Cairn

Warden's Guide — 2nd Edition

Cairn 2e Warden's Guide

The Warden's Guide includes tools, tables, and advice for running Cairn, with procedures to generate content that fits into the Vald setting or any fantasy world of your imagining. The following chapters offer resources and detailed instructions for creating immersive adventures, with an emphasis on dynamic gameplay and rich worldbuilding. It is our hope that with these pages anyone can craft unique, challenging experiences that engage and captivate players.

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World Building

Procedures for generating your own settings, maps, factions, dungeons, and forests.

Setting Seeds

Overview

The following procedure is designed to help create the seed of a setting: the unique topography, natural features, people, and paths that an adventuring party encounter as they travel throughout a region. We'll start by developing the people that live there, their ambitions and resources, and the factions that affect them. Then we'll generate the terrain of your region, followed by its various points of interest (POI), landmarks, roads, trails, and so on. As with any other rule, if you don't like a table result, roll again or tweak as desired!

The Realm & Regions

A **Realm** is a general term for a related collection of **regions**, potentially encompassing hundreds of places for the player characters to visit and interact with.

Materials Required

- A sheet of paper and a notebook. Letter/A4 is OK, but the larger the better. Going forward, we will refer to the sheet of paper as the **map**.
- Pencils and erasers. Colored pencils if you want to make it pretty or want to indicate terrain with color.
- At least one d6 and one d20, but 6d6 and 2d20 would be ideal.

Region Theme

People

The most important aspect of a region is its people: their character, ambitions, and the resources that tie them to this land. Roll on the Culture and Resources tables, then note the results in your notebook.

CULTURE
Roll 1d20 for each column and combine.

d20	Character	Ambition
1	Altruistic	Bounty
2	Artistic	Conquest
3	Curious	Control
4	Devious	Conversion
5	Enlightened	Division
6	Hardy	Dominance
7	Harmonious	Exploration
8	Inventive	Fealty
9	Mercantile	Independence
10	Nomadic	Knowledge
11	Reclusive	Natural Harmony
12	Religious	Peace
13	Resilient	Power
14	Scholarly	Purity
15	Stoic	Recognition
16	Struggling	Return
17	Traditional	Security
18	War-like	Stability
19	Wealthy	Unification
20	Xenophobic	Wealth

RESOURCES
Roll 1d20 for each column and combine.

d20	Abundance	Scarcity
1	Food	Food
2	Fuel	Fuel
3	Gemstones	Gemstones
4	Herbs	Herbs
5	Horses	Horses
6	Knowledge	Knowledge
7	Land	Land
8	Livestock	Livestock
9	Medicine	Medicine
10	Ore	Ore
11	Skilled Labor	Skilled Labor
12	Spices	Spices
13	Stone	Stone
14	Textiles	Textiles
15	Tools	Tools
16	Trade Goods	Trade Goods
17	Vessels	Vessels
18	Water	Water
19	Weapons	Weapons
20	Wood	Wood

Factions

A region is typically dominated by one or more factions, each with their own unique **Advantages**, **Agenda**, and **Obstacles**. Each faction should also have one or more representatives, or **Agents**, tasked with helping complete their agenda. Smaller regions with fewer POIs should have 1-2 factions, while larger regions could have as many as 5-6 factions.

Agents

Agents are often in charge of completing one or more of the goals of the agenda of a faction. Particularly large factions may have additional agents, each in charge of a distinct goal. Agents may have personal motivations that differ from the faction's main agenda, a fact that canny PCs can exploit for their own gain.

Advantages

Factions possess advantages that assist them in accomplishing their agenda. Advantages reflect a faction's influence, materials, wealth, and other unique features. Factions leverage their advantages as much as possible when trying to achieve their goals, and, at the same time, continually work to acquire more advantages.

Agendas

Factions will work to complete their agendas independently, enlisting the help of PCs only when that would strengthen their agenda. Agendas are defined by a series of 3-5 goals that build toward a clear objective. Goals are progressive, building on the previous successes (or failures) of earlier goals.

Goals should focus on acquiring a distinct advantage in order to proceed to the next goal. At least one goal should deal with the faction's primary obstacle. This may be the first goal, or the last. All agendas have at least one obstacle that stands in the way of their completion. Additional obstacles can arise through faction actions (pg. 13) or through developments in the fiction.

Completing a faction's agendas should be a significant event, potentially changing the political or natural landscape of a region.

> The region map should continually reflect the impact of factions as they work on completing their agendas and acquiring more advantages.
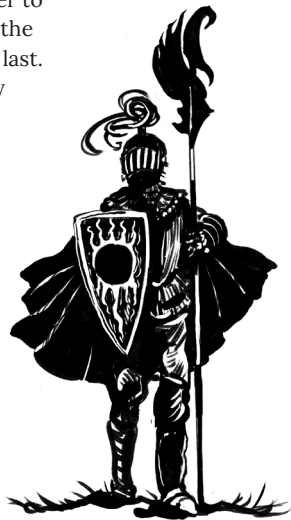
FACTION TYPE
Roll 1d20 for each column and combine.

d20	Type	Agent
1	Artisans	Academic
2	Commoners	Assassin
3	Criminals	Blacksmith
4	Cultists	Farmer
5	Exiles	General
6	Explorers	Gravedigger
7	Industrialists	Guard
8	Merchants	Healer
9	Military	Jailer
10	Nobles	Laborer
11	Nomads	Lord
12	Pilgrims	Merchant
13	Protectors	Monk
14	Religious	Mystic
15	Revolutionaries	Outlander
16	Rulers	Peddler
17	Scholars	Politician
18	Settlers	Spy
19	Spies	Thief
20	Tribe	Thug

FACTION TRAITS
Roll 1d20 for each column and combine.

d20	Trait 1	Trait 2
1	Cautious	Adaptable
2	Connected	Bankrupt
3	Decadent	Brutal
4	Disciplined	Collaborative
5	Discreet	Corrupt
6	Dogmatic	Craven
7	Enigmatic	Cruel
8	Fierce	Cunning
9	Incorruptible	Cynical
10	Intellectual	Deceptive
11	Judicious	Generous
12	Keen	Incompetent
13	Loyal	Manipulative
14	Meticulous	Mercurial
15	Popular	Repressed
16	Pragmatic	Ruthless
17	Resourceful	Selfish
18	Secretive	Stealthy
19	Shrewd	Threatened
20	Tenacious	Xenophobic

Faction Advantages

Roll 1d20 to determine the number of advantages the faction has, then roll 1d20 again for each of the corresponding advantages. For example, if a result of "2" was received from the "# of Advantages" column, you would roll on the "Type" column twice, noting each result. Reroll repeated results.

FACTION ADVANTAGES

d20	Total Advantages	Type
1	1	Alliances
2	1	Anonymity
3	1	Apparatus
4	1	Beliefs
5	1	Charisma
6	1	Conviction
7	1	Fealty
8	2	Force
9	2	Information
10	2	Lineage
11	2	Magic
12	2	Members
13	3	Popularity
14	3	Position
15	3	Renown
16	3	Resources
17	3	Ruthlessness
18	4	Specialization
19	4	Subterfuge
20	4	Wealth

FACTION AGENDAS

Roll 1d20 for each column and combine.

d20	Agenda	Obstacle
1	Ascend to a Higher Plane	A geographic barrier or impassable terrain.
2	Collect Artifacts	A key piece of information must first be discovered.
3	Cultivate a Rare Resource	A particular object or Relic is required.
4	Defend Something	A powerful figure or foe must be eliminated.
5	Destroy Something	A rare but necessary resource must first be acquired.
6	Dominate Others	A serious debt forces the faction to make dire choices.
7	Enrich Themselves	A well-known prophecy predicts imminent failure.
8	Establish a Colony	An alliance with an enemy must first be brokered.
9	Establish a New Order	An internal schism threatens to tear the faction apart.
10	Explore Uncharted Lands	Another faction has the same goal.
11	Forge an Alliance	Another faction stands in opposition.
12	Infiltrate Another Faction	Commoners stand openly in opposition.
13	Preserve the Status Quo	Considerable capital is required.
14	Protect a Secret	Contravenes an established code, with a heavy penalty.
15	Purge the Land	Hindered by cultural taboos.
16	Reveal a Secret	Many must die, either as a necessity or consequence.
17	Revenge	Must be carried out at a rare or exact moment.
18	Revive a Former Power	Must be carried out in absolute secrecy.
19	Seek New Leadership	Requires a specialist of an uncommon sort.
20	Spread a Belief	The outcome would lead to unavoidable war.

Example Faction

Type

- **Academics:** *Royal Cartographer's Guild.* Respected and feared, even by the royal family.

Advantages

- **Apparatus:** A *Map of the Dead.* Legend tells that the map reveals a Gate to the land of the dead.
- **Renown:** None would dare defy the *Guild* publicly. Their voice carries great weight in the Cities.

Agents

- Horatia Confi, first of her order. Recovered the *Map of the Dead* for the guild. WIL 15.

Agenda

- Hire a skilled party to escort Horatia to a location written on the map.
- Travel through the lands of the dead in search of the *Order's* original founder.
- Bring the founder back to the Cities. Overthrow the ruler of the Realm.

Obstacles

- The *Guild* has been warned that a well-placed operative moves within their ranks.

Faction Rules

- By default, factions operate independent of the player character's actions. If the PCs do nothing, the faction should still act to achieve their aims.
- The Warden should rely on the fiction to determine whether a faction is positioned to advance their agenda.
- Some goals may be time-sensitive or depend on explicit circumstances. Other times it might be more appropriate to introduce a new goal after a major event, alliance, or friction between one or more factions, etc.
- Whenever a faction is positioned to advance a goal in their agenda, roll a **d6** on the Faction Actions table.
- If two factions are *opposed*, the faction *most at risk* makes a WIL save, using the score of its highest-ranking agent. On a fail, the faction does not roll on the Faction Actions table at this time.

FACTION ACTIONS

d6	Consequence	Impact
1	Failure	A new **Obstacle** is introduced, and an **Advantage** is lost.
2	Setback	An **Advantage** is lost.
3	Status Quo	Nothing is gained, but nothing is lost.
4	Mixed Success	A **goal** is achieved, but an **Advantage** is lost.
5	Success	A goal is **achieved**, and no **Advantages** are lost.
6	Major Success	A **goal** is achieved, and a new **Advantage** is found.

The actions of the PCs can always overrule the necessity for a faction action or, in some cases, shift the outcome of the roll in a favorable or unfavorable direction.

Topography

A region's terrain and natural features are an essential part of any map, affecting the local history, resources, settlements, culture, and more.

Landmarks

Landmarks are unique, visible POIs that can also be used as geographic reference points: towers, mountains, tall buildings, and so on. They help orient travelers around the map, and are especially visible from areas with higher elevation or a clear viewpoint. Landmarks are represented on the map by a triangle.

DRAW TERRAIN

1. Roll **1d6** then roll an amount of dice equal to that number on the map. Collect any dice that roll off the page and set them aside. (fig. 1)

2. Note the face-up result for each die, then use the Terrain Die Drop Table to mark the terrain type on the map. For example, a die showing a 4 would indicate Tough terrain.

