HUMBLEWOOD™
CAMPAIGN SETTING

Credits

Writing and Game Design: Christopher Pinch, Matthew Gravelyn, Jordan Richer, Andrea Bruce, TR Rowe

Concept Creators: Ricardo Evangelho, Jordan Richer, Leesha Hannigan, Andrea Bruce

Editors: Andrea Bruce, TR Rowe, Dominik Parisien

Art Director: Leesha Hannigan

Graphic Designers: Ricardo Evangelho, Rajaa Al-Subairi

Front Cover Illustrators: Leesha Hannigan, Christina Kraus

Back Cover Illustrator: Derek Murphy

Cartographers: Hugo Solis, Tim Paul Piotorwski, Blue Sword Games, David Lanza Cebrian

Interior Illustrators: Leesha Hannigan, Andrea Radeck, Anneliese Mak, April Prime, Beck Hallstedt, Ben Zweifel, Brittany Pezzillo, Christina Kraus, Christina Pirvu, Crystal Sully, Cynthia F.G., Derek Murphy, Emily Hare, Griffin Macaulay, Ilse Gort, Jason Rainville, Jen Pattison, Jon Neimeister, Julia Metzger, Katy Grierson, Kiana Hamm, Kimberli Johnson, Lake Hurwitz, Lauren Henderson, Matei Monoranu, Paul Scott Canavan, Risa Hulett, Sarah Webb, Tiffany Turrill, Vadim Ciocazan, Valeria Ivanova, Veronika Fedorova

Additional Contributors: Holly Conrad, Deven Rue, Catherine Hariton

Special Thanks: Gail Simone, Erika Ishii, Geoffrey Palmer, Russ Charles

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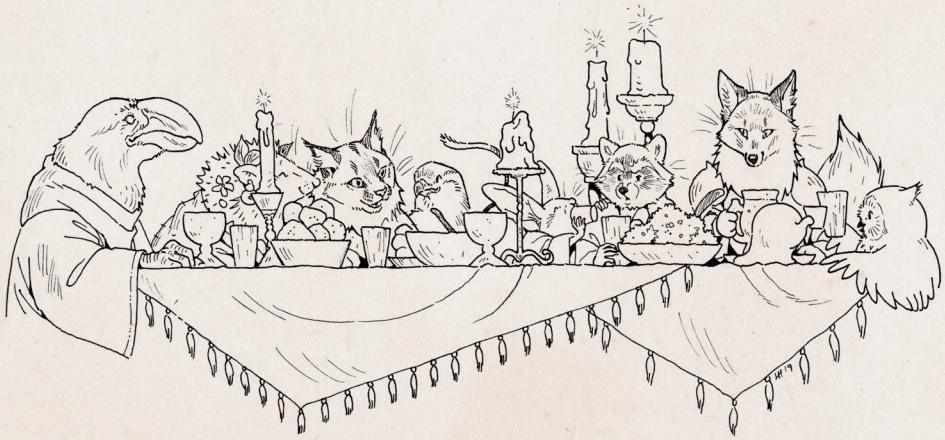

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Foreword

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

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

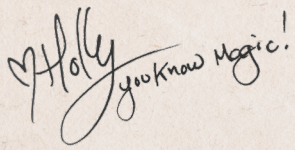
This is why I believe *Dungeons and Dragons* has had such a resurgence in the past few years, because we're looking for a connection to the world around us. We're looking for a way to get away from screens, to forget about our complicated lives, and to live as heroes with problems we can solve, not just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

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

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

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

Holly Conrad



Twitter: @HollyConrad
Twitch: @commanderholly

Preface

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

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

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

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

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

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

Leesha.

Leesha Hannigan,
Art Director

Twitter: @LeeshaHannigan

Introduction

ABOUT THE WOOD

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

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

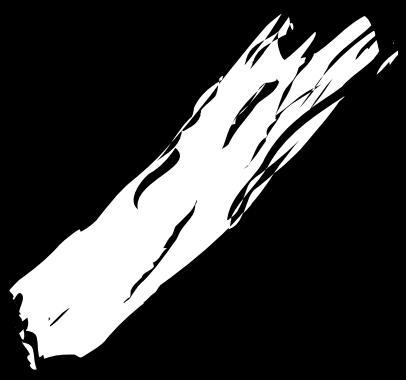
But the Wood has also known sorrow. Not long after the founding of Alderheart, a massive forest fire known as "The Great Calamity" burned a portion of the Wood. The origins of the fire are unknown, but it left the area permanently damaged. To this day, it is called the "Scorched Grove," an arid field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

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

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

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

Whether or not Humblewood is able to survive the flames is up to you. Go forth and adventure!



1 Welcome to the Wood

Races of the Wood

The various folk who make up the world of Humblewood are divided into two categories: the birdfolk and the humblefolk. While they resemble animals, the folk who inhabit the cities, towns, and villages of Humblewood are all humanoids.

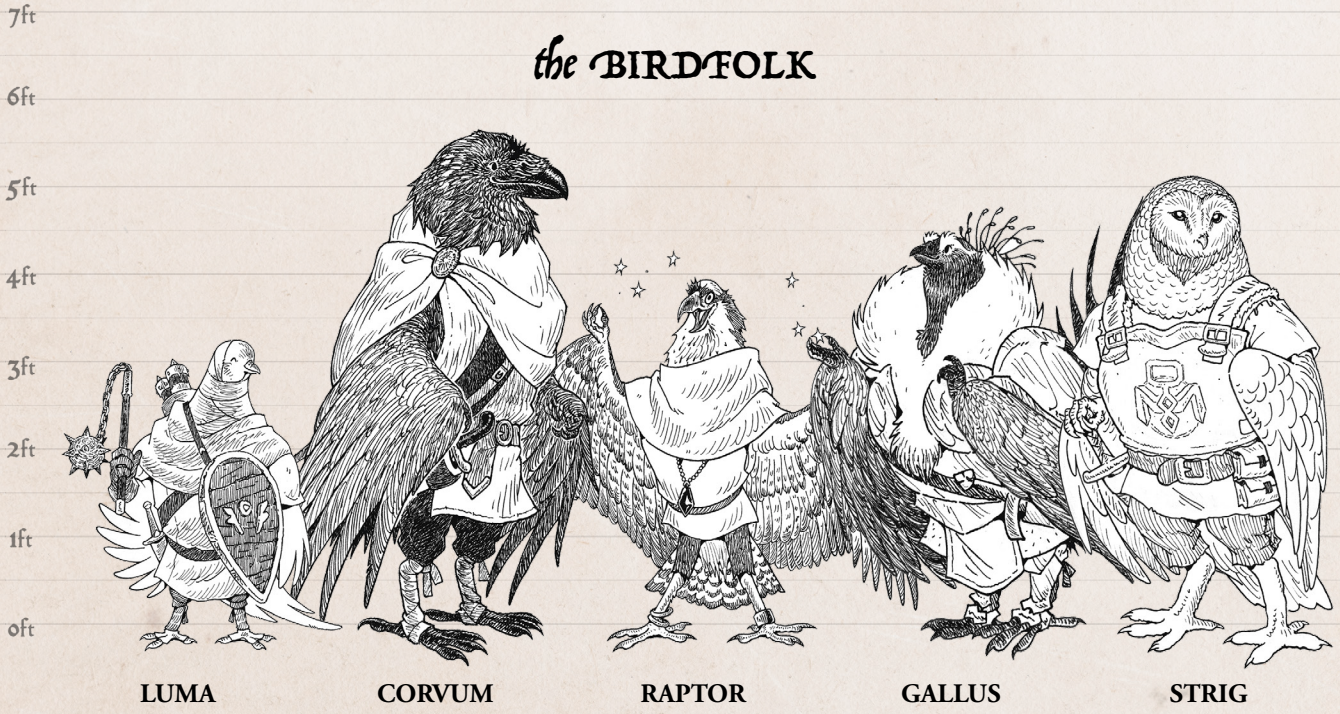
This chapter outlines the ten core races, five birdfolk and five humblefolk, who make up the majority of characters found in the Wood. It also details various character creation options, new class options, backgrounds, feats, and spells to help you make your own Humblewood adventurer.

THE BIRDFOLK

The birdfolk races of Humblewood are as diverse and unique as the forest itself. Only the skillful survive the forest, and the birdfolk have become masters of both the forest floor and the canopies above, creating several settlements (known colloquially as "perches") throughout the Wood. Despite regional differences and cultural peculiarities among the different kinds of birdfolk in the Wood, the birdfolk races nevertheless share much of their culture, language, history, and origin myths. This solidarity has allowed them to work together and prosper, creating a harmony in the Wood which has lasted for an age.

While a diverse group, adapted for a variety of environments within the Wood, birdfolk also share several physical traits which have allowed them to find common ground in the construction of their perches. Beyond the obvious physical similarities, all birdfolk possess arms covered in feathers, which extend into wing-like appendages. While incapable of true powered flight, the strong hollow bones and lightweight bodies of birdfolk allow them to easily use their feathered arms to glide, and unless severely encumbered, all birdfolk can recover gracefully from what would otherwise be a deadly fall. In some birdfolk races these wings have grown strong enough to bear their owners upwards in a mighty flap, while others instead developed talons which make for both deadly defensive weapons and useful tools for scaling tall trees.

The birdfolk have established themselves as a political force to be reckoned with in Humblewood. They shaped their mighty capital from the great tree Alderheart, and from this



bastion of safety their ruling body, the Birdfolk Council, makes decisions which impact all of Humblewood. The birdfolk are well-defended from outside threats thanks to the Perch Guard, a force of soldiers trained in both aerial and ground combat, that keeps their cities and the denizens within safe.

While Alderheart has been a beacon of peace and harmony for many years, the coming of the fires has thrown the region into chaos. The Perch Guard forces are spread thin across the canopy cities, barely able to secure the main roads for merchants while keeping their homes safe from the blazes. Now the great birdfolk cities face more threats from bandits and forest fires than ever before. Through it all, though, the birdfolk trust in solidarity, between themselves and the diverse groups of habitants who call their perches home, to weather the coming storm as they have so many times before.

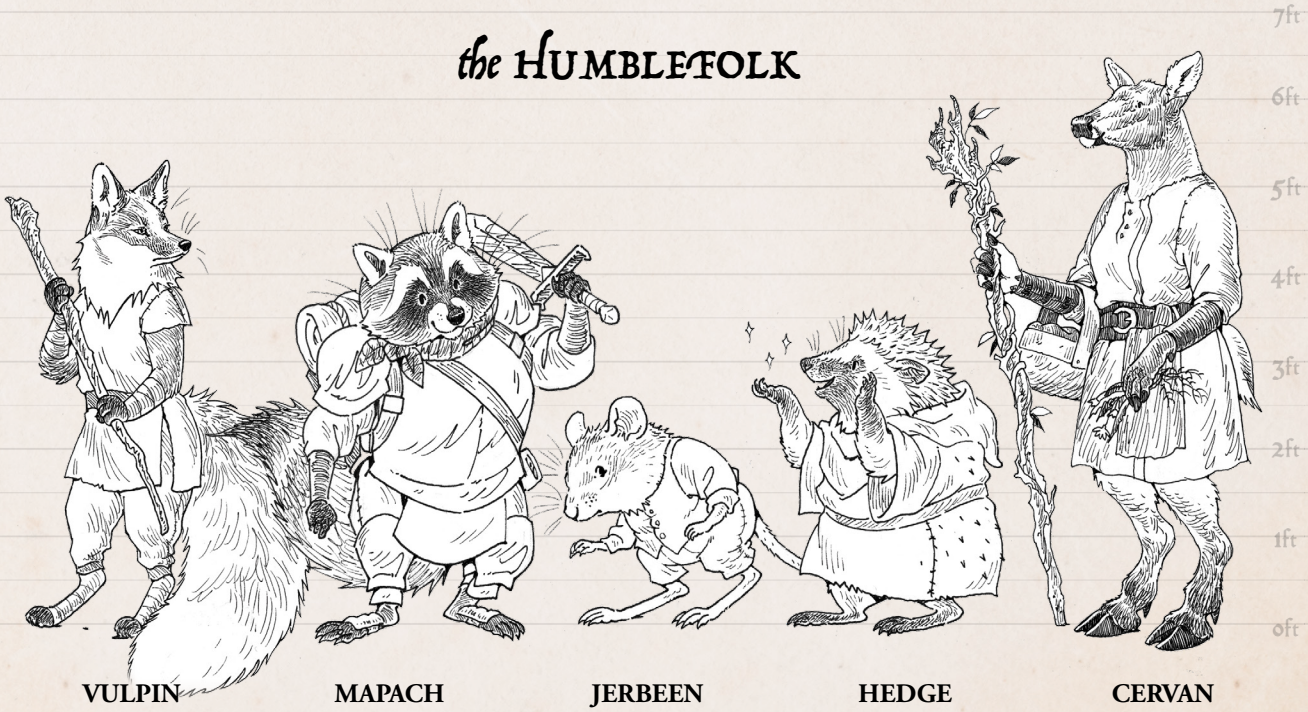
THE HUMBLEFOLK

Not all denizens of Humblewood are birdfolk. The term "humblefolk" is used throughout the Wood to refer to the non-birdfolk peoples who live a little closer to the forest floor. Unlike the birdfolk, whose shared language, histories, myths, and culture have allowed them to exist in harmony for most of Humblewood's history, the humblefolk represent a disparate group of peoples, cultures, and ways of seeing the world, many of whom haven't always seen eye to eye.

Ages ago, an accord was struck between the people of the forest floor to unite against roving bandits and quell the in-fighting that was wreaking havoc across the Wood. This accord was known as the "Humblefolk Treaty" and was witnessed by the birdfolk, who were just then beginning to shape the trunk of Alderheart. The birdfolk offered the humblefolk safety within their great city, and many accepted their offer. Over time, more and more humblefolk migrated to newly-established birdfolk perches, though many found birdfolk architecture to be restrictive for creatures without wings. In the same way, some groups of birdfolk, feeling too crowded within the booming perches, began to spread out and seek shelter within small woodland villages. Even today, the birdfolk who choose to live on the forest floor find themselves stigmatized, as a life in the canopy is considered proper in birdfolk society.

After the establishment of the treaty, humblefolk began to live once again in small woodland villages beneath the trees, although now in more diverse communities alongside some ground-dwelling birdfolk. With the expansion of the Humblefolk Treaty to allow humblefolk to call upon Perch Guard garrisons in times of crisis, and the birdfolk militias keeping the roads safe for merchant caravans, the Wood truly entered a golden age. Life for many humblefolk was peaceful and prosperous…until the fires came.

With the spreading flames, humblefolk villagers petitioned the overextended Perch Guard for aid, only to see help arrive too late, if at all. To make matters worse, after many years the divisions between the humblefolk communities have intensified: those who found prosperity in the birdfolk cities have adopted a perch-dweller's perspective, while those who live in the woodlands face a constant threat from brigands and forest fires. Others have even left to join the newly reformed Bandit Coalition, seeing not only a path for survival, but a chance to get even with the perch-dwelling birdfolk for broken oaths and unequal treatment. Yet, where the treaty holds, vibrant humblefolk communities can still be found. The humblefolk are resilient, and each race will devise a way to survive in this dangerous wood.



Corvum

Corvums are a crow-like race with dark feathers and sharp minds. Their reputation in birdfolk society is nothing short of villainous, and they are regularly cast as the antagonists of any given situation. It's hard to say whether the corvums are distrusted because they behave the way they do, or if they behave the way they do because they are distrusted.

For Personal Gain

It is widely believed that corvums only look out for themselves. Sometimes this presents as flexible morals, and at other times it simply means they follow a personal code instead of subscribing to general law. Either way, corvums are a crafty race and they tend to get what they want, one way or another.

Corvums are typically found in positions with a modicum of power, such as advisors or minor officials. The stigma they face usually prevents them from attaining too prominent a position in birdfolk society, but corvums are adept at working behind the scenes, spreading their influence subtly and to great effect.

Too Smart

Corvums are commonly accepted, sometimes begrudgingly, to be among the smartest of birdfolk. Keen observers, they trade in information the way others trade goods. They are hungry for knowledge and leverage it to further their goals whenever possible. Their undeniable skill in matters of logistics and planning make them valuable to councils and powerful individuals alike.

CORVUM TRAITS

Ability Score Increase. Your Intelligence score increases by 2.

Age. Corvums reach adulthood at around 18 years. They live slightly shorter lives than other birdfolk, approximately 70 years.

Alignment. Shrewd and capable, corvums prefer moral flexibility and are more likely to be neutral than either good or evil. Nonetheless, corvums see the benefit of rules, even if many attempt to turn them to their own advantage. Because of this they favor lawful alignments.

Size. Corvums cut imposing figures, standing between 4 and a half and 5 and a half feet tall, encompassing a variety of different builds. They weigh around 100 pounds. Your size is Medium.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 30 feet.

Glide. Using your feathered arms, you can slow your fall, and glide short distances. When falling you can use your reaction to spread your arms, stiffen your wing feathers, and slow your descent. While doing so, you continue to fall gently at a speed of 60 feet per round, taking no fall damage when you land. If you would fall at least 10 feet in this way, you may fly up to your movement speed in any direction you choose, although you cannot choose to move upwards, landing in the space you finish your movement. You cannot glide while carrying heavy weapons or wielding a shield (though you may drop any held items as part of your reaction to spread your arms). You cannot glide while wearing heavy armor, or if you are encumbered.

Talons. Your sharp claws aid you in unarmed combat and while climbing. Your damage for an unarmed strike is 1d4 piercing damage. Additionally, you have advantage on Strength (Athletics) checks made to climb any surface your talons could reasonably grip.

Learned. You gain proficiency in one of the following skills: Arcana, History, Nature, or Religion.

Appraising Eye. You have an almost supernatural ability to appraise objects. By spending an action examining any object, you can determine any magical properties the item has, how they might be used or activated, as well as a fair estimation of market price. Using this skill strains the eyes, and you must complete a long or short rest before you can use it again.

Languages. You can speak, read, and write Birdfolk. You can also understand Auran, though you cannot speak it naturally.

Subrace. There are two main subraces of corvum: dusk and kindled. Choose one of these subraces.

Dusk Corvum

As a dusk corvum, you are more at home in the bustle of society than in the wilds of the forest. You understand subtle social cues the way a hunter understands their prey, and you're just as quick to capitalize on an advantage.

Ability Score Increase. Your Dexterity score increases by 1.

Skulker. You have advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made in dim light or darkness.

Street Smarts. You gain proficiency in the Insight skill.

Kindled Corvum

As a kindled corvum, you know implicitly that you are the smartest in the room. Your ability to utilize your knowledge to your advantage, along with your deep understanding of others motivations, makes you a formidable opponent.

Ability Score Increase. Your Charisma score increases by 1.

Convincing. Kindled corvums have a way with words, and are accomplished at saying what someone wants or needs to hear. You have proficiency in either the Deception or Persuasion skill. Additionally, you have advantage on all Charisma checks made to convince someone of your exceptional knowledge on any topic related to the skill you selected with your learned trait (Arcana, History, Nature, or Religion).

Sharp Mind. You learn one additional language of your choice, gain proficiency in a tool of your choice, and are able to accurately recall with perfect clarity anything you have seen or heard within the past month.

Gallus

The gallus commonly dwell in small, familial communities as opposed to the grand perches of the Wood. Of the birdfolk, they are the most likely to be found living among the humblefolk. Gallus have a deep respect for nature and a love of gardening unmatched by other birdfolk. They value their social bonds above all else, and are always ready to help their neighbours and promote the common good. They are polite but have little patience for deceit and rudeness.

A Varied Folk

The gallus are a varied folk, resembling as many different varieties of wildfowl as there are trees in the Wood. Some are pheasant-like, others are grouse-like, while some resemble chickens or turkeys. There are dozens of variations of feathers, colors, and patterns even between gallus of the same subrace. The gallus are proud of their appearances but not to the point of vanity. Maintaining good grooming is akin to keeping a knife sharp and shows a level of respect for oneself.

Birdfolk are generally welcoming to other races, but the gallus are particularly well-known for their willingness to include virtually anyone in social or familial groups. In gallus culture, it is customary to always offer your seat at a table to guests. This is seen as the basis of a popular and hilarious children's story about a meal growing too cold to eat as the gallus continually give up their seats to late arrivals at a party.

Salt of the Earth

Gallus are a social and communal folk. They tend to form close-knit communities wherever they roost, and their sense of pride for their community runs deep. When tragedy leaves children in their village orphaned, it is customary for gallus families to take them in. Gallus value honest work, such as farming and smithing, and share labor equally between all community members. There is nothing a gallus would not give to their neighbors in a time of need.

While other birdfolk might look down on gallus for their common ways, the gallus have excellent interpersonal skills. They are insightful and empathetic, but not to the point of being socially exploitable. The gallus have an ear for the truth, and are often capable of rooting out lies and dishonesty.

GALLUS TRAITS

Ability Score Increase. Your Wisdom score increases by 2.

Age. While ages fluctuate, gallus reach maturity around 18 and can live anywhere between 70 and 100 years.

Alignment. Most gallus are lawful good. They are a salt-of-the-earth sort of folk who believe in justice, the value of hard work, and the importance of respecting others.

Size. Gallus are the most varied of the birdfolk races, ranging from just under 4 feet to just over 5 feet tall, and showing many unique builds. The variety of shapes and sizes means they also encompass a variety of weights, but most average around 90 pounds. Your size is Medium.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 30 feet.

Glide. Using your feathered arms, you can slow your fall, and glide short distances. When falling you can use your reaction to spread your arms, stiffen your wing feathers, and slow your descent. While doing so, you continue to fall gently at a speed of 60 feet per round, taking no fall damage when you land. If you would fall at least 10 feet in this way, you may fly up to your movement speed in any direction you choose, although you cannot choose to move upwards, landing in the space you finish your movement. You cannot glide while carrying heavy weapons or wielding a shield (though you may drop any held items as part of your reaction to spread your arms). You cannot glide while wearing heavy armor, or if you are encumbered.

Wing Flap. As a bonus action, you can use your powerful feathered arms to propel yourself upward a distance equal to half your movement speed. You can use it in conjunction with a regular jump, but not while gliding.

Communal. Whenever you make an Intelligence (History) check related to the history of your race, culture, or community, you are considered proficient in the History skill and add double your proficiency bonus to the check, instead of your normal proficiency bonus.

Militia Training. You have proficiency in simple weapons.

Of the People. You gain proficiency with the artisan tools of your choice: brewer's supplies, carpenter's tools, or smith's tools.

Languages. You can speak, read, and write Birdfolk. You can also understand Auran, though you cannot speak it naturally.

Subrace. There are two main subraces of gallus: bright and huden. Choose one of these subraces.

Bright Gallus

As a bright gallus, you are a natural leader. Growing up in your close-knit community has taught you how to inspire others and rally folks to a common cause. This air of command follows you wherever you roam.

Ability Score Increase. Your Charisma score increases by 1.

Inspiring. By spending an action and giving words of advice or encouragement, you can inspire an ally who is able to see and hear you. The ally can roll a d4 and add the number rolled to their next ability check, attack roll, or saving throw.

Understanding. You have proficiency in the Insight skill.

Huden Gallus

As a huden gallus, you are of the land. Like the Amaranthine Hanera, you have a unique connection to the Great Rhythm of nature, and in return the Rhythm grants you many gifts. This innate bond with nature may alienate you from city life, but you will always have a home within the more remote parts of the Wood.

Ability Score Increase. Your Dexterity score increases by 1.

One With the Wood. You have proficiency in the Nature skill.

Seedspeech. Your connection to the Great Rhythm is such that you can speak with the greenery of the forest itself. Through speech and touch you can communicate simple ideas to living plants. You are able to interpret their responses in simple language. Plants in the Wood do not experience the world in terms of sight, but most can feel differences in temperature, describe things that have touched them, as well as hear vibrations that happened around them (including speech).

Luma

Lumas are a race of polar opposites when it comes to their role in perch society. They are as often shunned for their eccentricities as they are celebrated for them. Lumas are smaller than most birdfolk, and resemble either doves or pigeons. Many have ruffs of feathers that shine with unique iridescent colours, something which can be seen as either alluring or unusual. Most fledgling lumas approach social situations with hesitation, until a time when society inevitably labels them an outcast or a notable figure, and the individual naturally adapts to the role.

Touched

To most, lumas seem perpetually disorganized and distracted, which has lead to a belief that they are of low intelligence. In truth, lumas have a unique perception of the world. They are able to interpret information in an uncommon way, allowing them to see possibilities others cannot.

These inherent talents, sometimes dismissed as luck, can be improved upon with training and study. Pairing their natural gifts with magical education, powerful luma wizards and radical scholars have been at the forefront of magical innovation for some time in Humblewood.

Of Two Worlds

While most lumas find their peculiar nature to be a hindrance in society, some make use of their gifts to climb the social ladder. These individuals inspire curiosity and have an air of authority about them. This divide in social standing among lumas can make for curious and strained relationships among families and friends.

Other lumas find it difficult to exist in the larger society of birdfolk cities. It is said that this is a main contributing factor for the close-knit, and exclusive luma districts in larger cities. Lumas tend to keep to themselves, preferring the company of those who understand them rather than those who pass judgement.

LUMA TRAITS

Ability Score Increase. Your Charisma score increases by 2.

Age. Lumas are short-lived reaching adulthood around 20 years. Few lumas live beyond 70 years.

Alignment. Spurred by personal interests and flights of fancy, lumas lean towards chaotic alignments. While generally good natured, those that have been spurned by society find it hard to see the benefits of altruism, but even under such circumstances lumas are rarely evil.

Size. Lumas are the shortest and lightest of the birdfolk, standing roughly 3 feet tall and weighing only around 30 pounds. Your size is Small.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 25 feet.

Glide. Using your feathered arms, you can slow your fall, and glide short distances. When falling you can use your reaction to spread your arms, stiffen your wing feathers, and slow your descent. While doing so, you continue to fall gently at a speed of 60 feet per round, taking no fall damage when you land. If you would fall at least 10 feet in this way, you may fly up to your movement speed in any direction you choose, although you cannot choose to move upwards, landing in the space you finish your movement. You cannot glide while carrying heavy weapons or wielding a shield (though you may drop any held items as part of your reaction to spread your arms). You cannot glide while wearing heavy armor, or if you are encumbered.

Wing Flap. As a bonus action, you can use your powerful feathered arms to propel yourself upward a distance equal to half your movement speed. You can use it in conjunction with a regular jump, but not while gliding.

Touched. You know one cantrip from the sorcerer spell list. Charisma is your spellcasting ability for this cantrip.

Fated. Whether by luck or a guiding presence, you always seem to find your way. You can choose to reroll any attack, skill check, or saving throw. You can decide to do this after your roll, but only before the outcome of the roll has been determined. You can't use this feature again until you have completed a long rest.

Languages. You can speak, read, and write Birdfolk. You can also understand Auran, though you cannot speak it naturally.

Subrace. There are two main subraces of luma: sable and sera. Choose one of these subraces.

Sable Luma

As a sable luma, you are often found on the fringes of social situations. While you are overlooked by the crowd, your gifts are undeniable. You are destined for greatness.

Ability Score Increase. Your Constitution score increases by 1.

Hard to Read. Your innate eccentricities make it hard for other folk to figure you out. When someone performs a Wisdom (Insight) check against you, they have disadvantage on their roll. Additionally, you gain advantage on Charisma (Deception) checks made against creatures that are not lumas.

Resilience. You have advantage on saving throws against poison and resistance against poison damage.

Sera Luma

As a sera luma, you are revered and celebrated by those around you. You have an almost unnatural beauty and grace, inspiring admiration in some and jealousy in others.

Ability Score Increase. Your Wisdom score increases by 1.

Center of Attention. You have proficiency in the Performance skill.

Songbird. When you perform, you can demonstrate the innate and mystical power of your Charisma. You may cast the charm person spell once per long rest. This spell does not require any somatic components to cast. Charisma is your spellcasting ability for this spell.

Raptor

When the birdfolk think of hunters or rangers, they picture a raptor. Resembling small hawks, eagles, and other birds of prey, they have sharp talons and agile builds that help them effortlessly glide through the canopy. These birdfolk are swift and strong with an uncanny knack for tracking. They are rarely prey, and are quick to turn the tables when finding themselves hunted.

Perceptive Awareness

Given their heightened senses, often raptors appear to be distracted or deep in thought. In reality, they are processing the wealth of sensory information they receive from their particularly keen eyes and sensitive ears. While many folk are only ever aware of what goes on directly around them, raptors have an extremely wide field of awareness.

Raptors are adept at living off the land. They are skilled hunters, usually leading the harvesting of meat and skins for their perches. Raptors are especially well versed in stalking prey from great heights, lining up impossible shots that their prey could not predict.

Natural Predator

While many of the birdfolk races are culturally communal, raptors don't have a great sense of connectedness, nor do they tend to create their own perches. They are more likely to adopt a transient lifestyle, moving from perch to perch, or to simply live in the vast forests of the Wood itself.

Though typically quiet, raptors are not averse to forming relationships with other birdfolk. Despite their reserved nature, raptors value personal bonds more highly than societal or even familial ties.

RAPTOR TRAITS

Ability Score Increase. Your Dexterity score increases by 2.

Age. Raptors reach maturity around 20 years. They can live longer than any other birdfolk race, over 100 years.

Alignment. Raptors tend towards neutral alignments. Preferring the path of naturalists and hunters, raptors rarely see value in order for the sake of order, and are often more pragmatic than idealistic.

Size. Raptors are lean, muscular hunters, but they stand less than 4 feet tall. Their light builds usually lend themselves to bodies that weigh far less than one would expect for their height, averaging around only 35 pounds. Your size is Small.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 25 feet.

Glide. Using your feathered arms, you can slow your fall, and glide short distances. When falling you can use your reaction to spread your arms, stiffen your wing feathers, and slow your descent. While doing so, you continue to fall gently at a speed of 60 feet per round, taking no fall damage when you land. If you would fall at least 10 feet in this way, you may fly up to your movement speed in any direction you choose, although you cannot choose to move upwards, landing in the space you finish your movement. You cannot glide while carrying heavy weapons or wielding a shield (though you may drop any held items as part of your reaction to spread your arms). You cannot glide while wearing heavy armor, or if you are encumbered.

Talons. Your sharp claws aid you in unarmed combat and while climbing. Your damage for an unarmed strike is 1d4 piercing damage. Additionally, you have advantage on Strength (Athletics) checks made to climb any surface your talons could reasonably grip.

Keen Senses. You have proficiency in the Perception skill.

Woodland Hunter. Your accuracy allows you to treat three-quarters cover as half cover and half cover as no cover.

Hunter's Training. You have proficiency with the longbow, short bow, and spear. Additionally, your familiarity with the longbow means that it is not considered a heavy weapon for you.

Languages. You can speak, read, and write Birdfolk. You can also understand Auran, though you cannot speak it naturally.

Subrace. There are two main subraces of raptor: mistral and maran. Choose one of these subraces.

Maran Raptor

As a maran raptor, you are as at home in the water as you are in the trees. You also have a wealth of patience, acting only when it best suits your goals.

Ability Score Increase. Your Intelligence score increases by 1.

Swimmer. You have a swimming speed of 25 feet.

Patient. When you react with a readied action, you have advantage on the first attack roll, skill check, or ability check you make as a part of that action.

Mistral Raptor

As a mistral raptor, you are most at home far from the ground. You can range for miles in the Wood without ever setting talon to soil, moving more confidently through the branches than some move on flat ground.

Ability Score Increase. Your Wisdom score increases by 1.

Agile. You have proficiency in the Acrobatics skill.

Aerial Defense. Creatures that attack you while you are falling, gliding, or jumping have disadvantage on their attack roll.

Strig

Strigs are the most imposing of the birdfolk races. Resembling owls, their thick feathers, solid bodies, and broad wings have earned them a reputation as the most powerful of the birdfolk races. They value strength and endurance, traits they believe crucial for survival in the Wood. Although they are not necessarily prejudiced against those who are weaker, strigs are quick to call out when someone is not doing their best for the common good.

Strong and Brave

While many of the birdfolk races rely on their prowess or intelligence for superiority, strigs use their immense strength and stamina to endure even the most punishing assault. They make mighty warriors, and whether defending their perch or braving the Wood itself, strigs never shy away from a fight.

Strig culture is largely based on principles of strength and endurance above all, but not necessarily for the purposes of combat. Protecting and providing for others in hard times is considered just as impressive, if not more so, than winning a fight.

Woodland Survivors

Strigs, more than any of the other birdfolk race, are most at home in the wild. Their mottled feather patterns, though not as bright or beautiful as others, allow them to easily hide in the forest. Due to this inherent advantage, along with their speed and power, strigs make excellent hunters and rangers.

Strigs prefer the relative simplicity of the forest to the machinations of society and politics. Despite these individualistic tendencies, they are capable of forming familial and community bonds that transcend a permanent or single physical home.

STRIG TRAITS

Ability Score Increase. Your Strength score increases by 2.

Age. Strigs reach maturity faster than most birdfolk races, around 15 years. They can reach a respectable old age by birdfolk standards, living around 80 years.

Alignment. Strigs are normally good aligned, having a strong sense of fair play as well as a tendency to see the best in others. They also favor chaotic alignments, as strigs are a freedom-loving people who will usually put their personal morals above any imposed system of governance.

Size. Strigs are muscular, imposing folk ranging from 4 to over 5 feet tall and weighing around 110 pounds. Your size is Medium.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 30 feet.

Glide. Using your feathered arms, you can slow your fall, and glide short distances. When falling you can use your reaction to spread your arms, stiffen your wing feathers, and slow your descent. While doing so, you continue to fall gently at a speed of 60 feet per round, taking no fall damage when you land. If you would fall at least 10 feet in this way, you may fly up to your movement speed in any direction you choose, although you cannot choose to move upwards, landing in the space you finish your movement. You cannot glide while carrying heavy weapons or wielding a shield (though you may drop any held items as part of your reaction to spread your arms). You cannot glide while wearing heavy armor, or if you are encumbered.

Talons. Your sharp claws aid you in unarmed combat and while climbing. Your damage for an unarmed strike is 1d4 piercing damage. Additionally, you have advantage on Strength (Athletics) checks made to climb any surface your talons could reasonably grip.

Darkvision. You are adept at hunting under the cover of night. You can see in dim light within 60 feet of you as if it were bright light, and in darkness as if it were dim light. You can't discern color in darkness, only shades of gray.

Patterned Feathers. You have advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks when you attempt to hide in a forest.

Languages. You can speak, read, and write Birdfolk. You can also understand Auran, though you cannot speak it naturally.

Subrace. There are two main subraces of strigs: swift and stout. Choose one of these subraces.

Stout Strig

As a stout strig, you are as hearty as you are strong, able to weather hardship and impose your will on the world around you.

Ability Score Increase. Your Constitution score increases by 1.

Imposing. You have proficiency in the Intimidation skill.

Brawler. When you successfully attack a target with your talons, you can choose to grapple that target as a bonus action.

Swift Strig

As a swift strig, you are a powerful force in the Wood who ranges far and wide without ever missing a step. You are most capable when immersed in the forest.

Ability Score Increase. Your Dexterity score increases by 1.

Swift. Your base walking speed increases to 35 feet.

Survivor. You have proficiency in the Survival skill.

Cervan

Cervans are a versatile deer-like folk who make their homes in small, intimate villages throughout Humblewood. More insular than other humblefolk, cervans often reside deep in the most ancient parts of Humblewood's vast forest, in tree stands and groves far from birdfolk perches.

Hale and Hearty

Cervans have a robust physique and are rarely sick. They are one of the longest-lived races among the humblefolk. Though their wariness has earned them a reputation as timid, cervans are cautious because they remain active and alert, and generally prefer practice to contemplation. Cervans like to pursue skills independently in order to give themselves a sense of purpose. This striving is what propels some cervans to positions of great import throughout the Wood. A happy cervan is one who is hard at work.

Wary and Practical

One of the reasons cervans form such close-knit communities is a mistrust of outsiders. Before the Treaty, vulpin raiders and mapach thieves were serious threats. These times have long since passed, but cervans still possess a wariness that makes it hard for others to gain their trust. After the implementation of the Humblefolk Treaty, many cervans continued to live by the old ways. However, some cervan villages have since started to contain the odd family of jerbeen, or a few lone hedges. Even under such circumstances, cervans have maintained positions of leadership and delegated responsibilities to make sure that villages are run in accordance with the old cervan teachings, ensuring that work necessary for survival in the most remote villages is accomplished, so that all its inhabitants may be kept healthy and happy.

The ability to balance their innate caution with practical considerations is one of the cervans' greatest strengths. Cervans teach that the best means of survival in any situation is to remain calm and weigh one's options. The best cervan leaders favour this approach.

The Sight

Cervans have a unique ability to bounce back and survive a physical shock that might kill others. Occasionally, cervans who survive such traumas are granted mystical visions. Sometimes these are flashes of insight into the world around them, sometimes portents of doom, and other times visions of a far away future. Known among cervans as "The Sight", this phenomenon is elusive, and out of the control of mortals. Cervans who have seen visions in this way are known as "The Sighted", and after this initial event, some will suddenly find themselves receptive to visions of the past, present, and future.

A cervan whose Sight has been triggered is encouraged to hone it, so that they might take on the role of a seer within their village. However, these efforts aren't always met with success. The Sight will sometimes visit a cervan only once in their lifetime, with no amount of training granting a glimpse of such visions again. This is believed to be for the best, as cervans acknowledge that those who are truly Sighted carry knowledge that can be both a blessing and a curse.

The Blessing of Cairith

While it's not unusual for some cervans to have small antlers or buds visible on their heads, only rarely is a cervan born who can grow a full set of antlers. These cervans are a different subrace — pronghorns — and are thought to be specially blessed by their Amaranthine Cairith, a sacred spirit of life and growth believed to watch over all cervans. Unlike other subraces, pronghorn and grove cervans are the same people. The arrival of a pronghorn cervan is an event to celebrate, as it can occur only once in a generation.

CERVAN TRAITS

Ability Score Increase. Your Constitution score increases by 2.

Age. Cervans reach maturity around 12 years. They live long lives compared to the rest of the Humblefolk, between 100 and 150 years, something they attribute as much to their way of life as the blessing of Cairith. Pronghorns generally live longer than grove cervans, which is considered a sign of Cairith's favor.

Alignment. Cervans are pragmatic in their thinking, and generally prefer to keep their philosophies flexible in order to prioritize what they believe is important for both themselves and their communities. They lean towards neutral alignments.

Size. Grove cervans stand between 5 and 6 feet tall, and have light builds, weighing between 130-180 pounds. Pronghorn cervans are taller and tend toward heavier, more muscular builds, standing around 7 feet tall, and sometimes weighing over 200 pounds. Your size is Medium.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 30 feet.

Practical. Cervans are eminently practical and like to spend their time learning useful skills for life in their woodland villages. You gain proficiency in one of the following skills: Athletics, Medicine, Nature, or Survival.

Surge of Vigor. All cervans possess a great tenacity and will to survive, which allows them to bounce back from even the most devastating blows. If an attack deals over half of your current remaining hit points in damage, (even if your HP is reduced to 0 by the attack) you immediately regain hit points equal to 1d12 + your Constitution Modifier. You can't use this feature again until you have completed a long rest.

Languages. You can speak, read, and write Birdfolk, and speak Cervan (Cervan has no written component).

Subrace. There are two main subraces of cervans: grove or pronghorn. Choose one of these subraces.

Grove Cervan

As a grove cervan, you are swift and agile, able to quickly maneuver out of harm's way. You are also incredibly versatile, and can fulfill a variety of roles within a village or an adventuring party.

Ability Score Increase. Your Dexterity score increases by 1.

Swift. Your base walking speed increases to 35 feet.

Standing Leap. Your base long jump is 30 feet, and your base high jump is 15 feet, with or without a running start.

Nimble Step. Opportunity attacks made against you are rolled with disadvantage.

Pronghorn Cervan

As a pronghorn cervan, you were born larger and stronger than others in the community and found yourself laden with expectations from a very young age. It is up to you whether you embrace your position of privilege, or rebel against the constraints thrust upon you by cervan society.

Ability Score Increase. Your Strength score increases by 1.

Robust Build. You count as one size larger when determining your carrying capacity and the weight you can push, drag, or lift.

Antlers. You have a set of large, strong antlers that can be used to make devastating charge attacks. You can use your unarmed strike to gore opponents, dealing 1d6 + your Strength Modifier piercing damage on a hit.

Additionally, if you move at least 20 feet in a straight line towards an opponent, you can spend a bonus action to charge them, dealing an extra 1d6 points of piercing damage. If the target of your charge is Large or smaller, they must make a Strength saving throw against a DC of your Proficiency Bonus + 8 + your Strength Modifier. On failure, the target is pushed 10 feet away from you into a space of your choice.

Hedge

The most diplomatic and good natured of all the humblefolk, hedges like to live quiet lives in villages throughout the Wood, or within the safety of birdfolk perches. They resemble hedgehogs, although the quills that cover their backs are far tougher, hard enough to repel blades and sharp enough to pierce the solid hides of monstrous creatures. Despite their sturdiness, hedges are sensitive and emotional creatures, who display meekness more than bravado. Their meek demeanor and deference in social situations has earned them a reputation as cowards in the eyes of outsiders. But rather than being born of cowardice, their behaviour stems from a desire to respect the feelings and sensitivities of others, something considered to be of utmost importance in hedge society.

Sensitive and Kind

Hedges have an incredible capacity for empathy, and tend to view all creatures, from the smallest beetle to the largest beast, as being equally deserving of respect and dignity. They are known across the Wood for being excellent conflict mediators, and usually find themselves acting as diplomats or emissaries between factions trying to broker an agreement.

Hedges feel most at home when everyone gets along. They are one of the few races who truly understand that conflict is not an evil force but simply represents an imbalance which must be resolved. This is not to say that hedges have never known strife, only that their proactive approach to mediation, coupled with their deep respect for the dignity of all living creatures, results in fewer occasions for conflict. Yet, when a serious conflict does arise, hedges who feel they have been truly and deeply wronged can close themselves off from the rest of their society, sometimes resulting in splits in a community.

One of the reasons hedges display such deep empathy and compassion towards others is due to the intensity of the emotions they feel. The strength of these emotions applies as much to positive feelings it does negative, meaning emotional wounds run deep with hedges.

One With the Forest

Gifted with a unique connection to the Great Rhythm, hedges are tied into the natural world in a fashion similar to the connection possessed by some gallus. This has granted hedges special magical gifts, such as the ability to speak with the smallest ground-dwelling creatures in the Wood, and the power to cause flowers to bloom. It is quite common for hedges to have a variety of animal friends who share their home.

Hedges who dwell outside of the birdfolk cities prefer to live in individual burrows under the great roots of trees. Communities of hedges enjoy living surrounded by nature, near clearings within the forest or lone copses. Central meeting areas and communal gardens can be constructed in the spaces between burrows. Hedges love gardening, and tend to keep a few small gardens wherever they live.

Dressed for Comfort

Hedges need special consideration when wearing clothes, and favor loose tunics, baggy trousers, flowing robes, and other clothes which fit easily over their quills. When not actively flared out, these tough quills naturally flatten, becoming smooth to the touch. However, if suddenly frightened, their quills reflexively flare out and stiffen, an accident which can ruin a hedge's clothing.

Adventuring clothes made specifically for hedges are available in nearly every major city in Humblewood, and tailors throughout the Wood are familiar with making alterations to suit a hedge's needs.

HEDGE TRAITS

Ability Score Increase. Your Charisma score increases by 2, and your Wisdom score increases by 1.

Age. Hedges take longer to mature than most other races, reaching adulthood around 20 years. They also live for a long time, with many reaching 120 years or more.

Alignment. Hedges are compassionate, empathetic, and diplomatic, tending towards good alignments. They also favor neutral alignments, as hedges have a great respect for the balance of nature.

Size. Hedges have short, rounded body shapes, standing between 3 and 4 feet in height, and weighing between 40 and 70 pounds. Your size is Small.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 25 feet.

Natural Burrowers. You have a burrowing speed of 15 feet. You are capable of burrowing through soil, but are unable to dig through anything more substantial with just your clawed hands.

Spiny Quills. The backs of hedges are covered with spiny quills, which makes it impossible for hedges to wear armor. These quills provide exceptional protection, therefore you have a base armor class of 14 + your Dexterity modifier. Even though you can't wear armor, you can still benefit from the armor class bonus provided by shields so long as you are proficient with them.

Curl Up. You can use your action to curl up, exposing attackers to a wall of your toughened quills. While curled up you cannot move, attack, or cast spells with somatic components, and your base armor class becomes 19. You cannot benefit from any Dexterity bonus to armor class while curled up, but you can still use shields.

Any creature that misses you with a melee attack while you are curled up takes 2d4 points of piercing damage from your sharp quills. If a creature hits you while you are curled up, you are knocked prone in your space at the end of the turn. You may uncurl yourself at any point during your turn.

Forest Magic. You have a deep connection to the magic of the Wood. You know the druidcraft cantrip. Additionally, you can cast animal messenger as a 2nd level spell once with this trait, and regain the ability to do so after a short or long rest. Charisma is your spellcasting ability for these spells.

Speak With Bugs. Through sounds and gestures, you can communicate simple ideas with creatures of the beast subtype that represent insects, spiders, worms, and other creepy crawlies, regardless of their size.

Languages. You can speak, read, and write Birdfolk and Hedge.

"I shall reclaim the Gasparian Isles and return my family to their homeland"

- Pico Piante,
Swashbuckler Extraordinaire

Jerbeen

Jerbeens are small mouse-like folk with long, furred tails that help them balance. In proportion to the rest of their body, a jerbeen's legs are long and powerful. Jerbeens can be found in a variety of places across the Wood, usually forming their own communities within birdfolk perches and humblefolk villages. Seldom do they live alone. A jerbeen's home can contain several generations, including extended family and cousins living together under one roof. Jerbeens have a strong sense of family and like to surround themselves with good company wherever they rest.

Outsize Courage

Jerbeens are the smallest inhabitants of Humblewood, dwarfed by nearly every kind of creature they encounter. While they are quick and nimble, and possess an affable attitude, they are not very strong, brave, or powerful on their own. When they stand with a group, jerbeens are emboldened: the presence of others reassures them, granting them the courage to face even the largest threats head on. They excel in team strategies, helping one another solve problems that could not be surmounted alone.

Community First

The communal slant of jerbeens stems from more than just their love of good company: jerbeen are kind and considerate creatures, known for their joviality and charm. Being small and not particularly strong gives them a perspective that allows them to easily empathize with others, though not all jerbeens share this compassionate outlook. Some respond to the dangers outside their community by becoming insular and fearing all non-jerbeens. Jerbeens value privacy, but true isolation from friends, families, or loved ones is considered to be the worst possible fate a jerbeen could suffer.

JERBEEN TRAITS

Ability Score Increase. Your Dexterity increases by 2, and your Charisma score increases by 1.

Age. Jerbeens grow quickly, reaching maturity around 5 years. They are the shortest lived of all the humblefolk races, living just about 40 years.

Alignment. Being small and facing many threats in the world, jerbeens are sensitive to the feelings of others, and tend towards good alignments. They also lean more towards lawful alignments due to their co-operative nature.

Size. Jerbeens have incredibly small and light bodies, standing between 2 and 3 feet tall, and weighing between 20 and 40 pounds. Your size is Small.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 30 feet.

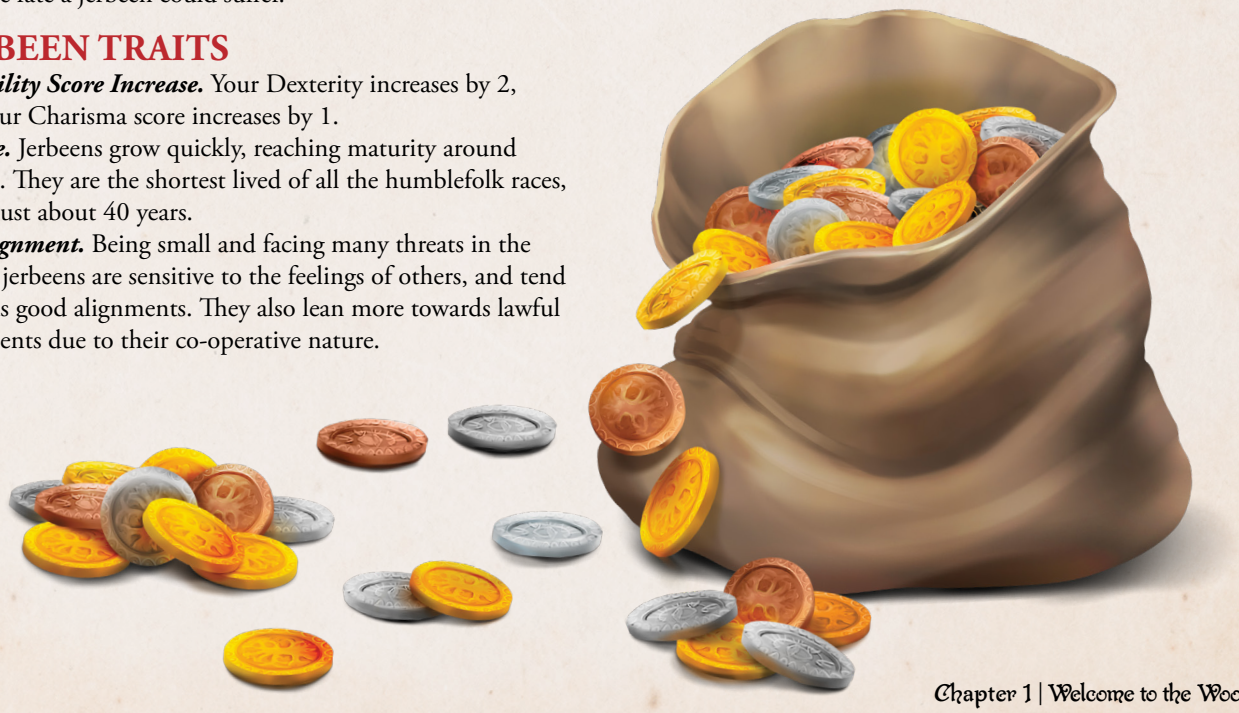
Standing Leap. Your base long jump is 30 feet, and your base high jump is 15 feet, with or without a running start.

Nimbleness. You can move through the space of any creature that is of a size larger than yours.

Take Heart. You have advantage on Strength saving throws and saving throws against being frightened as long as you are within 5 feet of an ally who isn't frightened or incapacitated that you can both see and hear.

Team Tactics. You can use the Help action as a bonus action.

Languages. You can speak, read, and write Birdfolk and Jerbeen.



Mapach

Naturally curious, mapachs are a medium-sized racoon-like race. They are crafty, hearty, and tough, but their true strength lies in the potential they see when looking at the world around them. Mapachs have incredibly light hands and a great degree of fine motor control that doesn't diminish with age. They are also adept at climbing and sneaking. This, combined with their love of trinkets, has earned them an undeserved reputation as thieves. While there are exceptions, most mapachs are quite good-natured, if a little eccentric.

Resilient Opportunists

Mapachs are adept at surviving tough woodland conditions, and at intuiting the right course of action when faced with a problem. They are also inveterate opportunists. Some may consider them brash, but mapachs know that opportunities rarely present themselves and are quick to act on them. Mapachs are alert and have a keen awareness of their surroundings. Only the truly foolhardy among them are taken in by obvious traps.

Canny Craftspeople

One of the traits mapachs are most well-known for is their ability to find a use for just about anything. This knack for creating functional or useful items out of debris, junk, or on-hand materials is known as "scroungecraft", and is a cultural staple among mapachs. This activity is considered an art form among mapachs, on par with the high art of other peoples. Scroungecrafting demonstrates creativity, ingenuity, and resourcefulness, but is misunderstood by outsiders who see it as primitive or crude. Genius ideas created by mapach hands frequently began as scroungecraft prototypes. Many who have built such interesting or unique creations achieve celebrity status among mapachs, going on to showcase their skills in loosely-organized scroungecraft fairs.

Hubs of Invention

Mapachs are often loners, but when they do establish communities with humblefolk or birdfolk, they have a habit of fostering innovation wherever they go. Mapach ingenuity was responsible for the contraption upon which Alderheart's pulley system was based. The pulley system was so successful that birdfolk perches beyond Alderheart have adopted the technology.

MAPACH TRAITS

Ability Score Increase. Your Wisdom score increases by 2, and your Constitution score increases by 1.

Age. Mapachs mature quickly, reaching adulthood around 8 years. Despite this they have fairly average lifespans, the oldest among them living just past 60 years.

Alignment. Mapachs don't favour good over evil, with most choosing to remain neutral. They also lean towards the freedom of chaotic alignments.

Size. Mapachs stand between 4 and 5 feet tall, and encompass a variety of builds from svelt to wide, weighing between 90 and 160 pounds. Your size is Medium.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 30 feet.

Darkvision. You can see in dim light within 60 feet of you as if it were bright light, and in darkness as if it were dim light. You can't discern color in darkness, only shades of gray. Mapachs are most comfortable under the cloak of night.

Expert Climbers. You have a climb speed of 20 feet.

Resilience. You have advantage on saving throws against poison and resistance against poison damage.

Scroungecraft. You are proficient with tinker's tools. Additionally, you have the ability to construct crude but functional versions of common items using materials present in your surroundings. You may spend 10 minutes to craft these materials into any tool or piece of adventuring gear worth 30 gold pieces or less. The item will be completely functional, even capable of passing for a disguise (if you crafted an article of clothing). Tools, along with any other item that would logically break on its first use (caltrops, arrows), will become useless afterward. Scroungecrafted items will otherwise last 1 hour before falling apart.

Depending on the materials available, a Game Master (GM) may rule that you cannot craft an item in this way. For example, a vial of acid might be easy to make if you happen to be near a nest of acidic beetle larvae, or bark can be bound into a makeshift flask, but it would be difficult to create a passable facsimile of silken robes from a pile of leaves.

Should you have access to the proper materials, you can spend 8 hours converting an item you have scroungecrafted in this way into a permanent version, so long as you start this process before the item falls apart. Items crafted in such a way will function exactly as a normal version of the item, and if you have proficiency in the tools used to craft them, they can even look professionally-crafted. Otherwise, they retain a rather rough, cobbled-together appearance. You can also use scroungecraft to repair broken equipment, provided you have the materials on hand. Though, how long your repairs hold together is up to the GM.

Skulker. You have advantage on Stealth checks made in dim light and darkness.

Languages. You can speak, read, and write Birdfolk and Mapach.

Vulpin

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Vulpins are fox-like in appearance, with light builds and sharp fangs. One of the least understood and most often vilified humblefolk in the Wood, vulpins have earned a bad reputation that isn't entirely deserved. Much of this stems from the fact that vulpins are ambitious. Sometimes their drive to succeed can make it difficult for them to empathize with others. Vulpins feel just as deeply as other folk of the Wood, but they possess a keen survival instinct which sometimes causes them to take courses of action that are selfish. Moreover, they are sharp and savvy, possessing an uncanny force of personality that allows them to easily sway the trust of others. In the right situations, vulpins can be true friends, and in the wrong ones, deadly enemies.

Artful and Cunning

Vulpins are naturally intelligent, rivalled only by corvums. However, where corvums are studious, vulpins are more creative. They enjoy the arts and the pursuit of leisure. Some devote their lives to mastering an art form; learning sculpture, poetry, or refined swordplay. Even though vulpins come from every walk of life, they also have a reputation for being snobbish and looking down on others.

All vulpins have a natural connection to the magic of the Wood, though they channel it in specialized ways. The right look from a vulpin can bewitch or terrify, and vulpins who are truly skilled can command an entire room through sheer force of presence.

Prodigious Predators

Before the Humblefolk Treaty was signed, vulpins controlled a large part of the Wood outside the influence of the birdfolk, and bands of vulpin raiders provided their own kin with a wealth of plundered goods at the expense of birdfolk and other humblefolk alike. Those days are long since gone, but the memory of the sinister vulpin has yet to fade from the minds of the humblefolk, who endured great suffering at their hands.

A few vulpins have attempted to change public opinion, but the majority are unconcerned with their notoriety. Vulpins learn from a young age that they are of two natures: the sophisticated and the savage. While sophistication and elegance are generally preferred, it is considered common sense that vulpins should know when to keep their fangs hidden and when to bear them.

VULPIN TRAITS

Ability Score Increase. Your Intelligence score increases by 2, and your Charisma score increases by 1.

Age. Vulpins mature at an average pace, and can be comparatively long-lived. They reach adulthood at 15 years, and live well past 90 years.

Alignment. Vulpins aren't innately evil, but their difficulty empathizing with others means they are only rarely good aligned. Most vulpins find strict authority distasteful, preferring chaotic alignments over lawful ones.

Size. Vulpins cut dashing figures and are usually lean and muscular. They stand between 4 and a half and 5 and a half feet tall, but are relatively lightweight, weighing between 90 and 140 pounds. Your size is Medium.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 30 feet.

Darkvision. You are adept at hunting at night. You can see in dim light within 60 feet of you as if it were bright light, and in darkness as if it were dim light. You can't discern color in darkness, only shades of gray.

Bite. You have sharp fangs that enable you to make natural bite attacks. You can choose to bite as an unarmed strike that deals 1d6 points of piercing damage, which can be calculated using either your Strength or Dexterity modifier for both the attack roll and damage bonus.

Evasive. You add your Intelligence modifier as a bonus on all Dexterity saving throws.

Bewitching Guile. You can cast *charm person* as a 1st level spell with this trait, and regain the ability to do so when you finish a long rest. When you reach 3rd level, you can cast *ambush prey* as a 2nd level spell with this trait, and regain the ability to do so when you finish a long rest. When you reach 5th level, you can cast *fear* with this trait, and regain the ability to do so when you finish a long rest. Intelligence is your spellcasting ability for these spells.

Languages. You can speak, read, and write Birdfolk and Vulpin.

"My dearest, though your dangerous and reckless lifestyle worries me so,
I know that you will outwit any opponent who comes your way..."

- Love letter excerpt from Tybalt Hillshaw to his bandit lover

Characters In the Wood

This chapter outlines how you can customize your character, everything from physical characteristics, backgrounds, class options, feats, and spells, all in keeping with the flavor of Humblewood.

CHARACTER DETAILS

Your character is more than just a collection of rules. Here are a few tools to help you flesh out the look and feel of your character.

Sex & Gender

The sex or gender of a character doesn't confer any special bonuses or penalties. Playable races do not exhibit physical characteristics based on sex, and traits such as plumage, markings, and size difference are not associated with a specific sex or gender. The most significant variations in physical appearance come down to a character's subrace.

Height and Weight

The table below can be used to decide your character's height and weight. These are based on the information provided in each race's description, and reflect the natural variation that occurs within the different folk of the Wood.

To use this table, first locate your character's race, and roll for their height modifier. Add this result in inches to the base height shown in the previous column. Next, using the appropriate column, roll for your weight modifier. Some races have a flat weight modifier. If this is the case, simply use the number provided in this column. Then, take the number you rolled for the height modifier, and multiply it by the weight modifier. Add this result in pounds to your race's base weight.

You may notice that the weights for birdfolk races are significantly lower than for humblefolk of similar size. The birdfolk have hollow bones, reinforced by special internal structures that act as struts. Along with other weight-reducing adaptations, this allows birdfolk to glide. Birdfolk characters are not negatively impacted by their lower weight.

Altering Race Size

The sizes listed in the racial descriptions represent suggested averages of the various races, but with your permission, players can adjust these sizes depending on the kind of birdfolk or humblefolk character they'd like to play. Some varieties of strig, a race that takes their physical characteristics from owls, could be smaller sized, around 3 feet tall, if the player desires. Similarly, raptors, a race whose physical characteristics resemble birds of prey, could reach around 5 feet in height at your discretion. For the sake of simplicity we advise that, regardless of the physical measurements of a character, they follow the size category rules of their race (Medium or Small). In the lore, this can be expressed by saying that even a small strig is solid and strong, where even a taller raptor is light and agile. This will make calculating things that rely on size categories much easier, rather than having to remember which size variant a player has chosen for a race.

Alternatively, if the races presented here are too big for your liking when placed in comparison to humans in other campaign settings, size categories can be adjusted accordingly when using them in other settings. This is entirely a matter of taste. It is recommended that you do whatever makes the most sense for the kinds of worlds you'd like to build and the kinds of stories you'd like to tell with your players.

Variant Rule: Different Looks for Birdfolk and Humblefolk

The Wood covers a vast area of different environments. As such, birdfolk and humblefolk can showcase a variety of different forms. At the discretion of the GM, your Humblewood character may look different than other members of its race. While not exhaustive, we've provided examples of suitable

Random Height and Weight

Race	Base Height	Height Modifier	Base Weight	Weight Modifier
Cervan (Grove)	4'8"	+2d10	110 lb.	× (1d4) lb.
Cervan(Pronghorn)	6'1"	+2d10	120 lb.	× (2d4) lb.
Corvum	4'4"	+2d10	70 lb.	× (1d4) lb.
Gallus	3'4"	+3d10	55 lb.	× (1d4) lb.
Hedge	2'11"	+2d6	30 lb.	× (1d4) lb.
Jerbeen	2'4"	+2d4	20 lb.	× (1d2) lb.
Luma	2'8"	+2d4	25 lb.	× 1 lb.
Mapach	3'11"	+2d6	85 lb.	× (2d4) lb.
Raptor	2'11"	+2d6	25 lb.	× 1 lb.
Strig	3'10"	+2d10	80 lb.	× (1d6) lb.
Vulpin	4'2"	+2d10	80 lb.	× (2d4) lb.

analogs for different kinds of animals from which a playable race could take inspiration. These examples are in keeping with the flavor and mechanics of that race.

Cervan

Cervan characters could be imagined as elk, moose, or antelopes. Any hoofed creature with horns would fit the bill, especially those native to forest or mountainous environments. While not every cervan has horns, the ability to grow them is seen as a blessing of Cairith, and is a part of their culture.

Corvum

Birds which are known for their dark coloration, such as crows, blackbirds and grackles, would be a good visual fit. Despite typically being dark-feathered, a variety of colorful corvids exist. Jays, nutcrackers, and jackdaws are good examples.

No matter which type of bird is being used for visual inspiration for your corvum, it is important that they have at least one black feather. Black feathers on a corvum are known as the "Mark of Gesme" and they are thought to impart some of Gesme's reckless curiosity.

Gallus

Gallus characters are usually represented by land fowl of all kinds, ranging from those with small rounded bodies, suited to ground life, to those with longer proportions. Waterfowl, such as ducks or geese, could be used as visual inspiration for communities of gallus living by Humblewood's wetlands. Other fowl, such as peacocks, could also be used. While not closely-related to fowl, herons, storks, and bitterns could be a good reference for taller, marshland-dwelling communities of gallus.

Gallus characters with ostentatious, colorful plumage are generally better suited to the bright gallus subrace, while those with modest, earth-toned feathers might be better suited to the huden gallus subrace.

Hedge

While inspired by hedgehogs, having a hedge character based on a quilled animal that inhabits forests, such as a porcupine, would also make sense. Although they would probably not be native to Humblewood, armadillos, pangolins, or echidnas would also work.

Jerbeen

The jerbeens are inspired by jerboas, a kind of jumping mouse. Other small rodents with mouse-like proportions, including chinchillas, could be used for visual inspiration as well. Though a greater stretch, the jerbeen's speed, size, and communal way of life would make them an ideal analog for races based on rabbits or hares.

Luma

Lumas are inspired by doves and pigeons, but their size and high charisma means that small songbirds such as chickadees, wrens, sparrows, and cardinals would also be a good fit. A bird-of-paradise could be used as well due to their focus on performance, though they might be better suited for visitors to Humblewood from more tropical regions. Birds with brighter or more decorative plumage would correspond to sera lumas, while those with more muted feathers would be better as sable lumas.

Mapach

Inspired by raccoons, mapach characters can reference members of the weasel family, such as ferrets and badgers. Mapachs are hearty and crafty, and possess a climbing speed, which means many members of this family, including polecats, would be good fits.

Raptor

Raptors take after smaller birds of prey, like falcons and hawks, but using larger species, like eagles or vultures as a reference would also work for raptor characters. Maran raptors could also take visual inspiration from seabirds, notably petrels or shearwaters, due to their swim speed.

Strig

Strigs usually resemble owls of all kinds. Owls comprise a very large and diverse family of birds, and examples can be found which are small, large, or unique in appearance. For larger, more intimidating strigs, the great gray owl or giant scops owl can provide a robust presence, while smaller strigs could take inspiration from the little owl, or boreal owl. Regardless of their size, stout strigs tend to be bulkier, with denser feathers, while swift strigs have more slender and streamlined bodies.

Vulpin

Vulpins generally look like foxes, but an alternative visual reference would be wolves, coyotes, or other hunting canines that could be commonly found in a forest environment. Vulpins should be represented as wild animals, to illustrate the duality of their sophisticated yet savage nature. Breeds of tamed dogs would not be a good fit.

Languages of the Wood

Race determines the language your character can speak by default, and your background might give you access to one or more additional language of your choice. You are free to select these from among the languages offered in other 5e material, but there are several languages which are specific to the Wood.

The standard languages listed below are part of common life in Humblewood, and are spoken widely. Sylvan, along with various dialects of Primordial (Auran, Aquan, Ignan, and Terran) are uncommon languages known only by few in the Wood, but they can prove exceptionally useful in communicating with the various fey and elemental Humblewood residents.

Each birdfolk race possesses a unique and mystical connection to the element of air, which allows them to understand Auran from birth, although they are unable to speak it naturally. Birdfolk who wish to become fluent in this dialect must take the time to learn. Because Auran is a dialect of Primordial, birdfolk innately understand Aquan, Ignan, and Terran as well, though not perfectly. Compared to Auran, the other dialects of Primordial sound stilted or broken to birdfolk. While they can understand simple concepts presented in these dialects, more complicated matters are lost in translation.

> **Common and Birdfolk**
> Birdfolk takes the place of Common in Humblewood. As the language of trade and custom, folk of the Wood take the time to learn it. If you choose to have other 5e races visit Humblewood, be sure they know Birdfolk. Likewise, if your players want to play as birdfolk or humblefolk characters visiting other lands, be sure they add Common to their language list.

STANDARD LANGUAGES

Language	Typical Speakers	Script
Birdfolk	Birdfolk, Humblefolk	Birdfolk
Cervan	Cervans	—
Hedge	Hedges	Sylvan
Jerbeen	Jerbeens	Birdfolk
Mapach	Mapachs	Mapach
Vulpin	Vulpins	Vulpin

Birdfolk

Birdfolk is a language of clicks, caws, and whistles. Though primarily oral, a system for writing Birdfolk in pictograms was developed long before the founding of Alderheart and has since transformed into a set of abstract glyphs representing different sounds. Birdfolk can be written quickly with a quill, or scratched easily with a claw, and has been widely adopted throughout the Wood.

Cervan

Cervan is a complex language with no written script. It is seen as disrespectful to try and transcribe it using Birdfolk characters. Much of cervan history is preserved by village elders and passed down orally through the generations as stories, songs, and sayings. The adage, "What is essential to learn lies in the teaching", is often invoked to illustrate this point.

Hedge

Hedge is a language meant to be spoken softly. It confounds many who try to learn it due to the prevalence of passive voice and the deferential manners built into conversation. These are meant to ensure that everyone's feelings are heard and respected. It is written using a variation of Sylvan script.

Jerbeen

Jerbeen is a system of squeaks and clicks represented in writing by using a variant of Birdfolk alphabet. It is a polite but direct language designed to communicate information quickly and effectively between multiple listeners.

Mapach

Mapach is a very technically dense language that often incorporates rough equations and estimations of physical properties in normal conversation. Awareness of one's surroundings is key to survival, and the Mapach language emphasizes this. Mapach uses its own script of glyphs made of various lines, dashes, and dots.

Vulpin

Vulpin is a language of growls, snarls, and yips. It is written in its own flowing cursive script. Speakers are taught to switch between low and high class versions of Vulpin depending on the context. The biggest stumbling block for new speakers is learning when to use which form.

a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o

p	q	r	s	t	u	v	w	x	y	z	!	?	.	,

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0

New Class Options

Here you will find a selection of options you can use to further customize your Bard, Cleric, or Fighter. The Cleric has access to two new domains: Night and Community, based on the Amaranthine of Humblewood. Bard and Fighter receive new class options which are well suited to characters from the Wood: The Scofflaw and The College of the Road. Scofflaws might find their talents useful among the Bandit Coalition, and bards from the College of the Road can be found sharing tales around campfires and hearths all across Humblewood.

BARD

Bard College

At 3rd level, when choosing a Bard College, the following option is available: The College of the Road.

College of the Road

Not an officially recognized college, the College of the Road represents the personal and eclectic sets of skills, knowledge, and techniques a wandering bard picks up along their journey. As inveterate jacks-of-all-trades, bards possess a variety of aptitudes in combat, magecraft, and general know-how, making them particularly well suited to learning a variety of different skills. It often happens that while traveling, a bard winds up sharing their campfire with a motley assortment of wandering adventurers who may impart valuable lessons in exchange for a lively song or a well-told tale. Compared to students of other Bard Colleges, a special kind of sensibility is important for the College of the Road. How effectively a bard of this College can apply what they have learned depends on their understanding and insight. The College of the Road is sometimes a harsh teacher, but bards who follow this path often find themselves rewarded with a diverse array of useful tricks and tactics. Those who underestimate a bard from the College of the Road soon find that these "graduates" are full of surprises.

College of the Road Features

Bard Level	Feature
3rd	Bonus Proficiencies, Wanderer's Lore, Traveler's Tricks (2 options)
6th	Favorite Trick (1st), Improved Tricks, Traveler's Tricks (3 options)
14th	Favorite Trick (2nd), Improved Tricks, Traveler's Tricks (4 options)

Bonus Proficiencies

When you join the College of the Road at 3rd level, you gain a few useful proficiencies picked up from your time on the road. Choose three of the following options (each option can only be selected once):

- You gain proficiency with a gaming set of your choice
- You gain proficiency with a martial weapon of your choice
- You gain proficiency with herbalism kits
- You gain proficiency with thieves tools
- You gain proficiency with a skill of your choice
- You learn two languages of your choice

Wanderer's Lore

At 3rd level, you can share any useful tidbits of information you have come across in your travels to help others to see problems from a new angle. While a creature has a Bardic Inspiration die from you they may choose to roll with advantage on a single Arcana, History, Nature, or Religion skill check. The creature may choose whether or not to add the Bardic Inspiration die to this roll.

Traveler's Tricks

At 3rd level you already have several memorable experiences from your life on the road. You learn two Traveler's Tricks of your choice (see Traveler's Trick Options below).

These Traveler's Tricks represent skills, techniques, and useful pieces of knowledge picked up along the way. Each one requires you to expend a use of your Bardic Inspiration, and takes a bonus action to use unless otherwise specified.

At 6th level and at 14th level you learn an additional Traveler's Trick.

Improved Tricks

At 6th and 14th levels, your Traveler's Tricks become stronger. By practicing the tricks you know, and encountering stronger adventurers who share their knowledge with you, your mastery over your tricks increases.

Favorite Trick

At 6th level, you have gained enough mastery over one of your Traveler's Tricks that you can use it whenever it's needed. You may choose one Traveler's Trick that you know and designate it as your favorite trick. If you roll initiative and have no uses of Bardic Inspiration remaining, you regain one use of it. Any Bardic Inspiration gained in this way can only be used to perform your favorite trick.

At 14th level you can select a second favorite trick from among Traveler's Tricks you know.

Traveler's Trick Options

The Traveler's Trick feature lets you choose options for it at certain levels. The options are presented here in alphabetical order. Each one is associated with a different class, and those marked with an asterisk (*) are magical effects.

Unlike traditional bard abilities which rely on skill or panache to be properly executed, the greatest asset for picking up tricks along the road is common sense and an openness to learning new ideas. Wisdom affects how powerful your traveler's tricks are, as well as how hard they are to counter. If an option requires a saving throw, your Traveler's Trick save DC equals 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Wisdom modifier.

Acrobatics Lessons. A slick rogue once gave you some pointers on zigging and zagging. When you or an ally makes a Dexterity saving throw, you may expend one use of your Bardic Inspiration, rolling a Bardic Inspiration die and adding the result to the saving throw. An ally must be within 60 feet of you and able to see and hear you to benefit from this trick.

At 6th level, if the target succeeds the saving throw against an effect that would deal half damage on a successful save, the target takes no damage instead.

At 14th level, even if the target fails their saving throw they only take half damage from the effect.

Armed Combat Lessons. A seasoned fighter taught you how to use a simple combat stance to wield your weapons more effectively. When you select this option, choose from the following Fighting Styles:

- Archery: You gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls you make with ranged weapons
- Dueling: When you are wielding a melee weapon in one hand and no other weapons, you gain a +2 bonus to damage rolls with that weapon.
- Great Weapon Fighting: When you roll a 1 or 2 on a damage die for an attack you make with a melee weapon that you are wielding with two hands, you can reroll the die and must use the new roll, even if the new roll is a 1 or a 2. The weapon must have the two-handed or versatile property for you to gain this benefit.
- Two-Weapon Fighting: When you engage in two-weapon fighting, you can add your ability modifier.

When you make a weapon attack, you can expend one use of your Bardic Inspiration, adding your Bardic Inspiration die to the attack or damage roll. When you do this, you gain the benefits of your chosen Fighting Style for 10 minutes.

At 6th level, you learn how to use your stance to chain your attacks together in deadly combination. Once, while your Fighting Style is active, you may attack twice, instead of once, when taking the Attack action on your turn.

At 14th level you have learned to shore up any weaknesses in your stance. You gain +1 to your AC for the effect's duration.

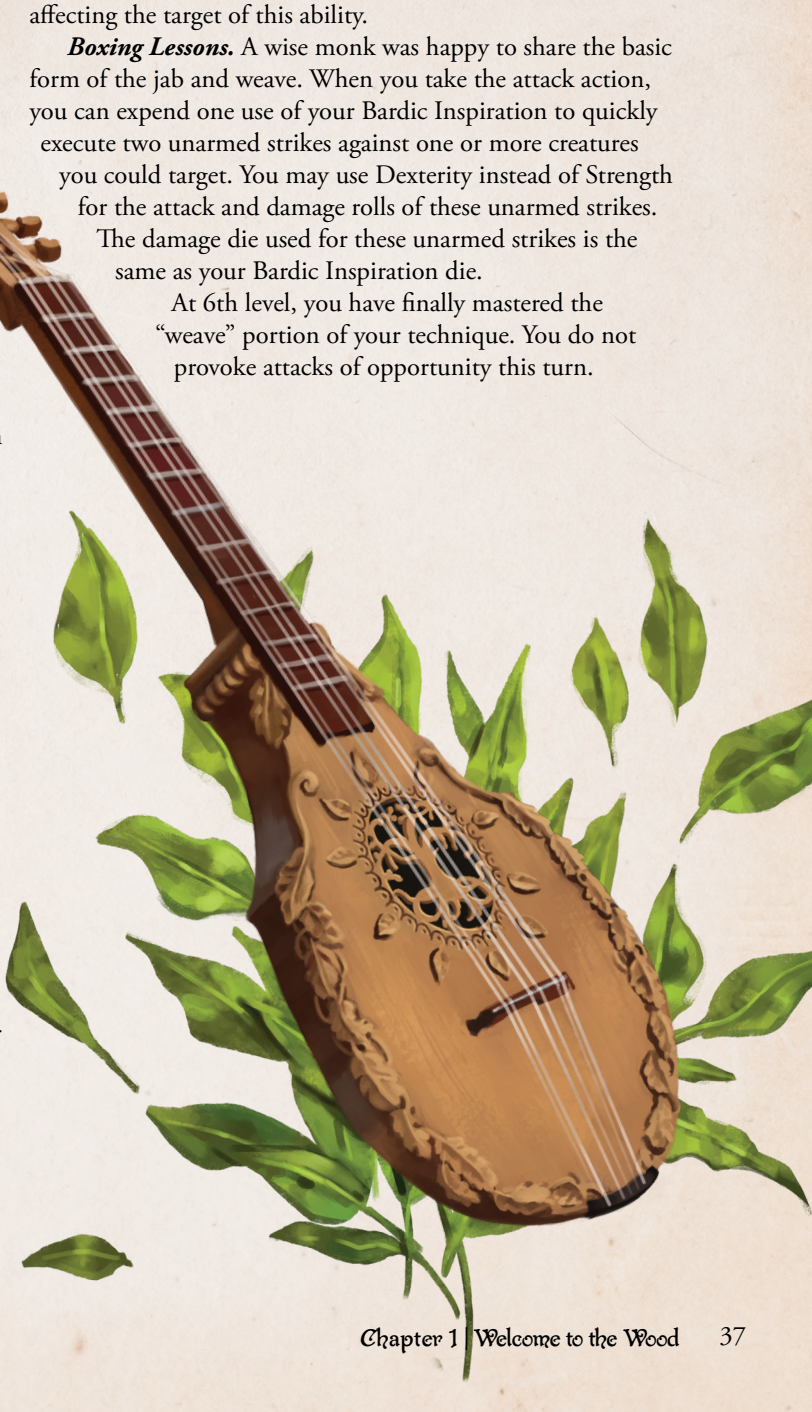
Bind the Wound. An experienced paladin instructed you in the basics of combat triage. When you or an ally within 5 feet of you receives healing of any kind, you may use your reaction to expend one use of your Bardic Inspiration and provide extra healing equal to the number on the Bardic Inspiration die roll + your Wisdom modifier (minimum of 1). You must have at least one hand free in order to quickly staunch the target's wound.

