





Scorched Grove

ASHBARROW

MEADOWFEN

WINNOWING REACH

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Coast



HUMBLEWOOD

Traversing the Wood

TRAVEL 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 Mokka 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

THE GREAT TREE

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

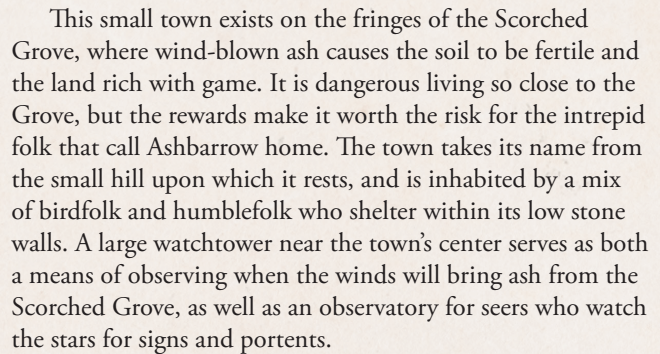


In the trunk, another market thrives. Here, stalls of all kinds cluster around central support pillars shaped from Alderheart's wood. They showcase unique wares and niche humble-folk-style foods and cultural goods not found in canopy markets. There are also curiosity shops and sellers of regional wares, 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.

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.

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

ASHBARROW



COLLEGE OF THE ASHLAKE

MAGIC, INSIDE AND OUT

SEAT OF KNOWLEDGE

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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

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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

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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 blustery peaks. Experts theorize that the formidable bulwark of rock helped the Wood thrive by shielding it from the bitter, salty winds of the ocean.

MARSHVIEW

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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

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Meadowfen is a peaceful village located between the Mokka 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 Mokka Fields ensures deadly slimes don't stray into the village.





MOKK FIELDS

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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 Mokka Fields to support a surprising array of life.

UNINVITING GEOGRAPHY

The fringes of the Mokka 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 Mokka 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 Mokka 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

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THE SEA

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 conservative birdfolk.

SCORCHED GROVE

ASH AXI> SLAME

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.

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