3. Draw long, curvy lines across the page, carving up the map around each die. (fig. 2)

4. Roll on the appropriate table for each result, writing the terrain and landmark results on the map. (fig. 2)

   - Replace the die with a triangle, writing the landmark result on the map.

   - If there are any empty spaces in need of terrain, roll a die anywhere you like and use the face-up result as before.
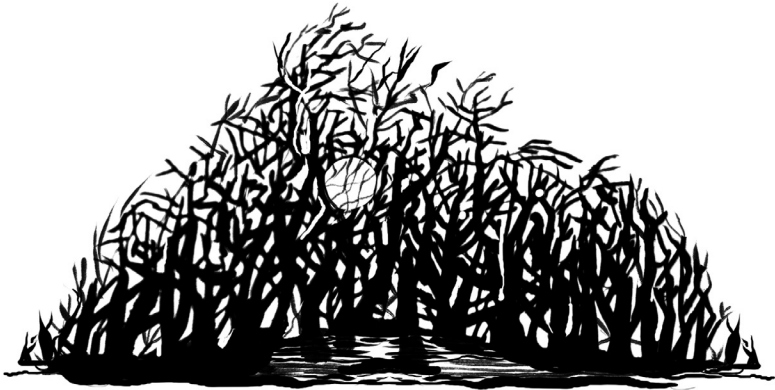
TERRAIN DIE DROP TABLE

d6	Type
1-3	Easy
4-5	Tough
6	Perilous

Fig. 1: Roll for terrain type
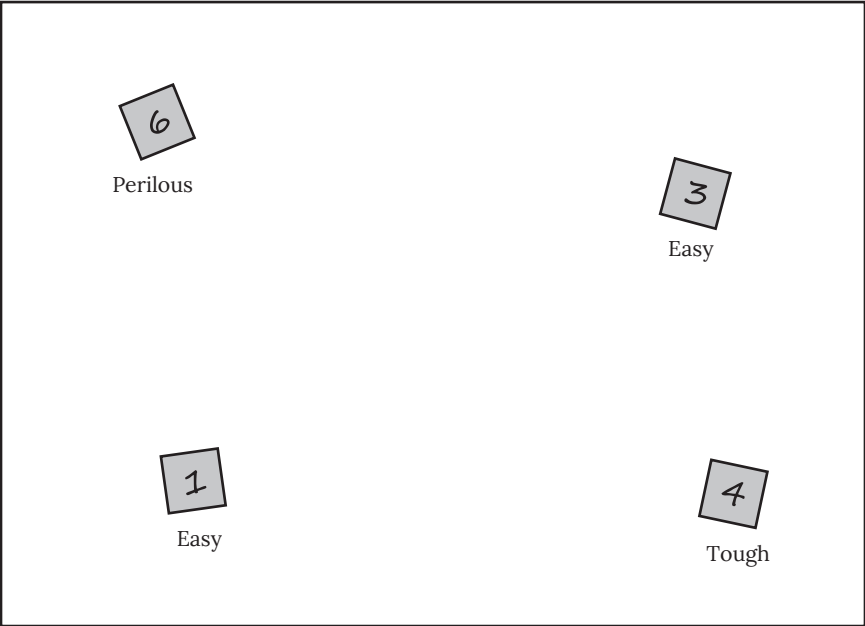
Fig. 2 Roll on terrain type tables

Perilous: Mountains
Landmark: Sky-Root

Easy: Plains
Landmark: Enormous Footprint

Easy: Grasslands
Landmark: Titanic Gate

Tough: Marshlands
Landmark: Leviathan Bones
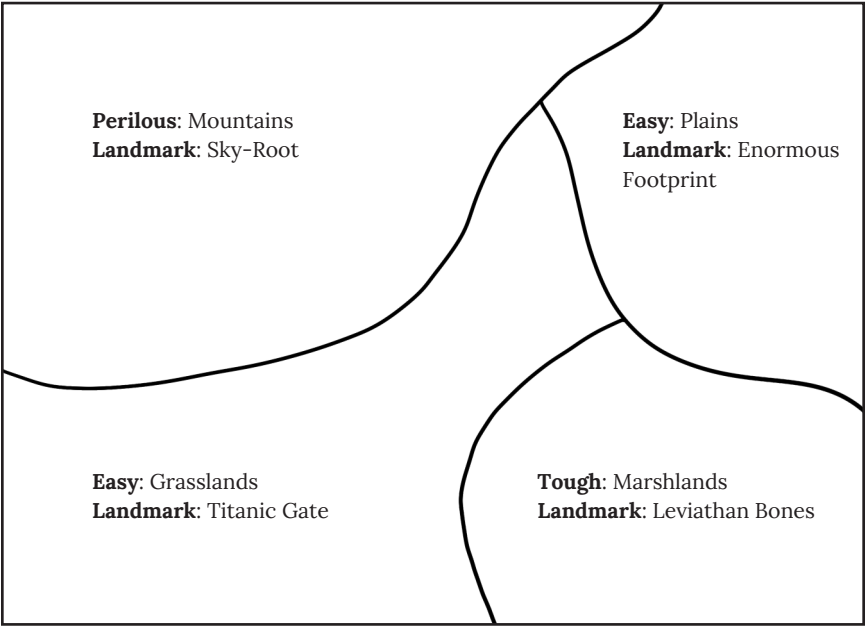
EASY

Roll 1d20 for each column and combine.

d20	Terrain	Landmark
1	Bluffs	Broken Sundial
2	Dells	Circle of Menhirs
3	Farmlands	Circular Maze
4	Fells	Cloud Stairway
5	Foothills	Dead Aqueduct
6	Glens	Enormous Footprint
7	Grasslands	Fallen Column
8	Gulleys	False Oasis
9	Heaths	Giant's Throne
10	Lowlands	Glittering Cascade
11	Meadows	Golden Bridge
12	Moors	Great Stone Face
13	Pampas	Great Waterwheel
14	Pastures	Heart Tree
15	Plains	Opaque Lake
16	Plateaus	Petrified Forest
17	Prairies	Pit of Cold Fire
18	Savannas	Silver Face
19	Steppes	Sinkhole
20	Valleys	Titanic Gate

TOUGH

Roll 1d20 for each column and combine.

d20	Terrain	Landmark
1	Barrens	Algae Falls
2	Canyons	Basalt Columns
3	Chaparral	Behemoth Graveyard
4	Coral Reefs	Canyon Bridge
5	Deserts	Cinder Cones
6	Dunes	Half-Buried Ark
7	Estuaries	Flame Pits
8	Fens	Forest of Arrows
9	Forests	Frozen Waterfall
10	Heathlands	Fungal Forest
11	Hills	Hanging Valley
12	Mangroves	Inverted Lighthouse
13	Marshlands	Leviathan Bones
14	Moorlands	Massive Crater
15	Rainforests	Massive Dung Ball
16	Scrublands	Salt Flat Mirrors
17	Taiga	Shrouded Ziggurat
18	Thickets	Stalagmite Forest
19	Tundra	Sunken Colossus
20	Woodlands	Titan's Table

PERILOUS

Roll 1d20 for each column and combine.

d20	Terrain	Landmark
1	Alpine Meadows	Active Volcano
2	Bogs	Ammonia Caves
3	Boulders	Bone Mountain
4	Caverns	Crystalline Forest
5	Cliffs	Dome of Darkness
6	Craters	Enormous Hive
7	Crevasses	Floating Object
8	Geysers	Inactive Automaton
9	Glaciers	Land Scar
10	Gorges	Large Vents
11	Hollows	Magma Sculptures
12	Ice Fields	Man on the Mountain
13	Jungles	Meteor Garden
14	Lava Fields	Obsidian Needle
15	Mountains	Reverse Waterfall
16	Peatlands	River of Sulfur
17	Quagmires	Siren Stones
18	Ravine	Sky-Root
19	Swamps	Titanic Ribcage
20	Wastelands	Weeping Bubble

Rivers, Seas, and Lakes

Every region should have some kind of water source. Otherwise, where would the locals get their drinking water or receive news from the rest of the realm?

- To create waterways, draw a wiggly line from the highest elevation point (e.g. Mountains) to the lowest (e.g. Grasslands). (fig. 3)

- If the river runs through terrain that is higher in elevation, it might terminate in a **lake**. If your map has a sea, it might terminate there. Otherwise, the river can continue on off the map page.

Weather

The weather can have a great impact on the people, culture, and terrain of a region. It impacts what kinds of clothes the adventurers need to wear, what sorts of tools they'll have to bring, and how tough the journey might be. To determine the average weather of a region, roll on the Seasonal Weather table once for each season. Optionally, you may also roll on the Unusual Weather table around particular landmarks or terrain.

SEASONAL WEATHER

d6	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
1	Mild and sunny	Hot and sunny	Nice and breezy	Mild and clear
2	Nice and drizzly	Nice and cloudy	Mild and windy	Cool and windy
3	Cool and breezy	Mild and rainy	Cool and foggy	Cold and raining
4	Mild and cloudy	Cool and stormy	Cold and cloudy	Frigid and stormy
5	Cold and windy	Hot and humid	Cool and rainy	Freezing and snowing
6	Cold and rainy	Sweltering and humid	Chilly and stormy	Freezing and hailing
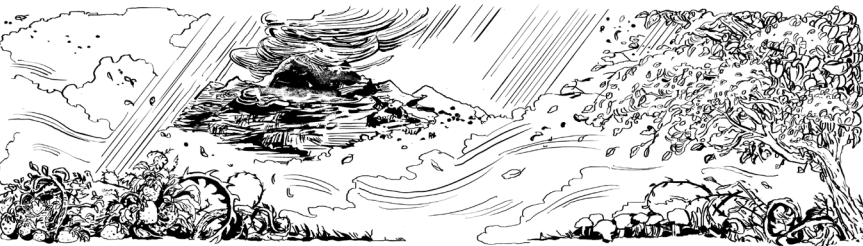
| d20	Unusual Weather
1	An annual fog appears randomly, turning metallic surfaces to gold on contact.
2	An aurora that is visible even during the day.
3	Birds fly backwards, yet somehow still move forward.
4	Days are erratic. The Sun goes backwards for a time, then jumps forward as night rapidly sets.
5	Distant chimes instead of thunder. A smoky, sweet wind blows in from the West.
6	Enormous, fleshy eyes peer down from the skies, their pupils lighting up the night sky.
7	Flashes of movement in the periphery that always amount to nothing.
8	Fog that fills the belly (no need for rations). Tomorrow, vomiting.
9	Lakes and streams evaporate in minutes, filling storm clouds that drench the landscape.
10	Periodic rains of small aquatic creatures (tadpoles, frogs, small fish). No one knows where they come from.
11	Rainbows lack most of their colors and occasionally flicker. Raindrops fall in various colors.
12	Rolling dust clouds that smell of cinnamon. The coughing lasts long after they've moved on.
13	Shadows disappear at random. Animals become more reluctant.
14	The air is thicker than usual, and breathing is difficult.
15	The clouds are shaped like faces. They appear to be laughing.
16	The moon appears larger and softly hums at night.
17	The rain glows gently at night. It can be gathered, but the light eventually fades.
18	The stars rearrange themselves in intricate patterns, making navigation difficult.
19	The winds carry whispers. Some say they tell hints of the future.
20	When it snows, the flakes are warm and dry.