At 6th level, you have learned to identify a selection of useful herbs that you can carry with you. When providing additional healing with this trick you may also remove the poisoned or paralyzed condition from the target.

At 14th level, you have developed a true knack for emergency triage. You may additionally remove a single disease affecting the target of this ability.

Boxing Lessons. A wise monk was happy to share the basic form of the jab and weave. When you take the attack action, you can expend one use of your Bardic Inspiration to quickly execute two unarmed strikes against one or more creatures you could target. You may use Dexterity instead of Strength for the attack and damage rolls of these unarmed strikes. The damage die used for these unarmed strikes is the same as your Bardic Inspiration die.

At 6th level, you have finally mastered the "weave" portion of your technique. You do not provoke attacks of opportunity this turn.



At 14th level, your practice has paid off, granting you the use of a slightly ki-infused attack. When you hit with one of these attacks you may attempt a stunning strike. The target must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or be stunned until the end of your next turn.

Conjure Woodland Spirit. * A patient druid shared the secrets of forest magic with you. You can expend one use of your Bardic Inspiration as an action to conjure a forest guardian spirit in an unoccupied space you can see within 60 feet of you. The guardian spirit is Large, and takes the appearance of a spectral predatory cat. Any enemy that moves into or leaves a space adjacent to the guardian spirit must make a Wisdom saving throw, taking magical slashing damage equal to your Bardic Inspiration die on a failure. The guardian spirit will remain for as long as you concentrate on it, up to 10 minutes.

At 6th level, your bond with the guardian spirit grows even deeper. Any creature dealt damage by your guardian spirit has their speed reduced to 0 for the rest of the turn.

At 14th level, any Large or smaller creature who has their speed reduced to 0 by the guardian spirit is restrained for as long as you maintain your concentration, as your guardian spirit pins them in place. The target can break free by spending an action to make a Strength (Athletics) check against your Traveler's Trick save DC.

Dark Bargain. * You made a shady bargain with a haggard warlock. When you select this option, choose a Eldritch Invocation from the Warlock's list of class features for which you meet the prerequisites. You can expend one use of your Bardic Inspiration to gain the benefits of this Dark Invocation for 10 minutes. Doing this requires you to roll your Bardic Inspiration die and take an amount of necrotic damage equal to the roll.

At 6th level, you have learned how to deepen your pact with the warlock you once met. You may choose to take double the necrotic damage you rolled on your Bardic Inspiration die to instead have the effect last for 1 hour.

At 14th level, your pact with the warlock unlocks frightening new power. When you reach 14th level, choose a single spell of 7th level or lower from the warlock's spell list. You may cast the spell once during this effect without expending any spell slots, although you must cast it at the level of your highest spell slot. In exchange, the spell deals additional necrotic damage to you equal to twice the level at which it was cast.

Evocation Lessons. * A venerable wizard shared secrets of evocation magic with you. When you select this option, choose a damage-dealing spell you can cast. You can expend one use of your Bardic Inspiration when you cast this spell to change the type of damage it deals to your choice of either acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder (chosen when you cast the spell). Add the number you roll on your Bardic Inspiration die + your Wisdom modifier (minimum of 1) to the damage dealt by the spell.

At 6th level you may choose to change the spell you had previously selected with this feature to another spell that you know.

At 14th level you may choose to change the spell you had previously selected with this feature to another spell that you know.

Hunting Lessons. * A skilled ranger taught you how to use your magic to pinpoint your quarry's weak spots. You can expend one use of your Bardic Inspiration to target one creature you can see within 90 feet of you as your quarry. For as long as you concentrate on this ability, up to 1 hour, all weapon attacks you make against the target deal additional damage equal to your Bardic Inspiration die.

At 6th level, you have honed your skills to the point where you can easily track your quarry. For the duration of the effect, you are aware of your target's approximate distance and direction from you, so long as you are on the same plane.

At 14th level, you can maintain this effect for up to 24 hours.

Reckless Tactics. You learned from a hardened barbarian that sometimes you have to charge into combat with no regard for your own safety. When you make an attack with a melee weapon that has either the heavy, two handed, or versatile quality, you can expend one use of your Bardic Inspiration to gain advantage on the attack. Add the number you roll on your Bardic Inspiration die + your Wisdom modifier (minimum of 1) to the attack's damage roll. Attacks made against you this round have advantage.

At 6th level you have learned, through practice, how to push your offense even further. You may impose a -5 penalty to this attack roll. If the attack hits, you add +10 to the attack's damage.

At 14th level, your experience has taught you how to really go all in. If you have not moved this turn, you may voluntarily reduce your speed to 0 until your next turn to resolve this attack against any number of creatures within 5 feet of you, making a separate attack roll for each target.

Warding Trick. * A gentle cleric taught you how to channel your magic into a protective veil. You can expend one use of your Bardic Inspiration as an action to grant an ally you can see within 60 feet of you a number of temporary hit points equal to your roll on the Bardic Inspiration die + your Wisdom modifier (minimum of 1). This ward lasts for as long as you maintain concentration on it, up to 10 minutes.

At 6th level, your practice allows you to weave wards that retaliate against those who would harm your allies. Any creature who deals damage to an ally with temporary hit points granted by this effect must make a Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the creature dealing damage takes an amount of radiant damage equal to your Bardic Inspiration die.

At 14th level, you have learned how to make your ward even more resilient. For the duration of the effect, at the beginning of each round on your turn the target gains a number of temporary hit points equal to your Bardic Inspiration die + your Wisdom modifier (minimum of 1). These replace any previous temporary hit points.

CLERIC

Divine Domains

At 1st level, when choosing a Divine Domain, the following options are available: The Community Domain, and the Night Domain.

Community Domain

The community domain focuses on the ties that bind all people together. These are the ties of family and friendship, the ties to ancestors, as well as the ties between elders and the next generation with whom they share their wisdom. The power of the Gods of community is in the security of home and hearth, and the joy of good company. Many such gods teach the value of tradition and simple ways of living in harmony with the natural world. They also tend towards the rule of law, not as a kind of great bureaucracy, but as sacred traditions passed from generation to generation. Some gods advocate the removal of harsh or disruptive forces to this order, and proper sanctions for the violation of the goodwill that any community ought to provide.

Clerics of such gods value unity, and praise the strength that can be gained when people support each other.

Community Domain Features

Cleric Level	Feature
1st	Domain Spells, Blessing of the Hearth
2nd	Channel Divinity: Magnificent Feast
6th	Channel Divinity: Community Watch
8th	Divine Strike (1d8)
14th	Divine Strike (2d8)
17th	Paragon of the People

Community Domain Spells

Cleric Level	Spells
1st	*bless, goodberry*
3rd	*aid, heroism*
5th	*beacon of hope, spirit guardians*
7th	*banishment, faithful hound*
9th	*mass cure wounds, telepathic bond*

Blessing of the Hearth

From 1st level, you gain the ability to conjure a small flagstone hearth with a simple iron cooking pot whenever you rest. This hearth helps warm you and your companions, and can be used to prepare hearty and nutritious meals on the road. If you or any friendly creatures you make camp with would regain hit points at the end of a short rest by spending one or more hit dice, each of those creatures may choose to re-roll one of their resting dice, taking the higher roll between the two.

Additionally, you gain proficiency with Cook's Utensils.

Channel Divinity: Magnificent Feast

Starting at 2nd level, you may use your Channel Divinity to conjure a magical feast for the rough road ahead. By spending 10 minutes, you may create a number of delicious, well-prepared, yet simple food items equal to your Wisdom modifier (minimum of 1). These food items will last up to 8 hours or until the end of a rest, and will never spoil. Eating food created in this way takes an action, providing whomever eats it with healing equal to 2d4 + your cleric level, and can remove either the frightened or poisoned condition from that creature (chosen by the creature when consumed).

Channel Divinity: Community Watch

Starting at 6th level, you can use your Channel Divinity to instill a feeling of vigilant protection in you and your allies. You grant yourself and a number of allies up to your Wisdom modifier (minimum of 1) that can see you within 30 feet a boon from your deity. Once per round, a creature benefitting from this boon can roll a d6, adding the result to a skill check, saving throw, or attack roll. This effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to your Wisdom modifier (minimum of 1 round). A creature can only benefit from this effect if it can see at least one of its allies.

Divine Strike

At 8th level, you gain the ability to infuse your weapon with the power to punish wrongdoing. Once on each of your turns, when you hit a creature with a weapon attack, you can cause the attack to deal an extra 1d8 psychic damage to the target. Visions of the evil they have wrought upon others flash before their eyes. You choose whether any foe reduced to 0 hit points by this attack remains stable or dies. When you reach 14th level, the extra damage increases to 2d8.

Paragon of the People

At 17th level, your Community Watch grants an additional d6 to each affected ally. It also grants immunity to fear for the duration of the effect. Additionally, your Magnificent Feast produces twice as many foodstuffs, each of which can, when consumed, remove a single curse or disease affecting the target (including attunement to a cursed item).

Night Domain

The night is mysterious, and conceals many unseen dangers. However, the cover of darkness also brings protection from predators and shadows within which one can conceal themselves. The gods of night are varied, encompassing those who would use the cover of darkness to conceal others from threats, to those who would use the shadows for wrong doings. The motives of night gods are often shrouded in mystery. Many teach their followers that it is only by peering through the darkness and looking beyond what is hidden that one can attain truth. Clerics of night do their best to keep themselves and their companions safe while journeying through the darkness.

Night Domain Features

Cleric Level	Feature
1st	Domain Spells, Eye of Twilight, Ward of Shadows
2nd	Channel Divinity: Invocation of Night
6th	Improved Ward, Eye of Twilight improvement
8th	Veil of Dreams, Eye of Twilight improvement
17th	Creature of the Night, Eye of Twilight improvement

Night Domain Spells

Cleric Level	Spells
1st	*sleep, veil of dusk**
3rd	*darkness, moonbeam*
5th	*nondetection, globe of twilight**
7th	*divination, stellar bodies**
9th	*dream, seeming*

Spells marked with an asterisk (*) can be found in this book.

Eye of Twilight

Beginning at 1st level, a divine blessing grants you the ability to see more clearly in dark and dim conditions. You can see in dim light within 60 feet of you as if it were bright light, and in magical or nonmagical darkness as if it were only dim light. You can't discern color in the darkness, only shades of gray.

When you reach 6th level, you can see in dim light within 120 feet of you as if it were bright light, and in magical or nonmagical darkness as if it were dim light. You can't discern color in the darkness, only shades of gray.

At 8th level, you can see normally in darkness, both magical and nonmagical within 120 feet.

Finally, at 17th level, your eyes are able to see the truth hiding within darkness. You gain the ability to call upon the powers of your deity to grant yourself truesight within 120 feet of you for a number of minutes equal to your Wisdom modifier (a minimum of 1 minute). Your truesight only functions while in conditions of magical or nonmagical darkness. Once you have used this feature, you cannot use it again until you have completed a long rest.

Ward of Shadows

At 1st level, you can create a ward of divine shadows to conceal yourself from an attacking enemy. When attacked by a creature you can see within 30 feet of you, you can use your reaction to impose disadvantage on the attack roll, as shadows envelop your form. An attacker that can't be blinded is immune to this feature.

You can use this feature a number of times equal to your Wisdom modifier (a minimum of once), and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Channel Divinity: Invocation of Night

Starting at 2nd level, you can use your Channel Divinity to harness the powers of night, clouding the vision of your foes in a shroud of darkness.

As an action, you present your holy symbol causing any source of mundane or magical light within 30 feet of you to be extinguished. Additionally, each hostile creature within 30 feet of you must make a Constitution saving throw. A creature who fails the saving throw is blinded for a number of rounds equal to your cleric level. A creature blinded in this way gets a new saving throw at the end of each of its turns to remove the effect. A creature that has total cover from you is not affected.

Improved Ward

At 6th level, you can use your Ward of Shadows feature whenever a creature you can see within 30 feet of you attacks a creature besides yourself.

Veil of Dreams

When you reach 8th level, you gain mastery over magical sleep. When you cast the sleep spell, add your cleric level to the dice you roll to determine how many hit points of creatures the spell can affect.

You may choose the order in which creatures within the spell's area are affected. If the first target chosen has too many hit points to be affected, the spell will instead target the next creature you have chosen that the spell could affect before affecting other targets.

Additionally, any creature you put to sleep cannot be woken until the start of your next turn. Otherwise, the sleep spell acts as normal.

Creature of the Night

Starting at 17th level, you can use your action to activate a supernatural aura of deep night. It lasts for 1 minute, or until you dismiss it using another action. You emit heavily obscuring darkness in a 30-foot radius and lightly obscuring shadows 50 feet beyond that. The darkness and shadows overlap and smother existing sources of light. Only light produced by a 9th level spell or similarly powerful effect can negate the darkness and shadows.

Enemies within the shadows constantly feel the presence of hungry predators watching them, and become frightened as long as they remain inside the affected area. Enemies in the darkness are both blinded and frightened for as long as they remain within its area.

FIGHTER

Martial Archetype

At 3rd level, when choosing a Martial Archetype, the following option is available: The Scofflaw.

Scofflaw

A fighter who hits hard and fights dirty, the Scofflaw balks at the ideals of honour and tradition, doing what they need to survive. Rules are made to be broken, and the Scofflaw extends this logic to their fighting style. Using every trick at their disposal to gain the upper hand against their foes, the Scofflaw cows their enemy into submission, or overwhelms their defenses with a single cheap shot.

Scofflaws eventually trust their notorious reputation to do much of the work for them, gaining the ability to cause foes to quake with a single threat. Scofflaws are a diverse bunch that run the gamut from graceful yet deadly knaves to bruiser thugs. What ties them together is their belief that there's no such thing as a bad win.

Scofflaw Features

Fighter Level	Feature
3rd	Bonus Proficiency, Intimidating Banter, Brutal Brawler
7th	Misdirection
10th	Blindside, Brutal Brawler Improvement
15th	Infamy, Blindside Improvement
18th	Two For Flinching, Brutal Brawler Improvement, Blindside Improvement

Bonus Proficiency

When you choose this Martial Archetype at 3rd level, you gain proficiency in one of the following skills of your choice: Deception, Insight, Intimidation, Sleight of Hand, or Stealth. Alternatively, you may learn Thieves' Cant.

Intimidating Banter

At 3rd level, you are adept at integrating insults and barbs into your fighting style. So long as you are in combat, you may choose to use Strength or Dexterity to make Charisma ability checks.

Brutal Brawler

At 3rd level, your tavernside scuffles have honed your ability to deal damage with just about anything that's handy. You have proficiency with improvised weapons, and treat any improvised weapon you handle as if it has the finesse quality.

Additionally, whenever you hit with an improvised weapon, you may spend a bonus action to break it over your opponent. Doing this destroys the weapon, but deals the maximum number each of the weapon's damage dice could deal to the target. Any additional dice added to the attack's damage roll are not affected by this ability.

At 10th level, the improvised weapons you wield become even more lethal in your hands. When you spend your bonus action to break an improvised weapon over your opponent, add an additional 2d6 to the weapon's base damage dice.

At 18th level, you roll all attacks made with improvised weapons with advantage.

Misdirection

At 7th level, you are adept at using words and gestures to taunt or fake-out your opponent, turning their lack of composure against them. This allows you to goad your foe into swinging in ways that can cause them to strike their allies, or which leave them open to a counterattack. As a bonus action you can misdirect an opponent within 5 feet of you. The target must succeed on an Intelligence saving throw against a DC equal to 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Strength or Dexterity modifier. On a failure, they must spend their reaction to attack a creature of your choosing within 5 feet of them. If no other creatures are present within 5 feet of them, they waste their reaction attacking the air where you once were.

In order for you to misdirect a creature in this way they must be able to see, hear, or otherwise be able to understand you.

Blindside

At 10th level, you are truly skilled at exploiting the openings you create in combat, hitting off-guard opponents with precise blows that are swift and deadly. You may use this technique against any creature that hasn't yet taken a turn in combat, or who you have successfully misdirected this turn. You may also apply this technique to any attack roll for which you have advantage. On a hit, you exploit an opening in the target's defenses. You can choose to have your attack deal an extra 5d6 points of damage. Once you use this ability, you can't use it again until you have taken a short or long rest.

At 15th level, the damage dealt by your blindside increases to 7d6.

At 18th level the damage dealt by your blindside increases to 9d6. If you have no uses of this ability at the beginning of combat on your turn, you regain one use of it.

Infamy

At 15th level, your reputation precedes you, making it easy for you to strike fear into the hearts of anyone foolish enough to oppose you. As part of your attack action, you can utter deadly threats to a single target within 30 feet of you, causing them to become frightened of you for 1 minute on a failed Wisdom saving throw. An affected target may repeat this saving throw at the end of each of their turns, ending the effect on a success. The DC for this saving throw is 8 + your proficiency bonus + your Strength or Dexterity modifier. A creature who has witnessed or heard tales of your ruthlessness rolls their saving throw with disadvantage.

In order for you to use this feature, a creature must be able to see, hear, or otherwise be able to understand you.

Two For Flinching

At 18th level, you have perfected the art of exploiting your opponent's weakness. Whenever you take the attack action against an opponent you have successfully misdirected this turn, or an opponent that is afflicted by a condition, you may make one additional attack against that opponent. You may only use this feature once per round.

New Backgrounds

You can use these backgrounds in addition to the backgrounds available in the 5e core rules. Remember that you are free to mix and match features or traits between backgrounds. What's important is that you select a background that suits your character.

BANDIT DEFECTOR

You were once a member of the Bandit Coalition, moving from place to place, ambushing and robbing passing merchants. Something made you decide that path was no longer worth pursuing, and you left that life behind. But quitting the Bandit Coalition isn't so easy.

Skill Proficiencies: Deception, Survival

Tool Proficiencies: Disguise Kit, one type of gaming set or musical instrument

Equipment: A knife, a cooking pot, a winter blanket, an object you received as your cut from a successful robbery, a set of common clothes, and a pouch containing 10 gp.

Bandit Specialty

The Bandit Coalition is a rather loose organization of rogues and brigands, but there is still a degree of specialization within the ranks. This ensures that everyone knows what their job is and lessens confusion in the heat of a robbery. You can select your bandit specialty from the Bandit Specialty table, or roll randomly.

d6	Bandit Specialty
1	Lookout
2	Lifter
3	Thug
4	Runner
5	Hustler
6	Captain

Lookouts typically watch the roads for any signs of Perch Guard patrols, signalling the team to bail if a heist looks too risky. They also keep an eye out for potential marks.

Lifters are the specialist thieves of an operation. They are usually as adept at pick-pocketing as they are at sneaking up behind a cart to liberate its valuables.

Thugs are the muscle of a bandit group, and use their size and strength to intimidate merchants into giving up without a fight. They also keep other bandits in line, at the captain's discretion.

Runners are the messengers and scouts of the Coalition, serving to smuggle pilfered goods to fences. Additionally, they pass information throughout the different camps of the organization. Their job often finds them working alone which makes them particularly vulnerable.

Hustlers are inveterate con-artists. Through careful planning and execution, their diversions can keep cart drivers occupied just long enough for the lifters to do their work, or create a seamless opening for an ambush.

Captains are the glue that holds each bandit team together, providing leadership, and stamping out dissention where necessary, often with force. They are figures that inspire with their skill and bravado.

Feature: Bandit Routes

As someone who once assisted in countless highway robberies, you are familiar with the roads of the Wood and escape paths used by bandits. When you are not in combat, you (and companions you lead) can travel between locations that cut through forested areas twice as fast as your speed would normally allow.

Suggested Characteristics

Those who have chosen to leave the Coalition behind have not made the choice lightly. Some wrestle with their doubts, still caring deeply about the friends they left behind, while others have forsaken their former lives entirely.

d8	Personality Trait
1	I am plucky and confident in my abilities, at least, that's what I want others to think.
2	I often crack jokes to lighten the mood.
3	I like to keep my secrets, and those who try to pry into my life irritate me.
4	I have trouble sleeping unless I'm on the ground (or floor) in my bedroll.
5	I picked up many stories during my time on the road, and I have one for every occasion.
6	You mess with my friends, you mess with me.
7	I never really had a plan in life, I tend to just go with the flow.
8	I'm as cautious as they come.

d6	Ideal
1	**Repentance.** I've done terrible things in the past, and I want to try and make up for them. (Good)
2	**Nature.** I've seen what's happening to the forest, and it's bigger than all of us. We're all doomed unless we do something about it. (Neutral)
3	**Friendship.** My friends are like family to me, and I'll keep trying to do right by them until the end. (Good)
4	**Self-Preservation.** Any good rat knows when it's time to flee a sinking ship. I want to be clear of the Bandit Coalition when it goes down. (Evil)
5	**Compassion.** The struggle between humblefolk and birdfolk will only lead to more bloodshed. It needs to stop somewhere. (Good)
6	**Freedom.** I just want to be free to live my own life, and make my own way in the world. (Chaotic)

d6	Bond
1	I did some hard time in Alderheart's prison, and the perch guard who arrested me still has it out for me.
2	I stole something valuable from the Captain of my unit. I'm in big trouble if they ever find me.
3	I harbor a terrible secret that might change how people think of me if it got out.
4	I still sympathize with the Coalition's aims, I just believe there's a better way.
5	My friends in the Coalition didn't understand why I had to leave. They've branded me a traitor.
6	I had people in the Coalition who looked up to me as a leader. They might still follow me, if I could only reach them.

d6	Flaw
1	I'm always ready to bail when something goes wrong.
2	Whenever I see something valuable, I can't help but think of a way to steal it.
3	It's hard for me to trust people. I've been burned before.
4	I have a problem with authority. Nobody tells me what to do.
5	There's a warrant out for my arrest.
6	I have a bad habit that I picked up on the road.

GROUNDED

Despite the inherent vertical aspects of birdfolk culture, you have always felt safer and more at peace with your feet firmly planted on the soil. You are practical and level-headed, but due to your different perspective on the world, other birdfolk see you as quirky or unsettling. Your unique insight allows you to connect with the humblefolk who live under the forest canopy in ways perch-dwelling birdfolk cannot.

Skill Proficiencies: Athletics, Insight

Tool Proficiencies: One type of artisan's tools

Languages: One of your choice

Equipment: A set of artisan's tools (one of your choice), a walking stick, a trinket from another culture, traveling clothes, and a belt pouch with 5 gp

An Odd Bird

Among birdfolk you are somewhere between an oddity and an outcast. Some consider your aversion to heights a rejection of birdfolk culture, leading many to find you off-putting. Choose how your community regards you or roll on the table below to determine how you fit in.

d6	Community Place
1	I am considered weak or unskilled and many treat me like a fledgling.
2	I am looked upon as a traitor to my people.
3	My family wants me to return to the perch, but I just can't.
4	I am not welcome back in my home perch.
5	I am viewed as an oddity, someone for others to laugh at and tease.
6	I have found a new community on the forest floor.

Feature: Find Another Path

Since you have lived your life close to the ground, you are familiar with the undergrowth in the same way other birdfolk are familiar with the canopy. You can always recall the general layout of the terrain around you while traveling along the forest floor. If your path is ever blocked by an obstacle that requires you to climb or otherwise gain height to circumvent it, you can always find a way around, so long as such a path exists. Additionally, you are adept at finding shelter in the Wood while traveling, and can usually locate a suitable safe shelter (a cave, a tree hollow, or bramble thicket) somewhere on the forest floor for you and up to five other creatures.

Suggested Characteristics

Birdfolk who are grounded often find ways to cope with their aversion to canopy life. Some have completely forsaken their old lives in favor of new ones in undergrowth communities, while others keep ties with family and friends in the perches where they were born.

d8	Personality Trait
1	I always second guess my choices.
2	I have learned to not let the comments of others affect me.
3	I'm eager to show the benefits of my unique perspective.
4	I'm slow to trust someone new, but open up over shared hardships.
5	I manufacture difficult situations to prove my abilities.
6	I get embarrassed easily, even when someone tries to compliment me.
7	I will deny my fears to everyone.
8	I want to see how others handle situations I'm afraid of.

d6	Ideal
1	**Adversity.** Others think of me as weak, but I will prove my worth with hard work and determination. (Lawful)
2	**Encouragement.** I try to seek out and support others like me who are seen as outcasts. (Good)
3	**Exploration.** I yearn to experience unique cultures and discover new places. (Chaotic)
4	**Safety.** In this dangerous world, it's best to keep your head down and stay cautious. (Neutral)
5	**Rebellion.** Who cares what others think of me, so long as my actions reflect how I feel in my heart? (Chaotic)
6	**Compromise.** The best way to respect each other's differences is to find a solution that doesn't exclude anyone. (Good)

d6	Bond
1	My family has been the subject of ridicule ever since I left my home perch.
2	A bully from my childhood now holds a position of power in my home perch.
3	I follow the teachings of a wise outcast I met in my travels.
4	I feel kinship to a culture outside my own.
5	I won't tolerate anyone who insults me or my friends.
6	I have found a new family on the forest floor, and they mean more to me than anything.

d6	Flaw
1	I am incapable of action when I'm at great heights.
2	I lash out at the slightest insult.
3	I keep a distance from others so they won't learn of my fears.
4	I project my insecurities onto others.
5	I am uncouth and mannerless.
6	I find hard to trust other birdfolk.

WIND-TOUCHED

There are legends within the Wood, of birdfolk blessed by the wind who are destined to soar over any and all obstacles. When a chick is born with special markings or unique feather patterns, or when they survive a dramatic childhood event, some folks brand them "Wind-Touched". Though a few dismiss the notion of the Wind-Touched as superstition, others heap reverence upon those believed chosen. According to legend, one who is touched by the wind will never feel at ease anywhere but high in the forest canopy, with the wind in their feathers.

Skill Proficiencies: Acrobatics, Performance

Tool Proficiencies: One type of wind musical instrument

Languages: you can speak as well as understand Auran

Equipment: A wind musical instrument (one of your choice), an ornate cloak, a symbol of the wind, common clothes, and a belt pouch containing 10 gp

Title and Blessing

For some birdfolk, the moniker of Wind-Touched is merely a title, a symbol of their devotion to the wind and the natural world. Others have been told since birth that they were blessed by the wind, much in the way the Amaranthine Reya was in the old tales. Decide what your character believes, or roll on the table below to understand how they feel.

d6	Acceptance
1	I am truly blessed and have power over the wind itself.
2	I am devoted to the wind spirits, in action and title.
3	I believe in nature and goodness.
4	I will work tirelessly to earn the respect of those who give me this title.
5	I accept this honor but have my doubts.
6	I feel nothing for this title, and carry it against my will.

Feature: Supernatural Presence

Whether or not you are truly Wind-Touched, there are folk all across Everden that believe that you have been divinely blessed. If you make a show of power or skill that can be attributed to the wind or air, such as feats of acrobatics or commanding unseen forces, those believers will be bolstered by your supernatural presence. They will support you and, depending on how well you have convinced them of your powers, treat you with reverence and possibly even worship.

Suggested Characteristics

The wind-touched are revered by believers and scrutinized by skeptics. For better or worse, they find themselves in a world of expectations they struggle to live up to.

d8	Personality Trait
1	I never back down from a challenge.
2	I always end up being the center of attention.
3	I am gifted by the wind and destined for greatness.
4	I have no time for those who doubt me.
5	I seek out challenges to test myself.
6	I am better than everyone else.
7	I avoid showing my power at all costs.
8	I remain humble despite my blessing.

d6	Ideal
1	**Responsibility.** The powers I have been gifted with are meant to serve the common good. (Good)
2	**Heroism.** The wind chose me to be a brave warrior and leader, so shall it be. (Lawful)
3	**Egotism.** My powers situate me above others. The masses should know their place. (Evil)
4	**Mysticism**. Connected to nature, I speak for the wind and divine its will for others. (Neutral)
5	**Cynicism.** What matters isn't whether or not my powers are genuine, but what advantages I can reap because of that belief. (Evil)
6	**Naturalism.** The wind speaks to my soul, and I am bound to go wherever it directs me. (Chaotic)

d6	Bond
1	I am guided by a wise elder who prepares me for my destiny.
2	I am estranged from my parents who don't believe in my blessing.
3	I seek to discredit the person who burdened me with this moniker.
4	I live in the shadow of my mentor, seeking their approval.
5	I have a sibling who is not blessed, which causes tension
6	I am one with the wind. Personal relationships are fleeting.

d6	Flaw
1	I can't accept another's suggestion once I've set my path.
2	I expect nothing less than reverence from common people.
3	I blindly trust in the power of my blessing.
4	I am overly concerned about how others see me.
5	I will prove my worth, even if it means putting myself and my friends in danger.
6	I am burdened with responsibility, and find it hard to make even the simplest decisions.

Coupled with Power

While this background primarily focuses on the beliefs and perceptions of yourself and your community, pairing this background with a character who actually can manipulate the wind through magic could potentially set them up to become a holy figure, a prophet, or a fabled hero.

New Feats

The following new feats are appropriate for campaigns taking place in Humblewood.

AERIAL EXPERT

Prerequisite: Glide trait

Through intensive training or a natural luck, your feathered arms have become much stronger and more wing-like than others of your kind. You gain the following benefits:

- Your feathered arms make it easier to jump. You no longer need to move at least 10 feet to perform long and high jumps. You may choose whether the jump uses your strength or dexterity score for determining height or distance, and you double the distance you would normally leap in either case.
- You may take the dash action while using your glide ability.
- You may change direction freely while gliding, and may gain up to 10 feet of altitude once before you finish your descent.

BANDIT CUNNING

Your time as a bandit has granted you a sense for danger, and made you skilled at sizing up opponents. You gain the following benefits:

- When you are asked to make a saving throw, you may spend your reaction to add your Intelligence modifier as an additional bonus to the saving throw. You cannot use this ability again until you have completed a long rest.
- During combat, you can use your action to make an Intelligence (Investigation) check against any creature you have seen fight. As long as you succeed against a DC of 10 + their challenge rating, you can learn one useful fact of your choice about the target's combat abilities. Choose from:
  - one damage resistance or immunity.
  - one condition immunity.
  - one special ability possessed by the creature that either does damage, or prevents damage.
  - one option under their attack, legendary, or reaction actions.
  - one special sense they possess.

HEAVY GLIDER

Prerequisite: Glide trait

You were either born with great strength, or trained hard to allow yourself to glide under circumstances most would find impossible. You gain the following benefits:

- You may glide while holding a heavy weapon and wearing heavy armor as long as you aren't encumbered.
- You may choose to land your glide in a space occupied by a hostile creature that is Large or smaller. If you do so, you may roll an opposed Strength check against the creature. On a success, you push them 10 feet away and knock them prone with the force of your impact. On a failure you land in the nearest un-occupied space.

OPPORTUNISTIC THIEF

You have learned the tricks of the trade of thievery, allowing you to exploit opportunities for pick-pocketing both in and out of combat. You gain the following benefits:

- Increase your Dexterity score by 1.
- When a creature fails a melee attack roll against you in combat, you can make a Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check against a DC equal to 10 + the target's Dexterity modifier. On a success, you may steal any one item that is not being held or worn by the target.
- Whenever you successfully use your Sleight of Hand skill outside of combat to steal an object, you may immediately conceal it flawlessly on your person, or put another object you possess in its place.

PERFECT LANDING

Years of living at great heights have taught you how to fall more gracefully. You gain the following benefits:

- Increase your Dexterity score by 1
- Reduce the damage die for fall damage from a d6 to a d4.
- You do not fall prone after taking falling damage.
- You do not take damage for the first 30 feet of your fall.

SPEECH OF THE ANCIENT BEASTS

You have a special connection with the natural world. Great beasts regard you as their kin, and you possess the ability to speak the languages of the most powerful and mystic of their kind. You gain the following benefits:

- Increase your Charisma score by 1.
- Beasts of Large size or larger have a friendly disposition toward you unless you have attacked them.
- You have advantage on Charisma checks made against beasts that are of Large size or larger.
- You can speak and understand Giant Eagle, Giant Elk, and Giant Owl. You can otherwise be understood by any beast of Large size or larger, whether or not they speak a language. Beasts with Intelligence scores of 4 or lower may only be able to understand simple concepts.

WOODWISE

You have lived your entire life in the gnarled, wooded areas of the world. You are adept at finding your way through even the most treacherous terrain. You gain the following benefits:

- You gain proficiency in either the Survival or Nature skill.
- You ignore difficult terrain.
- You cannot become lost in natural surroundings except by magical means.

New Spells

The following spell lists show which spells can be cast by characters of each class.

BARD SPELLS

Cantrips (0 Level)

Gust Barrier

4th Level

Shape Plants

CLERIC SPELLS

1st Level

Elevated Sight

3rd Level

Invoke the Amaranthine

4th Level

Shape Plants
Stellar Bodies

DRUID SPELLS

Cantrips (0 Level)

Gust Barrier

1st Level

Elevated Sight
Spiny Shield
Veil of Dusk

3rd Level

Feathered Reach
Globe of Twilight

4th Level

Shape Plants
Stellar Bodies

PALADIN SPELLS

3rd Level

Invoke the Amaranthine

RANGER SPELLS

1st Level

Elevated Sight
Spiny Shield

2nd Level

Ambush Prey

3rd Level

Feathered Reach
Globe of Twilight

SORCERER SPELLS

Cantrips (0 Level)

Gust Barrier

1st Level

Spiny Shield

4th Level

Stellar Bodies

WARLOCK SPELLS

1st Level

Elevated Sight
Veil of Dusk

3rd Level

Globe of Twilight

WIZARD SPELLS

Cantrips (0 Level)

Gust Barrier

1st Level

Elevated Sight
Spiny Shield

4th Level

Stellar Bodies

Spell Descriptions

The spells are presented in alphabetical order.

AMBUSH PREY

2nd-level illusion
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Self
Components: S, M (a broken twig)
Duration: 1 hour

You channel primal predatory energies to perfectly conceal your presence in order to surprise your target. You become invisible for the spell's duration, granting advantage on all Dexterity (Stealth) checks to remain hidden. The invisibility will last for the duration of the spell, however, moving 5 feet or more from your position when you cast the spell will end the effect.

As long as you remain invisible, the first attack you make against any target who is unaware of your presence deals an additional 1d6 points of damage. This attack ends the spell.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot above 2nd level, the damage of your first attack increases by 1d6 for every slot level above 2nd.

ELEVATED SIGHT

1st-level divination
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Self
Components: V, S
Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You cast your eyes skyward, granting you sight from a higher vantage point. You project your vision to see through an invisible sensor which appears in a spot up to 120 feet above you. You can see through the sensor as if you were flying, granting a full 360 degree view from its location.

The sensor moves with you, retaining its height in relation to you. You can use a bonus action to adjust the sensor's height, but only to a maximum of 120 feet above you.

While looking through this sensor you are blind, though you can switch between seeing through the sensor or through your own eyes at any time during your turn.

FEATHERED REACH

3rd-level transmutation
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Self
Components: S, M (a small feather)
Duration: 1 minute

You transform your arms into powerful wings, and your fingers into long, graceful feathers. The effects of this spell last 1 minute, at which point the feathers gradually fall out, causing you to float gently to the ground as your arms return to their original form. This spell confers a number of benefits upon the caster:

- As a bonus action, you can fly up to double your movement speed. You must land once you finish your movement, although you do not take fall damage while this spell is active, as your feathered arms bear you gently to the ground.
- You can use your powerful feathered arms to propel yourself upward a distance equal to half your movement speed. You can do this once during your turn and may use it in conjunction with a regular jump.
- When falling, you can use your reaction to stiffen your arms, and glide on the wind. You may fly up to your movement speed, in any direction, choosing where you land.
- You gain advantage on all athletics checks used to make a long or high jump. You do not need to move 10 feet before you jump to gain distance, and you triple the distance you would jump normally.

In order to benefit from this spell your hands must be free of shields and heavy weapons, and you cannot be encumbered.

GLOBE OF TWILIGHT

3rd-level conjuration
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Self (15-foot radius, 15 feet high)
Components: V, S, M (a dab of pitch and a bag of glittering sand)
Duration: Concentration, up to 10 minutes

You shroud the area surrounding you in a sphere of night sky, dotted with miniature stars. The twilight conceals your allies, but clearly illuminates your enemies.

The area affected by this spell is lightly obscured by magical shadow, within which small constellations softly twinkle. Aside from these stars, only light produced by a spell of 3rd level or higher can properly illuminate any area inside the sphere. Nonmagical light does not function inside the sphere, and all other forms of magical radiance can only produce dim light in a 5-foot space.

When you cast this spell you may designate any number of creatures you can see to be concealed by the supernatural shadows while in the sphere. A concealed creature has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks when inside the sphere and may attempt to hide at any time. Because the area of the spell is lightly obscured, creatures within the spell's area have disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks made to see those outside of it.

All other creatures in the area are dazzled by the light of the miniature stars, causing them to have disadvantage on all perception checks inside the sphere. When such a creature enters the spell's area for the first time, or starts its turn there, it must make a Wisdom saving throw or be blinded until the end of its turn.

GUST BARRIER

Evocation cantrip
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Self
Components: S
Duration: 1 round

You spread your arms wide, allowing yourself to become enveloped by the air around you. Until the end of your next turn, any ranged attack made against you is done with disadvantage.

Melee attackers who successfully hit you must make a Constitution saving throw against your spell save DC. On a failure, the attacker is flung away from you up to 10 feet and is knocked prone.

INVOKE THE AMARANTHINE

3rd-level divination

Casting Time: 10 minutes; Special, see text
Range: Self; Special, see text
Components: V, S, M (a holy symbol of the Amaranthine); Special, see text
Duration: 24 hours

You call upon the power of an Amaranthine to grant yourself insight into the Great Rhythm that moves all things. When you cast this spell, roll two d20s, and record what you rolled. For each die, choose either attack roll, skill check, or saving throw. You can choose each option multiple times. For the next 24 hours, you may substitute any roll of an ally or enemy you can see within 60 feet with one of the recorded numbers that matches the type of roll you wish to replace (attack roll, skill check, or saving throw). The target still adds any relevant modifiers to this number, but otherwise treat the substituted number as the number they rolled.

To do this, you must spend a reaction to present your holy symbol and invoke the name of the Amaranthine whose energies you called upon. You can do this anytime after the skill check, saving throw or attack has been rolled, but before the outcome of the event has been determined. The spell ends after 24 hours have passed, or when both dice have been expended.

SHAPE PLANTS

4th-level transmutation

Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Components: V, S
Duration: Instantaneous; Special, see text

You call upon gentle natural magics to alter the growth of plants. Any plant life you can see within range that fits within a 5-foot cube can take on whatever shape you desire. Additionally, if the plant is a bramble, or capable of growing thorns, you turn the affected area into difficult terrain, causing 2d4 points of piercing damage for every 5 feet moved through the area you shaped. You may also increase or decrease the number of flowers, vines, leaves, thorns, branches, or fruits produced by any plant you shape.

After one hour, the magic of your spell fades, and the plant resumes its normal shape. If you can use speak with plants (or a similar ability) to communicate with the plant, you may persuade it to retain its new form. Different plants have different feelings and attitudes, and if the form is too different from its natural shape it is likely to decline. If the plant accepts, at the GM's discretion, it will retain the form you have sculpted it into, in which case the effect becomes permanent.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot above 4th level, the size of the cube of plant life you can affect with the spell increases by an additional 5 feet for every slot level above 4th.

SPINY SHIELD

1st-level abjuration

Casting Time: 1 reaction
Range: Self
Components: V, S, M (a small quill)
Duration: 1 round

An ethereal barrier of spikes, made of magical force, interposes itself between you and an attacker. Until your next turn, when you are hit by a melee attack, the barrier reduces the damage your are dealt by 2d4, and deals the same amount of piercing damage to the attacker. The shield is ineffective against ranged attackers, but still provides a +2 bonus to AC (treat as half cover) against them for the duration.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot above 1st level, increase the spell's effect by an additional 1d4 for every slot level above 1st.

STELLAR BODIES

4th-level evocation
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Special, see text
Components: V, S
Duration: 1 minute

You create two small stars that orbit you. They twinkle pleasantly, shedding dim light in a 10-foot radius centered on you. The stars protect you. If a creature within 5 feet of you hits you with a melee attack they must make a Wisdom saving throw or take 1d8 points of radiant damage for each star orbiting you.

Once per round, on your turn, you may use your action to cause a star to streak towards an enemy, expending it as it explodes in a blinding flash. Make a ranged spell attack against an enemy within 120 feet, dealing 4d8 points of radiant damage on a hit. The target must then make a Constitution saving throw or be blinded until the start of your next turn.

The spell ends when either its duration expires, you fall unconscious, or you have expended all of your stars.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot above 4th level, you may create one additional star for every two slot levels above 4th. For each additional star orbiting you, the radius of dim light centered on you increases by 5 feet.

VEIL OF DUSK

1st-level abjuration
Casting Time: 1 bonus action
Range:60 feet
Components: V, S, M (a pinch of soot)
Duration: Concentration, up to 10 minutes

You incant towards a creature, cloaking them in a shadowy veil of darkness and silence. The target gains a +1 bonus to their armor class and rolls stealth checks with advantage for the duration of the spell.

2 Religion in the Wood

In the beginning, there was only the sound of wings. Faint at first, the distant beats were easy to miss, but as time passed they grew stronger, faster, until they could be heard across the great unending dark. Then, with a single flap, creation burst forth: fire, ice, air, water, soil and sky, all came from the sound of feathers that resonated throughout the cosmos. This is the Great Rhythm, and by the Great Rhythm are all things moved. The Rhythm tells the sun when to set, and the moon when to rise. The Rhythm tells the seeds when to flower, the trees when to shed their leaves, and the snows when to fall. The essence of everything there is comes from the Great Rhythm. One day, the Rhythm may cue the end of creation — but there will be no end to the Rhythm itself. As every downbeat has an upbeat to follow it, so too will the cycles of nature eventually start again — for even though the Rhythm can be faint at times, it is everlasting and eternal.

Every denizen of the forest, from the large to the small, from predator to prey, knows of The Great Rhythm: the beating force that is the pulse of life itself. To the birdfolk, the Rhythm began with the sound of beating wings, but other folk of the Wood tell that it began with the thundering of hooves, the padding of paws, or with a tiny heartbeat. Birdfolk believe that two great spirits emerged from the Rhythm. They were the first Amaranthine: Ardea, whose wings usher in the dawn, and Tyton, whose wings are the shadow of night. They are the avatars of life and death, and keepers of the Rhythm.

The Amaranthine

Just as we need a heart to make our pulse pound, so too does the Rhythm require a drummer. The heart of the Rhythm lies within the Amaranthine. They are the immortals, who have been given new life by the Rhythm, and act as its guardians, maintaining the balance of nature.

The Amaranthine are the gods of Everden. They are entrusted with maintaining the cosmic balance known as the Great Rhythm. Unlike gods in other settings, the Amaranthine rarely squabble with one another, for any strife between the Amaranthine is a threat to the balance of nature itself. The Amaranthine tend to keep to themselves, and rarely meddle in each other's affairs.

Though each Amaranthine is a powerful being in their own right, holding a great degree of autonomy over their dominion, each understands that they are but a small part of a greater whole. Like the themes of a concerto, the Amaranthine are the harmonies that create the Great Rhythm.

BIRDFOLK VS. HUMBLEFOLK AMARANTHINE

The Amaranthine are venerated by all races of Humblewood, although birdfolk and humblefolk worship them differently. The five whose origins are described in the "Tales of the Amaranthine" (Altus, Clhuran, Gesme, Reya, and Hanera), are primarily worshiped by birdfolk, and they (along with Ardea and Tyton) form the most common pantheon worshiped across the Wood.

While humblefolk still recognize the birdfolk pantheon, most worship Amaranthine specific to their culture and heritage. Belief in these Amaranthine is not as widespread, but their power is just as real.

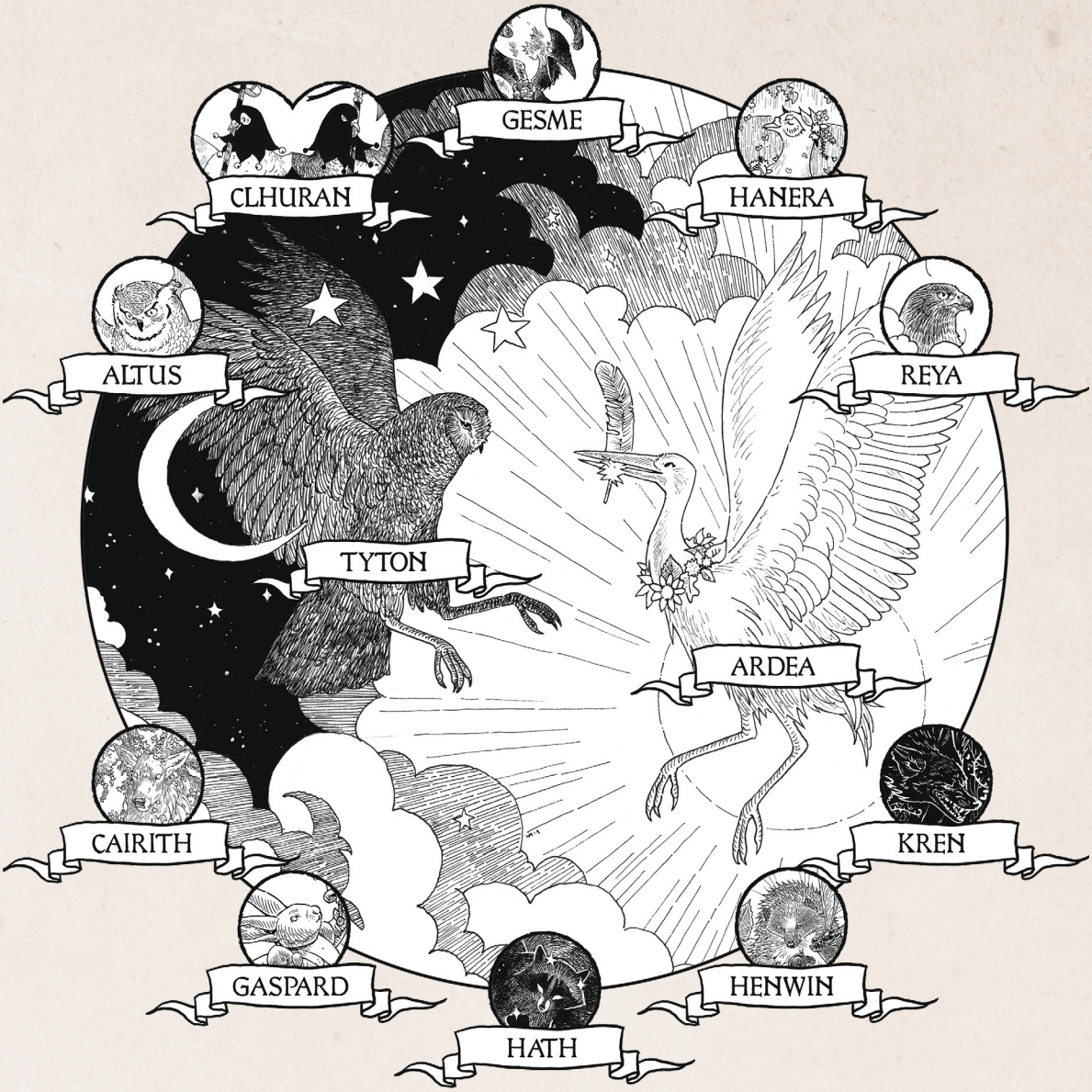
The humblefolk Amaranthine are less cohesive, with each having varied tales, origin myths, rather than a single origin story. Many fables are told of the humblefolk Amaranthine, such as the time Kren tricked Gesme into dropping her flaming staff to flush game out of a bush, or when Henwin sheltered Gaspard from a great monster.

To humblefolk who live outside of birdfolk perches, Ardea and Tyton are known as Dawnmother and Nightfather. They are depicted in forms that closely resemble the features of the humblefolk who worship them.

In the perches, humblefolk Amaranthine tend to be viewed as a folk religion alongside the primary birdfolk pantheon. Occasionally, perch-dwelling humblefolk will have small shrines in their homes, or in their shops dedicated to their Amaranthine.

While these Amaranthine go largely overlooked by most birdfolk, some who have taken the time to learn their legends pay homage to the featherless Amaranthine. This bothers a few humblefolk, but the priests of these Amaranthine understand that each one is but a reflection of the Great Rhythm, and welcome any birdfolk to learn from them.

BIRDFOLK AMARANTHINE



HUMBLEFOLK AMARANTHINE

Amaranthine	Alignment	Race	Domains	Symbol
Altus, the Enduring	CG	Strig	Tempest, War	An ornate wooden chalice, out of which pour storm clouds
Ardea, the Dawnmother	NG	—	Life, Light	A radiant sun with two golden feathers
Cairith, the Resolute	LN	Cervan	Life	A pair of white antlers wrapped in flowering vines
Clhuran, the Fickle	CN	Luma	Arcana, Trickery	Two birds, one singing, the other crowing
Gaspard, the Champion	NG	Jerbeen	Community	Three rapiers, tied together by a pink ribbon
Gesme, the Brilliant	N	Corvum	Knowledge, The Forge	A gnarled oak branch, burning at one end
Hanera, the Provider	LG	Gallus	Community, Nature	A bird with plants for tail feathers
Hath, the Whisperer	CN	Mapach	Night	A raccoon mask with a single star above it
Reya, the Explorer	CN	Raptor	Nature, Tempest	Four arrows, in a circle of ivy, forming a compass
Henwin, the Kind	NG	Hedge	Nature	A blooming yellow rose, flecked with dew
Kren, the Sly	NE	Vulpin	Trickery	An eye wreathed in fangs
Tyton, the Nightfather	LN	—	Grave, Night	A wing containing three stars and a crescent moon

Ardea

ALIGNMENT

Neutral Good

DOMAIN

Life, Light

DOGMA

All life, great and small, is equal and sacred. Protect life, and be kind to all living beings.

HOLY SYMBOL

A radiant sun with two golden feathers

Ardea is depicted as a great stork with shining golden feathers, wreathed in flowers or other plant life. She is the Amaranthine of the sun who watches over the flora and fauna of Everden and provides them with light and energy to grow.

Ardea's light is present in all living things, from the tiniest sprouting seed to the mightiest beast. Her light also represents love and kindness, which every creature is believed to possess. All birdfolk are said to be Ardea's children, and many think she appears as a stork to demonstrate her maternal love for them — although she is speculated to appear in a different form to each woodland race.

When she vacates the sky she rests in a plane of pure light and life. There, great celestial storks carry out her will, and act as her messengers in the mortal world. An old folk story relates that Ardea sends these storks to fly unnoticed into Everden, where they place her animating light into unhatched eggs. This is why birdfolk often refer to her as "Mother Stork".

She is worshiped by good aligned characters of every sort: poets write of the love she has bestowed upon the world, priests ask her to watch over the newly born, and farmers pray to her for good harvests and light winters.

Tyton

ALIGNMENT

Lawful Neutral

DOMAIN

Grave, Night

DOGMA

As day turns to night, so must all things end. Respect the power of death, but fear not the end, for it is part of the Rhythm.

HOLY SYMBOL

A wing containing three stars and a crescent moon

Tyton is depicted as an immense black barn owl. It is believed he ushers the night in by spreading his wings over the sky. Tyton also governs time, memory, and death. As the sun must set, so too must the light of life give way to the darkness of the grave. Rather than being seen as a frightful figure, Tyton is looked upon as kind; he greets the old, the frail, and those at the end of their lives as familiar friends, guiding their souls peacefully back into the Great Rhythm, where they will be reborn, in time.

When not occupying the sky, it is believed Tyton resides in the lands of death. Not an afterlife, rather this is a part of the Great Rhythm where everything is cold, dark, and eternally still. His abode lies beyond the parts of the Rhythm associated with life, a divide impossible for mortals to cross. Even other Amaranthine find travel to the lands of death difficult, except for Altus, who resides there with Tyton for most of the year, only leaving to bring winter storms across the land.

In addition to guiding the souls of the dead, Tyton is associated with the coming of old age, and the keeping of memory. When Tyton is invoked at funerals, it is to remember those who have passed, and to recall their lives and deeds. He watches the living, patiently observing all beneath him. Tyton can learn all there is to know of your life by watching your dreams. Because Tyton watches the living from birth to death, he is known as "Father Owl".

Tyton frowns upon those who would seek to enslave the souls of the dead using necromantic magics, and those who would desecrate the tombs of the deceased, as these actions corrupt the natural cycle.

Altus

ALTUS

ALIGNMENT

Chaotic Good

DOMAIN

War, Tempest

DOGMA

Challenge yourself. Endurance brings change, change brings growth, and growth brings strength!

HOLY SYMBOL

An ornate wooden chalice, out of which pour storm clouds

Altus is depicted as a powerful horned owl with white feathers, who rides across the sky pouring thunderheads from his chalice. Altus is a pragmatic Amaranthine, believing that strength is cultivated through enduring hardships, overcoming challenges, and testing mortal limitations. Stories of Altus' tenacity and endurance abound, including the time he captured the moon as a gift to Ardea, and the time he made the mountains by lifting the earth. Themes of bravery and strength are common in his myths.

Altus resides with Tyton in the lands of death. Legend says that every year Altus makes the long and arduous journey to bring winter storms and foul weather. According to myth, this is as much to test the endurance of his people as it is to test himself by crossing the divide between life and death, which binds the Great Rhythm. Summers with especially bad weather are credited to Altus, who made the trip early to keep his people strong and vigilant.

Altus is the patron Amaranthine of the strig, and is celebrated by them annually in a great winter festival. Games and activities during this festival challenge entrants with feats of strength and endurance. No official winner is declared, and all who participate are lauded for their courage and given a special place at the feasting table.

Altus usually finds veneration among warriors or athletes, but also among common people who pray for strength to withstand personal hardships, bad harvests, and natural disasters.

Clhuran

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ALIGNMENT

Chaotic Neutral

DOMAIN

Arcana, Trickery

DOGMA

Fortune will not always favour you, but live each moment to the fullest, for it is where you are meant to be.

HOLY SYMBOL

Two birds, one singing, the other crowing

Fickle and unpredictable, Clhuran is the Amaranthine of fortune, magic, and fate. He is commonly represented in dual profile: on one side as a jester with bangles and bells, carrying a marotte, and on the other as an executioner, weilding an axe. Clhuran's double profile illustrates his fickle nature, and the nature of fate. Clhuran's tales are of his luck, mirth, and jest, though he is also known to be a capricious Amaranthine. His normally pleasant demeanor can shift at a moment's notice to melancholy or jealousy.

Clhuran teaches that everyone is tied to the web of fate by invisible strands. Each thread extends out into the cosmos, darting and weaving as it moves to the Rhythm. Clhuran's wisdom is to allow yourself to be moved by the threads of fate, to feel the pull of possibility around you, and to act in accordance with their whims. Even misfortune may lead one to an important place, or so Clhuran says. Good times and bad times are all part of the tapestry of fate, and there is a strength that can be drawn from accepting one's destiny. According to his teachings, good luck is nothing more than being open to change, and following the will of the universe.

Lumas are seen to be Clhuran's chosen, because of their connection to the threads of fate, which manifests as a natural magical talent. Arcane spellcasters, seers, and fortune tellers pray to Clhuran for insight into the will of the universe. Bards, artists, and writers also pay homage to Clhuran, because of his wild moods and connection to emotion. They hope to follow their fate to events of great import, which may be immortalized by their art.

Gesme

ALIGNMENT

Neutral

DOMAIN

Knowledge, The Forge

DOGMA

Learn, create, and discover. Sometimes the old ways must burn to make way for the new.

HOLY SYMBOL

A gnarled oak branch, burning at one end

An enigmatic figure, Gesme is the Amaranthine who governs knowledge, insight, and inspiration. She represents fire, the spark which both inspires and destroys. She acknowledges that delving into the unknown requires the courage to be burned.

Gesme is depicted as a raven, whose body is alight with the flames of knowledge. In her talons she carries a staff of burning oak which lights the way for scholars. Gesme is best known for stealing fire from Ardea's sun and bringing it to Everden, burning her feathers black in the process.

Her stolen flame brought fire and the light of reason to the world. While this act earned her a place among the Amaranthine, many feel it was a folly to give fire to mortals.

She is the patron spirit of the corvums. Legend has it that all corvums have at least one black feather, symbolic of Gesme's seared plumage.

Gesme teaches that chaos and innovation are part of a great cycle. Each discovery spawns a new mystery, which leads to further discovery in a never-ending loop, in which the old becomes fodder for the new. She is a symbol of all that birdfolk can achieve if they dare to push boundaries and harness their creativity.

First among her followers are those who study the arcane arts or experiment with magical forces, such as scholars and mages. She is also revered by artisans, and craftspeople of every kind. Blacksmiths in particular understand the danger and power of working directly with flames and pay her special reverence. Her followers pray to her for the spark of creativity that will ignite the fires of creation.

Hanera

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ALIGNMENT

Lawful Good

DOMAIN

Nature, Community

DOGMA

Respect the earth and her gifts, share what you can with those in need, and always live with compassion in your heart.

HOLY SYMBOL

A bird with plants for tail feathers

Hanera is the birdfolk Amaranthine closest to nature. She holds dominion over all things that grow within the earth. While Ardea is the animating force of life, Hanera is the guiding heart that gives life purpose and meaning. She encourages birdfolk to see the world not only from the treetops, but from the loam and all the tiny living things beneath. Everything, Hanera teaches, is connected as part of a vast continuum of life stretching back to the earliest ancestors.

Hanera is depicted as a pheasant with feathers that fade to green as they morph into plants and flowers. She is the patron Amaranthine of the gallus, and is invoked when growing anything from the soil.

As a spirit of both earth and hearth, Hanera governs the bonds that connect people to one another and to nature. She is celebrated at feasts, and during ceremonies involving the sharing of food.

Her generosity and kindness are renowned, as is her intolerance for evil. It is Hanera's will that evil be challenged wherever it is found. Not with violence, but with acts of compassion. Those who harbor darkness in their hearts require the warmth of friends, family, and shelter to heal, and so Hanera teaches birdfolk never to give up on each other. Even the most wicked among us can be healed with love.

Hanera is worshiped by farmers and druids, but many clerics tend shrines in her honor, mostly in modest woodland villages. Her holy symbol is often hung above the doorway, inside a home, to bless the dwelling and all those within.

Reya

ALIGNMENT

Chaotic Neutral

DOMAIN

Nature, Tempest

DOGMA

Seek out unknown horizons. Your skills can take you anywhere if properly harnessed.

HOLY SYMBOL

Four arrows, in a circle of ivy, forming a compass

Reya, the Amaranthine of wind, is depicted as a great hawk wrapped in a cloak of swirling clouds, wielding a great longbow in her talons. She is the patron of the raptors, and is believed to have endowed them with their superior senses.

The wind is free, streaming unimpeded across land and sea. Reya embodies this freedom. Her spirit glides through trees, over mountains, and out to the four corners of the world. She is the Amaranthine of exploration; her holy symbol forms a compass. Free-spirited folk who feel an insatiable urge to wander and roam the lands have been touched by her winds.

Reya is a skilled hunter, credited with the invention of the bow, a gift she passed down to the birdfolk. She is also honored for her skills in navigating wild country and surviving off the land. Travelers undertaking long journeys pray to be blessed by a portion of her talents, to assist them in the perilous wilderness. Reya watches over those who embark on daring expeditions, protecting travelers and presenting them with challenges to make their journey all the more memorable.

Reya is worshiped by hunters, travelers, sailors, and explorers. She is revered by wandering bards, who carry their journeys home in the form of songs and tales.

Cairith

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ALIGNMENT

Lawful Neutral

DOMAIN

Life

DOGMA

The way of nature is growth. Let nothing stifle you, and you will flourish.

HOLY SYMBOL

A pair of white antlers wrapped in flowering vines

An Amaranthine of vigor and strength, Cairith is the patron spirit of the cervans. The energy that Cairith oversees is the cause of slow, steady growth and longevity. In living beings, this force manifests as the ability to run, jump, grow, and become strong. Ancient forests, where plants cover the tree trunks and giant beasts endowed with the intelligence to speak, are seen as signs of Cairith's blessing. Cairith teaches that adversity brings strength, but his teachings differ from those of Altus. Altus encourages his followers to seek out challenges, where Cairith sees life itself as a perpetual struggle. The true test of survival is always against oneself and one's own limits. By persevering in spite of these limits, Cairith counsels his adherents to triumph over the forces of death. This struggle must one day end,
of course, and so the followers of Cairith seek to honor the daily triumphs of life as they happen. An existence is considered well-spent if it was lived unflinchingly, even in the face of sorrows and hardships. Cairith adamantly opposes necromancy as those made undead truly cannot appreciate life's struggles.

Cairith is described as a mighty stag with antlers covered in moss and flowering vines. He is massively tall, and wherever he walks plants sprout from the earth. Where others see a tangle of vegetation, Cairith sees the plan of nature unfolding. All cervans profess a kinship to Cairith. But rather than claiming him as a direct ancestor, he is seen as a guardian spirit. Some say he was the first to be born from the land when the Dawnmother gave Everden life.

Cairith guided the first cervans, and blessed them with many gifts so that they might survive in the primitive forest. One of these gifts, the power of The Sight, is attributed to Cairith. Certain cervans are gifted with The Sight, and this allows them to glimpse events that have occurred in the past, present, and future.

Cairith finds reverence among rangers, druids, healers, and community leaders. Paladins invoke his dogma to give heart to those they defend. Cervan diviners gifted with the Sight call upon Cairith in their rituals. Cairith also has many followers among common people, especially humblefolk who have suffered hardships.

Gaspard

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ALIGNMENT

Neutral Good

DOMAIN

Community

DOGMA

With courage and conviction, the least among us can inspire the greatest.

HOLY SYMBOL

Three rapiers, tied together by a pink ribbon

An Amaranthine of heroism and valor, Gaspard is "The Champion". In life, Gaspard was a great jerbeen leader. Upon his death, the Great Rhythm took him, and his spirit ascended as an Amaranthine. It is believed he was chosen to serve as an example of greatness, one to inspire others for generations to come. Tales of his mortal adventures have earned him renown. He traveled the whole of Everden, with his closest companions, slaying monsters, unseating tyrants, and bringing peace and prosperity wherever he roamed.

Gaspard's followers believe the actions of an individual ripple outwards, affecting those around us, which in turn can embolden anyone to achieve greatness. The example of Gaspard teaches jerbeen to affect others with acts of courage, heroism, and kindness.

At times, Gaspard has been at odds with other Amaranthine. Before he ascended, there is a tale of him meeting Kren, where he was forced to show no sign of fear, lest she eat him and his companions. Thankfully, his composure kept his group strong, and in turn their bravery kept him strong. They escaped with their lives.

Gaspard's example has lead many to heed the paladin's call. Gaspard is worshiped by warriors who seek to match his exploits, as well as bards who seek to inspire others through the telling of heroic tales.

Humblefolk hold summer festivals in his honor. These holidays include storytelling, puppet shows, and magnificent jousts where armored jerbeens mounted on tamed wolves put on a spectacle of courage and daring before the crowds.

Hath

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ALIGNMENT

Chaotic Neutral

DOMAIN

Night

DOGMA

Be crafty, be cunning, be careful. Death is everywhere, but heed my words, and you can evade its grasp.

HOLY SYMBOL

A raccoon mask with a single star above it

Known as "The Uncaring", "The All-Knowing Stars", and "The Whisperer", Hath is an Amaranthine that humblefolk and birdfolk alike struggle to understand. In spite of this conflict, Hath is revered by the mapach. According to them, Hath was a constellation of stars who listened carefully to the Nightfather. In ancient times, the Nightfather spoke and spread his vast wisdom across the primordial darkness. He spoke of night, of time, and of the worlds beyond life. The constellation listened and grew wise, too wise to remain as stars. Thus, it became a part of the Great Rhythm as the Amaranthine of fear, doubt, and secrets. This is why, the tellers say, the Nightfather no longer speaks.

Ever since, Hath has whispered its unsettling secrets to the creatures below, speaking quietly so the other stars cannot hear. Mapachs were not the first to hear its voice, but they claim to be the first to truly make use of its secrets. While priests of Hath do not necessarily "hear" the words of the stars, mapachs believe that Hath speaks in subtle ways. Those frightened while traveling at night or caught in dangerous situations are bestowed with cautious and crafty thoughts by Hath. If heeded, one may survive. If ignored, one may die. Either way, Hath, The Uncaring, is apathetic.

The stars teach the importance of trusting in oneself and keeping your wits about you, even in dire situations. When a mapach gets a shiver of premonition, something they could never have known, it is said to be the whispers of Hath they have heard.

Hath has few followers, and most are mapachs. Rangers and travelers passing through dangerous parts of the Wood at night often pay homage to the All-Knowing Stars. While some pray to this Amaranthine for guidance, others hope not to hear Hath's voice, as the stars only whisper to those in peril. Warlocks make pacts with this Amaranthine for knowledge of the worlds beyond life. Most consider this practice to be rather reckless — The Uncaring is known to exact a terrible price for such secrets. Some lose their mind delving into the vast reservoir of knowledge that Hath is all too eager to supply.

Henwin

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ALIGNMENT

Neutral Good

DOMAIN

Nature

DOGMA

The rose only blooms thanks to the many kindnesses of the soil.

HOLY SYMBOL

A blooming yellow rose, flecked with dew

Henwin, the patron spirit of hedges, is venerated by humblefolk of all kinds. They are the Amaranthine of balance, and teach that all things in the forest must be respected, as all are connected in a great web of kindness. It is thanks to the sun that the plants grow, and because the plants grow, all living things have food. Decayed food turns into soil, which nourishes more life. The teachings of Henwin asks followers to take into consideration the many kindnesses which brought each of them into being and nourished them throughout their lives.

It is only fitting, then, that Henwin is said to be a hedgehog who spends their life in the forest. Storytellers say that they reside in an ancient part of the world, hidden from the eyes of most mortals, where they inhabit a tangle of roots from every forest that has ever grown. Here they tend to a garden of moss, fungi, and insects, helping to keep the living roots healthy. Henwin ensures that even the husks of withered plants can provide for the vegetation and creatures who rely on dead things for sustenance.

Unlike other Amaranthine, Henwin is not described as male or female. Being a spirit of balance, they are considered to possess traits of all genders. They are often depicted carrying a yellow rose, which is their symbol. When a yellow rose blooms, it is said to be Henwin, blessing a forest with the beauty of their quiet grace. These roses are often given as tokens of friendship.

Henwin teaches understanding, and respect for the web of kindness that connects all life. If death is dealt indiscriminately, the web may become damaged. Although it is resilient, the web is still as fragile as one made from spider's silk. It is the duty of all who follow Henwin to strengthen the web and to help maintain the balance which supports all living things.

Henwin is followed by druids, who take the message of nature's web of kindness to heart. Henwin's druids can be found protecting groves and leading communities, keeping both safe from those with harmful intentions. Priests of Henwin often invoke the Amaranthine Henwin's name to protect the fauna, flora, and folk under their care. Gardeners honor Henwin by keeping plots filled with a diverse array of complementary plant and insect life.

Kren

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ALIGNMENT

Neutral Evil

DOMAIN

Trickery

DOGMA

Guile is the greatest weapon at your disposal. Hone it, use it, and your fangs will always find their mark.

HOLY SYMBOL

An eye wreathed in fangs

The Amaranthine of predation and guile, Kren is portrayed as a great fox-like beast, whose form is usually obscured by shadows. The only known parts of her form are her fangs and her eyes, glinting as they catch the light. Kren appears in many tales, as often a villain as a hero, and even then it is rare that her motives are laudable. Yet, one can learn from Kren, for her stories often demonstrate how hubris can be exploited, how heroes can be laid low, and how there is no weapon so deadly as flattery.

The patron spirit of the vulpin, Kren teaches them to walk the line between savagery and sophistication, and how and when each should be used. For many other humblefolk she demonstrates the value of cunning, showing that no creature is so wise or mighty that they cannot be taken advantage of.

Stories of her origin are often vague and contradictory. A popular vulpin myth tells that Kren came from a time before life existed on Everden. That she was an ancient force, ready to feast on a world full of new and fresh meat, who simply awoke when the Dawnmother and Nightfather set creation in motion. Others believe she was the first vulpin, who ascended from an ordinary fox. As the story goes, Kren tricked the Dawnmother into allowing her to watch over the Amaranthine's two divine feathers. Kren ate a single feather and became the Amaranthine of guile. This is why the Dawnmother only carries one feather in her beak.

Kren isn't worshiped in the same way as other Amaranthine. Rather, Kren is invoked in stories to teach the dangers of vainglory. Many outlaws keep shrines to her patronage. These individuals include thieves, smugglers, and purveyors of black market goods. Priests of Kren use her stories to teach others how to be crafty and cunning, but also to be cautious of the wiles of others. There are those, however, who invoke Kren for dark rites and rituals to gain power for themselves. Kren is always ready to make bargains with such supplicants, but all who do are fated to be devoured by her when their lives finally come to an end.

Tales of the Amaranthine

The birdfolk have a myth that tells of the origins of the Amaranthine and of the five birdfolk races. While humblfolk tell their own stories about how the Wood and its people came to be, these tales are known throughout Humblewood, and are generally believed to be true by all birdfolk.

ARDEA AND TYTON

With the birth of Ardea and Tyton, the world was set into motion. Where once there was nothing but barrens, the land came alive with the coming of the Amaranthine, and the world began its endless cycle of life and death. Their arrival split the formless sky into day and night. They created the sun and the moon, and the succession of light and dark which emerged from their movement across the heavens told all life when to act and when to rest. Ardea and Tyton were born from opposite parts of the Great Rhythm. Each knows of the other's existence, but they keep to their separate spheres, meeting only in the early hours of dawn and the late hours of dusk to exchange dominion over the sky. In seasons of warmth, Ardea has a greater reign over the sky, while in seasons of bitter cold, Tyton's power increases.

The two Amaranthine created much of the life in Humblewood. Ardea suffused the days with sun-loving flowers, plants, and animals, while Tyton baptized the night with insects and animals that embrace the dark. They birthed sentient races, and from them originate all birdfolk, the first of their children, followed shortly after by the humblefolk.

Originally, all birdfolk were the same. It was difficult to distinguish them from the birds of the forest, as they even possessed the ability to fly. One day, the entire flock of birdfolk decided on a grand contest of gift-giving, to prove which of them was the most worthy to lead. Ardea agreed to act as judge; whoever could present her with the greatest gift would become leaders among her children. For an entire season, birdfolk searched and scrounged, gathered and hunted, returning with trinkets, baubles, gifts great and small. Though Ardea commended all her children for their gifts, only five were truly deserving of her boon.

Gesme, Reya, Hanera, Altus, and Clhuran: these five became leaders of the birdfolk. They inspired tales, devotion, and gave the birdfolk races their distinct forms and skills. These great ones went on to become part of the Great Rhythm as keepers of nature's balance and protectors of birdfolk across Everden, eventually ascending and joining the Amaranthine. The followers of each of the five were granted new forms and great gifts, to match their leader's exploits. Yet, to accept these gifts, something needed to be lost. This is why the birdfolk of today can only glide: their gift of flight was taken as the price for becoming something new.

THE TALE OF GESME, THE BRILLIANT

The first to present Ardea with a worthy gift was Gesme, a clever birdfolk who saw potential in the world that her kin could scarcely imagine. She had observed the great orb of fire that Ardea had placed high in the sky, and how Ardea had positioned it a great distance from the land and it's creatures, so it would warm them gently without burning them. But Gesme also saw that the sun vanished with the coming of night, when the creatures of the dark began to prowl, and thought: "How remarkable would it be to have some of that fire in the world?"

Other birdfolk laughed at Gesme as she spent days plotting, and reading the sky. She examined every tree, from the great ash to the supple willow. Each day she carried a new branch in her beak, dropping many in frustration. The birdfolk were puzzled, but dismissed her actions. Then, one day at dawn, when the sun was at its lowest point in the sky, Gesme appeared with an oak branch in her beak. Without a word, she took off straight into the horizon. She flew for what seemed like ages, but the oak branch was light and did not trouble her. As she neared the sun her feathers, talons, and beak began to blacken in the heat. Still, she persisted. The oak was hardy and spry, and did not wither. Finally, she stuck the tip of the branch into the sun, igniting it. Hastily she flew back toward the ground, with the branch burning bright in her talons. The oak was patient, and did not burn up, keeping the flame steady as Gesme returned from the sky.

"See what I have brought here!" she bragged, as the astounded birdfolk looked upon her scorched feathers. "This will keep us warm on the cold days of winter, and safe through the long nights!"

Ardea was at first concerned at the presence of fire in the world, for she knew the forests could burn, and that misuse of the fire would bring harm to Everden. But, when she saw the birdfolk gather around the fires, and felt the gentle warmth a small flame could provide to her children, she was overcome with happiness.

"This," she declared, "is worthy of a boon."

And thus was Gesme changed. Set ablaze with the flames of knowledge and creativity, she became an Amaranthine. The forms of her followers changed too, and they became the first corvums. They were gifted with a bit of her cleverness and foresight, but Ardea gave them all black talons, feathers, and beaks as a reminder of the price Gesme paid to bring fire into the world.

THE TALE OF REYA, THE EXPLORER

The second to present a worthy gift was Reya, whose hunting skills were second to none. Though she was small, she was nimble, swift, and wise in the ways of the forest. Reya was capable and reliable, but birdfolk deemed her too independent to be a leader. She would travel the length and breadth of the land on her hunts, sometimes not returning for weeks at a time.

During one of her journeys Reya encountered a stranger. The traveler's true form was hidden under a cloak, but they could fly and clearly felt as comfortable in the trees as any birdfolk. They had heard of Reya's skill in racing, hunting, and navigating the forest, and proposed three challenges, to which Reya agreed.

For the first event, the pair moved to a patch of open sky overlooking rugged plains. There was a rocky outcropping in the distance; whoever flew there first would be the winner. The race began, and Reya immediately fell behind, the cloaked figure moving faster than Reya had ever seen.

Reya summoned all her strength to keep up, beating her wings like never before. Yet the traveler kept inching forward, and she was unable to close the gap in time.

Reya steeled herself for the next challenge. They flew to the meadows, where small creatures grazed, and it was decided that the first to catch five hares would be the winner. Reya moved with purpose, confident no one could best her skills with a bow, a tool of her own creation. Each of her shots found its mark, until she had but a single hare left to catch. But when Reya looked over at the traveler, she was shocked to see them waiting impatiently with a full complement.

For the third and final event, the pair flew to the center of the forest. The first to emerge into the open fields beyond would be the victor. These were forests Reya knew well, and she was certain she would win. As soon as they had started though, Reya saw the traveler alight, darting through the trees as if weightless. Reya kept pace, using every trick she could to give herself an advantage. Still the traveler pulled ahead, if only by inches, and emerged victorious.

Reya landed on a nearby branch and cursed her lack of skill. After a moment of pause however, she regained her composure, and thanked her competitor. Yet the traveler laughed, a sound so familiar, Reya wondered why she hadn't noticed before.

"You have nothing to be ashamed of, birdfolk. I see your skills are real. You are the first to so nearly best me in every event, and this is no easy feat." The traveler removed their cloak, and Reya could not believe her eyes. She had been challenged by the wind itself.

It swirled, spinning a cloak out of the very clouds, which it placed around Reya. "Consider this a gift, for providing me with such sport." Reya thanked the wind, and with that, it departed, caressing Reya's feathers in a familiar breeze.

When the time came to present a gift, Reya offered Ardea her cloak of clouds, along with the story of her adventure. As Reya told her tale, Ardea could see the eyes of the other birdfolk light up with excitement. When Reya had finished, Ardea returned Reya's cloak to her, saying the story of her adventure was the rarer gift. Reya was changed, and became the Amaranthine of wind, archery, and exploration. Those she inspired became the first raptors. They began to take on a nomadic lifestyle, finding their fortune day by day as Reya once did and told tales of their own adventures by the light of the campfire.

THE TALE OF HANERA, THE PROVIDER

The third to present a precious gift was Hanera, a gentle birdfolk and the first to shift her focus away from the sky. Rather than live in the trees with other birdfolk, Hanera made a home for herself below the canopy. She cared for the soil and the earth, and in return the earth gifted her with wisdom. From the earth, Hanera learned to speak with plants — knowledge she used to better care for them. She soon earned fame among the birdfolk, as one who grew the largest and best-tasting crops.

"These crops," Hanera thought, "are the finest gift I could offer to our Mother." And so she set about planting a large garden, its bounty reserved for Ardea.

One day, while tending to her garden, Hanera saw a family of haggard travelers making their way out of the woods. When they saw Hanera, the mother begged her for aid.

"Please, kind sister, we are in great need. We were traveling through the forest when a creature attacked me and wounded my wing. We escaped, but I cannot fly. Please, help us, we are terribly hungry."

Hanera knew that she couldn't feed herself and this family while storing crops for Ardea. Even still, she could not turn them away in their desperate state. She offered to share her home and her food for as long as the travelers needed, making sure their needs were met before saving any food for Ardea.

The travelers stayed with Hanera for many nights while the mother healed. Each day, Hanera would prepare the family meals, telling the plants of their plight. The plants understood, and were honored to nourish the weary and wounded birdfolk. In return, Hanera ensured their seeds were saved and planted again, so their lives would continue indefinitely.

At night, Hanera applied medicine to the mother's wound made from the leaves of kindly herbs. By the end of the season the mother had healed, the family was in good health, and they gratefully flew away.

When the day finally came for birdfolk to present their gifts, all Hanera could offer Ardea was a few fruits and vegetables. She wove them together along with flowers she had grown, attempting to make her offering look more cheerful.

"I'm sorry, Mother Stork," Hanera said. "I had meant to present you with a great harvest, but this is all I could provide."

Ardea took the wreath, and spoke gladly: "You have given me more than enough, for you see my child, I received your compassion for an entire season." As Ardea spoke, celestial messengers appeared by her side, and together they transformed into the birdfolk family Hanera had so tenderly cared for.

For her charity, Hanera received the Amaranthine's boon: her feathers turned green and grew into vines and shoots, adorned with the most beautiful flowers. Other birdfolk stared in awe, and those who followed Hanera became the first gallus, blessed with her inspiring kindness, as well as her closeness with the earth and all growing things.

THE TALE OF ALTUS, THE ENDURING

The fourth to present a commendable gift was Altus, whose hunting skills were second only to Reya's, though Altus journeyed the Wood to test his limits rather than explore as Reya did. Altus felt pure joy when overcoming obstacles. He loved the cold seasons and challenged himself by hunting at night. His nocturnal existence granted Altus a perspective other birdfolk lacked.

"What if I gifted Ardea something she has never seen before?" he thought. "Yes! I shall hunt the moon, and present it to her, so that she may see its lovely glow." This would be

unthinkable to any other birdfolk, but Altus was resolute, confident his gift would please Ardea.

However, he was neither as skilled or nimble as Reya, nor as clever or cunning as Gesme. His arrows would not scratch the moon, and despite his great strength, he could not move it. But Altus was stubborn, for many nights he tried and failed to bring down his quarry. The more he tried, the more frustrated he became. Altus even thought he could hear the moon's laughter reflected in the babbling brooks and rippling ponds, mocking his futile efforts. Still, Altus remained determined.

Tyton, intrigued, observed Altus as he struggled. "Why do you persist in this task, my child?" the Amaranthine of night asked. "You must know you will not succeed."

Altus replied, "If I did not try, then I would never know for certain if I could. But you may be right. For all my strength, I can never best the moon, and only a fool refuses to acknowledge when he has been bested." Altus paused, letting out a sigh. "Pity, it would have made a lovely gift for Ardea."

Tyton was touched, not just by the sentiment but by the incredible will of this birdfolk.

"Your resolve does you credit" Tyton said. "To capture the moon, you will require this." He said producing a lidded chalice, intricately carved from the wood of an alder tree. Tyton gave it to Altus, then the Amaranthine of night disappeared.

Altus was puzzled, until the moon appeared from behind a cloud. He heard its laughter in the pond behind him. When he turned, he saw it: the moon's reflection set perfectly in the still, clear waters. Without delay, Altus filled the chalice with water. With the moon clearly reflected within the chalice, he quickly shut the lid. The moon was caught.

As dawn began to break over the horizon, Tyton appeared once again before Altus, "Let my sister gaze upon my creation, but return it by day's end. The night has need of it," old Father Owl said, before departing for the lands beyond life.

And so it was that Altus presented Ardea with the moon. He became the first strig, and his people were gifted with his great strength and indomitable will. He kept his oath to Tyton, returning the moon that very evening. For this, Tyton gifted all strigs with the ability to see clearly under its light. Tyton welcomed Altus as a guest in his home, deep within the lands of death. Altus found the cold there bracing, and decided to share it with the people of Everden. This is why the weather is so inclement in winter; Altus returns each year, carrying storms of sleet and snow in his chalice, to test the birdfolk's endurance.

THE TALE OF CLHURAN, THE FICKLE

The last to present a worthy gift was Clhuran, who seemed an odd choice for a leader. Clhuran had no desire to lead. He was whimsical and impulsive. He had wild moods, and was never able to focus on one task for too long. He also had incredible luck. Most saw him as little more than a bumbler, someone who floated their way through life. In truth, Clhuran was full of mirth and cunning. "Where I am," he oft remarked, "is simply where I am meant to be. I follow the flow of the universe."

For all his mirth, Clhuran was notoriously fickle; he was a trickster, who delighted in humbling birdfolk who boasted about their cleverness. This earned him many admirers, and just as many enemies.

Clhuran never intended to compete in the gift-giving contest.

"What should I care what others think of me," he harrumphed, "So long as I am happy?" Some birdfolk, bitter at having been fooled by him, claimed Clhuran could never hope to win such a contest. Clhuran tried to pay them no heed, in his heart he felt the barbs hit their mark.

"Who am I kidding," Clhuran sighed. "I am not strong, nor smart, nor skilled, nor leaderly...I couldn't possibly produce a gift worthy of Ardea." With this last thought he sank into a bitter melancholy.

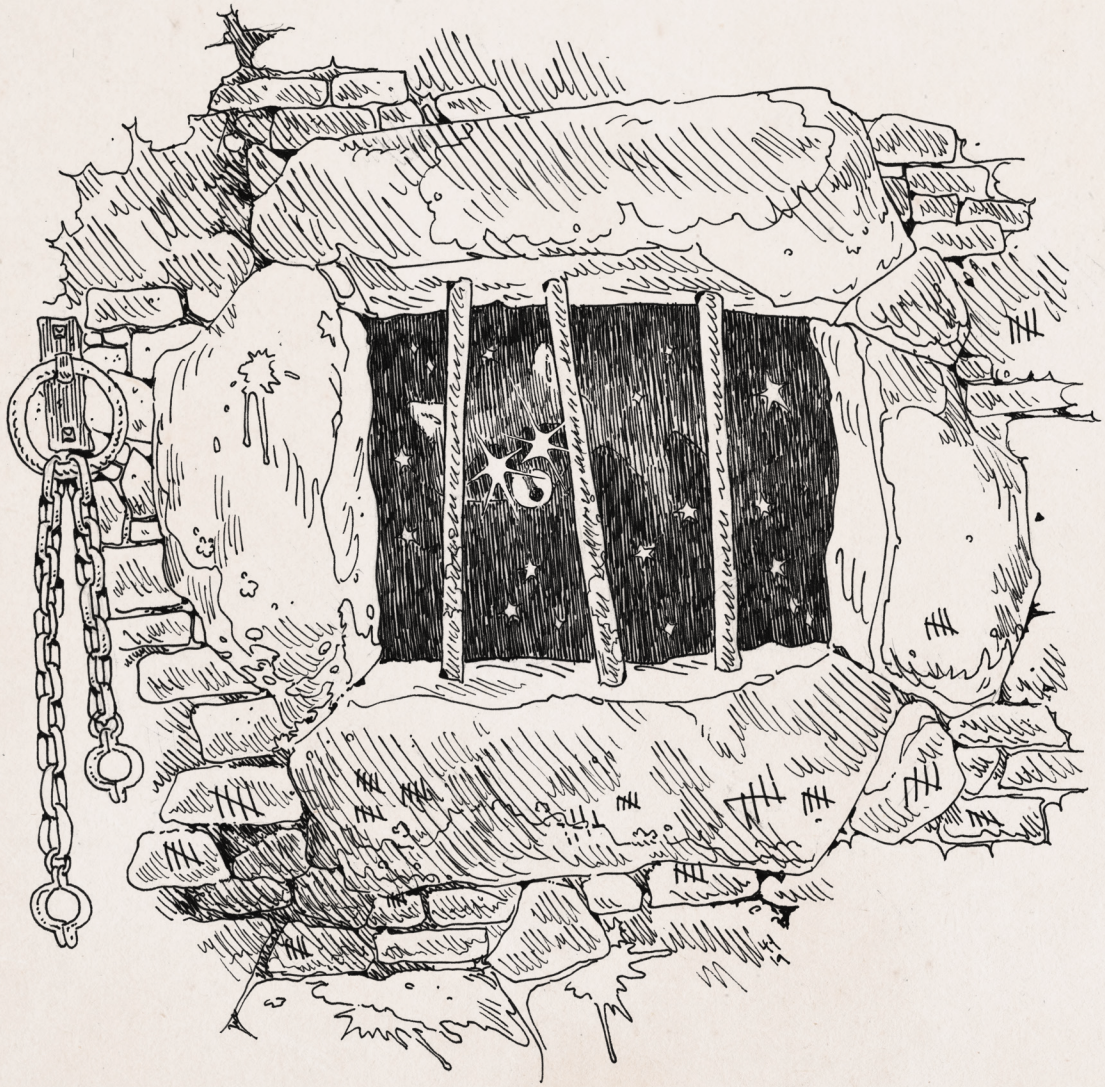
It was only when a young boy approached him that he regained his confidence. "Please Clhuran, won't you show us what you can do?" the small birdfolk said. "Many of us love your tricks, and your jokes. You bring joy to all birdfolk! Surely if you try you can do it!"

Clhuran saw the sincerity in the boy's eyes, and suddenly he knew what to do. "Fine, fine," he exclaimed in mock annoyance. "I suppose I shall entertain you."

With newfound confidence, he approached Ardea. All of the birdfolk were gathered, and when Clhuran looked upon the crowd he saw both enemies and friends. Thoughts of those friendships allowed Clhuran to reach deep within himself, and from the depths of his soul he felt a beat, like the Great Rhythm itself. Channeling this energy, Clhuran opened his beak and brought forth a most beautiful gift: a song.

It was a song so perfect, so harmonious, that no birdfolk could deny its charm. Ardea beamed."My child, you have within you a rare gift. May all of your kin be blessed by it." With those words, Clhuran became the first luma, the Amaranthine of all fortune, good or ill. His peculiar connection to fate is shared by all his kin.

Ever since Clhuran's performance all birds sing, hoping that they might imitate the perfect song he sang to Ardea. While some sing pleasantly, Clhuran made it so those who mocked him can only trill, shriek, or caw artlessly. This is why it is always important to show respect for others, no matter how odd they may seem.



"O, seeing stars, hear my words and part the veil of night,
Gift me thoughts of strategy, bless me with your sight.
If this trial I do survive, with plans and actions shrewd,
I pledge undying loyalty, for wisdom you imbued."

- A mapach prayer to Hath

Scorched Grove
Ashbarrow
Meadowfen
Winnowing Reach
Mokkden Caverns
Mokk Fields
Marshview

The Crest Mountains
DERHEART
Bandit Fortress
the Avium
Brackenmill
N
W
E
S
Saltar's Port
Coast
Humblewood™

3 Traversing the Wood

Humblewood is a great and ancient land covered by a vast temperate forest. In some places, this forest is so old the trees dwarf even the tallest castles. In other places, smaller trees provide food and shelter for the fauna and folk of the Wood. Humblewood is named after the forest, but beyond the trees exist the towering range of The Crest mountains, the low-lying swamplands of the Mokk Fields, and the rocky shores of the Talongrip Coast.

Many Humblewood locations can be encountered by playing through the Adventure in the Wood portion of this book. This section also fleshes out other locations, providing GMs and players alike with the tools to understand the places of the Wood and the people who live there.

ALDERHEART

Long ago, druids of the Wood learned how to speak with trees and use magic to shape them into shelters in which they could make their homes. This process was considered deeply respectful, as a tree could not be forced to take any shape it didn't agree to. So it was that specialist druids, known as shapers, became mediators between the will of the people and the will of the forest. Birdfolk shapers spoke to the tallest and most ancient tree in the Wood — Alderheart. The shapers obtained permission for birdfolk to build a home within Alderheart's branches. Later, the great tree again gave permission to shape its trunk into homes for an increasing population. This burgeoning city took the name of the tree who so generously provided a home for the people of the Wood, and Alderheart became Humblewood's capital. Known throughout the region as the "Great Tree City," Alderheart, is a vibrant place and a cultural center, home to thousands of residents, some regional and some from the farthest corners of Everden.

Heart of the Wood

Alderheart is home to every race of birdfolk and humblefolk. The thriving community attracts people from faraway lands, like traveling merchants, explorers, and foreign dignitaries. Citizens of the Humblewood who don't live in the city routinely journey there to trade goods, stock up on supplies, engage in artistic endeavors, or simply to catch up on the latest news and gossip. Effectively everyone in Humblewood is connected to Alderheart.

Virtually anything can be found in Alderheart, if you know where to look. The majority of the city's inhabitants are well-meaning, decent folk, but like any city there are dark alleys and back rooms. Crime here is usually kept in check by the Perch Guard, but while the city guards are vaunted as being among the best in the Wood, illicit activities continue under the cover of darkness.

Wide and Tall

As Alderheart is massive, it is often difficult for visitors to tell they are in a tree at all. The Great Tree City is divided into three main levels where people live, work, and go about their lives: the canopy, the trunk, and the roots.

The canopy contains Alderheart's most iconic structures, including the chambers of the Birdfolk Council, the headquarters of the Perch Guard, and the largest market in the Wood. This market boasts boutiques where patrons can find high-quality weapons, armor, and adventuring gear, the latest fashions, finest foods, and goods brought in from all across Everden. Outside the main market, smaller shops peddle wares off the beaten path. Some contain enchanted goods at a bargain, though any Alderheart socialite will recommend sticking to the more respectable shops.

City gates, located at strategic points around the canopy, are the only sanctioned ways to enter the city, and are monitored by Perch Guard watchposts. These gates are connected to lower levels of the tree and the forest floor by large winding stairways that allow travel by foot. Vast infrastructures for transportation are common in the canopy. "Branchroads", specially-shaped wooden pathways, are the arteries of trade in Alderheart. Along with rope bridges, these roads allow couriers to move goods from place to place using hand carts. Pulleys connected to raisable platforms are used to lift freight from the forest floor. In the outermost branches, where such infrastructure cannot be supported, gliding platforms provide birdfolk, at least, with a means of crossing otherwise impassable gaps. Without the ability to glide, navigating this part of the capital becomes increasingly dangerous.

Buildings in the canopy are made from a variety of materials, including stone, wood, and brick. Most are stationed atop reinforced platforms to keep them stable. The more impressive homes are located in the Boughs District, just above the market. Those on the outer branches tend to be made of wood and have a more modest feel to them.

The largest section of the metropolis, the trunk, which acts as an intermediary zone between the prosperous canopy and the less affluent roots. Many humblefolk make their homes here, where there is stable floor beneath them.

The trunk can be one of the most confusing and disorienting areas of Alderheart for new travelers. Pathways split and diverge, sometimes tapering off into nothing. Systems of specially-designed cold lanterns serve as signposts along the

main paths. These lanterns use either captured fireflies or motes of magic to provide light, depending on the neighborhood. In either case, lamplighters are tasked with making sure they stay lit during the day to provide a day/night cycle.

In the trunk, another market thrives. Here, stalls of all kinds cluster around central support pillars shaped from Alderheart's wood. They showcase unique wares and niche humblefolk-style foods and cultural goods not found in canopy markets. There are also curiosity shops and sellers of regional wares, such as crystals harvested from the backs of young basilisks. Additionally, the trunk market is home to inns, taverns, and public houses. This is the best place in Alderheart to find serviceable goods and adventuring gear for those looking to save coin. Near the market is a druidic grove of moss and fungi supported by the Tenders, who help care for the tree and train new recruits to their order.

Beyond the many shops and goods on offer in the trunk market, the central support pillars contain tenement style housing for the most cosmopolitan trunk dwellers. More affluent homes can also be found here, shaped out of the trunk, for Alderheart's traditionally minded humblefolk nobility, as well as birdfolk aristocrats whose homes have been here since Alderheart was first shaped.

Down past the trunk market, pathways widen and wind, illuminated by knotholes in the tree that allow sunlight to filter inside. Although some homes in these bright hollows are built near the bark, where windows can be shaped out of the wood, most homes are shaped inside the dim pathways. A select few obtain permission to shape homes on the outside surface of the trunk. These special homes are connected to interior pathways via carefully fenced roads, and are considered a luxury that many cannot afford.

The farther down the trunk one travels, the more shabby and ill-kept the residences and infrastructure become. There are no officially authorized ways to leave or enter the tree by way of lower parts of the trunk, and Perch Guard are constantly on the lookout for smugglers.

Beneath the lowest parts of the trunk, a series of tunnels have been carved into the roots of Alderheart. At first, the roots were not considered to be official parts of the city, and their development was largely overlooked by city officials in the canopy, until word arrived of the illicit activities taking place there. Many were convinced that the tunneling would simply go away if druids were to heal the tree, but Alderheart itself took pity on those living here, and decided to allow the tunnels to exist rather than force people from their homes. The root tunnels have since been strengthened by druidic shaping, lit to be on par with the inside of the trunk, and a garrison of the Perch Guard was stationed nearby. Even with these improvements, the roots remain the poorest area in Alderheart: the slums of the Great Tree City. Here, the air is always dank and humid, and wild fungi grow rampant. The buildings are mostly cobbled together from scavenged materials, and some have been converted into community gathering places. These hubs help connect communities in the roots with helpful aid from the trunk district, and allow the people here to organize and plan neighborhood events. Life in the roots isn't easy, but people are trying their best to keep their communities strong, as they petition the canopy for better living conditions. There are few shops here, and they typically traffic in smuggled and stolen goods. Crime is ever-present; many who dwell in the roots see it as necessary to survive.

ASHBARROW

This small town exists on the fringes of the Scorched Grove, where wind-blown ash causes the soil to be fertile and the land rich with game. It is dangerous living so close to the Grove, but the rewards make it worth the risk for the intrepid folk that call Ashbarrow home. The town takes its name from the small hill upon which it rests, and is inhabited by a mix of birdfolk and humblefolk who shelter within its low stone walls. A large watchtower near the town's center serves as both a means of observing when the winds will bring ash from the Scorched Grove, as well as an observatory for seers who watch the stars for signs and portents.

THE AVIUM

The Avium is a college of magical arts with a wide range of subjects available for study. The free transmission of knowledge is one of the Avium's core principles, but the college nonetheless maintains a certain degree of secrecy regarding some of the more dangerous magical tomes it safeguards. All races are welcome within the Avium's halls, although admittance is granted only by the will of the headmaster and a council of senior staff. Prospective students are tested for their skills, but also the motivation for their studies. The college takes great care to ensure its members will positively represent the legacy and reputation of the Avium out in the world.

Magic, Inside and Out

The Avium was once a living tree that was home to a perch known for producing some of Humblewood's most legendary scholars. After the tree's death, a group of wizards from this perch decided to found the Avium here. They used transmutation magic to artificially petrify the tree, and then shaped it into a building capable of housing the largest mage college in Humblewood. Controlled by magical fields, the college's many structures float in circuit with one another: a collection of towers, courtyards, and observatories all hover around the huge central building, each equipped with a bridge that lines up with the main building at regular intervals. Those not gifted with the birdfolk's limited form of flight must harness their magic for transportation, or wait until the archways align to allow for foot traffic.

Seat of Knowledge

While the curriculum is diverse, the college does impose certain limitations, most notably regarding necromancy. As inhabitants of the Wood, the Avium's primary staff members originate from a culture with great respect for nature and the

cycle of life. As such, the necromantic arts are taught mainly in a theoretical sense. Practical application of necromancy at the college is highly regulated, and available only under strict guidance.

Students are, however, encouraged to explore other schools of magic to their fullest potential. Breakthroughs in elemental theorems, teleportation methods, and advances in practical transmutation have been pioneered at the Avium. Within these classrooms you will find future Tenders, council members, and protectors of the Wood. The application process is demanding, and the curriculum rigorous. Few make it to graduation. For those who prove their grasp of the arcane, endorsement from the Avium is among the highest of honors.

BRACKENMILL

Farming in birdfolk perches is unconventional. In the taller perches, fruiting vines and mosses are grown from the branches of the trees. The largest and most productive farming perch is Brackenmill. Considered a lesser perch due to its proximity to the ground, Brackenmill nevertheless consists of many proximate tree-farms that, after years of growth, melded into one another. It includes a central hub of shops, trade halls, and shipping platforms, all under the watchful eye of the local Perch Guard. Some of the farms have even begun to expand downward, encompassing small horticultural plots at the base of trees. The grounded farms produce luxury goods that can't be grown along the branches, and house corrals for giant insects that produce goods ranging from silk to meat.

Practically every store, tavern, and supplier in Alderheart gets their goods from Brackenmill. The movement of agricultural products to vendors around the Wood is overseen by a powerful trade guild made up of prominent farm-owning families. The guild is comprised of elected leaders and legacy members from the most noble of these families. Legacy members inherit their position and tend to hold lifetime appointments.

THE CREST

The Crest is the name given to the mountain range to the northeast of Humblewood. It stands in stark contrast to the green forest at its base with sheer rock faces and huge boulders rising into the sky.

Desolate and Dangerous

The mountain's severe environment supports a variety of goats and small mammals that feast on hearty shrubbery growing between the crags. There are also several unique creatures native to the Crest. Griffons roost in the peaks and scour a wide territory around the mountain for prey. Basilisks feast on rocks, but have a special preference for creatures they have petrified with their deadly stone gaze. Giant eagles nest atop the highest cliffs, keeping their young safe from lowland predators. Mountain lions, powerful earth-aspected hunters, prey on goats, rodents, and occasionally more monstrous creatures.

The Crest is dotted with structures built during different points in history by both birdfolk and humblefolk. In addition to garnering interest from archeological teams, some of these mysterious ruins have become home to a handful of intrepid folk who have taken to life in this dangerous and remote place.

Mighty Origins

An old tale relates how the Amaranthine Altus was challenged to a contest of strength by a giant made from living rock. To achieve victory, Altus is said to have lifted the earth up with his talons, proving his might and creating the mountains. In some versions, the frustrated giant challenges Altus to several rematches. They travel across the face of Everden, raising higher and higher peaks, until all the mountains in the world are created. Every adaptation agrees: Altus is always victorious, and is given dominion over the high summits of the world. The snowy, harsh environment of the mountains is said to be directly influenced by Altus, the Amaranthine of storms.

It is a wonder that such a lush, expansive forest sits at the foot of these blustry peaks. Experts theorize that the formidable bulwark of rock helped the Wood thrive by shielding is from the bitter, salty winds of the ocean.

MARSHVIEW

In the south of the forest is a small perch known as Marshview. One of the most unconventional perches, Marshview is extremely disconnected from the goings on of the Wood. The location has basic amenities, like shops and an inn, but it is not a prime destination for travelers. Residents eye visitors with a mix of curiosity and suspicion, but are ultimately a kind and welcoming folk.

A balanced mix of birdfolk and humblefolk inhabitants results in architecture unique to Marshview. A reflection of its population, walkways and staircases are more common here than in other birdfolk settlements. Several buildings are on the ground, and traditional farming takes advantage of the limited dry ground between the forest and the nearby swamp.

MEADOWFEN

Meadowfen is a peaceful village located between the Mokk Fields to the south and a glade of spruce copses to the north. It is a humble village, with a small number of residents. Most are farmers who work either the ash-enriched pastures to the north, or the marshlands to the south, which are ripe with sour berries and waterborne plants. Meadowfen has been quiet for as long as anyone can remember, and life here goes by slowly. Its closeness to the marsh keeps it safe from attacks by emberbats and other fire-based creatures from the Scorched Grove. Its distance from the Mokk Fields ensures deadly slimes don't stray into the village.

MOKK FIELDS

The confluence of dozens of streams and runoff flows have pooled within the southwestern lowlands of Humblewood, creating a vast wetland. The water here gradually filters out to the Talongrip Coast and into the sea. Before it does, the still, muddy freshwater reservoirs allow the Mokk Fields to support a surprising array of life.

Uninviting Geography

The fringes of the Mokk Fields are wreathed with reeds, water lilies, and pleasant greenery. Farther into the heart of the swamp, travelers find themselves inundated by stagnant, foul-smelling waters and muddy lowlands with poor footholds. Patches of dry stable ground are scarce, meaning that the slimy, gnarled trees that grow here are rarely suitable to support a perch.

Rare Goods

The Mokk Fields are not a popular travel destination, especially for birdfolk accustomed to towering trees and bustling perches. Still, some venture here seeking the area's unique resources. Plants and creatures found only in the swamp are useful for potion brewing or magical reagents, and there is good coin to be made for people willing to brave the area's many dangers. Of special note are the slimes, dangerous ooze creatures exclusive to this environment, whose residue has become a sought-after commodity for those with the skill to harvest it.

Mokkden Caverns

One of the more unlikely landforms of the Mokk Fields is the intricate, vast cavern system that runs beneath the swamps. Years ago, what was thought to be sinkholes were revealed to in fact be tunnel entrances to a series of caves. Scouts from Winnowing Reach have probed the depths to learn more about these caverns. The few who have returned reported a significant number of slimes. The damp, lightless caverns make a perfect home for the amorphous creatures that dwell here.

SALTAR'S PORT

History shows there was serious disagreement over the founding of Saltar's Port. For many birdfolk, the idea of building a city on the ground is laughable in itself, but to build on the rocky coastline with the express intent of sailing ships was considered a gross misuse of resources. After heated debates, a group of birdfolk broke off and founded the port city on their own. The rift between the inhabitants of the Port and the rest of the Wood took many years to mend, and the relationship is still tense at times.

Saltar's Port serves as the only access for ships coming to or leaving from Humblewood. It has sparked a vibrant trade business, offering the riches of the Wood to faroff cities and kingdoms. The port has also opened up Humblewood to overseas visitors and migrants, causing concern among the more consevative birdfolk.

SCORCHED GROVE

Centuries ago, the area known as the Scorched Grove was once a lush forest of calm meadows and peaceful glades. Then, the Great Calamity came: a massive forest fire that swept through the Grove and reduced it to a smoldering, ashen plain. The Grove refused to heal. Stranger still, the soil beneath the ashen steppes still smolders with embers. The air here carries a supernatural heat which can exhaust travelers or even cause burns depending on its fierceness. This hostile landscape is home to a variety of curious fire-aspected creatures. Certain species, now considered native to Humblewood, only appeared after the Great Calamity. Most notable are the emberbats, which roost in the safety of the Grove during the day.

A Scar on the Forest

Accounts of the great blaze have been recorded in Humblewood's history books, but the exact cause of the Great Calamity remains a mystery. The soils of the Grove were tested and found to be distinctively suited to channeling evocation energy, especially when used with fire spells. It

was also discovered that the fire-aspected creatures of the Grove have extra-planar origins, giving rise to the theory that the Calamity was caused by magic. A popular myth told by forest-dwellers alleges that the Calamity was caused by the appearance of a great primal being of fire and destruction, which visited its wrath upon the Wood and then vanished as mysteriously as it arrived.

Whatever its origins, the fire devastated the area and displaced thousands of beasts and people from their homes. While the inhabitants of the Humblewood know that the death and rebirth is part of the natural order of the Wood, the Calamity that befell the Grove was clearly unnatural.

Each year, the Grove pushes on the boundary of the forest, growing slightly as its edges are set ablaze by windblown embers or fire-infused creatures. The expansion of the Grove leaves the newly-burned areas similarly affected, experiencing the supernatural qualities of the Grove. This gradual spread has increased with a recent spate of forest fires, making those who study the Grove nervous.

A Watchful Eye

The Scorched Grove is cared for by a conclave of mystics and druids known as the Tenders. Many Tenders are talented thinkers and practitioners of natural magic, who have dedicated their lives to understanding the nature of the Calamity's effect on the Grove and healing the damage it has caused. They believe that through study and communion with nature, the natural balance of the energy in the wood can be restored, healing the Grove back into the tranquil forest it once was.

There is much debate about the intent and success of the Tenders. High-society perch-dwellers are inclined to think of the Tenders as nothing more than "odd-birds," embarking on a fool's errand. These detractors claim that the Scorched Grove is simply a quirk of Humblewood's natural magic. Much of the populace agrees with this point of view, despite educated claims to the contrary. Still, given the affinity between nature and the cultures of the Wood, Tenders are generally respected for the care and reverence they give to the forest.

TALONGRIP COAST

The perches of Talongrip Coast stand in stark contrast to their woodland counterparts, often rising from cliff faces, salt-blasted trees, and jagged rocks jutting from the sea. These small settlements are sparsely decorated, focusing on stability and protection from the salty winds of the ocean. Homes are chiseled out of the rock faces, with wooden platforms serving as walkways between them. On more vertical slopes, buildings are connected by a veritable forest of ropes and cables used to get from place to place.

Life Over the Water

Citizens of coastal perches and villages are primarily folk who wish to remain close to the water. Sea raptors, mapachs, and jerbeens have carved out space for themselves along the coast, sometimes literally. These seaside settlements focus on fishing and salt drying, exporting their cured fish to the rest of the Wood.

The weather here is volatile. It can turn from clear and sunny to black and stormy with one gust of the wind. Most of the coast's inhabitants can spot these changes easily, knowing when to retreat to shelters. Living near the shore means enduring the occasional hurricane, windstorm, and tidal wave. Those who make the coast their home are known for resilience.

Deadly Neighbors

A number of dangers face the people who live along the coastline. Large predatory lizards hunt and scavenge the sandy shores, and giant crabs have been known to drag victims to a watery grave. Rarest of all are the dreaded wakewyrms. Most professional fishing outfits employ hunters to stand guard, and guides and mercenaries are often hired by merchants hauling goods across the treacherous coastways. Those who wish to avoid the cost of protection can attempt the journey alone, but many grim fables describe foolish travelers who were too stingy to take the proper precautions.

WINNOWING REACH

Winnowing Reach is a relatively new development in the Wood. It started as a modest outpost, a last stop for researchers and slime-wranglers bound for the Mokk Fields. When folk began disappearing in the swamp, it was decreed that a more permanent settlement be constructed to hold a small contingent of Perch Guard. To this end, the perch was hastily constructed within a small stand of willow trees. In contrast to standard perches, a decent portion of the homes and facilities here were built entirely on the ground. This closeness to the earth creates a feeling of unease and general distaste for bird-folk accustomed to the high perches, but the other races that make up the population appreciate the easier access to research stations and support buildings.

The Slime Industry

South-west of the Winnowing Reach are the damp slime-filled caves of the Mokkden Caverns. Initially considered a hindrance, slimes quickly became a valuable export for the Reach. Thanks to the profits from slime-wrangling, Winnowing Reach has grown to include businesses specializing in harvesting and shipping slime residue. The trade is mainly with the Avium for educational, research, and experimental purposes, but other buyers are appearing at a steady pace. Alchemists across the Wood find the substances useful in a variety of potions, and some healers are beginning to test the medicinal application of various slime-based concoctions.

4 Adventure in the Wood

A TALE FROM THE WOOD

INTRODUCTION

The earth beneath Leya felt unusually warm. She reached down to confirm and pulled back in pain immediately. Her feathers were seared slightly. The season had been unusually dry, but this was a frightening temperature. After a closer look, it seemed like the ground was glowing.

CRACK! Leya's eyes went to the sound. The large tree she'd played in as a child had fallen, and smoke rose from its remains. "Go!" her mind yelled, and she listened, rushing towards home. "Get to them before—"

Suddenly, flames burst forth, travelling at an unearthly velocity towards Leya's perch. Her perch meant the world to her, but in the vast expanse of the Wood it was small and unimportant. Too insignificant for a Perch Guard outpost of its own. Her heart tightened knowing the remote settlement wouldn't be warned in time, and that aid would not be close by.

Leya's hands began to move without thought as she whispered the words of her grandmother. It wouldn't be enough, but she wouldn't be able to live with herself if she didn't try. When taught to her, the spell was meant to help farms through rainless seasons. It wasn't intended to be used defensively. Droplets of a lost cause formed between her fingers.

Conjured water fell to the ground, evaporating as soon as it hit the steaming forest floor. As she concentrated, a strong warm gust touched Leya's face. It's Altus, it must be! Leya thought. The Amaranthine of storms was bringing rain to quench this hateful wildfire. She looked to the sky, frantically searching for more signs of changing weather.

Barely able to register what she saw, her arms dropped to her sides in defeat. Flying balls of fire were filling up the sky. A swarm broke off, headed in her direction. Leya sank to her knees, hoping with her last thoughts that someone would save Humblewood before it all burned.

FREE RESOURCES

To supplement your Humblewood adventure, handouts, maps, tools and more are available at:
HUMBLEWOOD.COM/RESOURCES

RUNNING THE CAMPAIGN

The following chapter contains a full adventure set in Humblewood that takes characters from levels 1 to 5. This chapter is meant for the GM's eyes only. It is recommended that you read the entire book, including the **Adventure in the Wood** chapter, prior to running it with your group. It is also assumed that you have read the 5th Edition Core Rules and Monster Books.

Information formatted in a box like this should be read out loud for players. This information is to be read when the party arrives at that point in the adventure.

Information formatted in a box like this is additional background information used to help shape the campaign. This information can be revealed to the players when necessary.

Any monster or non-player character (NPC) stat block included in this book is identified by **bold blue text**. These monsters can be found in **Appendix A: Bestiary (pg.177)** and the NPC's are listed in **Appendix B: Nonplayer Characters (pg.190)**. Any monster or NPC stat block in **bold purple text** can be found using the 5th Edition Core Rules. NPCs with given names will appear in **bold green text** the first time they are introduced to the players. **Bold red text** references other sections within this book. Magic items that can be found in the 5th Edition Core Rules will appear in *italics*, and items or spells with an * beside them can be found in **Appendix D: New Magic Items (pg.211)** or **Chapter 1: New Spells (pg.48)** of this book.

The challenges in this adventure were created with a balanced party of four players in mind. If your group has more or fewer players, consider adding or removing enemies in each encounter. Try to ensure players feel challenged, but not overwhelmed. The adventure can be played through in its entirety, or used as pieces for your own custom campaign. **Appendix E: Random Encounters (pg.213)**, as well as the ***Monster Cards***, and ***NPC Cards*** can be used to further flesh out the game.

Humblewood lies on the eastern coast of a vast continent, nestled in a valley between the towering Crest Mountains and the marshlands of the Mokk Fields. It is a mystical, secluded place that gets by quite well without much trade from the outside world, due to the fertility of the soil and an abundance of natural resources. The Wood has many skilled workers and artisans, and this, coupled with the supply of raw materials, makes Humblewood a great exporter.

The Wood has a diverse population, but the true power in Humblewood are the birdfolk. At the heart of their nation lies the great capital of Alderheart. The seat of commerce, art, and political power in the region, Alderheart has long been a refuge for those seeking fame, fortune, or protection.

Players will encounter some locations that are not extensively explained in this chapter. It is recommended that the information in the **Traversing the Wood (pg.76)** chapter be used to help players understand their surroundings.

Monster and NPC Cards. In addition to their entries in **Appendix A: Bestiary (pg.177)**, all the monsters and NPCs exclusive to this adventure have accompanying *The Deck of Many* cards for quick reference.

Character Advancement. For ease of play, the adventure has been structured with the milestone leveling rules in mind. Characters will level up automatically at the end of key story moments. For those groups using the standard XP rewards, there are experience point rewards for the social, puzzle, and other non-combat encounters provided alongside the milestone rewards. Otherwise, award standard XP for defeated foes as the players progress through the adventure.

OVERVIEW

There have been disturbing signs over the last few months, signalling that something is wrong in Humblewood. The troubles appear to originate from activity in the Scorched Grove, an ashen plain that was ravaged many centuries ago by a destructive fire. Whatever caused the fire has scarred the land with elemental magic, making it inhospitable to all but strange fire-based creatures. Of late, the Grove has begun to expand. At first, it was hard to notice the slow expansion, but those in tune with nature (especially the Tenders) could see the imbalance in the elemental forces of Humblewood. For many common folk, this imbalance has been experienced as unseasonal dryness, which has led to crop failure and an increased frequency of forest fires. There have also been a number of unusually aggressive emberbat clouds reported far outside of their natural ranges.

The true nature of the danger still remains hidden from the people of the Wood. A corvum necromancer named **Odwald Ebonhart (see Appendix B, pg.196)** has stirred the elemental **aspect of fire**, which has lain dormant beneath the Scorched Grove since its first burning. The aspect's energies have begun to empower fire-based creatures within the Wood. The increased range of emberbat swarms have brought fires that have expanded the Grove. Many forest-dwellers, who have been left without homes, have turned to banditry to survive. Soon the elemental incarnation will break free, and players must find a way to stop the aspect of fire before it reduces the Wood to ashes.

Part 1: The Adventure Begins

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Part 1 of the adventure is designed to start a party of 1st level characters off on their journey in the world of Humblewood. The kinds of characters players create will influence how the campaign begins.

If characters are not playing races described in this book, perhaps they have heard legends of Humblewood, and have traveled or were brought here to explore the wonders of the forest. Maybe the newcomers have come to see the magnificent city of Alderheart, or to seek an audience with the Birdfolk Council. Any number of stories can be crafted about why standard 5e races have ended up in the Wood, but keep in mind that they might be viewed as curiosities as they travel the land. Most folk in Humblewood haven't seen outsiders like them before.

If characters are birdfolk or humblefolk, have them start their adventure as residents of Meadowfen, a small village south of the Scorched Grove, near the main road.

SLEEPY MEADOWFEN

Meadowfen has been quiet for as long as anyone can remember, and life there goes by slowly. Recently, Meadowfen has fallen on hard times. Seasonal rainfalls haven't arrived, leaving the fields barren. To make matters worse, trade wagons sent to provide relief have gone missing, fueling rumors of bandits prowling the roadways. Fire-based creatures are venturing closer to the village than ever before. A week ago, an ominous plume of black smoke to the north blocked the sun. A few brave villagers ventured out to investigate, but they haven't returned. The source of the smoke remains unknown.

The sleepy village of Meadowfen is the perfect home for aspiring adventurers who dream of fantastical quests across Humblewood. The recent chaos surrounding the settlement presents ample opportunity for a group of heroes to get their feet wet. Meadowfen also works well as a staging ground for new arrivals to the Wood, as there are few here who the village Elder can turn to for help in these times. It would be fortuitous if a group of travelling adventurers were to show up.

Wherever the journey begins, one of the locals who went to investigate the black smoke in the north will return, badly wounded and in need of aid.

The Great Blaze

There is a commotion in the village square. A wounded strig woman limps towards the Meadowfen Elder's home, staggering and catching herself on the side of a well. She is bloodied, and her tawny feathers are singed and flecked with ash and soot.

The birdfolk, **Cara Stormsinger (see Appendix B, pg.193)**, is one of the villagers who left a week ago to investigate the smoke to the north.

Cara will take water if it is offered, but will refuse other aid as she is adamant about getting to the village Elder.

"I must speak to the Elder, we are all in grave danger. The Grove has taken an entire town."At this moment, a wizened gallus, who was sitting on her front porch, rises and flings open her door, waving for Cara to come. Cara cannot carry herself anymore

If a party member does not assist her, a villager helps Cara into the Elder's house. The gallus, **Ardwyn, Elder of Meadowfen (see Appendix B, pg.190)** grants entrance to Cara and the party. Many villagers will try to follow Cara, but Ardwyn will turn them away. It is clear the party was only allowed into Ardwyn's home because she wants to speak with them.

If any party member has proficiency in the Medicine skill, they will be given time to tend to Cara's wounds.

Impatiently, Ardwyn approaches Cara.

"It's clear you have endured much, my child," the respected gallus says, motioning to the party to gather around. "But we must know what happened out there."

Cara explains that the fires from the Scorched Grove have spread to the hillside town of Ashbarrow and razed it to the ground. Cara warns that the roads are full of bandits. Luckily, she escaped with her life. Others, Ashbarrow citizens fleeing their burning homes, were not so lucky. Cara doesn't know where those captured by the bandits were taken.

The Elder, understanding how serious this is, asks the party to travel to Alderheart, to speak to the Birdfolk Council and inform them of Ashbarrow's destruction and of the bandit activity on the roads near Meadowfen. The party may be the only ones who can make the dangerous journey.

Five Finger Discount

As the party sets out from Meadowfen, four hooded figures will come into view on the road ahead.

Three hooded figures are gesturing violently at a crumpled body on the ground, while a fourth is leaning against a nearby tree. A small hand-cart stacked high with bags and boxes of various sizes stands nearby. One of the hooded figures goes to the cart and unceremoniously sifts through the packages, leaving fallen bundles strewn on the road.

As you approach the three strangers who were gesturing at the body, you can see the pointed faces of mapach under the hoods. Two male and one female mapach, each wearing worn leather armor and a short sword on their belt. The fourth, an intimidating vulpin female, is lightly armored and wears an ornate sword on her hip. She seems to be hanging back, letting her subordinates do all the work.

You hear a whimpered "Help me" from the creature laying on the road, but you can't make out their features. The mapach female, still standing near the fallen body, puts her hands on her hips and says to the party, "All right folks, nothing to see. Move along if you know what's good for ya."

The vulpin leading these three **mapach bandits** is a powerful foe named **Fray Merridan (see Appendix B, pg.207)**. She represents a serious threat to the party, but won't take interest in them unless she has a reason to believe the characters are a worthy challenge.

Assuming the party doesn't want to fight, the bandits will leave if bribed. They are reasonable robbers, and will gladly relinquish the cart if the party can offer a worthy sum. Negotiations start with Fray evaluating the cart's contents. She and her crew will simply walk away for 10 gp each. Players can roll opposed Charisma (Deception) or (Persuasion) checks against a Wisdom check made by Fray to negotiate for a lower price, but the bandits won't leave for anything less than 5 gp each.

Believing they have the upper hand, the bandits won't hesitate to attack if they sense trepidation or suspect that the party might be up to something. Any threats or posturing from the characters will be met with an attack from the three mapach bandits. This fight shouldn't be too difficult, as the party likely outnumbers the bandits and are probably better equipped.

Fray will stay back and let the party fight the bandits for a round or two. She will intervene after two rounds or when a bandit is brought down. Fray will target the character who looks to be the most capable in single combat. If the party is larger than four players, she will engage in combat from the start, ordering her underlings to deal with the others.

Joining the fight, the bandit captain says,"Intriguing. You look like you might actually give me a proper fight!" The vulpin smirks and draws her blade, tracing intricate patterns in the air as she rushes into battle.

Fray is a deadly foe, but she wasn't prepared to have her heist interrupted. She won't risk her life needlessly if the odds turn against her. If at least two of the mapach bandits go down, she will make a tactical retreat into the dense forest, where she can easily disappear in the foliage. While escaping, she will swear revenge and leave any unfortunate underlings to the party's mercy.

The terrain is difficult for the party, but not for Fray, who is familiar with the area. Any character trying to pursue Fray on foot will quickly lose her in the forest unless they can make a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check each round. The dense forest also makes gliding difficult. Most birdfolk can't glide through the trees, but Small birdfolk characters can attempt to glide after Fray, avoiding trunks and branches with a DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check.

Failure on either the Wisdom or Dexterity check means the character has lost sight of Fray and ends the chase for that character. A character successfully chasing Fray through the woods means the party catches up with her, at which point she will surrender. If four rounds have passed since her retreat, the party has lost Fray.

Should the party choose to try and locate Fray by continuing down the road, they will arrive at a clearing where a river separates them from a dense forest on the other side. A heavy log sits with one end on riverbank and the other end in the water, preventing the party from crossing the river and chasing Fray.

If the party continues through any forest terrain, they will need to make regular survival checks to avoid becoming lost in the trees. Use the **Forest Encounters (Level 1-2) table (pg.214)** for an especially persistent group. Make it clear that the vulpin has made her getaway, covering her tracks well enough that following her is fruitless.

If the encounter should go horribly awry, the bandits won't bother capturing the party or finishing them off. Rather, they will retreat, stealing as much from the hand-cart as they can carry. After all, the bandits aren't sure there won't be reinforcements coming to the rescue. If a player consents, their character can earn a scar from their battle with Fray in order to heighten anticipation for the rematch later.

TREASURE

The mapach bandits are wearing worn leather armor and each one carries a poorly-kept short sword. If they are defeated and searched, the party also finds a small coin purse with 5 gp inside it.

If Fray is defeated. She is wearing a suit of studded leather armor (obviously pilfered), and a finely crafted shortsword with a rose insignia on the pommel. The sword is not magical, but it will sell for double the normal going rate of a shortsword. Any lower level bandit who sees a character wearing the sword will immediately recognize it as a captain's sword. So long as the sword is visible, all bandits of a rank lower than captain will have disadvantage on any rolls made to oppose Charisma (Intimidation) ability checks made by that character. The party will also find among Fray's possessions 10 gp, and a map which has the location of a bandit camp marked (see **Bandit Camp, pg.110**).

Escorting Eliza

After defeating or bribing the bandits, the characters can help the beaten figure lying in the road to her feet. If they don't engage with her immediately, have her grunt or whine to attract attention. If they still don't assist, the merchant eventually sits up on her own. She is **Eliza Pennygleam (see Appendix B, pg.196)**, an eluran who hails from lands beyond Humblewood. It's fairly common to see eluran traders in these parts, and the merchant is happy to explain that she has traveled here to set up shop.

If the characters were defeated by the bandits, Eliza will be the one who revives them, healing each character for 2d4+2 hit points using the last of a supply of poultices from her small hand-cart. She will curse the bandits who stole from her, but will still be grateful to the party for their valiant efforts.

"My whiskers, that was close! Thank you all for protecting me and my cart. My name is Eliza. I'm on my way to Alderheart by way of Winnowing Reach. Would you be kind enough to help me the rest of the way?"

Eliza

In case the characters are unfamiliar with the Wood, Eliza describes the road ahead. She explains that it works its way along the edge of Mokk Fields, a large swampland, before reaching Winnowing Reach, a small research outpost whose inhabitants study the slimes that live in the nearby caverns.

Eliza's plan was to stop briefly in Winnowing Reach, to sell her wares and acquire new stock, before eventually making her way to Alderheart.

If the characters seem reluctant to aid her, she will entice them by offering each character a single item from her cart in exchange for their protection and company on the road — to be awarded upon arrival.

If the party decides to walk with Eliza, their movement speed is reduced considerably as she pulls her cart behind her. A strong character can offer to pull the heavy-laden hand-cart instead. Succeeding a DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check keeps everyone moving at regular traveling speed, while failure means the party continues slowly.

B-B-B-BATS!

The road to Winnowing Reach keeps the party just out of reach of the swamplands on the right.

> **As you make your way down the road, terrain on the left side changes considerably. Beyond the lush green trees lining the road, glimpses of burned stumps and ash-covered fields can be seen. It looks as if a massive fire recently ravaged this place.**

This bleak landscape seems to stretch for miles. While looking out over this gray scene, the characters may notice a cloud of creatures flying above the ash. Those who keep an eye on the creatures, or characters with a passive perception score of 15 or higher, notice the cloud change course and begin flying toward the party.

> **A swarm draws near. You can see it is composed of hundreds of tiny flying creatures, each one resembling a bat with a candle-sized flame sprouting from above its upturned nostrils. The combined heat of their bodies can be felt on the wind.**

If the cloud's course change was noticed, the characters have about 10 seconds before the bats descend on them. If the bats flew unnoticed until this point, they arrive so swiftly that the characters do not have time to prepare for the attack.

The characters are beset by two **swarms of emberbats**. The bats dive and harass their targets relentlessly until they are slain or the party is defeated. The swarm won't give chase for long, and can be escaped if the party is able to put considerable distance between themselves and the ashy plain.

WINNOWING REACH

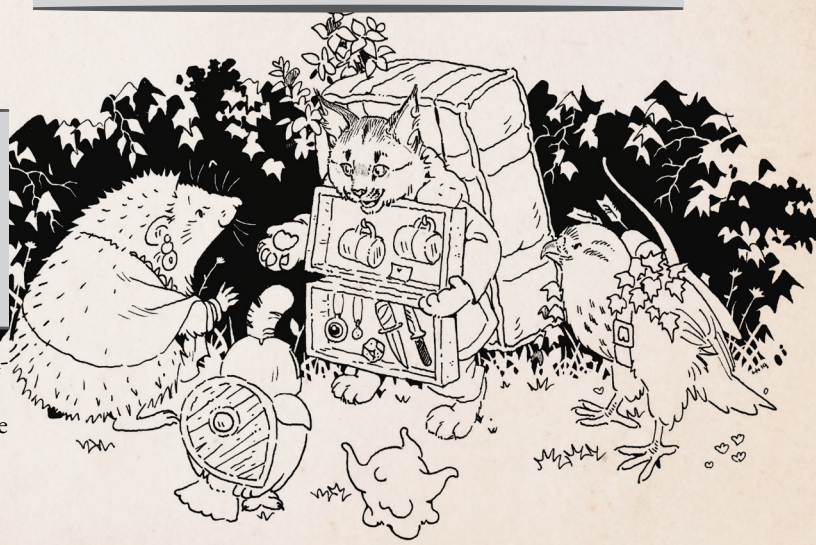
With the flaming bats behind the party, the rest of the trip is uneventful. After a couple hours on the road, the village of Winnowing Reach comes into view.

Entering the Reach, Eliza thanks the party and tells them that she will set up in the center of town to see what she can sell or trade.

> **"Have a rest," Eliza says. "You are going to need it for when you escort me to Alderheart." she winks.**

If Eliza promised the characters an item for accompanying her to Winnowing Reach, they can claim that now. Each player can choose a piece of adventuring gear worth 50 gp or fewer as a reward.

> **"Come find me when you are ready to head north," she calls out as she walks away.**



Characters are free to explore Winnowing Reach, though they will find the amenities of this research station to be lacking compared to other settlements of its size. There is a general store and a small inn with a tavern, but instead of staples like a weapon or armorsmith, the town has an apothecary and a bookbinder. The following numbered locations refer to Fig.1.1: the map of Winnowing Reach.

1. Storage and Granary

This large building houses slime residue, which will eventually be exported across the Wood, as well as collected foodstuffs from nearby farms. It is a hub of activity, with laborers moving about constantly under the watchful eye of Winnowing Reach's town militia.

2. Town Gaol

As it is not a large settlement, Winnowing Reach has only a small gaol. Looked after by a **birdfolk guard** who commands the small local militia, it's usually empty. If the party has any captive bandits in tow, this gaol should hold them until a wagon from Alderheart arrives to bring outlaws to the capital for sentencing.

3. Magistrate's Office

A stately building in the center of town serves as the official chambers for the local magistrate. Two **birdfolk militia** guard the stairway that leads up to the platform upon which the building rests. Entry to this building is generally denied unless it is for official business (in response to a summons by the magistrate, for example).

4. Eliza's Cart

Although she isn't particularly well-stocked at the moment, Eliza's cart contains a variety of wares available for barter or trade. Eliza has an odd assortment of equipment from the Weapons, Tools, Adventuring Gear, and Trade Goods sections of the Core Rules. Rather than determining what she has in her cart ahead of time, whenever a character wishes to purchase an item from her, roll a d6. If the result is an even number, she has such an item with her, while if the result is odd, she does not. Eliza is interested in expanding her wares, and will accept a trade for an item of greater value instead of payment in gold pieces.

5. Apothecary

The apothecary has *potions of healing*, healer's kits, and herbalism kits for sale. They also sell swamp herbs, philters, and other raw materials, which can be used to make *potions of healing*. It costs half the price of a completed potion to buy enough reagents to craft one. Any character proficient with an herbalism kit can craft a potion.

6. The Bookbindery

The bookbinder has a small library of assorted tomes to offer, and a few strange books may be found among the modest collection. Books can be purchased for 1 gp each. Some books may confer an advantage on the next Intelligence check made to see what a character knows about a creature, object, or location when read, depending on their subject matter.

7. The Wrangler's Rest

The local inn and tavern here in the Reach is a quiet place with quality rooms and decent food. The innkeep receives quite a few visitors from the Avium, along with the occasional adventurer looking to try their hand at slime wrangling. Treat the Wrangler's Rest as a Modest Inn.

Reaching The Magistrate

At some point during the party's stay, word of the adventurers reaches the Magistrate, the ranking political figure in Winnowing Reach. He eventually tracks the party down and implores them to help find a missing researcher. He fears the lost researcher has entered the Mokkden Caverns to conduct hazardous research.

THE MISSING RESEARCHER

She Slipped Away

A young corvum researcher looking to make a name for herself has recently gone missing. The Magistrate investigated her office, and learned she had been studying the nearby slimes in order to understand their physiology. Attempting to get live samples, she has ventured to the nearby caverns which are known to be infested with several species of slimes.

The town's magistrate, **Walden Krane, Magistrate of Winnowing Reach (see Appendix B, pg.207)**, petitions the characters to find the researcher, a young woman named **Kenna Brightspark (see Appendix B, pg.201)**.

Once the party is properly rested, the Magistrate will approach them.

> **An agitated kindled corvum dressed in finery approaches you, his feathers ruffled with worry. "Adventurers? Thank Clhuran you happened here! Please, you must help me. Kenna, that foolish girl, has gotten in over her head! She ventured to the caverns looking for slimes, but hasn't returned for days! I can only hope she's still alive — you will help me, won't you?"**

If the party declines, the Magistrate can offer to use his position to get the party an audience with the Birdfolk Council in Alderheart. Certainly, they don't think the Council will just see just anyone, do they? Walden can write a letter of introduction to help the party get an audience, but he makes it clear he won't consider this until he is certain Kenna is safe. Should the party agree, Walden will express his gratitude, adding:

> **"Oh, and if along your way, you just so happen to reduce the local slime population, the Reach would be grateful for your service…" Somewhat unconvincingly, Walden adds, "Of course, Kenna's safety comes first."**

For the service of killing a few slimes, the Magistrate also promises 5 gp to each character.

If the party opts to find Kenna, the Magistrate will provide a rough map of Mokk Fields that has the entrances to the Mokkden Caverns marked.

THE MOKKDEN CAVERNS

The Mokkden Caverns are a network of caves and tunnels with several entrances dotting the Mokk Fields. The closest entrance to the Reach is located about half a day's hike southwest, in the middle of the swamp. Alternatively, there is a road that leads around the swamp to the south, arriving at another entrance at the very southwest edge of the swamp.

This is a longer route, most likely requiring a night of camping along the road, but it is safer than the swamp. The outside of the rocky caves are visible against the backdrop of the sunken Mokk Fields, though tall reeds and dead trees provide barriers to sight. The entrances can be spotted through the marsh from about 80 feet away.

> **A Dangerous Swamp**
> Along the way, the party might run into bandits, or swamp creatures who want to make a meal of them. Decide what feels right for pacing and difficulty and add in an extra encounter here to ratchet up the action. Refer to the **Swamp Encounters (Level 1) table (pg.215)** for suggestions.

General Features

> **The inside of the caverns are dark, damp, and dank. It is evident that the murky waters of the surrounding swamp have inundated the system of tunnels beneath. Water drips from the glistening ceilings and gathers in pools throughout the caverns, filling the subterranean area with the harsh smell of rot. Tunnels descend gradually into the ground, curving gently back and forth as they go. The Mokkden Caverns are vast and largely uncharted.**

The cave interior is dimly lit at best, with most of the natural light provided by glowing fungi that grows in the humid environment. Ceilings in the tunnels are about 10 feet high but can drop low enough in some places that Medium characters will need to hunch. Many of the open areas have ceilings that are 15 feet high unless otherwise specified.

The journey through the caverns can be made more difficult by incorporating difficult terrain. It can take the form of areas water-logged by the swamp seeping in or areas made slippery by dripping water and organic muck. While navigating slippery areas at more than half speed, a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw is required to avoid tripping and falling prone.

The slimes encountered within don't attack with reason or tactics. They lash out at the nearest target and attack until that target is subdued, even when assailed by multiple characters at the same time.

Entrance

The closer entrance to the Mokkden Caverns juts out obviously from the surrounding mire. Be sure to roll on the **Swamp Encounters (Level 1) table (pg.215)** as the party approaches. They are taking a dangerous route through the swamp, and will likely run into trouble. When the party arrives, there are two **sticky slimes** burbling about in front of this entrance.

The farther entrance can be spotted just as the forest gives way to marshlands. This cave opening has two **caustic slimes** in front of it, wading through the fen looking for prey. This route will take the party longer to reach, but is safe enough that they shouldn't encounter anything else on the way.

The slimes are ostensibly combat encounters, but any character can make a DC 12 Perception check as they approach, easily spotting the slimes from 80 feet away on a success. On a failure the character does not notice the slimes until they are within 60 feet. If the party enters the range of the slime's blindsight (60 feet), the slime will attack. If the party can spot the slimes before then, they can attempt to pick the slimes off with ranged weapons and spells (treat the slimes as though they are blinded if they are attacked beyond their blindsight radius).

Other methods, such as luring the slimes away with a distraction, or using stealth to slip by unnoticed, can also work. So long as the party didn't bumble into a slime's blindsight range, the party can avoid either encounter by succeeding on a DC 14 group Dexterity (Stealth) check. If at least half of the party members succeed, they make it by quietly.

Despite being dangerous, the slimes are slow and easy to outrun, so be sure to let the party know that they can make a break for the entrance if they're spotted. The slimes will give up the chase a few rounds after the party moves outside of their blindsight range.

TREASURE

If the party defeats the slimes they will find 15 silver pieces undigested inside the creatures.

Collapsing Hazard

After about 30 minutes of walking in the caves, the party stumbles upon a 50-foot-long tunnel. It appears to be the only way forward, but seems dangerous to say the least.

You look down the tunnel in front of you. It is haphazardly propped up by makeshift frame made from wooden struts. The timeworn frame creaks audibly, and dust occasionally showers down from the ceiling into the tunnel. It looks like it could collapse at any moment.

The first researchers created supports to shore up hazardous rocks on the tunnel ceiling that threatened to collapse. In the years since, the struts have largely been ignored. The easiest way to circumvent the hazard is to collapse the struts on purpose, which can be accomplished in a few ways:

- ***Break the moisture rotted struts.*** This requires a successful DC 13 Strength check. Make sure to have players describe what methods they'll use for the Strength check and ensure that their choices won't leave them in the path of falling rocks (for example, using a 10-foot pole as a lever, or trying to throw a reasonably-sized object at the struts).
- ***Determine weak spots in the structure.*** After a minute of observation, characters can determine weak spots in the structure. Striking these with a series of three hits against AC 10 with ranged weapons or spells will trigger the collapse.
- ***Thunder damage.*** Any spell or ability that deals thunder damage can create enough of a shockwave to collapse the rocks.
- ***A novel path forward.*** If the party is especially clever, create some ad hoc rules using the above as guidelines.

Once the struts have collapsed, characters will need to navigate the debris-strewn ground (treat as difficult terrain) but will otherwise be fine.

Conversely, characters can attempt to go through the tunnel carefully. With a successful DC 14 group Dexterity (Stealth) check, they can move through without disturbing the boulders. On a failure, their movement will trigger a small collapse. Characters must then make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take 4 (1d8) points of bludgeoning damage from falling debris. Consider replacing the damage with a level of exhaustion if it deals too much damage to the party. Treat the collapsed tunnel as difficult terrain.

Falling Slimes

After about 30 minutes of walking through the winding subterranean paths, the party arrives at a large cavern.

The tunnel opens up into a spacious cavern. Stalactites and stalagmites dot the floor and ceiling, the sound of dripping water can be heard slowly echoing in the distance.

The cavern is roughly 30 feet high and 60 feet across.

Two **sticky slimes** and two **caustic slimes** have heard the vibrations of possible prey passing through the adjoining tunnels, and are lying in wait upside-down on the ceiling. If players are being cautious and say they're keeping an eye out, a DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check is required to locate the motionless blobs against the dark ceiling.

Without warning, two sticky slimes and two caustic slimes drop down from above, surrounding you! Besides the entrance you just came through, you can make out three exits on the opposite side of this dark cavern.

The slimes land, encircling the group. Characters looking to flee can escape either through the three exits ahead or by backtracking through the tunnel they entered from. However, the ceiling in the entrance tunnel is 10 feet high, providing ample room for slimes to follow. There, any pursuing slimes are able to move upside down on the ceiling and attack from above. Fleeing through the three exits ahead is a simple matter — slimes don't move very quickly and the party should be able to lose them in a round or two.

There are three exits from the chamber:

- ***Exit 1–*** a 15-foot-tall, 5-foot-wide exit that goes for 90 feet, and quickly narrows out to 10 feet in height before becoming a dead end.
- ***Exit 2 –*** a 15-foot-tall, 10-foot-wide exit reinforced with rickety wooden beams to prevent cave-ins (like the one in the previous encounter). This exit must be navigated at half-speed in order to avoid triggering a collapse. Characters can intentionally cause a cave-in to drop rocks on any pursuing slimes. This leads to the next area.
- ***Exit 3 –*** a smaller opening, about 4 feet tall and 4 feet wide. Medium or Larger creatures would need to squeeze through using half of their movement. The exit tunnel quickly widens to 15 feet in height, providing no impediment to movement beyond the entrance. After a minute, the tunnel curves to join up with Exit 2's tunnel (the one that leads to the next area).

If the party successfully defeat the slimes, they will find that Exit 1 leads to a dead end that is safe, dry, and perfectly suited for a short rest.

TREASURE

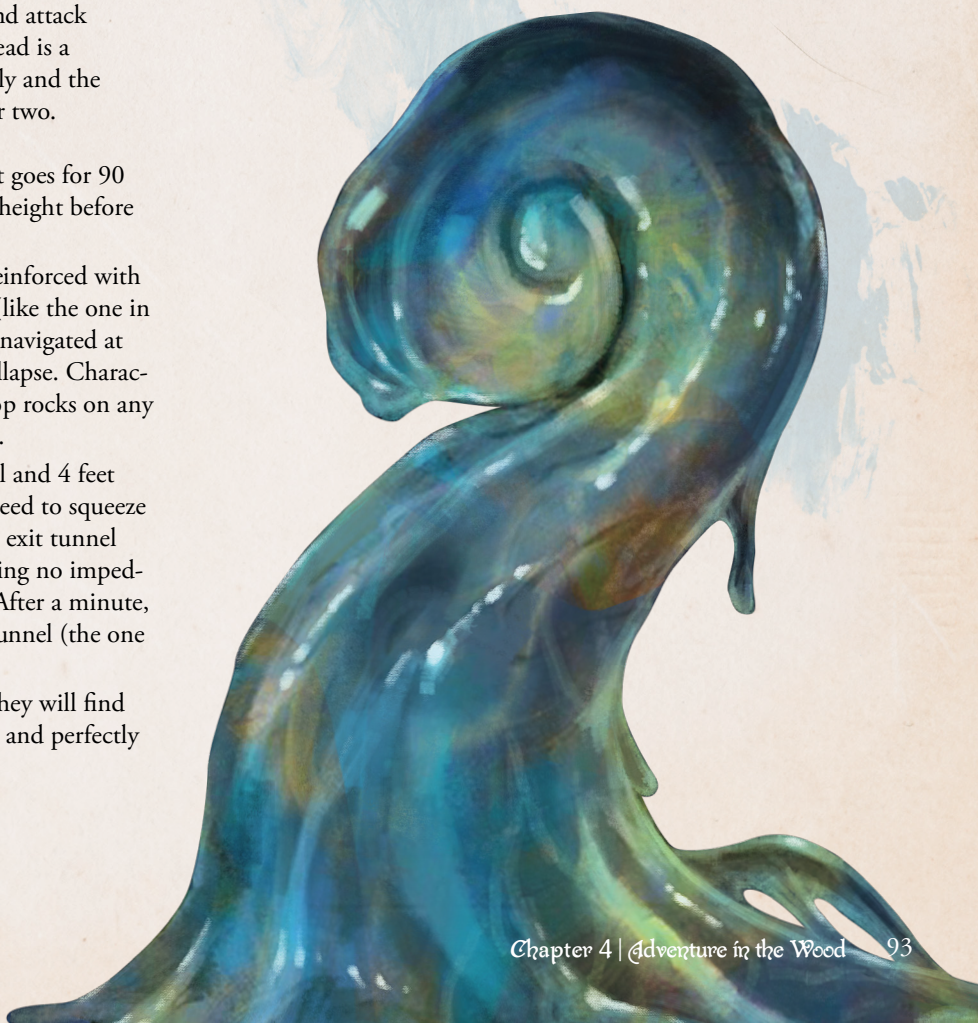
One of the slimes has an intact brass magnifying glass inside of it, which can be recovered if the slime has been defeated. The magnifying glass is slightly corroded and needs cleaning, but is still serviceable. It can be kept, or sold for 40 gp when properly cleaned.

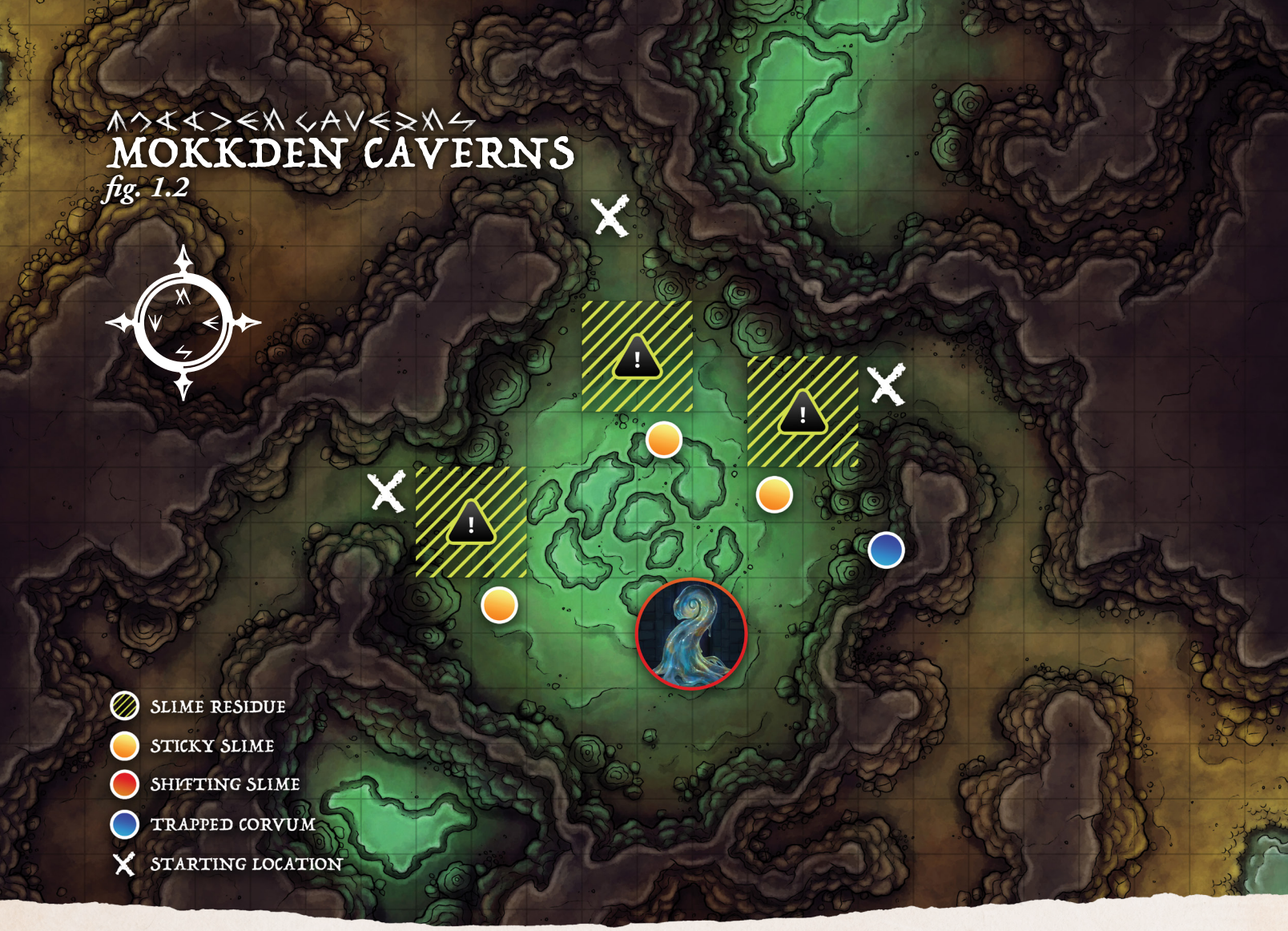
Slime Attack!

After another 30 minutes of walking through the caverns, the area will become dimly-lit (for the purpose of vision).

Smears of luminescent residue line the walls of the tunnels. At first, the smears are sporadic, but soon there is enough faintly glowing goo to dimly light your surroundings.

Coming upon a space that seems to be the center of the cave, you see a young corvum standing next to a rock formation. Because of the sheen of slime covering the birdfolk, you are quickly able to deduce that she is in fact stuck to the rock! Her eyes go wide and suddenly focus on something above you. A giant slime drops down from the ceiling and attacks!





The center of the cave is a 60-foot-wide clearing with tunnels branching off in different directions. Refer to Fig. 1.2 for a map of the Mokkden Caverns.

Using the Mokkden Caverns battlemap
This is a suggested setup for the battle with the Shifting Slime and the three Sticky Slimes. The party can find their way to the main chamber through any of the entrances marked with a white "X". Choose the entrance that makes the most sense based on the characters journey through the caverns so far. A suggested location for the trapped corvum researcher is provided, though she can be positioned anywhere up against the inner wall of the cavern. The hatched green lines represent the spaces that have been coated in sticky slime.

The characters are beset by a **shifting slime** (the large slime), and three **sticky slimes**. The sticky slimes have left several residue trails between the characters and the chamber's entrance. Any character that steps into the trail becomes restrained unless they make a DC 10 Strength saving throw.

A character who hits a shifting slime with a damage dealing spell will notice the slime change color.

Captured in Slime
If a character would die in combat, instead of dealing a killing blow, a sticky slime may instead try to encase the character in ooze, preserving them for later. A character reduced to 0 hit points in this way remains stable, but is rendered unconscious and restrained by the ooze that encases them. The character will regain consciousness when they have at least 1 hit point, and can attempt to free themselves with a DC 12 Strength check, ending the restrained condition on a success. Other characters can attempt to free the restrained party member with a DC 12 Strength check.

Freeing the Researcher

To free Kenna from her slime prison, a character, using an action, needs to succeed on a DC 12 Strength check or use applicable spells. Once free, if the slimes are still a threat, Kenna will do her best to stay out of the way and follow orders that don't put her in danger. So long Kenna doesn't attack, the slimes will ignore her.

TREASURE

Inside the body of the shifting slime is a trinket that looks to be a small sphere, intricately woven from strands of gold and bronze. This is a *nest charm**. The charm's magical aura is faint from having been fed upon by the shifting slime, but it is very much intact.

Slime Sampling

Kenna runs towards the adventurers. "Thank you for saving me, but, please, I need a sample!" the corvum says, her eyes filled with determination. She almost lost her life, but is now begging you to help her collect ooze samples from slimes. "I can give you something if you help me. Please, it's so important to my research. I can't go back to the Reach empty handed. I've come so far. I have risked so much. Please..." You can hear the desperation in her pleas.

If characters refuse to help Kenna, a DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check is required to get her to come along.

If characters wish to assist the young researcher, Kenna has three vials she will pass out to anyone willing to help. One vial is sufficient for a sample.

The party must find a live slime from which to collect the sample. This can be accomplished by making a DC 12 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check.

The party can backtrack to find slimes they previously encountered in the caves, or the party can explore the Mokk Fields outside of the caverns for slimes. The **Swamp Encounters (Level 1) table (pg.215)** or the **Cave Encounters (Level 1) table (pg.213)** can be used to decide what creatures lurk in the fields and caves.

RETURNING TO THE REACH

The trip back to Winnowing Reach is uneventful, if a little slow, with the researcher tagging along. Magistrate Krane is relieved to see Kenna returned safely and is satisfied to hear there are fewer slimes in the Mokk Fields. For the service of killing a few slimes, the Magistrate awards 5 gp to each character.

"Look!" Kenna says, holding up the vials of ooze up for the Magistrate to see. The Magistrate gives her a look of disapproval, which goes unnoticed. Nodding his head slightly to the travellers the Magistrate begrudgingly thanks the party. "It really wasn't necessary to go to all that trouble for a few samples…but thank you for your help."

Irrespective of if the Magistrate had promised a letter in exchange for the party's help, as thanks, Magistrate Krane promises he will write a letter to the Birdfolk Council on the party's behalf. However, before Krane can write the correspondence requesting that the Council grant an audience to the travelers, he must attend to an urgent problem in the Reach.

"If you are still around tomorrow, I will summon you to discuss this matter. I may need the help of adventurers and am willing to pay well for your assistance." And with that, the Magistrate leaves.

Kenna smiles at the group, "Alright, time to celebrate! How about some refreshments at the Wrangler's Rest? What do you say? First round is on me!"

Suggest spending the night in Winnowing Reach if it makes sense for the time of day, or if the characters need a rest. Add that in order to deliver Elder Ardwyn's message to the Birdfolk Council, a letter from the Magistrate would go a long way — it may be in the party's best interest to find out what he wants from the group.

THE SWAMP WITCH

A Second Request

The next day, Magistrate Krane summons the party to his official chambers. The discussion requires some discretion and he doesn't want others overhearing.

Turning a few nobs and pushing a few levers, a clunk is heard, and the chamber door is bolted. Satisfied that you are alone, the Magistrate lets out a big sigh before turning around to face you. He looks concerned and tired. "The swamp," he begins hesitantly, "is home to a foul sorceress, a witch who dabbles in evil magics. I need you to discreetly take care of her. If it got out that I allowed this, I would be finished. Especially after what happened to Ashbarrow, everyone is scared. Think of the Wood. Do what is best for it. Do this one thing for me and I swear, I will write a letter to the Birdfolk Council."

At first the Magistrate appeals to the decency and goodness of the party, but if pressed, he will offer 5 gp per character to help deal with the witch. However, he'll also make it clear his coffers are running low. In order to prove they have dispatched the witch, Walden asks that the party obtain a distinctive amulet made from a small curled horn that she wears, after they've finished the job. It may be a demon's horn, the source of her evil powers, and he would see it destroyed with his own eyes.

Traversing the Swamp

The Magistrate suspects the witch's lair can be found in the deepest, foulest stretches of the Mokk Fields.

To speed up travel, a character can make a DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check to navigate the swamp and find signs of the witch.

Alternatively, a DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) check could be used to determine the optimal location for magical activity within the swamp.

On a success, the party finds the witch after only a few hours of travel, leaving plenty of daylight. On a failure, it takes them longer to find the witch than anticipated, and the party arrives at dusk.

Swamp Encounters

To add more action, consider rolling a d20 for every hour of travel. On a roll of 5 or lower, roll again on the **Swamp Encounters (Level 1) table (pg.215)** to see what happens. The party can also stumble across an encounter from the table if they fail their check to navigate the swamp.

The Witch's Hut

At last you find yourselves at a small hut on a thin patch of dry land. There are a few gnarled trees, more moss than leaves, flanking the rustic hut. From the porch roof hangs dozens of bundles containing flowers, herbs, and some desiccated lizards.

Smoke gently rises from a cobblestone chimney, and a strange yet delicious smell fills the air. Through a window you can see a short, robed figure shuffling quickly about the kitchen, adding ingredients to a cauldron in the shape of a giant snail shell. There is also a rather large beetle skittering around, hopping at their master's heels. She leans over to pat the beetle affectionately, and it chitters in a way that is almost sweet.

If the party opts to attack, **Susan of the Swamp (see Appendix B, pg.200)** will defend herself. She will appeal to the party, explaining that she is not evil, merely misunderstood. During combat she will continue to try and explain that she means no harm, defending only with as much force as necessary to protect herself.

Should the party successfully kill the witch, they can easily retrieve the amulet from her body before heading back to inform the Magistrate of their success.

If the party approaches civilly, or Susan convinces them to stand down, they will learn that she is a friendly hedge witch who lives with her beetle familiar, Normal. Susan will explain that she relocated to the swamp in order to delve into secret and ancient magical lore on her own terms. In fact, when they walked in on her, she was in the middle of a ritual. It was her hope to summon an entity that she might question regarding a vision she had during a recent divination ritual.

"I saw a great blaze consuming the Wood. Near the Scorched Grove, I think. There were figures, too. A large, lumbering, burning thing, and something else, shadowed and distant, watching from afar. Heh–that's lizard spleens for you. Their tea gives very cryptic visions. Shame I don't have any moonfish. You always get clear visions from moonfish… or was it starfish?"