Fig. 3: Adding water
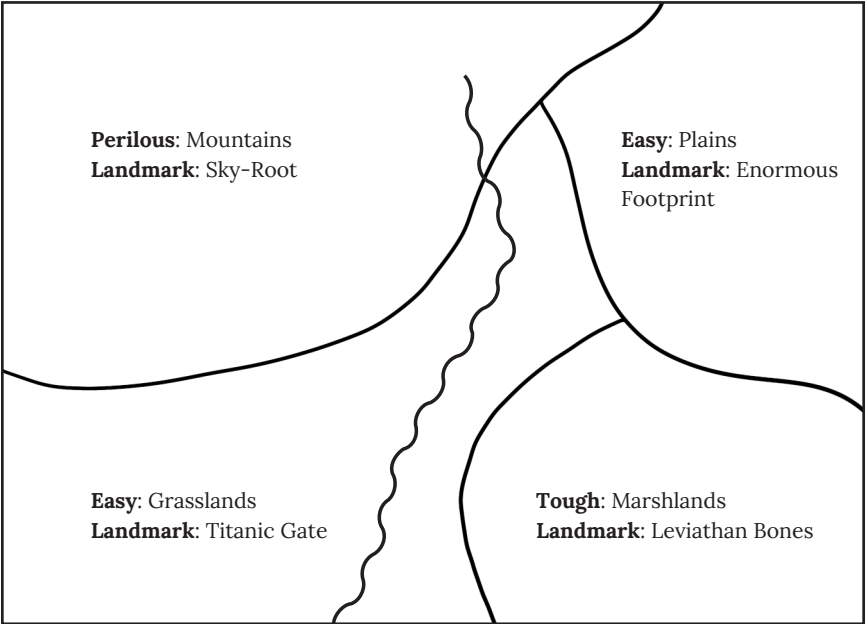
Fig. 4: Illustrating terrain and landmarks (optional)
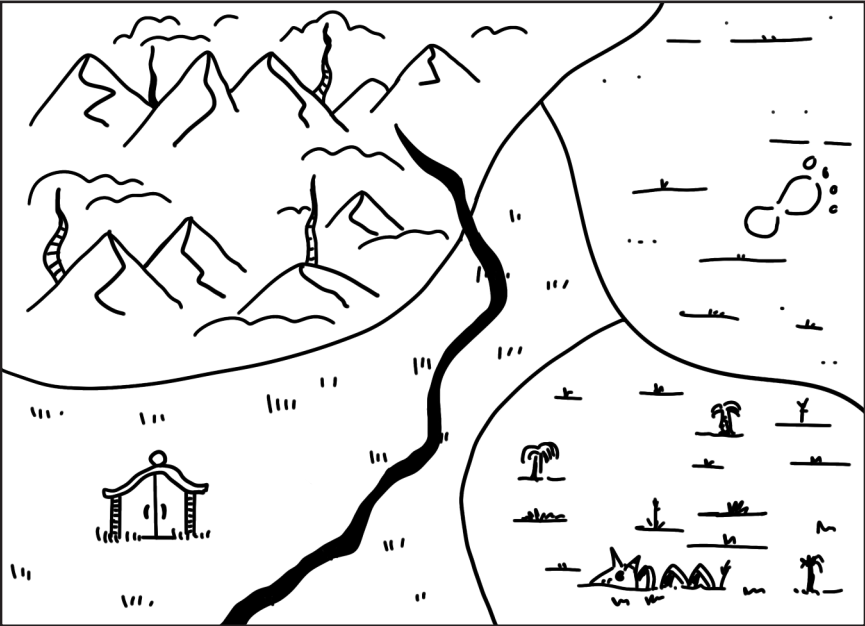
Points of Interest

Points of Interest on a map (or POIs) are generally divided into the following categories:

- **Heart**: The primary settlement in a region. It isn't necessarily the largest or most important place, but it should always be significant to the region's history and people.

- **Settlements**: Permanent, largely self-sufficient population centers, typically governed by a political body or faction.

- **Waypoints**: A safe place to refill supplies, get a good night's sleep, or get directions.

- **Curiosities**: A wilderness locale of note, somewhere remarkable or strange. It may indeed be hazardous, but only if the PCs interact with it.

- **Lairs**: An enemy encampment, hive, or source of heightened monster activity.

- **Dungeons**: An explicitly dangerous locale, dungeon, or adventure site.

Draw Points of Interest

1. Draw the letter H close to a water source on the map. (fig. 5)

2. Roll **3-8 d6** dice on the map, collecting any dice that roll off the page and setting them aside.

3. Note the face-up result for each die, then use the POI Die Drop Table to mark the type of POI on the map. For example, a die showing a 4 would indicate a Lair, denoted by the letter "L" on the page.

4. Roll any dice that fell off the map page, repeating the last step until none remain.

5. Starting with the Heart, number each POI on the map. (fig. 6)

6. Roll on the relevant tables for each POI, including the Heart (usually a Waypoint or Settlement). Note the results for each in your notebook. (fig. 6)

> Some POIs may allow the PCs to see more of the world than what appears on their map.

POI DIE DROP TABLE

d6	POI
1	Waypoint or Settlement
2-3	Curiosity
4	Lair
5-6	Dungeon

Fig. 5: Place heart and roll again for POIs
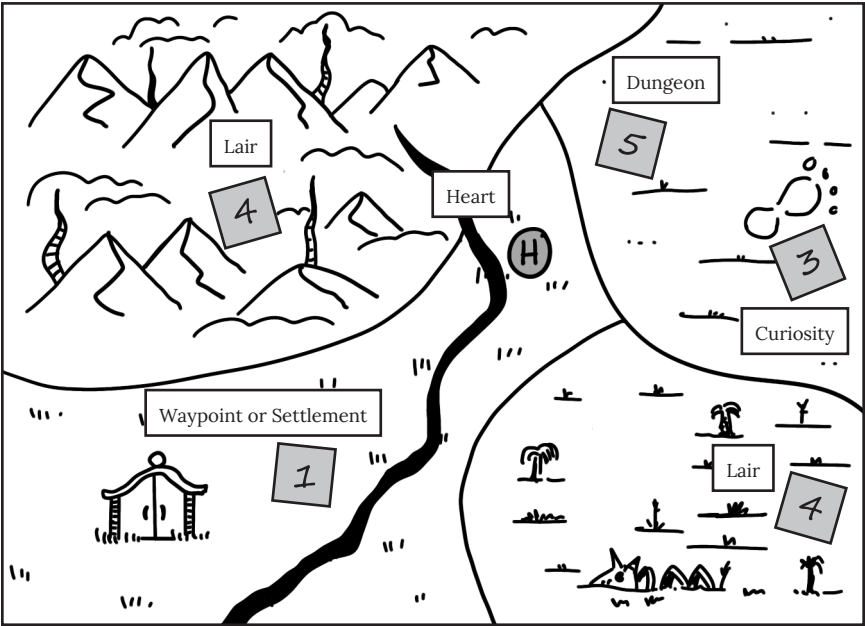
Fig. 6: Roll on POI tables to define
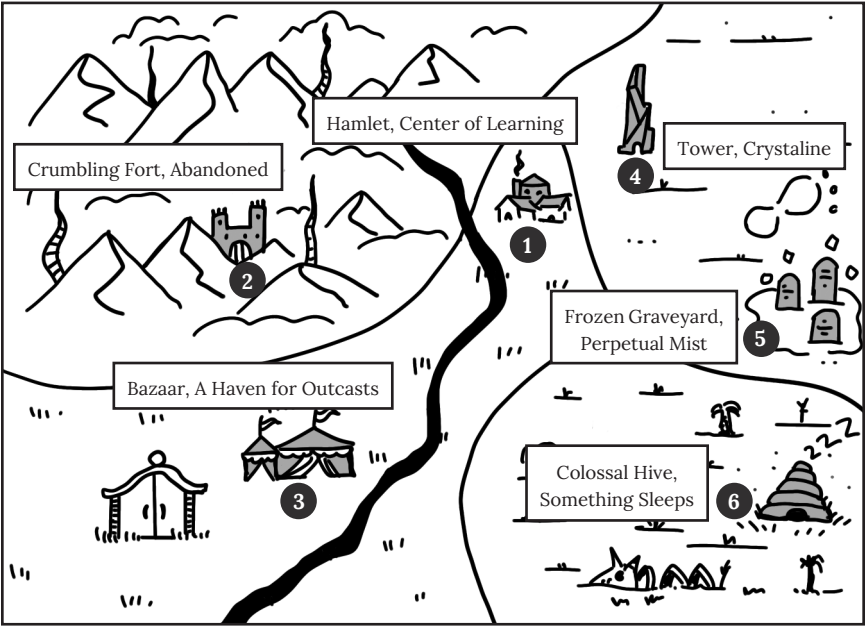
SETTLEMENTS

Roll 1d20 for each column and combine.

d20	Settlement	Feature
1	Academy	Built atop Ruins
2	Caravan	Built on Bones of Giants
3	Citadel	Center of Learning
4	City	Close-Knit
5	Commune	Divided
6	Compound	Emits a Mysterious Hum
7	Convent	Famous for its Artisans
8	Farmstead	Famous for its Festivals
9	Fortress	Guarded by Trained Beasts
10	Garrison	Hides a Dangerous Portal
11	Hamlet	High Population Density
12	Keep	Impregnable
13	Monastery	Integrated with Nature
14	Outpost	Known for its Hospitality
15	Plantation	Location of a Legendary Forge
16	Prison	Moves or Revolves
17	Stronghold	Protected by a Great Warrior
18	Town	Ruled by a Powerful Faction
19	Villa	Steeped in Tradition
20	Village	Trading Hub

WAYPOINTS

Roll 1d20 for each column and combine.

d20	Waypoint	Feature
1	Archive	A Haven for Outcasts
2	Asylum	Built on Sacred Grounds
3	Bazaar	Contains a Powerful Artifact
4	Beacon Tower	Cursed By Previous Occupants
5	Bunker	Decrepit Buildings
6	Cabin	Distrustful Occupants
7	Campground	Does Not Appear on Any Map
8	Guildhall	Front for Illegal Operations
9	Hospice	Host to a Renowned Artisan
10	Hunting Lodge	Known for its Elaborate Defenses
11	Inn	Occupants Are Lawful to a Fault
12	Observatory	Occupants Are Overly Formal
13	Reservoir	Outsiders Are Barred
14	Sanatorium	Outsiders Cannot Carry Weapons
15	Sanctuary	Part of an Illegal Trade Route
16	Shrine	Popular Pilgrim Destination
17	Temple	Protects a Powerful Object
18	Trading Post	Reclusive Occupants
19	Watchtower	Sits on Natural Deposits
20	Work Camp	Technologically Advanced

CURIOSITIES

Roll 1d20 for each column and combine.