She asks if the party might help her gather the necessary ingredients to complete her ritual.

If asked about her amulet, she'll offer a throaty giggle and reply:

"Oh, this old thing?" the hedge witch laughs, holding up the horn amulet. "This is just my old ocarina." She demonstrates by placing the horn to her lips and playing a few notes. "I used to study music at the College." She says with a wistful sigh, "Takes me back."

The amulet has no special powers or worth, but it holds a great deal of personal significance to Susan. She won't assent to giving it up simply to appease the Magistrate, but she will consider giving it to the party if they agree to help her complete her ritual.

Finding the Reagents

The characters are asked to gather some swamp herbs and capture a few plump green frogs, whose spleens are an essential component. Both can be found about an hour's walk north from the hut, near a large pond wreathed with dense reeds. The herbs are easy to locate with a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) check. On a failure, the characters do not find the herbs, but instead find one of the following items:

- a bull-rush root,
- the shed tail of a swamp lizard,
- a small scale, or
- a feather, covered in muck.

These items are magical reagents in their own right and can be turned in to Susan in exchange for potions. Players can roll as many Survival checks as they need to find the herbs.

The frogs are Tiny creatures with an armor class of 14, but they only have 1 hit point. The frogs will retreat into the pond's depths at the slightest hint of trouble, and characters require a DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth) check to attack them. There are enough frogs about that characters can find as many as they need. After three failed attempts to catch them, however, the players will trigger an event.

The ground around you begins to rumble, as a chorus of croaking rings in your ears. A gigantic frog bursts from the pond, fixing you and your companions with a hungry gaze!

This frog resembles the smaller ones the party was trying to catch, but it is many times their size, and is looking to make a meal of the characters. Use the stats for a **giant toad**. Upon defeating the creature, a character can cut out its spleen easily, provided they don't mind getting covered in frog innards. The spleen is so large that Medium creatures must carry it with both hands, and Small creatures can barely carry it over their shoulder. The giant frog's spleen should provide ample material for the ritual.

After the party has gathered three frogs, or one spleen from the giant frog, they can return to the witch. If they returned with the giant frog's spleen, Susan will congratulate them and muse how lucky she is to have this for future experiments. She will save all that she doesn't use in stoppered glass jars.

The last demon I summoned wouldn't stop talking...

Now that she has what she requires, Susan will start the ritual.

> **Susan draws the curtains on her windows. The only light source in the hut is the eerie green glow that emanates from the mixture bubbling in the large snail shell cauldron. Susan adds the final ingredients: first the herbs, which burn as they are incorporated into the mixture. This causes Susan to cackle with delight, while Normal clicks its mandibles cheerily. "O great spirit, heed my call!" Susan intones as she adds the frog spleens. "Rise and grant me the wisdom I seek!" The ritual ends with a flash, and a whoosh of air whips the curtains open.**

Refer to Fig. 1.3 for a map of Susan's Hut.

> **Using the Susan's Hut map**
> Determine where the player characters are positioned when the fight breaks out. Suggested starting positions for the lesser demon and Susan are provided for ease of play. Should the fight spill outside, consider having the water areas of the map be difficult terrain.

After a moment of trepidation, a **lesser demon** climbs out of the cauldron, spilling the ritual mixture everywhere. Susan begins to ask the demon a flurry of questions. At first the demon seems uninterested, and is unresponsive to Susan's inquiries. Suddenly, it attacks the nearest person wildly, which may be Susan or a party member. It behaves confused and feral, remaining on the attack until defeated, at which point it crumbles into ash that floats away mysteriously.

A WITCH'S DEBT

Susan is grateful for your help in dispatching the demon. She admits she may have been a bit too ambitious with her summoning, and will adjust her future rituals accordingly. If the party asked her for her amulet (or if they ask her for it now), she'll part with it as thanks for stopping the demon before it could hurt anyone or destroy her home. Susan will also thank the party for warning her about the Magistrate, but assure them that she's accustomed to looking after herself.

If the party ever visits the Mokk Fields in the future, Susan promises her door will always be open. As the party walks away from the hut, it almost seems like Normal is waving goodbye.

The party may now call on Susan to make a variety of potions and brews in exchange for ingredients and a donation of 1 gp per potion. Refer to the table below for more details.

REWARDS

If the party assisted the witch successfully, she is now considered an ally. She offers two *potions of healing* to the party, with the promise of more potions in exchange for ingredients.

Potion	Ingredients	Potion Effect
Potion of Healing	A swamp lizard tail and bull-rush root	Heals the drinker for 2d4 + 2.
Potion of Greater Healing	A crocodile eye, bull-rush root, and a violet fungus cap	Heals the drinker for 4d4 + 4.
Potion of Animal Friendship	A bit of fur, a scale, a feather, and a whisker	The imbiber can cast *animal friendship* (save DC 13) for 1 hour at will.
Potion of Feather Fall	A downy feather and a pinch of forest ash	The imbiber gains the effects of the *feather fall* spell for 5 minutes.
Potion of Resistance	Shifting slime residue and a small mirror	The imbiber gains resistance to one type of damage for 1 hour (Player's choice).
Oil of Stickiness	Sticky slime residue and a forest slug	When spread on an object or location it creates a nearly imperceptible coating. Creatures that come into contact with the oil must succeed a DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check or become restrained. At the end of each of its turns, a restrained creature can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on a success.
Oil of Slipperiness	Mountain breeze and morning dew	If spread on a creature, they gain the effects of the *freedom of movement* spell for 10 minutes. If spread on a location, it gains the effects of the *grease* spell for 20 minutes or until it is washed away.

LEAVING THE REACH

After dealing with the swamp witch, the party returns to Winnowing Reach. The Magistrate wants to hear about the excursion, and again invites the characters into his chambers for a private conference.

If the party killed the witch. They can simply tell the truth. Walden will immediately ask for his proof; handing him the horn amulet will convince him of the party's deed and allow them to receive the promised reward of 5 gp per character, if agreed upon.

If the party did not kill the witch and wishes to lie about it. One character must make a DC 11 Charisma (Deception) check to pass off a suitable lie to the Magistrate. If they produce the horn amulet as proof, the character making the check rolls with advantage. If they do not have the amulet, they must account for why they don't have it in order for Walden to accept their story and reward them.

If the party killed the witch, or convinced the Magistrate of such. Walden also produces the promised letter.

If the party did not kill the witch, and tells the truth. The Magistrate responds furiously:

> **"You WHAT!?" Walden replies. "Don't you see that you have doomed our town? You are not the heroes I took you for. Take your things and leave."**

He refuses to pay any agreed upon bounty for the party's work, and will not write them their letter of introduction.

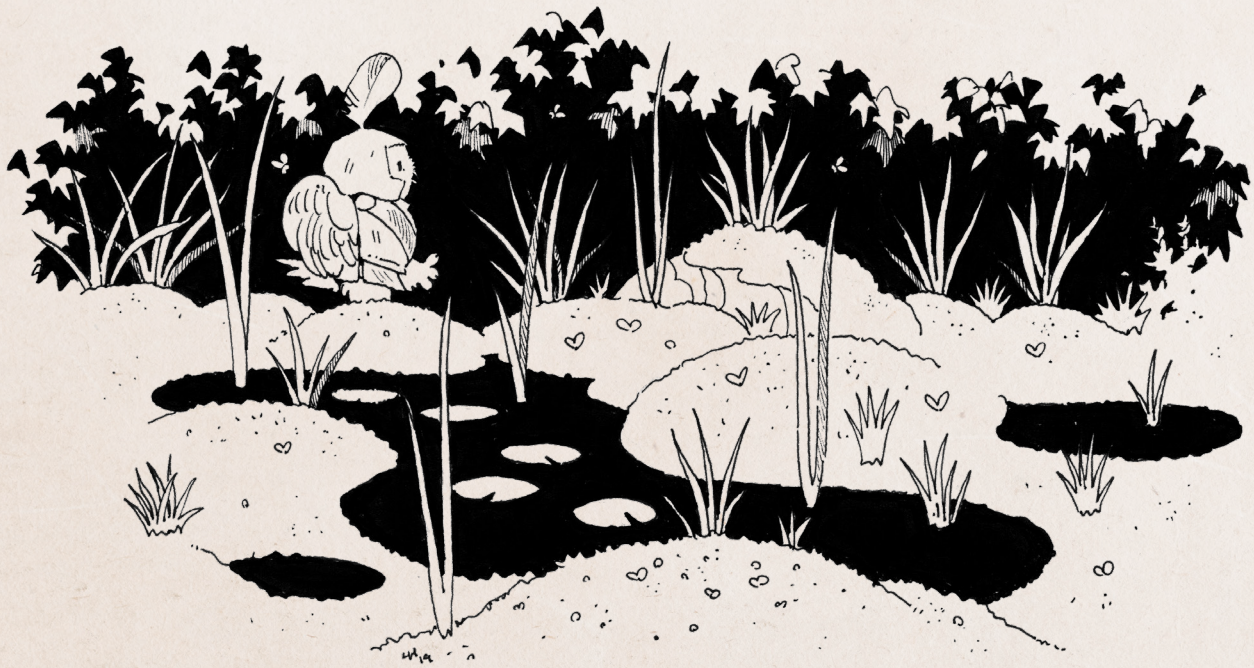
> **"Should you require a letter of introduction," Walden begins, a sardonic look playing across his face, "why not try the Magistrate of Alderheart?" He gives a hollow chuckle. "Oath-breakers like yourselves will have much in common with that scoundrel."**

As the party prepares to depart, Eliza approaches, asking if she might travel alongside them to Alderheart. She welcomes both the company and protection offered by the party.

When the party is ready to leave, they can resume their journey to Alderheart to deliver Elder Ardwyn's message to the Council. The road to Alderheart leads northeast out of town, deeper into the forest.

REWARDS

- Award standard XP for defeated foes.
- For surviving the collapsing hazard in the Mokkden Caverns: 100 XP per character.
- If using the milestone experience rule, the characters reach 2nd level.



Part 2: The Bandit Menace

This part of the adventure introduces one of the greatest forces threatening the Wood: the Bandit Coalition, which has risen up and gained power since the fires first began to spread. The Coalition's membership is comprised mostly of humblefolk who, because of the fires, have been displaced from small villages deep in the Wood. Their homes are generally less fortified than the birdfolk perches, and while humblefolk refugees have sought shelter within Alderheart, many were refused entry due to overcrowding, and have turned to a life of banditry to sustain themselves.

The Coalition now represents a serious threat to the Wood, owing to the leadership of a scarred cervan warrior named **Benna Seridan (see Appendix B, pg.194)**. Benna's mission is one of revenge against the Birdfolk Council at Alderheart, but she also seeks to support all the forest-dwellers who were displaced by the fires, many of whom now serve in the Coalition. The party must defend Alderheart from the Bandit Coalition, and will later be asked by the Council to help strike a decisive blow against the bandit menace.

A ROUGH ROAD AHEAD

After their trials at Winnowing Reach, characters will continue to make their way toward Alderheart to seek an audience with the Birdfolk Council, possibly with Eliza in tow. The road to the capital is long, requiring three days of travel. Be sure to have Eliza or another NPC from Winnowing Reach remind the party to properly stock up before they depart. They can find any supplies they might need for their journey (rations, bedrolls, and the like) at the local general store.

> **The Wood is Burning**
> By this point, the party should have some idea of the effects of the fires on the Wood and its citizens. Provide more context as the party continues their travels by describing scorched sections of the forest on the horizons, or the remains of burnt-down woodland villages.
>
> These themes can be expanded upon by selecting encounters from the **Road Encounters (pg.102)** table (such as emberbats, or bandits) to further illustrate the depth of the chaos caused by the spreading fires.

Roll a d20 for each day of travel, and on a roll of 5 or lower, roll again on the **Road Encounters** table (below). To add more random encounters, roll a d20 every four hours of travel. Alternatively, have the party skip straight to Alderheart.

In each encounter, if accompanied by Eliza, she will do her best to stay out of danger, hiding behind her cart and relying on the party to protect her and her wares.

Road Encounters

d8	Encounter
1	2d4 **mapach bandits** ambush the party.
2	1d2 **swarms of emberbats** attack the party.
3	1d3 **magmin** can be spotted burning foliage through the trees. They haven't started a fire yet, but they will if left unchecked.
4	A giant elk appears in a peaceful glade, drinking from a mysterious pond with an abundance of plant life. There is a sense of calm and serenity here. Each character that stops to drink from the pond heals 1d4 + 2 hit points.
5	1d4 + 1 **mapach bandits** and a **jerbeen thief** spring from the forest, offering safe passage for a road toll of 3 gp per party member. They will attack if the toll is not paid immediately.
6	A traveling **gallus druid** is met on the road. She has a calm demeanour and will inform the party of the **The Tenders (see Appendix B, pg.206)**, an organization to which she belongs. She has two bags of poultice that she will sell for 15 gp apiece. Each can be applied to a wound to heal 1d4 + 2 hit points.
7	A small pool of water giving off mist can be seen in a clearing. Disturbing the pool reveals that the mist is actually steam and the water is scalding. 1d4 + 1 **steam mephits** appear and attack immediately.
8	A bandit's net trap has been laid across the trail and covered with leaves. It can be spotted with a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. If characters walk into it, the trap springs, and characters must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw to avoid getting caught. On a failure, you can roll on this table again to complicate the encounter.

THE GREAT TREE CITY

If traveling with Eliza, read this:

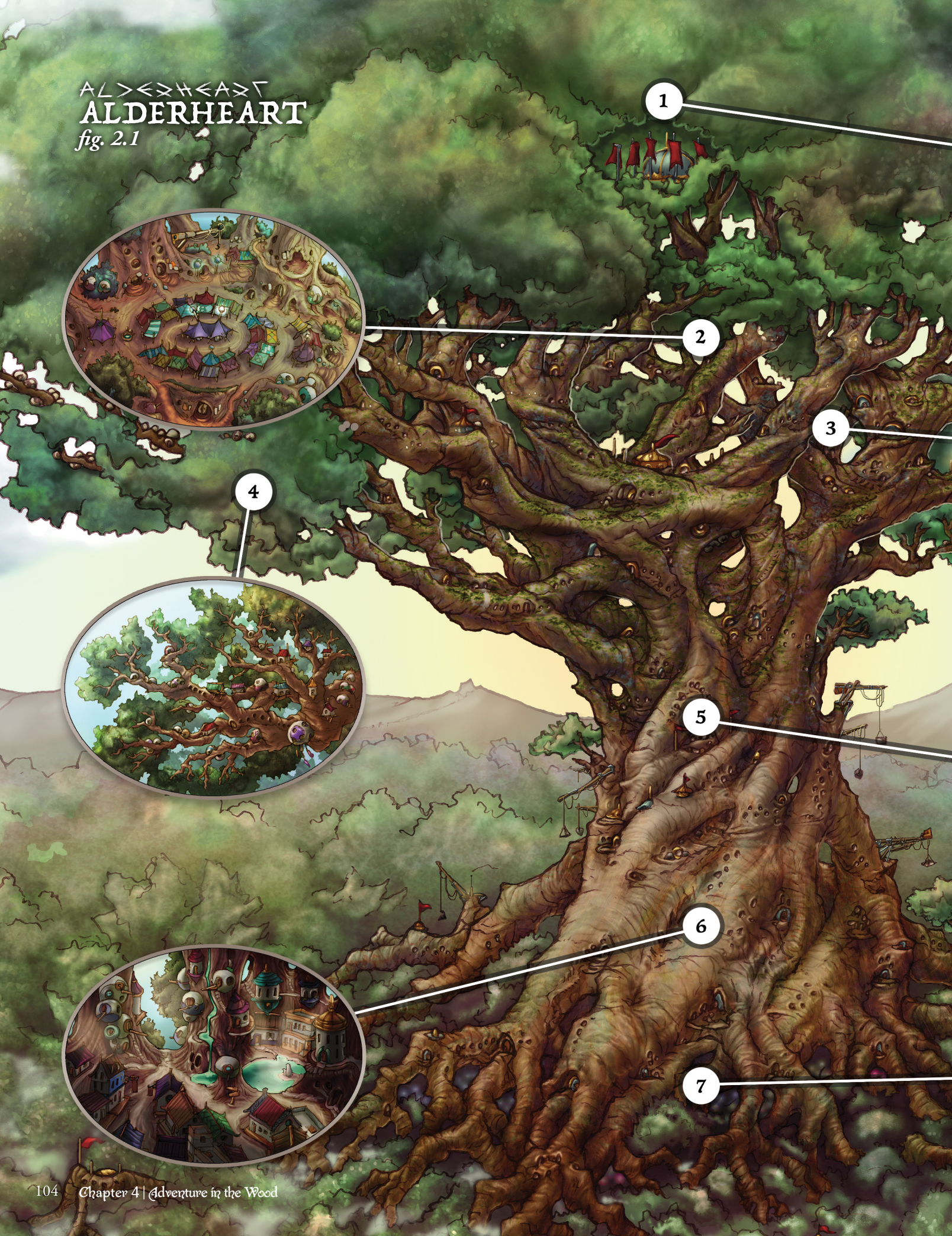
> **After a few hours of travel, Eliza abruptly sets her cart down where the road winds around an immense tree trunk. The tree is so large its branches block out sunlight for at least a mile. "Well, this is it! We've finally arrived at Alderheart!" She gestures upward to a network of platforms and bridges in the canopy above. Closer inspection of the tree shows rough steps carved into the trunk. At a distance, these steps are almost impossible to spot.**

If Eliza is not around to guide the party, read the following:

> **After a few hours of travel, the road winds around an enormous tree whose branches block out the sunlight for at least a mile. Looking up, in the canopy you can see a system of pulleys which lead to networks of platforms and bridges. Closer inspection of the tree reveals hidden steps carved into the massive trunk. You have reached Alderheart, the Great Tree City.**

A Bustling Metropolis

> **You and your companions emerge from the winding stairway up the trunk into a canopy filled with the bustle of city life. Buildings are located within the foliage, and crowded roadways are sculpted from the giant branches. The roadways are connected with rope, wood bridges, and carefully postioned platforms made of timber. Bird-folk guards, known colloquially as "the Perch Guard," can be seen keeping watch throughout the city. Laborers operate pulley systems that are used to raise carts to the canopy platforms.**



ALDERHEART
fig. 2.1

For more details about the city, refer to the description of Alderheart in **Chapter 3: Traversing the Wood (pg.76)**. All the usual amenities of a large city can be found here. Refer to Fig. 2.1 for a map of Alderheart.

1. Council Plaza

The upper levels of Alderheart's canopy can be reached by a stairway near the canopy market that leads up through a massive central pillar. This is where all judicial and government buildings related to the oversight of Alderheart and Humblewood can be found. Here, characters can find the Birdfolk Council Chambers, a large domed structure nestled within the branches. Next to it, there is a courthouse, a gaol, and the Perch Guard Headquarters. All of these buildings are arranged around an open plaza containing a large statue of a sera luma dressed in ceremonial robes. This is an effigy of Speaker Ava, the Founder of the Birdfolk Council.

2. Canopy Market

This busy market in the canopy is where characters can find high quality wares and imported goods from beyond Humblewood. Talented weaponsmiths, armorers, and merchants of all sorts do business here. There are also shops on the outskirts with truly unique wares. **Eliza's Emporium (pg.106)** is located in the canopy market, a little ways off from the main thoroughfare.

3. The Boughs

An affluent neighborhood of high class homes. Many of Alderheart's aristocrats and high ranking city officials have residences here.

4. The Branches

A neighborhood made of modest homes, connected by wood bridges and gliding platforms. This area is dangerous for non-birdfolk. Without the ability to glide, a fall from here is almost certainly fatal.

5. Trunk Market

Lately, the number of folks residing in the trunk section has swelled due to villagers escaping the fires. A hollow space, just a few minutes walk from the trunk's market, has become a shelter area for refugees, much to the dismay of local merchants. The market area is overcrowded, and many refugees are searching for work, begging for alms, or taking to thievery to support themselves.

6. The Bright Hollows

This part of the trunk is known for a series of holes within the bark that allow natural light to stream in. The trunk contains many of the common homes and markets in Alderheart, and the majority of those who live there are humblefolk. Some pathways here lead to dwellings on the outside of the tree, which are nicer than the simplet homes that can be found inside the trunk.

7. The Underfall

The roots are the slums of Alderheart, and within these shabby tunnels characters will see destitute refugees and communities of locals living in poverty. This is the best place to find criminal contacts within the city, as well as fences who can help characters sell restricted goods or purchase them at a heavily inflated price.

Seeing the Sights

Characters should be given an opportunity to rest after their journey, and be encouraged to explore the city.

ELIZA'S EMPORIUM

Using the map of Eliza's Emporium
Though it is unlikely that an interaction in Eliza's shop will result in combat, a map of her emporium is provided to show what the interior of a common Humblewood shop or home might look like.

If Eliza accompanied the characters, a day or more has passed since arriving to Alderheart, Eliza will find the party and let them know where her new storefront is located. She is taking over an old shop on the edge of the canopy market, the same one her sister used to manage. Visiting the shop now, the characters will find that it looks a little run down compared to the others nearby, but Eliza is determined to make her business a success. Should the party return after the next few encounters, she will have it looking almost new. Refer to Fig. 2.2 for a map of Eliza's Emporium.

If the party helped Eliza along her journey she will remember their kindness and offer them a 10% discount on purchases, and an extra 10% when selling to her. While always friendly and welcoming, if a character ever deeply offends Eliza, she will refuse them service. Those looking to get back in her good graces may find success by offering a unique item as an apology.

fig. 2.2

Goods for Sale

In addition to adventuring essentials, Eliza prides herself on stocking one-of-a-kind items and treasures. She is a consummate capitalist and always knows how to properly value an item. Her rare goods usually come with large price tags.

Eliza's stock consists of basic adventuring gear, along with a collection of strange and unique goods found in her travels. At first, her wares are sparse, but more items may be added to the shop as the story unfolds and Eliza becomes more established in the city. The below tables can also be rolled on to randomize the wondrous items Eliza has managed to acquire. All magic items listed here can be found in the 5e Core Rules.

Magic Items That Reference Character Races

Typical fantasy races (elves, dwarves, halflings, orcs and the like) aren't native to the world of Everden, but instead of keeping magic items that reference these races out of your campaign, it is recommended that you find a way to incorporate them in ways that fit with the races available in the Humblewood setting. For example, the cloak of elvenkind allows its wearer to camouflage with their surroundings, much like the Patterned Feathers ability possessed by strigs, so it could be called the cloak of strigkind instead.

d6	Item	Cost
1	Deed to a house in Brackenmill	500 gp
2	Wooden Eye	10 gp
3	Scroll of *major image*	150 gp
4	A small clockwork squirrel made of bronze. It will hop for 1 minute after it has been properly wound.	25 gp
5	Token with a ram's head on it	5 gp
6	An old spellbook with 1d6 random 1st level spells, 1d4 random 2nd level spells, and 1 random 3rd level spell (choose from the Wizard's spell list).	350 gp

d10	Magic Item	Cost
1	*eluran boots (boots of elvenkind)*	200 gp
2	*bracers of archery*	250 gp
3	*cloak of strigkind (cloak of elvenkind)*	300 gp
4	*efficient quiver*	350 gp
5	*feather token (bird)*	500 gp
6	*feather token (tree)*	500 gp
7	*figurine of wondrous power (silver raven)*	250 gp
8	*ring of feather falling*	600 gp
9	*robe of useful items*	350 gp
10	*staff of the python*	500 gp

THE BIRDFOLK COUNCIL

Walking towards the Council Chambers, you can see a huge domed structure rising up through the foliage. The building is cradled into the natural curve of Alderheart's giant trunk. A large platform has been built around the imposing structure, connecting it to the branch-roads that run throughout the city. It is adorned with brightly-colored banners displaying crests of the major settlements of the Wood. Two guards in resplendent armor stand watch at the entrance, turning away those who do not have permission to enter. A throng of people mill about nearby.

Without a letter of introduction, the guards will ask the party to register their pleas at the local magistrate's office and wait for their request to be approved (see **The Magistrate of Alderheart, pg.107**).

With a letter of introduction from a magistrate, the guards watching the entrance will verify the paperwork (skip The Magistrate of Alderheart, and see **Audience with the Council, pg.108**).

The Magistrate of Alderheart

When the party enters the Magistrate's office they find **Gregor Thornspur, Magistrate of Alderheart (see Appendix B, pg.196)**, sitting at his desk.

"Ashbarrow has burned to the ground? You don't say!" The Magistrate looks down at his papers as he strokes his chin. "Now, that is important. Unfortunately, I am bound by my office to be fair, so your news will have to wait, just like everyone else. I recommend you make yourselves comfortable and enjoy the splendor of the city." After a short pause, Gregor raises his head and continues, "But, if you are interested, and are willing to hear me out, I might 'accidentally' submit your request ahead of the others. These things do happen, you know."

If the party agrees to help, the Magistrate will tell them about a group of jerbeens that have been causing trouble around the trunk's market district. People down there have been filing complaints, and he would like to see the matter dealt with. Supposing the party can ensure Gregor never has to hear about this problem again, he'll grant them an early audience with the Council.

You can have the party come up with their own solution for finding the jerbeens, but if they're stuck, advise them that asking around the market might be an easy way to locate them. Inquiring around the market will require a DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check, which will lead the party straight to the jerbeen hideout on a success. A failure will require another hour of searching before coming across someone who knows where the hideout is.

There are four jerbeens, all of them siblings. Their parents died when their village was consumed by a forest fire, and they've been stealing to survive ever since. The eldest uses the stat block for a **jerbeen thief**. The other three, being far less skilled, use the stat block for a **bandit**, but halve the bandit's hit points (add jerbeen traits to these NPCs if desired). They are all armed with daggers and slings.

The party can attempt to persuade the thieves to stop stealing and find another means to support themselves. A DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion) check will convince them their current lifestyle is too dangerous, but it won't solve their problems. Have the characters roleplay to find a solution. Any character with a background that grants them connections to a temple, business, or other such institutions in the city could likely help the jerbeen orphans secure work.

The party can give the young thieves some gold, solving their financial problems temporarily. Any amount of gold will help them for a time: five gold pieces will provide the siblings enough security to look for honest work, while a payment of one gold piece could result in the jerbeens resorting to stealing again, once the gold runs out. In the latter situation, the characters may cross paths with the Magistrate later, at which point he will report that "The thieves are at it again!"

The orphans can also simply be fought. If one or more of them are reduced to 0 hit points, the rest will flee. This humbling experience could result in them aligning with the bandits to survive. The Magistrate may never hear from the orphans again, but the party might meet the jerbeen orphans again during an encounter with bandits.

Whatever the party decides to do, after confirming the player's actions through some of his connections in the city, the Magistrate will tell the party they can expect to have their audience granted the following day.

Audience with the Council

The guard to your left roughly grabs the paperwork. "Let me see that." After giving the scroll a very thorough readthrough, the guard moves to the side, stiffens his back, and gestures towards the door. "Everything is in order here. Please join the other petitioners waiting to be summoned."

After waiting for what feels like an eternity, another guard loudly calls your names and instructs you to enter the chambers.

As you pass through the double doors into the Council Chambers, you see a group of five stately birdfolk arranged across elevated seats. Each council member has a tall podium in front of them, rising to just above their waist. A sheaf of papers is ordered neatly upon each podium. A circular aperture in the center of the ceiling allows sunlight to shine in. A wise-looking bright gallus raises a talon in greeting and addresses your party: "You now stand in the presence of the Birdfolk Council. I am the Council's Speaker, Bita. Please, state your case."

Overseen by **BIRDFOLK Dockmaster (see Appendix B, pg.190)**, the Council is the ruling body of Humblewood. The Council has the authority to draft laws that affect the entire Wood.

The members of the Council will gladly hear the party out. Despite the dignity and formality with which they hold themselves, each Council member cares deeply for the people of the Wood. They will listen carefully to the woes Meadowfen is facing, and will be saddened to hear of Ashbarrow's destruction. If there are any other issues the party wishes to recount to the Council, they will hear these as well.

Use this pool of information to inform the Council's behavior:

- The Council is aware of the spreading fires, but their primary concern is banditry jeopardizing the big city and essential trading hubs. The bandit ranks have swelled of late, and the Perch Guard can only be spread so thin.
- The bandits have been rallied by a fearsome leader, making them bolder than ever. Little is known about this leader, but the Council has been able to corroborate that she is a ruthless cervan female, named Benna Seridan, who holds a great hatred for Alderheart.

- The Council knows that Alderheart could support more refugees, but they prefer to remain cautious in these difficult times. The fires keep spreading, after all. If all the refugees are allowed to enter, how long before the city runs out of food and other essential resources?
- The Council can decide to confer among themselves and meet with the party again tomorrow afternoon, to see what aid they can afford to send to Meadowfen. They assure the party that aid will be sent, but ask for their patience during these trying times. Sending a cart of supplies along bandit-ridden roads will not be easy, and any guards they send as an escort will mean less protection for the Alderites

BANDITS ATTACK

After the meeting with the Birdfolk Council, in the middle of the night, the following happens:

A city-wide alarm sounds, rousing the Perch Guard to their posts. Following the commotion, you see a great deal of movement around the northern entrance to Alderheart. There are shouts of "Bandits!" all around, and something about a merchant caravan arriving at the city.

If the party decides to check out the scene, they will arrive at a platform in front of the northernmost city gate. There they will be faced with a dismal scene: several wagons are being besieged by a massive bandit force. If the characters are armed or wearing armor, the guard captain will beseech them to help repel the bandits.

Below, a handful of bandit captains are barking orders at dozens of bandits attacking the caravans. Though the party may want to leap right into the fray, be sure to emphasize the danger involved. While ranged combat might help provide support for the sparse Perch Guard infantry, any character that throws themselves into the melee will soon be overwhelmed.

There are many ways characters could provide support for the sparse Perch Guard infantry. Examples include rallying the scattered Perch Guard with a heartening display, or cutting the ropes on the pulley system or freight elevators to create make-shift cover for Alderheart's forces to crouch behind. Encourage players to come up with their own creative solutions.

After two or three party members have helped stem the assault, the brigands will start to flee, spilling armfuls of plundered treasure as they escape. At this point, the bandit horde will be small enough that the Perch Guard can go on the offensive, and characters can attempt to enter melee combat. If they do, have them encounter a **vulpin captain**, still trying to keep the bandit forces organized. A one-on-one fight with a character might be appropriate, but if the whole party joins in, add two **mapach bandits** or a single **jerbeen thief**. The downfall of these foes marks the complete rout of the bandit forces.

If no characterss go into melee combat, the Perch Guard will run the bandits out of the city and into the Wood.

Spears, arrows, and even rocks thrown from slings rain down upon the bandit horde. Laden with the spoils of their raid, the bandits struggle to fight and begin to retreat. A victorious cry goes up along the wall, but the captain of the Perch Guard gazes down at the razed and ramshackled caravan with a look of steely determination. "We have wounded down there," she exclaims, rallying the troops. "Send for healers!"

The bandits have taken all they can carry and fled into the northern forest. The scene left in their wake is one of broken merchant carts and wounded people. Birdfolk and humblefolk alike are injured and frightened. Characters can join in the relief effort, helping to carry the injured up the tree for treatment, or assist the shocked travelers to the safety of the canopy. A character who can provide medical aid with skills, tools, or spells may also do so.

As the wounds of the injured are being tended, the guard captain will immediately begin organizing a counter-attack, hoping to press the bandits back to their hideout and snuff out the threat for good.

"This cannot be allowed to continue!" the captain shouts, swinging up on a nearby branch to make herself visible to the crowd. "These bandits strike at our home, at our livelihood, and at our dignity as citizens of the Wood. Well, I say no more! The time has come for us to stop this menace, once and for all! Who's with me!?"

The party should be encouraged to join the growing force of guards, militia, and common folk getting ready to leave for the bandit camp. The captain will applaud the party if they volunteer, and single them out to the jeers of the crowd if they try to refuse. Be sure that the captain advises the party to heal if they are wounded, as the bandit camp is heavily fortified and they will meet with strong resistance.

TAKING THE FIGHT TO THEM

The bandits, loaded down with stolen goods, leave an obvious trail. They have become brash and sloppy, leading the guard captain and her troops directly to their camp. The camp is a collection of canvas tents and a few hastily-constructed storehouses behind fortified palisades. There is a large central tent that appears to be for the leader of the camp. Refer to Fig. 2.3 for a map of the Bandit Camp.

Using the Bandit Camp map

Depending on how players approach the bandit camp, have them enter at either point marked with a white "X." The bandits attack in two stages, as indicated by the numbered creatures shown on the map. The diagram provides suggested positions for each stage to enter the fight. **Fray Merridan (see Appendix B, pg.207)**, her wolf, and a jerbeen lieutenant are hiding in the tent, as indicated. If playing with tokens or miniatures, consider keeping Fray and her group off the map until their presence is revealed.

The party is joined by a number of birdfolk who are anxious to put an end to the raids. Utilize the **birdfolk guard**, **birdfolk skirmisher**, **birdfolk militia**, and **birdfolk farmer** stat blocks to fill in the fighting force. For narrative purposes, have these characters fight in the background, adding tension and color to the encounter. Some of them can join the party's fight if it looks like the characters could use help. Slot them in at the start of the round for the purposes of determining initiative.

There is also a lone **strig knight** fighting among the Alderites. He is a mighty ally, and the party should notice him displaying his skill and prowess during the fight, perhaps even diverting the flow of battle so that the party can deal with their encounters without interference from more experienced bandits. The knight is **Riffin, the Ash-Knight (see Appendix B, pg.205)**, an NPC players can choose to seek out after the battle. Whether or not a character speaks to Riffin after the battle, Riffin will join the story at a later juncture. It is advised to not have him help the party directly unless they are in dire need, as he can easily overpower any of the challenges faced here.

The moment the two sides meet, fighting will immediately break out between the Perch Guard and the bandits. If at any time the encounter seems too easy, add an extra **mapach bandit**. The bandits attack in stages. Roll initiative for all creatures involved in both stages, but only have the second group engage once the first group has been dealt with. The attack stages are as follows:

Riffin, the Ash-Knight

Stage 1: Attack now, think later

Out of the greenery rush five **mapach bandits**. There is nothing elegant about the attack. Success in numbers seems to be the battleplan.

Stage 2: "A" is for arrows and arbalist

Schhwaff! An arrow wizzes by and embeds itself in the earth near one of the defeated bandits. Before the arbalist can be located, two **jerbeen thieves** fall from the branches above. Jumping around wildly, the jerbeens will attempt to disarm and distract the party. Two **mapach bandits** with crossbows, using camp tents as cover, provide ranged support for the thieves.

Leader of the Bandits

When the party starts to get the bandits under control, read the following:

> **The chaos of battle surrounds you. Birdfolk militia clash with bandits. Some, merely farmers with pitchforks, are not faring as well as the trained guards. A swift defeat of the bandit leader will surely save many lives.**

If by some happenstance Fray was killed or captured, skip the below text and replace her with another **vulpin captain**. The bandit leader will single out the party as the primary threat and decide to take them on.

> **As you approach the largest tent, you see a familiar figure exit, along with a retainer and a trained wolf. She greets you with a sneer, "You again!" The tall, graceful vulpin leader of this bandit camp is none other than Fray Merridan! "It's time I finished you once and for all." Fray draws her sword with a flourish, pointing it at you and your companions. "You shall have the honor of witnessing my deadly grace before you die."**

This time, Fray will attack along with her **wolf** animal companion, and a rough-looking **jerbeen thief**. The thief has a scrap of cloth covering one of her eyes and one ear that looks like it's been cut with a knife. Fray and her retainer both have magical items:

- Fray has come into possession of a magical brooch, which grants her resistance to all force damage and immunity to the *magic missile* spell.
- The jerbeen thief is wearing magic boots. She can click her heels together as a bonus action to double her walking speed and, for the rest of the fight, cause opportunity attacks made against her to have disadvantage.

Fray will target whoever she fought in her first encounter with the party before battling the rest of the characters. There will be no attempts at self-preservation this time. The Coalition is counting on Fray to defend the camp, and she will not desert her post. Fray will command her wolf and the thief to attack the same target, but if Fray is heavily injured she will call the animal to her aid.

TREASURE

If the party defeated Fray and her retainer, they are free to help themselves to their equipment.

Fray has:

- a fine suit of studded leather armor (obviously pilfered).
- a flawlessly made shortsword with a rose insignia on the pommel. It isn't magical, but of obvious craftsmanship, and will sell for double the normal going rate for a shortsword. Any lower level bandit who sees a character wearing it will also immediately recognize it as a captain's sword, giving them disadvantage on any rolls made to oppose Charisma (Intimidation) ability checks made by that character against them.
- a *brooch of shielding*.
- A pilfered bronze ring, studded with rubies, worth 480 gp.

The thief has:

- a suit of leather armor.
- three daggers.
- *boots of speed*. The magic in these boots is such that once they are attuned, they will re-shape themselves to fit the feet of the creature wearing them, including transforming into talon-covers for birdfolk.

The Rest Scatter

After their leader is dispatched, the remainder of the bandit forces flee in any direction they can.

With their leader nowhere in sight, and Alderheart's forces bearing down on them, any semblance of order among the bandits disintegrates. They begin to flee in every direction, taking what they can, and abandoning the camp. A cry of victory rises from the assembled citizens. The day is won, but at a heavy cost.

The bulk of the bandit force appears to be heading east, toward The Crest. The guards, beaten and exhausted, cannot give chase. The guards bandage up the injured and rest briefly before preparing the fallen for transport back to Alderheart.

With the camp abandoned by the bandits, the party can take their time searching the camp.

During a search of the camp, a few captive birdfolk will be found. These hostages are the villagers from Meadowfen. Taken as ransom, they are a little malnourished but otherwise fine. The captain of the guard promises that she will ensure the Medofenners get to Alderheart safely and, once they are well enough to travel, provide them with an escort back to Meadowfen.

TREASURE

In the storage buildings near the camp's rear entrance the party finds an assortment of stolen goods, much of it from the day's raid on the merchant caravan:

- A chest of coins, with a combined value of 350 gp.
- A collection of small gemstones pried from various objects, with a combined value of 250 gp.
- A variety of gold and silver plated urns, plates, and utensils, with a combined value of 200 gp.

Returning Victorious

Leaving the traces of battle behind, the remainder of the Perch Guard and militia return to Alderheart. Honoring their sacrifice, the fallen are transported at the front of the somber parade back to the city. Those who cannot carry themselves are carried on makeshift stretchers while the injured are helped along the trail home. Despite heavy losses, you and your companions are welcomed back to Alderheart as heroes.

Upon returning to Alderheart, the party is summoned to an emergency meeting of the Birdfolk Council. The Captain of the Perch Guard commends the party for their bravery and skill, but the Council urgently demands to hear about the bandits. The Council asks many questions about the bandits: their numbers, their tactics, which way they fled, and how many were injured. It is clear the Council fears reinforcements may be nearby.

One Council member asks if any personal items were found at the camp, explaining that over the past few months goods and possessions have gone missing. Should the party be honest about what they found in the camp, they will be allowed to keep any recovered magical items for their effort, as well as half of the value of treasure they recovered from the bandit camp.

It is also an option to keep their treasure a secret, requiring a DC 15 Charisma (Deception) check. On a success, the party is taken at their word. On a failure, the Council member who posed the question distrusts them, but the rest of the Council will side with the party in this dispute, at least for now.

The Birdfolk Council, not knowing the location of the bandit's hoard, will conduct an inquiry in the coming days.

REWARDS

- Award standard XP for defeated foes.

If using milestone rules for experience, each character should now reach level 3.

THE COMING STORM

With the bandits dealt with for now, life quiets down a bit around Alderheart. This is a good opportunity for the characters to further explore the city and resolve plot threads or character hooks.

The razing of the bandit camp was a huge blow to the morale of the Bandit Coalition, and should the party wander around the city, the Alderites will make them feel that their actions have had an enormous impact. Roughly a week's downtime is reasonable. Shorten or extend the quiet period depending on side quests. As soon as the party seems ready, skip to **Council Summons (pg.113)**.

Bandit Interrogation

If any of the party members are curious or would like to pursue leads on the bandit threat, they will find out that Fray (if she is still alive) and any bandits the militia rounded up are being held in the Alderheart gaol.

At the gaol, the characters may question Fray or another bandit to persuade them to reveal the location of the bandit's mountain stronghold. The interviewee is initially tight-lipped, but if either goaded with a DC 14 Charisma (Intimidation) check or bluffed with a DC 14 Charisma (Deception) check, they will reveal the stronghold's exact location in the Crest. Sometimes there is more than one way to open a lock, and the players may be able to find other avenues to acquire this information. Either way, the captive's position is simple:

> **The prisoner scoffs, then says snidely, "So, you know where our base is. It won't do you any good. Our people have suffered while the Council sits by and does nothing. A reckoning is coming to Alderheart."**

Once the Birdfolk Council learns that the location of the bandit stronghold has been revealed, it won't take them long to summon the party and ask for their assistance in dealing with the stronghold once and for all. Hopefully, action can be taken before the bandits can unleash whatever they're planning for Alderheart.

Seeking out the Ash-Knight

Should the party want to seek the Ash-Knight out, Riffin can be found at the Wooden Flagon. The Wooden Flagon is a tavern near the trunk's market district where Riffin has been staying. It won't be too hard to locate him, especially if the party speaks with any of the guards, militia, or birdfolk who fought in the assault on the bandit camp. Riffin's gallant efforts against the bandits have made him the talk of the town, and he has had many visitors since the victory.

> **You see before you a small yet sturdy looking strig clad head to talon in heavy armor, sitting at the bar with a flagon of ale. He wears a shield emblazoned with a wing crest on his back and a sheathed sword on his belt. He regards you with a friendly look as you approach. "Well, hullo, how'dya do?"**

Riffin is friendly, and will gladly share his story. He is from Ashbarrow and was only able to escape the recent destruction of his village thanks to the help of his good friend **Odwald Ebonhart (see Appendix B, pg.196)**, who brought him here. Riffin and Odwald have been adventuring buddies for a long time. The morning before the bandits raided the merchant caravan outside Alderheart's gates, Riffin awoke to find Odwald gone without a word. He was looking for his friend when the violence began, but he couldn't stand idly by while bandits attacked the city. Now that he's confirmed Odwald is no longer in Alderheart, Riffin is preparing to leave on a journey to find Odwald. He has some idea of where the old bird might've gone.

> **"I owe Odwald, even if he might not accept it. Maybe it's strange, but I just know he's got himself into 'sumthin'. He needs my help. What sorta friend would I be if I abandoned him?"**

Riffin will politely decline any requests from the party asking for his help in dealing with the bandits. His duty now is to his friend. If the party offers to help Riffin look for Odwald, the strig will thank them kindly, but insist that both as a knight and a friend it is his duty alone to pursue this. He knows Odwald well, and Riffin is certain he'll find his friend at one of their old haunts.

As the party leaves the tavern, Riffin will wish them luck on their travels. If the party tries to locate Riffin once they get back from the stronghold, they'll find he has already left the city.

Council Summons

If the party was unsuccessful at holding an audience with the Birdfolk Council and relaying Ardwyn's message, the party may relay that message at this meeting with the Birdfolk Council (see **Audience with the Council, pg.108**).

To guarantee the characters meet with the Alderheart Birdfolk Council, have a messenger or guard present them with an immediate summons to the Council Chambers. There, during a brief meeting, the party can be presented with the task of dealing with the bandit stronghold.

Having fled after the defeat at their forest camp, many bandits have returned to their stronghold in the Crest. This fortress is capable of withstanding a large-scale attack, and its position in the mountains makes it a dangerous location to assault. The Council has seen fit to ask the adventurers to flush out the bandit leadership once and for all, finally ridding Humblewood of their thievery and brutality. Given a major encounter would prove disastrous, the Council calls on the

heroes to use their proven skills to infiltrate the fortress and dispatch the leader of the Bandit Coalition: Benna Seridan.

APPROACHING THE BANDIT STRONGHOLD

The Crest Mountains are located roughly five days away from the capital. The party must travel through the forest before they can begin their ascent of the Crest. For the sake of pacing, choose to simply start the party at the foot of the mountains. Given the importance of their mission, it's reasonable that Alderheart would send an entourage of guards to escort the party to the base of the mountain, which would provide sufficient protection to eliminate the risk of encounters.

If the group consists of players who enjoy the experience of traveling across open country with their characters, use the **Road Encounters (pg.102)** table at the start of this section, or the **Forest Encounters (Level 1-2) table (pg.214)** to provide some color to the journey.

However they choose to arrive there, players will be greeted by a majestic sight:

> **The jagged slopes of the Crest tower before you, their peaks obscured by clouds. There is but a single path ahead. The daunting ascent up the mountain looks to be the only way to reach the summit and the bandit stronghold.**

The crags and canyons of the Crest would be enough to deter even the most hardened explorers, and the ascent to the fortress will take time, roughly two days of travel up the steep mountain road. If the party has an escort, the escort will leave them at the base of the mountain and return to Alderheart.

Along the way, the party will need to contend with rock slides, **mountain lions**, and bandit patrols.

The mountain climb can be fast-tracked by having at least one member of the party make a DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) check each day, skipping the day's encounter and potentially reaching the fortress without incident. On a failure, have the party deal with an encounter from the **Mountain Road Encounters** table. The paths that lead up the Crest are narrow and weave between craggy outcrops (perfect for ambushes), or along sheer cliffs (perfect for traps), but it would be appropriate to create other terrain hazards for a given encounter.

Mountain Road Encounters

d6	Encounter
1	A sudden rock slide! Make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or suffer one level of exhaustion. Roll again on this table.
2	Bandit patrol of four **mapach bandits** led by a **vulpin captain.**
3	A pair of **mountain lions** attack.
4	Find an old birdfolk hermit's campsite containing 1d4 random common objects.
5	Find an old but serviceable explorer's pack, missing the rations.
6	Bandit patrol of three **mapach bandits** and two **jerbeen thieves.**

Bandit Patrols

To maintain the secrecy and security of the fortress, the bandits regularly patrol the paths. These patrols are comprised primarily of three **mapach bandits** and two **jerbeen thieves**, but if the party has been spotted by patrols at any point, add a **vulpin captain** to the encounter.

THE BANDIT STRONGHOLD

> **Finally, through the mist you see a pair of great stone towers looming on the horizon. As you approach, you notice they are connected to a squat and sturdy fortress, which stands in lonely vigil among the crags. A few distant shapes can be seen patrolling the parapets, and banners with the crest of the Bandit Coalition hang proudly from the walls.**

Entering the fortress proper will be a challenge. It has 100-foot-high stone walls with guard posts stationed around the perimeter. Behind the perimeter, the fortress opens into a square, 120-foot-long inner courtyard consisting of barracks and training areas. A narrow wagon-road leads from the north of the courtyard to a wooden palisade with a set of double doors. Beyond that, a meeting hall has been dug into the mountain itself, and serves as the inner keep.

Connecting the courtyard to the outside is a single large entrance on the front wall: a massive wooden door behind an iron portcullis, which can be lowered like a drawbridge for wagons. A smaller, 5-foot-wide door to the side allows for single-file entry and is guarded by two well-armored mapachs who are big for their kind. These two each use the stat block for a **mapach bandit**, but with the following changes:

- They have 21 HP each
- They have a Strength score of 14 (an additional +1 to attack rolls)
- They are wearing chain mail (AC 16)
- They are wielding greataxes (1d12 + 2 damage per hit)

Storming this entrance will almost certainly raise an alarm and incur attacks from the four archers walking the walls (use the stat block for a mapach bandit). The archers each benefit from three-quarters cover thanks to the parapets. Even though the stat block of the mapach bandit can be used for many of the least-skilled members of the camp, they come from a variety of humblefolk races. Hedges, cervans, jerbeens, and vulpins can all be found within their ranks.

> **Captured!**
> There are many ways things could go badly for a party of adventurers here. If by chance they are overwhelmed by bandits, remember that Benna won't necessarily want them dead. She'll want to question them first, so the party will be placed in the fortress' prison until she's satisfied she has the answers she wants. If Benna has any reason to believe some of the characters are valuable hostages, she'll happily keep them alive in order to ransom them to the Birdfolk Council at Alderheart and continue filling the Coalition's coffers. If any of the party members are humblefolk, she might even try to convince them to join the Coalition. Birdfolk have had power in these lands for too long. If the character accepts her offer, once her plan to get revenge on the Council is complete, she'll be sure they share in the spoils.

Finding a Way In

If there are any humblefolk in the party, and the party managed to get their hands on bandit outfits (either by taking some with them from the bandits defeated near Alderheart or from defeated bandit patrols on their way up the mountainside), those characters can easily disguise themselves and bluff their way into the fortress. The bandit ranks have grown steadily over the last few months, and new arrivals to the fortress are common. A birdfolk can attempt to bluff their way in, but this will be a little more challenging, requiring a DC 14 Charisma (Deception) check to fool the bandits. A few "odd birds" have sided with the bandits, but their numbers are low enough to make the guards suspicious. Unless they are being introduced as "prisoners" rounded up by the humblefolk, birdfolk characters infiltrating the base will need to be careful of catching Benna's eye. They will face immediate suspicion from her if they are noticed.

> **The Captain's Sword**
> Any character wearing Fray's sword will have advantage on Charisma (Deception) checks needed to enter the stronghold, as the sword denotes a captain's rank in the Coalition, and the sentries won't want to risk offending a ranking officer. While there aren't many bandits here who would recognize it as Fray's sword, any character openly wearing this weapon will need to be careful around Benna. She knows her captains well, and this will draw immediate suspicion.

While the fortress walls are high, they are still surmountable with at least 100 feet of rope and a grappling hook, but the party will need to approach this option with caution. Spending a few hours on a stakeout will reveal the guard patrol patterns well enough to attempt to infiltrate the fortress with advantage on the DC 15 group Dexterity (Stealth) check required to avoid the sentries. Stealthier parties may be able to slip in unnoticed without such preparation.

In addition to the above options, the party could choose a number of other routes to gain entry. Below are some possible options that would open a path to Benna:

- ***Creating a distraction,*** like setting a fire or sounding an alarm, that would pull the guards away from their posts.
- ***Causing a scene outside the fortress or in the courtyard,*** goading Benna to come out and fight. She will accept the terms of single combat, but the party will need to abide by the results and be prepared to be taken as hostages if they lose (see **The Prison, pg.117**). If another party member attempts to interfere, she'll set the camp on them (see **Entering By Force, pg.116**).
- ***If the party stakes out the fortress,*** they'll find that wagons with stolen goods make regular shipments up to the keep. The party could create a distraction, then sneak into one of these wagons and enter the keep undetected (see **The Storeroom, pg.117**).
- ***If characters encountered the jerbeen orphans in Alderheart, and treated them fairly,*** the orphans can turn up in the fortress as insider allies. They don't like the methods the bandits use, but they will mention that Benna is kind and has provided for all of the folks here, many of whom lost their homes to the fires.

> **Fighting to the Boss**
> The party can always choose to simply try to fight their way into the fortress, but it isn't recommended. It might not be too hard for them to force their way past the outer walls and into the courtyard, but from there, resistance will only increase (see **Entering By Force, pg.116**). If the characters are getting in over their heads, have Benna appear early to fight them without having too many smaller confrontations.

THE COURTYARD

The wide courtyard contains a small community of humblefolk, some wearing arms and armor, others unarmed and going about their day. There are two buildings inside the walls, as well as a narrow road leading up to the meeting hall. A few points of interest can be seen here:

- The largest building is the wooden barracks to the east. It has rows of target dummies at the front. Depending on the time of day the party may see a captain training fresh recruits.

- The building to the west of the barracks is only slightly smaller, and more barn-like. The party may see supply wagons being carted in.
- There is a large canvas tent near the barracks. Two guards stand watch out front. A gust of wind whips up one of the side-flaps, revealing large cages inside. This is the stronghold's prison.
- Spiral stairs at the intersecting corners of each of the walls provide access to the upper levels. The pathways along the top of the wall are 5 feet wide, and provide three-quarters cover for characters firing down on targets.
- There are two large levers inside the gate. One controls the portcullis, and the other the drawbridge. The drawbridge lever can be pulled quickly, causing it to swing open. The portcullis lever drops the portcullis across the entrance. Large rope pulleys on either side are used to reset the levers.
- There are at least a dozen bandits inside the courtyard. Some are training by the barracks, some are helping move supplies around the fort, and others are simply enjoying downtime by reading and whittling behind the safety of the walls.

The Art of Infiltration

If the party snuck in or managed to bluff their way inside, it's pretty easy to keep a low profile and explore the courtyard. Most bandits will assume they're supposed to be here, unless the party does something to draw the suspicion of the captains. If the party strikes up conversations with members of the camp, or attempts to scout around with a successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check, they should be able to find out one of the following pieces of information:

- The Bandit Coalition used to be a far less organized and effective force until General Seridan took over. She has really changed things for the better, and the stronghold is now well-stocked and prepared, even if Alderheart sends an army to drive them out.
- Not all who live here can fight. Some work as messengers, cooks, healers, and other odd jobs that keep the camp running. The General has never forced anyone to fight. She inspires them to take up arms by example, and support the cause to the best of their abilities.
- General Seridan has taken excellent care of the people here since the fires burned their homes and ruined their lives. There is an infirmary in the inner keep to treat those burned while fleeing their villages or wounded in raids. Some of the refugees are children, but Benna has provided for them all the same.
- The General lost her family to the fires. If the Birdfolk Council had listened to Benna's mother, a powerful seer, they might have lived.
- Alderheart needs to change its ways of dealing with humblefolk in the Wood, and General Seridan is the only one with the vision to make it happen. Members of the Coalition should take heart, and know that they're helping to shape the Wood for the better.
- Alderheart should be prepared for a reckoning. The Birdfolk Council should fear the power of the Coalition.

If some of the party have been escorted in as prisoners, the guards at the gate will wave over reinforcements to help characters posing as bandits transport the hostages to the prison in the courtyard. They'll be able to escape later (see **The Prison, pg.117**).

Entering By Force

Should the party fight their way in, or decide to start a fight once inside, they can expect to be set upon in waves as messengers rush to alert Benna, while the rest of the camp prepares for the worst. At first the party will fight four **mapach bandits** led by a **vulpin captain**, then two **jerbeen thieves** and another vulpin captain. If any archers have been left on the walls, they will fire from three-quarters cover throughout the fights, only retreating once the last of the bandit forces have been dispatched. During the fight, the rest of the bandits here will have made their way up the road to the inner fortress.

If the party defeats the courtyard's forces, they will have an opportunity for a short rest before continuing, as the Coalition holes up in the inner fortress, fearing reinforcements are coming. If the party lingers for too long after their rest, start sending bandit patrols down to assess the situation and report back to Benna. Otherwise, skip to **The Inner Keep (pg.118)**.

If the party is defeated, decide whether they are taken to the prison for a jailbreak sequence (see **The Prison, pg.117**), or whether they are delivered to the meeting hall of the inner keep for a final showdown with Benna (see **The Bandit Leader, pg.120**).

THE BARRACKS

Rows of triple decker bunk beds can be seen next to a rest area, where a table lies strewn with playing cards and game pieces. Some of the bunks are occupied by people sleeping or reading, and a few of the bunks have sheathed weapons and leather armor hanging from hooks built into their frames. Stairs lead from this main area up to the top level. There looks to be ample space here for all who live in the camp.

The barracks serve as the main living quarters. Many who live here train to become raiders in order to advance the aims of the Coalition across the Wood. At any given time there will be empty beds, as some bandits are out patrolling, working, or taking up other posts throughout the camp.

The game table in the corner is usually empty during the day, but at night it may be filled with off-shift bandits who gather for games over flagons of ale after a hard day.

Upstairs, the party will find more rows of bunk beds, some occupied, as well as a door marked "Captains' Quarters." Entry to this area is off limits to most bandits, but individuals bearing a captain's sword may enter untroubled. Otherwise, anyone in the nearby bunks will politely inform the party that the area is restricted. They may even introduce themselves, as new recruits are common, and declare how good it is to see new members for the cause. This can be an opportunity to continue to drip-feed the party information from **The Art of Infiltration (pg.116)**, so long as the party doesn't do anything to arouse the suspicion of NPCs.

Inside the captains' quarters there are four single beds, each with a personal storage trunk in front. There's nothing here for General Seridan, however. She sleeps in the inner keep. All the beds are empty, and the trunks each contain different personal effects, such as small trinkets and letters from friends and family. Some of the letters reveal that the captains have friends and family in the Coalition, while others are scattered among the Wood as refugees. There are also a handful of coins between the trunks (2d4 gold pieces worth), as well as 1d4 trinkets and 1d4 tools or instruments (your choice). Some of these objects bear scorch marks.

If the scene could use a little tension, have a **vulpin captain** walk in on the party, and require them to roleplay their way out of the situation or risk having their cover blown.

If the party is captured, decide whether they're taken to the prison for a jailbreak sequence (see **The Prison**), or whether to have them delivered to the meeting hall of the inner keep for a final showdown with Benna (see **The Bandit Leader, pg.120**).

THE STOREROOM

Nothing of much value can be found in this storeroom, which keeps enough food (fruits, vegetables, cured meats, and grains) to sustain the fort for an extended period of time. There are also torches, lanterns, rope, and other general supplies. There isn't much in the way of a guard here, but a hedge with bright eyes and incredibly thick spectacles does serve as the storeroom's keeper. He'll mention the characters are free to take something if they're hungry, but to let him know so he can record it in his ledger. If questioned, his attitude will be similar to that of the other bandits in the camp (see **The Art of Infiltration, pg.116**), and he will call the guards if the party arouses his suspicion.

THE PRISON

The interior of this large canvas tent contains a small open area with a large locked chest, and a chair where the gaoler sits, a ring of keys hanging loosely from her belt. The rest of the area is filled with four rusty-looking iron cages. The cages are all currently empty.

If any of the party members are captured, or brought into the fort posing as hostages, they'll wind up here in one or more of the cages. This tent is watched by two **jerbeen thieves**, and attacking them directly is all but certain to raise an alarm within the camp. Any weapons or treasure (coins, gems, and art objects) characters carry will be moved into the gaoler's chest until they can be properly sorted. All other clothing and equipment worn by the prisoner will be left alone. The gaoler is a bit lax and doesn't bother to remove anyone's armor, or do a detailed search. This might be a boon for any characters who have hidden objects on their person.

Gaolers trade shifts once a day at noon, passing the belt from which the keyring hangs to the next gaoler as they arrive. The gaoler is more of an attendant than the guards outside, and can be easily subdued by a character (use the **commoner** stat block). The gaoler's job is to stay at their post and call the guards if anything happens. They are a tad complacent however, as no prisoners have tried to escape.

The prison tent is held up by poles throughout its interior, and four pitons that keep it all in place. The flaps of the tent can be lifted easily. Clearly, the tent's function is mainly to keep the cages from rusting further. The makeshift prison's interior is 30-foot-wide and 35-foot-long, and light filters through the canvas during the daytime making it easy to distinguish day and night. The cages are 10-foot-cubes, and have 10-foot-wide paths between them. They nearly fill the small space, leaving barely 5 feet between the gaoler and the bars. This is easily enough distance for a character to attempt to grab the keyring on the gaoler's belt, so long as the party can create a distraction to keep the gaoler occupied while they work. Grabbing the keyring from the gaoler's belt requires a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check, but depending on the nature of the distraction (such as if the gaoler is put to sleep) advantage may be granted on this roll.

The cage bars are heavily rusted, and some are weak enough to bend with a successful DC 12 Strength check, allowing a character to slip out. The gaoler is watchful, however, so they would need to be distracted for this plan to succeed.

There are any number of ways a party could plot an escape. If the players are having a difficult time, provide them some hints at the solutions above, or present them with an opportunity by having a gaoler fall asleep during their shift. If the party escapes, they should be able to evade the guards (who are mostly focused on threats outside the walls) with a successful DC 13 Dexterity (Stealth) check. The party has advantage on all stealth checks rolled at night.

If the party is caught escaping from the gaol, use this opportunity to have them brought before Benna Seridan in the inner keep to initiate the final showdown with the bandit general (see **The Bandit Leader, pg.120**).

THE INNER KEEP

Refer to Fig. 2.4 for a map of the Inner Keep.

> **Using the Inner Keep map**
> The map provides suggested starting positions for the bandits in each area. An asterix on a creature indicates that it has some changes to its stat block. Refer to the numbered areas in which they appear for these details.

If the party kept a low profile and made it to this location while exploring the camp, read:

> **The rough road to the north of the courtyard climbs up the steep crags until it curves, revealing a forty-foot-tall barricade of logs lashed together, and a large set of double doors. A pair of tough-looking mapachs in chain armor eye you warily as you approach. One saunters up, raising a hand to halt you. "That's far enough, friend," he says in a gravelly voice. "State your business."**

If the camp was alerted to the intruders, the guards will be openly hostile and it will be a fight.

The outer guards use stat blocks identical to the **mapach bandits** who guard the fortress gate (see **The Bandit Stronghold, pg.114**). There is a much smaller courtyard here, and unlike the one the party came through, no one is milling around. People don't come here without reason. There are two square wooden buildings, one to the east and another to the west:

- The larger one to the east is the infirmary.
- The building to the west is smaller and has a strong lock on the door. This leads to the armory.

A narrow pathway between the two leads to a sturdy wooden door that grants access to the inner keep carved into the mountainside.

1. The Infirmary

> **Several cots occupy the inside of this space. A shelf at one corner of the room is filled with salves and tinctures, as well as a few books and some herb samples preserved in glass jars and fluids. A wooden table nearby, stained with long-dried blood, has an opened healer's kit upon it. Three bandits, bandaged along various parts of their bodies, are resting on the cots.**

This building serves as a burn ward and infirmary for the bandits. A **jerbeen thief** and two hedges rest here (for the hedges, use the stat block for a **mapach bandit**). The three bandits are fast asleep thanks to some sleeping herbs, and will not wake unless a character attacks or forces them awake. If awakened, they will assume the characters are friendly, but they will immediately shout for help if characters give any indication of being otherwise.

If the bandits are left asleep, a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Medicine) check on their bodies will reveal they were treated by a healer of some skill. The healer's kit is missing six uses, but is otherwise perfectly serviceable. The shelf contains two burn salves, which can be applied to heal 4d4 hit points each, but will only work if the damage was caused by fire. The two books are valuable advanced medical texts worth 5 gp each. Characters who have both of these books on hand, and at least a minute to skim through them, have advantage on all Intelligence and Wisdom checks related to medical matters. The herbs are useless to characters without proper training, but anyone with proficiency in a herbalism kit could use them to craft a single *potion of superior healing*.

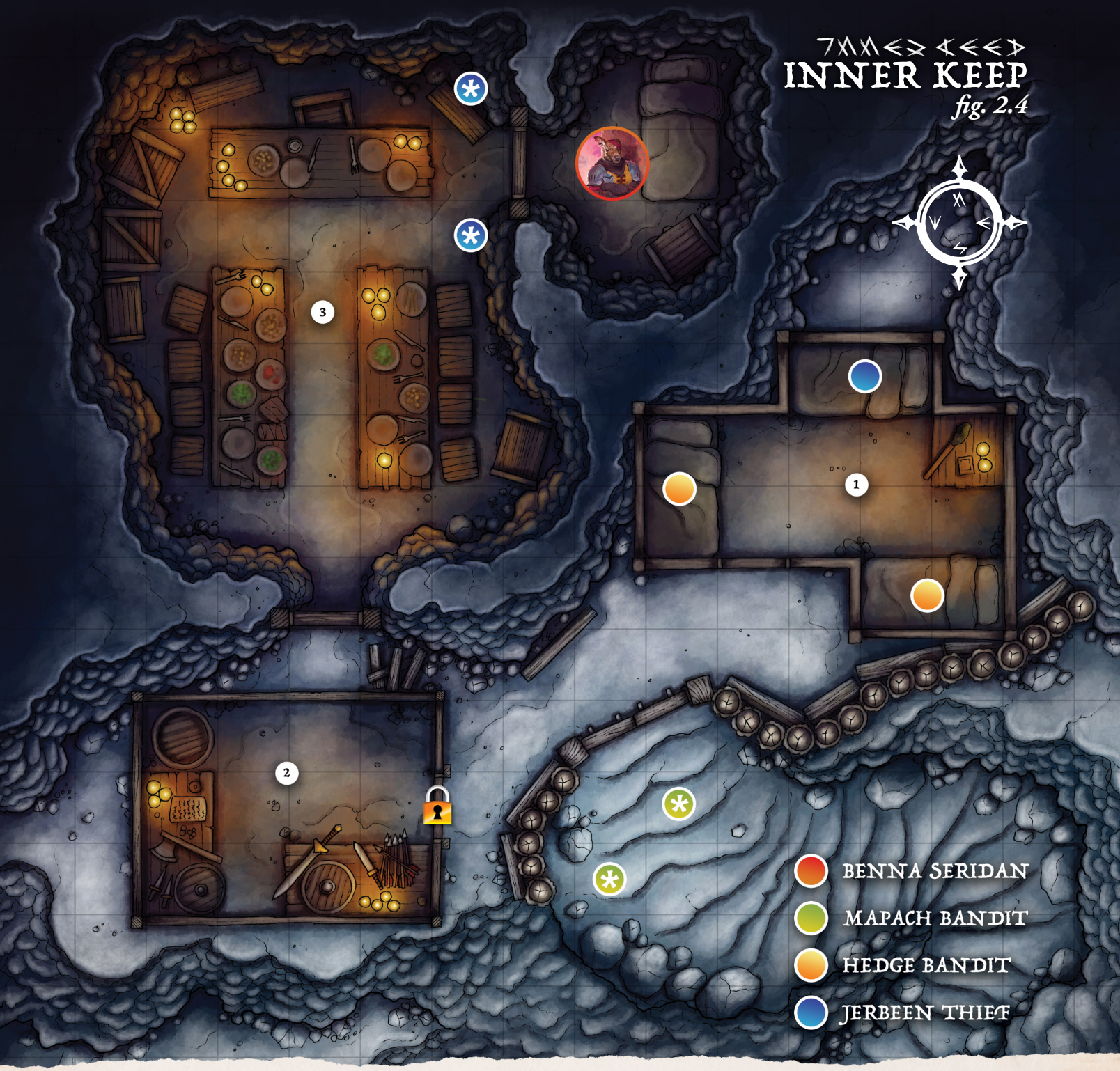
2. The Armory

The lock to this building is made of heavy iron and is incredibly sturdy, requiring a successful DC 17 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools) check to open. The lock can be broken by force, but it has an AC of 18, 20 hit points, and resistance to all non-magical bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage. The noise of breaking it may draw bandits from the inner keep.

> **This small building contains a rack of weapons, an armor rack, and bags of assorted treasure in a pile.**

The armory doubles as storage for valuables. If the party managed to enter, they will find:

- Three coffers overspilling with coins, there's at least 800 gp worth, in various denominations. This is too much for the party to carry out at once without some clever thinking.



- A small box filled with an assortment of precious jewelry. Among them is a necklace of polished shells and pearls worth 200 gp, and a high quality ring inlaid with gold and polished wood worth 400 gp. The rest of the baubles will fetch 320 gp together on the market.
- Two paintings of the Wood, one of the Mokk Fields at sunset, and the other of the sunrise behind Alderheart. They are signed by an unknown artist. These were made by an artist of uncommon skill, and can easily fetch 300 gp each on the market.
- Four light crossbows, each next to a full quiver of bolts, sit on a weapon rack, alongside a finely kept longsword and a halberd. This halberd is obviously one used by the Perch Guard, and even has divots on the top part of the haft where a banner could be affixed.
- A suit of scale mail on the armor rack.

Benna Seridan

3. The Meeting Hall

Three long tables are crammed into this meeting area. Two of them along the sides, a jumble of chairs packed together at each one. Remains of a meal still linger in front of each seat. On the northern wall there is a third table with a single high-backed chair. Candles and a single iron chandelier bathe the area in a dim light. Two jerbeen sentries stand watch over a door in the hall's northeast corner.

The meeting hall was a part of the fortress long before the bandits moved in. The stonework has aged, but is still of high quality. This is where the denizens of the stronghold share their meals, and the table near the northern wall is often stood upon, and used to share stories of suffering as well as news of successful raids.

Inside the meeting hall, a pair of veteran jerbeen guards stand outside the entrance to their leader's personal chambers. These are Benna's elite skirmishers. Each uses the stat block for a **jerbeen thief**, but with the following changes:

- They are wearing pilfered scale mail (AC 16).
- They wield a rapier (which deals 1d8 + 2 piercing damage on a hit) as well as a dagger (which deals 1d4 + 2 piercing damage on a hit), and they can make one attack with each as part of their attack action.

If a fight ensues, the noise will draw Benna from her chambers (see **Cut Off the Head, pg.121**). Have her act immediately at the top of the round.

The Bandit Leader

Whatever the party's plan is, all roads eventually lead to Benna Seridan, leader of the Bandit Coalition. If the party was brought to the meeting hall after being captured, they will encounter Benna, standing atop the northmost table. The two elite skirmishers guarding the area will keep watch on either side of the party.

A solid cervan woman with a face partially obscured by a red bandana fixes you with a stony glare. "So, this is what Alderheart sends: a group of greenhorns? Pathetic. If you knew what we're fighting for you wouldn't be so quick to condemn us."

Their engagement can be roleplayed, or have Benna simply draw on the party, explaining that she'll end the threat they pose to her operations here once and for all (see **Cut Off the Head, pg.121**). Benna isn't unreasonable, and will listen to the party if they engage with her. She is conflicted, and unpredictable as a result. The trauma that led her to join the Coalition, as well as the actions she took to become its general, have hardened her heart, and she is bent not only on change, but revenge. She loathes the Birdfolk Council, whom she still holds responsible for the deaths of her family and the destruction of her home. She also blames them for the suffering of all

those who have lost their homes to the flames, as the Council has chosen to hide behind the bastion of Alderheart instead of reaching out to help folk in need. However, Benna has begun to find solace in the act of caring for others. Building a community here, using her combat experience to teach others to defend themselves, and inspiring the once hopeless people of the Wood has ignited a passion within her, and she desperately wants to do right by her people. She has begun to wonder if there might be a better way to lead, one which wouldn't place so many of her loved ones in harm's way.

Should a character offer a particularly impassioned and heartfelt plea, decide how Benna behaves based on their role-playing. If a player has to roll, their character must succeed on a DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion) check. A successful negotiation will only be enough for Benna to agree to treat with the Birdfolk Council, her hated enemies, so that the lives she has fought to save are not lost needlessly in the struggle. If this is accomplished, the party will be allowed to leave the camp to deliver Benna's terms to the Council, but bandit activity will not stop in the interim. Failure to sway her here will lead to combat.

Cut Off the Head

If the characters storm the inner keep, or if Benna has decided to attack the party, read the following:

> **Benna removes her bandana, revealing the concealed portion of her face. She is horribly burned, her left ear is gone, and her eye can barely be seen under the warped flesh. "The fires have already burned away everything I love. I will make sure they burn away the corruption that festers within Alderheart."**

Benna is a spirited and skilled foe, and will press the attack even to her own detriment. If at any point the fight seems too easy, add a patrol of two **mapach bandits** returning to report. Benna will not flee, nor will she give up. The party will need to render Benna unconscious if they wish to take her captive and bring her to Alderheart to face the Council's judgement. Capturing Benna will allow the party to walk out of the stronghold without a fight, as the bandits will not risk injury to their leader.

If Benna is killed, the members of the Coalition will scatter, taking what they can as they move to safehouses stationed all over the Wood.

TREASURE

As with the bandit camp, there is a wealth of treasure to be found in the armory of the complex (see **2. The Armory (pg.118)**), as well as Benna's personal quarters. Most of this loot is stolen, and belongs to various merchants and residents of Humblewood. The council will allow the party to keep half of the treasure as a reward for their services, just as before.

The party will also be free to keep the *blade of the wood** recovered from Benna.

The party finds the following in Benna's quarters:

- A scorched music box. It is made of varnished alderwood and inlaid with gold. When opened, a cervan dancer spins on a spring to a familiar humblefolk folk tune. Despite its condition, this rare item is worth 300 gp.
- A rough map of the Crest and the peninsula to the northeast.

EPILOGUE

This is a major part of the story completed, as now the bandits will return to being a far less threatening force in the Wood. Ultimately there are two ways this part of the story can end: with Benna slain, or with the Council and Benna negotiating for a better outcome for the Wood's displaced humblefolk.

If Benna was captured, and delivered to the Birdfolk Council as promised, the party should be made aware that the penalty for her crimes is death. Even so, there may still be hope for the characters to convince the Birdfolk Council to improve the lives of humblefolk.

Either the party or Benna can plead for Benna's life and the desperate cause of humblefolk in the Wood, leading to a new directive for the Coalition; go to **If Benna was reasoned with**.

If Benna can't be reasoned with and is executed, the Coalition won't be interested in peace talks; go to **If Benna was killed**.

If the Benna was reasoned with, the Birdfolk Council will be dismayed and angry at first. The party will need to spend some time convincing the Council of the good Benna has done, and the benefits of treating with her and her organization. It will take some heated discussion, but the Council members will consent to meeting with her provisionally. After hearing Benna's story, the Council's disposition will soften. They will agree on the need to provide aid to the humblefolk who have lost their homes to the fire.

The Bandit Coalition will keep control of the fortress. Either Benna will retain command, or she'll support a new leader being appointed for the Coalition—this could be the characters (if they so choose), or someone selected from among Benna's captains. The Council will work with whoever leads the Coalition, provided the party (if they don't take over themselves) can vouch for the leader's good intentions and agrees to keep them in line. Spurred by a new purpose, the criminal elements of the Coalition will be put to an end, and the organization will turn into a relief network for those displaced by the fires.

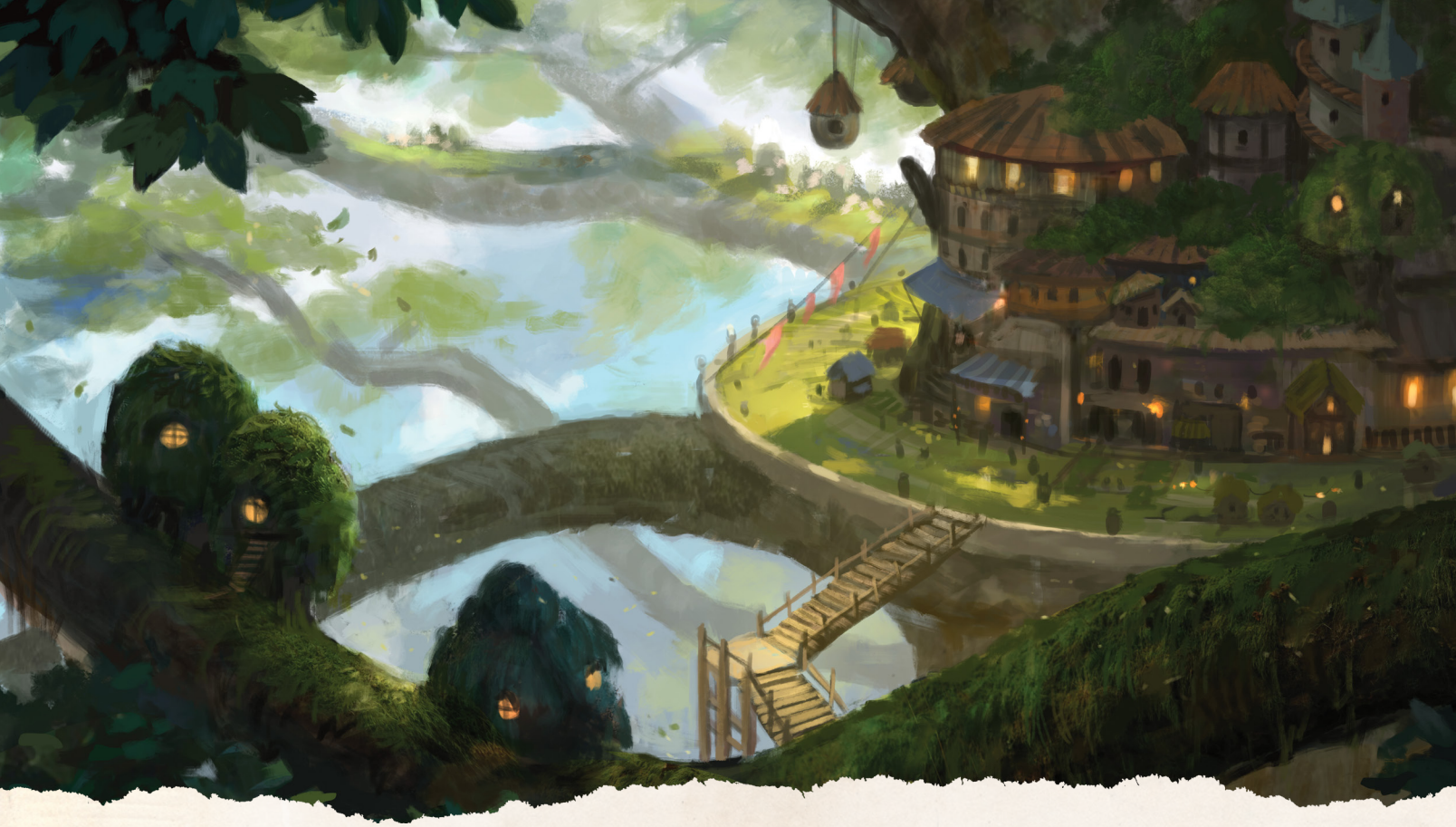
With the Coalition's supply networks and Alderheart's resources working together, response times for relief efforts will be greatly improved. While some members of the Coalition will abandon the cause for their own gains, many will be willing to help it transition into an organization dedicated to helping fight the spreading fires and provide relief and shelter to those in need. The Birdfolk Council will release a decree: they will become the Humblewood Council, and new representatives from major humblefolk villages in the regions and within Alderheart itself will be added to their numbers, effectively giving humblefolk across the Wood a voice in governance for the first time. This significant change will take the span of the adventure to resolve, but by the end, the Humblewood Council will lead the way to a new era of unity in Humblewood. Now dedicated to peace, Benna will show her gratitude by presenting the party with the *blade of the wood** she once wielded.