d20	Curosity	Feature
1	Ancient Tree	Abandoned Vessel
2	Broken Tower	Ancient Trash Heap
3	Buried Megalith	Buried Ley Line
4	Collapsed Mill	Buried Library
5	Cracked Bell	Carnivorous Plants
6	Crystal Spire	Celestial Mirror
7	Dripping Archway	Cult Ritual Site
8	Echoing Fields	Edible Fungus
9	Enormous Fist	Floating Debris
10	Enormous Footprint	Hidden Market
11	Floating Island	Illusory
12	Frozen Graveyard	Impossible Music
13	Hanging Bridges	Infested With Vermin
14	Illegible Signpost	Irregular Gravity
15	Leviathan Skeleton	Isolated Weather
16	Oddly-Shaped Lake	Only Appears at Night
17	Petrified Trees	Perpetual Mist
18	Purple Geysers	Perpetual Shadows
19	Singing Stones	Site of Ancient Battle
20	Sunken City	Unstable Ground

LAIRS

Roll 1d20 for each column and combine.

d20	Lair	Feature
1	Abandoned Tower	Abandoned
2	Ancient Prison	At Crossroads
3	Collapsed Mine	Baited Entrance
4	Colossal Hive	Bioluminescence
5	Crashed Ship	Constant Screaming
6	Crumbling Fort	Entry Forbidden
7	Dry Aqueduct	Faction Hideout
8	Enormous Stump	Hidden Exit
9	Forgotten Graveyard	Odd Machinery
10	Hidden Burrow	Piles of Bones
11	Hollow Obelisk	Previously Occupied
12	Overgrown Garden	Religious Graffiti
13	Primeval Menhirs	Scattered Traps
14	Primitive Bridge	Scavengers Prowl
15	Rotted Mill	Signs Posted
16	Ruined Town	Something Sleeps
17	Rusted Construct	Symbiotic Entity
18	Spiked Cave	Training Camp
19	Sunken Grotto	Underwater
20	Unruly Copse	Waste Pit

DUNGEONS

Roll 2d20 and combine the results. See the Dungeon Seeds chapter (pg. 32) for how to flesh out each Dungeon POI for your setting

d20	Type	Feature
1	Burial Ground	Abandoned
2	Cave	Buried
3	Cellar	Burnt
4	Crypt	Clockwork
5	Den	Collapsed
6	Estate	Crumbling
7	Fort	Crystalline
8	Great Hall	Floating
9	Laboratory	Flooded
10	Manor	Fungal
11	Mine	Inverted
12	Outpost	Isolated
13	Palace	Mirrored
14	Prison	Otherworldly
15	Ruined City	Overgrown
16	Stronghold	Petrified
17	Temple	Remote
18	Tomb	Sealed
19	Tower	Toxic
20	Workshop	Warped

Generating Paths

Paths act as geographic connectors on the map, ranging from well-traveled roads and trails to rough wilderness routes. Paths should provide compelling choices between POIs, where factors such as safety, speed, and travel difficulty must be weighted.

Path Types

- **Standard** paths are obvious or well-trod routes between two POIs.
  - » *Represented by a thick line.*
- **Hidden** paths do not appear on any known maps. Their discovery always requires some kind of cost.
  - » *Represented by a dashed line.*
- **Conditional** paths may be blocked or require specialized tools (boats, climbing gear, etc.) to cross. Others may even be impossible to navigate without a map or guide.
  - » *Represented by a crossed line.*

Draw Paths

- Starting with the Heart, create 1-4 paths between each location.
  - » Create loops, branching paths, dead-ends, and shortcuts between POIs.
  - » Some paths may be parts of a chain and tied to a particular terrain (mountain passes, rivers, etc.).
  - » Some paths are Conditional, represented by a crossed line.
  - » Some paths are Hidden, represented by a dashed line.
- Designate each path using the number of a POI and its connecting point, e.g. 1–3. Indicate this in your notebook under the originating POI or in a separate section.
- Decide whether a path represents a road, a trail, or a wilderness route, and write the results in your notebook.
- Roll on the Path Features table for each path, writing the results in your notebook.
- Determine the path distances between POIs, and note the duration on the map:
  - » A Watch is 8 hours long. Denote days between POIs wherever possible (typically two Watches and one rest per day of travel).
  - » A short distance between POIs takes one Watch to traverse, a medium distance takes two Watches, and a long distance takes three Watches.
  - » For Trails, add 1 more Watch, and for Wilderness routes, add 2 additional Watches.

PATH FEATURES

Roll 1d20 for each column and combine.

d20	Feature	Condition
1	Abandoned Fields	Bandit Ambushes
2	Blood-Red	Blocked by Giant Boulder
3	Buried Charms	Collapsed Bridge
4	Cattle Prints	Confusing to Navigate
5	Constant Patrols	Dense Bramble
6	Dead Vegetation	Divided by Political Dispute
7	Disappearing	Erratic Weather
8	Diseased Animals	Frequent Flash Floods
9	Follows the Stars	Gets Extremely Cold
10	Frequent Pilgrims	Heavy Toll Required
11	Massive Grooves	Labyrinthine Canyons
12	Mile Markers	Night Predators
13	Mineral Flecks	Occasional Stampedes
14	Newly Made	Overcrowded
15	Overgrown	Passes over Rapids
16	Rusted Tools	Poisonous Fruit
17	Shredded	Smoke-filled
18	Shriveled Away	Steep Climb
19	Twisted	Thick Evening Mist
20	Ubiquitous Footprints	Uneven, Soggy Ground

Terrain Difficulty			
Difficulty	**Terrain**	**Penalty**	**Factors**
Easy	Plains, plateaus, valleys	None	Safe areas for rest, fellow travelers, good visibility.
Tough	Forests, deserts, hills	+1 Watch	Wild animals, flooding, broken equipment, falling rocks, unsafe shelters, hunter's traps
Perilous	Mountains, jungles, swamps	+2 Watches	Quicksand, sucking mud, choking vines, unclean water, poisonous plants and animals, poor navigation

Put It All Together

Ask yourself the following questions:

- What would draw people to this region? What keeps them here?
- What do the people here think of outsiders? What do outsiders think of them?
- What power do the Factions have over the people who live here?
- Who or what threatens their agendas?
- How would a faction interact with any newcomers (e.g. an adventuring party)?
- How does the region's terrain and weather affect the people that live here?

You should now have a sufficient idea about the people and terrain of this region, and your first region is now complete. To expand your realm, repeat the process as many times as you wish.


Example

If my results described a people that were religious and sought conversion, I'd assume they were a proud folk, prone to religious extremes and proselytizing. And if their primary resource was land, yet spices were rare, I'd assume they grew their own food but, due to a religious prohibition, their cuisine was often bland.

Presume that for a faction the result was a group of Nomads, with conviction their primary advantage. I could then assume that their elites were a class of religious chiefs. If the faction's agenda was to cultivate a rare resource, but they were hindered by cultural taboos, I might decide that they had hired the party to take on the task instead. Perhaps the object of their quest was a unique plant, only grown in a distant place, and that the mission must remain a secret!

Finally, the party would meet with one of the faction agents: a spy posing as a peddler. Only she could tell them where the plant grew and how to cultivate it. I keep in mind that this person should likely appear in an important place, such as the region's Heart (pg. 20).
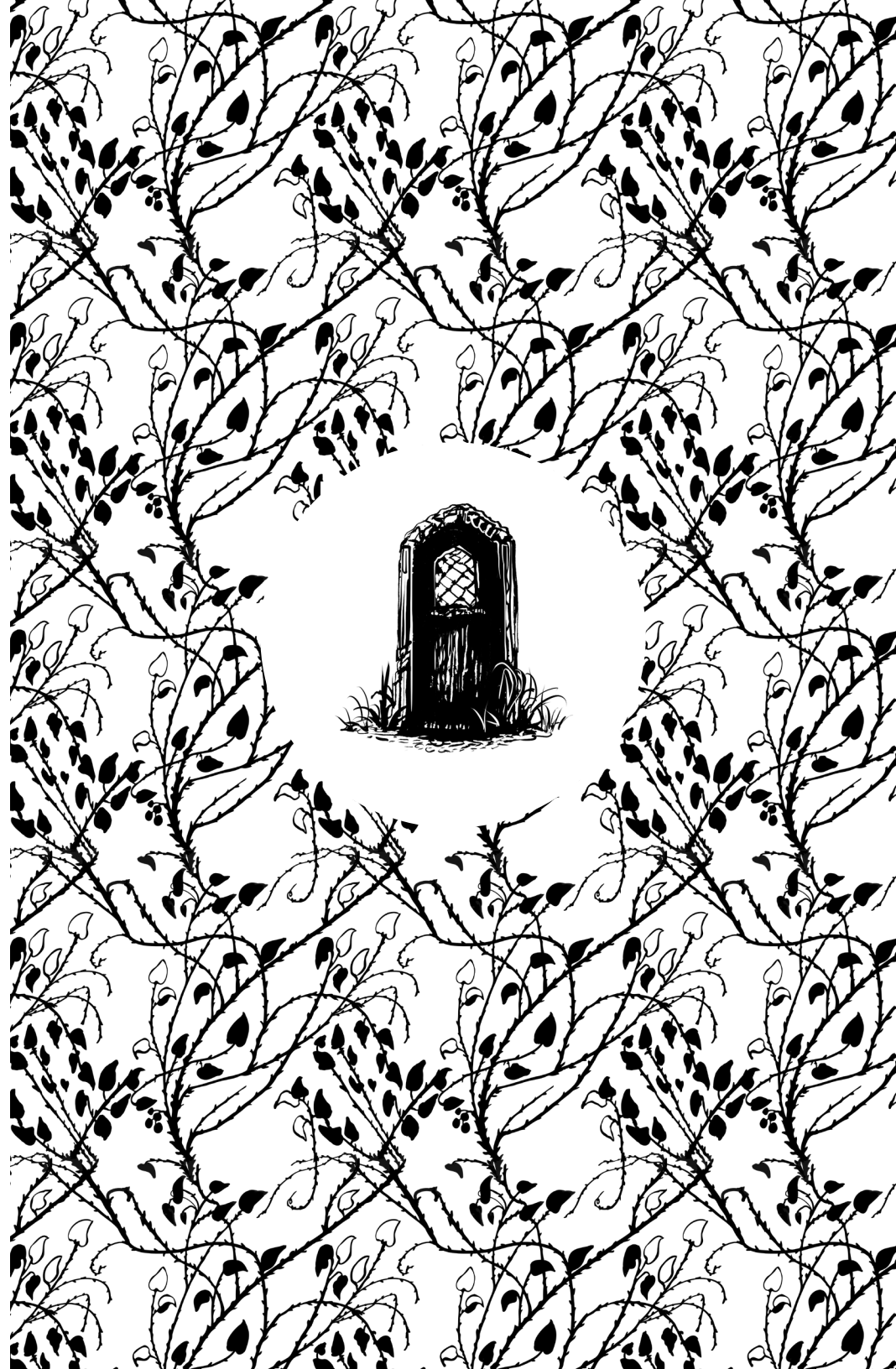
Dungeon Seeds

Dungeon Principles

Purpose
Consider what the dungeon's original purpose was as well as what it is being used for today. Demonstrate a dungeon's history by including signs of its original inhabitants and their goals. Sometimes a dungeon will have multiple purposes, and these can collide against each other to create tension among its denizens.

Levels
Though they should make sense as part of the dungeon's construction and purpose, levels should also represent increasing danger. On each level, try to push players to weigh the risk of further exploration versus a potential reward.

Layout
Create multiple entrances and exits, offer multiple routes, design choke points, and provide hiding spots. Add meaningful and obvious information to room entrances and exits.

Verticality
Incorporate tall rooms, climbable structures, and paths that allow movement around and over obstacles.

Secret Areas
Include hidden zones, including at least one that will likely remain undiscovered but is still worth finding. Try to avoid hiding crucial information behind secret rooms.

Rooms
Vary room shapes, sizes, and functions. Use architectural motifs to connect rooms and provide hints of what's to come. Room descriptions should be easy to map and recall.

Treasure
Incorporate a variety of treasures beyond mere gold, such as knowledge, allies, trade goods, and artifacts. Add narrative elements to treasure to increase its non-monetary value.

Challenges
Allow the characters to drive the story by writing challenges without prescribed outcomes. Create a sense of peril, but avoid making obstacles seem unbeatable. Overly dangerous areas and creatures should be obvious. Create encounters that can be avoided with critical thinking and problem-solving, not just violence. Remember that monsters and other obstacles are another way to tell the dungeon's story.

NPCs
Include engaging NPCs with their own goals and agendas. These characters may want to stay in the dungeon; they may even love it! NPCs and monsters should communicate with the PCs, even during combat. Have them make threats, suggest compromises, or try to persuade the PCs whenever possible. Every character wants something, and has a limit to what they might do to get it.

Factions
Factions should interact with both the characters and one another, acting on their own regardless of the character's actions. Give them hierarchies and divisions that can be exploited.

Puzzles
Create puzzles that have clear, actionable goals. Puzzles should reinforce the themes of the dungeon and build on its history. Make the challenge of the puzzle obvious, but the solution less so. Allow for multiple solutions, and for players to solve them using intelligence and critical thinking, not just special abilities or tools. Create built-in clues suggesting the puzzle's origin and its effects.

The Dungeon Map
Put boring or repetitive stuff (exits, room shapes, etc.) on the map, rather than in the room description. Obvious exits should be described using clear, distinct language. Number your rooms to help avoid confusion when referencing the map.

Room Keying
Emphasize a room's most important aspects (typically obvious threats or NPCs). Describe elements that help orient the party to their surroundings. Be specific, but avoid describing how the characters should feel. Only describe what's happening now. If there is history here, the characters will discover it in play. Name each room!

Encounter Tables
Create random events to help make a dungeon feel alive by making exploration tense and unpredictable, as parties may encounter wandering monsters, factions, NPCs, or signs of an approaching threat. Try to provide challenges, moments of respite, or opportunities for roleplay.

Creating a Dungeon

Materials Required

- A sheet of paper and a notebook. Letter/A4 is fine.
- Pencils and erasers.
- At least one d6 and one d20, but 6d6 and 2d20 would be ideal.

> Going forward, we will refer to the sheet of paper as the dungeon map. As with any other rule, if you don't like a table result, roll again or tweak as desired!

Follow this procedure for any dungeon POIs in your setting. Refer to the dungeon type table results from earlier, reading the results from your map. What image springs immediately to mind? Where is the dungeon located? What does its entrance look like? Don't worry if you can't answer these questions yet. By the end of this process, you should be able to.

Overview

- Describe the dungeon's original purpose, its construction, and finally its ruination.
- Describe the dungeon's NPCs and factions, including their unique traits and agendas.
- Finalize the dungeon theme.
- Create the map.
- Stock the dungeon's rooms.

History

Who built the dungeon? What was it originally used for? Perhaps it was once a great forge, capable of building the world's most powerful weapon. Or maybe it was once a burial site for ancient kings, binding their souls to the lands they once ruled. Roll on the tables below, noting the results in your notebook, keeping the following questions in mind: "*What kind of dungeon is this, and what makes it unusual?*" and "*Why was this dungeon built, how was it built, and what caused its downfall?*"

PURPOSE

Roll 1d20 for each column and combine.

d20	Original Use	Built By
1	Ancestral Rites	A Fallen Hero
2	Arcane Library	A Fanatical Cult
3	Astral Trading Hub	A Forgotten Empire
4	Bestial Creations	A Long-Dead Poet
5	Breeding Grounds	A Militant Order
6	Burial Site	A Renowned Alchemist
7	Celestial Observations	A Royal Dynasty
8	Covert Experiments	A Secret Society
9	Forbidden Trysts	A Tyrannical Ruler
10	Forge for a Great Weapon	A Warrior Tribe
11	Hideout	A Wealthy Recluse
12	Impenetrable Vault	Desperate Rebels
13	Invasion of Dreams	Heretical Alchemists
14	Isolated Refuge	Heretical Monks
15	Military Outpost	Immoral Sorcerers
16	Observatory	Inverted Astrologers
17	Pilgrimage Site	Mob Families
18	Protection of Rare Artifacts	Opulent Merchants
19	Secret Meeting Place	Pilgrims to a Dead God
20	Treasure Horde	Rogue Scholars

CONSTRUCTION

Roll 1d20 for each column and combine.

d20	Entrance	Composition
1	A Creature's Lair	Bone
2	A Dream	Coral
3	A Massive Tree	Crystal
4	A Well	Earth
5	An Enormous Grave	Ethereal Fabric
6	Behind a Waterfall	Flesh
7	Between Menhirs	Floating Platforms
8	Cave	Fungi
9	Center of a Maze	Glass
10	Cliff Door	Ice
11	Hollow Statue	Living Plants
12	Illusory Wall	Marble
13	Mine Shaft	Metal
14	Sinking Sand	Obsidian
15	Skyward Beam of Light	Petrified Wood
16	Starlight Path	Sand
17	Through a Painting	Shadow Material
18	Under a Bridge	Stone
19	Underwater Tunnel	Webs
20	Veil of Mist	Wood

RUINATION

Roll 1d20 for each column and combine.

d20	Condition	Cause
1	Corpse	Alchemical Accident
2	Crumbling	Ancient Curse
3	Cursed	Cataclysmic Flood
4	Desecrated	Civil War
5	Devoured	Competing Rituals
6	Displaced	Consumed by a Beast
7	Divided	Disease
8	Frozen	Hedonism
9	Haunted	Invasion
10	Infested	Long-Term Abandonment
11	Overgrown	Magic Gone Awry
12	Overpopulated	Magical Seal
13	Petrified	Natural Disaster
14	Plundered	Natural Erosion
15	Poisoned	Obfuscation
16	Scorched	Overrun with Monsters
17	Shrouded in Mist	Sudden Change in Climate
18	Submerged	Teleported to Another Realm
19	Unending	Turned to Stone
20	Warped	Unresolved Spirits

Dungeon Denizens

Most dungeons will have creatures that live there and make it their home. The following table can be used to describe the general attitude of any or all of the intelligent creatures in the dungeon. Roll on the Traits table, writing the results in your notebook. This describes the general attitude of the creatures found in the dungeon.

Meanwhile, every dungeon should have at least one NPC that stands out from all the others. These types prefer the dungeon life over any other, but still act differently from their brethren. They should be NPCs that the party can interact with, trade with, hire, aid, and so on. These strange creatures can be deeply involved or entirely neutral towards the dungeon's other denizens and factions. Roll on the Traits table again, writing the results in your notebook, keeping the following questions in mind:

- *"What do we know about the creatures and factions that occupy the dungeon?"*
- *"What is each faction trying to achieve, and what stands in their way?"*

DENIZEN TRAITS

Roll 1d20 for each column and combine.

| d20	Virtues	Vices
1	Compassionate	Absent-Minded
2	Courageous	Aloof
3	Creative	Critical
4	Deductive	Cynical
5	Honest	Greedy
6	Incisive	Impulsive
7	Incorruptible	Inflexible
8	Individualistic	Naive
9	Loyal	Obstinate
10	Methodical	Passive
11	Polite	Pedantic
12	Practical	Perfectionist
13	Resilient	Sarcastic
14	Scholarly	Selfish
15	Self-Sufficient	Skeptical
16	Solid	Stubborn
17	Studious	Superficial
18	Suave	Unfocused
19	Unwavering	Unimaginative
20	Witty	Vain

Dungeon Factions

All dungeons should have one or more factions with their own unique agenda, obstacles, leaders, and hierarchy.

AGENDAS

Roll 1d20 for each column and combine.

d20	Goal	Obstacle
1	Ascension	Conflict
2	Creation	Corruption
3	Destruction	Cost
4	Dominion	Danger
5	Enlightenment	Decay
6	Exploration	Discord
7	Growth	Division
8	Innovation	Dogma
9	Justice	Exposure
10	Knowledge	Factionalism
11	Liberation	Fear
12	Peace	Ignorance
13	Power	Incompetence
14	Preservation	Injustice
15	Protection	Isolation
16	Redemption	Opposition
17	Revenge	Sacrifice
18	Survival	Stagnation
19	Transformation	Tradition
20	Wealth	Weakness
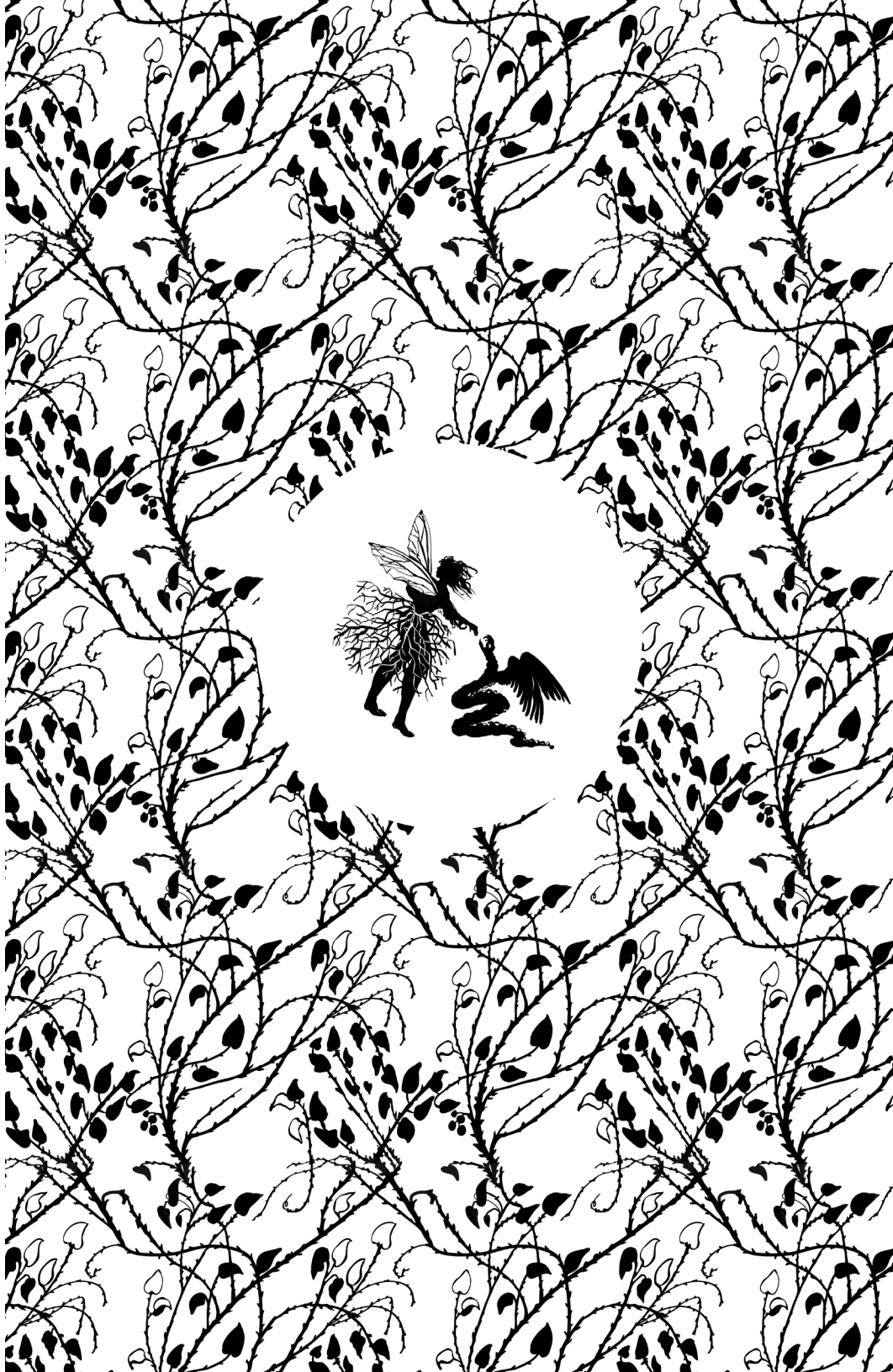
Build a Dungeon

Create the Map

1. Roll 6-20 d6 dice on the dungeon map, ignoring any dice that fall off the page. These are the dungeon's rooms (Fig. 1).