If Benna was killed, between losing their camp near Alderheart and their mountain stronghold, the Coalition will be dealt a heavy blow and the bandit menace will no longer pose the same threat to the region. Many will lose hope and desert without Benna, but others will see her as a martyr and rally under a surviving captain. Members will work from safehouses in the forests, doing their best to keep the Coalition command structure intact, and continue to cause problems for the Wood after the events of this adventure. Perhaps peace can be achieved someday, when the wounds of losing their beloved leader aren't so fresh. But, without Benna, the Coalition won't trust or treat with outsiders.

Once the bandit general has been defeated, the Council will send an armed force to secure the stronghold. Should the players wish, this could become their base of operations. The Council will happily grant this boon to the party as they have proven themselves to be valuable allies and defenders of the realm. A small contingent of guards and hirelings from the Birdfolk Council will oversee the upkeep and protection of the fortress while the party is away. The Council does, however, expect the heroes to come to the aid of the realm whenever summoned to do so.

DEFENDERS OF ALDERHEART

Regardless of how the party dealt with this, the Alderites will remember them as the ones who saved their city by ending the threat of the Bandit Coalition. With the bandit threat halted by the party's efforts, the Council will gladly send for a contingent of Perch Guard to Meadowfen with much needed supplies. Henceforth, rumors of the party's deeds will slowly begin to spread across the realm, and soon the people of the Wood will recognize the party by their new title: the Defenders of Alderheart.



Part 3: An Urgent Summons

THE WOOD CALLS

With the Council agreeing to aid Meadowfen, and the bandit forces dealt with, the Wood is enjoying relative peace. The party is free to engage in some downtime activities. Just remember that there may be a need to increase the challenge of the encounters listed here if the party reaches level 4 before this part of the adventure.

In this part of the story, the party will receive an urgent summons from the Council in Alderheart, who will explain that a huge creature, about which little is known, has been spotted burrowing under the ashen fields of the Scorched Grove. This is an **ashsnake**, one of many new fire-aspected creatures never before encountered in Humblewood. It was brought to life as a manifestation of the great **aspect of fire**'s rage.

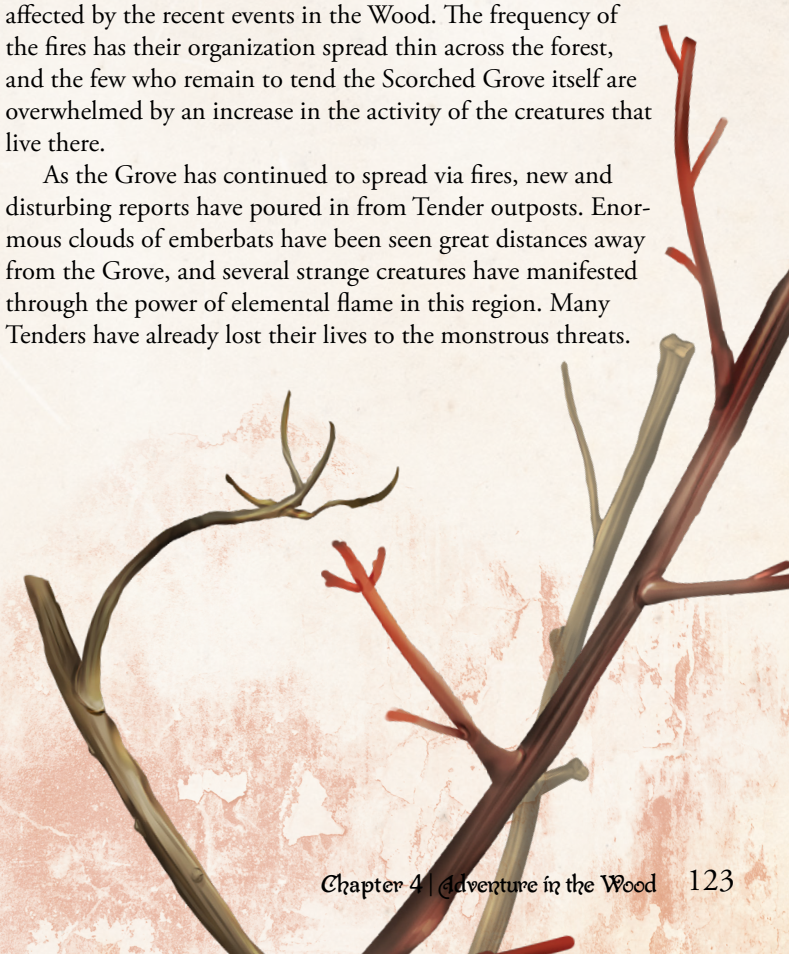
The aspect of fire has been stirring more and more since its slumber was first disturbed, and fires began ravaging the Wood. The appearance of these elemental monstrosities signals that the aspect is close to fully awakening. Worse still, the ashsnake roaming the Scorched Grove has started to make things dangerous for the Tenders.

Having seen the party's prowess handling the bandits, the Council has sent for them to help put an end to this strange creature. It has become clear to both the Council and the Tenders that whatever has been happening in Humblewood of late has its roots in the Scorched Grove. For the good of the realm, the party will need to go investigate.

THE TENDERS

The Tenders (see Appendix B, pg.206) have been badly affected by the recent events in the Wood. The frequency of the fires has their organization spread thin across the forest, and the few who remain to tend the Scorched Grove itself are overwhelmed by an increase in the activity of the creatures that live there.

As the Grove has continued to spread via fires, new and disturbing reports have poured in from Tender outposts. Enormous clouds of emberbats have been seen great distances away from the Grove, and several strange creatures have manifested through the power of elemental flame in this region. Many Tenders have already lost their lives to the monstrous threats.



Council Summons

If the party is in Alderheart, a frantic Council aide will come to find them and deliver an emergency Council summons. The official-looking letter asks the characters to appear before the Council as soon as they are able.

If the characters are currently at another location in the Wood, a tracker from Alderheart may come to call on them or deliver the urgent summons. In either case, have the date of the summons set for the next day, or the day after characters arrive in the city to give them a chance to explore.

RETURN TO ALDERHEART

Whether or not this is actually a return depends on where characters spent their downtime: in Alderheart or elsewhere. Characters in the city are free to see the sights:

Eliza's Emporium (pg.106), still owned and operated by the party's favorite eluran, will be turning a good profit and might have some new wares available at your discretion.

Susan of the Swamp (see Appendix B, pg.200) is now here! She has assembled a small tent of wares in the Trunk Market, which she hopes to sell along with fortune readings. If a character wants their fortune read, it will cost a single gold piece. After taking a drop of their blood and consulting her cauldron, Susan will offer cryptic visions of a character's future. Either ad lib these or prepare them ahead of time to suit the game and the characters.

Susan will still offer to make potions in exchange for reagents (see **A Witch's Debt, pg.99**), but she'll also sell a few prepared potions to fund her ongoing arcane research. Each of her potions costs 50 gp, except for *potions of superior healing* and *potions of resistance*, which each cost 100 gp. To decide how many of each potion she has in stock, roll randomly. Use a 1d4 to determine the quantity of any potion that cost 50 gp, and a 1d2 to determine the quantity of any potion that costs 100 gp.

Future of the Coalition

Alderheart will have changed since the character's foray into the Bandit Stronghold, in ways that reflect the party's choices. Below are the two most common ways this could play out, but details can be modified based on how players decided to deal with the events of **Part 2: The Bandit Menace (pg.101)**:

If Benna was reasoned with, the party will see a new uniformed force around Alderheart: the Wildwood Brigade, into which the Bandit Coalition has begun to successfully transition. They specialize in quickly mobilizing across parts of the Wood the Perch Guard have trouble reaching. They have already been of great help in extinguishing fires before remote villages can be destroyed, and delivering supplies and aid to villages damaged by blazes. Many members are humblefolk, former refugees who use their knowledge of pathways under the forest canopy to get where they're needed in a short time.

The bandit stronghold in the Crest has been converted into a supply depot and fallback point for the wounded. A new headquarters is also under construction in the Canopy, near the Perch Guard's headquarters. Characters may even find Benna, or whoever was appointed the Brigade's leader, working out of a temporary office in the Canopy district. They're busy overseeing operations for the Brigade, receiving intel from the ground, and mobilizing help where it's needed. The work is challenging, and word is coming in that the situation with the fires just keeps getting worse.

The Council chambers will now not only have the flags of the different birdfolk perches adorning it, but also several flags of the larger humblefolk settlements in the Wood. The humblefolk delegate selections for the Humblewood Council are ongoing. Many prominent figures have arisen in the political scene and are becoming more engaged in Council matters, hoping to win their own seat.

If Benna was killed, with the defeat of their leader and the capture of their fortress, the Bandit Coalition has been broken in Humblewood, making for easier travel across the roads and an increase in the Perch Guard's ability to send aid to those affected by fires. Maintaining supply routes is still a strain however, and rumor has it conditions for humblefolk aren't much better.

Refugees still crowd the trunk market, and more are sneaking up into the city through secret knotholes, or making their way down to the roots where there is more space. Crime is becoming a real problem in Alderheart, and while the situation is not immediately noticeable in the canopy, even relatively affluent areas in the trunk show increased Perch Guard presence and increased fear of thievery among the populace. Locals lock their doors at night, and some have begun to arm themselves, fearing the need to defend their livelihoods. Merchants are especially vocal about this, and many can be found waiting for an audience outside the Council chambers.

TROUBLE WITH TENDERS

At some point during their stay in the city, the party will run into one of the Tenders speaking to a crowd in the canopy market.

A frail young huden gallus stands on a crate in the market square, trying to catch the attention of the passing crowd. "The fires are spreading more and more by the day. We need help to quell the blaze! Please, join with the Tenders and help us heal our Wood!" As he speaks, a shy looking sable luma stands awkwardly to the side of him. No one seems to be taking much interest in the gallus' speech, and some are openly derisive.

The gallus is named **Havel of the Autumn Moon (see Appendix B, pg.196)** and the luma is **Tevor of the Spring Path (see Appendix B, pg.193)**. They both wear the robes of Tenders, though Havel seems to have more authority than Tevor. Havel will recognize the party as the Defenders of Alderheart, and inform them that he had a friend in the caravan attack last month who survived thanks to their efforts. He has heard of the party's deeds since they arrived in Alderheart, and will admit to a bit of jealousy. He wishes he were able to go out and help survivors of the fires across the Wood, but he is frail and lacks the fortitude to work in such conditions.

Tevor seems incredibly nervous, and informs Havel that he wouldn't be so quick to say things like that if he'd ever been to the Scorched Grove. Tevor has been helping heal the Grove, and will relate that lately things have been very difficult for the Tenders there, with many being injured or worse due to monster activity.

Tevor was summoned to Alderheart by the Council just like the party, but he isn't sure why. It's clear from the pained expression on Havel's face that there's more to the story. A DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) check will reveal Tevor is lying. Tevor won't answer anymore questions about his summons, and he will leave if pressed for information. So long as Tevor isn't around, Havel can be made to divulge what he knows with a DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) check: Tevor only barely escaped an encounter with an unknown monster that has been hunting Tenders in the Scorched Grove. Tevor doesn't talk about it, but Havel heard that Tevor's instructor died.

Havel will share that he'll likely see the party again soon, since he and Tevor are both due to attend the Council chambers tomorrow.

AN EMERGENCY SESSION

When the characters enter the Council chambers they are met with an unusual sight: it is filled with people! Birdfolk, humblefolk, Tenders, and even a few people from beyond the Wood have assembled here:

All those assembled clamor over each other, their pleas desperate. Some are urging for an immediate removal of all Tenders from the Grove before more lives are lost. Some are calling for a mobilization of the Perch Guard to meet the monsters head on. It seems everyone has an opinion and is fighting to be heard. Tevor and Havel are here as well, standing patiently off to the side of the rabble.

Shortly after the party enters, the familiar bright gallus seated in the middle of a long table at the front of the hall raises her feathered hand. This is **Bita, the Council Speaker (see Appendix B, pg.193)**. She waits patiently as many of the gathered birdfolk notice her gesture and fall silent. The silence in the hall is almost overwhelming in its contrast to the noise that filled it moments before.

When Bita speaks it is not with a booming voice or harsh language. The sound of command and respect permeate her every word. She addresses you and your companions simply. "Thank you all for heeding our summons so quickly. The Wood is in great need, and many of our Tenders have already paid the dearest price to protect it. We hope you will hear our pleas and offer us your aid in this most dire of circumstances".

Speaker Bita continues by describing clouds of emberbats, in larger numbers than have ever been seen. She speaks of strange fire creatures sighted in the Wood, and how they have injured many travelers. She then talks about the missing Tenders and the reports of a huge, unknown creature stalking the ash plains of the Grove. Something must be done, which is why the Council has called upon the help of the Defenders of Alderheart. Bita offers whatever information she can, but this creature is a new discovery and the Council has little to go on.

Tevor is called up before the head table. He was the most recent Tender to encounter the massive beast in the Grove. He recalls seeing the ash of the plains seize up, as if something were burrowing through. The creature never broke the surface, so he was unable to get a good look at it. It must have grabbed his instructor, though, as Tevor saw him get sucked under the ash. Tevor ran, until he was safe on the edge of the Scorched Grove.

Tevor is obviously shaken after the account, but Havel places a hand on his shoulder, which seems to comfort him.

Tevor points out on a map where this most recent sighting took place. Bita will mention that the Grove is a dangerous place, and ask Havel to look for someone to guide the party. At first, Tevor simply raises his hand to speak. It's clear that he is conflicted and his fear is getting the better of him. Despite this, he'll firmly state that he will guide the party to where he last saw the creature. He will admit his fear, but every second they waste is a chance for it to strike again.

THE SCORCHED GROVE

The great ashen plain that stretches across the northwest forest has come to be called the Scorched Grove. The Grove is the result of a massive forest fire known as the Great Calamity, which raged centuries ago. It left the area altered, and strongly connected to the magic of elemental fire. This barren place has remained in such a state for as long as anyone in the Wood can remember.

A Tender's Telling

The story of the Calamity that has been passed down through the Tenders goes like this:

"Long ago, birdfolk thought they could stop forest fires from devastating the Wood by using powerful otherworldly magics. But the plan backfired. Their magics only fueled the flames, and the Grove was consumed. By the grace of the Amaranthine, the birdfolk were able to lull the blaze into a quiet slumber. Though the flames were contained, the act unbalanced the elemental forces of the Wood for generations. This is why only gentle magics are used to help the earth heal. With nature, the slow way is the right way."

APPROACHING THE GROVE

To get to the Scorched Grove by road the party will need to head back toward Winnowing Reach, then continue west until the road nears the southern edge of the Grove. While this is the easiest path, it will take four days to arrive at the location where Tevor last saw the beast. If the party takes the long road, they are not at risk of an encounter.

Alternatively, the party can take a more direct approach through the forest to the northeastern edge of the Grove, very near where the beast was last spotted.

If the party takes the direct approach, they will reach their destination in two days, but they'll likely run into some trouble. After one of the following encounters (either **A Cloud of Emberbats** or **The Flaming Specter, pg.127**), the party will make good time to the location described by Tevor. Choose one of the encounters below.

Cloud of Emberbats

While nearing the Scorched Grove, you begin to hear a faint sound far off in the distance. The sound quickly grows louder, and a cacophony of screeches reaches your ears before you see the source: a great cloud of emberbats is consuming the sparse forest to the north. They are still a distance away, but you can feel the combined heat of their bodies even from here. A bright and mysterious orange light can occasionally be seen shining in between them.

Tevor will try to sound calm as he advises against rushing in blindly, but it's clear that he's frightened of this swarming mass of emberbats. He'll support the party however he can while maintaining a safe distance.

The emberbat cloud takes up the space of a Huge creature, and it has 103 hit points and resistance to slashing, bludgeoning, and piercing damage. It also has the following properties:

- It can fly at a speed of 30 feet per round and it begins 60 feet away from the party.
- The heat generated by the emberbats is so intense that any creature within 30 feet must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw when they enter this area, or start their turn inside of it, taking 4 (1d8) points of fire damage on a failure.
- The emberbats' space can be entered and moved through freely, but the heat inside is so intense that creatures inside this area take 7 (2d8) points of fire damage if they end their turn inside it.

Any creature that enters the emberbats' space will see that they are swarming around a glowing ball of molten orange energy. This orb is only a foot across and shines like a miniature sun, making it difficult to target.

The orb can be attacked, and has the following properties:

- AC 18.
- 30 hit points.
- Immunity to fire damage.
- Vulnerability to cold damage.
- Resistance to bludgeoning, slashing, and piercing damage dealt by non-magical weapons.
- It is magic, and registers as conjuration magic if examined with *detect magic* or a similar effect.

Once this orb is destroyed, the cloud of emberbats will gradually disperse, taking 4 rounds to disappear completely. If the bats are killed, but the orb remains, the orb will fly off in a random direction at a speed of 60 feet per round, streaking through the forest, eventually slowing down as it attracts a new cloud of emberbats.

Whatever type of energy the orb was, it seemed to be exciting the emberbats, driving them to cloud in large numbers. A difficult DC 17 Intelligence (Arcana) check will be enough for a character to ascertain similarities between this phenomena and similar instances mentioned in conjuration textbooks: when high-level conjuration circles deteriorate, such energy nodes have been observed being intermittently released.

The Flaming Specter

While making your way through the tranquil forest, you see what looks to be a blazing fire off in the distance. As you look at the fire, you notice the flames have taken on a birdfolk-like form, resembling a weeping corvum. It's far enough away that you could make it past without being noticed, but branches of the trees around its body are already beginning to smolder.

This creature is a fire specter, a memory of a former inhabitant of the Scorched Grove animated by the flames that took its life. Tevor will be able to identify the creature immediately. He'll also add that such entities are only found in the deepest parts of the Grove, and it's unheard of to see one so far from the Grove itself. The Tenders are taught to leave them be, as they will dissipate once they have fulfilled their purpose, which usually consists of re-enacting a memory from the life of the victim. Tevor will warn the party that disturbing the specter risks invoking its wrath.

If characters interact with the specter peacefully, read this:

As you approach, the creature appears unaware of your presence. It is on its knees, and continues to fruitlessly grasp at something in the underbrush, only to burn any plant life it touches. With each failed attempt the creature places its head in its talons and shudders in a way that suggests weeping.

The memory this creature is enacting is one of picking flowers to place at a nearby gravesite. Players must figure this out on their own. If a character examines the area, with a DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check they will be able to locate an overgrown wooden grave marker covered by reeds. The singed, desiccated bush the specter keeps reaching for matches bushes on either side of it, around which small patches of bluebells grow. Simply gathering any number of these flowers and placing them upon the grave will be enough to cause the specter to dissipate harmlessly.

Remind the players that their time is limited, as the mere presence of the specter is causing trees and shrubs around it to smoke. Characters can attempt to quench the flames before they become true blazes, but unless they have a way to do this at range, they'll need to get within 5 feet of the fire specter. Any character that lingers too long near the specter takes 5 (1d10) fire damage from its heat. Have characters continue to take fire damage the longer they stay in close proximity to the fire specter.

If a player disturbs the creature in any way or attempts to harm it, it will turn and attack. The fire specter uses the stat block for a **fire elemental**, but it is Medium and has only 51 hit points. The creature can be lured into a nearby clearing to prevent more fires. It will attack ferociously until it has been slain, at which point it will dissolve into smoke and ash.

"Beneath the ash it lies in wait. A hiss, a snap, and it's too late."

- From The Epic of Fire, a centuries old poem.

REACHING THE GROVE

The forest gives way to expansive plains of ash, dotted with the charred husks of petrified trees. The wind here has a heat to it, and it constantly disturbs the ashen soil. As it blows, small embers can be seen forming in the disturbed ash, glowing briefly before being swept up and fading on the wind. This place is clearly unnatural.

Regardless of the route party took, once they arrive at the location described by Tevor they will need to locate the creature that has been preying on the Tenders. A DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check or other tracking skill is needed to follow its trail. On a failure, it takes another day of searching to catch sight of the creature. Optionally, roll on the **Scorched Grove Encounters (Level 3) table (pg.215)** if the party fails to find the **ashsnake**.

Paying the Price

To add some urgency or consequences to the player's decisions, or to complicate matters, announce that by the time they locate the ashsnake it has already found another Tender and is attacking them! Not only must the party fight the beast, they must do so while attempting to save the Tender from meeting a deadly fate.

Have combat start with the party being surprised by the ashsnake ambushing the fleeing Tender. The ashnake will burst from the ground next to the Tender as they try to escape.

The Tender has 30 hit points and can cast the *druidcraft* and *spare the dying* cantrips. They have no combat ability, but they make any rolls to escape being grappled at a +2 bonus. In combat, they act directly after the ashsnake.

ASHSNAKE ATTACK

Suddenly, you see what looks to be a disturbance in the ashen plains. Something is moving underneath the thick coating of cinders at frightening speeds, churning up burning embers on either side as it goes, before vanishing. Something is here, and it has noticed you.

The **ashsnake** starts hidden in the ash. The first time it attacks, read the following:

A creature resembling a huge molten snake breaks the ashen surface with incredible force! Its scales are like charcoal, and between the scales a sinister orange glow issues from its molten core. This same glow can be seen coming from two points on the creature's head, resembling eyes, though whether or not it uses these to see is unclear.

The ashsnake can feel vibrations within 60 feet of itself, and will attack if it senses movement within range of its bite or constrict attacks. If it senses the party grouping up, it will unleash its breath attack on them. If attacked from outside the range of its tremorsense, the ashnake takes an action to determine the direction from which the attack originated.

During the fight, the ashsnake will try to stay under the ash to protect itself, but it will come up to attack when it senses an opening. Have it burrow or surface to make the fight interesting.

Here are a few points to remember:

- The ashsnake will generally surface near characters to try and knock them over with its eruption ability. If anyone falls prone, they can expect to have a grab attack launched against them, or a bite attack if the creature is already grappling a character.
- The ashsnake can be attacked while under the ash, although it has a bonus to its armor class (as noted in the monster's description).
- The ashnake can also hide under the ash, but to do this it needs to spend an action making a Dexterity (Stealth) check opposed by each character's passive perception score. While hidden in this way the ashsnake is functionally invisible, although characters can make a Wisdom (Perception) check against its initial roll once on their turn (this doesn't cost an action), determining its location on a success. Anytime the ashsnake emerges it is no longer hidden.
- The ashsnake can grab characters before burrowing, and can move freely underground with a grappled character in tow. Each time a character starts their turn under the ash they need to hold their breath (which they can do for 1+ their Constitution modifier's worth of minutes before they start to suffocate). This resets every time the creature surfaces, giving the character a chance to gasp for air. If a character cannot hold their breath, they must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking one level of exhaustion on a failure.
- The ashsnake isn't very intelligent, but it understands how to hunt prey. It is drawn to loud noises and heavy movements. A party member could attempt to distract it in this way.
- The ashsnake will always try to have one creature grappled while it bites, and will use its ash breath as often as it can, provided there are enough targets close together for it to hit.

OUTRUNNING THE FIRE

As soon as the ashsnake is slain, the following will happen in the Grove:

> **The earth shakes, nearly knocking you and your companions from your feet. All around you ashsnakes erupt through massive mounds of ash. They rear up, emitting a terrifying hiss, a sound so shrill it's as though the air were being rent. As the ashsnakes encircle you, there is a deeper rumble, less violent but full of power. The creatures hesitate for a moment, until another more powerful tremor shakes even their massive bodies. The ashsnakes flee, heading south and burrowing into the ash. The tremors continue to gain in momentum and intensity. To the north, miles away, something gigantic rises from a bed of cinders. First a hill, then a small mountain, releasing a plume of ash that blocks the sun. As the dust clouds settle, you see a huge creature made of craggy black rock and pulsing orange magma. It bellows a guttural sound unlike anything you've ever heard and begins to march toward your position.**

The **aspect of fire** is a primeval elemental whose very being thrums with rage. Try to avoid calling it the "aspect of fire" in front of your players, as this creature is currently unknown to them. If a character wants to make an Intelligence (Arcana) check to see if they know of it, a roll of 16 or higher would be enough for them to have heard of the aspect of fire through scant tales and myths. The stories say that this creature's sole desire is to consume, heedless of the destruction it leaves in its wake. Characters would not know anything more than this.

The aspect will immediately sense the party of intruders in its Grove, and make for them at full speed. It's obvious from the size and power of this creature that taking it on would be folly. Be sure to communicate this to the players. However, any party member who stays to make a noble sacrifice will surely buy time for their companions to escape.

The party can make whatever plans they want, but the shortest distance out of the aspect's path is back into the forest toward Alderheart. Any other path out of the Grove would leave them exposed to the aspect's march or ashsnakes that could be following. The forest canopy should also provide some cover from the creature, making the party difficult to target.

Tevor will flee immediately into the forest, making his escape before the party can react. This is the simplest way to resolve the matter, but if it makes sense within the story, you can have Tevor sacrifice himself to buy the party time to escape, or to save a party member in the following chase sequence.

Have the players describe how they would make their way to safety. The easiest way to resolve this would be to have each character make a DC 14 Strength or Dexterity (Athletics) check to attempt to outrun the aspect. Allow players to make different ability checks if they can come up with a unique way for their characters to escape the threat. For example, distracting the creature might be somewhat of a challenge, requiring a DC 14 Charisma or Intelligence (Deception) check, but attempting to restrain it would be more difficult.

Once they have succeeded on the first skill check, have each player make another skill check to determine how successful they are at fleeing as the creature continues to move toward them. Make this check easier or harder depending on how well players did on the first check. If players succeed at this check, their character flees at a sufficiently quick pace to avoid being in range of the creature's attacks. Particularly dire failures on this check could result in characters falling prone. Advantage on any rolls can be granted to flee based on class abilities or roleplaying decisions made by the players as they planned their flight.

As the aspect marches, it indiscriminately hurls massive boulders of magma and rock into the forest. Characters who failed the second skill check have fallen behind and are in range of these attacks. They must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw at the start of each round. On a failure, they take 16 (3d10) fire damage. On a success, they take half that damage. They may then attempt another skill or ability check to flee out of the creature's range. As above, be flexible here, and try to reward players for creativity while keeping the threat to their characters believable.

After about two rounds of pursuit, the characters should notice that the aspect isn't gaining as quickly, and after another round the characters will all have made it out of the creature's range regardless. If any look back, all they will see is an ominous red glow through the trees, and a plume of thick smoke rising up over the horizon. From here the characters are free to make their way safely into the forest and back to Alderheart.

FLEE TO ALDERHEART

A large part of the forest has been burned away in the wake of the "**aspect of fire**," but it seems to have mysteriously given up chase. The party has made it back to the city safely. Having heard and felt the massive aspect's movement, the Council is eager to hear a firsthand account of what happened in the Grove.

The Council members accept the news with sadness, anger, concern, and confusion. Whatever this creature is, it represents a threat to all life in the Wood. Many elementals have resided in and around the forest for centuries, but this one harbors a rage that the Council doesn't understand.

A sage looking Council member will mention that she once heard tales of an elemental creature of great size and power called an "aspect of fire", but that she hopes this is not the monster they face. Another Council member will mention that the first rule of battle is "know thine enemy," and add that the Dean of the Avium, a sable luma named **Gabe Windsworth (see Appendix B, pg.201)**, is incredibly knowledgeable. He may be able to offer some insight on the situation. Council Speaker Bita will agree, and state that should the Dean be unable to assist the party, the Avium is still home to the largest library in the Wood and it's tomes may be the party's best chance at finding answers.

The Council is interested in any information that can be found regarding this creature. More than that, they would welcome a means of defeating it. In the meantime, they will begin to rally the Perch Guard in case Alderheart should come under threat. The party must now embark on a quest to stop this monster, before it consumes the land.

Thick plumes of smoke from the massive blaze the party outran can be seen from Alderheart's canopy, and news of both the awoken creature and the destruction it has wrought spreads through the whole city quickly.

If Tevor led the party, and returned with them, he will be granted the rank of Summerblossom for his valor. He will head up the effort to quell the forest fires the aspect has started. If he did not return, Havel will lead the relief effort, drawing on the memory of his friend to inspire the crowd, and Tevor will be given a solemn funeral. Either way, many volunteers, both humblefolk and birdfolk, will sign up to help quell the still-raging flames and assist those injured in the blaze. The party can choose whether or not they wish to aid in this effort, but nobody will begrudge them if they need to rest after their ordeal.

TREASURE

The party will be given a special requisition from the Council to aid in fulfilling their mission to stop the creature. Characters will be able to use this unassuming piece of parchment, stamped with the seal of Alderheart, to requisition up to 500 gp worth of equipment from any shop in the city. This can be used in separate stores, or all at the same place. Likewise, it can be used to pay for a portion of an item, such as a weapon or piece of armor, with the rest needing to be paid in coin.

In order to obtain this discount players must explain how the requisitioned goods will aid them in their mission. Some shopkeepers may require more convincing than others.

The requisition is stamped on the back by a merchant each time it is redeemed, and notarized with the amount it was used for. This can be altered with a difficult skill check using a forgery kit. However, modifying the document constitutes thievery, and any character caught doing this will be arrested and brought before the Council to face punishment.

Characters will also be rewarded with a *feathered helm** from the Tenders for their good work. If Tevor awards characters this item, it will come with a gallus feather, given by Havel, to thank the party for helping Tevor return safely.

If Tevor died, have Havel gift them the helm instead. It will contain a luma feather in memory of his lost friend.

If the optional variant **Paying the Price (pg.129)** was used for the ashsnake encounter, the Tender the party saved may award them the helm, fitted with an appropriate feather.

REWARDS

- Award standard XP for defeated foes.
- For successfully fleeing the Aspect of Fire: 275 XP per player.

If using the rules for milestone experience, each character should now reach level 4.

Part 4: Mysteries of the Avium

Now that the **aspect of fire** has awoken from its long slumber, it's only a matter of time before it fully replenishes. Once it does, the aspect will surely have enough power to reduce all of Humblewood to ashes.

The seal which kept the aspect of fire sleeping beneath the Grove was broken by a corvum mage named **Odwald Ebonhart (see Appendix B, pg.196)**. Odwald deeply regrets his actions and blames himself for the spreading wildfires. In his desperation, he has returned to the Avium, where he was once a student, and disguised himself as a librarian in order to access its resources. Out of fear for what might befall the Wood if the aspect is not stopped, Odwald has begun to secretly research the darkest of necromancies. He created a monstrous undead creature known as a **cobblefright**, which he hopes will provide him with the key to stopping the elemental menace once and for all. In so doing, Odwald has placed the Avium in grave danger, for his control of the monster is imperfect. Strange occurrences on campus have aroused the suspicions of a few students and professors that something isn't quite right at the Avium. While the Dean, **Gabe Windsworth (see Appendix B, pg.201)**, doesn't yet have any concrete information, he's hoping the party will be able to investigate and help him uncover the mystery. This will lead the way to Odwald and his dangerous scheme.

AFTER THE ESCAPE

Be sure to allow the party some downtime after the events of **Part 3: An Urgent Summons (pg.123)** to prepare for the journey to the Avium. The aspect of fire poses a great danger to the Wood, but there's still a good amount of time to deal with the situation. If players feel pressed, have a messenger approach them with a missive from the Council, stating that the aspect hasn't moved from Scorched Grove, according to information obtained from the Alderheart observatory. Scholars cannot make any concrete predictions, but many theorize that the creature may need to remain near an area that is closely tied to elemental fire magic.

Traveling to the Avium

The Avium lies to the east of Alderheart. From special observation platforms in the city, the gigantic floating structures of the mage college can be seen rising above the trees of the forest. The College isn't terribly far, but the roadway curves around the eastern forest in order to avoid the dangers which lurk there. This part of Humblewood is known to be a nesting ground for **forest prowlers**, deadly predatory cats that grow leaves and vines on their fur to better blend with their surroundings.

Taking the road poses less risk, but it will cost the party three days of travel to reach the Avium. The path through the forest is much more dangerous and harder to navigate, but if the party moves quickly they can cut down their time, making it to the Avium in about two days.

The Long Road

If the party takes the long road around the forest, there are a few ways to handle this. The first and easiest way is to skip to them arriving at the Avium after an uneventful journey. This is useful for speeding up the pace of the game, or if players are itching to get to the next story beat. Be sure to mention things they encountered along the way to provide additional context:

- If the Bandit Coalition was crushed, Humblewood will have an increased presence of Perch Guard forces. The party might see merchant caravans carrying supplies from Brackenmill being escorted by Perch Guard lancers known as "The Spears." Perhaps some of the Perch Guard will even be hauling Bandit Coalition prisoners who managed to escape the fortress back to Alderheart for trial and sentencing.
- If the Bandit Coalition has started to transition into the Wildwood Brigade, the party might see intrepid groups of ex-bandits turned rangers. These individuals may be helping escort supply trains and refugees to prepared camps where food, shelter, and medical supplies are available. It seems like everyone is doing their part to keep the Wood together in these trying times.

Random Encounters

If the party enjoys travel time and random adventures on the road, use the **Forest Encounters (Level 1-2) table (pg.214)** to decide what they encounter. For each day of travel, roll a d20, and on a roll of 5 or lower, roll on the encounter table to see what happens. Some of these fights might be easy for a party of level 4 adventurers, so more enemies can be added to provide a greater challenge.

Optional Encounter: My Name is Krall

Not every bandit shares Benna's idealism. A few bad seeds will either use her death as an opportunity to promote themselves, or they'll balk at the idea of a reformed Coalition and splinter off into disparate groups. Use this optional encounter to add danger to the route, and help illustrate the new threats that have risen in the wake of the Coalition's destruction or transformation.

These new bandits are no better than raiders, and they prey on humblefolk and birdfolk alike. Among the strongest are forces led by a mapach known as **Krall, the Scavenger King (see Appendix B, pg.194)**. After hearing news of the party traveling through his territory, Krall is interested in cementing his reputation among the remaining raider factions by taking down the adventurers who either killed or turned Benna.

Krall has a force of bandits lying in ambush in the surrounding forest. These include a **jerbeen thief**, two **mapach bandits**, and his vulpin lieutenant: **Shyla Denn (see Appendix B, pg.205)**.

As the party approaches Krall's trap, the forest seems eerily quiet. Something is amiss. The bandits are well-hidden in the dark undergrowth, so rather than using passive perception, have each character make a DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check to spot the ambush. If anyone fails this check, they will spend their first round surprised. Read the following:

You see a burly mapach with matted fur, missing in patches, sitting on the road ahead, casually picking his teeth with a long, pointed dagger. He wears studded leather armor and has a rapier sheathed at his hip. He eyes you maliciously as you approach, standing to reveal that he is nearly six feet tall. "Well well, if it isn't Alderheart's lackeys."

Krall immediately attacks with his force. The thief supports him in melee combat while his priest and the two mapach bandits stay in the forest and attack the party at range. Krall will order Shyla to heal him if he is wounded, but otherwise she is free to attack using her own judgement, and support the bandits with her spells as needed.

The dense forest provides a half cover bonus to anyone within it, and creatures there can hide as an action on their turn.

During the fight on his turn, Krall will boast:

"If you thought Benna was tough, then you lot got no idea what you're in for. I'll show the whole Wood how harmless you really are."

This is a challenging fight, and if it looks like the party is having trouble add some wandering Perch Guard NPCs to aid them. A force of three **birdfolk skirmishers** should turn the tide in the party's favor, but the guards will be focused on defending the party and won't pursue Krall into the forest if he makes a run for it. Perch Guard forces should also come to chase off Krall if he's victorious, though he won't stick around for too long.

If Krall wins, he'll settle for humiliating the heroes by stealing something of value from each party member. Retrieving these items could be the basis of a whole side adventure all its own.

Krall seeks revenge, but he isn't so foolhardy as to risk death here. If the party seems amenable, he'll beg for mercy and turn himself in. He has connections in Alderheart's criminal underbelly, and he would rather be imprisoned than dead. If the party doesn't seem like the merciful sort, Krall will order his forces to scatter into the forest when things look grim. Once he enters the forest, the party has only 2 rounds to capture him before he leads his pursuers into a prepared escape burrow where he will pull a lever which snaps a wooden portcullis over the entrance. The portcullis can be broken by spending an action and succeeding on a DC 15 Strength check, but in this time Krall will already have traveled down one of the many branching pathways of the tunnel and made a clean getaway. His followers don't know about the escape burrow, and they can be easily captured. Krall won't hesitate to cut them loose to save himself.

If any Perch Guard came to offer assistance, those remaining will sound a horn, calling on reinforcements that will arrive in the next few minutes. This will include combat medics who can help tend to the party's wounds. The Perch Guard have orders to take a share of any treasure recovered from either Krall or his bandits back to Alderheart. However, the Guard appreciates the party's service to the Wood and will look the other way if the party decides to take the treasure for themselves.

TREASURE

The bandits all have standard equipment for their stat blocks, with the exception of Krall's parrying dagger, which appears to be of high quality and is branded with the insignia of the Bandit Coalition on its pommel. Treat this weapon as a shortsword. It also allows anyone proficient with shortswords to use their reaction to parry one melee attack that targets them, adding +2 to their AC against it. They must be wielding the weapon in order to use this feature.

- Each of the mapach bandits have pouches filled with 35 gp and the jerbeen thief has an opal (worth 200 gp) in their pouch.
- The priest has a flawless emerald (worth 350 gp) and three spell scrolls: *spiritual weapon, spirit guardians*, and *locate object*.
- Krall himself has a *chime of opening* with five remaining uses in his bag, along with a pair of exquisite rubies (worth 600 gp each) and a small sapphire (worth 200 gp).

THE ANCIENT FOREST

The forest may be a quicker route to the Avium, but progress is slow in the dense undergrowth. This part of the forest is ancient, and its floor is a thick carpet of ferns, moss, and other plant life. Treat all areas in this forest that are not clearings or groves as difficult terrain, unless the party does something about it. Spells that deal fire or acid damage can remove the difficult terrain from target areas. Characters can also choose to climb up the branches and travel via gliding if they are birdfolk, completely bypassing the difficult terrain. The forest is thick enough that anyone up at least 30 feet in the giant trees will have an easy time finding branches in gliding range, allowing them to make progress at normal speed, or scout ahead with ease if they so desire.

Gigantic 60-foot-tall trees form a canopy that significantly weakens incoming sunlight, and only dim light filters down from above. It's easy to hide here, and cover is readily available behind the trunks of the giant trees. Even with a map, there are no recognizable landmarks, and it doesn't take much for travelers to become disoriented. At least one character must lead the group, succeeding on a DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check every four hours of travel to avoid getting lost. Getting lost means the party must spend another hour wandering off-course before they can correct their course. Each time the party fails one of these checks, roll on the **Ancient Forest Encounters** table to see what they encounter in their wanderings.

Ancient Forest Encounters

d6	Encounter
1	A thicket containing a hidden **shambling mound**, which attacks as soon as a character enters its reach. It can be seen with a passive perception of 14 or higher.
2	A group of 1d4 **giant elk** can be seen grazing peacefully by a grove with a clear pond.
3	The bones of a **giant elk**, picked clean and growing moss. A successful DC 17 Intelligence (Nature) check is enough to tell this was done by a **forest prowler**.
4	A 60-foot-wide clearing contains 1d3 **giant boars** rooting around the soil for food. They have 1d4 young (Medium sized beasts that cannot attack) with them and will attack if provoked.
5	An **owlbear** can be seen in a clearing nearby. It is young (only has half its normal hit points) and hasn't yet spotted the party. There is another owlbear, its mother, also nearby. The mother will arrive after a round of combat has passed to defend her child.
6	A **unicorn** appears in a small grove. It is wary, but can be approached if the party is careful. If befriended, it will heal the party's wounds. If threatened, it will flee.

Hunter and Prey

The party will eventually encounter the **forest prowler** that has been nesting in the area for the last month. It makes its home in the treetops in well-camouflaged nests made from leaves and branches. A sure way to tell a prowler's nest from a giant bird's is the stench of meat. Prowlers keep carrion from the animals they hunt, usually giant elk or boars, on nearby branches as a source of food.

This encounter should happen towards the end of the party's journey through the forest. The characters could come across the prowler's lair mere hours from the forest's end, or the beast could ambush them as they camp for the night. As long as the party keeps moving in a stealthy manner, they will elude the beast, but if they stay camped in one spot for more than an hour the forest prowler will be alerted to their presence.

However the encounter happens, the prowler will study the party from a distance first, biding its time as they move through its territory. It will attempt to use its stealth to approach the party quietly, and will single out the smallest and most vulnerable character among the group as its prey. The prowler hunts through hit-and-run tactics, disappearing into the foliage with its camouflaging fur before pouncing again on unsuspecting foes. The prowler's incredible claws give it a solid grip on tree trunks, and it can climb even the highest branches with ease. Once it begins its assault it won't stop until it has scored a kill, or has been critically wounded.

THE AVIUM

After the party has either made their way through the forest or reached the end of the road, they will arrive at the Avium, the magical college of the birdfolk. Here arcane spellcasters from all over Humblewood study, decipher mystic secrets, and teach the next generation their craft.

> **Odwald's Disguise**
> Throughout most of this part, Odwald Ebonhart has assumed the identity of the librarian Mordane Swiftgale. To avoid confusion, the person the players know as Mordane will be referred to in this text as Odwald. This ensures that it is clear when reading this part that certain events do not involve the real Mordane. Be cautious when GMing, and refer to the disguised Odwald only as Mordane until Odwald's true identity has been revealed.

Important Information

At the heart of the Avium is a mystery the players will need to solve. The party's suspicions should be aroused when they start their research and realize much of the information they require is missing. In most cases, books have had pages torn out. The tomes were vandalized by Odwald while in a frantic state, before he took **Mordane Swiftgale (see Appendix B, pg.202)** hostage and assumed his appearance.

As Librarian Swiftgale, Odwald now has access to all of the highly regulated books in a part of the College known as the lower library (see **Into the Library, pg.139**). He can manipulate the records to account for missing books and place suspicion on others.

During his research, Odwald has uncovered a frightening truth: the **aspect of fire** is immortal, its energies have seeped into the Scorched Grove over centuries, creating a well of power it can use to reconstruct its form if it is ever destroyed. However, evidence of his earlier panicked search still remains, and Odwald worries that the heroes may use it to expose him.

The torn-out pages contain information necessary for the party to defeat the aspect of fire, but the players won't be able to find this out until they discover Odwald's secret chamber in the library, where he has been using the information he stole to plan a way to kill the aspect. Odwald has been dabbling in dangerous necromancy, and he's created a **cobblefright** to aid in his research, seeking to study its soul siphon ability in order to recreate the effect as a large-scale spell. If it works, such a spell might drain the vital energies that make the aspect immortal, ending its threat to the Wood once and for all. The cobblefright is a threat to all who currently live and study in the Avium, and the party will need to uncover Odwald's secret laboratory and dangerous monster before he loses control of his creation.

There are many pathways players can follow throughout this investigation, and many ways for the party to come across important information. The party doesn't need to know everything to find out the location of Odwald's lair, but the more they know, the more complete their picture of the happenings at the Avium will be. Because there are many connections players can make between different leads, clues, and avenues of investigation, some sections will cross-reference others that might be relevant.

If the players are lost or unsure where to go, an NPC can deliver one or more of the following hints to move the narrative along:

- Only faculty members have access to tomes dealing with high-level or forbidden magic, and even then it's solely intended for research purposes. Removing one of these dangerous books from the lower library, or practicing the knowledge they contain, is grounds for termination from the Avium.
- One tenured librarian, Mordane Swiftgale, has always been an odd one, but lately he's been keeping to himself even more than usual.
- Secret rooms were built into the Avium, and many remain undiscovered to this day.
- A lot of odd things seem to be happening in and around the lower library. Books with missing pages, malfunctioning servitor skeletons, and strange noises coming from the stacks, have all been reported.

Players can find the information they need through reading tomes in the library or speaking with knowledgeable NPCs on campus. By the end of their time at the Avium players should know the following:

- The aspect of fire is immortal. There is no known way to destroy it without it simply regenerating.
- The aspect of fire consumes living forests for energy.
- The aspect of fire is weakened by cold damage, which may cause it to cool and become immobilized.
- In the past, the aspect of fire was sealed away using a conjuration circle somewhere in the Grove.

Arriving on Campus

The Avium is a remarkable structure, and as the party approaches it, either from the forest or from the road, read the following:

Four gigantic circular stone platforms float alongside several towers and spires in the air above you. These structures slowly rotate around a leafless and branchless tree trunk made from solid stone. The trunk towers hundreds of feet high, and the orbiting structures appear to connect to stone bridges which jut out of the trunk near its upper levels. You see two Perch Guards in crenellated watch posts above the entryway to this petrified trunk. They greet you, and moments later a robed, bespectacled raptor glides down to land at your feet.

The raptor is an associate professor named **Rhys Birchwalker (see Appendix B, pg.203)**, who has been sent to greet the party. She explains the Dean is expecting them, and then leads the party to the large central gate, which appears to be the only entrance into the structure. She withdraws a an amulet with the Avium's crest upon it from the folds of her robe and presents it to the giant wooden double doors. After a brief moment the same symbol etches itself in light across the entrance. Then, with a heavy creak, the doors begin to part, revealing an interior lounge.

A main desk sits near the far wall, behind which a scribe is busy with tottering piles of paper. Several chairs and couches are situated around circular tables throughout the room, which is lit comfortably by floating braisers containing magical flames. Portraits of wizened birdfolk hang from the walls, each one wearing robes similar to those of your attendant.

Behind the main desk is a spiral staircase that leads down. The staircase is flanked by a pair of large birdfolk statues, one of which bears the likeness of a corvum whose portrait hangs from the west wall. Opposite this staircase, a circular platform rests in its own cylindrical alcove.

Professor Birchwalker leads the party onto the circular platform and utters an incantation, which causes the entire stone

disk to rise from the ground and propel the group upwards through the tree trunk. A few windows occasionally zip by on the way up, showing glimpses of the Wood and just how high the party is traveling. The platform stops halfway up the structure, and the party finds themselves in an area next to a busy atrium. Following Professor Birchwalker, everyone arrives at the Dean's office.

You and your companions enter into a round stone office. It is surrounded on all sides by windows, through which several spires and large circular terrariums can be observed slowly floating by. The many tables inside the office are filled with disorganized piles of books, and the desk is in a similar state of disorder. A sable luma peeks up from over the books. "Oh, please excuse me! I'm reviewing a few… hundred theses for my students. Excellent work! But, one does tend to lose track of time. I'm terribly sorry."

The luma is **Gabe Windsworth (see Appendix B, pg.201)**, the Dean of the Avium. He will apologize profusely and clear a few tomes off his desk before moving to give each party member a firm handshake and an official welcome to his College. The Dean will then cut right to the chase: he knows why the party is here and what they've come for, thanks to messages from the Council. He is eager to help them find whatever they need to stop the aspect of fire. The Dean will tell the party:

"You won't find information on something that old and powerful in just any library. Thankfully, the Avium was built upon the greatest store of knowledge in all of Humblewood… literally! Beneath the main building is the oldest structure here, a library with a collection of tomes, folios, and manuscripts gathered from all over Everden. With any luck, that's where you'll find what you're looking for. Now, a disclaimer—some of the tomes in there are a little… uh, deadly. But worry not, our librarians are experts. They'll help point you in the right direction while steering you clear of the more… 'advanced' materials."

He will then give each of the characters a small amulet with the insignia of the Avium. These appear to be of lesser quality than Professor Birchwalker's, and Dean Windsworth will inform the party that these are amulets, made especially for guest researchers. The party will then be free to roam the grounds.

The Dean knows the importance of their mission, but he also knows they've had a long journey. The amulets will give the party access to dormitory chambers that have been prepared specifically for them. The room will have exactly the right number of bunkbeds for the playgroup. The party won't need to worry about food either, as their guest amulets grant them free meals at the campus dining hall. Characters are also free to sit in on any lectures they wish to attend around campus, as well as to peruse the more conventional libraries housed in the orbiting structures.

EXPLORING THE AVIUM

Refer to Fig. 4.1 (pg. 138) for a map of the Avium.

At the heart of the Avium is the central building, made from the trunk of a petrified tree. It is orbited by four terrariums and a dozen or so smaller towers. Each structure which orbits the trunk does so at varying heights and speeds, between one rotation every 10 minutes, and one rotation every half hour.

The orbiting structures each have gliding platforms and moveable bridges, which correspond with bridge sections on other structures and connect at regular intervals to form complete overpasses. These structures stay aligned for 10 minutes, allowing for crossing by foot. For humblefolk students, knowing when to cross can make the difference between missing a class and arriving on time. But for birdfolk, the entire aerial campus can be traversed with ease. If ever in doubt about how long it will take for the route to an orbiting structure to connect, roll 3d10 and use that number in minutes to decide when the next favorable rotation will be.

There are many places in the Avium for characters to explore, and characters can spend their time here however they wish. Those who so desire can learn new spells or concoct potions. To track the party's activities, let the players know that each day they spend in the Avium consists of eight hours within which they can benefit from all the College has to offer. After this time, several campus areas close their doors to students, and only those with special faculty amulets can get past security. Studying at the College can grant one of the following benefits:

- Wizards who study here can add any spell on the wizard's spell list to their spellbook, but they still require the necessary amount of coin and time to do this. Spells are only granted to wizards deemed worthy of their power, meaning only spells of a level the wizard could cast will be made available.
- By spending a full day studying and practicing, any bard, ranger, sorcerer or warlock can swap one spell they have learned previously for another of the same level that is on their class spell list.
- Additionally, any character proficient with a herbalism kit can avail themselves of the campus potions laboratory, which stocks reagents needed for potion making. Creating a potion can be done for the normal cost (to help cover the expenses associated with growing so many magical herbs) and only takes one day of brewing instead of the normal amount of time it would take to craft such an item.

THE AVIUM

fig. 4.1

1. Central Building

Faculty offices, most lecture halls, the large communal dining hall, and the infirmary are all located in the central building. A Perch Guard station near the middle of the central building serves as the headquarters for campus security forces. Servitor skeletons can often be found here, performing janitorial tasks.

2. The Terrariums

The four terrariums are circular stone structures with bowl-shaped bottoms and mostly flat surfaces. They are contained in magical spherical fields, which allow matter to pass through, but are designed to shield and contain magical blasts. This keeps the surrounding structures safe in case of an accident. Three of the terrariums are 200 feet in diameter. They contain different biomes and are used for natural research. The fourth is smaller, only 100 feet across, and is located higher up. It houses a security building, as well as a gaol, both overseen by the Perch Guard.

3. The Towers

The floating towers are between 40 to 80 feet across, and they are the oldest structures orbiting the central tree. Some house libraries and small classrooms on niche subjects, mostly for advanced students of a particular school of magic. Other towers contain laboratories for practicing spellcraft, testing established arcane theorems, and brewing potions.

4. The Dean's Office

Located high in the Avium's structure, this large office belongs to Dean Windsworth. More than just his private study, it is a historical part of the building, having been used by every headmaster of the Avium since the College's founding. Dean Windsworth can often be found here poring over documents.

5. Dormitories

The central building houses dormitories for students and faculty. The student rooms are near the lower part of the tree, and are divided by an individual's standing within the Avium, with those in their first year having rooms closer to the ground. The faculty dorms rest above these, in areas off limits to students.

6. Lower Library

The lower library consists of a series of rooms and corridors, shaped from inside the tree's stone roots. Unlike many of the classrooms in the central building, which have been remodeled, much of the lower library remains unchanged since the days of the Avium's founding. It contains the most dangerous and rare books in the Avium, and only high ranking faculty members and a few special guest researchers are privy to the contents within. The sturdy stone shelves here are molded from the same stone that makes up the floor. They tower with books and require little in the way of care beyond dusting (though some sections are clearly overdue for it).

INTO THE LIBRARY

The staircase near the entrance leads down to the lower library. This area is only accessible to those with the appropriate pass, at appropriate times of day. If the party attempts to descend the stairs without their guest amulets or outside of normal hours, the two **stone golems** that guard the entrance (the birdfolk statues on either side of the stairway) will come to life and attempt to stop them. The golems seek only to restrain the party until Perch Guard authorities arrive. If the party attempts combat, the golems will defend themselves, but they will strike with calculated force. Any character reduced to 0 hit points by the golems will remain stable, since the sentries are under strict commands to incapacitate intruders, not kill them.

As characters enter the lower library they will be greeted by the librarian, Mordane Swiftgale, who is actually Odwald Ebonhart in disguise. This is a magical effect produced by a specially crafted pendant that Odwald wears, and as long as he (or anyone else) wears it, they will look and sound exactly like Mordane Swiftgale. This is a transmutation effect, although it has been supplemented with illusion spells so as not to appear magical when examined with detect magic or similar effects.

As you reach the bottom of the long and winding staircase, you emerge into a room filled with rows upon rows of large stone shelves, each containing several hundred books. Magical braisers illuminate this area, but their light strains to reach every nook between the large bookshelves. A swift strig sits reading behind a desk in the center of the room. As you approach he puts down his book and eyes you curiously. "The Defenders of Alderheart, I presume?"

Odwald will inform the party that he is Mordane Swiftgale, and he's been instructed to help them find whatever they need. While the request came directly from the Dean, Odwald has some trepidation about assisting the party. He fears that if the heroes start poking around, they'll discover the pages he tore from the tomes. If characters notice his nervousness and make a Wisdom (Insight) check, have Odwald make an opposed Charisma (Deception) check. Even if a character succeeds they won't find out anything incriminating, only that Mordane appears apprehensive. If characters report the missing pages to him, Odwald will feign shock and confusion and recommend they notify the Dean as such vandalism is taken very seriously. If a character doesn't believe Odwald, have the character make another Wisdom (Insight) check opposed by Odwald's Charisma (Deception) check.

A success will show the character that Mordane is clearly flustered, but nothing more. Odwald's bluster is in character with Mordane, who was always passionate about the library, and this will help to conceal his true identity.

For players who want to use their downtime to research the aspect, they need to decide what types of information to look for. The information the characters will be looking for can broadly fit into four categories: **The Scorched Grove**, **The Great Calamity**, **Elemental Creatures**, and **Conjuration Magic**. Each category has an associated amount of time required for research in order to obtain all the information for that category. This time can be lessened by having multiple characters research different areas of the same topic.

Helping The Party

If the party ends up stuck during research, or are unsure of what to do, you can always have them run into one of the NPCs in this chapter: Professor Birchwalker, Professor Revayne, or even Dean Windsworth. Any of these characters would be able to guide the party in their research and help point them towards the sections they should investigate.

Alternatively, if your party finds the research portion boring, you can skip to the incident in **Shadows Fall (pg.142)** early. This will provide some action and a quick transition from the party's investigation into the strange occurrences happening at the Avium.

While Odwald wants to stop the party's efforts, he knows just how much attention he could draw to himself if he acts out of character. He'll guide them to the first three topics, but anyone looking for help acquiring information on **Conjuration Magic** will find Mordane busying himself with other tasks, such as cataloging source materials and returning tomes to far-flung wings of the enormous underground library.

If what a player wants to research doesn't fit into one of these categories, either base the findings on what's known about the aspect (be careful not to give too much away), or rule that while they located the tome they were looking for, all important information appears to have been on pages that were ripped out. No matter how much time the characters spend on research, the information on torn-out pages can't be found in other books.

The Scorched Grove

There are many books here regarding the Scorched Grove, and since scholarly interest in this subject is so focused on its physical properties, origins, and fauna, it won't take more than a day of research before a character finds information repeating itself or covering the same questions from increasingly esoteric angles.

Most of the writing available on the Grove covers what was already provided in **Part 3: An Urgent Summons (pg.123)**. Reiterate information for the players if necessary, or just say that no new information is available. However, one book found by a character researching this topic will contain important knowledge. The character finds the following passage:

> **… from the above evidence, one can conclude that the Scorched Grove displays properties which suggest extreme conjury, perhaps even the calling of a major elemental force. Whether this was conjured from a nearby plane or a farther one remains uncertain, but the readiness with which the elemental magics have taken root suggests a source in close proximity to our world.**

The Great Calamity

There is very little work of substance on the Great Calamity, as numerous books addressing the subject resort to legend more than truth. Those books which do attempt serious historical study of the event note the relative lack of credible living witnesses. In terms of overall scope, there is a wealth of material written about the Calamity, although the information is unfocused and spread across many books. It could take a character three days of research to get through all there is to read. Quite a few books have had pages torn out and these seem to reference prophecies of some kind, but it's unclear exactly what they pertain to.

The following passage was found:

> **… regardless of the origin of the Calamity, whether or not the rumors of an elder elemental being hold any truth to them, a magical event of incredible significance is almost certain to have taken place. The calling of such elemental energies, whether through evocation or conjuration, would require a mage of unparalleled skill, or an entity of unfathomable power.**

Details on the aspect have been torn out of one book: an eyewitness account, from someone who claimed to have seen a "creature of fire and destruction."

Read this when the torn out pages are found (see **The Old Classroom, pg.149**):

> **"It flared so brightly as it consumed the forest. It turned the burning trees into fuel, gaining power as it devoured them, and left naught but ashes in its wake."**

Elemental Creatures

A fairly straightforward avenue of research, the library holds a wealth of tomes on elemental creatures. However, elementals of the size seen in the Grove comprise a narrow field of study, and a character researching this subject should be able to find everything they need to know in about two days of study. The following information can be found:

- The most important thing they will learn is that elementals of this size are normally elder elementals, incredibly powerful beings that re-shape the lands in which they live through their sheer presence. These beings would require advanced conjuration magics to summon.
- Many elder elementals have the traits of one or two elements working in concert. Stories from across Humblewood tell of a fire and earth elemental who may have been involved in the calamity that birthed the Scorched Grove.
- They'll find this passage in an old book:

> **Elemental creatures composed of fire that also possess earth elemental traits tend to be incredibly strong and durable, and do not appear to retain their vulnerability to cold-typed magics. However, cold-typed magic should theoretically be able to…**

The following page is torn out. Read this when the torn out pages are found (see **The Old Classroom, pg.149**):

> **…slow such creatures down as it cools their molten exterior, eventually encasing them in a shell of hard earth and rendering them immoble. This is only temporary, however, and depending on the power of the creature, this immobilized state may only last for one hour.**

- A fragment of text in one book reads:

> **Elder elementals have strong connections to the energy of their aspected element. This connection can be so strong that…**

The following page is torn out. Read this when the torn out pages are found (see **The Old Classroom, pg.149**):

> **…some of the most powerful elementals have been reported to regenerate themselves completely if destroyed through conventional means. They do this through the vast reservoirs of aspected energy present in areas that have been infused with their elemental aura, normally through extended exposure to the elder elemental.**

- Finally, the party may come across a few burned pages from an old tome. The pages are badly damaged, almost as if they were saved from a fire, and are kept in a small magical field to prevent further disintegration. Their origin is unknown. The following passage can be made out:

> **"After its defeat, the aspect of ice lost a single shard… *the Borealus*… was sealed away… A dance of fire and ice maintains the Wood's balance… if the fire wanes, it must wane slowly, only then will its energies have time to ebb away…"**

Ashsnake Lore

The ashsnakes were thought to be new to Humblewood, but with a bit of poking around characters can find out that the creatures may have appeared in the past.

Any player that spends the full amount of days researching **Elemental Creatures** or **The Great Calamity**, while also looking for information about ashsnakes, will find a few accounts detailing sightings of similar creatures around the time of the Great Calamity. Although the ashsnakes are definitely related to the element of fire, accounts do not provide enough information to tell whether or not the creatures are elementals, and descriptions of them feeding run exactly counter to this notion, as elementals require neither food nor drink to survive.

Conjuration Magic

Any player who picked up on the evidence of conjuration magic in the Grove, possibly from their encounter with the **Cloud of Emberbats (pg.126)**, could have their character investigate this topic. Other research topics could lead characters here as well. This is a broad category, and even when pared down to tomes on elemental summoning, it would take time to sift through. After four days of research, a character will learn the following:

- Anything as big as the aspect would require huge amounts of energy to seal. It would take tremendous effort on the part of a creature, even one as powerful as the aspect of fire, to break free. This likely couldn't have been done without the seal being weakened by some outside force.
- A large conjuration circle would be needed in order to seal away anything as massive as the aspect of fire. The circle may have become obscured over time, but it is impossible for the aspect to have been kept dormant all this time without it.
- After finding the previous piece of information, further research will lead the party to a cryptic tome: a treatise by a conjurer who attempted to calculate the location of the postulated conjuration circle within the Grove. The conjurer's treatise is based on painstaking research on energy readings, topography, ley lines, and other academic esoterica. However, while the complex formulae of his calculations remain, the pages that actually specify the location have been ripped out (see **The Old Classroom, pg.149**). Without the missing page, the conjurer's calculations could be worked through to find the location of the circle, but it would be incredibly challenging, taking at least a full day of research by someone proficient in the Arcana skill. At the end of the day, the researcher must make a DC 21 Intelligence (Arcana) check. On a success, the character calculates the circle's postulated location in the Grove, which is on it's eastern edge, at a point between Winnowing Reach and Alderheart. On a failure, the character must repeat the process, requiring another full day of calculations. Other characters can help with this roll, granting advantage to the character rolling for the check, but only if the supporting characters are also proficient in the Arcana skill. Professor Birchwalker can also help a character perform the calculations to find the location of the conjuration circle within the Grove.

SHADOWS FALL

After the party completes five days of research, Odwald will become nervous. He'll try to use a necromantic ritual ripped from one of the tomes he stole in an attempt to scare the party off. He'll wait until the party members are absorbed in their tasks before acting. When no one is watching him, he will use *greater invisibility* to move unseen and unheard between the large stacks, then cast the ritual slowly and quietly. Once Odwald completes the ritual, he'll discard the useless ritual page in a place where the characters can find it, attempting to frame another necromancer on campus. If characters search the area where the shadows appeared, they will find the page. A DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana) check will reveal the dark runes scratched upon the parchment to be associated with particularly foul necromancy. All the magic in the runes has been spent.

Odwald's ritual curses the characters, causing their **shadow** to detach and become an undead creature in the character's likeness. The shadows each attack the character to which they are closest, and if in an area of dim light they will use their bonus action to hide immediately before making their attack. Party members in the main areas of the library will be in conditions of bright light, while those between the shelves will be in areas of dim light. If anyone calls for help, Odwald, still disguised as Mordane, will hear it but ignore their pleas.

Once the shadows are defeated, Odwald will arrive and make excuses for his absence at the onset of battle. He'll tell a story about having to return some terribly fragile evocation scrolls to a far-away section of the library. If any characters doubt this story, have them make opposed Wisdom (Insight) checks against Odwald's Charisma (Deception) check. Odwald makes this check with advantage. He knows this library like the back of his talon and can easily lead the characters to the exact section where he placed the tomes earlier to set up this alibi.

If a party member succeeds, let it be known Mordane is hiding something, but don't reveal exactly what. A good thing to note is that a party member's success should put him on a list of potential suspects for the strange occurrences on campus, not force the final encounter early. If pressured, Odwald would likely keep up his ruse, and even call security on the party if they try a heavy-handed tactic like resorting to intimidation.

Regardless of the conversation, Odwald will ask if the party requires aid, and if any have been injured he will use his faculty amulet to contact Avium security and medics. The party members will be escorted to the infirmary, where healers will tend to their wounds and examine them with divination magic. The healers will ask any characters who've taken Strength damage to finish a short rest in the infirmary, to make sure the curse of undeath is fully purged. Characters should return to normal after completing a short or long rest.

Unmaking the Mystery

This isn't recommended, but should the decision be made to force the final encounter early — if the party isn't the type for mysteries — this section will detail how they can proceed from this point. Make sure to read everything from **The Secret Door (pg.147)** to get a rough idea of the dungeon the party will be going into.

If at any point "Mordane" is presumed to be behind the strange happenings, make sure the disguised Odwald has time to escape from the party (with his spells he should have plenty of ways to evade them). Then, have him flee through his secret passageway, which the party must uncover in order to continue their pursuit.

The party can even appeal to the Dean for help, as Dean Windsworth would now be forced to agree that something suspicious seems to have happened to Mordane.

If Odwald made it to his laboratory, he'll stay hidden there, working on his calculations. Because he knows the party is coming, he will have the **cobblefright** guarding **The Old Classroom (pg.149)** to make it easier for him to escape.

MYSTERIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES

The day after the party's encounter with the shadows, they will be awoken by a knock on their dormitory door. Professor Birchwalker will inform the party that the Dean wishes to see them as soon as possible. The party will find the Dean in his office in a nervous state. He'll ask them to shut the door moments after entering.

Dean Windsworth fixes you with a serious stare and anxiously speaks: "You aren't the first to have an 'incident' in the past few weeks. I… uh, don't mean to alarm you, but several strange things have been reported across campus and… well, this college was made by powerful wizards, and… we haven't really figured out everything those old codgers left hidden here. Magical defenses and the like. We've had a few uh…accidents in the past. I hope that isn't the case...but if it is, well, you folks are the Defenders of Alderheart, right? I can't think of anyone else I'd rather have looking into this."

The Dean will elaborate if the characters have questions. He's received odd reports from across campus, and believes them to be the result of some as yet undiscovered magical defense built into the Avium being accidentally triggered. He has a few leads that might help the party find out what's happening. Normally, the Dean would trust such investigations to the Perch Guard, but he has so little to go on at this point that he'd rather not involve them if it turns out to be something minor. If the party mentions anything suspicious on the part of the faculty, the Dean will insist they gather sufficient proof first. He trusts his staff and will need hard evidence before he can even consider the possibility of one of them being to blame. The Dean outlines three leads for the party to follow-up on:

- A poor student, **Figory Figgins (see Appendix B, pg.196)**, is a skittish jerbeen who recently applied for sick leave. He filed reports about experiencing something unusual and frightening on campus. Most people think he's exaggerating to gain a medical exemption from classes, but the Dean believes something scared Figory. In truth, Figory was attacked by the **cobblefright**, and was afflicted when it drained some of his vitality. The party will find Figory in the first year dormitories in the central building, near the ground floor (see **The Unnerved Underachiever, pg.143**).
- **Corvax Revayne (see Appendix B, pg.195)**, a dusk corvum divination instructor, has made cryptic predictions, regarding a bad event that's either going to, or already has happened on the campus. He's a brilliant scholar, but also a bit of an oddball. It would be of great help if the party could check in and see what exactly the old corvum has predicted. It might be related to the events on campus. He has an office in the central building, but he can be found in the divination lab in one of the outer spires (see **A Disturbed Diviner, pg.144**).
- A studious sera luma named **Jell Platena (see Appendix B, pg.200)** has lodged a complaint about the servitor skeletons on campus acting oddly. It's minor, but it might be worth looking into. Jell doesn't know this, but what she saw was the direct result of Odwald controlling the servitor skeletons to help in his research. She can be found in one of the libraries in the inner spires (see **The Apprehensive Apprentice, pg.145**).

The Unnerved Underachiever

The party will find Figory in his room. He'll be hesitant to talk with them, as he is accustomed to being bullied by the other students.

The door to the dormitory room opens only a crack, and through it you can see a small eye looking at you nervously. A timid voice squeaks, "Who are you? What do you want?"

If the party explains they're here to question Figory, he'll shut the door and ask them to leave. The party can convince him to let them in with a DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion) check or a DC 12 Charisma (Intimidation) check. They can also try a more subtle route, such as claiming they were sent to check up on his health. Figory, really does feel burdened with his secret, but he isn't convinced people will believe him.

Figory looks pale and weak. His face is drained of color and his eyes are heavy, as though he hasn't slept. If the party persuaded their way in or otherwise entered in a non-threatening way, Figory will open up and tell them his story. If they intimidated or otherwise bullied their way in, they'll have to

succeed on another Intimidation skill check (at the same DC) to get him to speak. On a failure, he won't talk, and if the party continues to push he'll ask them to leave immediately, warning the group that he will call for campus security if they don't. If the party can get him to speak, this is the story Figory tells:

> **"It was a cold night. It was raining. I — I could hear scratching, like something scraping at the wall outside my window. When I looked out, I saw it. This huge monster was c-c-climbing with its c-claws… It saw me too. It had four eyes. Four big red eyes. It opened its mouth and… I think I passed out. When I woke up I felt sick, and it — it was just gone. You probably think I'm crazy… don't you?"**

If the party asks around to see if other students heard or saw anything, there will be no corroboration. It was raining heavily, and even Figory will admit to only being able to hear the creature faintly through the downpour. If anyone in the party casts detect magic on Figory they will find that he has a faint aura of necromancy about him, as though he was recently affected by necromantic magic.

Figory isn't interested in getting too involved in the investigation. He explains that he has to focus on his health in order to be ready for the next semester, but it would be a great comfort to know the party has caught the creature he saw before it can hurt someone. He will provide them with any information he can before they leave.

If the party examines the outside of the trunk where Figory saw the creature, a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check will be enough to uncover marks on the trunk's surface, as well as a few pieces of bone peeking out of the soft earth.

The marks on the trunk are faded and subtler than one would expect from Figory's story. These are leftover from the transmutation magic Odwald used to cover up the damage done by his escaped cobblefright creation. Any wizard specializing in transmutation can instantly identify magical tampering on the trunk upon examination. Such a character would also be able to tell that whoever covered up these markings wasn't a specialist transmuter: there are differences in the way the magic was used here, and a true master of this magical school could have blended these markings seamlessly. The same information could be discerned by any other character with a DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana) check.

The bone fragments on the ground can be identified as birdfolk bones with a DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) or Wisdom (Survival) check, but the pieces are too small to make out anything else. The bones feel strange to anyone holding them, somehow imparting a sense of unease. Casting *detect magic* on the bones will reveal them to have a strong aura of necromancy.

A Disturbed Diviner

Professor Revayne is in his classroom, at a table specially prepared for divination. He is performing some kind of ritual with a set of small animal bones when the party enters. The interruption causes him to lose focus and curse at the party, until he realizes they are the Defenders of Alderheart. Then, he is eager for their aid in convincing the Dean to mount an investigation regarding the strange omens he keeps reading in relation to the College. Instead of explaining further, Professor Revayne will demonstrate by performing the *augury* ritual now.

As he casts the magic, and throws a set of small animal bones inside a prepared ritual circle, they begin to glow. A soft voice speaks, revealing a cryptic clue:

> **A black heart lies among the white and gray, but in the dimness it is hard to say,**
> **Who is friend, and who is foe? The master weal, the monster woe.**

This is what the ritual has revealed every day for the last few weeks. The professor is unsure what to make of it, but he thinks the first line might hint that the threat comes from someone people trust on campus: a student, or perhaps even a faculty member.

If showed the bones from **The Unnerved Underachiever (pg.143)**, Professor Revayne will cast *detect magic* on them, and report the necromantic aura. This is outside of his area of expertise, but he'll postulate they might be from one of the servitor skeletons that perform menial tasks throughout the school. If the party tells the professor about the creature Figory described, he'll be unnerved and caution them to proceed carefully. Necromancy is only taught in theory at the Avium, and the servitor skeletons are all former faculty members or alumni who willingly donated their remains to the College after a natural death. If anyone were to have created something else, it would surely be cause for alarm. Either way, if Professor Revayne found or heard that the bones appear to have an aura of necromancy about them, he'll direct the party to **Glinda Nightseed (see Appendix B, pg.195)**, a professor of theoretic necromancy (see **The Necromancer, pg.145**).

The Apprehensive Apprentice

It might take the party a bit of time to locate Jell. She's a serious student, and is often on the go from one place to the next for classes, extra credit activities, and her own personal studies. If the party asks around campus, during the day they should be able to find which library she's currently in with a DC 13 Charisma (Investigation) check. They can also ask the Dean for her dorm room location, where they'll be able to track her down at night, but she might not be in much of a mood to talk at that point.

Once they manage to find a suitable time to speak with her, Jell will tell the party she noticed the servitor skeletons behaving weirdly. This is her story:

> **"Well, I was finishing up an extra credit assignment for Professor Leachwood in the potions lab, when something strange happened. The servitors that were cleaning up the lab stopped, walked out of the lab, and went toward the crossing platform. I was curious, so I followed them. It looked like they were headed into the lower library. I would have followed them down, but I don't have access to the lower levels."**

Jell filed a notice with the administration that day, but figured it was their doing after she didn't hear anything back. She guesses it might have been a planned drill or maintenance. She won't be able to provide more information than this, but she can point the party to Professor Glinda Nightseed who teaches an advanced course in theoretic necromancy (see **The Necromancer, pg.145**). If anyone were to know what was happening with the skeletons, it would be Professor Nightseed.

PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

If the party suspects that the individual they believe to be Mordane Swiftgale is behind the strange happenings, they may begin to investigate him. If Odwald realizes he has come under suspicion, he will try to draw attention to Professor Glinda Nightseed, as she is the perfect scapegoat. Odwald hopes by diverting the party's suspicions, he will buy himself time to continue his experiments in peace. Even if the party is clueless as to Odwald's involvement, or have already spoken to Professor Nightseed, Odwald will attempt to shift their investigation towards her by dropping the following information:

> **"A few days ago, Professor Nightseed came by with a rather unusual request. It was for the Necronomicon Ex Corvis, a tome of powerful necromancy spells. Normally such dangerous books are not permitted to leave the lower library, but she insisted. Of course, she returned it after studying it for some time, but recently that same tome has gone missing from my shelves. I have been waiting to hear back from the appropriate channels, but it seems that whoever has taken the book wished to leave me shouldering the blame. I have my suspicions, but… I cannot very well level such an accusation at a tenured professor without proof."**

THE NECROMANCER

Professor Glinda Nightseed can be found in her office in the main building, or in a classroom in one of the outer spires where she teaches theoretical necromancy. Strictures in the Avium forbid her from practicing necromancy on campus, with the exception of reanimating those who wished to serve the College in death.

Professor Nightseed seems nice enough, if a little strange, and she is a skilled necromancer. But the Professor is hiding a secret that makes her seem very suspicious, especially around the subject of the campus' servitor skeletons. She has been using these legal reanimations to practice new ways of imbuing simple undead creatures with greater faculties, on par with the living. This is gray-area work, definitely bending some of the strictures against necromancy at the Avium, if not breaking the rules outright, and it could cost the professor her job.

If the party has the bones found in **The Unnerved Underachiever (pg.143)**, Professor Nightseed will be able to tell them that the bones carry a strong aura of necromancy, something dark and sinister. It genuinely spooks her.

If the party mentions the servitor skeletons they heard about in **The Apprehensive Apprentice (pg.145)**, the professor will become visibly uncomfortable. Professor Nightseed's secret makes her nervous at this point, and she'll simply say she couldn't guess as to why this might be happening. Any player who succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) check will be able to tell that the professor is lying. Professor Nightseed won't discuss the subject further, and if the party pushes her she'll ask them to leave.

If the party decides to break into Professor Nightseed's office to investigate, they can find a notebook within a locked desk drawer (DC 16 Dexterity check to unlock with thieves' tools). The professor's notes will reveal her secret manipulation of the servitor skeletons.

The party will also notice a necromancy tome on the professor's bookshelf. This is the *Necronomicon Ex Corvis**, out of which Odwald tore a page to cast his ritual in **Shadows Fall (pg.142)**, though it appears to have additional pages missing. Odwald planted the book here to frame Professor Nightseed.

Tomes like the *Necronomicon Ex Corvis** are dangerous and restricted material on campus. Any character caught with the book risks being banned from the Avium (see **Developments, pg.152**).

If confronted by the party, Professor Nightseed will claim to know nothing of how the forbidden book managed to get in her office. She will even go so far as to insist the party hand the book back to her so that she might bring it to the lower library, citing its danger in inexperienced hands.