2. Write the face-up results on the page using the **Dungeon Die Drop Table**. For example, the number 4 would indicate a Special room, which you can denote on the page with the letter "S."

DUNGEON DIE DROP TABLE

d6	Room Type
1	Monster (pg. 44)
2-3	Lore (pg. 45)
4	Special (pg. 46)
5-6	Trap (pg. 47)

3. Select the room closest to the page border. This is the entrance to the dungeon (Fig. 2).

4. Starting with the entrance, number each room on the dungeon map (Fig. 2).

   > If a room feels "too far" from the rest, roll another die and follow the previous process to add a new room.

Draw Paths

5. Starting with the entrance, create 1-4 paths between each room (Fig. 2).
   - » Create loops, branching hallways, dead-ends, and shortcuts between rooms.
   - » Some paths are Conditional, represented by a crossed line.
   - » Some paths are Hidden, represented by a dashed line.

6. Create at least two intersections (crossed lines) with no rooms in between.

Stock the Rooms

7. Roll on the relevant tables for each room, writing the results in your notebook.

8. For each room, filter the table results through the theme you generated earlier in this process.
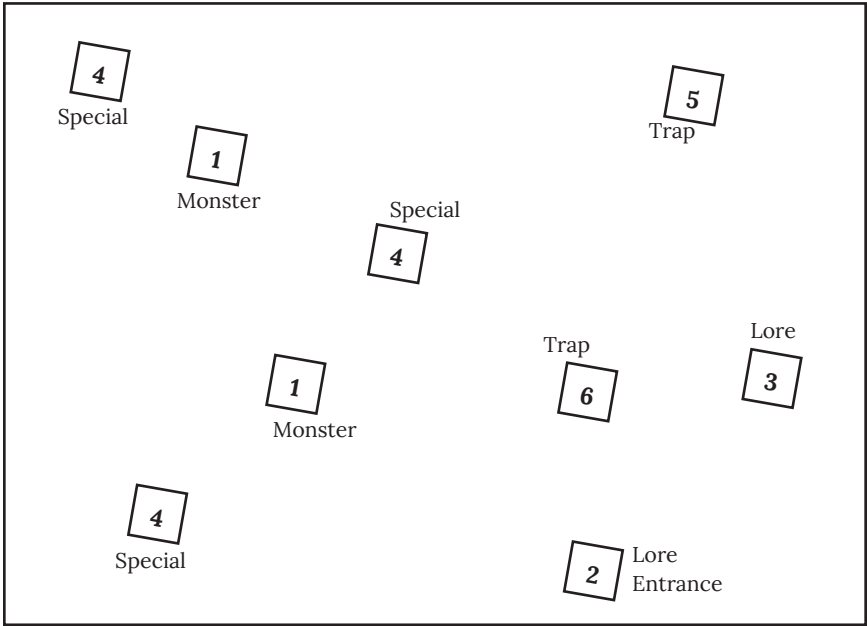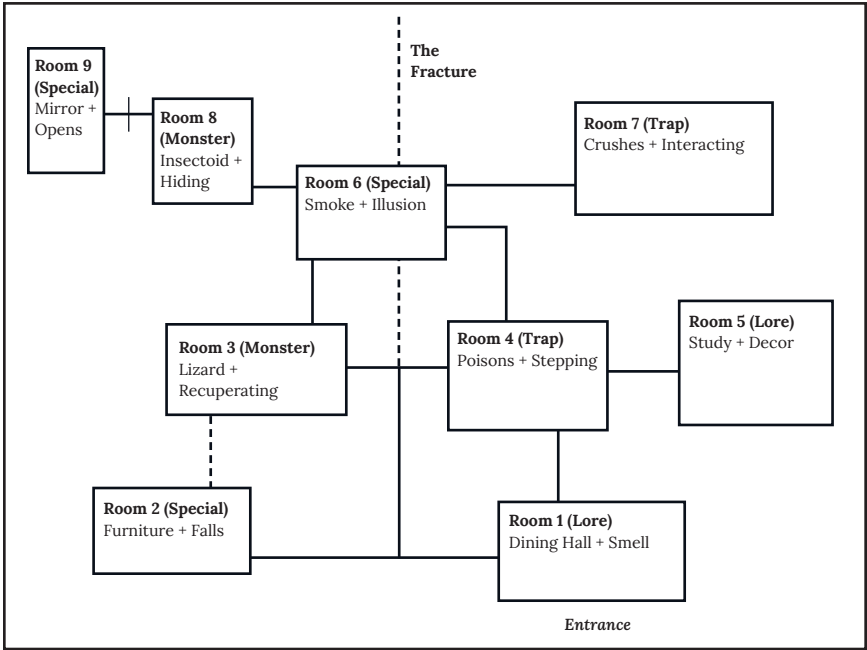
Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Monster Rooms

Monsters are any dangerous creature that lives in a dungeon. This does not mean it will attack intruders by default! Monsters are not simply "waiting around" for the characters to find them, but instead have their own wants and goals, even if they are simply looking for their next meal. Some monsters can talk, reason, and even beg for mercy. *People can be monsters, too.*

Roll 1d20 for each column and combine.

d20	Group	Activity
1	Avian	Building
2	Beast	Devouring
3	Behemoth	Dying
4	Construct	Fighting
5	Demon	Growing
6	Extraplanar	Haunting
7	Fey	Hiding
8	Giant	Killing
9	Goblinoid	Mating
10	Humanoid	Mourning
11	Hybrid	Patrolling
12	Incorporeal	Praying
13	Insectoid	Protecting
14	Lizard	Recuperating
15	Magical	Scheming
16	Mythical	Sleeping
17	Plant	Stalking
18	Shape Shifter	Torturing
19	Undead	Training
20	Unusual	Trapped

Lore Rooms

Lore rooms should build on the theme of the dungeon, provide a valuable lesson, or connect the characters with an NPC or Faction. They might create a dilemma that unites the party or puts them at odds with their mission. At a minimum, these rooms act as a curiosity, adding something memorable to the experience beyond danger and puzzle-solving. Of course, the characters should not know that these rooms do not contain danger or challenges. This helps increase tension in the dungeon, while offering a potential respite and opportunity for growing the narrative.

Roll 1d20 for each column and combine.

d20	Room Type	Clue
1	Armory	Decay
2	Barracks	Decor
3	Bath	Draft
4	Cistern	Echoes
5	Court	Footprints
6	Crypt	Leavings
7	Den	Light
8	Dining Hall	Markings
9	Guard Post	Moisture
10	Infirmary	Noise
11	Kitchen	Paraphernalia
12	Latrine	Residue
13	Library	Scurrying
14	Shrine	Signs
15	Smith	Smell
16	Stable	Stains
17	Storage	Tapping
18	Study	Temperature
19	Vault	Vibrations
20	Workshop	Writing

Special Rooms

Special rooms areas are uncommon areas that feature a hidden or interactive element. This element can be a challenge, an obstacle, a puzzle, or all of the above. These rooms should offer difficult choices with long-term impacts. They might make dungeon exploration easier, but with a serious cost.

Roll 1d20 for each column and combine.

d20	Special	Feature
1	Books	Ages
2	Bridge	Alarms
3	Contraption	Animates
4	Creature	Attracts
5	Door	Charges
6	Flames	Closes
7	Furniture	Falls
8	Hole	Glows
9	Liquid	Grows
10	Mirror	Illusion
11	Mural	Levitates
12	Pool	Locks
13	Shadows	Opens
14	Smoke	Reflects
15	Statue	Repels
16	Surface	Reveals
17	Treasure	Shifts
18	Voices	Silences
19	Wheel	Teleport
20	Writing	Transforms

Trap Rooms

A trap is a dangerous and hidden object, typically triggered through interaction with a character. While traps are by their very nature not obvious, a good trap should contain hints as to their presence or the room's true purpose.

Roll 1d20 for each column and combine.

d20	Trap	Trigger
1	Ages	Activating
2	Burns	Breaking
3	Captures	Crossing
4	Carries	Disturbing
5	Confuses	Entering
6	Crushes	Extinguishing
7	Curses	Focusing
8	Cuts	Interacting
9	Deafens	Lighting
10	Drops	Moving
11	Drowns	Opening
12	Freezes	Pulling
13	Glues	Pushing
14	Hypnotizes	Reading
15	Impales	Speaking
16	Infects	Stepping
17	Lifts	Taking
18	Poisons	Talking
19	Shocks	Touching
20	Shoots	Tripping

Example Dungeon

For this example, let's assume we are looking at a POI generated using the methods described in the Setting Seeds chapter. Our relevant results were:

- **Terrain**: Forest
- **Type**: Temple
- **Feature**: Isolated

What kind of dungeon is this, and what makes it unusual?

> A remote forest temple, cut off from the world by a vast ocean of trees and shrubbery.

We then roll on the **Purpose**, **Construction**, and **Ruination** tables and get the following results:

- **Purpose**: The protection of rare artifacts. Built by a fanatical cult.
- **Construction**: The entrance is between a circle of menhirs, and its foundation is built of the very same petrified wood that surrounds it.
- **Ruination**: Divided (literally) by competing rituals.

Why was this dungeon built and what caused its downfall?

> It was designed by an extremist cult of forest druids to house a reality-altering Relic. Its entrance is beneath a false stone in a circle of menhirs deep in the forest. The walls and ceiling of the dungeon are built from petrified wood, as the ancient artifact affects living plants, warping them to its will. A division within the cult faced off over control of the Relic but fell victim to their own hubris and nearly destroyed one another. When two opposing rituals collided, the temple was split in two, divided along Factional lines. The Relic was lost in the aftermath.