Should the party have read Glinda's notebook, they can confront her about her experiments. In this case, she will admit to some wrongdoing, but ask the party to keep her experiments a secret. As an expert on both the good and evil sides of necromancy, Professor Nightseed assures them that while her research is not strictly permitted, she is not using any sinister magics to achieve her results. She is simply researching ways to resurrect the dead at a lower cost of both materials and magical energy, and these experiments are key to crafting cutting-edge magics. The impressions remaining within the servitor skeletons may hold the solution to successfully completing her research.

If forced into combat, Professor Nightseed's primary goal is to restrain the heroes and escape to call security. She doesn't wish to kill the party, and will refrain from any spells or tactics that might result in their death.

If the party informs the Dean that they found the *Necronomicon Ex Corvis** in Professor's Nightseed's office (or convince the Dean to have Perch Guard security search Professor Nightseed's office, where they will surely find the contraband grimoire) the Dean will be satisfied that the party has found the one responsible for summoning the shadows (as the missing page from this book was clearly the one used to cast that ritual), and Professor Nightseed will be imprisoned in the gaol for questioning. The professor will protest her innocence to the last.

If the party has no conclusive evidence linking Professor Nightseed to any wrongdoing on campus, Glinda will be released and the party will be reprimanded by the Dean for their error in judgement. Dean Windsworth will give them another chance, however, as they are still the best hope at finding out who or what is causing these disturbances.

Revealing Professor Nightseed's secret research will result in a less harsh reprimand for the party. The Professor will be released from custody, but her experiments constitute a serious breach of campus rules, and she'll lose her job. Either way, the party had best be certain the next time they accuse a faculty member, since another mistake like this could get them banned from the campus.

TREASURE

If a character didn't return the book planted by Odwald, they will now be in possession of the *Necronomicon Ex Corvis**. The page containing the Grasp of Shadows ritual has been torn out.

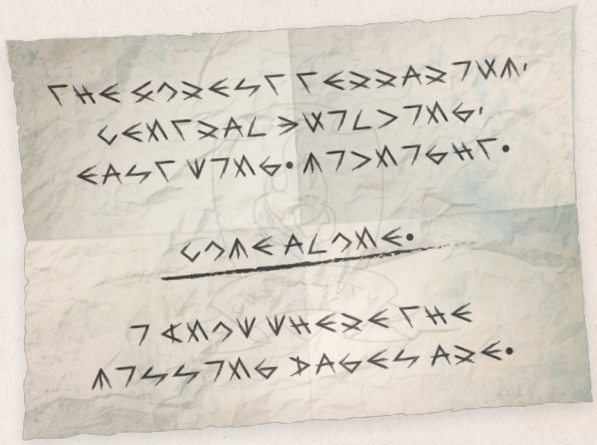
ODWALD'S TRAP

If the party fell for Odwald's framing of Professor Nightseed, it shouldn't take more than an interrogation to discover that she knows nothing of the missing pages. This development is something Odwald hadn't considered, and now he worries that he might have incriminated himself by leading the party to her.

Similarly, if the party has been to visit Glinda but haven't turned her in, Odwald worries it'll only be a matter of time before the suspicion falls on him.

Using various methods of disguise and surveillance, Odwald is keeping an eye on the party as they investigate around campus. The characters might not be aware of it yet, but every person they talk to will unwittingly provide a clue pointing toward Odwald's involvement. Their continued investigation will push an already skittish Odwald over the edge, and prompt him to lay a trap for the party, hoping to put them out of commission for the rest of their stay at the Avium.

A day after the party meets with Glinda Nightseed (if she was not arrested), or two days afterward (if she was arrested), a note will be slipped under the door of the party's dormitory room. Scrawled on the parchment in scratchy letters are the words:



> **"The Forest Terrarium, Central Building, East Wing. Midnight. Come alone. I know where the missing pages are. "**

If the party alerts the Dean (or anyone who might tell the Dean), he will attempt to stop them from going, insisting it's too dangerous. The Dean will request the party allow the Perch Guard to handle the situation. The party can refuse, but if the Perch Guard attends the meeting, with or without the party, Odwald will abandon his trap (skip to **The Secret Door**). If the party arrives at the terrarium unaccompanied, read the following:

> **It is a dark, moonless night as you step onto the large floating disc that houses the Forest Terrarium. You find yourself in an unusual woodland with several types of trees that don't look quite right beside one another. In the center of this place is a building, made up of a great central dome which branches off into two semi-spherical wings on either side. The night is deathly quiet.**

Anyone can make a DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) check to discover these trees don't naturally grow next to one another. Some might even have been altered by magic. The central building has no door, simply a wide archway that leads into the interior of the domed structure. This is a museum, and behind glass panels the party can see fossils, as well as magical recreations of extinct plants. The west and east wing both contain fossils and skeletons of animals from different points in the natural history of Humblewood. The sound of chanting carries over from the east wing. When the party enters the east wing read the following:

> **You see a shadow moving in the distance, and hear the sound of sharp footfalls on the smooth stone floor. Suddenly, two elk skeletons flash with crackling, dark energy, and burst from their glass confines. They circle your party.**

Use the stat block for a **minotaur skeleton** to determine the fighting capabilities of the elk skeletons. Replace the minotaur's greataxe attack with a hoof attack that deals the same amount of bludgeoning damage. The skeletons will attack the nearest targets, and pursue any characters who flee if there isn't at least one character to keep their attention in the main room.

At the start of the elk encounter, the party catches a glimpse of someone fleeing. The retreating figure is an undisguised Odwald, who needed to be nearby to reanimate the skeletons. Odwald's robes are enough to conceal his features, but any character within 5 feet of him will be able to tell he is a corvum. If anyone follows the sound of his footsteps, they will end up outside where they witness a dark hooded figure leap from the terrarium's edge, feathered arms outstretched. Within a round, Odwald will use a scroll of *fly* he has prepared to hide in the darkness within the rotating spires of the College. From there he can use *greater invisibility* to guarantee his escape. If forced to defend himself, Odwald will fight, looking to end things quickly while making his escape. While not intent on killing anyone, Odwald isn't opposed to seriously injuring his opponents. All the better if it slows down their investigation.

After combat, characters will be able to search the Forest Terrarium for clues. Any character who succeeds on a DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check will discover a scroll which was accidentally dropped by Odwald in his retreat. This heavy vellum scroll bears necromantic symbols. It is also clearly marked as material belonging in the lower library. A character can attempt a DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check to decipher the spell, but a Wizard of the Necromancy Arcane Tradition rolls with advantage. On a success, the character will deduce that these sigils form a spell designed to control large numbers of simple undead, such as the Avium's servitor skeletons. Characters who fail this check can take this scroll to Professor Nightseed (if she hasn't been arrested) or to the Dean, either of whom will be able to decipher it and tell the party that this is scroll forbidden to leave the library. Furthermore, it looks to have been altered by a highly skilled mage to enhance its effectiveness.

THE SECRET DOOR

The goal of the events at the Avium is to lead the players to this point. If they've completed enough of the above tasks, they should have sufficient clues to understand there is necromancy at play on campus, the culprit is a faculty member, and the mystery leads to the lower library.

If the party needs more help, have Dean Windsworth call them up to discuss their progress. Once he hears their evidence, he could reasonably conclude the lower library is a good place to investigate further, and he can even point them toward some of the older documents about the Avium's

construction for clues as to what he still desperately wants to believe is just a malfunctioning magical defense.

If the party decides to investigate the lower library, they can find what they're looking for in one of three ways:

If the party spends a full day stealthily staking out Mordane Swiftgale, they may catch him sneaking off behind some shelves, which could lead them to the wall with the hidden door. This requires a group Dexterity (Stealth) check against DC 14. Reduce the DC to 10 if Glinda was apprehended, as Odwald will be less careful with a scapegoat behind bars. Either way, if the party fails this check, Odwald will notice their efforts and not use the secret entrance.

If the party spends a day in the lower library, they will notice some of the servitor skeletons abruptly stop their programmed tasks. Should the characters follow the skeletons closely, the skeletons will lead them to a wall that appears to be a dead end, but which actually hides a secret door.

If the party researches the documents on the Avium's construction, after a day of research, the party will find an old scroll with lower library blueprints that show plans for lower level classrooms and laboratories. It's hard to tell from the blueprints if these were ever built. The area indicated on the plans is bricked off and is now a wall.

Regardless of how they are led to the wall in the lower library, investigating it with a successful DC 15 Investigation check will reveal a hidden door. The door opens when pushed inward, causing a stone slab to recede into a groove, revealing a secret path. Some hidden mechanism resets the door after five seconds have passed, but there is enough time for everyone to make it through before it closes. A lever on the opposite side of the door can be used to open it again. Once the party makes it through the door, read:

You and your companions find yourselves in a small hallway, dimly-lit by motes of magical light which float in slow, random patterns near the passageway's ceiling. The hall before you continues downward into darkness. Twenty feet ahead, to your left, a door has been left ajar.

This hallway is 10 feet wide and 100 feet long. The magical motes follow the party through the area, continually providing them with dim light. As the hallway proceeds, it turns at regular intervals until it ends at a closed door. Light is streaming from the crack beneath it (see **The Old Classroom, pg.149**).

The open door leads to a small room that looks like an office (see **The Study Room**).

THE STUDY ROOM

This small stone room smells musty and old. Bookshelves line the walls, though they are mainly empty, and there is a table against the right wall. A cushioned chair sits in the middle of the room. Most of the furniture is old, except for the chair, which appears to be a new addition. A simple wooden door lies to the left.

When the characters enter the study, they will notice that it's clean, and appears to have seen recent use. The wooden door to the left of the entrance opens into a closet, which contains the real librarian, Mordane Swiftgale. Mordane is standing upright, though his eyes are closed as if he is sleeping, and he's surrounded by a field of swirling gray energy, which has a jelly-like viscosity when touched. He does not appear to be breathing. If Mordane is checked for a pulse, a character will find that he is alive, but his pulse is beating at an incredibly slow rate. It is obvious he's being kept alive and imprisoned by this magic, but a DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check is required for a character to figure out that necromancy is involved, and that it's holding Mordane in a state of suspended animation. This effect can be dispelled, and counts as a 4th level spell for the purposes of determining the DC of *dispel magic*.

A crystal pendant hangs from a hook on the inside of the closet door. The pendant looks familiar, and any character who succeeds on a DC 14 Intelligence check, or who has the Sharp Mind trait, will recognize it as the one worn by the birdfolk they know as Mordane. Analyzing the pendant reveals it to possess both moderate transmutation and illusion auras. Anyone who puts on the pendant assumes the appearance of Mordane Swiftgale, and an examination of the character in this form will reveal no magical aura of any kind until the pendant is removed.

The doorway that led into the study is the only exit, and will lead players back to the main hallway.

THE OLD CLASSROOM

As you and your companions travel down the dim hall, you are met with the unmistakable smell of death. There's no ambient sound here, aside from your own footsteps. You pass by empty rooms, all of which look to have been long abandoned, but soft candlelight seeps out from beneath a closed door at the end of the hallway.

The hallway within 20 feet of the wooden door is guarded by a permanent *alarm* spell, and if the alarm is triggered Odwald will receive a silent signal in his mind.

A character that sneaks up to the door without triggering the alarm and presses their ear against the door can hear soft, incomprehensible speech, as if someone is muttering, along with strange clacking noises and a hollow scraping sound. If a character triggers the alarm, however, there will be nothing but eerie silence.

The door opens into 40-foot-wide, 80-foot-long classroom containing Odwald and five **birdfolk skeletons**. There is a passageway to the west of Odwald's desk that leads into darkness. The servitor skeletons are under his control, and he had them working on various blackboards set up around the room, writing out arcane equations.

If the alarm was triggered, Odwald will have pulled his skeletons away from their calculations into defensive positions. He won't send his minions out to attack the party, but he and his undead servants will be ready for them when they open the door. The party will begin combat surprised.

If the alarm wasn't triggered, Odwald will be surprised at the beginning of combat, and will be found seated at a paper strewn desk, doing calculations. His skeletons will still be at their chalkboards when the party opens the door. Odwald can command the skeletons to defend him as a bonus action on his turn.

If the party is aware of the alarm, through *detect magic* or a similar effect, they can plan to storm the room to try and catch Odwald off guard. If they do this, Odwald will not be surprised, as his alarm will still trigger, but he won't have had time to pull his skeletons into defensive positions either. Roll initiative as normal.

After a round of combat, Odwald will make for the passageway to the left, which leads to a staircase. His primary goal is escape, but he may throw out a spell or two before he does so in order to keep the party off-balance while they fight his minions. If things are looking particularly bad for Odwald he'll use greater invisibility to protect himself as he flees. Once Odwald has fled, the skeletons will bar entry to the passageway, lashing out at the party with rusty weapons and sharp, bony talons.

TREASURE

In the old classroom, the party finds some of the missing pages (see **Into the Library, pg.139**) on the desk. However, it's clear he's taken some crucial information with him. If they take at least an hour to look through everything here, the party will also have enough information to discover the culprit's name: Odwald Ebonhart.

If the party defeats or captures Odwald in **The Old Classroom**, then the **cobblefright**, no longer able to feel its master's control, will climb the stairs to investigate. Freed from Odwald's command, the cobblefright is hungry for the character's life energy, and any characters attempting to take a short rest in the classroom will soon find it interrupted.

Once the fight with the cobblefright has been concluded, refer to the developments section (see **Developments, pg.152**) to see what happens.

Odwald Ebonhart

THE SECRET LABORATORY

fig. 4.2

THE SECRET LABORATORY

The stairway that Odwald fled through leads from **The Old Classroom (pg.149)** down to his laboratory. If the party follows Odwald immediately after the previous encounter, they will be able to engage him there, though they may be surprised to find that he isn't alone. the **cobblefright** he created lurks in the darkness.

Refer to Fig. 4.2 for a map of the Secret Laboratory.

> **Using The Secret Laboratory map**
> When the party descends to Odwald's Lab, have them start in the space marked with a green "X." Suggested placements for Odwald and his cobblefright are shown for ease of play. If Odwald flees from the laboratory, he will head through the door marked with a red * and down the spiral staircase to the tunnels and passages below the College.

You find yourself in a macabre laboratory. An assortment of bones lays strewn across the tables, and foul-smelling liquids bubble in pots. The stench of death is gut-wrenching. A terrifying creature lurches towards you, a hulking monstrosity of bone and sinew. It appears to be comprised of hundreds of birdfolk bones, jumbled together to form a roughly humanoid shape. The arms end in several talons intertwined into circular claws, and the creature's face is made from the top halves of two birdfolk skulls, one atop the other. It gazes at you with its four empty red eyes and emits a shriek.

As long as Odwald is near, the cobblefright won't go on the offensive unless the order is given, but it stands ready to defend itself or its master. Have Odwald say:

"You don't understand what you're doing. Stay out of my way!"

Given the chance, Odwald will explain his plans, detailing his creation of the cobblefright from deceased birdfolk, and telling of how he stole the information he needed to stop the aspect. The aspect is immortal, and the only sure way to defeat it for good is to drain its vital energies through necromancy. To Odwald, stopping the aspect is worth any risk. He is condescending to the party at every opportunity. He is arrogant, and doesn't think the Defenders of Alderheart could possibly understand what he sees as necessary steps to stop the aspect. He is also deeply afraid for the future of the Wood, and doesn't believe the party can be trusted to defeat the aspect on their own.

Depending on if the party hears him out or not, it may be possible to talk Odwald out of moving forward with his plan. Even if they may not be able to argue logic with Odwald, he might listen if the party can make an emotional appeal. Though Odwald acts as if his plan has been well-considered, he is entirely motivated by fear, and he hasn't actually given himself time to think through the consequences of his actions. Any character who can convince him that he's not thinking clearly may help him recognize his folly.

If the party manages to reason with him, create tension by having Odwald lose control of the cobblefright just as he is about to surrender quietly. Fearing for his life, Odwald's cowardice will compel him to flee, apologizing as he leaves the party to fight his mistake. Though, if reasoned with, Odwald will return after the battle to face his demons, and offer to let the party turn him in to the Dean.

If the party attacks Odwald, or fails to reason with him, he will order the cobblefright to hold them off while he flees. Though he intends for the cobblefright to do this nonlethally, the creature's corrupted and evil nature will cause it to attack with maximum violence.

Should the players have difficulty with this fight, have Odwald experience a change of heart and come back to assist against the cobblefright. With this change of heart, Odwald will allow the party to turn him over to the authorities.

If a character attempts to capture a retreating Odwald, allow the character following him as he flees to try and catch up to him, but give Odwald a 60-foot head-start. Odwald won't bother attacking his pursuer unless it's absolutely necessary to avoid capture. Instead, he will turn invisible and attempt to lose any character chasing him in the winding passageways.

TREASURE

The Defenders of Alderheart are celebrated for uncovering Odwald's scheme and putting a stop to his creation before things got any worse. The real Mordane will thank them personally for freeing him.

Provided that the characters broke none of the Avium's rules, the Dean welcomes each character back to study, seek information in the libraries, or even to teach a class if they possess the requisite skills and interest to do so. Additionally, the Dean offers a *ring of spell-storing*, which contains the *stellar bodies** spell, cast by him at 5th level, along with two *potions of resistance* which grant resistance to fire damage. He hopes these will help in the party's quest to save Humblewood from the aspect's fury.

The Dean will also grant the party the sigil sequence to a secret teleportation circle within the College, as well as an amulet emblazoned with the Avium's crest, which allows them faculty-level access to campus resources. The Avium is home to the only teleportation circle in Humblewood, which is a closely-guarded secret. Those who learn this sequence can teleport to the Avium using the magic contained in their faculty-level amulets, but this can only be done once per day, and only to return to the Avium's teleportation circle. Upon arrival by way of the circle, campus security will demand they show their faculty amulet for identification.

REWARDS

- Award standard XP for defeated foes.
- For completing research in the lower library: 300 XP per character.
- For investigating any claims by Figory, Corvax, or Jell: 117 XP per character, per claim investigated.
- For investigating Professor Nightseed: 200 XP per character.
- For discovering Odwald's secret identity in the Necromancers Trap: 200 XP per character.

If you are using the milestone rules for experience, each character should now reach level 5.

DEVELOPMENTS

***If any character was caught with the* Necronomicon Ex Corvis** (This is the book that Odwald planted in Professor Glinda Nightseed's office, see **The Necromancer, pg.145**), they will not receive the faculty-level amulet and teleportation circle sequence and will be informed that they have been banned from the Avium. Other party members may suffer the same fate for failing to report such a dangerous tome and return it to those trained in its proper care. At the Dean's behest, any banned characters may be granted restricted, temporary access to the Avium. The Avium will still provide any aid the Defenders of Alderheart might require to quell the threat of the aspect, but only under strict supervision. After the aspect is dealt with, anyone banned from the College will no longer be welcomed at the Avium. The characters can protest, but while the Dean is sympathetic, he'll ultimately uphold the rules of the institution.

If Odwald has been apprehended, the Dean will express shock and disappointment that a brilliant alumni of the College would perpetrate such heinous actions under his beak. However, as Odwald explains the gravity of the situation, the Dean will take a moment to consider. Odwald will mention his research has yielded results: if the aspect can't be destroyed, the party may be able to re-seal it in such a way that its harmful energies are contained. It's a long shot, but he knows a seer of great talent, who can help them find an item that could theoretically be used to stop the aspect. Should they allow him some time to rest, he can locate her and help the party bring an end to this menace.

It's up to the party whether or not they accept Odwald's help, but Dean Windsworth will advise that this could represent the best option for success, even if they don't like the idea of teaming up with Odwald. For his part, the Dean will ensure the necromancer is held in custody, and he will make sure Odwald faces judgement before the Council at Alderheart for his crimes. Odwald will accept whatever consequences his actions have brought, so long as the party promises to stop the aspect before it destroys the Wood.

If Odwald was slain, it will take some time for his background and the full scope of his research to be uncovered. However, it's clear from the evidence gathered that he had an interest in researching the aspect. The Dean will task his best scholars with studying the old corvum's notes. They will contact the party when they've found something.

If Odwald escaped, the Dean will encourage the party to find him in order to uncover what else he knows, as well as to prevent him from continuing his dangerous research somewhere else.

Part 5: Of Fate and Flame

In this part, the party will learn how to quell the **aspect of fire**'s rage, and of a dungeon hidden somewhere within the Scorched Grove. There, a mystic staff known as *the Borealus** waits for someone worthy to wield its frozen power. Once obtained, *the Borealus* can help the party seal the creature and its harmful energies away properly, healing the imbalance in the Wood. Not many know about the ancient myth of *the Borealus* or its resting place. While **Odwald Ebonhart (see Appendix B, pg.196)** managed to theorize how one might use this item to re-seal the aspect, he isn't sure how this would work in practice, or if *the Borealus* even truly exists. Pursuing the staff is a gamble, but without any other recourse, the mythic weapon might be the last hope to save the Wood from fiery ruin.

How this part of the adventure plays out depends on the choices the party made up until now, beginning with whether or not Odwald was killed, apprehended, or if he escaped in **Part 4: Mysteries of the Avium (pg.132)**.

Unless Odwald escaped, give the players a few days of downtime. The Dean will take the time to consider Odwald's fate. If Odwald died, use the same downtime to allow the Dean and his scholars to pore over the deceased Odwald's notes as they try to discover what he was up to. During this time the party is free to avail themselves of the potions lab or the spell libraries on campus (see **Exploring the Avium, pg.137**). Since the party can teleport back to the Avium (unless they've been banned for life), use this time to deal with character hooks or plotlines. After the party members have finished with their activities, the Dean will summon the party to his office to discuss what he's learned.

ODWALD'S FATE

If Odwald escaped, the party will be told that there's no time to waste. The Dean has launched an investigation into Odwald's lab, and his scribes are examining the materials left behind, but there appear to be some notes missing. It's probable Odwald took them with him when he fled. Odwald must be found (skip to **Finding the Necromancer, pg.156**). Since it's likely that the party will need to form an alliance with Odwald if he is captured, it's recommended to read **If Odwald was apprehended (pg.154)**. Much of this information will still be relevant later, so use it as a reference for character interactions with Odwald as the events of this part of the adventure unfold.

If Odwald was slain, the Dean will uncover some interesting information concerning Odwald's background. He'll inform the players that Odwald is a member of the illustrious and noble Ebonhart family from Alderheart. He was an adventurer in his past, as well as an alumnus of the Avium. The Dean appears saddened that such a prestigious scholar turned to the dark arts. According to Odwald's notes, he blamed himself for the awakening of the aspect, but the details of how Odwald might have been involved are unclear. Among them, however, are scrawlings of a prophecy predicting that a member of the Ebonhart family would be the one to finally heal the Wood from the effects of the Great Calamity.

In his research, Odwald also found writings about a mystical artifact called *the Borealus*, which was hidden sometime after the Great Calamity. He discovered records of its creation, penned by the wizard who crafted, stored it in the Avium's lower library. Using these valuable notes, Odwald theorized a ritual that might utilize this artifact's power to seal the aspect of fire. He had abandoned the ritual in favour of the cobble-fright, because he couldn't ascertain whether or not the records of the artifact were genuine. However, scribbles in the margins of his notebook hint that he was considering contacting someone he knew from his adventuring days to help him divine its location.

At this point, *the Borealus* may be the best lead the party has for a way to defeat the aspect. The Dean will ask them to travel to Alderheart and speak with the companion mentioned in Odwald's notes, a hedge witch named **Susan of the Swamp (see Appendix B, pg.200)** (if Susan is dead, see the **Should the Worst Have Happened, pg.156**). While they do this, the Dean will look over the formulae Odwald used, to see if he might be able to perform this ritual. However, the ritual clearly won't work without the power of *the Borealus* (skip to **Susan the Seer, pg.161**).

If the players wish to inform **Riffin, the Ash-Knight (see Appendix B, pg.205)** of Odwald's demise, have them run into him in Alderheart. He is once again at the Wooden Flagon, retracing his steps in the hopes of meeting Odwald along the way. Riffin will be saddened to hear about the loss of his friend, but he will remain confident that even if Odwald seemed bad, he had a good heart. Riffin will offer to help the party in any way he can, something which may become necessary in **Facing the Aspect (pg.172)**.

If Odwald was apprehended, the party will receive a summons from the Dean to convene in his office. When the party arrives Odwald will be there, waiting beside Dean Windsworth. Odwald has some kind of silver bangles affixed to his wrists, which the Dean explains are necessary to prevent Odwald from using magic.

The old corvum wishes to pursue a lead that could reveal the location of a magical artifact called *the Borealus*, a weapon that may seal away the aspect's energies and return it to a dormant state beneath the Grove. It was a coincidence that Odwald stumbled upon historical accounts of this artifact, and while he isn't convinced it exists or whether the ritual he's created will work, it's the only thing he can think of that might stop the aspect from continually being reborn.

The Council has granted Odwald permission to join the party in order to follow up on this lead. He is to stay within sight of the party at all times, until the aspect of fire has been dealt with. Afterwards, Odwald must be brought to Alderheart for trial and sentencing. Characters may have reservations about teaming up with Odwald, but there's no other choice. The Dean is clearly suspicious of Odwald, but the necromancer's research has granted him a situational awareness that the Dean would need time to grasp. Furthermore, Odwald's past experience as an adventurer means he knows his way around the Wood. If Odwald attempts to flee, the party is to apprehend him at once and deliver him to Alderheart.

Odwald's Story

If the party apprehends Odwald, once given leave to assist the party, Odwald will help them willingly. Time has made him reflect on his actions, and he feels great shame. He is now committed to fixing his mistakes in the right way. Odwald will offer the party every assistance they might require, and he will even share a bit about his background to any characters who are curious.

During their travels, determine when it fits the narrative flow for Odwald to share information regarding his family, researching *the Borealus*, and his longtime friend, Riffin.

When role-playing Odwald, remember that he is prideful and cowardly, but also intelligent and deeply concerned for the well-being of the Wood. He sees everything that has happened up to now as a personal failing, and while he's finally willing to ask others for help, in the end, he still feels responsible for the current state of the Wood.

Odwald's Family

Odwald is a member of the noble Ebonhart family, one of the founding families of Alderheart.

"My family holds a generations-old prophecy that an Ebonhart will be the one to finally heal the Wood from the Great Calamity that birthed the Scorched Grove. For many years I believed it would be me, but the more I learned, the less I knew about the fundamental nature of the problem. Six months ago I was granted a vision. An entity visited me in a dream and imparted knowledge of the aspect's existence. It showed me the location of the seal, and told me of the spells I might use to heal the Grove of the aspect's influence once and for all."

The entity that spoke to Odwald in his dream kept its true form hidden. All he could hear was a voice that sounded very old and felt wise beyond the understanding of any mortal. He went to the conjuration circle in the Grove and found it unusually active, as if it was already weakening. He panicked, and used the spells he was shown to try and cleanse the aspect's energy. Instead, the sigil flared up, and shortly thereafter the fires began to spread.

If asked why he did it, Odwald will reply:

> **"I was a damned fool. All these years I've spent, afraid of failing to live up to my family's name. It was this same fear that caused me to act so recklessly. I should never have listened to that blasted voice… and now my actions may have doomed Humblewood."**

Researching *the Borealus*

If any characters ask Odwald about his knowledge of *the Borealus*, he will relate the following points of information:

- He stumbled across an old legend mentioning *the Borealus* many years ago, but it was only since returning to the Avium that he managed to find a collection of laboratory notes claiming to be from the wizard who crafted it.
- Because of these notes, Odwald concedes that such an item could have been created. If it was indeed constructed, its power would not only be tremendous, but also uniquely suited to counter the elemental energies of the aspect.
- Based on his research, he has theorized a way to use *the Borealus* along with the conjuration circle to re-seal the aspect. However, this isn't something he could test, and coupled with the uncertainty of *the Borealus*' existence, it seemed like this avenue had too small a chance of success.
- Since his recent research on spellcrafting (trying to create a spell that mimics the cobblefright's siphon soul ability), he has hit upon some new documents, which have increased his confidence in the chances of success for a ritual using *the Borealus*... but there's still no way to be sure.

Odwald will add that this gamble may be the Wood's last hope, as his studies have indicated the aspect will continue to grow in strength the longer it remains un-sealed. He only hopes that *the Borealus* still resides in the Wood, because their time is short.

Friendship with Riffin

If any player asks about Riffin, or brings up that the strig knight has been looking for Odwald, he will evince a combination of relief and sorrow. He and Riffin were once adventurers who traveled Humblewood together. Odwald was staying with Riffin in Ashbarrow when the fires claimed it. He and Riffin helped people evacuate, but during the chaos a building collapsed and seriously injured Riffin. Odwald saved him and brought him to Alderheart. Burdened as Odwald was by the knowledge that he was responsible for the fires that destroyed Riffin's home, he couldn't bear to stay.

> **"It was then I resolved to find a way to correct my mistakes, by any means necessary. It seems all I've succeeded in doing is hurting others. I should have asked for help but… perhaps I couldn't accept the idea that it wasn't possible to quell the aspect alone." He scoffs, "My own selfish pride as a chosen son of Ebonhart is to blame. I am truly sorry for the way I acted toward you all."**

Odwald still feels great shame because of his actions, but he will acknowledge that he needs to make amends with Riffin. Besides, Riffin is a capable warrior, and his assistance might prove valuable if they are to face the aspect. Odwald has a good idea where his old friend might be found (skip to **The Perch of Brackenmill, pg.157**).

If the subject of Riffin never comes up, Odwald will suggest the party meet with one of his old adventuring companions, a hedge witch by the name of Susan, who may be able to help point the party toward the location of *the Borealus* (skip to **Susan the Seer, pg.161**).

Should the Worst Have Happened
If Susan is dead, direct the party to **Ardwyn, Elder of Meadowfen (see Appendix B, pg.190)** of Meadowfen from **Part 1: The Adventure Begins (pg.86)** instead. She was once a formidable priestess of Tyton, and back in Odwald's adventuring days she was known as a talented seer. She should be able to perform a similar ritual to guide the party to *the Borealus*' resting place.

Leaving the Avium

When the party leaves the Avium, they should be armed with knowledge about the terrifying and deathless nature of the aspect of fire, but also with a clear view of its weaknesses. Depending on what happened to Odwald, they may have a sense of where to look for leads regarding the location of *the Borealus*.

FINDING THE NECROMANCER

If Odwald escaped in **Part 4**, then the party's next step is to track him down before he can start more trouble. Have Dean Windsworth or another character impress upon the party that Odwald might have absconded with information from the Avium that could help defeat the aspect once and for all. Therefore, it's important he be captured alive. To help the party achieve this, the Dean will give them a pair of silver bangles, which can be affixed to Odwald to prevent him from using magic. The party's mission is still to quell the aspect, and while Odwald must face justice, the safety of the Wood comes first. Once they apprehend Odwald they are to return him to the Avium for questioning.

A Divination Ritual

The Dean has informed his most learned professors of the party's situation, and many have offered to help in any way they can. Particularly, the divination professor, **Corvax Revayne (see Appendix B, pg.195)**, may be able to locate Odwald. The party can meet with Professor Revayne in his office, where he has already made the necessary preparations.

Inside this small office, the furniture has been pushed aside to make space for an intricate chalk circle drawn with several flourishes on the flat stone floor. Professor Revayne, still sketching symbols around the circle's edge, is startled by your approach and immediately stands to address you."Be careful! This circle must reflect the many threads of fate in order to show what is possible. Erase any of them and we risk inaccuracy!" He then motions for you to move to the edges of the room.

Once he finishes a few strokes, or fills in any lines a hapless character may have stepped on, grumbling as he does so, he will lightly hop into the center of the circle. He asks that someone pass him his tools: a crystal on a string, a bowl of water, and a bag of sand, all of which are easily accessible on the nearby table. Professor Revayne carefully places the bowl of water in the center of the circle, and requests silence while he works. He will suspend the crystal over the bowl and begin to incant his spell.

The air in the room crackles with arcane energy as the pendulum swings back and forth over the bowl of water, which reflects the crystal above like a mirror. The corvum's eyes glow white as he casts a small pinch of sand into the water. It ripples, and images begin to form on its surface. As the pendulem is pulled strongly south-east by an invisible force, you can see tree-farms, wagons filled with goods, and corrals of giant insects. With a gentle "swoosh" the circle of chalk lifts from the ground and disappears into vapour, returning both the bowl of water and the professor to normal.

Professor Revayne will inform the party that Odwald is in Brackenmill. This place appears to have personal significance to Odwald, though the professor can't guess what it might be. However, the professor is certain the necromancer's form will be veiled in concealing magic. Professor Revayne will also impart that someone else in Brackenmill is looking for Odwald. There was a winged shield in his vision: the one who bears this shield is the key to finding Odwald.

He will also remind the party that the augury he performed in **Part 4** ("the master weal, the monster woe") might mean Odwald is a potential ally. He'll caution them against making any rash moves against Odwald, as his vision gave him the impression the necromancer might yet have a part to play in the fate of the Wood.

The professor will also provide the party with a *gem of seeing*. This variant of the item grants only the effects of *see invisibility* rather than *truesight*, and it does not regain charges at dawn. Once all its charges have been expended it will become a normal, non-magical gem. Professor Revayne will point out that this item could come in handy if the necromancer attempts to use invisibility to escape (as he may have done in their first encounter).

Odwald's Disguise

Armed with new knowledge, players can prepare to set out from the Avium, though it will take about three days on the road to reach Brackenmill. Have this trip be uneventful in order to keep up the game's pace, but hint at the growing power of the aspect by mentioning that the air is much warmer and drier than it was when the party began their journey. The forest also appears quieter than usual as they travel. These are dire times indeed.

Since his escape from the Avium, Odwald has reached Brackenmill, where he now weighs his options. His research has been set back to zero, he has none of his materials or laboratory equipment, and while he harbours some idea of how to stop the aspect he isn't certain the artifact even exists, let alone if its powers are truly as strong as he's read. After having had time to reflect, he is painfully aware of the danger he posed to the innocent people at the College. He has also spotted his

old friend Riffin in Brackenmill, and a part of him desperately seeks to confess his misdeeds to the strig knight. However, Odwald lacks courage and will simply be trying to lay low. When the Defenders of Alderheart arrive, he is contemplating his next steps.

Odwald is using *disguise self* to pose as a traveling huden gallus monk, staying at the Sunny Silkworm Inn. He must limit his interactions with others due to the nature of the spell, but the form he has chosen roughly matches his own size, so the spell is difficult to uncover at a glance. Any player that specifically examines Odwald can make a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to see if something is amiss; for example, if a part of his vestments passes through a table as he moves by. Any physical interaction with Odwald would be enough to detect his illusion, so he'll do his best to deny the party that opportunity by keeping his distance. Odwald endeavours to stay in his rented lodgings for as long as he can, only making appearances in the inn's common room or around town in short intervals, since he must hide and re-cast his spell each hour to maintain its effect. Any player able to scan Odwald with detect magic will instantly know he is under the effect of an illusion spell.

If he ever feels as though he has been discovered, Odwald will attempt to flee into the forest.

The Perch of Brackenmill

When the party reaches Brackenmill, they'll find themselves looking up at a series of lush tree canopies. These will be immediately recognizable as perch-farms; the boughs are filled with familiar herbs, fruiting vines, and are tended by several farmers. Corrals on the ground house different varieties of giant insects, including giant silkworms, munching on greenery.

Brackenmill is a lively hub for folks of all kinds, and upon seeing travelers, folks will smile and greet them politely, welcoming them to their perch. Steps shaped into the tall trees allow players to climb up to a series of bridges made of wood and rope, and platforms that serve to connect the trees together.

The locals here are a hearty folk, and while busy, they exude a kind of rustic hospitality that is honest and charming. If any characters ask about life in Brackenmill of late, locals will tell them that things have been busy. This season, people have had to work even harder than usual to produce enough crops to aid those displaced by the fires. Moreover, it has been so dry that crops require more care to keep them green and healthy. Some of the Tenders have helped by nourishing the plants with their magic, but such services are in short supply. It's been a hard year, and everyone is overworked.

If the party has come here with Odwald looking for Riffin, Odwald will suggest heading to **The Sunny Silkworm (pg.158)**.

Grant characters who offer to assist the farmers an opportunity to glimpse Odwald in disguise as he passes by, To speed up the pace, have the character make a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to notice some malfunction in Odwald's illusion.

If a character who succeeded on this check attempts to call attention to Odwald in a friendly manner, Odwald will ignore them and walk hastily back to the safety of his room at **The Sunny Silkworm (pg.158)**.

If Odwald is called out in a way that suggests the character is suspicious of him, Odwald make for the forest as fast as he can (skip to **A Confrontation, pg.159**).

If the characters ask around for clues about any strange travelers entering town, the locals won't be much help. People come and go everyday, after all, transporting goods and materials between the various perches that depend on Brackenmill's tree-farms. Folk will point the players toward the local inn, The Sunny Silkworm, which lies near the center of town. Many travelers frequent it, and some even pay to keep rooms in permanent reserve.

The Sunny Silkworm

The Sunny Silkworm is a large inn and tavern housed in an expansive, circular wooden building in the center of Brackenmill's sprawl. The building rests on a disk-shaped wooden platform seated within the gnarled branches of a great tree that has been shaped around it. Different bridges connect with the wooden platform to allow travel from all around Brackenmill. The place looks cozy and inviting, and players who approach will notice a wooden sign above the door with a smiling silkworm munching on a leaf. Pleasant-smelling smoke wafts from the large chimneys that emerge from its quaint thatched roof. The inn is usually bustling, and today is no exception. When the party enters the building, read:

> **The common room of this inn and tavern teems with activity. Many birdfolk and humblefolk of all descriptions are engaged in talk, drink, and games. Three large hearths frame the space, one to the right, another in a stone chimney which rises in the center of the common room, and one behind the bar counter at the back of the common room, over which pots of stew bubble away aromatically. The place is warm and inviting.**

The party will find Riffin in the inn's common room, sitting at a small table next to the large central hearth, where he is engaged in a game of cards.

If the party came here with Odwald, they will likely be searching for Riffin so that Odwald can explain himself to his old friend. Once they find Riffin, skip to **Riffin and Odwald (pg.160)**.

If the party came here looking for Odwald, they'll find Riffin is still looking for him as well. After checking many of their old haunts, Riffin decided it's best to wait at the Sunny Silkworm, rather than risk missing his friend in roving. After all, this was where they always ended up when they traveled together; he's hoping to run into Odwald eventually if he stays long enough. If the characters interacted with Riffin at the Wooden Flagon in Alderheart, he'll recognize the party once they enter and excuse himself from his table to greet them.

If the party never spoke to Riffin, he will recognize them from the battle at the Bandit Camp, as well as from stories he's heard about their exploits since that battle. By now, they surely sound like honorable and upstanding folk to the strig knight, and he'll introduce himself in a familiar tone (they fought alongside each other, after all).

> **"Hullo again, friends! Looks like you've grown into fine adventurers. 'Defenders of Alderheart' even!" he'll say with a friendly chuckle. "Would ya care for a drink? I'd love a chance to catch up."**

If for some reason the party has gained a negative reputation, Riffin will still wish to talk with them, but his response will be a little more subdued.

> **A familiar looking strig knight waves you over as you enter. "By Tyton's stars, it looks like you've grown a fair sight since that hubbub at the bandit camp." he'll say with a chuckle. "Would ya care for a drink? It's not every day you see the Defenders of Alderheart up close."**

In this case, Riffin will explain that he's come here looking for his friend, Odwald. Refer to **Seeking out the Ash-Knight (pg.113)** to determine how he would react to the party, and how he would answer questions about his journey to find his friend.

Should the party try to explain to Riffin what Odwald's been up to, he will politely insist they must be mistaken. Odwald might have gotten himself into some tough scrapes before, but he would never act in such a reckless and hurtful manner. If the party decides to press the point, Riffin will excuse himself, maintaining that they don't know what they're talking about. He and Odwald have known each other for years, and this doesn't sound like him.

So long as the party doesn't do anything to really offend Riffin, he will be able to provide some useful information. Though he hasn't seen Odwald, he has noticed a few lodgers who don't seem very friendly. He'll point some of them out:

- A surly luma sorcerer who wants to be left alone. She doesn't wish to explain why to a stranger.
- A stoic strig barbarian who seems cold and expressionless, unless someone in the party strikes up a conversation about weapons, at which point he becomes quite animated.
- A withdrawn gallus monk (this is Odwald in disguise).

If anyone approaches Odwald, he will attempt to bluff that he is a humble traveler looking for work defending caravans in order to hone his skills. A character who sits down with Odwald must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to notice a hiccup in his illusion. The moment Odwald feels unsafe, he'll run.

A Confrontation

Once the party has unmasked Odwald, he won't be able to flee very far. He's tired, ragged from stress, and filled with doubt. If necessary, he will attempt to use the last of his magic to escape. He will refrain from hurting the party and simply look to make a bloodless escape. Odwald will try to turn invisible, or use *suggestion* or *fear* to attempt to slow down his pursuers or send them off-course. He'll use *counterspell* or *misty step* against any spells cast to restrain him. If he escapes the party, he'll flee Brackenmill and run into the forest. Whatever happens here, the commotion will attract the attention of the local Perch Guard.

Odwald will flee until he reaches a clearing filled with dense and difficult forest terrain. This is the last stop for the exhausted corvum, and once the party has dealt with any ill effects caused by his magic, they should be able to track him here. They'll find him panting, out of energy, and trapped by the difficult terrain. If the party manages to capture him sooner, Odwald will relent once it's clear he cannot escape.

"That's quite enough, I yield," the old corvum wheezes. "I can't run from my fate any longer. Take me away, I'll come quietly…"

Odwald will comply with the party's wishes, letting them place the silver bangles on him, though he will insist on keeping his book of research notes. He intends to go peacefully and cooperate with the Avium, and the notes would make far less sense without his guidance. If questioned, Odwald will explain what he was trying to achieve with his experiments, and why it was so important to him that he be the one to stop the aspect, but that he regrets everything. His actions have brought harm to the Wood and its people. Depending on how much players want to roleplay this, refer to the information presented in **Odwald's Fate (pg.153)** to further flesh out this interaction.

At some point, the Brackenmill Perch Guard will arrive, drawn by the disturbance caused by Odwald's flight and the party's pursuit. The party can easily explain the situation, and once they present proof that they are working with the Dean of the Avium (their amulets will do) the Perch Guard will relinquish Odwald to their custody. Riffin, who accompanied the guards, looking to help, will rush over to aid his friend, regarding the corvum with a look of shock and confusion.

Riffin and Odwald

If Odwald came willingly to Brackenmill, the corvum is looking to apologize to Riffin, and this interaction will likely take place in The Sunny Silkworm. Riffin will look more and more confused as Odwald explains himself. Once Odwald has finished his narrative, read:

> **The tired old corvum regards his friend with a sad expression. "It's all my fault. Riffin, I'm sorry."**

If Odwald was trapped in the forest, this scene will play out amongst the trees. The strig will look at Odwald and ask him pointedly if what the Defenders of Alderheart said about him is true. Odwald can only look crestfallen, and deliver the above line.

Either way, Riffin is hurt. Odwald not only saved his life, but traveled with him for many years, and Riffin thought he could trust his friend. To find out that the corvum had been keeping so much from him, coupled with the reckless and dangerous nature of his activities, has Riffin considering whether or not to break ties with Odwald.

Riffin will retreat to his room at The Sunny Silkworm without a word. He'll stay here for one more day, but he won't accept any visitors until the next day at dawn. This will give players some time to learn more about him and his motives (see ***If Odwald was apprehended*** under **Odwald's Fate, pg.153**, for details into his backstory), all of which might impact their decision whether or not to help repair his friendship with Riffin.

Once Riffin is taking visitors, Odwald will encourage the party to go and convince the string knight to stick around and help their party. The character talking with Riffin can make a Charisma (Persuasion) check to convince him to take the course of action they suggest, but the difficulty check of the skill should be modified based on the approach party members take while talking with Riffin. For example, if they appeal to his sense of honor and duty to the Wood, the check should be easier. Some players may decide to have Riffin and Odwald meet to talk things over, which could also be successful. Characters who try to convince Riffin can make any number of arguments:

- They need Riffin's help to defeat the aspect.
- Riffin should work with them for the good of the Wood.
- Odwald seems to regret his actions and care deeply about their friendship.
- Anything else the players might come up with that feels appropriate.

Decide how things play out based on the motives of the characters, improvising checks with any characters who might be serving to mediate, and select the outcome that best fits with the narrative.

If Riffin and Odwald reconcile, Riffin will steadfastly agree to help the party in whatever way he can on their quest. Riffin and Odwald's relationship will be strained for the rest of the game, but they will work together to defeat the aspect. Riffin will accompany the party back to the Avium, but he won't have much to say along the way—he's more of a doer than a thinker. Despite recent events, should it be required, he'll act as a character witness for Odwald. Riffin will never totally forgive the old corvum, but he can attest to his brilliance and reliability from their years of adventuring together. Riffin is willing to journey with the party to Alderheart. He'll choose to bunk separately at the Wooden Flagon, the inn and tavern in the trunk district. If the players wish, Riffin can accompany them on the rest of their journey. If he joins the party, he will be treated as another character for the purposes of dividing up XP.

If Riffin and Odwald don't reconcile, Riffin will leave. He feels betrayed, but also conflicted, and he needs time to figure things out. When he returns, it will be in the final battle, after contemplating his duty and coming to the decision to help the party.

If the party came to Brackenmill to find the escaped Odwald, the characters can either return Odwald to the Avium for questioning, or take him to Alderheart, where he will help them find their next lead. This may depend on whether or not the party believes in Odwald's change of heart. Regardless, he'll try to convince them to take him to Alderheart since time is of the essence.

If the party returns Odwald to the Avium, resume play from the ***If Odwald was apprehended*** section in **Odwald's Fate (pg.153)**.

If the party killed Odwald, they will find the old corvum's book of research notes on his body. Resume play from the ***"If Odwald was slain"*** section in **Odwald's Fate (pg.153)**.

If the party takes Odwald to Alderheart, skip to **Susan the Seer (pg.161)**. The party may need to explain themselves to the Dean or the Council for this later.

Dean Windsworth

In certain situations, it may be necessary for you to account for the whereabouts of Dean Windsworth during the events of **Part 5**. He can be a pivotal character, filling Odwald's role in the story if Odwald was killed, or an important side character if Odwald lives. The Dean can even assist Odwald in the final battle against the aspect of fire.

If Odwald lives, whether he was apprehended at the Avium (**Part 4**) or in Brackenmill, the Dean will remain at the College after the party has left for Alderheart. There he will research Odwald's ritual, perhaps improving upon it in the process, until he is ready to rejoin the party for the final fight with the aspect of fire.

If Odwald is dead, the Dean will join up with the party in Alderheart, out of a sense of duty. In all likelihood, the only reason Odwald was able break the aspect's seal in the first place was because of what he learned as a student in the Avium, and the Dean feels that he should make himself available in case the party is in need of advice. The Dean won't help in combat — he will spend his stay in Alderheart looking through the old corvum's notes to decipher the ritual that Odwald theorized would re-seal the aspect.

SUSAN THE SEER

At this point the party will be led to Alderheart either by the living Odwald, or by information Dean Windsworth gleaned from the deceased corvum's notes. There, Odwald's old friend and former adventuring companion, Susan of the Swamp, can be found. Susan's eclectic scholarship has led to her possessing some esoteric knowledge. This, coupled with her unique divination abilities, means she is the party's best hope of finding *the Borealus*.

Seeing an Old Friend

The party will find Susan's tent in Alderheart's trunk market (see **Return to Alderheart, pg.124**, for information on her services). She's been turning a tidy profit in Alderheart with her fortune telling. If the party has encountered her before this, she'll greet them fondly and tell them she's been meaning to pack up and head back to her hut in the swamp to try out some new experimental conjury. Perhaps it's fate that they came here when they did.

If Odwald is with the party, she'll give him a warm welcome and ask how he's been all this time. While Odwald is happy to see Susan, he'll make it clear that catching up will need to wait, explaining the urgency of their task.

If Odwald was killed, this is explained to Susan. She will become quiet and solemnly agree to help the players with any task they should need for the good of the Wood.

However this encounter happens, Susan will eventually perform her ritual.

The hedge witch circles her snail shell cauldron, picking handfuls of hanging herbs and small dessicated creatures from around her tent, and plopping them into the brew. Her beetle familiar, Normal, assists in this task, and as it drops a shriveled tentacle into the cauldron, Susan chuckles, "Starfish, for visions as clear as a midsummer's night…" The witch mutters an incantation over the brew, and then, satisfied with her work, she grabs a ladle and portions out a bit of the liquid, blowing it cool before taking a sip.

As soon as Susan sips the concoction, her pupils dilate until her eyes turn black. They appear to contain stars and constellations, and for a moment Susan seems far away. Then her eyes return to normal, and Susan regains her senses.

"What a vision… there are so many possible futures, it's hard to keep track!" she says, moving to a small bookshelf behind her. "I saw one great power being kept in check by another. An endless dance of fire and ice." Susan then pulls a tome from the shelf and rifles through it. "*the Borealus* wants to be united with the flames. It is barred behind a door of cinders, to which only the Tenders have the key. To reach it you must find… this!"

Susan will find the page she was looking for, and show it to the party. It's an illustration of a plant that characters proficient in the Survival or Nature skills can easily recognize as skyleaf, a type of leafy vine that grows around the taller trees in Humblewood. She'll explain her vision showed a sprig of skyleaf would be the key to accessing *the Borealus*, and that the artifact still rests in Humblewood, but beyond this she isn't sure. Signs pointed to the Tenders living in Alderheart; a character the party should be familiar with holds the second key to *the Borealus*' resting place.

Susan will tell the party that skyleaf vines grow in a part of the forest to the northwest, a three hour walk from Alderheart. The party can choose to search for the skyleaf right away (see **Picking through the Ashes**), or speak to the Tenders (see **The Wisdom of Tenders, pg.162**). Remind the players they can also avail themselves of Alderheart's many shops while they're here, including **Eliza's Emporium (pg.106)**.

Picking Through the Ashes

The northwest forests of Alderheart have changed.

You arrive to see a sparse, burned forest. Ashes litter the branches and cover the forest floor in a thick carpet. To the north, a swath of charred trees is visible in the distance, unmistakably the work of the aspect. It looks like the aspect has been able to push even closer to Alderheart.

The ashes that cover the forest floor are cool, and possess none of the supernatural properties that ashes within the Scorched Grove have, but their presence here is disconcerting. The forest is still, and the familiar sights and sounds of the Wood are conspicuously absent.

A party member will need to make a DC 16 Wisdom (Survival) or Intelligence (Nature) check to locate skyleaf among the ash-covered foliage. This search can be done either from the ground or in a tree, but once the leaf is located, a character will need to climb up to retrieve it. Any character attempting to climb a tree must make a DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check, as skyleaf grows only within the highest

branches. After a character has acquired the skyleaf sprig, (preferably while one or more party members are up in a tree) the party will run into an **ashsnake** that will try to use the ash cover to ambush a target close enough to the ground. Resolve passive perception checks as normal, and point out that the trees in this part of the forest are in small copses around 80 feet apart, making it difficult (but not impossible) to retreat using glide.

The Wisdom of Tenders

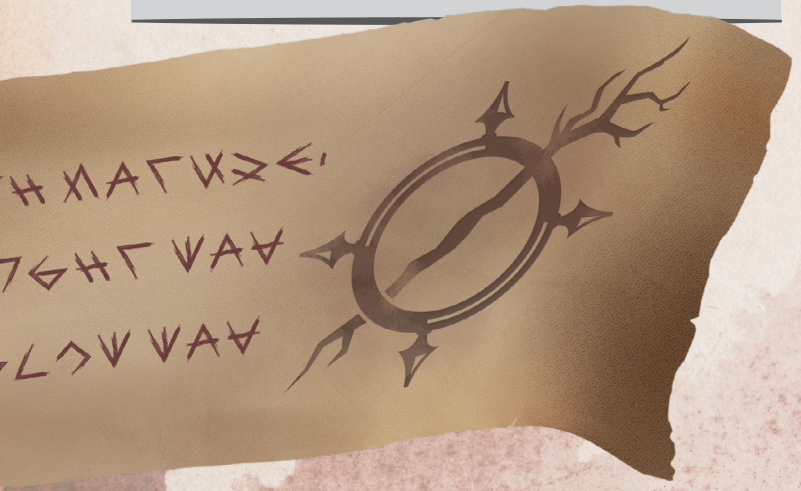
The Tenders the party will find in Alderheart are **Tevor of the Spring Path (see Appendix B, pg.193)** and **Havel of the Autumn Moon (see Appendix B, pg.196)**, whom they met in **Part 3: An Urgent Summons (pg.123)**. The party should run into Havel and Tevor at the Tenders' headquarters within Alderheart's trunk. If the players aren't familiar with this location yet, it won't be hard to locate when asking around. Despite the short supply of Tenders in the Wood, both Havel and Tevor (presuming Tevor survived the events of **Part 3**) can be found there, helping where needed.

If Tevor is still alive, Havel and Tevor have begun to live together, and are clearly affectionate toward one another. The harrowing events in the Wood lately have helped deepen their bond, and they now work as partners to train and coordinate the less experienced Tenders. If Tevor died, Havel carries on alone, working hard to honor Tevor's sacrifice.

Either way, whoever is there to meet the party greets them warmly, and will offer up any assistance the Defenders of Alderheart require.

Havel is familiar with old Tender legends about *the Borealus*. He explains:

> **"The story of *the Borealus* tells of a wizard who stole a piece of a powerful spirit of winter. They thought they could control its icy power by containing it within a staff, but instead it froze them. Left to itself, the newly-made artifact kept freezing the land around it. The tales say that the old Tenders felt this imbalance in the Wood. When they found *the Borealus*, they had the artifact sealed away by Tender Elders using a sprig of skyleaf, which remains hearty even through the winter."**



Havel will add that he hadn't placed much stock in the tale, since it's ancient, and he only came across it after a long period of study. When he first read it, he thought the story to be a parable about the dangers of trying to enslave the powers of living elementals. When the party (or Odwald, if he's traveling with them) tells Havel what they know, he'll be surprised and offer to help the Defenders of Alderheart however he can.

If Tevor is alive, he will reveal some practical information that can help locate *the Borealus*. Tevor will recall a story he once heard from his mentor. According to the tale, the fate of an elder who wished to become a Tender Treekeeper was decided by delivering an unburned skyleaf sprig to a frog-shaped rock in the southwest of the Scorched Grove. Havel will support Tevor, and say he believes this agrees with references to an ancient chamber in the Scorched Grove. The text appeared in the historical records around the same time as the stories of *the Borealus* being sealed away. Neither Tevor nor Havel can take the party to the location because they're needed in Alderheart, but Tevor can mark it on the party's map. It's a fairly distinctive landmark, so the party should be able to find it easily with this direction.

If Tevor is dead, Havel will admit he doesn't know anything that might hint at *the Borealus*' location, but he has access to some rather old tomes of lore in the archives of the Tenders' headquarters. If given time to unravel this mystery, Havel might be able to find something of use. It will take him a day to discover the information, which he will be so eager to deliver to the party that he'll rush to meet them at dawn wherever they're staying. He will say, tearfully, that he recalled a story Tevor once told him, and he just needed to look up references in the ancient records to be sure. Havel will tell the party that the entrance to *the Borealus*' resting place is in the Scorched Grove, near a frog-shaped rock in the south.

THE CRUCIBLE OF FIRE

Odwald will ask to accompany the party into the Scorched Grove, but he'll point out that due to his magical restraints he won't be of use to them in a fight. Should any party members try to get crafty and break Odwald out of the silver bangles, a close examination will reveal that the restraints cannot be dispelled or removed through conventional means, and appear to be made of a virtually indestructible material. If another reason to prevent Odwald from fighting by the party's side is required, he can also point out that should he die, the knowledge of the ritual which might save the Wood dies with him.

While he'll do his best to stay out of combat, Odwald can offer valuable insights. The party rolls any ability checks that rely on Intelligence with advantage while Odwald is with them. Should the heroes decide to journey without him, Odwald will stay in Alderheart under Perch Guard supervision, and await the party's return.

It's also possible that the party could bring Riffin along for this journey. Be sure to adjust encounters appropriately if this is the case.

The party can reach the Grove in a day's travel if they don't mind hiking through the more dangerous parts of the Wood. Much of the Wood is covered in ash, and the energies of the Grove have spread in such a way that small patches of the nearby forested areas have become home to creatures and phenomena previously only witnessed in the Grove. For a more action-filled trip, roll on the **Scorched Grove Encounters (Level 3) table (pg.215)**. Optionally, skip right to the next section to increase the pace of the game.

In stark contrast to their last trip through the Scorched Grove, the party will find the ashen plain to be eerily silent and devoid of life, even the strange variety that usually finds purchase here. This is due to the increasing influence of the aspect of fire, which has caused the creatures here to scatter. It is much hotter and drier than it was before; have characters make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw once as part of traveling through the Grove, taking a level of exhaustion from the heat on a failure.

Buried in the Ash

In order to contain the tremendous ice-aspected energies of *the Borealus*, the Tenders created a dungeon hidden beneath ash, and several magical defenses to keep the artifact out of mortal hands. The Elder Tenders of old needed to store the staff where the fire-aspected energies of the Scorched Grove could serve to keep *the Borealus*' dangerous energies sequestered. In times long past, Tenders wishing to join the leadership of their organization would come here to be tested for their worthiness; this practice was ended when a breach of the sanctum caused the Tenders to swear the location of *the Borealus* to secrecy and destroy records of its location. Only scant myths and snippets of information escaped the culling. Eventually, the last of those who possessed actual knowledge of the artifact died, and the dungeon has sat unused for hundreds of years.

The Borealus lies at the lowest level of the dungeon, where the flame energies are strongest. It is safeguarded by an ancient treant called **Oakheart (see Appendix B, pg.203)**. He is a sworn guardian, who was given instructions to only allow *the Borealus* to pass into the hands of one who understands and is committed to keeping nature's balance.

The party should arrive at the frog-shaped rock after a few hours of travel through the Grove, but they need to figure out how to locate the dungeon's entrance. Without the proper key, the entrance to the dungeon will not reveal itself. Read the following if the party is carrying the sprig of skyleaf with them:

> **As soon as you and your companions arrive at the frog-shaped rock formation, the ground begins to quake. Five pedestals emerge from the ashes, one at each cardinal point around a flat disk that rises in their center. The fifth stands in the middle of the disk. One of the four outer pedestals is broken.**

The pedestals rise from the earth, to a height of four feet. The ones to the west, east, and south have distinctive carvings and motifs, along with a domed receptacle on their top which opens like a mouth. The receptacles are large enough to fit the sprig of skyleaf. The fourth pedestal to the north is broken in half and exhibits obvious wear, as though it had been smashed long ago. The pedestal in the center of the disk has no domed receptacle or motif carved, only an inscribed Druidic rhyme. Druidic is a language known only by druids, but any character using the *comprehend languages* spell or a similar effect will be able to read this:

> **The cycle of nature is death and rebirth,**
>
> **forests to ashes and ashes to earth.**
>
> **Stand in the compass and your proof there deliver,**
>
> **to the cleanser of forests, the sapling's life-giver.**

The motifs carved into the three intact pedestals represent elemental forces of nature. The one to the west has motifs of waves and rain clouds, the one to the east has gusting winds and blowing leaves, and the one to the south has flames and smoke plumes. Upon closer examination, the broken pedestal has worn geometric motifs, depicting fallen trees on fractured ground, most likely representing earth. At least one party member must stand in the middle of these pedestals when placing the skyleaf sprig into a receptacle. Whether or not the party chooses the correct answer, nothing will happen if no one is standing in the center of the "compass" when placing the sprig inside a receptacle.

The correct answer is to set the sprig in the receptacle of the pedestal with the flame motifs. This will cause the sprig to ignite with magical flames and the pedestals to recede, revealing the door to the dungeon.

The ashen field shifts again as the pillars recede beneath it. Then, with a lurch, a small hill rises from the ashes. A square section on the front of this hill falls away, revealing an open door. Ancient stone steps descend into darkness.

The steps lead to the room in **The Guardians of Flame (pg.165)**.

The other two answers are incorrect.

If the sprig is placed in the receptacle of the pedestal with the water motif, party members in the center of the compass will be caught in a trap, as the disk between the pillars instantly transforms into a 15-foot-diameter pool of cold water. The water within the pool is very deep, and moves as if possessed by a will of its own. Characters inside of the pool can feel a strong force attempting to pull them down into the cold depths and hold them there.

Have the players roll initiative. At the top of each round, each character in the pool takes 3 (1d6) points of cold damage and must make a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check to avoid being pulled under. Characters who are pulled under are blinded by the dark waters, and may suffocate unless they can breathe water or hold their breath. Remember that characters can hold their breath for a number of minutes equal to 1 + their Constitution modifier (minimum of 30 seconds or 5 rounds), after which point they begin to suffocate.

Any player can use their action to attempt the Athletics check again on their turn. A character that has been pulled under can succeed on this check to reach the surface, allowing them to gasp for air. A character that is not currently being held under the water can attempt the Athletics check again on their turn to pull themselves free of the pool, though doing so is sufficiently taxing, and a character who successfully escapes the trap can do nothing else this turn.

Any character outside of the pool can make a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check to free someone inside the pool. A character who has been pulled under the water is out of reach to a character outside of the pool, but characters in the pool who have not been can assist those who have been pulled under. Players may think of clever strategies to help their friends out, like throwing ropes and the like, but the water is dark in addition to being bitterly cold, and any character that was pulled under rolls Wisdom (Perception) checks with disadvantage.

Once all characters have left the pool, the disk returns to normal and the sprig may be safely retrieved from the water pedestal.

If the sprig is placed in the receptacle of the pedestal with the wind motif, party members in the center of the compass will be caught in a trap, as a 15-foot-sphere of wind appears above the disk between the pillars. The sphere encloses all creatures standing on the disk, lifting them 10 feet into the air, and begins to slowly crush them.

Have the players roll initiative. At the top of each round, each character in the sphere takes 4 (1d8) points of bludgeoning damage from the buffeting winds and must make a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check to avoid being grappled by the gusting force.

A character that has been grappled can use their action to attempt this check again. On a success, the character is no longer grappled. A character that is not currently grappled can attempt the DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check again on their turn to push their way out of the wind sphere, falling prone in a space outside of the compass.

Any character outside of the sphere can make this check to free someone trapped inside on a success. However, a character outside who enters the sphere's space must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or be sucked inside as well. Characters inside the sphere who try to free a grappled ally roll their Strength (Athletics) check with disadvantage.

Players may think of clever strategies to help their friends out. Using a staff or a 10-foot pole a character can attempt to free a trapped ally without the risk of being sucked in themselves. Using a spell like *thunderwave* to blast allies clear of the effect will also work. Any thrown ropes or projectiles will simply be blown aside by the force of the sphere's winds.

Once all characters are free of the sphere, it slowly dissipates and the sprig may be safely retrieved from the wind pedestal.

The Guardians of Flame

The stairway descends into the dungeon for about 150 feet, occasionally turning and twisting upon itself, until it opens into a round chamber with a circular entranceway. There is no light source down here, and players without darkvision will need to provide illumination for themselves.

You see a chamber that appears to have been shaped out of black, volcanic rock. There is a wooden disk in the center of this chamber that has a series of druidic runes carved into its surface. In one quadrant of the disk these runes glow dimly with red light. Four alcoves surround this central room, equidistant from each other. In three of them, large statues of eagles, made from the same volcanic rock, rest upon intricately shaped branches of small, petrified trees. The fourth alcove is empty.

This chamber is 60 feet across, and each alcove is 10 feet across. The wooden disk in the center of the room is immune to fire damage, as are the petrified trees upon which the statues rest. As soon as the entire party enters the room, a stone slab closes over circular entryway, trapping the party inside. Each statue comes alight as the rock from which it is composed turns to barely-cooled magma. The 3 statues are Medium creatures that use the stat block for **gargoyles**, with the following changes:

- They speak Ignan instead of Terran.
- They are resistant to fire damage, but nothing else.
- They attack with their claws and their beaks, which use the same stats for the claw and bite attacks of the gargoyles. These attacks deal fire damage instead of slashing or piercing damage.

When an eagle statue is defeated it transforms into red flames, which are drawn toward the druidic runes on the wooden disk in the room's center. This will cause a section of the central platform's runes to glow red. Once the statues have been defeated, all of the runes will be lit, and the platform can be used to travel between this room and the dungeon's lower level. Stepping onto the activated platform, a character will learn that the code words "ascend" and "descend" can be spoken anywhere in this dungeon to cause this platform to magically float down to the lower levels, or rise back up to this chamber.

The Blazing Barriers

Speaking the word "descend," the platform moves down a 50-foot shaft, which opens into a wide subterranean cavern, and lands in a disk-shaped depression on an island.

This large subterranean cavern is lit by the glow of magma, which flows below an island of rock. A long bridge connects the island to a bank on the other side, where a passageway continues through the cavern wall. It is sweltering in here.

The island is a mere 30 feet wide, and the ceilings are 60 feet high. The magma lies 60 feet below the island of rock, and any character that gets too near the edges of the island will feel its full heat. The heat isn't enough to cause damage, but any creature that falls into the magma will almost certainly die, if they're not immune to fire damage, taking 33 (6d10) points of fire damage each time they enter magma for the first time on a turn, or end their turn there. Fortunately, under normal circumstances there are no dangers within this place that would cause a character to fall into the magma. Add such hazards if desired, but consider the risks carefully.

The bridge over the magma is 10 feet wide and 20 feet long. It appears to have small gaps at 5-foot intervals. Any player who steps onto the bridge's surface will trigger the bridge's main trap, which will cause a 20-foot-high jet of flame to erupt from the nearest gap. This jet remains for a few seconds, receding for a moment before flaring up again.

The party can tell that these flame jets aren't made of magma, but that they are still dangerous. Any character who passes through one will need to succeed on a DC 16 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to avoid taking damage. Failure on this check means the character must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw, or take 10 (3d6) points of fire damage from the flames on a failure, or half as much on a success. Whether or not they succeed on this save, the characters will arrive on the other side of the jet, which will trigger the next flame jet.

Characters who hesitate once they begin crossing will find their energy sapped, as they are caught between the hot jets. It is impossible for a character to run across the bridge avoiding these jets, unless they succeed on the listed Acrobatics check for every jet they cross.

There are a few ways to circumvent this obstacle.

- Players might have access to the *fly* spell, which can be used to avoid the bridge altogether.
- Players with resistance to fire may be able to make it across even if they cannot succeed on their checks, especially if they have the ability to heal themselves.
- Players can attempt to block the jets of flame, though the jets erupt with enough force to blast through wooden barriers. If a metal object (like a shield) is held in place to allow passage across a jet, it will be rendered red hot, causing 9 (2d8) points of fire damage to anyone holding or stepping onto the object.
- The *floating disk* spell will completely block the flame jets, and its magic will shield anyone on top of the disk from the heat of the jets, allowing for easy passage.

Use the above rules to decide whether any of the more unique solutions players could conceive of will work.

On the bank at the other side of the bridge is a lever disguised as a rock formation. Any character with a passive perception of 17 or higher, or who succeeds on a DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check, will be able to notice the lever. When pulled, the lever causes the flame jets to cease, and the magma in the chamber to cool almost instantly into solid rock. The tunnel into the rock wall ahead is the only way forward.

Oakheart the Guardian

The passageway from the magma chamber continues for another 400 feet, curving downwards until it leads into a strange space.

> **The tunnel transitions into a room that has been magically shaped from the earth beneath the Grove. The floor is made of black cobblestones, shaped from a layer of volcanic rock. Breaking through the stones is a line of three great trees. Each tree appears black and charred, with leaves of flame and bark that glows like embers. The tree in the middle is the largest, and its roots tangle outward in a great mass.**

The room is 90 feet long and 60 feet wide. The largest tree is **Oakheart (see Appendix B, pg.203)**. Once enough of the party has made it within 80 feet of the trees, Oakheart will reveal himself, shuddering as if waking from a deep slumber. His body shifts into a more humanoid form. Okaheart speaks slowly in Birdfolk, or in Druidic if one of the party members is a druid, with a voice that sounds like a cross between creaking wood and a blasting forge.

> **Suddenly, the great tree at the back of the room quivers, and its bark shifts to reveal eyes and a mouth. Its long branches twist into hands and its roots become large feet. "Hrrmmmmmm… so… I am to receive… guests? How long has it been?" the creature creaks. "You do not look… like Tenders… a test is in order then..."**

Oakheart will then fight the party to test whether or not they possess the skill needed to safely control *the Borealus.* If the above dialogue was interrupted by a player launching an attack at any point, do not treat Oakheart as being surprised and simply roll initiative as normal. Oakheart is sworn to guard *the Borealus* from thieves, and if attacked while speaking he'll scold the players on his turn, saying:

> **"Little ones… so impatient…"**

If the party attempts to talk their way out of this fight, he will say:

> **"It matters not… None may obtain *the Borealus*… until they have proven… their worth!"**

Oakheart will begin by animating the other two charred trees in the room. They have stats identical to Oakheart, but otherwise follow the rules for animated trees in the **treant** stat block.

Oakheart will not die once he reaches 0 hit points, but he will cease his assault and return the trees he animated to their posts. He is a guardian, but unless the party shows or has shown signs of ill intent throughout the dungeon, he will sense that they are not thieves and try not to kill them. He simply wishes to test whether or not they are strong enough to control the terrible power of *the Borealus*.

If the party does poorly in this fight, Oakheart may cease his assault and dismiss his animated trees, sitting down to parley. He'll ask why they have risked their lives to obtain *the Borealus*. If Oakheart is satisfied with the answer (attempting to save the Wood from burning is an acceptable explanation), he will give them the staff.

Whether defeated in battle or convinced to give the players *the Borealus*, Oakheart will inform the party that he has safe-guarded the artifact with his own life force, and for its power to become unsealed his life must end. There's no way around this. If characters sympathize, he will thank them for their concerns, and offer a warm smile before delivering the parting statement:

> **"I have lived for a very… very… very long time. I go… with the blessing of the Nightfather… that I may pass onto you… this burden." Oakheart then reaches into a hollow in his trunk, and pulls out a luminous crystal staff. "Plant this one in flames… such is its power… otherwise… the Wood may freeze…"**

As Oakheart speaks the light from his bark dims, and his flame-leaves fade, leaving behind a large blackened tree amidst the chamber.

TREASURE

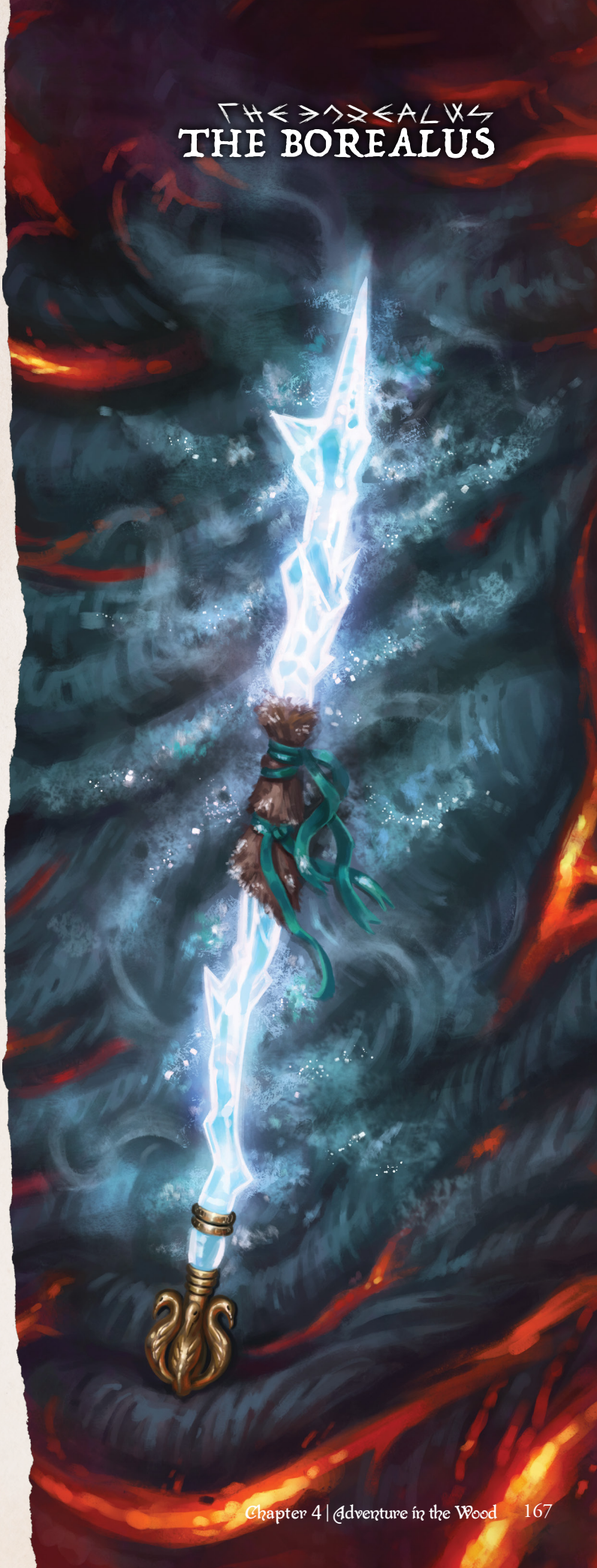
The party receives the artifact they came here for: *the Borealus**.

Once the party has acquired *the Borealus*, have them return to Alderheart.

THE FINAL SUMMONS

Upon returning to Alderheart, give the party a chance to have a long rest and recover from any exhaustion they may have suffered traveling through the Grove. After resting, they will find Dean Windsworth waiting for them in the common room of the inn in which they are staying. He has been called on by the Council to advise the Defenders of Alderheart during these perilous times. The Dean will be stupefied by the existence of *the Borealus*, and overjoyed that the party has obtained it. This means there is a chance to stop the aspect and save the Wood.

If Odwald is with the party, he will explain that the aspect must still be weakened in order for *the Borealus* to be useful in sealing it. What's more, in order to channel a power as vast as *the Borealus* is said to contain, the ritual requires at least two mages working in tandem to succeed. This ritual must be done



over the conjuration circle that was used to seal the aspect the first time. Fortunately for them, Odwald knows its location. If Odwald died, the Dean will take over Odwald's role in explaining the information gleaned from the necromancer's ritual notes.

After learning about the ritual, the party will notice a commotion outside the inn. Some people are closing up their shops, others appear to be filing to the city gates with hastily packed bags, some with families in tow, and others still are heading toward the canopy. The party will soon learn the cause, either by asking passersby or listening to town criers, who announce an emergency meeting of all citizenry. The party can investigate, but it won't be long before they receive a summons from the Council. The news is grim: the aspect is moving toward the Great Tree City.

Everyone is crowded around the Council Chambers, some literally hanging from branches and filling up every inch of available space. In this sea of faces, the party will see any currently living friendly NPC they might have encountered on their journey who would reasonably be in Alderheart at this time, including: the Dean, Benna, Riffin, Susan, Odwald, Havel, Tevor, Eliza, and the jerbeen orphans.

The citizens are nervous and whispering amongst themselves. Some say they saw an intense red-orange glow far off in the forest, others that Alderheart is under attack, and some are worried the Council will call for an evacuation.

A contingent of The Spears escorts the members of the Council (including, if appropriate, any newly-elected humblefolk delegates) onto a specially prepared platform with a row of seats and a podium that bears Alderheart's city crest. **Bita, the Council Speaker (see Appendix B, pg.193)** appears from out of the ranks of the Council members as they take their seats. A hush falls over the crowd when she approaches the podium:

> **"My fellow citizens, we have just received a dire report from our watchposts. The elemental creature that so recently arose from beneath our Wood now makes its way toward Alderheart."**

The citizens may remain silent, or begin to despair. They might even start to panic, at which point the Defenders of Alderheart may step in to help regain control. As symbols of hope in the realm, the crowd will listen to them. Any party member can step up to make a reassuring statement and attempt a DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion) check to calm the populace, allowing Speaker Bita to continue. Have a character roll this check with advantage if their reputation has earned them particular favor among the many Alderites (if they are seen as a champion of the people, for example).

Speaker Bita gives the crowd a moment, thanking the Defenders of Alderheart if they provided assistance, then resumes, speaking with a grace and dignity that inspires hope even in these dark times:

> **"Recently, we have faced many hardships. The flames that ravaged the Wood have threatened to tear our communities apart. Yet, Alderheart still stands. We are not birdfolk and humblefolk, nor are we perch-dwellers and forest-dwellers: we are people of Humblewood. Since its creation, Alderheart was meant to stand as a symbol of our unity. Perhaps we have lost our way since those early days, but there is still a chance for a brighter future. However, in order to obtain it we must stand together now! I implore each and every citizen of Humblewood, not as the Council Speaker, but as a fellow resident of the Wood. We must defend each other, we must defend Humblewood. It is the only home we have."**

Someone starts cheering. Whoever starts the cheer is optional: it may be a humblefolk (perhaps one of the jerbeen orphans, or a reformed bandit working for the Wildwood Brigade), or a birdfolk (maybe Tevor, showing his newfound courage, or Riffin, to inspire the people). This one cry will multiply, and soon the crowd cheers together with one voice, as denizens from all parts of Humblewood unite.

Preparing for Battle

After Speaker Bita's speech, the party will be found by either Odwald or the Dean (if Odwald isn't alive) and told that, by the looks of it, the aspect's influence in this region has grown tenfold since the party's first encounter. If they don't take the opportunity to try and seal the aspect with *the Borealus* now, even if it is driven back, the aspect may become too strong to attempt sealing again.

The Defenders of Alderheart will soon find their presence requested by the Council: the aspect of fire must be stopped before it reaches the Great Tree City. Its movement has stirred up ashsnakes, emberbats, and other fire creatures that are causing havoc in the surrounding forest. Give the party a chance to explain to the Council what they can do to help (the Council is receptive to most ideas), but if the party doesn't mention sealing away the aspect, then either Odwald or the Dean (if Odwald is dead) will make the suggestion.

While the Council will listen to the Dean, Odwald will be looked upon more suspiciously, and the party may need to convince the members on his behalf. To keep the tension high maybe have the party roll Charisma checks for this. The Council will trust the Defenders of Alderheart, even if they don't trust Odwald. However the Council is convinced, Speaker Bita will make it clear in no uncertain terms that the fate of the Wood is in the party's hands.

Odwald will elaborate that in order to complete the ritual to seal the aspect, two mages must work together to weave a spell into the existing conjuration circle to strengthen and alter its magic. He'll also remind the party of the importance of utilizing cold-type magics to subdue the aspect. Once it has been subdued, they will have only an hour before it regenerates, so it's imperative that the character attuned to *the Borealus* brings it to the circle, so the mages can complete the sealing.

If a spellcasting party member volunteers to help the NPCs

prepare the sealing ritual, they will be turned down. Preparing the ritual will be time-consuming and require such focus that the party member wouldn't be able to fight the aspect at the same time. The mages who work the ritual need to rely on the Defenders of Alderheart to ensure their efforts aren't interrupted. Odwald (or the Dean, if Odwald is dead) will explain that the second mage must have a good grasp of arcane theory and precise control over their magic. They will essentially serve as an additional power source and they therefore do not need to have the same familiarity with the ritual.

Odwald can think of only one other spellcaster he would trust with this ritual: Susan, and he will ask for her to accompany him (if she is alive). Otherwise, the Dean can help. The Dean has a strong desire to see this through to the end, and would gladly work with Odwald for the good of the Wood. If Odwald is dead, the Dean will need assistance for the ritual. Should Susan not be able to assist, a Council member will mention knowing of a talented spellcasting protégé within the Tenders who may be able to help. This is, of course, Havel.

If Odwald is conducting the ritual he will request to have the restraints inhibiting his magic removed, which will cause the Council consternation, but they will ultimately agree. If the party is still suspicious of Odwald's intentions and unwilling to have his restraints removed, the Dean (who has been looking through Odwald's notes) is familiar enough with the material to lead the ritual. Even so, he'll insist they bring Odwald along, shackled or not, as the corvum's knowledge could prove useful should something go awry.

The plan is to have the mages escorted to the conjuration circle, by either the Wildwood Brigade or the Perch Guard, to prepare the ritual. The rest of the Perch Guard and/or Wildwood Brigade will need to work together to keep the path to the aspect cleared for the party.

Whoever is leading the ritual indicates that someone will have to grab the aspect's attention and lure it closer to the Grove. If the aspect is too far away when the ritual is completed, there's no guarantee it will be sealed. Scouts report that the aspect is easy to provoke, but it'll be difficult to outpace, and luring it to the Grove will certainly place the volunteer in incredible danger. Riffin volunteers to help draw the aspect back to the circle if he's here, otherwise a Defender of Alderheart has to volunteer for the task. Speed won't matter as much as endurance, since they'll need to be able to withstand whatever the aspect can throw at them in order to make it to the Grove.

As the party leaves the Council chambers, they will witness something special:

> **The mood in the city is electric. Birdfolk and humblefolk from all walks of life work hand-in-hand, with the Perch Guard distributing weapons and armor to any who volunteer. Those who cannot fight are readying supply lines and bucket brigades to help people on the front lines combat forest fires and support the Defenders of Alderheart. Everyone in Alderheart is doing their best to pitch in however they can.**

If any characters are looking to prepare for the final fight, the party has a small window to resupply. Many of Alderheart's shops have been closed or abandoned, but the armories of Alderheart are open to the party, allowing them to take whatever supplies they may need (Weapons, Armor, or Adventuring Gear). If they're looking for a little extra, **Eliza's Emporium table (pg.106)** is always open, though even in such dire times the party won't be able to get a magic item for free. Eliza is volunteering for the bucket brigade and plans on living through this. While she's still willing to offer "friends-only" prices, and supply the party with any non-magical necessities they might need to complete their mission, she has no intention of giving up her livelihood out of fear.

THE CHASE

Before the characters can do battle with the aspect of fire, they must find a way to lure it out of the forest toward the Scorched Grove. This is necessary not only for the ritual, but because the abundance of available fuel in the forest makes the aspect functionally invincible there. Consider having a scout report that the aspect seems to flare up as it burns through the forest, as players may be unaware that the aspect can heal itself using the trees it consumes. While not a vital clue at this stage, this information about the aspect is essential to the fight. If not given the hint, players will have to deduce why the aspect is not weakening when fought in wooded areas.

If Riffin volunteered to lure the aspect of fire into the Grove, skip to **Facing the Aspect (pg.172)**.

If Riffin wasn't around to volunteer, the player character who volunteered to bait the aspect will accompany a unit of Perch Guard or Wildwood Brigade scouts into the part of the forest where the

aspect is advancing. In the meantime, the rest of the party and the mages will be escorted to the conjuration circle to ready for the aspect's arrival. It isn't necessary for more than one party member to serve as bait, and if multiple characters volunteer then either Odwald or the Dean will advise against it, insisting that the rest of the party will need their strength to fight the aspect.

Separated from their friends, read to the player that volunteered:

Around you, you can see woodland denizens of all kinds fighting. Parts of the forest are ablaze. Bucket brigades desperately try to keep the fires in check while coordinated teams assault massive ashsnakes and use specially-crafted nets to drive back swarms of emberbats. The scouts lead you further into the brush, until you can see the blazing form of the aspect lumbering toward Alderheart. It hasn't yet spotted you or your guides in your hiding place.

The aspect of fire will give chase as soon as it sees the volunteer character, hurling hunks of magma at the lone hero. Rather than resolving this engagement using movement speed, resolve the chase through the ash covered-forest by having the pursued character make a DC 18 Dexterity (Acrobatics) or Strength (Athletics) check to keep ahead of the aspect and avoid taking damage. On a failure, have the player make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw, taking 22 (4d10) fire damage on a failure, and half as much on a success. The character being chased can take one other action in addition to making their check, but they can do nothing else since the rest of their energies are focused on the flight.

If a player decides to attack the aspect during this chase, resolve their attack as normal, but the aspect won't take any damage. The character should see that once the aspect moves through a stand of trees, its fire consumes the trees, causing it to regain health and blaze brightly.

The character being chased must succeed on four of the above Athletics checks to lure the aspect toward the conjuration circle. Resolve each failure as it happens. Once the character being chased succeeds on two Dexterity or Strength checks, or is doing poorly, Riffin will appear, shielding the character from a hit and preventing the damage. From this point on, Riffin will protect the character from further harm.

As the fireball hurtles toward you, you see a flash of steel and suddenly find yourself shielded from the blast. Looking over, you can see Riffin, running alongside you with his shield held high. The face of his shield emits a barrier of wind which deflects the aspect's flames. The small strig gives you a smile and shouts, "Sorry I didn't help sooner, but I'm not about to let the whole Wood burn! Riffin the Ash-Knight, at your service."

However he feels about Odwald, Riffin has decided that his duty, both to the Wood and as a knight, comes first. This is the right thing to do.

Riffin's Fate

Depending on who is alive, and if Riffin isn't alive, have another NPC be the last-minute-hero.

Or, should this be the first time the characters talk to Riffin, some introductions will be in order.

Facing the Aspect

Refer to Fig. 5.1 for a map of the Final Battle with the Aspect.

The final battle with the **aspect of fire** will take place in a 120-foot by 80-foot field that is mostly ashen plains. To the south of the field is 40-feet-deep tree cover. The aspect will be led through a gap in the tree cover that is 20 feet wide.

Only the 40 feet of tree cover to the south is substantial enough for the aspect to heal using its "Fuel for the Fire" ability.

The conjuration circle is 20 feet in diameter, and it's located 40 feet from the tree cover and 80 feet from the eastern edge of the map. As long as the aspect remains on the map, it is near enough to the circle for the ritual to succeed.

The aspect of fire gains the following ability:

- ***Rekindle.*** If the aspect of fire is at 0 hit points, it regains 10 hit points at the start of its next turn.

  If the aspect is reduced to 0 hit points by cold damage, or is hit with cold damage while at 0 hit points, rekindle doesn't function at the start of the aspect's next turn. The aspect is petrified only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and doesn't rekindle.

  The aspect can not rekindle for one hour after being petrified. After an hour of being petrified, the aspect will regain all of its hit points and no longer be petrified.

A Million Little Pieces

No matter how many pieces of the aspect are broken off while petrified, the aspect will reform. In 1d4 rounds, it will become whole again. Once petrification wears off, treat each separate piece as having the aspect's molten skin ability.

First, what happens here will be decided by whomever was luring the aspect. If it was Riffin, read this:

> **The ground begins to quake, softly at first, then heavier and more rhythmic, until Riffin can be seen dashing hurriedly through the treeline toward the party. A moment later, the trees erupt in flames as the aspect bursts through the forest, leaving cinders in its wake. It seems to recognize you, and bellows in fury as it advances.**

If a character lured the aspect have them arrive along with Riffin, and with the aspect in tow. Give the injured character a chance to be healed. An NPC will act at the top of the round by rushing over and casting a cure wounds spell at 3rd level on the injured character (assume a Wisdom modifier of +3 for the spell) before retreating. The NPC can either be Tevor (if he's alive), Havel (if not performing the ritual), or another NPC Tender.

Riffin will retreat, as the chase has exhausted him. While he longs to fight, he feels he would be more of a burden to them in his fatigued state, and insists they go on without him.

The task of facing the aspect of fire is up to the Defenders of Alderheart now.

At least one party member must attack the aspect each turn to hold its attention, otherwise the mages are at risk. If the party successfully keeps the aspect's attention, it will fight recklessly, ignoring everyone but the party.

If the aspect tries to attack the mages, the mages can spare some of the ritual power to create a shield against the aspect's attacks, causing the mages to take no damage from any attacks for one round. This will only work three times before they can no longer defend themselves.

If the aspect drops to half its hit points or lower, it will move as quickly as it can toward the treeline to try and refuel using the timber.

The battle ends once the aspect is petrified, at which point the mages will call to the character holding *the Borealus* and instruct them on what to do.

Healing the Wood

With the aspect cooled or temporarily dissipated, the party has only one hour to complete the ritual before the creature returns to full strength. The two mages standing over the conjuration circle beckon to the character attuned with *the Borealus* to stand in the ritual circle's center.

The heat which surrounds you inside the circle is intense, but it feels as though *the Borealus* is pushing back against it. You feel the opposing elemental forces grate against each other as you reach the circle's center.

Upon reaching the center, either Odwald or Dean Windsworth will give the signal to plant the staff into the earth. The moment the character does so, a stream of energy shoots out and surrounds the petrified aspect. Once enveloped, the aspect begins to lose its physical form, becoming one with the energy around it. Suddenly, the flow of energy is pulled into the ritual circle. Immediately, the heat will dissipate and a wave of pressure will emanate from the circle, knocking anyone within 500 feet who is not inside of the circle prone.

For a moment there is calm, but during this time the mages still struggle. The energies that crackle from their hands feed into the circle, which once again begins to flare. The ritual has been enacted, but something is wrong. There isn't enough power. *The Borealus*' long confinement has left it too weak to provide the required energy. Reaching the required level of power can only be done at a cost: someone will need to give their life in order to complete the ritual.

If Odwald is alive, any party member with the ability to cast spells, or the party member attuned to *the Borealus*, can volunteer. However, even if they do Odwald will insist upon being the one to give up his life. It was his mistakes that got the Wood into this mess, so in his eyes it's only fair that he forfeit his life. There is no time to argue, and if another character volunteers and refuses to back down, Odwald will appear to acquiesce, only to sacrifice himself at the last minute and save them. As the blaze of the ritual fire consumes him, Odwald will thank the hero for helping him find some measure of peace.

If Odwald is dead, the Dean will offer to sacrifice himself, though he won't protest if a player takes his place. Either way, the Dean or the player in the ritual circle will see Odwald's ghost supplying them with even more power. Miraculously, Odwald will keep the sacrificial character alive.

The final moments of the ritual begins:

The land around the Grove quakes, as both the conjuring circle and *the Borealus* within are consumed in a harmonious white light. The ground beneath the seal shakes and swells, rising from the ashen plain as though it were a living creature. Those outside the circle can see the mound thrash, momentarily assuming the form of the aspect. It lashes out in fury, before its shape melts away into the earth, which rises still. Then, without warning, everything stops. The quakes cease, leaving a tranquil hill on the ashen plain.

Anyone inside the circle, including any sacrifice (besides Odwald), can be found unconscious at the top of the hill. Both *the Borealus* and the aspect are gone, and from atop the hill a single sapling grows. The threat to the Wood has ended.

REWARDS

- Award standard XP for defeated foes.
- For roleplaying and investigation in Brackenmill: 500 XP per player.
- For finding the entrance to the dungeon holding *the Borealus*' resting place (see **The Crucible of Fire, pg.162**): 300 XP per player.
- For surviving additional trials within the Tender's dungeon (see **The Blazing Barriers, pg.165**): 300 XP per player.

EPILOGUE

After the final battle, the characters will return to Alderheart to the cheer and jubilation of all. The Wood has been badly scarred, but once the aspect was sealed, the creatures assailing the forest fled back toward the Grove, and much of the Wood survives. In the coming days the characters can recover from their wounds and finish up any unresolved points they might have in their character arcs before the Council summons them to a ceremony celebrating their momentous feat.

Each character is given a medal bearing Alderheart's crest, and their choice of either a *blade of the wood**, *wing crest shield**, *red-feather bow**, or *feathered helm**. These rewards should be decided upon before the ceremony, and made to the character's exact specifications (so long as they fit within what

the weapons could be. For example, the blade of the wood might be a rapier or a greatsword, but it would need to be a sword). If the *feathered helm* is selected, the player can choose which race of birdfolk the feather is sourced from:

- If a corvum feather, it will have been one recovered from Odwald before his sacrifice—or if this doesn't make sense, one donated by Professor Revayne.
- If a gallus feather, Council Speaker Bita will provide it.
- If a luma feather, it will be one belonging to Dean Windsworth.
- If a raptor feather, it will come from either the captain of the Perch Guard or Professor Birchwalker.
- If a strig feather, it will come from Riffin.

If there are any custom birdfolk NPCs, especially ones with whom the players have an affinity, consider having the feather come from one of them instead. A birdfolk party member may also donate a feather for the helm. Once the characters have received their medals and gifts from the Council, they are bestowed the title "Champions of Humblewood." There is a parade in Alderheart and a great feast to follow, but the story doesn't end here…

Humblewood will undergo a great period of change in the coming months. Based on the choices made by the players, the fate of the Wood will be different. Decide whichever scenario is best given the actions of the party up to this point.

The Wood

Within a few months, the parts of the Wood that were recently consumed by the Scorched Grove return to normal, and the creatures of the Grove return to their natural ranges. As the forest heals, new settlements are constructed for those who wish to return to their lives on the forest floor. While it's impossible to replace everything lost in the fires, these homes will eventually grow into new communities. Riffin will return to Ashbarrow, and enlist to help the restoration efforts. Ashbarrow will recover its former beauty and provide a home for those who were forced to abandon it.

Perch-Dwellers and Forest-Dwellers

If Benna was reasoned with, the Wildwood Brigade is now well-established. While small groups of raiders and brigands still beleaguer the roads, organized banditry in Humblewood on the scale of the Coalition appears to be a thing of the past.

After much deliberation, the new Humblewood Council has been established, and includes humblefolk delegates for a handful of prominent forest-dwelling communities. The Perch of Marshview has a humblefolk delegate, as the predominantly grounded settlement's birdfolk representative was replaced in a landslide vote. Council Speaker Bita retains her position, to the applause of a far more inclusive Alderheart.

Trunk infrastructure within Alderheart is being expanded in the lower levels, and there are talks about improving living conditions in the roots, though there is still much to do in this regard. Humblewood appears to be entering its next golden age in birdfolk-humblefolk relations.

If Benna was killed, she has since become a folk hero among certain groups of forest-dwellers. She was seen as the one who could have helped cast aside the oppressive yoke of the perches and bring about a true redistribution of power in the Wood. This is a change that is sorely needed, and now that forest refugees have fought side by side with the Alderites, many are pushing for a true reform of the Birdfolk Council. The hope is to transform it into something that also represents delegates from outside the perches. The popular support for change means it will likely happen, even though there are already signs that most of the powerful nobles in Alderheart are opposed to the change.

Harsher sentences for bandits and thieves are being called for by Alderheart's elite, and the news on the wind is that the Bandit Coalition is still around. Though broken, it survives to cause trouble for merchants who can't afford an escort.

The Tenders and the Grove

The Scorched Grove has shrunk in recent months, owing to the efforts of Tenders as much as the sealing of the aspect. While the Grove will remain part of Humblewood for the foreseeable future, the ash in its plains no longer burns with embers, reducing the frequency of fires in the Wood. The ashsnakes that appeared with the aspect remain, and have filled new niches in the ecology of the Grove, due to the snake's ability to survive on the energy of consumed elementals and beasts. The ashsnakes help keep some of the more dangerous fire-based creatures at bay. This has greatly helped the Tenders, who now see the ashsnakes as something to be respected from a distance, but not feared. Plants are growing on the lonely hill which marks the final resting place of the aspect of fire, and the sapling which sprouted from its top is quickly growing into a tree. It has been named "The Healing Hill," and is watched over by the Tenders as a sacred site.

To Be Continued…

One night, a player's character, will have strange dreams. In the dreams, they encounter Odwald. His form is spectral and he appears to have something to say, but before he can impart any new wisdom, the character wakes up. Who was the entity that tricked him into releasing the aspect? If they could cause such destruction in Humblewood, what might happen to Everden if they're still out there?

Appendix A: Bestiary

ASHSNAKE

Ashsnakes are huge monstrosities which resemble snakes moulded from volcanic magma. Their bodies seeth with an internal heat below the charcoal-grey scales that cover their forms. While the blazing light emanating from their empty eye sockets makes it appear as though ashsnakes can see, they rely entirely on vibrations to assess their surroundings.

ASHSNAKE

HUGE MONSTROSITY, UNALIGNED

Armor Class 14 (natural armor) (18 while under ash)
Hit Points 67 (7d12 + 21)
Speed 40 ft., burrow 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	4 (-3)	12 (+1)	4 (-3)

Damage Vulnerabilities cold
Damage Resistances fire
Senses blindsight 30ft. (blind beyond this radius), tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 11
Languages understands Ignan, but can't speak
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Ash Cover. The ashsnake has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made when it is burrowing in ash, as well as a +4 bonus to its armor class.

Eruption. When the ashsnake emerges from burrowing, any creature within 5 feet of it that is at least one size smaller than the ashsnake must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or be knocked prone.

Actions

Multiattack. The Ashsnake can make one bite attack and either one Constrict or Crush attack each round.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit*: 8 (1d10 + 3) piercing damage.

Constrict. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit*: 11 (2d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 14). Until the grapple ends the target is restrained and the ashsnake cannot constrict or crush another target. The ashsnake can release the target at any time during its turn.

Crush. The ashsnake crushes its grappled target, dealing 11 (2d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Ashen Breath (Recharge 5-6). The ashsnake breathes out a cloud of superheated ash in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in the area must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 11 (2d10) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much on a success.

Mysterious Origins

Little is known about the origins of the ashsnake. They recently emerged from beneath the ashen plains of the Scorched Grove and appear to have an insatiable hunger. Ashnakes use the mounds of ash and dust in the Grove to conceal their presence, allowing them to close in on unwary prey and ambush them. While not particularly intelligent, ashsnakes possess predatorial cunning and survival instincts eerily reminiscent of the fauna that inhabited the Grove before its burning.

Sightless Worms

Ashsnakes have no ability to detect sights and sounds in a traditional sense. They are, however, adept at sensing even the smallest vibration, and the slightest footfall is enough to draw their attention. Some scholars believe it may be possible to "disappear" from an ashsnakes "vision" by standing perfectly still, but finding volunteers to confirm this theory has understandably proven difficult.

"Beneath the ash it lies in wait.
A hiss, a snap, and it's too late."

- From The Epic of Fire, a centuries old poem.

*"It flared so brightly as it consumed the trees...
leaving naught but ashes in its wake."*

- Witness account of The Great Calamity

ASPECT OF FIRE

The aspect of fire is an elemental creature of fire and molten rock, whose gargantuan frame could easily be mistaken for a small mountain. The aspect is not only a creature of heat and energy, but also of destruction and rage, and it appears to draw strength from the forests its flames consume.

Primal Incarnation

A creature of legend, it is believed by some that this was the "being of fire and destruction" said to have caused the Great Calamity that created the Scorched Grove many centuries ago. The aspect possesses frightening power, enough to cause serious harm to the Wood and all those who inhabit it. Long has it been forgotten that the creature was conjured in a lost ritual. Shortly afterwards, it was sealed away beneath the Scorched Grove where its presence has continued to affect the region. Centuries of dormancy have weakened the aspect, as its essence has seeped into the surrounding land. Since being released, it has begun to amass power for itself by consuming plants, trees, and other living beings in flame. Once it attains enough energy to completely break the mystical fetters that tie it to the Scorched Grove, it will be an unstoppable force that could very well bring fiery ruin to all of Humblewood.

Stirring in its Slumber

The strange occurrences of late have many prominent scholars baffled: unusually aggressive emberbats, the appearance of ashsnakes, the increased frequency of forest fires, and many other phenomena which have never been seen before in Humblewood. More than mere legend, the aspect is the reason for all of these. As a creature of primordial fire, it is inextricably bound to the plane of its element. Even as it slumbered beneath the Grove for generations, the aspect has stirred, its presence causing a weakening in the barrier which keeps the material plane separate from the plane of fire, allowing for weaker creatures to slip through.

The aspect's essence has also seeped into the Scorched Grove, causing the landscape to take on far stronger elemental properties than before. The fundamental shift in the Grove's nature has effectively thwarted the efforts of the Tenders, who have for so long sought to heal this burned land. As the aspect continues to grow in power, more of this harmful elemental energy will be released, and even more powerful creatures will arise from the flames. If this otherworldly power spreads across the forest unchecked, all of Humblewood might suffer the fate of the Scorched Grove.

ASPECT OF FIRE

GARGANTUAN ELEMENTAL, UNALIGNED

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 174 (12d20 + 48)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	13(+1)	18 (+4)	6 (-2)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Wis +6
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons
Damage Immunities fire, poison
Condition Immunities exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, restrained, unconscious
Senses darkvision 120 feet, passive Perception 9
Languages Ignan
Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

Legendary Resistance (3/day). If the aspect of fire fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Molten Skin. Any creature who touches, makes a melee attack within 5 feet of, or ends their turn within 5 feet of the aspect takes 11 (2d10) fire damage. Flammable objects within 5 feet of the aspect burst into flames.

Natural Light. The aspect gives off bright light in a 60-foot-radius and dim light for an additional 60 feet.

Cooling. If the aspect of fire takes 50 or more cold damage in one round, its speed is reduced to 0 until the end of its next turn.

Fuel for the Fire. The aspect of fire doesn't treat plant life as difficult terrain. Whenever the aspect begins its turn in a space of plant life that provides cover, it burns the plant life away from all spaces it is currently occupying, healing 1d4 hit points for each 5-foot square of such plant life it has consumed. If it heals for 17 or more damage in this way, it flares up, recharging its magma throw action.

Actions

Multiattack. The aspect makes two molten fist attacks.

Molten Fist. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit*: 16 (2d10 + 5) fire damage.

Stomp. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 20 (3d10 + 5) fire damage. The target must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or be knocked prone.

Magma Throw (Recharge 5-6). The aspect hurls a ball of molten rock. Choose a location within 60 feet of the aspect. All creatures within 15 feet of the target location must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, a creature takes 22 (4d10) fire damage. On a success, the creature takes half as much damage.

Legendary Actions

The aspect of fire can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time, and only at the end of another creature's turn. The aspect regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Detect. The aspect makes a Wisdom (Perception) check.

Molten Fist. The aspect makes a molten fist attack.

Magma Barrage (Costs 2 Actions). The aspect of fire uses its magma throw action. It may use this ability if it has not yet been recharged by dealing 17 points of damage to itself.

BIRDFOLK SKELETON

Medium undead, lawful evil

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)
Hit Points 13 (2d8 + 4)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	7 (-2)	8 (-1)	4 (-3)

Damage Vulnerabilities bludgeoning
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9
Languages understands Auran and Birdfolk, but can't speak
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Talons. The birdfolk skeleton has advantage on Strength (Athletics) checks made to climb any surface its talons could reasonably grip.

Actions

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Talons. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

BIRDFOLK SKELETON

Deceased birdfolk granted a semblance of life through necromantic spells don't have memory per se, but their skeletal bodies retain familiarity with tasks they performed in life. They also remain skilled with weapons they wielded in life, making them useful guards or servants.

Unnatural Life

Animated skeletons are common among the practitioners of the necromantic arts. Even at the Avium, where necromancy is forbidden in practice, it is taught in theory. A common exception is the use of animated skeletons for menial tasks around the college. The reanimation of birdfolk who did not give their express consent in life is seen as a violation of their memory, so these skeletons usually consist of former college staff who desired to stay and help long past their own time. Not all scholars agree that even this relatively benign form of necromancy should be allowed, while others don't see why permission from the dead should be necessary, believing that "dead is dead". Though the consent policy remains in place, heady debates over the ethics of certain forms of necromancy have resulted in the shunning of more morally flexible scholars.

COBBLEFRIGHT

Cobblefrights are undead monstrosities created through dark necromancy. Rumored to have been originally devised by the mad necromancer Lathrus of the Night's Call, cobblefrights are made are made by linking several birdfolk skeletons together to form one frightening creature with enhanced physical properties. Among those who have studied Lathrus' research, only the most reckless have tried to create a cobblefright of their own, often to disastrous effect.

Horror of Horrors

Cobblefrights are generally pieced together from the skeletons of five or six birdfolk. The combination of multiple bodies allows not only for a larger and more robust design, but also vastly increases the quantity of necromantic energies cobblefrights contain hold. This increased capacity for power provides cobblefrights with tremendous strength, as much as a dozen birdfolk combined. It also grants cobblefright bones greater durability. Their remarkable power and resilience is somewhat of a double-edged sword, as cobblefrights also require a large amount of necromantic energy to be sustained. The surviving records of cobblefright creators note that, quite unexpectedly, the creatures developed the ability to drain the life force of other living beings, replenishing their own energy in the process. This makes cobblefrights useful as independent sentries, so long as they have a steady supply of living beings to fuel them.

Chaotic Psyche

The discordant parts that comprise cobblefrights exert tremendous strain on the bodies of these creatures. The source of this strain is rooted in the same magic that allows birdfolk skeletons to recall skills they once knew in life: the bones remember. Remnants of the soul such as memories, desires, fears, skills, and certain forms of knowledge are imprinted on the bones of the departed. When activated by necromantic energy, these conflicting impressions swirl chaotically within cobblefrights. Since cobblefrights are composed of multiple bodies, often originating from differing times, places, and walks of life, the impressions contained within the creatures are particularly volatile and chaotic. This constant internal conflict requires large and regular supplies of energy to keep cobblefrights stable, but it also grants them a surprising degree of resistance against those who would seek to wrest control of the creatures away from their creator. However, necromancers must be careful to maintain control over these dangerous creatures. Damaged cobblefrights will readily harvest their maker as an immediate source of life energy.

COBBLEFRIGHT

LARGE UNDEAD, CHAOTIC EVIL

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 102 (12d10 + 36)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)	6 (-2)	8 (-1)	5 (-3)

Saving Throws Con +6, Wis +2
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, poisoned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9
Languages understands Auran, Birdfolk, and any other languages it knew in life, but can't speak
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Berserk. Whenever the cobblefright starts its turn with 40 hit points or fewer, roll a d6. On a 6, the cobblefright goes berserk. On each of its turns while berserk, the cobblefright attacks the nearest creature it can see. If no creature is near enough to move to and attack, the cobblefright attacks an object, with preference for an object smaller than itself. Once the cobblefright goes berserk, it continues to do so until it is destroyed or regains all its hit points.

Actions

Multiattack. The cobblefright makes three claw attacks. One of those attacks can be replaced by a grab attack.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit*: 8 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage.

Grab. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature not grappled by the cobblefright. Hit: The target is grappled (escape DC 15). The cobblefright can grapple up to 2 targets at once. Once at the start of its turn for each target it has grappled the cobblefright can squeeze its victim. The target must make a DC 15 Strength saving throw, taking 13 (2d8+4) bludgeoning damage on a failed save.

Soul Siphon. One creature the cobblefright has grappled must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw, taking 11 (2d10) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half that amount on a success. The target's hit point maximum is reduced by the amount of necrotic damage taken, and the cobblefright regains hit points equal to that amount. The reduction lasts until the target finishes a short or long rest.

EMBERBAT

Curious and gentle creatures, these tiny bats have ashen fur and noses which sport a small candle-sized flame.

Winged Fire

Emberbats only started appearing in Humblewood after the calamity that befell the Scorched Grove, and scholars nearly all agree that the emergence of the creatures had something to do with the elemental magics present in the Grove. The flames that give the bats their name are lit through an internal combustion process that issues fuel from their nostrils as they exhale. Emberbats appear able to start and stop this process at will. The bats obviously do not need the flames to see, but it is hypothesized that the small candle serves to attract moths or other insects into their waiting mouths, greatly facilitating hunting.

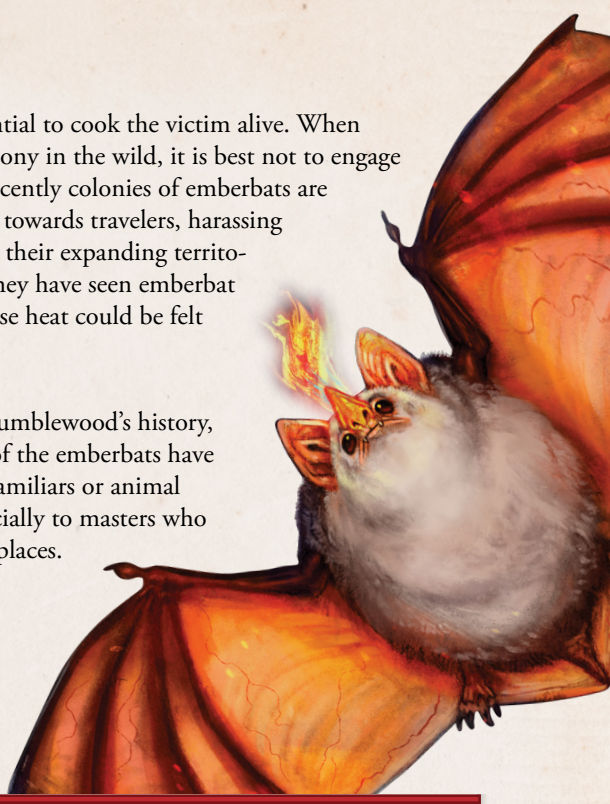
Colonies of Combustion

Emberbats are most often seen flying in clouds consisting of many different families acting in unison. The bats perform virtually every task as a cohesive unit, from flying to hunting to nesting. The real threat they pose lies in the remarkable coordination of their colonies.

Alone, an emberbat is no more dangerous than a candle. But together they have the potential to burn like a pit of hot embers, and can easily set dry tinder ablaze. When a colony of emberbats attacks a target, it is usually for defensive purposes. The air temperature within the cloud rises dangerously fast, and it has to potential to cook the victim alive. When encountering a colony in the wild, it is best not to engage them. However, recently colonies of emberbats are acting aggressively towards travelers, harassing any who approach their expanding territories. Some swear they have seen emberbat supercolonies whose heat could be felt from yards away.

Fine Familiars

Throughout Humblewood's history, the docile nature of the emberbats have made them ideal familiars or animal companions, especially to masters who journey into dark places.



EMBERBAT

TINY BEAST, UNALIGNED

Armor Class 12
Hit Points 2 (1d4)
Speed 5 ft., fly 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
2 (-4)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	2 (-4)	12 (+1)	5 (-3)

Senses blindsight 60ft., passive Perception 11
Languages -
Challenge 0 (10 XP)

Echolocation. The emberbat can't use its blindsight while deafened.

Keen Hearing. The emberbat has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing.

Ember Flame. The emberbat can create a flame from its nose at will. It sheds bright light in a 5-foot-radius and dim light in another 5 feet beyond this. This effect lasts until it is dismissed, which the emberbat can do at anytime. When lit, the flame also provides a small damage boost to the emberbat's bite (already included in stat block).

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +0 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 1 piercing damage plus 1 fire damage.

SWARM OF EMBERBATS

MEDIUM SWARM OF TINY BEASTS, UNALIGNED

Armor Class 12
Hit Points 22 (5d8)
Speed 0 ft., fly 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
5 (-3)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	3 (-4)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned
Senses blindsight 60ft., passive Perception 10
Languages -
Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Echolocation. The swarm can't use its blindsight while deafened.

Keen Hearing. The swarm has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing.

Flame Essence. Any creature that starts their turn within 5 feet of the emberbat swarm must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw, taking 2 (1d4) points of fire damage on a failure.

Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Tiny bat. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

Actions

Bites. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 0 ft., one creature in the swarm's space. *Hit*: 5 (2d4) piercing damage, or 2 (1d4) piercing damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer.

FOREST PROWLER

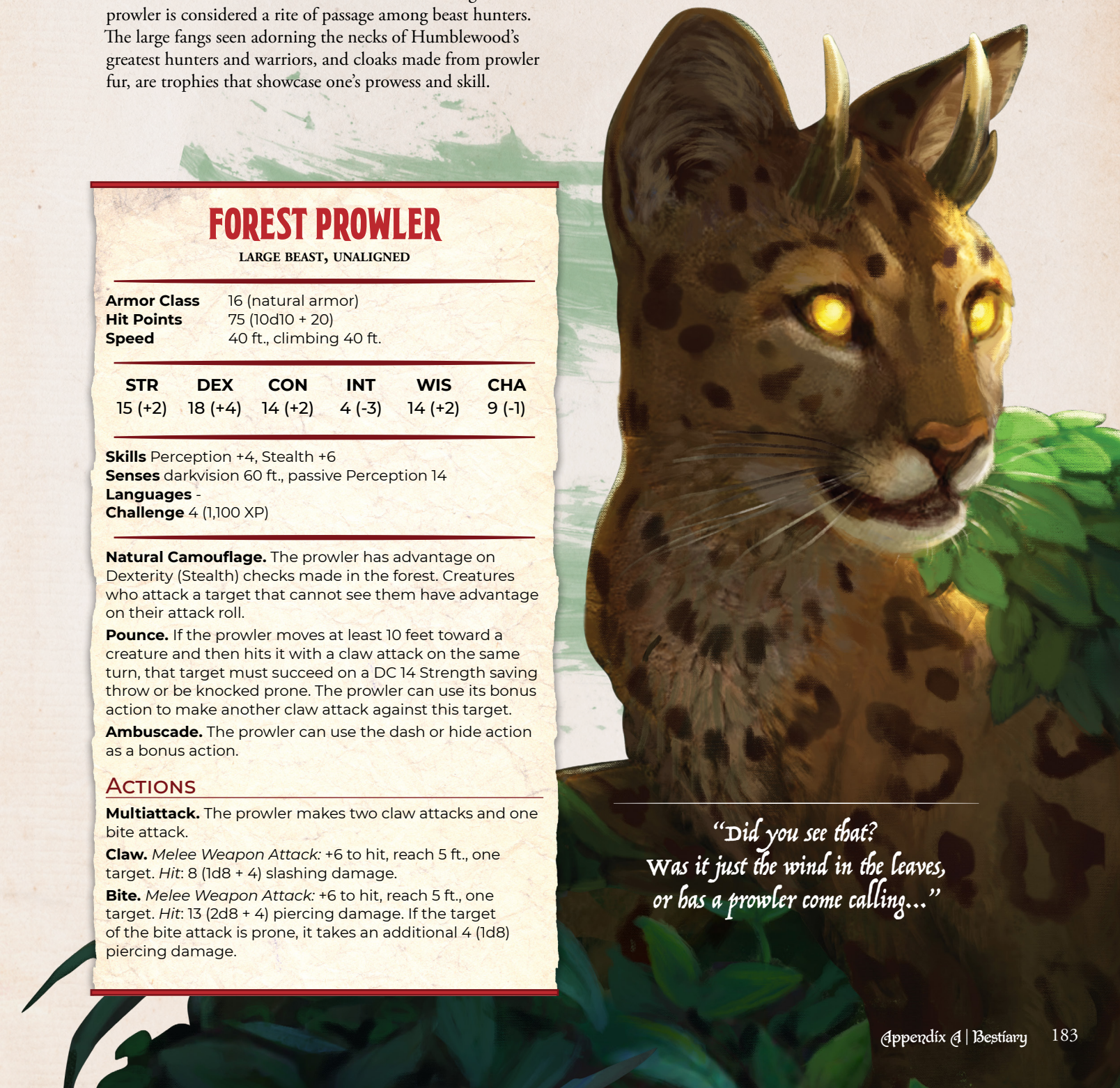
Forest prowlers feature prominently throughout folktales in Humblewood, notably as monsters in frightful stories. These cat-like beasts have the unique ability to grow leaves and moss on their spotted fur, allowing them to camouflage perfectly within the forest canopy.

Fable and Folklore

One of the reasons forest prowlers have attained such mythic status is due to their elusive nature. They are adept at moving unseen through the canopy where they hunt, and their skills as ambush predators means that few who see them live to tell the tale. In some communities the killing of a forest prowler is considered a rite of passage among beast hunters. The large fangs seen adorning the necks of Humblewood's greatest hunters and warriors, and cloaks made from prowler fur, are trophies that showcase one's prowess and skill.

Fierce Hunter

Forest prowlers are apex predators. They can claim virtually any prey they desire, but usually target deer, elk, and other large herbivores. Prowlers use their powerful bodies and gripping claws to drag their kill up into their tree nests, where it can be consumed at their leisure. These felines are known to travel long and winding paths through the forest, residing in temporary shelters throughout the seasons. Although nomadic, the prowlers are quite territorial of whatever area they currently inhabit. Relatively passive in the winter, they are most active in the spring and summer during peak hunting and breeding seasons.



"Did you see that? Was it just the wind in the leaves, or has a prowler come calling..."

FOREST PROWLER

LARGE BEAST, UNALIGNED

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 75 (10d10 + 20)
Speed 40 ft., climbing 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	4 (-3)	14 (+2)	9 (-1)

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +6
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14
Languages -
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Natural Camouflage. The prowler has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made in the forest. Creatures who attack a target that cannot see them have advantage on their attack roll.

Pounce. If the prowler moves at least 10 feet toward a creature and then hits it with a claw attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. The prowler can use its bonus action to make another claw attack against this target.

Ambuscade. The prowler can use the dash or hide action as a bonus action.

Actions

Multiattack. The prowler makes two claw attacks and one bite attack.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 8 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage. If the target of the bite attack is prone, it takes an additional 4 (1d8) piercing damage.

LESSER DEMON

SMALL FIEND (DEMON), CHAOTIC EVIL

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)
Hit Points 22 (4d6 + 8)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	5 (-3)	8 (-1)	3 (-4)

Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities poisoned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9
Languages Abyssal
Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Actions

Multiattack. The demon makes two attacks, one with its bite and one with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 5 (1d6+2) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 7 (2d4+2) slashing damage.

Foul Odor (1/day). The demon emits a cloud of poisonous gas that fills a 20-foot sphere and persists for 1 minute until it disperses into the surrounding air. The cloud spreads around corners, and the affected area is heavily obscured. Any creature that is completely within the cloud at the start of its turn must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw against the poison. On a failed save, the creature spends its action on that turn retching and reeling. Creatures immune to poison are immune to this effect. A moderate wind (at least 10 miles per hour) disperses the cloud after 4 rounds. A strong wind (at least 20 miles per hour) will disperse it after 1 round.

LESSER DEMON

For those still new to the art of summoning, a fumbled attempt to conjure forth an entity of great power often results in the appearance of a lesser demon in its place. These beings are lowly, vexing creatures, eager to sow discord wherever they have been called.

Vile and Malicious

While there are all manner of devils and demons that seek to terrorize the good folk of the world, others are more off-putting and disgusting — an embarrassing blunder for the fledgling witch or wizard whose invocation went awry. Although not particularly powerful, lesser demons can still pose a serious threat to inexperienced conjurors and unsuspecting civilians.

MOUNTAIN LION

The mountain lions of Humblewood's Crest Mountains are more than the mere beasts travelers may mistake them for. Covered in rocky protrusions that serve to protect as well as camouflage them, mountain lions possess special powers as a result of their ties to the elemental earth of their territory.

Mountain Stalker

Mountain lions live and hunt in their craggy mountain homes. They are natural climbers and prefer to ambush unsuspecting prey rather than engage in prolonged chases across the treacherous cliffs. A pride of mountain lions is led and protected by a large female. Males compete for the right to mate, and work together as a hunting party. While not as adept at pack hunting as wolves, a few mountain lions working in tandem can take down dangerous creatures of unusual size, including basilisks and griffons.

Roar of the Earth

Owing to the magic of the elemental earth, mountain lions can gain limited control over nearby rocks with their roar. Using this ability, they can cause rockslides to hinder their prey's escape or inflict critical damage. The ability takes a great deal of energy, so many mountain lions use it sparingly, knowing it will be some time before they can call upon it again.

MOUNTAIN LION

LARGE BEAST, UNALIGNED

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 37 (5d10 + 10)
Speed 40 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	3 (-4)	14 (+2)	6 (-2)

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +4
Senses passive Perception 14
Languages -
Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Keen Smell. The mountain lion has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

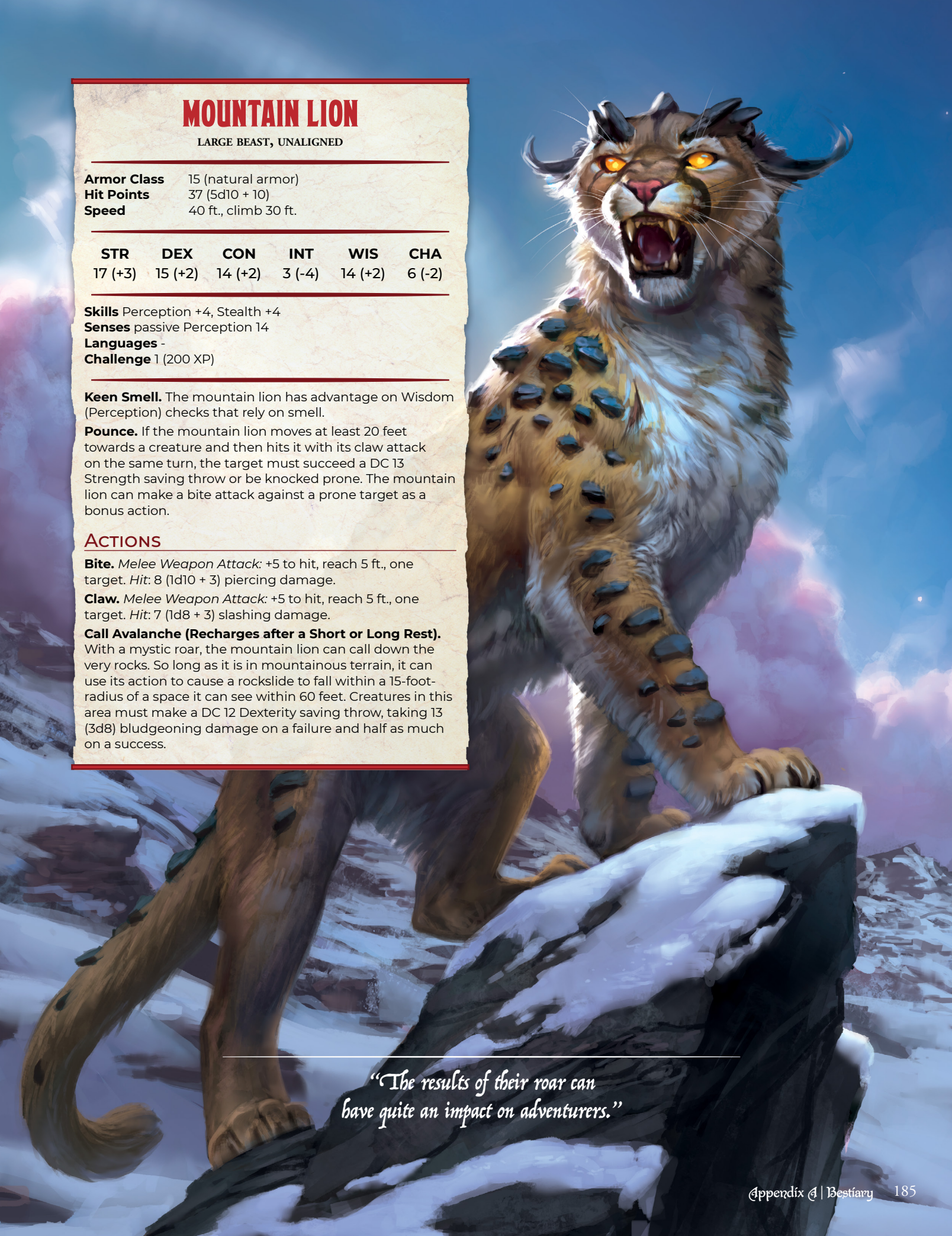
Pounce. If the mountain lion moves at least 20 feet towards a creature and then hits it with its claw attack on the same turn, the target must succeed a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. The mountain lion can make a bite attack against a prone target as a bonus action.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 8 (1d10 + 3) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage.

Call Avalanche (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). With a mystic roar, the mountain lion can call down the very rocks. So long as it is in mountainous terrain, it can use its action to cause a rockslide to fall within a 15-foot-radius of a space it can see within 60 feet. Creatures in this area must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 13 (3d8) bludgeoning damage on a failure and half as much on a success.



"The results of their roar can have quite an impact on adventurers."

SLIME

Deep in the murky marshes of the Mokk Fields, where water lays stagnant and the stench of decay permeates all, the worlds of life and death intertwine. Within this ominous mire lurk some of the most unusual natural predators in Humblewood. Collectively known as "slimes", these oozes move slowly through the muck, well-camouflaged by the dark and pungent waters, waiting to devour any hapless being that wanders within reach.

Slimes are easily provoked, and while it isn't difficult to outrun one, some who have strayed into a slime's territory only find out too late that they have been detected. Fortunately for many swampland travelers, slimes have a slow metabolism, and can go without feeding for long periods.

In addition to being an important part of the ecosystem, many slimes are either naturally magical, or yield organic materials which are in high demand among mages, scholars, and researchers. While slime hunting is a dangerous undertaking, the perch of Winnowing Reach was built on the labor of so-called "slime-wranglers", whose skill collecting valuable residue from live slimes is directly responsible for transforming the once minor outpost into a thriving site for scholarly innovation.

Three main types of slimes have been classified, but as magical creatures with strange properties, it's speculated that more elusive slime species might exist somewhere in the remote swamps. The three documented types are: **caustic slimes**, **shifting slimes**, and **sticky slimes**.

CAUSTIC SLIME

These pale green oozes have an astringent chemical odor, which mixes with the smell of liquefied flesh from their latest meal. Owing to the slow speed at which they digest their victims, the bones of partially-digested meals can be seen through their transparent exterior. Dissolving remnants move within the slimes in a macabre semblance of motion. This phenomena has earned them the nickname "green puppeteers".

Natural Defenses

Capable of producing a lethal acid that can eat away at stone and metal, caustic slimes are especially deadly. Even the slightest touch on exposed fur or feathers can be dangerous. Many would-be heroes have met a slow, grim demise after being engulfed by these strange creatures.

CAUSTIC SLIME

MEDIUM OOZE, UNALIGNED

Armor Class 8
Hit Points 22 (3d8 + 9)
Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	6 (-2)	16 (+3)	1 (-5)	6 (-2)	1 (-5)

Damage Immunities acid
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, prone
Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 8
Languages -
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Amorphous. The slime can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

Spider Climb. The slime can climb difficult surfaces, including vertically and upside down, without making an ability check.

Caustic. Any creature that touches the slime or hits it with a melee attack must succeed a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or take 2 (1d4) points of acid damage.

Actions

Pseudopod. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 5 (1d6 + 2) points of acid damage.

Reactions

Split. When a slime that is Medium or larger and has 10 or more hit points is hit with slashing damage, it splits into two new slimes. Each new slime has hit points equal to half the original slime's, rounded down. New slimes are one size smaller than the previous size.

Scientific Interest

Though hazardous, the acid produced by these slimes is also valued for its potential uses as a powerful sorcery reagent and an ingredient in potent potions. Some claim it can be distilled into practical applications, like a solvent for metallurgists and builders.

SHIFTING SLIME

A type of large and fluid ooze, shifting slimes have an iridescent hue to them which seems to shift as they move. According to slime-wranglers, they can use magical energy to create an eerie bioluminescence. Shifting slime residue is a highly sought after potent reagent, but it is hard to come by. Despite their size, these slimes are elusive and generally spend their time below ground where visibility is low. They can be quite difficult to locate when they conceal themselves in the subterranean darkness, though these strange creatures are known to leave trails of bioluminescent residue to lure in prey.

Adaptive Defenses

This type of slime can harness magical energy within its form. Shifting slimes absorb and store magic passively over time, but are also capable of absorbing magical jolts from spells. It is unclear exactly how much energy they can store, or for how long.

Shifting slimes can develop a temporary immunity to various types of magic after exposure. This immunity in turn makes it exceptionally difficult to destroy the slimes with a single type of magical energy. Luckily for slime-wranglers, shifting slimes are only capable of containing one energy type at a time.

Manifestation of Stored Power

After absorbing magical energy, these slimes will change color based on the type of power absorbed. Because of the rarity of shifting slimes, only a handful of people have witnessed these changes. But, over generations, skilled slime-wranglers have managed to record which color a shifting slime will turn in response to different types of magic.

SHIFTING SLIME

LARGE OOZE, UNALIGNED

Armor Class 9
Hit Points 31 (3d10 + 15)
Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	8 (-1)	20 (+5)	1 (-5)	6 (-2)	1 (-5)

Damage Immunities Special; see Adaptive ability
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, prone
Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 8
Languages -
Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Amorphous. The slime can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

Spider Climb. The slime can climb difficult surfaces, including vertically and upside down, without making an ability check.

Actions

Pseudopod. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 5 (1d6 + 2) acid damage. The target is grappled (escape DC 13). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained and the shifting slime can't make a pseudopod attack against another target.

Swallow. The shifting slime makes one pseudopod attack against a target it is grappling that is at least one size smaller than itself. If the attack hits, the target is swallowed, and the grapple ends. The swallowed target is restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the shifting slime, and it must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw at the start of each of its turns taking 3 (1d6) acid damage on a failure. If the shifting slime used its adaptive ability to become immune to a damage type, the damage dealt to the target on a failed save becomes that type instead. The shifting slime can have only one target swallowed at a time.

If the shifting slime dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it, and may move freely as the body of the slime quivers and neutralizes into an inert puddle of goo.

Reactions

Split. When a slime that is Medium or larger and has 10 or more hit points is hit with slashing damage, it splits into two new slimes. Each new slime has hit points equal to half the original slime's, rounded down. New slimes are one size smaller than the previous size. New shifting slimes each have the same damage type immunity as their parent slime and retain the Adaptive ability.

Adaptive. Each time the slime is hit by a spell that deals damage, it can become immune to that damage type for 1 hour. When the slime changes the damage type it's immune to, its color changes based on the table on the below. The slime can only be immune to one damage type at a time. Normally, shifting slimes are iridescent, shimmering with all the colors of the rainbow.

Damage Type	Slime Color
Acid	Lime Green
Cold	Ice Blue
Fire	Bright Crimson
Force	Clear
Lightning	Vibrant Yellow
Necrotic	Dark Black
Poison	Dark Green
Psychic	Bright Violet
Radiant	Warm Orange
Thunder	Bright White

STICKY SLIME

A semi-solid type of ooze, sticky slimes are far more robust than their cousins. Experienced slime wranglers know never to attack them directly with weapons. The rubbery bodies of sticky slimes can suck a blade out of a wielder's hands, leaving the attacker unarmed.

True to Form

Sticky slimes are wholly described by their name. They leave a trail of extremely thick adhesive residue in their wake. While the residue itself is harmless, it can trap adventurers where they stand, and sticky slimes tend to live in proximity of far more threatening monsters.

STICKY SLIME

MEDIUM OOZE, UNALIGNED

Armor Class 6
Hit Points 13 (2d8 + 4)
Speed 15 ft., climb 15 ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	3 (-4)	14 (+2)	1 (-5)	6 (-2)	1 (-5)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, prone
Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 8
Languages -
Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Amorphous. The slime can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

Slime Trail. The slime leaves a trail of ooze behind it that remains tacky for up to 15 minutes. A creature that steps in the ooze must succeed a DC 12 Strength saving throw or become restrained. A creature may attempt the saving throw again at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success.

Mucus. When the slime is hit by a melee attack, the attacker must succeed on a DC 12 Strength saving throw or their weapon becomes stuck in the slime. The weapon can be wrenched out by using an action to make a Strength (Athletics) check against the same DC, freeing the weapon on a success. All weapons stuck in the slime can be retrieved once the slime is slain.

Actions

Pseudopod. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 3 (1d4 + 1) bludgeoning damage.

WAKEWYRM

Wakewyrms are massive reptiles that have aspects of both snakes and eels. On rare occasions they've been spotted close to the shores of the Talongrip Coast, though many are quick to dismiss these accounts. Their name originates from the powerful tidal waves their bodies cause, which pose a considerable threat to nearby vessels.

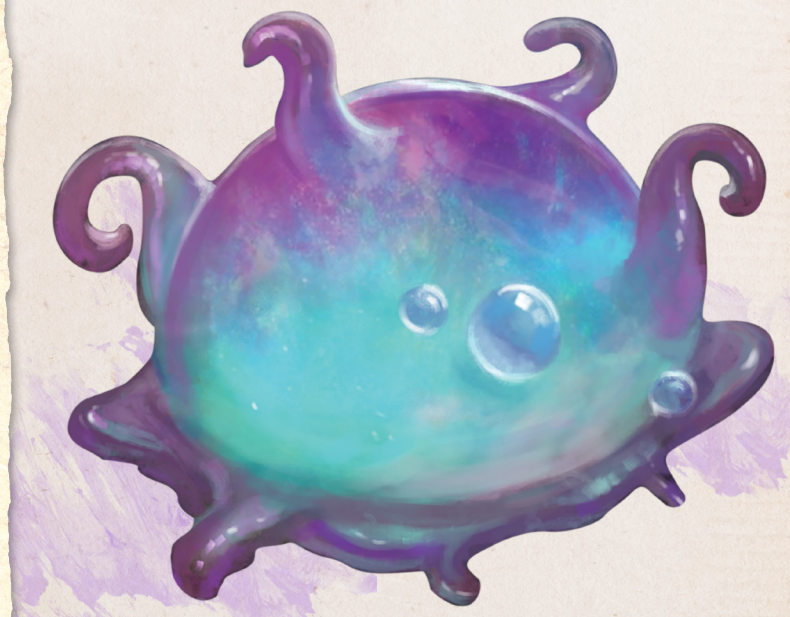
Ocean Tales

Despite their size, wakewyrms are elusive, able to hide within the vast expanse of the ocean. The rarity of this creature has bred many rumors about the exact nature of wakewyrms. All sailors know at least a few stories about bizarre creatures of the sea, including fantastical accounts of wakewyrms that lurk in the ocean's gloomy depths, able to sink an entire fleet of ships. Such tales are more often fabrications than not, as few have actually encountered these creatures.

Devourer from the Deeps

Wakewyrms are more than a 100 feet long and weigh over 1000 tons. Their lashing tails, snapping jaws, and huge bodies can deal significant damage to a ship's hull, though they prefer to swallow sailors whole, swiftly pulling them into the fathoms below with hardly more than a splash. Filling their gullet with as many creatures as possible, wakewyrms let their strong stomachs take care of their meals. While a fine tactic for devouring fish or other large marine creatures, wakewyrms that swallow adventurers whole sometimes find the snack too much to handle.

Though wakewyrms rarely encounter sailing vessels as they cross the ocean looking for food, the results are often violent. Afterwards, all that remains is nothing but a derelict phantom ship, found wrecked against the rocks of distant shores.



WAKEWYRM

HUGE BEAST, UNALIGNED

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 123 (13d10 + 52)
Speed 20 ft., swim 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	3 (-4)

Senses passive Perception 11
Languages -
Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Hold Breath. The wakewyrm can hold its breath for 1 hour.

Actions

Multiattack. The wakewyrm makes two attacks, one with its bite and one with its tail, or two bite attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit*: 15 (3d6 + 5) piercing damage. The target must succeed on a DC 16 Strength saving throw or be grappled (escape DC 16). The wakewyrm can only grapple one creature at a time, and cannot make bite attacks against other creatures while it has a creature grappled.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 25 ft., one target. *Hit*: 18 (3d8+5) bludgeoning damage.

Swallow. The wakewyrm makes a bite attack against a Large or smaller creature it is grappling, and if the attack hits the target is swallowed, and the grapple ends. The swallowed target is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the wakewyrm, and it takes 11 (3d6) acid damage at the start of each of the wakewyrm's turns. If the wakewyrm takes 18 or more points of damage from a creature inside of it, the wakewyrm must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw at the end of that turn or regurgitate all swallowed creatures, which fall prone in a space within 10 feet of the wakewyrm. If the wakewyrm dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it, and it can escape from the corpse using 20 feet of movement. After death, internal gasses keep the wakewyrm's body afloat for several hours, before it begins to sink gradually to a watery grave.

Appendix B: Nonplayer Characters

You can use the NPC stat blocks presented here to create or alter encounters in Humblewood.

Some of the listed NPCs have been devised with certain birdfolk races in mind, and this is reflected in their stat blocks. Some are generic and could be used for any race of birdfolk. These can be used as is, but can also be further customized using the rules in **Appendix C: Creating NPCs (pg.208)** of this book.

Descriptions of the various NPCs which appear in **Chapter 4: Adventure in the Wood (pg.84)** can also be found here.

ARDWYN, ELDER OF MEADOWFEN

A venerable huden gallus with rounded grouse-like proportions and feathers that have long since lost the sheen of youth. As the village Elder, Ardwyn is a figure of authority within Meadowfen. She and her late husband kept the village running until his death, after which she took on the role alone. Elder Ardwyn is a kind and perceptive woman who exudes leadership. The villagers look to her for guidance.

BIRDFOLK DOCKMASTER

It may be odd to see birdfolk working the docks and ships of Saltar's Port, but the sea is a way of life for some folk. Jobs in the seafaring industry are as lucrative as they are tough. For the birdfolk that choose to ply their trade on the water, life is about order and efficiency. One improperly stowed barrel or poorly lashed line can spell disaster on the sea. Dockmasters take their marine jobs very seriously.

BIRDFOLK FARMER

Simple farmers can be found across the Wood, providing necessary food and supplies to the cities. There are many places in Humblewood where digging up large heaps of soil would either be impractical or damaging to the forest. While traditional farms exists in Humblewood, the majority of farms are built in the canopies in or around cities. Farming in the canopy consists of growing flowering moss gardens or fruit-bearing vines on the branches of perch trees. Canopy farms can also include the raising of large insects for food, or silkworms for clothing.

BIRDFOLK DOCKMASTER

Medium humanoid (any birdfolk), any alignment

Armor Class 14 (leather)
Hit Points 55 (10d8 + 10)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	8 (-1)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)

Skills Athletics +2, Perception +5, Persuasion +4
Senses passive Perception 15
Languages Birdfolk. Can also understand Auran, but cannot speak it.
Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Glide. When falling at least 10 feet, the dockmaster can spend a reaction to fly up to their speed in one direction as they descend. They land in an unoccupied space at the end of their movement, and take no falling damage. They cannot glide while carrying heavy objects, heavy weapons, or shields (though they can drop any held items as part of their reaction).

Confidence. The dockmaster adds their Charisma modifier to their initiative rolls.

Sneak Attack. Once per turn, the dockmaster deals an extra 3 (1d6) damage when they hit a target with a weapon attack and they have advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 ft. of an ally of the dockmaster that isn't incapacitated and the dockmaster doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Actions

Multiattack. The dockmaster makes two saber attacks and one dagger attack.

Saber. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., range 20/60, one target. *Hit*: 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

BIRDFOLK GUARD

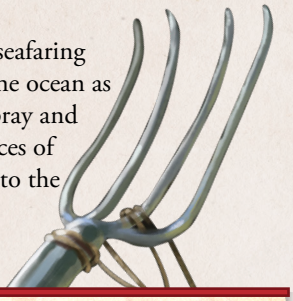
Aspiring recruits from all over the Wood flock to the Perch Guard headquarters in the capital of Alderheart to join their ranks. After successful training, these newly sworn guards return to their home perch. They serve with pride, acting as the perch's first line of defense. Under the Humblefolk Treaty, members of the Perch Guard are tasked to aid nearby villages on the forest floor whenever necessary. In larger cities like Alderheart, the Perch Guard are also responsible for dealing with inner city issues such as robbery, bar fights, and investigating and arresting criminals.

BIRDFOLK MILITIA

In smaller perches, where a guard force may be minimal or nonexistent, town security consists of a locally-organized militia. Anyone can enlist in these groups, provided they are upstanding citizens. They can be called upon by the Perch Guard to perform duties ranging from policing streets to supplementing military efforts.

BIRDFOLK SAILOR

For birdfolk who take up the seafaring trade, their home is as much on the ocean as it is at port. They relish the salt spray and stiff winds, finding the closed spaces of forest life to be stifling compared to the wide-open expanse of the sea.



Peculiar Design

Birdfolk ship design often causes confusion among other seafaring races due to the relative absence of rigging. While cordage is needed to keep sails in place and cargo stored, nets and climbing ropes prove less necessary when the crew is capable of limited flight. A birdfolk sailor can simply lash a rope to their leg, open their wings, and let the ocean breeze carry them up to the sails or to a lookout post on the main mast.

BIRDFOLK SKIRMISHER

The bulk of the Perch Guard's military force are a light infantry called "The Spears." They train relentlessly with polearm weapons perfectly suited for branch-to-branch combat. Many are also skilled at ranged attacks with these weapons, as well as performing special diving maneuvers, making them an even greater threat to enemies below. In times of peace, skirmishers often serve as skilled hunters, following the direction of trackers to collect enough food for entire villages.

BIRDFOLK FARMER

Medium humanoid (any birdfolk), any alignment

Armor Class 10
Hit Points 4 (1d8)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Nature +4
Senses passive Perception 10
Languages Birdfolk. Can also understand Auran, but cannot speak it.
Challenge 0 (10 XP)

Glide. When falling at least 10 feet, the farmer can spend a reaction to fly up to their speed in one direction as they descend. They land in an unoccupied space at the end of their movement, and take no falling damage. They cannot glide while carrying heavy objects, heavy weapons, or shields (though they can drop any held items as part of their reaction).

Actions

Pitchfork. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) piercing damage.

BIRDFOLK GUARD

Medium humanoid (any birdfolk), any lawful alignment

Armor Class 16 (chain shirt and shield)
Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Perception +2
Senses passive Perception 12
Languages Birdfolk. Can also understand Auran, but cannot speak it.
Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Glide. When falling at least 10 feet, the guard can spend a reaction to fly up to their speed in one direction as they descend. They land in an unoccupied space at the end of their movement, and take no falling damage. They cannot glide while carrying heavy objects or heavy weapons, or shields (though they can drop any held items as part of their reaction).

Actions

Spear. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack*: +3 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit*: 4 (1d6 + 1) piercing damage, or 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

BIRDFOLK MILITIA

MEDIUM HUMANOID (ANY BIRDFOLK), ANY ALIGNMENT

Armor Class 12 (leather armor)
Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Senses passive Perception 10
Languages Birdfolk. Can also understand Auran, but cannot speak it.
Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Glide. When falling at least 10 feet, the birdfolk militia can spend a reaction to fly up to their speed in one direction as they descend. They land in an unoccupied space at the end of their movement, and take no falling damage. They cannot glide while carrying heavy objects, heavy weapons, or shields (though they can drop any held items as part of their reaction).

Actions

Mace. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 4 (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage.

BIRDFOLK SAILOR

MEDIUM HUMANOID (ANY BIRDFOLK), ANY ALIGNMENT

Armor Class 12 (leather armor)
Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Athletics +3
Senses passive Perception 10
Languages Birdfolk. Can also understand Auran, but cannot speak it.
Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)
Glide. When falling at least 10 feet, the sailor can spend a reaction to fly up to their speed in one direction as they descend. They land in an unoccupied space at the end of their movement, and take no falling damage. They cannot glide while carrying heavy objects, heavy weapons, or shields (though they can drop any held items as part of their reaction).

Actions

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack*: +3 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit*: 5 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

Tevor of the Spring Path

Tevor is a timid sable luma, with ruddy gray feathers and a short beak. He is a good friend of Havel, and has begun to feel affection for the gallus since their time working together. Tevor is a Sapling, a low ranking member of the Tenders, who barely escaped from an ashsnake attack which killed his mentor. While he has agreed to give his report of events in the Scorched Grove, he is not prepared to do much beyond this. He possesses conviction in the beliefs of his order, but the traumatic event has left him feeling frightened and helpless. If only he could find the courage to match his ideals, he would be destined for greatness. Tevor is generally averse to combat now, but before joining the Tenders he trained as a perch guard recruit. He uses the **birdfolk skirmisher** stat block but with these changes:

- Tevor is Small sized, and his alignment is neutral good.
- He has 22 hit points.
- His speed is 25 feet, and he has resistance to poison damage.
- His Wisdom score is 14 (+2) and his Charisma score is 12 (+1)
- Tevor gains the following abilities:
  - ***Fated (Recharges after a Long Rest).*** Tevor can choose to reroll any attack roll, skill check, or saving throw.
  - ***Resilience.*** Tevor rolls with advantage on saving throws against being poisoned.
- Tevor can also cast *cure wounds* as a first level spell once per long rest. Wisdom is his spellcasting ability for this spell.

BITA, THE COUNCIL SPEAKER

Bita is a bright gallus whose elegant white plumage resembles that of a peacock. As the Birdfolk Council's Speaker, she is always first to address those who have been granted an audience with the Council. She takes her duties as the Speaker and as a Council member very seriously. Despite her profound affection for Humblewood and it's citizens, she often comes off as severe and cold. Bita believes in doing what's best for the folks of the Wood, and sometimes this means making level-headed, tough decisions.

CARA STORMSINGER

A tawny-feathered swift strig woman from Meadowfen. Cara is the captain of the village militia. She was responsible for assembling the team of villagers who went out to investigate the black plume of smoke that appeared over Meadowfen's horizon. She endured a harrowing journey to return home and relate Ashbarrow's fate to Elder Ardwynn.

BIRDFOLK SKIRMISHER

MEDIUM HUMANOID (ANY BIRDFOLK), ANY LAWFUL ALIGNMENT

Armor Class 14 (chain shirt)
Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Athletics +4
Senses passive Perception 10
Languages Birdfolk. Can also understand Auran, but cannot speak it.
Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Glide. When falling at least 10 feet, the skirmisher can spend a reaction to fly up to their speed in one direction as they descend. They land in an unoccupied space at the end of their movement, and take no falling damage. They cannot glide while carrying heavy objects, heavy weapons, or shields (though they can drop any held items as part of their reaction).

Drop Attack. The skirmisher can make an attack during their glide. If they do so they deal an extra 1d8 points of damage.

Actions

Spear. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack*: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit*: 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage, or 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

CERVAN BANDIT GENERAL

Bandit clans are commanded by generals. Serving as both a battle-tested warrior and master strategist, they alone coordinate the disparate band of thieves and outlaws that make up the collective. While military monikers are used to refer to bandit leadership, more than combat prowess is needed to maintain order in these volatile organizations. A dominating personality and charismatic voice are as necessary as a swift blade and a sharp mind. Cervans don't typically take to brigandry, but their practical skills and ability to survive in even the most adverse situations make those with loose morals and dubious ambitions a natural fit.

CERVAN BANDIT GENERAL

MEDIUM HUMANOID (CERVAN), NEUTRAL EVIL

Armor Class 15 (studded leather)
Hit Points 65 (10d8 + 20)
Speed 35 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Cha +4
Skills Deception +4, Persuasion +4
Senses passive Perception 10
Languages Birdfolk, Cervan
Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Surge of Vigor (Recharges after a Long Rest). If an attack deals over half of the general's current remaining hit points in damage (even if their hit points are reduced to 0 by the attack), the bandit general immediately heals 8 (1d12 + 2) hit points.

Standing Leap. The general's long jump is 30 feet, and their base high jump is 15 feet, with or without a running start.

Actions

Multiattack. The general makes three melee attacks, two with their scimitar and one with their dagger. Alternatively, the general can make two ranged attack with their daggers.

Scimitar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack*: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit*: 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

Reactions

Parry. The general adds 2 to their AC against one melee attack that would hit them. The general must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

Benna Seridan

Benna is a tall, scarred grove cervan, who wears a red bandana over her lost left eye. The leader of the Bandit Coalition, she is an idealist who believes that Alderheart's canopy, the symbol of birdfolk power in the region, should be burned and its resources looted to help those displaced by the flames. Benna lived a tranquil village life until her mother, a respected village elder and seer, foretold that the flames would come. Word was sent to Alderheart's Council, asking for supplies and aid, both of which were denied because the Council didn't believe in the power of the seer's visions. When the flames had all but consumed the village, the birdfolk support arrived, but it was too late. Benna lost her family. She also lost, her left eye and left ear due to the burns she sustained while helping others escape from the blaze. She fell in with the bandits and quickly rose through their ranks, thanks to her passion and purpose. She is a seasoned veteran who has been building the bandit forces, and utilizing the organization to care for humblefolk left homeless by the spreading fires. Benna Seridan uses the **cervan bandit general** stat block, but the scimitar in her main hand is a *blade of the wood* *(+1 to attack and damage rolls, see **Appendix D: New Magic Items, pg.211**), and a shortsword (1d6 + 3 piercing damage) in her offhand.

Krall, the Scavenger King

Krall is an imposing mapach, standing nearly 6 feet tall with a solid build and matted fur that is missing in patches. He was close friends with Benna, although he didn't share her altruism and instead believed that those who couldn't carry their weight should be left behind. He expects complete loyalty from his followers, and favors hit-and-run tactics. He and his troops exact tolls on poorly-defended caravans for passage along the roads, which many pay to avoid his wrath.

Kraal the **cervan bandit general** stat block, but with these changes:

- He is a Mapach and knows the Birdfolk and Mapach languages.
- His Wisdom score is 14 (+2), his Intelligence score is 12 (+1), and his Constitution score is 16 (+3).
- He has 75 hit points and resistance to poison damage.
- His base speed is 30 feet, and he has a climb speed of 20 feet.
- Replace ***Surge of Vigor***, and ***Standing Leap*** with the following:
  - ***Resilience.*** Krall has advantage on saving throws against being poisoned.
  - ***Skulker.*** Krall has advantage on Stealth checks made in dim light or total darkness.
- He wields a rapier in his main hand and a long parrying dagger (use the stats for a shortsword) in his off-hand. He has the following attack actions, and can multiattack, though he cannot make ranged attacks with his parrying dagger:
  - ***Rapier.*** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage.
  - ***Parrying Dagger.*** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

CERVAN PRIEST

Cervan villages are typically led by a community elder who is wise both in politics as well as in the ways of the Amaranthine. Priests provide guidance to the community, ensuring that rituals are properly observed and customs well kept. As storytellers and keepers of a village's history, they are trusted with the myths and folktales used to impart knowledge necessary for survival in the forest.

CORVAX REVAYNE

This slender dusk corvum's plumage resembles that of a black-billed magpie. A professor of divination at the Avium, his brilliant mind is often held back by paranoia, an unfortunate side-effect of the diviner's line of work. This has led faculty to view his predictions cautiously, and has earned him a reputation as a bit of an oddball around campus. He is smart and capable, however, and can be a useful ally to the party in the last two parts of the adventure. Corvax shouldn't ever be in combat, but should you need to reference his stats, use the stat block for a **mage**, with the following changes:

- Corvax has proficiency in the Religion skill. His alignment is lawful neutral.
- Add the **Glide (pg.208)** and **Talons (pg.208)** abilities, along with the following ability:
  - ***Skulker.*** Professor Revayne has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made in dim light or darkness.
- Corvax has the following spells prepared:

  Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt, light, mage hand, prestidigitation*
  1st level (4 slots): *detect magic, mage armor, magic missile, shield*
  2nd level (3 slots): *augury, misty step*
  3rd level (3 slots): *clairvoyance, counterspell, fly*
  4th level (3 slots): *greater invisibility, locate creature*
  5th level (1 slot): *scrying*

CORVUM ASSASSIN

Frequently members of criminal organizations, contract killers can be found in the Wood's largest and most politically complex perches. They serve powerful figures with a lack of scruples and an abundance of coin. Assassins are trained from a young age to become deadly masters of their craft, learning how to skulk the branchroads and keep hidden in the canopy to time the perfect ambush. Corvums, with their natural intelligence and cunning, make the best assassins.

CORVUM NECROMANCER

Every sentient being is susceptible to the lure of necromancy. The promise of seeing lost loved ones again, or raising an army of powerful minions, can sometimes be difficult to resist. The birdfolk of Humblewood are not immune to that lure. To help curb this curiosity, professors at The Avium teach necromantic theory only. But some intrepid students have been known to pursue the practical applications in secret. Sure of their intellect, corvums in particular are often willing to challenge traditions for the sake of knowledge. As a result, more than one corvum has wandered down the path of the dark arts.

Glinda Nightseed

This venerable huden gallus' plumage resembles a ptarmigan, and she usually wears a pince-nez on her beak. A professor of advanced theoretical necromancy, Glinda is known for having strange opinions about her field of study. Unlike most birdfolk, she sees necromancy as a manipulation of life energies on par with druidic magic. She is a kind soul, and only practices the lighter forms of necromancy. However, she has been performing secret experiments on the servitor skeletons in the Avium hoping to develop a cutting-edge resurrection spell. This violates campus policies which ban practical necromancy, and could cause her to lose her job.

CERVAN PRIEST

Medium humanoid (cervan), any alignment

Armor Class 10
Hit Points 19 (3d8 + 6)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)

Skills Medicine +4, Religion +2
Senses passive Perception 12
Languages Cervan, Birdfolk
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Surge of Vigor (Recharges after a Long Rest). If the priest is dealt damage equal to half or more of their current remaining hit points (even if their HP is reduced to 0 by the attack), they immediately regain 8 (1d12 + 2) hit points.

Charge. If the priest moves at least 20 feet in a straight line towards an enemy, their antler attack deals an extra 3 (1d6) points of piercing damage. If the target of the charge is Large or smaller, they must make a DC 11 Strength saving throw or be pushed 10 feet away from the priest.

Spellcasting. The priest is a 3rd-level spellcaster. Their spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). The priest has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *guidance, light, spare the dying*
1st level (4 slots): *bless, cure wounds, guiding bolt, shield of faith*
2nd level (2 slots): *calm emotions, warding bond*

Actions

Antlers. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 4 (1d6 + 1) piercing damage.

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 4 (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage or 5 (1d8 + 1) bludgeoning damage if being held in both hands.