Continuing on to the current inhabitants of our dungeon, we get the following results (rolling for two factions):

- **Denizens**: The creatures living here are practical, yet unimaginative.
- **Faction A**: Goal: Destruction. Obstacle: Opposition.
- **Faction B**: Goal: Redemption. Obstacle: Tradition.

What do we know about the creatures and Factions that occupy the dungeon?

> The current denizens of this dungeon are the descendants of the original Factions, are typically pragmatic about their ceaseless war, and cannot imagine a way out.

What is each Faction trying to achieve, and what stands in their way?

The Crimson Path would like to destroy their former brethren, the **Azure Legion**, but are cowed by their opponent's prowess in battle. The Azure Legion feel great shame over the actions of their forebears and believe that their redemption can only be achieved by way of finding and destroying the temple's hidden artifact. Unfortunately, an ancient custom decrees that no one wearing the Azure cloth may seek the lost Relic.

Dungeon Theme

With some idea on the history, purpose, and denizens of the dungeon, we finally have our theme. Let's put it all together:

> Nestled within a dense, shrouded forest lies a temple made entirely of petrified wood. Built by a fanatical cult called the Children of Eolith, the temple was designed to protect the Woodturn, an ancient Relic that could turn any plant to stone. The cult eventually split into two opposing factions, and when their dueling rituals collided, the temple was shattered, with each faction taking one half. Today the descendants of these factions still vie for control, destruction, and redemption but are hindered by power imbalances and ancient tradition.
>
> The Crimson Path believe that if the original Relic were recovered, they might bend its power to destroy the Azure Legion forever. However, every attempt to plumb the temple's depths has been countered by their former brethren. A recent attack has left many of their number dead, and the remaining members have since fled the temple to regroup.
>
> The Azure Legion feel a great sense of shame over their ancestor's actions and believe that if the original Relic were destroyed, the temple would be healed again and their shame expunged. Unfortunately, a long-standing tradition prohibits any members from seeking the Relic, so as to avoid the mistakes of the past.
>
> In the center of the temple (between 3 and 4), a massive crack (the Fracture) splits the dungeon in two, acting as a sort of demilitarized zone. Both Factions realize that only death lies across its threshold.
>
> Hidden deep within the dungeon is a Relic called the Woodturn. It is capable of petrifying trees, wood, or other plant life through mere contact. If not properly contained, it could turn an entire forest into a wasteland!

Hooks

The Crimson Path has made a public offer of 300gp apiece for the safe retrieval of an "ancient relic" deep within the temple. The characters will be on their own in dealing with any "opposition."

The party is contacted by an agent of the Azure Legion, acting in secret. The party is to find and destroy the Woodturn, an item of great power lost somewhere in the temple. The mission is to remain a secret, and members of any Faction will likely stand against them. The characters are to be paid 1000gp (total).

The Fractured Temple
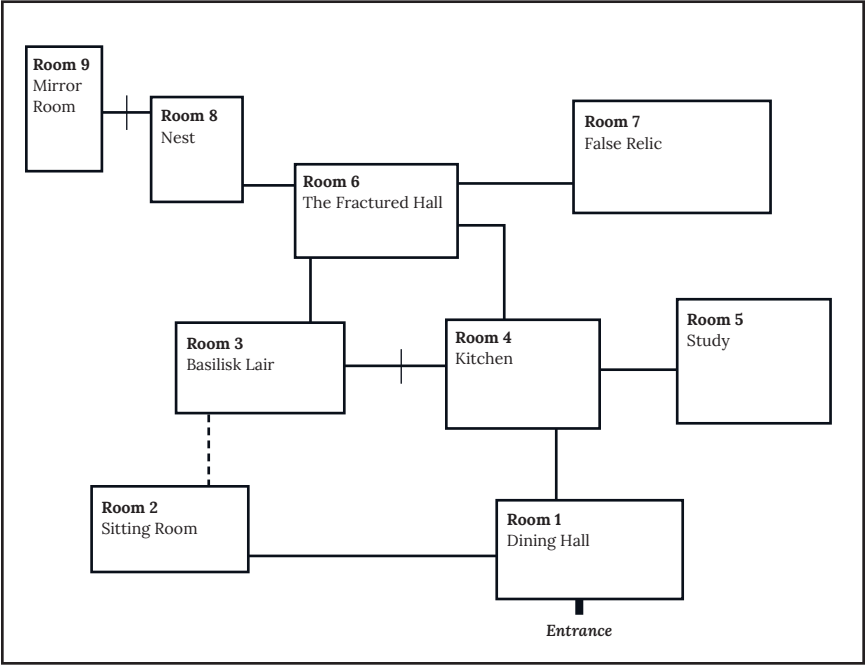
Features Throughout

- **Light**: Wall sconces are built into the walls in every room. None are lit.
- **Smell**: Damp, dirt, and hints of sulfur.
- **Noise**: Distant shouting, along with an occasional rumbling and creaking throughout.
- **Build**: The walls and floor are made of a white, petrified wood.

Entrance: Circle of Menhirs

A small circle of 10' tall **stones** are set in a circle atop a **grassy** hill. White **trees** surround the glade on all sides.

- **Stones**: Moss-covered, with thin, ruined writing in an ancient script.
  - » An expert in such matters can still determine that the stones are many centuries old.
- **Grass**: A patch in the center of the circle is browner than the rest.
  - » A trap door is concealed underneath. Petrified wooden steps lead down to 1.
- **Trees**: Petrified. As white as snow.

1 - Dining Hall

▌ **Lore**: Dining Hall. Smell.

Long, rustic tables are arranged in horizontal rows. The smell of root vegetables and cloves lingers in the air.

- **Tables**: Large enough for 80 people, used by the cult before the split.
- **Smell**: Strongest near the North passage (towards **4**).

2 - Sitting Room

▌ **Special**: Furniture. Falls.

Plush, **dust-covered** chairs and couches are arranged in a semi-circle around a black, **wooden chair**. The air in the room tastes stale.

- **Dust**: Most of the furniture appears long-abandoned, but the black chair is dust-free.
- **Chair**: Clean and shiny, as if new. Ankle straps are tied to the underside of the chair, which is bolted to the floor.
  - » A thin, nearly-invisible square line is cut around the chair.
  - » Sitting in the chair and attaching the straps causes the floor beneath the chair to lower, descending to **3**.

3 - Basilisk Lair

> **Monster**: Lizard. Recuperating.

A Basilisk sleeps on a nest built atop a slab of **wall** on the East side of the room. In the center of the room, a tall glass **cage** runs from the floor to the **ceiling**. A long, broken **chain** is attached to the South wall.

- **Basilisk**: Recuperating after having just birthed a new clutch of three eggs.
  - » She warms her eggs by sitting atop them and will not leave them for very long.
  - » The eggs are worth 1000gp each. They are bulky and extremely fragile.
- **Wall**: The passage East is still accessible, despite having collapsed. The Basilisk is too large to traverse the rubble.
- **Cage**: Acts as an observation chute from 2, where new acolytes were lowered into the chamber to observe the Basilisk.
- **Chain**: Once used to trap the Basilisk here.

BASILISK
10 HP, 1 Armor, 12 STR, 13 DEX, 13 WIL, bite (d10)

- Long, serpentine lizards that nest deep below the earth or in brambles just underfoot.
- Fighting a Basilisk without meeting its gaze is difficult (attacks facing it are impaired).
- **Gaze**: A target facing the Basilisk is slowly petrified from the bottom up and completely frozen after three rounds. An antidote can be brewed from the Basilisk's gizzards. The creature's reflection is harmless.

4 - Kitchen

> **Trap**: Poisons. Stepping.

The withered **corpse** of a man is stretched atop a large butcher block. A **sconce** on the West wall, over the West exit, burns with twin blue flames. Open **cupboards** stand at knee-height on the North wall.

- **Corpse**: Dressed in the Red Robes of the Crimson Path. Looks at least two weeks dead.
  - » There are no obvious wounds or markings, save for a green crust around the man's lip.
  - » He carries a white dagger made of petrified wood (d8).
- **Sconce**: Passing beneath the flames releases a poison gas spray into the room, dealing d4 STR damage to anyone nearby (save to avoid losing consciousness).
- **Cupboards**: Bare. The arrangement of the cupboards and the block seem to imply that this room was once a communal kitchen.
  - » One of the cupboards has a false back that can be depressed, disabling the poison gas trap for one minute.

5 - Study

> **Lore**: Study. Decor.

Bookshelves wrap around every inch of wall, their dusty **shelves** stacked with heaps of **books**. An unlit **candelabra** hangs from the ceiling.

- **Shelves**: Despite the lack of furniture, the room looks like it may have been a well-used study at one time.
- **Books**: Untouched for decades. Clearing the dust from the spines reveal all manner of subjects.
  - » Nearly every word in every book has been blacked out in stark black.
- **Candelabra**: Unusual design, worth 500gp (four slots, brittle).
  - » The candles (5 uses) are still accessible (assuming they can be reached). When lit, they produce around 20ft of darkness that is impenetrable by non-magical light. They were placed here as a final insult against the old study.

6 - The Fractured Hall

▌ Special: Smoke. Illusion.

Swirling **smoke** fills the air in a ceaseless typhoon of ash and embers, obscuring the exits. Faint **movement** is visible through the smoke, as well as occasional shouting from the West side of the room. The **floor** is not level, with the East side raised a full foot higher than the West.

- **Smoke**: Magical, it emits no sound or smell and cannot be dissolved by normal means. The exits in this room are obscured.
  - » The doorway near the SW corridor contains the broken statue of a robed figure (see Basilisk, 3).
- **Movement**: Robed soldiers engaged in melee combat with unseen opponents.
  - » There are always at least 3 members of either Faction engaged in skirmishes here. They will generally attack any shapes that try to cross the room but are easily confused by the smoke.
  - » Due to the smoke, all attacks within the room are impaired.
- **Floor**: Split when the temple fractured. Along with the smoke, navigation in this room is extremely difficult.

DRUID CULTIST
5 HP, 11 STR, 12 DEX, 8 WIL, petrified short sword (d8)

- Wears a red or blue robe to indicate their factional allegiance. Are otherwise indistinguishable.

7 - False Relic

▌ Trap: Crushes. Interacting.

Four pillars are arranged in a square pattern around a white rod suspended in air.

- **Pillars**: Built from floor to ceiling and made of petrified wood.
  - » The space between the pillars is protected by a magical, impenetrable barrier. At least two pillars must be destroyed for the barrier to dissolve.
  - » If two adjacent pillars are destroyed, the room will collapse on its occupants (DEX save or take 12 STR damage).
- **Rod**: A facsimile of the Woodturn found in 9, but lacks any real power.

8 - Nest

▌ Monster: Insectoid. Hiding.

The floor is heavily broken, segmented by raised tiles of petrified flooring. Large holes are scattered throughout the low ceiling. There are no obvious exits.

- **Tiles:** A maze of broken shards. The West exit is entirely obscured by the tiles.
- **Holes:** Created by a Burrowing Horror.
  - » If the party ignores the ceiling, it attacks the first PC that walks under a hole (ignore HP).
  - » A hole on the West side is actually a 30ft tunnel leading up to 9. Small grooves along the tunnel make climbing easy, provided one can reach them.