Glinda uses the **corvum necromancer** stat block, but with these changes:

- Her Charisma score is 10 (+0) and her Wisdom score is 14 (+2). Her alignment is chaotic good.
- Remove the ***Talons***, ***Convincing***, and ***Life Leech abilities***. Add ***Wing Flap*** along with the following:
  - ***Seedspeech.*** Professor Nightseed can communicate simple ideas to living plants, and is able to interpret their responses in simple language.
- Glinda has the following spells prepared:

  Cantrips (at will): *chill touch, light, mage hand, prestidigitation*
  1st level (4 slots): *sleep, false life, mage armor, magic missile*
  2nd level (3 slots): *misty step, web, ray of enfeeblement*
  3rd level (3 slots): *animate dead, counterspell, fear*
  4th level (3 slots): *black tentacles, blight*
  5th level (1 slot): *passwall*

Odwald Ebonhart

Odwald is a haggard old kindled corvum, resembling a thick billed raven with coarse, hoary feathers, ruffled from years of adventuring. Odwald has a sharp mind but a faint heart. A member of the illustrious Ebonhart family, a noble house that dates back to the founding of Alderheart, Odwald was an arcane prodigy who grew up in a world which expected him to be brilliant. While magic always came naturally to him, the pressure of his family's expectations weighed heavily upon him, and filled him with a deep-seated fear of failure. Months ago, he was tricked by an unknown entity into weakening the seal that held the aspect of fire beneath the Scorched Grove. Ever since he has blamed himself for the worsening conditions in the Wood. He has no solution for stopping the aspect, and this terrifies him. Shortly after saving his friend Riffin, desperation drove him back to his alma mater, the Avium, where he has since worked with forbidden magics in secrecy. Using a secret door he discovered during his time as a student, Odwald converted several inaccessible and defunct classrooms into a makeshift laboratory where he toils tirelessly, experimenting with dark and dangerous magics in the hopes of discovering a way to stop the aspect. Odwald uses the **corvum necromancer** stat block. His alignment is chaotic neutral.

ELIZA PENNYGLEAM

Eliza Pennygleam is an eluran, a group of cat-like people from the west. While not native to Humblewood, elurans are commonly seen along the roads as part of merchant caravans, and behind merchant stalls in the capital. Eliza is a savvy merchant, on her way to Alderheart to take over her late sister's shop. She is a natural bargainer, but she is also charitable to those who have faced hardships.

FIGORY FIGGINS

A slender, blond-furred jerbeen with an affable nature and an unfortunate reputation. Figory has been studying for two years at the Avium, but anxiety about the professors expectations and the complicated schedule needed for featherless students to navigate campus have held him back a full year compared to other students. He has been bullied by his classmates at the Avium, and his recent encounter with the cobblefright has left him deeply unnerved. He desperately wants someone to believe his story and take action against the creature lurking around campus.

GALLUS DRUID

The gallus of Humblewood have an especially deep connection with nature. Hanera teaches them to see the world from the forest floor, instead of the canopy. This is a message many gallus have taken to heart. Out of this reverence for nature, some gallus dedicate themselves to the study and preservation of the Wood, becoming wardens of the forest, or acting as guides. A select few with a unique connection to flora and fauna develop incredible powers and abilities. These druids can sprout trees and mend injured animals with a touch. They are revered among birdfolk and humblefolk alike as spiritual leaders and wise advisors

Havel of the Autumn Moon

Havel is a frail but courageous huden gallus, with pheasant-like plumage. He is a dear friend of Tevor, and the two have fallen for each other during their time together in Alderheart. Havel is a Summerblossom, a rank given to experienced members of the Tenders. He has been working at the Tenders' headquarters in the Trunk district, where he provides aid to the refugees. He is also skilled in the use of natural magic, and while normally too sickly to adventure, could still assist the party with his talents.

Havel uses the **gallus druid** stat block with these changes:

- Havel only has 10 points, and his alignment is neutral good.
- Havel's Strength score is 6 (-2), his Dexterity score is 10 (+0) and his armor class is 10 (16 with *barkskin*).

GALLUS MONK

Gallus who are not content to settle into everyday life in small communities venture out to secluded monasteries and learn the way of the monk. There, a disciplined routine of physical rigours and spiritual contemplation is overseen by wizened masters. After years of training, initiates are deemed ready to journey the land and put their learning to the test. The majority return to the monastery after having had a revelation during their travels. Other continue to wander, sometimes with a few trusted companions, forever finding new meaning.

GREGOR THORNSPUR, MAGISTRATE OF ALDERHEART

Gregor is a dull-looking sable luma with a single errant feather that sticks out oddly from his brow. Gregor is the Magistrate of Alderheart, and though he appears to be a tired bureaucrat, his demeanour hides a shrewd businessman eager to turn any situation to his advantage. He is not above taking bribes in exchange for expediting requests to see the Birdfolk Council.

CORVUM ASSASSIN

MEDIUM HUMANOID (CORVUM), ANY NON-LAWFUL ALIGNMENT

Armor Class 15 (studded leather)
Hit Points 54 (12d8)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Int +5
Skills Insight +5, Nature +5, Perception +8, Stealth +9
Senses passive Perception 18
Languages Birdfolk, Thieves Cant, and any one other language. Can understand Auran but cannot speak it
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Glide. When falling at least 10 feet, the assassin can spend a reaction to fly up to their speed in one direction as they descend. They land in an unoccupied space at the end of their movement, and take no falling damage. They cannot glide while carrying heavy objects, heavy weapons, or shields (though they can drop any held items as part of their reaction).

Talons. The assassin has advantage on Strength (Athletics) checks made to climb any surface their talons could reasonably grip.

Assassinate. During their first turn, the assassin has advantage on attack rolls against any creature that hasn't taken a turn. Any hit the assassin scores against a surprised creature is a critical hit.

Sneak Attack. Once per turn, the assassin deals an extra 10 (3d6) damage when they hit a target with a weapon attack and have advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the assassin that isn't incapacitated and the assassin doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Skulker. The assassin has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made in dim light or darkness.

Actions

Multiattack. The assassin makes two melee attacks: one with their shortsword and one with their dagger. Or the assassin makes two ranged attacks with their daggers.

Talons. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 5 (1d4 + 3) slashing damage.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack*: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit*: 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

CORVUM NECROMANCER

MEDIUM HUMANOID (CORVUM), ANY EVIL ALIGNMENT

Armor Class 12 (15 with mage armor)
Hit Points 49 (9d8 + 9)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Int +7, Wis +3
Skills Arcana +7, Deception +5, Medicine +3
Senses passive Perception 10
Languages Birdfolk, and any two languages. Can also understand Auran, but cannot speak it.
Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Glide. When falling at least 10 feet, the necromancer can spend a reaction to fly up to their speed in one direction as they descend. They land in an unoccupied space at the end of their movement, and take no falling damage. They cannot glide while carrying heavy objects, heavy weapons, or shields (though they can drop any held items as part of their reaction).

Talons. The necromancer has advantage on Strength (Athletics) checks made to climb any surface their talons could reasonably grip.

Convincing. The necromancer has advantage on all Charisma checks used to convince someone of their knowledge of subject matter pertaining to the Arcana skill.

Life Leech. Once per turn, when the necromancer kills one or more creatures with a spell of 1st level or higher, they can regain hit points equal to twice the level of the spell, or three times the level if it is a necromancy spell.

Spellcasting. The necromancer is a 9th-level spellcaster. Their spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). The necromancer has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch, light, mage hand, prestidigitation*

1st level (4 slots): *disguise self, false life†, mage armor, magic missile*

2nd level (3 slots): *misty step, suggestion, ray of enfeeblement†*

3rd level (3 slots): *animate dead†, counterspell, fear*

4th level (3 slots): *greater invisibility, blight†*

5th level (1 slot): *dominate person*

†necromancy spell of 1st level or higher

Actions

Staff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 2 (1d6 - 1) bludgeoning damage or 3 (1d8 - 1) bludgeoning damage if wielded with both hands.

Talons. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

GALLUS DRUID

MEDIUM HUMANOID (GALLUS), ANY NEUTRAL ALIGNMENT

Armor Class 11 (16 with *barkskin*)
Hit Points 65 (10d8 + 20)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)	10 (+0)

Skills Insight +6, Nature +2, Medicine +6, Perception +6

Senses passive Perception 16

Languages Birdfolk, Druidic, Sylvan. Can also understand Auran, but cannot speak it.

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Glide. When falling at least 10 feet, the druid can spend a reaction to fly up to their speed in one direction as they descend. They land in an unoccupied space at the end of their movement, and take no falling damage. They cannot glide while carrying heavy objects, heavy weapons, or shields (though they can drop any held items as part of their reaction).

Wing Flap. As a bonus action, the druid can use their powerful feathered arms to propel themselves upward up to half their movement speed. The druid can use it in conjunction with a regular jump, but not while gliding.

Seedspeech. The druid can communicate simple ideas to living plants, and is able to interpret their responses in simple language.

Spellcasting. The druid is a 6th-level spellcaster. Their spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). The druid has the following spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *druidcraft, produce flame, shillelagh*

1st level (4 slots): *animal friendship, cure wounds, entangle, fog cloud*

2nd level (3 slots): *barkskin, gust of wind, moonbeam*

3rd level (3 slots): *conjure animals, dispel magic, wind wall*

Actions

Staff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 4 (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage.

Spirit Totem (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). As a bonus action, the druid calls forth a nature spirit. The spirit appears at a point the druid can see within 60 feet. The spirit creates a 30-foot-radius aura. The spirit is neither an object nor a creature, but is a spectral beast. As a bonus action, the druid can move the spirit to another location within 60 feet. The spirit lasts for 1 minute.

Bear Spirit. The druid and allies within the aura gain 9 temporary hit points and have advantage on Strength checks and saving throws.

Hawk Spirit. The druid can use their reaction to grant advantage to an ally's attack roll against a target in the aura. The druid and allies within the aura have advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks.

Unicorn Spirit. If a spell that requires a spell slot heals the druid or allies in the aura, each creature of the druid's choice also gains 4 hit points.

GALLUS MONK

MEDIUM HUMANOID (GALLUS), ANY ALIGNMENT

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)
Hit Points 78 (12d8 + 24)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Dex +7
Skills Acrobatics +7, Insight +6, Perception +6, Stealth +7
Senses passive Perception 16
Languages Birdfolk. Can also understand Auran but cannot speak it.
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Glide. When falling at least 10 feet, the monk can spend a reaction to fly up to their speed in one direction as they descend. They land in an unoccupied space at the end of their movement, and take no falling damage. They cannot glide while carrying heavy objects, heavy weapons, or shields (though they can drop any held items as part of their reaction).

Wing Flap. As a bonus action, the monk can use their powerful feathered arms to propel themselves upward up to half their movement speed. The monk can use it in conjunction with a regular jump, but not while gliding.

Wind's Grace. While moving, the monk can move along vertical surfaces and across liquids without falling.

Actions

Multiattack. The monk makes four attacks, each of which can be an unarmed strike or a dart attack. They can also use their Graceful Step once, either before or after one of the attacks.

Unarmed Attack. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 7 (1d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Dart. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit*: 6 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage.

Graceful Step. The monk moves 40 feet. This movement does not provoke opportunity attacks.

Inspiring. The monk inspires an ally that can see and hear them. The ally can roll a d4 and add the number rolled to their next ability check, attack roll, or saving throw.

HEDGE BARD

Recognized for being excellent diplomats and mediators, hedges are less well known for their love of music. Those who turn their natural charm towards the talent of entertaining can find great success. Some of the most gifted performers are blessed with magical talents. While most hedges use these powers for good, others choose a more sinister path, using their bardic talents to cheat, dupe, or steal from common folk.

HEDGE BARD

Small humanoid (hedge), any alignment

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 36 (8d6 + 8)
Speed 25 ft., burrow 15 ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Dex +4, Cha +5
Skills Acrobatics +4, Perception +5, Performance +7
Senses passive Perception 15
Languages Birdfolk, Hedge. Can also speak with beasts of any size, which represent spiders, insects, worms, or other bugs.
Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Spellcasting. The bard is a 4th-level spellcaster. Their spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). They have the following bard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *gust barrier, prestidigitation, vicious mockery*

1st level (4 slots): *charm person, healing word, hideous laughter, thunderwave*

2nd level (3 slots): *invisibility, shatter, suggestion*

Taunt (2/Day). The bard can use a bonus action on their turn to target one creature within 30 feet of them. If the target can hear the bard, the target must succeed on a DC 13 Charisma saving throw or have disadvantage on ability checks, attack rolls, and saving throws until the start of the bard's next turn

Actions

Multiattack. The bard makes two weapon attacks, one with their rapier and one with their dagger.

Rapier. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack*: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit*: 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Curl Up. The bard curls up into a spiny ball. While curled up in this way they cannot move, attack, or cast spells with somatic components, and their base armor class becomes 19. Any creature that misses the hedge bard with a melee attack while they are curled up takes 2d4 points of piercing damage from their sharp quills. If a creature hits the bard while they are curled up, however, the bard is knocked prone in their space at the end of the turn. The bard may uncurl themselves at any point during their turn.

HEDGE WITCH

Small humanoid (hedge), any chaotic alignment

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)
Hit Points 21 (6d6)
Speed 25 ft., burrow 15 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)

Skills Arcana +4, Survival +4
Senses passive Perception 12
Languages Abyssal, Birdfolk, Hedge. Can also speak with beasts of any size which represent spiders, insects, worms, or other bugs.
Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Spellcasting. The witch is a 2nd-level spellcaster. Their spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). The witch has the following warlock spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *eldritch blast, minor illusion*

1st level (2 slots): *hellish rebuke, charm person, unseen servant*

Dark One's Blessing. When the witch reduces a hostile creature to 0 hit points, the witch gains 5 temporary hit points.

Repelling Blast. When the witch hits a creature with eldritch blast, they can push the creature up to 10 feet away in a straight line.

Actions

Staff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +1 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 2 (1d6 - 1) bludgeoning damage.

Fiendish Vigor. The witch can cast false life at will as a 1st-level spell.

Curl Up. The witch curls up into a spiny ball. While curled up in this way they cannot move, attack, or cast spells with somatic components, and their base armor class becomes 19. Any creature that misses the witch with a melee attack while they are curled up takes 2d4 points of piercing damage from their sharp quills. If a creature hits the witch while they are curled up, however, the witch is knocked prone in their space at the end of the turn. The witch may uncurl themselves at any point during their turn.

HEDGE WITCH

Many who apply to study at the Avium are turned away by the prestigious institution. Spurred by their desire for knowledge, rejected candidates sometimes start on a path to become self-taught masters of arcana. Notably in tune with the magic of the forest, hedges pursuing an individualistic path often leverage their connection to these natural forces to make pacts with powerful fey or elemental beings, learning secrets inaccessible to traditional students.

Susan of the Swamp

Susan is an eccentric hedge whose magical aptitude has always been outclassed by her hunger for knowledge. She studied at the Avium for a short time, but left of her own accord to experiment with magics the Avium found unsavory. Susan recently settled in the swamp in the hopes of pursuing her arcane curiosities in peace. She shares her modest home with her beetle familiar, Normal, and spends her time foraging for ingredients, testing spells, and reading mystery novels in addition to tomes of eldritch lore. Though she performs her rituals a safe distance away from the cities and towns, her presence in the region has made the Magistrate of Winnowing Reach uneasy, and he wants her gone. Susan uses the **hedge witch** stat block. Her alignment is chaotic good.

JELL PLATENA

Jell is a bespectacled sera luma with bright red plumage resembling a cardinal. Jell has studied at the Avium for three years now, and is well on her way to becoming a graduate. She is bright and studious, and serious about everything she does in life.

JERBEEN THIEF

While criminals can often be found picking pockets in large perch cities, only the most successful end up recruited by the Bandit Coalition. Small of stature, jerbeens can easily move about unnoticed; their swiftness is responsible for the expression 'quick as a jerbeen.' This, coupled with their natural charm, makes jerbeens perfectly suited for the thieving arts.

JERBEEN THIEF

Small humanoid (jerbeen), neutral evil

Armor Class 13 (leather armor)
Hit Points 14 (4d6)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)

Skills Acrobatics +4, Sleight of Hand +4
Senses passive Perception 12
Languages Birdfolk, Jerbeen
Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Standing Leap. The thief's long jump is up to 30 feet and their high jump is up to 15 feet, with or without a running start.

Team Tactics. The thief can take the Help action as a bonus action.

Actions

Multiattack. The thief makes two dagger attacks.

Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Reactions

Opportunist. When a creature fails a melee attack roll against the thief, the thief can make a Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check against a DC equal to 10 + the target creature's Dexterity modifier. On a success, the thief steals one item of the GMs choosing from the target. The item cannot be actively held or worn by the target.

JERBEEN SWASHBUCKLER

Small humanoid (jerbeen), any non-lawful alignment

Armor Class 17 (leather armor)
Hit Points 34 (8d6 + 6)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)

Skills Acrobatics +8, Athletics +5, Persuasion +6
Senses passive Perception 10
Languages Birdfolk, Jerbeen
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Standing Leap. The swashbuckler's base long jump is 30 feet, and their base high jump is 15 feet, with or without a running start.

Team Tactics. The swashbuckler can take the Help action as bonus action.

Sharp Witted Defense. While the swashbuckler is wearing light or no armor and wielding no shield, their AC includes their Charisma modifier.

Actions

Multiattack. The swashbuckler makes three attacks, one with a dagger and two with their rapier.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack*: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit*: 6 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage.

Rapier. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Reactions

Riposte. The swashbuckler reduces the damage dealt by one melee attack that would hit them by 1d8, and deals that much piercing damage to their attacker. The swashbuckler must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

JERBEEN SWASHBUCKLER

A common figure in many jerbeen folktales, a swashbuckler is a champion who fights with finesse and daring. Natural leaders, swashbucklers keep their wits about them during a duel, pressing small advantages to win the day. Jerbeen swashbucklers often train in the tradition of their Amaranthine, Gaspard. Each year swashbucklers participate in fencing matches held in Gaspard's honor. Not all swashbucklers follow this path, with some using their talents for brigandry.

KENNA BRIGHTSPARK

An energetic and curious young dusk corvum scholar who is currently working on a dissertation in Winnowing Reach. Kenna's research focuses on the properties of various slimes around the region. She is a student of the Avium, and hopes her findings will earn her a grant to fund yet more study of these fascinating creatures. Kenna is a native of Winnowing Reach, and knows the village well. She is a little precocious and takes risks for her work.

LUMA CLERIC OF ARDEA

Clerics of Ardea travel the Wood on holy pilgrimages to sacred groves resplendent with life fostered by the Dawnmother. They spread Ardea's message of kindness wherever they go, taking it upon themselves to protect all life, great and small. Clerics serve the communities they pass through as healers, mediators, and occasionally as valiant defenders. Lumas who heed the call of the Amaranthine find their natural charisma and mystic talents to be of great help as they walk the cleric's path.

LUMA WIZARD

It is widely believed among the birdfolk that only those with focused minds can master the subtle art of magic. For unknown reasons, perhaps their inherent connection to fate or particular manner of engaging with the world, lumas are able to tap into the mystical and magical forces with ease.

Gabe Windsworth

Gabe is an eccentric, middle-aged sable luma with a large plume of iridescent feathers that surround his nape like a cowl. The Dean of the Avium, Gabe always appears as though he is deep in thought. Though his amiability and kooky behavior cause people to underestimate him, beneath the eccentric exterior lies a keen mind that carefully evaluates all possibilities before taking action. He is a good-natured scholar who is just as concerned with the wellbeing of his staff and students as he is with the quality of research and education within the Avium. Dean Windsworth uses the **luma wizard** stat block. His alignment is neutral good.

LUMA CLERIC OF ARDEA

Small humanoid (luma), any good alignment

Armor Class 14 (chain shirt)
Hit Points 27 (6d6 + 6)
Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)

Skills Medicine +7, Persuasion +4, Religion +2
Senses passive Perception 13
Languages Birdfolk and one other language. Can also understand Auran, but cannot speak it.
Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Glide. When falling at least 10 feet, the cleric can spend a reaction to fly up to their speed in one direction as they descend. They land in an unoccupied space at the end of their movement, and take no falling damage. They cannot glide while carrying heavy objects, or heavy weapons, or shields (though they can drop any held items as part of their reaction).

Wing Flap. As a bonus action, the cleric can use their powerful feathered arms to propel themselves upward up to half their movement speed. The cleric can use this in conjunction with a regular jump, but not while gliding.

Fated (Recharges after a Long Rest). The luma cleric can choose to reroll any attack roll, skill check, or saving throw.

Spellcasting. The cleric is a 5th-level spellcaster. Their spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). The cleric has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *light, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*
1st level (4 slots): *bless, cure wounds, guiding bolt*
2nd level (3 slots): *lesser restoration, spiritual weapon*
3rd level (2 slots): *dispel magic, beacon of hope*

Actions

Staff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage or 4 (1d8) bludgeoning damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

Ardea's Vigor (1/day). The cleric calls on the powers of Ardea to imbue their allies with her protective life force. The luma cleric and up to 3 allies within 30 feet gain 5 (2d4) temporary hit points. For one minute, anyone under this effect gains 5 temporary hit points at the start of each of their turns.

Songbird (Recharges after a Long Rest). The cleric can cast *charm person*. Charisma is their spellcasting ability (spell save DC 12) and the spell does not require any somatic components to cast.

LUMA WIZARD

SMALL HUMANOID (LUMA), ANY ALIGNMENT

Armor Class 12 (15 with mage armor)
Hit Points 58 (13d6 + 13)
Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Int +7, Wis +4
Skills Arcana +7, History +7
Damage Resistances poison
Senses passive Perception 11
Languages Auran, Birdfolk, and any three other languages
Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Glide. When falling at least 10 feet, the wizard can spend a reaction to fly up to their speed in one direction as they descend. They land in an unoccupied space at the end of their movement, and take no falling damage. They cannot glide while carrying heavy objects, heavy weapons, or shields (though they can drop any held items as part of their reaction).

Wing Flap. As a bonus action, the wizard can use their powerful feathered arms to propel themselves upward up to half their movement speed. The wizard can use it in conjunction with a regular jump, but not while gliding.

Fated (Recharges after a Long Rest). The wizard can choose to reroll any attack, skill check, or saving throw.

Resilience. The wizard has advantage on saving throws against poison.

Spellcasting. The wizard is a 10th-level spellcaster. Their spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). The wizard has the following spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch, fire bolt, minor illusion, prestidigitation, ray of frost*

1st level (4 slots): *charm person, detect magic, mage armor, shield, sleep, thunderwave*

2nd level (3 slots): *darkness, hold person, ray of enfeeblement*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell, fireball*

4th level (3 slots): *banishment, stellar bodies**

5th level (2 slots): *conjure elemental, mislead*

Actions

Staff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 2 (1d6 - 1) bludgeoning damage.

Reactions

Charming (3/day). When a creature makes an attack against the wizard, the creature must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or target the next closest creature within range. If multiple creatures are closest, the attacker chooses. This feature does not work if there are no other creatures within range.

MAPACH BANDIT

Mapachs are particularly distrusted among birdfolk because of their eccentricities and willingness to break with commonly held customs. Often judged on sight to be criminals, some mapachs find it hard to integrate into birdfolk society and turn to crime to survive. Local bandit forces are happy to exploit this, offering the displaced mapachs shelter and a share of the spoils in exchange for their service.

MAPACH TINKERER

Unlike those who are content to stay within the boundaries of their established craft, tinkerers have a passion for innovation that is unfettered by tradition. Mapach craftspeople who constantly look for ways to improve upon past creations find themselves branded as eccentrics. Their methods are unconventional, but eminently practical. Designs are often carefully considered, and some of their innovations eventually find widespread use around the Wood.

MORDANE SWIFTGALE

Mordane is a prim-and-proper elderly swift strig, who keeps his gray and white feathers preened, and his librarian robes freshly pressed. He is wise, but old fashioned, and prefers to read in solitude when off shift, rather than fraternize with his peers. Despite his social shortcomings, he's an experienced librarian, and has incredible knowledge of even the oldest parts of the lower library.

MAPACH BANDIT

MEDIUM HUMANOID (MAPACH), NEUTRAL EVIL

Armor Class 12 (leather armor)
Hit Points 9 (2d8)
Speed 30 ft., climb 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)

Senses darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 11
Damage Resistances poison
Languages Birdfolk, Mapach
Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

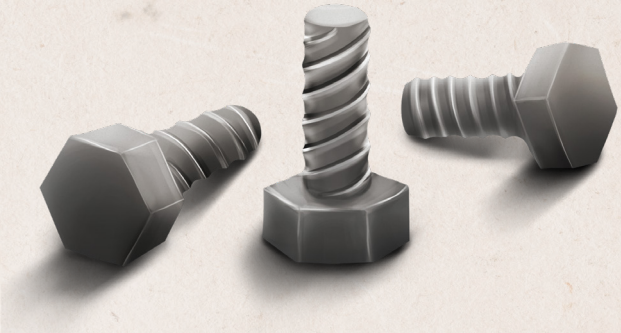
Resilience. The bandit has advantage on saving throws against being poisoned.

Skulker. The bandit has advantage on Stealth checks made in dim light or total darkness.

Actions

Short sword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 4 (1d6 + 1) slashing damage.

Short bow. *Ranged Weapon Attack*: +3 to hit, reach 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit*: 4 (1d6 + 1) piercing damage.



MAPACH TINKERER

Medium humanoid (mapach), any alignment

Armor Class 12
Hit Points 13 (3d8)
Speed 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11
Languages Birdfolk, Mapach
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Resilience. The tinkerer has advantage on saving throws against being poisoned.

Skulker. The tinkerer has advantage on Stealth checks made in dim light and total darkness.

Actions

Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Tinker's Toys. The tinkerer uses one of the following options (roll a d4 or choose one); the tinkerer can use each one no more than once per day:

1. **Clockwork Bird.** The tinkerer winds and releases a small mechanical bird that flies to a target creature within 30 feet and distracts it. The next attack against that creature is made with advantage.
2. **Flash-bangs.** The tinkerer targets a space up to 10 ft. away, and throws some small explosive shells that flare up in a blinding light. All creatures within 10 ft. of the target space must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or be blinded until the start of the tinkerer's next turn.
3. **Nettle Gun.** The tinkerer turns the crank on a small gadget that sprays nettles at a target. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 10/20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage. All creatures within 5 ft. of the target must make a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw or take 5 (1d10) piercing damage.
4. **Grease Balloon.** The tinkerer targets a 10-foot by 10-foot area up to 15 feet away, and makes it slick with grease. The area is considered difficult terrain, and each creature standing in the area must succeed on a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw or fall prone. A creature that enters the area or ends its turn there must also succeed on a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw or fall prone.

OAKHEART

Oakheart is a huge tree-shaped creature with charred bark that smolders in places, and many small flames which burn on his branches, giving the impression of leaves. Once a treant, he bathed in the primal energies of the Scorched Grove, transforming into a cinder-tree: an entity possessed of the element of flame so thoroughly that he could serve as *The Borealus'** keeper. He is the artifact's guardian, and will not relinquish the staff until he has been convinced that whoever has disturbed him can control the staff's considerable power, and that they mean to maintain the natural balance he sacrificed himself to protect. Oakheart uses the stat block for a **treant**, but with the following changes:

- His strength score is 20 (+5) and his attacks each have +8 to hit.
- His slam attacks deal fire damage instead of bludgeoning damage, though his boulder attacks deal damage as normal. He will fling obsidian tiles from the floor when using this attack.
- He has 69 hit points.
- He is resistant to fire rather than being vulnerable to it.

RAPTOR EXPLORER

Whether drawn by tales of treasure or the allure of faraway lands, some residents of Humblewood journey to seek out distant ruins or remote vistas to satisfy their wanderlust. Explorers are common among raptors, many of whom do so out of veneration for the Amaranthine Reya, the guide and protector of travelers. Numerous explorers embark on such adventures for the sake of self-discovery and personal growth. Those who have made a life out of exploring often find their service as guides in high demand.

RAPTOR RANGER

The ranger is an iconic figure in raptor stories and myths, and has inspired many to follow in their legendary footsteps. Outfitted for rough living in the wilds, these rangers are consummate archers and exceptional hunters. With supernatural eyesight and quick reflexes, raptors are ideally suited to the life of a hunter. Many who chose this path find themselves the inspiration for new tales.

The raptor ranger listed is outfitted with a *red-feather bow** (see **Appendix D: New Magic Items, pg.211**).

RHYS BIRCHWALKER

An associate professor of conjuration at the Avium, this middle-aged mistral raptor has little in the way of mystic talent, but she makes up for it with an enthusiasm for learning and a wealth of knowledge on her chosen subject. She is well-versed in conjuratory theory, and can provide characters with any of the information they would otherwise find in **Conjuration Magic** (see **Into the Library, pg.139**) if she is asked about the subject directly. Professor Birchwalker can also help a character perform the calculations to find the location of the conjuration circle within the Grove.

RAPTOR EXPLORER

Small humanoid (raptor), any neutral alignment

Armor Class 13 (leather armor)
Hit Points 18 (4d6 + 4)
Speed 25 ft., swim 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)

Skills History +2, Perception +6, Stealth +4, Survival +6
Senses passive Perception 16
Languages Birdfolk. Can also understand Auran but cannot speak it
Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Glide. When falling at least 10 feet, the explorer can spend a reaction to fly up to their speed in one direction as they descend. They land in an unoccupied space at the end of their movement, and take no falling damage. They cannot glide while carrying heavy objects, heavy weapons, or shields (though they can drop any held items as part of their reaction).

Talons. The explorer rolls advantage on Strength (Athletics) checks made to climb any surface their talons could reasonably grip.

Patient. When the explorer reacts with a readied action, they have advantage on the first attack roll, skill check, or ability check they make as a part of that action.

Keen Hearing and Sight. The explorer has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or sight.

Sure Footing. The explorer ignores non-magical difficult terrain.

Actions

Multiattack. The explorer makes two melee attacks or two attacks with their hand crossbow.

Talons. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Saber. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage.

Hand Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack*: +4 to hit, ranged 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit*: 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

RAPTOR RANGER

Small humanoid (raptor), any neutral alignment

Armor Class 15 (studded leather)
Hit Points 66 (12d6 + 24)
Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	8 (-1)

Skills Athletics +3, Stealth +7, Survival +5
Senses passive Perception 14
Languages Birdfolk, Mapach. Can also understand Auran, but cannot speak it.
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Glide. When falling at least 10 feet, the ranger can spend a reaction to fly up to their speed in one direction as they descend. They land in an unoccupied space at the end of their movement, and take no falling damage. They cannot glide while carrying heavy objects, heavy weapons, or shields (though they can drop any held items as part of their reaction).

Talons. The ranger rolls advantage on Strength (Athletics) checks made to climb any surface their talons could reasonably grip.

Aerial Defense. Creatures who attack the ranger while the ranger is falling, gliding, or jumping have disadvantage on their attack roll.

Arrow Sight (3/day). When the ranger attacks with their red-feather bow, they can use their bonus action to see from the point the arrow struck as if they were there. If the arrow strikes a creature, the ranger can see from the creature's perspective. This effect lasts for 1 minute.

Hunter (3/day). As a bonus action, the ranger can deal an extra 1d10 damage on their next attack made with a shortbow or longbow.

Spellcasting. The ranger is a 3rd-level spellcaster. Their spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 13, + 5 to hit with spell attacks). The ranger has the following spells prepared:

1st level (3 slots): *cure wounds, fog cloud, hunter's mark, protection from evil and good*

Actions

Multiattack. The ranger makes two red-feather bow attacks.

Red-Feather Bow. *Ranged Weapon Attack*: +6 to hit, 80/320 feet, one target. *Hit*: 6 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., range 20/60, one target. *Hit*: 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

Talons. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

SHYLA DENN

A scarred, gray-and-russet-furred vulpin cleric of Kren, Shyla serves as Krall's lieutenant. Krall saved her life when she was but a child, orphaned in the Wood, and she has been grateful to him ever since. Her loyalty to Krall is absolute, and she believes that Krall will only cut loose those who can't pull their weight. Shyla uses the **priest** stat block, but with these changes:

- She has a neutral evil alignment.
- She has a Dexterity score of 14 (+2), and an Intelligence score of 15 (+2).
- Her armor class is 15.
- She gains this ability:
  - ***Evasive.*** Shyla includes her Intelligence modifier as a bonus on all Dexterity saving throws.
- She gains the following attack action:
  - ***Bite.*** Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.
- Shyla has the following spells prepared:

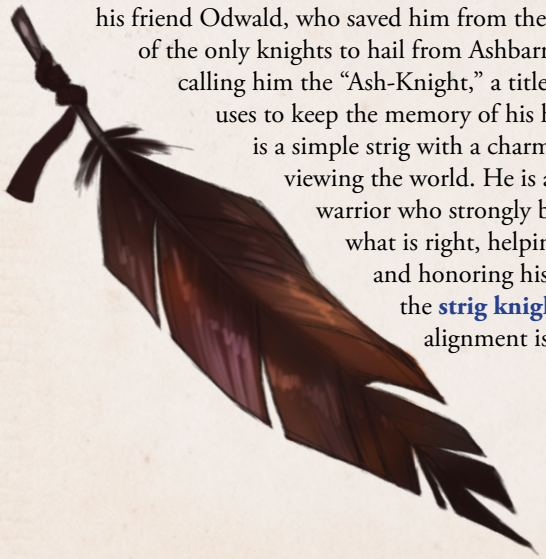
  Cantrips (at will): *light, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*
  1st level (4 slots): *cure wounds, disguise self, guiding bolt*
  2nd level (3 slots): *lesser restoration, mirror image, spiritual weapon*
  3rd level (2 slots): *blink, spirit guardians*

STRIG KNIGHT

The Perch Guard produces many skilled soldiers, but only those who possess a great degree of talent are trained to become knights. The knights of Alderheart's Perch Guard are taught how to protect others by creating opportunities for allies to regroup or retreat as necessary. Experts in sword-and-shield fighting, the knight's heavily-armoured fighting style allows them to hold the line against even the fiercest of enemies. The strig knight listed is equipped with a *wing crest shield** (see **Appendix D: New Magic Items, pg.211**).

Riffin, the Ash-Knight

Riffin is a small stout strig, standing a few inches over three feet, whose plumage and proportions resemble a little owl. A traveling knight of the realm, Riffin lived in Ashbarrow before its destruction, and was carried to Alderheart by his friend Odwald, who saved him from the fire. Being one of the only knights to hail from Ashbarrow, folk began calling him the "Ash-Knight," a title which he now uses to keep the memory of his home alive. Riffin is a simple strig with a charming way of viewing the world. He is also a steadfast warrior who strongly believes in doing what is right, helping those in need, and honoring his debts. Riffin uses the **strig knight** stat block. His alignment is lawful good.



STRIG KNIGHT

MEDIUM HUMANOID (STRIG), ANY LAWFUL ALIGNMENT

Armor Class 18 (half plate, shield)
Hit Points 60 (8d8 + 24)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	8 (-1)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Con +5, Wis +4
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages Birdfolk. Can also understand Auran, but cannot speak it.
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Glide. When falling at least 10 feet, the knight can spend a reaction to fly up to their speed in one direction as they descend. They land in an unoccupied space at the end of their movement, and take no falling damage. They cannot glide while carrying heavy objects, heavy weapons, or shields (though they can drop any held items as part of their reaction).

Talons. The knight rolls advantage on Strength (Athletics) checks made to climb any surface their talons could reasonably grip.

Maneuver (2/day). When the knight hits with an attack, they can choose to maneuver the enemy out of position, granting an ally within 5 feet of the target the opportunity to use their reaction to move away from this enemy at half their movement speed without provoking an attack of opportunity.

Actions

Multiattack. The knight makes two short sword attacks.

Short Sword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Talons. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage. The knight can choose to grapple a target hit by this attack as a bonus action.

Wing Crest Shield (1/day). The knight casts the *gust of wind* spell (save DC 15).

STRIG TRACKER

Capable of moving swiftly through the wilderness, trackers help find those who have lost their way in the forest. Accomplished survivalists, they are familiar with hidden pathways throughout the Wood. Often found alongside woodland beasts, many have formed bonds with these creatures, and find their aid useful in locating lost travelers. For Strigs, known for being at ease even in the harshest environments, becoming a tracker can prove a satisfying challenge. Some use their skills to double as bounty hunters, which can provide for an even more thrilling chase.

STRIG TRACKER

Medium humanoid (strig), any neutral alignment

Armor Class 14 (Hide Armor)
Hit Points 65 (10d8 + 20)
Speed 35 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)

Skills Acrobatics +6, Perception +4, Survival +4
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15
Languages Birdfolk, and two other languages. Can understand Auran but cannot speak it.
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Glide. When falling at least 10 feet, the tracker can spend a reaction to fly up to their speed in one direction as they descend. They land in an unoccupied space at the end of their movement, and take no falling damage. They cannot glide while carrying heavy objects, heavy weapons, or shields (though they can drop any held items as part of their reaction).

Patterned Feathers. The tracker has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks when they attempt to hide in a forest.

Reya's Keen Eye. The tracker can make Wisdom (Perception) checks as a bonus action to try and find hidden creatures.

Spellcasting. The tracker is a 3rd-level spellcaster. Their spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). The strig tracker has the following ranger spells prepared:

1st level (3 slots): *elevated sight*, hunter's mark, longstrider, speak with animals*

Actions

Multiattack. The tracker makes two melee attacks, one with their longsword and one with their hand axe. Or they make two ranged attacks with their hand axe.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage or 8 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage if wielding with both hands.

Hand Axe. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack*: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit*: 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Talons. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage. The knight can choose to grapple a target hit by this attack as a bonus action.

THE TENDERS

Although the Tenders are most well known across the Wood for their involvement in healing and studying the Scorched Grove, their order is actually far more ancient. Wardens of nature, they use their gentle magics to mediate between the people of the Wood and the living forest itself, and to help the forest heal from natural disasters.

Today, many of their members find employ as tree-shapers, and are well-respected in birdfolk settlements. Nowhere is this more true than in Alderheart, where the Tenders are looked upon favourably for the work they've done to create and strengthen living spaces within Alderheart's trunk. Other factions of Tenders work to respond to forest fires across the Wood, using their magic to encourage new growth in burned areas, as well as to help any survivors.

Since the Great Calamity, a large part of their order has dedicated their efforts to tending the Grove, monitoring its spread, and studying the mysterious creatures that live there. Unfortunately, much of the healing in the Grove can end up ruined by a sudden blaze. Progress has been made, however. Before the fires started to rage with renewed force, the Tenders managed to shrink the Grove little by little, doing much to bolster the forest that grows around its edges.

The Tenders are a unique organization in birdfolk society. Gaining admission to their ranks is akin to joining a monastery or convent. After initiation, a novice is generally expected to make their way to the Scorched Grove to learn from the masters who live there. Recruits live and study communally in special shelters within the Grove, protected by Tender magic. When they are sent out in the world again, new acolytes are taught to leave the high cities and walk among the undergrowth, to gain a better perspective on forest life. On occasion, Tenders living in the Wood will go on pilgrimages to tend to the Grove before returning to their normal duties. Masters of the order often choose to completely dedicate themselves to healing the Grove, setting up permanent homes there. This is considered to be a noble self-sacrifice among Tenders, and those who do this are given the order's highest honors.

Joining the Tenders

Gaining admission to the ranks of the Tenders is not difficult, and recruits are especially welcome now to help expand their thinning numbers. Any player who shows proper devotion to the tenets of natural balance and a willingness to swear an oath to become a keeper of the Wood can speak with Havel of the Autumn Moon about joining the Tenders. New recruits will begin at the Seedling rank.

The Tenders
Rank 1 - Seedling
Rank 2 - Sproutling
Rank 3 - Sapling
Rank 4 - Summerblossom
Rank 5 - Autumnal
Leader - Treekeeper

Joining the Tenders involves taking an oath to keep the balance of nature, to help it recover from disasters both natural and unnatural, and to help all people who have been harmed by natural imbalance. The Tenders know they can't control nature, and they teach that trying to do so is a folly which will only lead to further unbalancing of natural cycles. They do believe that when disaster strikes, it is their duty to restore the balance that was lost for the sake of all beings.

VULPIN CAPTAIN

Captains are respected among the bandit forces, leading units on raids and ambushes, and sometimes running the operations of an entire camp. While captains are among the more skilled warriors in the coalition, involvement with day-to-day operations grants them a certain rapport with even the low-ranking bandits. This leadership, coupled with their prowess, allows them to rally or kowtow those foolish enough to consider desertion. Vulpins, with their natural ambition, cunning, and force of personality, can readily be found climbing to the rank of captain.

Fray Merridan

Fray is a dashing red-furred vulpin with sharp eyes and a quick wit. A highly skilled swordswoman, she was left without a home when forest fires spreading from the Scorched Grove burned her village. She saw joining the bandits as an opportunity to use her skills to provide for herself and those she cares for. She is astute and talented, but also competitive and unwilling to forget even the smallest slight against her. Fray uses the **vulpin captain** stat block.

VULPIN NOBLE

Although founded by birdfolk, Alderheart is home to several noble families of influential humblefolk. Among them are vulpins who find both their charms and wiles perfectly suited to the political intrigue of Alderheart's high society. Some vulpin nobles can trace their lineage back to ancient royalty.

WALDEN KRANE, MAGISTRATE OF WINNOWING REACH

A fastidious, easily agitated, middle-aged kindled corvum with drab black feathers. As the Magistrate of Winnowing Reach, he is a prominent political figure in the region. Walden isn't a particularly good or kind man, but he tries to be a reasonable and honorable one. He will not break his bargains, and likewise won't tolerate anything on the party's part which could be conceived as oath-breaking, dishonesty, or actions that might bring harm to the Reach. He cares deeply for his citizens, but that sometimes fails to come across as his political ambitions tend to get in the way. Walden has known Kenna Brightspark since she was but a fledgeling.

VULPIN CAPTAIN

Medium humanoid (vulpin), neutral evil

Armor Class 14 (studded leather armor)
Hit Points 27 (5d8 + 5)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)

Skills Acrobatics +4, Perception +4
Senses darkvision 60ft., passive Perception 14
Languages Birdfolk, Vulpin
Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Evasive. The captain includes their Intelligence modifier as a bonus to their Dexterity saving throws.

Actions

Multiattack. The captain makes two attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Short sword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Short bow. *Ranged Weapon Attack*: +4 to hit, reach 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit*: 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Reactions

Parry. The captain adds 2 to their AC against one melee attack that would hit them per round. The captain must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

VULPIN NOBLE

Medium humanoid (vulpin), any alignment

Armor Class 15 (breastplate)
Hit Points 9 (2d8)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11(+0)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)

Skills Deception +5, History +4, Insight +3, Persuasion +5
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11
Languages Birdfolk, Vulpin
Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Evasive. The noble includes their Intelligence modifier as a bonus to their Dexterity saving throws.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 4 (1d6 + 1) piercing damage.

Rapier. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage.

Reactions

Disparaging Remark. When a creature the noble can see makes an attack roll against an ally, the noble can use their reaction to impose disadvantage on that roll. The target of this effect must be able to hear and understand the noble.

Appendix C: Creating NPCs

To adjust an existing NPC or build one from scratch, follow these steps to create birdfolk or humblefolk NPCs to use in your own adventures.

BIRDFOLK NPCS

Turn any NPC into a birdfolk by making the following changes to its base stat block. These rules can be used to further customize the generic birdfolk NPCs included in this book.

Birdfolk are Medium sized and use the base speed of the NPC unless otherwise specified.

Glide

All birdfolk have feathered arms capable of gliding short distances and slowing their fall speed. Add the Glide trait to the NPC. Ignore heavy armor in this glide. Birdfolk NPCs with heavy weapons, armor, or shields in their stat block should be able to glide with them.

Feathers vs. Talons

If your creature is a **gallus** or **luma**, they have much more developed wings. They have the Wing Flap trait, an ability that can propel them upwards into the air at up to half their base movement speed. This costs a bonus action to use, and cannot be used to gain height while gliding.

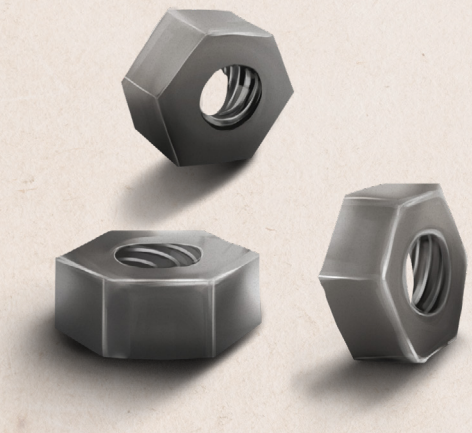
If your creature is a **corvum**, **raptor** or **strig**, they have taloned hands. Make sure to add Talons to their attacks, and calculate attack and damage bonuses for it using either Strength or Dexterity. The base damage for these attacks is 1d4 piercing damage. Birdfolk with Talons also have advantage on Strength (Athletics) checks made to climb.

Languages

Birdfolk all speak Birdfolk. They can also naturally understand Auran, the elemental language of air, but they have no innate ability to speak it.

Racial Abilities

Every birdfolk race has two subraces, and each subrace possesses a different set of abilities.



CORVUM

Desperate for knowledge as a means of power, corvums are usually found in positions of power or influence. Their quest for power leads many to become warlocks or assassins.

- Make the following adjustments to the base creature's stat block:

Ability Modifiers. +2 to the base creature's Intelligence score.

Learned. A corvum gains proficiency in one of the following skills: Arcana, History, Nature, or Religion.

- Then, add abilities from a corvum subrace.

Dusk Corvum

Ability Modifiers. +1 to the base creature's Dexterity score.

Skulker. The dusk corvum has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made in dim light or darkness.

Kindled Corvum

Ability Modifiers. +1 to the base creature's Charisma score.

Convincing. The kindled corvum gains proficiency in your choice of the Deception or Persuasion skill. Additionally, they have advantage on all Charisma checks used to convince someone of their knowledge of anything pertaining to the skill they gained proficiency in from their Learned ability.

GALLUS

Salt of the earth folk, gallus are as hearty as they come. They can often be found as soldiers, leaders, or spiritualists.

- Make the following adjustments to the base creature's stat block:

Ability Modifiers. +2 to the base creature's Wisdom score.

- Then, add abilities from a gallus subrace.

Bright Gallus

Ability Modifiers. +1 to the base creature's Charisma score.

Inspiring. As an action, the bright gallus inspires an ally that can see and hear them. The ally can roll a d4 and add the number rolled to their next ability check, attack roll, or saving throw.

Huden Gallus

Ability Modifiers. +1 to the base creature's Dexterity score.

Seedspeech. The huden gallus can communicate simple ideas to living plants, and is able to interpret their responses in simple language.

LUMA

Odd as they may be, lumas have an innate connection to the arcane, lending them magical abilities or simply an aura of charisma. They are just as at home in a ballroom as a mage's tower.

- Make the following adjustments to the base creature's stat block:

Size. Lumas are Small sized.

Speed. Lumas have a base movement speed of 25 feet.

Ability Modifiers. +2 to the base creature's Charisma score.

Fated (Recharges after a Long Rest). The luma can choose to reroll any attack roll, skill check, or saving throw.

- Then, add abilities from a luma subrace.

Sable Luma

Ability Modifiers. +1 to the base creature's Constitution score.

Damage Resistance. Sable lumas are resistant to poison damage.

Resilience. Sable lumas have advantage on saving throws against being poisoned.

Sera Luma

Ability Modifiers. +1 to the base creature's Wisdom score.

Songbird (Recharges after a Long Rest). Sera lumas can cast *charm person*. Charisma is their spellcasting ability and the spell does not require any somatic components to cast.

RAPTOR

Consummate hunters, raptors are at home in forests and other dark places. They make skilled rangers and rogues.

- Make the following adjustments to the base creature's stat block:

Size. Raptors are Small sized.

Speed. Raptors have a base movement speed of 25 feet.

Ability Modifiers. +2 to the base creature's Dexterity score.

Hunter's Training. Raptors have proficiency with the longbow, short bow, and spear. Additionally, their familiarity with the longbow means that it is not considered a heavy weapon for them.

- Then, add abilities from a raptor subrace.

Maran Raptor

Ability Modifiers. +1 to the base creature's Intelligence score.

Speed. Maran raptors have a swim speed of 25 feet.

Patient. When a maran raptor reacts with a readied action, they have advantage on the first attack roll, skill check, or ability check they make as a part of that action.

Mistral Raptor

Ability Modifiers. +1 to the base creature's Wisdom score.

Aerial Defense. As long as a mistral raptor is falling, gliding, or jumping, attacks made against them have disadvantage.

STRIG

Fond of the wilderness and proud of their physical prowess, strigs are generally loners, survivalists, and fighters.

- Make the following adjustments to the base creature's stat block:

Ability Modifiers. +2 to the base creature's Strength score.

Senses. Strigs have darkvision out to 60 feet.

Patterned Feathers. Strigs have advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks when they attempt to hide in a forest.

- Then, add abilities from a strig subrace.

Stout Strig

Ability Modifiers. +1 to the base creature's Constitution score.

Brawler. Whenever a stout strig hits with their talon attack, they may choose to grapple their target as a bonus action.

Swift Strig

Ability Modifiers. +1 to the base creature's Dexterity score.

Speed. Swift strigs have a base walking speed of 35 feet.

HUMBEFOLK NPCS

You can turn any NPC into a humblefolk by making the following changes to its base stat block. These rules can be used to further customize the generic humblefolk NPCs included in this book.

Humblefolk are Medium sized and use the base speed of the NPC unless otherwise specified.

CERVAN

Hearty and practical, cervans can find themselves at home virtually anywhere, though many prefer the life of a recluse, often accompanied by or living with only a handful of close companions with whom they have formed strong connections.

- Make the following adjustments to the base creature's stat block:

Ability Modifiers. +2 to the base creature's Constitution score.

Languages. Cervans speak Birdfolk and Cervan.

Surge of Vigor (Recharges after a Long Rest). If an attack deals over half of a cervans current remaining hit points in damage (even if their hit points are reduced to 0 by the attack), they immediately regain hit points equal to 1d12 + their Constitution Modifier.

- Then, add abilities from a subrace listed below.

Grove Cervan

Ability Modifiers. +1 to the base creature's Dexterity score.

Speed. Grove cervans have a base walking speed of 35 feet.

- Choose one of the following:

Standing Leap. A grove cervan's base long jump is 30 feet, and their base high jump is 15 feet, with or without a running start.

Nimble Step. Opportunity attacks made against the grove cervan are rolled with disadvantage.

Pronghorn Cervan

Ability Modifiers. +1 to the base creature's Strength score.

Antlers. Pronghorn cervans have a set of large, strong antlers that can be used to make melee attacks. Their antler attack deals 1d6 piercing damage and is calculated using the creature's strength score for the purposes of determining the attack roll and damage bonus.

- Choose one of the following:

Robust Build. The pronghorn cervan counts as one size larger when determining their carrying capacity and the weight they can push, drag, or lift.

Charge. If the pronghorn cervan moves at least 20 feet in a straight line towards an enemy, their Antler attack deals an extra 1d6 points of piercing damage. If the target of the charge is Large or smaller, they must make a Strength saving throw against a DC of the pronghorn cervan's Proficiency Bonus + 8 + the pronghorn's Strength modifier. On failure, the target is pushed 10 feet away from the pronghorn cervan.

HEDGE

Sensitive and empathetic, hedges tend towards the mystic arts, especially paths of natural magic, such as druids, or those which make use of their innate talents, such as bards.

- Make the following adjustments to the base creature's stat block:

Size. Hedges are Small sized.

Natural Armor. Hedges have a natural armor class of 14 + their Dexterity modifier.

Speed. Hedges have a movement speed of 25 feet. They also have a burrow speed of 15 feet. They cannot burrow through anything more solid than packed soil.

Ability Modifiers. +2 to the base creature's Charisma score, and +1 to the base creature's Wisdom score.

Languages. Hedges speak Birdfolk and Hedge. They can also speak with beasts of any size which fall into the category of insects, spiders, worms, or other bugs.

- Then, add the following ability:

Curl Up. As an action, the hedge curls up into a spiny ball. While curled up in this way they cannot move, attack, or cast spells with somatic components, and their base armor class becomes 19. Any creature that misses the hedge with a melee attack while they are curled up takes 2d4 points of piercing damage from the sharp quills. If a creature hits the hedge while they are curled up, however, the hedge is knocked prone in their space at the end of the turn. The hedge may uncurl themselves at any point during their turn.

JERBEEN

Nimble and naturally good at working as part of a team, jerbeens fit in well in a variety of roles. Their natural quickness makes them excellent thieves or duelists, and their desire to help better their communities draws many down the path of a paladin.

- Make the following adjustments to the base creature's stat block:

Size. Jerbeen are Small sized.

Speed. Jerbeen have a movement speed of 30 feet.

Ability Modifiers. +2 to the base creature's Dexterity score, and +1 to the base creature's Charisma score.

Languages. Jerbeens speak Birdfolk and Jerbeen.

- Then, add the following abilities:

Standing Leap. A jerbeen's long jump is 30 feet, and their base high jump is 15 feet, with or without a running start.

Team Tactics. Jerbeens can take the Help action as a bonus action.

MAPACH

Wily and resourceful, the mapachs are expert survivors with a special knack for tinkering. They are often drawn towards professions as artisans or craftspeople, frequently producing unconventional inventions along with standard wares. They also make excellent rangers, helping to guide those less experienced through dangerous territory for the right price.

- Make the following adjustments to the base creature's stat block:

Speed. Mapachs have a climb speed of 20 feet.

Ability Modifiers. +2 to the base creature's Wisdom score, and +1 to the base creature's Constitution score.

Damage Resistance. Mapachs are resistant to poison damage.

Senses. Mapachs have darkvision out to 60 feet.

Languages. Mapachs speak Birdfolk and Mapach.

- Then, add the following abilities:

Skulker. A mapach has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks made in dim light or darkness.

Resilience. Mapachs roll with advantage on saving throws against being poisoned.

VULPIN

Artful and cunning, vulpins are ambitious and seek positions of status, wealth, and power. An astute mind makes them natural wizards, but just as many can be found using their wits to outsmart Alderheart's Perch Guard as criminal masterminds.

- Make the following adjustments to the base creature's stat block:

Ability Modifiers. +2 to the base creature's Intelligence score, and +1 to the base creature's Charisma score.

Senses. Vulpins have darkvision out to 60 feet.

Languages. Vulpins speak Birdfolk and Vulpin.

- Then, add the following abilities:

Bite. Vulpins have sharp fangs that enable them to make natural bite attacks. Their bite attack deals 1d6 points of piercing damage and can be calculated using either the creature's Dexterity or Strength score for the purposes of determining the attack roll and damage bonus. Vulpins are proficient in their bite attacks. If the base creature has the Multiattack ability, this applies to the vulpin's bite attack as well.

Evasive. A vulpin includes their Intelligence modifier (if positive) as a bonus on all Dexterity saving throws.

Appendix D: New Magic Items

ENCHANTED TREASURES

BLADE OF THE WOOD

Weapon (any sword), rare (requires attunement)

A finely crafted sword with delicate etchings, it resonates with a faint hum of life.

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon.

The sword has 2 charges. You can expend a charge and speak the command word to cast *spike growth* (save DC 16) centered on yourself. You can pass through this terrain unaffected.

The sword regains one charge each day at dawn.

THE BOREALUS

Staff, artifact (requires attunement)

This legendary artifact was created by a powerful wizard, crafted from the finger of a towering, ancient elemental aspect of frost. It is so cold to the touch that it numbs any skin it comes into contact with, although an attuned character is immune to this effect.

Gifts of the Rime. As long as you are attuned to *the Borealus*, you gain the following benefits:

- You are resistant to fire damage
- You are immune to cold damage
- You learn the *ray of frost* cantrip

Breath of Winter. While holding the staff you can use your action to unleash an icy-cold blizzard from your open mouth. A 100-foot-cone of hoarfrost blasts forth in a direction of your choice, dealing 9d8 cold damage to all creatures within the cone if they fail a DC 18 Constitution saving throw, or half as much on a success. You can't use this property again until the next dawn.

Glacial Prison. By using your action to touch the staff to a surface, you can cause a barrier of ice to spring into existence from a point you can see along this surface within 200 feet of you. This effect is otherwise identical to a *wall of ice* spell cast at 6th level, with a DC 18 for all saving throws related to the effect. You can't use this property again until 3 days have passed.

Cruel Winds. Wherever the staff goes, a bitterly cold boreal wind accompanies it. The wind gusts intermittently within 30 feet of the attuned character and extinguishes all non-magical flames it comes into contact with.

Destroying the Staff. The staff can be destroyed through exposure to flames from a fire elemental of equal power to the being it was crafted from. After centuries of exposure, it will melt away into nothing.

FEATHERED HELM

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

The helm itself is simple leather, hide, scale, or plate, but the magic imbued into it comes from the feather. The birdfolk races of Humblewood consider the giving of a feather to be one of the highest honors one can bestow, and it represents an eternal bond or deep appreciation.

The helm has 3 charges that, while wearing it, you can use to activate its abilities. The helm has different properties based on the race of the birdfolk who gifted the feather.

Corvum. You can use a charge to cast *hideous laughter* (save DC 16) and two charges to cast *detect thoughts* (save DC 16).

Gallus. You can use a charge to cast *bless* and two charges to cast *aid*.

Luma. You can use a charge to cast a random 1st-level spell from the sorcerer spell list, then roll a d20. On a roll of 20, you may use this ability again without expending a charge. On a roll of 1, the spell also targets you, unless you are it's only target, in which case the spell fizzles to no effect. Any spell cast using this helm that requires a saving throw has a save DC of 16.

Raptor. You can use a charge to cast *hunter's mark* and two charges to cast *magic weapon*.

Strig. You can use a charge to cast *divine favor* and two charges to cast *pass without trace*.

The helm regains 1d3 charges each day at dawn.

> **A True Gift**
>
> Whether you are playing through the Humblewood adventure, or playing your own campaign in the Wood, look for organic relationships between a character and the races of birdfolk. If one stands out, use that to decide what type of feather is offered to the player in this helm.
>
> Additionally, a character whose character is a birdfolk may want to make this gift themselves. Make sure to create a narrative bond between this player and who they share a feather with — the gift of a feather is not something which should be given lightly.

NECRONOMICON EX CORVIS

Book, artifact (requires attunement by a wizard)

This legendary tome of dark necromancy was penned by the mad corvum necromancer Lathrus, of the Night's Call. The book is one of a kind and contains terrible necromantic secrets.

The *Necronomicon Ex Corvis* is a spellbook, and as such only wizards can truly benefit from studying the dark secrets within.

Abyssal Secrets. By spending a full week studying the dark secrets in this tome, your Intelligence score increases by 2. These secrets gnaw at your mind, however, and your Wisdom score decreases by 1.

Grasp of Shadows. By spending at least a minute reciting a ritual listed in this book, you can summon forth 1d4 + 2 **shadows**. These creatures are loyal to you and can understand any instructions you give them. They will carry out these instructions to the best of their ability. This property can only be used once per week.

Knowledge Beyond Reason. You may add the spells listed below into your spellbook. However, the tome removes the restriction that requires you to be able to prepare and cast these spells. In effect, you can copy these spells to your spellbook now, though they will only be available to prepare once you reach a level at which you can cast them.

Additionally, rather than pay gold pieces to copy any spell within into your spellbook, you may deal one point of damage to yourself and take one level of exhaustion to scribe the spell in your own blood.

Level	Spell
3rd	*animate dead*, *bestow curse*, *vampiric touch*
4th	*blight*
6th	*circle of death*, *magic jar*
7th	*finger of death*

The Corvum's Curse. After copying at least one spell from this tome into your spellbook, you must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or become cursed (as *bestow curse*), with the effect of the curse being decided by the GM.

The curse persists for 2d4 days, but its duration resets anytime you copy a spell from this book. Otherwise, only a remove curse spell cast using a 5th level or higher spell slot can rid you of this effect.

Destroying the Book. Unlike other artifacts, the book is not immune to damage. Pages removed from the book will lose their magic within a day. Additionally, exposing the book to direct sunlight for at least 8 hours will cause the dark magic within to dissipate, rendering it useless.

NEST CHARM

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)

This charm is a sphere of intricate metal branches, interwoven to form a sort of nest.

By placing the charm on the ground and speaking its command word, you can cause it to unfold, creating a 30-foot-diameter circular platform of interwoven branches. Once the platform has reached its full size, a magical tree grows beneath it, lifting the platform 50 feet into the air, carrying any passengers and items along with it.

This perch lasts up to 8 hours, at which point the tree will retreat into the ground and the platform will shrink, eventually curling back into the small charm. At any time the command word can be spoken again to dismiss the perch in a similar fashion. Once the nest charm's power has been used, it can't be used again until the next dawn.

RED-FEATHER BOW

Weapon (any bow), uncommon (requires attunement)

A prized hunting weapon among mistral raptors, this bow is imbued with magic to help the wielder see their prey from afar.

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon.

The bow has 3 charges. When you fire an arrow from this bow, you can speak the command word and use a charge to see through the arrow as a bonus action. You can see from the point your arrow lands as if you were there for 1 minute. If the arrow strikes a creature, you see what they see for the same duration.

The bow regains 1d3 charges each day at dawn.

WING CREST SHIELD

Armor (shield), uncommon (requires attunement)

While wielding this shield, you gain a +1 bonus to your AC.

As an action, you can speak the command word to cast gust of wind (save DC 15). Once the shield has been used to cast this spell, it can't be used to cast this spell again until the next dawn.

Appendix C: Random Encounters

Here are a few random encounter tables to both provide inspiration for any encounter you may wish to build, and to flesh out the encounters in your game.

City Encounters (Levels 2-4)

d8	Encounter
1	A **mapach tinkerer** with a hand cart of goods distracts the party with his marvellous wares while his **hedge bard** partner attempts to pick-pocket them.
2	An innocent **cervan priest** is accosted by 1d4 **birdfolk guards**. These birdfolk are criminals who've stolen Perch Guard uniforms, and the party will be rewarded for their capture.
3	A visiting **vulpin noble** is interested in seeing the sights. Show them around town by rolling again on this table. They will accompany the party for this encounter, and should they survive, will reward the party 20 gp for the invigorating time.
4	A gathering of acrobatic street performers. If high enough level, a party member with the Sharp Mind trait, or who makes a DC 14 Intelligence check, will recognize a **gallus monk** among them from a wanted poster.
5	A citywide parade to honor Gaspard, the Champion. There are jousts, fencing matches, and other contests in which the party can participate. Defeat a **jerbeen swashbuckler** in a duel to win a magic item.
6	A mysterious death. If players are high enough level, this could lead to a fight with the **corvum assassin** who was paid to perform the murder.
7	A bar fight breaks out between 1d4 **mapach bandit** patrons and 1d4 **birdfolk militia**.
8	A pair of **jerbeen thieves** steal from the party. This leads back to their **vulpin captain** leader, who runs a pickpocketing ring in town.

Cave Encounters (Level 1)

d8	Encounter
1	1d2 **gray oozes** conceal themselves as stagnent pools.
2	A **shifting slime** attacks.
3	1d2 roosting **swarms of emberbats** drop from the ceiling.
4	2 **caustic slimes** attack.
5	The party finds a 6-foot-tall bioluminescent mushroom.
6	1d4 **sticky slimes** attack.
7	Two **sticky slimes** and a **caustic slime** attack.
8	1d4 **violet fungus** attack.

Coast Encounters (Level 4)

d8	Encounter
1	The party finds a small shrine to Gesme within a hidden grotto. The first player to pray here gains the ability to cast *clairvoyance* once, without material components.
2	2 **raptor explorers** are leading a **strig tracker** bounty hunter to the party.
3	1d4 giant petrels circle overhead (use the stat block for a **giant eagle**, but with a 30 ft. swim speed).
4	A violent storm rolls in. If the party chooses not to take shelter, they must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw while traveling, suffering a level of exhaustion on a failure.
5	A mass of seaweed turns out to be a **shambling mound**.
6	A ship is stolen from the docks by 1d4 +1 **birdfolk sailor** pirates, led by a **jerbeen swashbuckler**.
7	A sinking ship is spotted with it's crew aboard. There are 1d3 **hunter sharks** circling in the water.
8	A crashing wave sweeps in, and the party must make a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be swept 80 feet into the sea, where a **water elemental** lies in wait.

Forest Encounters (Level 1-2)

d8	Encounter
1	2d4 **mapach bandits** ambush the party.
2	1d2 **swarms of emberbats** attack the party.
3	1d4 **magmin** can be spotted burning foliage through the trees. They haven't started a fire yet, but they will if left unchecked.
4	The party finds a moss covered shrine to Reya. The first character that stops to pray here gains the ability to cast *elevated sight* once.
5	1d4 **mapach bandits** and a **jerbeen thief** spring from the forest, offering safe passage for a road toll of 3 gp per party member. They will attack if the toll is not paid immediately.
6	1d3 **wolves** led by a **dire wolf** attack the party.
7	A **birdfolk skirmisher** on patrol is struggling in a large spider web and calling for help. He has been bound in silk, requiring a DC 15 Strength check or one round using a cutting tool to free him. There are 1d2 +1 **giant spiders** hidden in the trees.
8	A bandit's net trap has been laid across the trail and covered with leaves. It can be spotted with a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. If players walk into it, the trap springs, and players must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw to avoid getting caught. On a failure, you can roll on this table again to complicate the encounter.

Mountain Encounters (Levels 2-3)

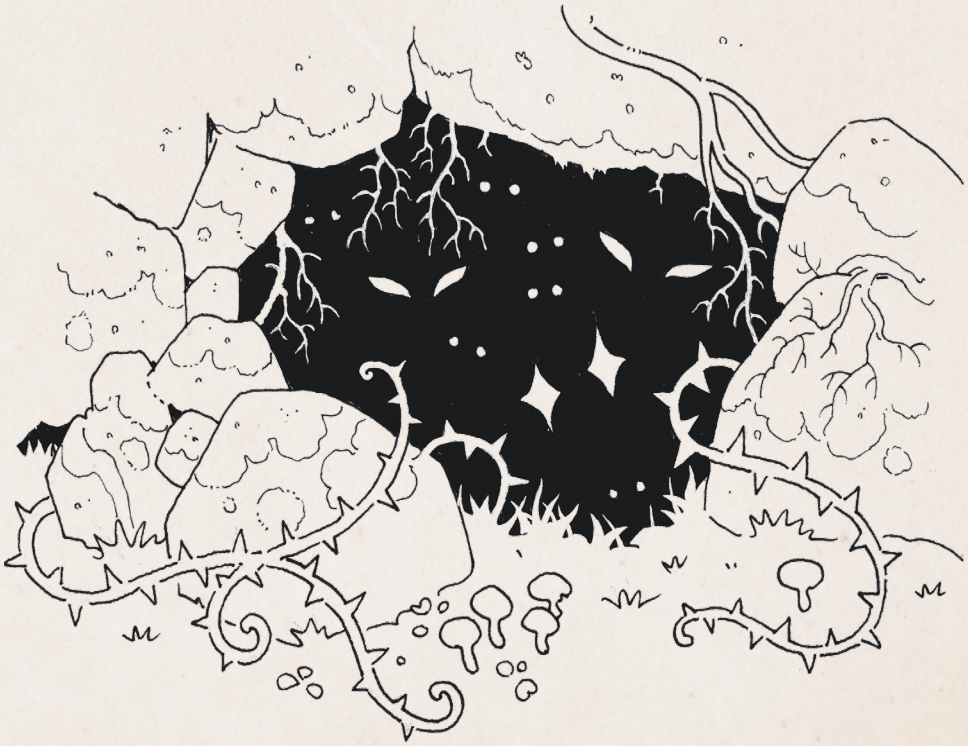
d8	Encounter
1	Two **griffons** can be seen in the distance. They give a warning shriek. The party can find another route, losing ground and rolling again on this table, or fight them.
2	1d4 **mapach bandits** and a **vulpin captain** attack.
3	A hungry **basilisk** appears.
4	1d4 **jerbeen thieves** attack.
5	1d4 **mountain lions** attack.
6	The weather suddenly shifts to a bitter storm. If the party chooses not to take shelter, they must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw while traveling, suffering a level of exhaustion from the cold on a failure.
7	The party finds a weathered shrine to Altus. The first character that stops to pray here gains the ability to cast *enhance ability* once, without using material components. The player may only select either the **Bear's Endurance** or **Bull's Strength** options when the spell is cast.
8	The party finds a roost of 1d3 **giant eagles** with 1d4 young (Medium sized beasts that cannot attack) with them. They will attack unless the party can convince them they are not a threat.

Scorched Grove Encounters (Level 3)

d8	Encounter
1	1d4 +1 **swarms of emberbats** attack.
2	An **ashsnake** attacks. If the party is hunting for the **ashsnake** in **Part 3**, it is waiting to ambush them.
3	The party finds a small stand of scorched trees, two of which tower above the others. When approached these two **awakened trees** attack with branches that glow with embers. Their attacks deal fire damage instead of bludgeoning damage, and can set flammable objects carried by characters on fire.
4	One **fire elemental** can be seen off in the distance. Players must make a DC 10 Dexterity (Stealth) check to avoid its notice, otherwise it will see them and attack.
5	1d3 **magma mephits** and 1d2 **dust mephits** attack.
6	1d4 **magmin** attack.
7	A Tender is being attacked by a **swarm of emberbats**.
8	A field of geysers lays ahead, each intermittently spraying scalding gases into the air. The party can attempt to cross cautiously with a DC 16 Intelligence check to notice a pattern, or by making three DC 14 Dexterity saving throws, taking 4 (1d8) fire damage on each failure. Pass or fail, after 3 saving throws they've made it across. Alternatively, party members can choose to go around. If so, roll again on this table.

Swamp Encounters (Level 1)

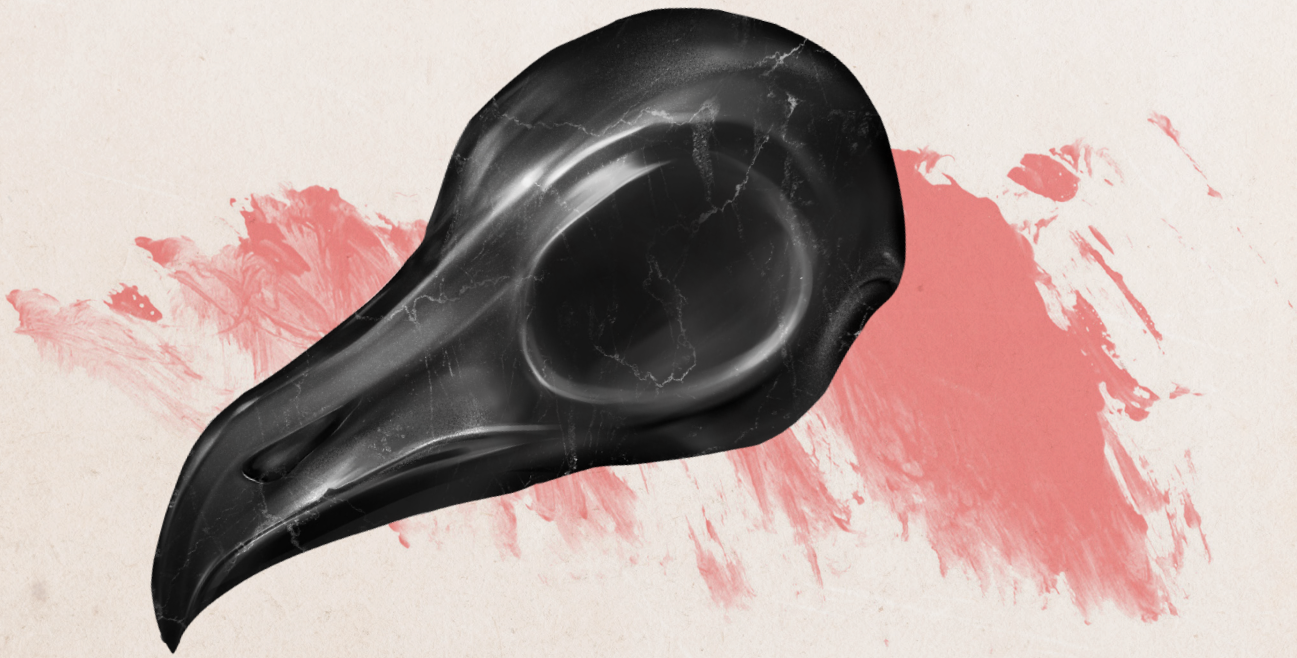
d8	Encounter
1	1d3 **birdfolk skeletons**, covered in moss rise from the murky water and attack.
2	Two **sticky slimes** and a **caustic slime** attack.
3	The party stumbles upon a **swarm of quippers** in the water. Players with a passive Perception of 15 or higher notice the swarm and avoid it.
4	The party finds a fungus covered shrine to Henwin within a tangle of plant life. The first character to pray here gains the ability to cast *spiny shield* once, without using material components.
5	1d4 **sticky slimes** attack.
6	1d2 **swarms of insects** envelop the party. They have a walking speed of 5 ft., a 30 ft. flying speed, and no climbing speed.
7	Two **caustic slimes** attack.
8	A birdfolk researcher caught in quicksand. Requires a DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check to free. Roll again on this table to complicate the encounter.



Appendix F: What did They Find?

Use this helpful list to determine what a character might find when searching through a place in the Wood, in an NPCs bag, or the like.

d20	They find...
1	A carefully cleaned and varnished mouse skull.
2	A ruby statue worth 50 gp, but birdfolk and humblefolk alike believe it to be cursed.
3	A golden coin dating back to the very founding of Alderheart.
4	A small switch-knife hidden inside of a wooden spoon.
5	A holy symbol of an Amaranthine not worshipped in Humblewood.
6	A feather with brilliant tropical colours, not seen on any Humblewood birdfolk.
7	A ring with a strange seed where a gemstone would normally be.
8	A mechanical cricket, but its winding key is missing.
9	A thin length of chain, that when examined is actually made of seamless loops of wood.
10	A small bag containing hand polished marbles, each one with a different small insect in it.
11	A necklace made from the shells of small iridescent beetles.
12	A wooden frog that is perpetually slick with some kind of viscous moisture.
13	A short, thin twig that is unbendable and indestructible.
14	A locket made from a polished periwinkle shell. A strange sigil has been carved on the inside.
15	A glass jar filled with eight fireflies, each giving off light. One glows white, and the others glow a different colour of the rainbow.
16	A bandit mask from a time before the Coalition.
17	A detailed onyx carving of a birdfolk skull. It is cold to the touch.
18	A silver pinecone that is completely immune to fire damage.
19	A locked music box. Mechanical chirping can occasionally be heard from inside.
20	A weathered parchment scroll, which unfurls to reveal music inscribed in long-faded ink.



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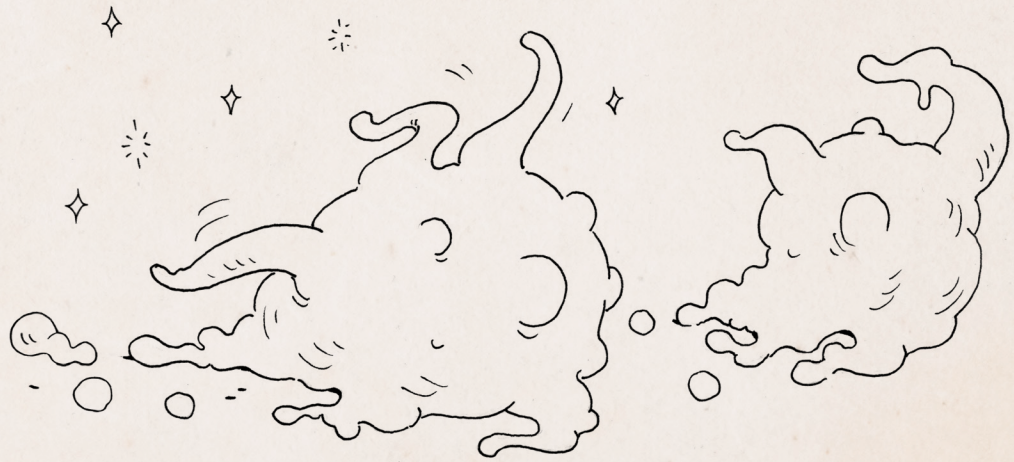

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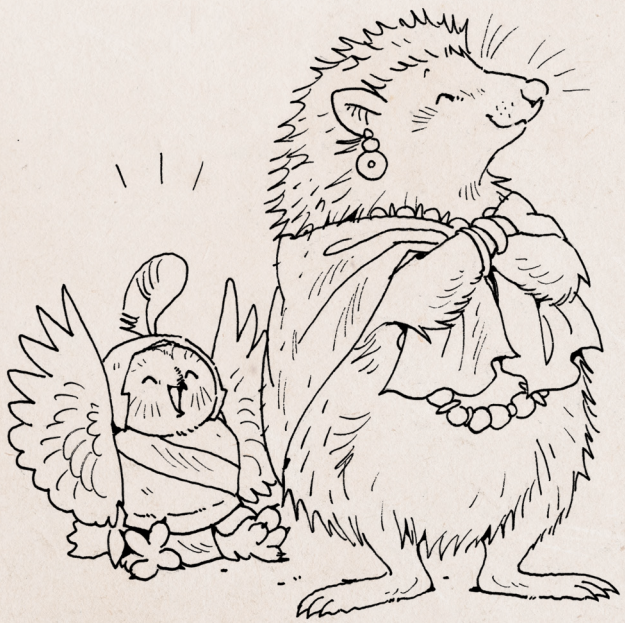

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