BURROWING HORROR
6 HP, 1 Armor, 16 STR, 11 DEX, 4 WIL, bite (d10), acid squirt (d8, blast)

Huge insectoids with multiple legs and shiny black eyes. Subsist from dirt, roots, and flesh.

- Burrow just beneath the surfaces to ambush unsuspecting creatures.
- **Critical Damage:** Target loses a body part. Roll 1d6. 1: Head, 2-4: Leg, 5-6: Arm.

9 - Mirror Room

▌ Special: Mirror. Opens.

A mirror hangs on a track on the West wall. A large hole is dug into the ground on the East side.

- **Track:** Runs in a full circle around the room, allowing the mirror to be moved along the track.
- **Mirror:** If moved to the North wall, the reflection will reveal a small, invisible alcove on the South side.
  - » The alcove is hidden behind an otherwise illusory piece of wall. Hidden inside is the Woodturn.
  - » If damaged, the mirror will explode (d6 STR damage to any nearby). The victim is deprived, and their cuts do not heal until they have left the temple.
- **Hole:** Tunnel to 8 (30ft).

WOODTURN
A white rod made of polished wood. Touching the rod to any living plant petrifies it. 3 Charges.

- **Recharge:** Burn the rod in heavy flames for a day and a night. Pour the ashes into pure spring water. The rod will reform.

Forest Seeds

Forestcrawls

A forestcrawl is a simple method for exploring a large forested area, typically made up of branching trails connecting scattered points of interest. While a forestcrawl has some of the same properties as a traditional dungeon delve, it swaps stone walls and ceilings for the dense, non-linear design of a heavily wooded area. Instead of rooms, points of interest are defined as clearings or major changes in the forested landscape. However unlike exploring a dungeon, characters can take shortcuts, go "off-trail," or climb trees to get a better look around (with a cost, of course).

Exploring The Wood

- Follow the Dungeon Exploration procedures found in the Player's Guide, but rather than rolling for Dungeon Events, use the Wilderness Events table instead.

- If the party attempts to step off the trail and cut through the forest, the Warden should make any associated costs clear: added travel time, effort, special tools that may be required, and any obvious dangers. Going off-trail also automatically triggers a roll on the Wilderness Events table.

- Points in a forestcrawl are close to each other. When traveling on clearly marked trails, a small forest (10-15 POIs) can be explored in a single Watch.

- Rely on the fiction and common sense to determine how much daylight is available, whether a suitable area is available for rest, and what the costs or dangers the forest may contain in the darkness.

Creating a Forest

Follow this procedure for any forested terrain in a region. If a conflict or interesting pattern emerges, be open to restating or modifying any earlier results!

> Going forward, we will refer to the sheet of paper as the **map**. As with any other rule, if you don't like a table result, roll again or tweak as desired!

Materials Required

- A sheet of paper and a notebook. Letter/A4 is fine.
- Pencils and erasers. Colored pencils or crayons are good, too.
- At least one d6 and one d20, but 6d6 and 2d20 would be ideal.

Overview

1. Describe the forest.
2. Describe the spirit of the forest.
3. Create the forests's POIs.
4. Create the forests's trails.
5. Create forest encounters.
6. Name the forest.

Forest Description

Roll on the Forest Description and write the results in your notebook. This table both indicates how outsiders perceive the forest as well as any unique natural features it may have. If the forested terrain was generated using the methods described in the Setting Seeds chapter, consider how the associated Landmark affects it as well.

> Landmarks help travelers navigate through the dense foliage, acting as geographic reference points: unusually tall trees, watchtowers, and so on. Most forest landmarks are visible only by climbing a tree, though a few are large enough to stand out from the green. Some landmarks are heard rather than seen.

Roll 1d20 for each column and combine.

d20	Description	Description
1	Barren	Ancient
2	Crystalline	Awakening
3	Diseased	Buzzing
4	Dying	Decaying
5	Flowering	Flooded
6	Glowing	Foggy
7	Hallowed	Frigid
8	Mossy	Frozen
9	Murky	Fungal
10	Perilous	Hidden
11	Petrified	Infested
12	Polluted	Misty
13	Primeval	Mossy
14	Scorched	Overgrown
15	Secluded	Sacred
16	Suffocating	Secluded
17	Timeless	Silent
18	Uncharted	Smoldering
19	Unspoilt	Sunlit
20	Winding	Wild

The Spirit of the Forest

In some ways, the Wood is a single entity, its brain alive within every tree and plant, connected via a network of thorn and branch. The animals and plants are its limbs, directing its wants, desires, fears, and needs. The creatures that live within its boundaries are its blood, answering its call by delivering much needed defenses and rebuffing interlopers. The Wood will always protect itself and its children. Roll on the Traits and Forest Agenda tables, writing the results in your notebook. This describes the general attitude of the creatures found in the forest as well as what the forest wants as a whole.

TRAITS

Roll 1d20 for each column and combine.

d20	Virtues	Vices
1	Adaptive	Aggressive
2	Balanced	Aloof
3	Brave	Covetous
4	Clever	Detached
5	Cultivating	Dominating
6	Empathic	Doubtful
7	Enduring	Invasive
8	Graceful	Judgmental
9	Hardy	Naive
10	Harmonious	Obscuring
11	Independent	Overzealous
12	Learned	Parasitic
13	Nurturing	Passive
14	Observant	Polluting
15	Purifying	Predatory
16	Resolute	Prideful
17	Sensible	Rigid
18	Sharp	Scatterbrained
19	Stable	Selfish
20	Trusting	Territorial

FOREST AGENDA

Roll 1d20 for each column and combine.

d20	Goal	Obstacle
1	Abundance	Agreements
2	Awakening	Belief
3	Balance	Contamination
4	Cleansing	Disease
5	Conservation	Exploitation
6	Defense	Fragmentation
7	Discovery	Frailty
8	Emancipation	Greed
9	Enrichment	Ignorance
10	Evolution	Infestation
11	Expansion	Invasion
12	Harmony	Isolation
13	Healing	Leadership
14	Integration	Oppression
15	Justice	Pollution
16	Metamorphosis	Scarcity
17	Purification	Stasis
18	Rebirth	Turmoil
19	Tranquility	Vulnerability
20	Unity	Weakness

Create Points of Interest

1. Roll 8-12 d6 dice on the map, ignoring any dice that fall off the page. These are the Points of Interest (POI) in the forest.

2. Write the face-up results on the page using the Forest Die Drop Table. For example, the number 4 would indicate a Shelter, which you would denote with the letter "S."

3. Select two opposite points, preferably close to the page border. These are the forest's entrance and exit.

4. Starting with the entrance and ending at the exit, number each POI on the map.

5. Roll on the relevant tables for each point, writing the results in your notebook.

6. Filter the table results through the table results you generated earlier in this process.

FOREST DIE DROP TABLE

d6	POI
1	Monster
2-3	Ruins
4	Shelter
5-6	Hazard

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Point 9 (Exit)
Fishing Hut + Occupied by Army Deserters

Point 4
Hut with Legs + Hunting is Forbidden

Point 6
Frozen Troll + A Spell Gone Wrong

Point 3
Hermit's Cabin + Presents a Ready Meal

Point 8
Giant Spider Nest + Injured Creature

Point 5
Grizzly + Prowling

Point 2
Sap Trap + Ghost Trapped in Crystal

Point 7
Flooded Monastery + Hidden Cache

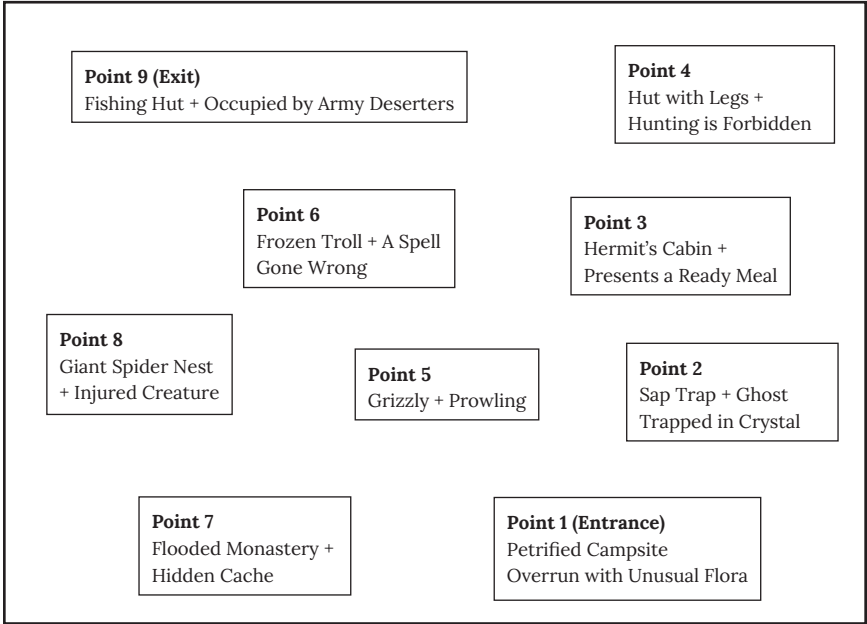Point 1 (Entrance)
Petrified Campsite Overrun with Unusual Flora

Trails

Trail Types

- Standard trails are obvious or well-trod routes between two points. Represented by a thick line.

- Hidden trails do not appear on any known maps. Their discovery always requires some kind of cost. Represented by a dashed line.

- Conditional trails may be blocked, or requires specialized tools (boats, climbing gear, etc.) to cross. Others may even be impossible to navigate without a map or guide. Represented by a crossed line.

Draw Trails

- Starting with the entrance, draw 1-4 paths between each point.
  - » Create loops, branching paths, dead-ends, and shortcuts between points.
  - » Some paths are Conditional, represented by a crossed line.
  - » Some paths are Hidden, represented by a dashed line.
  - » If possible, create intersections (crossed lines) with no points in between.
- Create trails by drawing over paths that connect 3-4 points in an obvious, consistent, or interesting manner.
  - » Hidden paths and short, isolated routes are not usually a part of a trail.
  - » Use colored pencils or crayons to help distinguish different trails.
- Roll on the Trail Types table for each trail, recording the results in your notebook.

> If some of the results seem incongruous, that's OK! Turn these juxtapositions into questions like "Why is there an old logging road leading to the bandit's hideout?" That said, don't be afraid to choose a more appropriate result if you're having a hard time making it work!

TRAIL TYPES

Roll 2d20 and combine the results.

d20	Type	Marker
1	Animal Path	Bear Rubbings
2	Bandit's Run	Bent Trees
3	Bouldered Way	Claw Marks
4	Cloistered Grove	Damaged Flora
5	Deer Crossing	Deer Tracks
6	Dry Riverbed	Distant Singing
7	Fae Passage	Faint Laughter
8	Farm Trail	Fox Prints
9	Foraging Path	Fresh Spiderwebs
10	Hunter's Track	Giant Feathers
11	King's March	Glowing Toadstools
12	Merchant's Road	Muted Bells
13	Old Logging Road	Peripheral Images
14	Orchard Path	Rabbit Droppings
15	Pilgrim's Footpath	Serpent Traces
16	Spore Saturated	Smoke
17	Sticky Sap Path	Stillness
18	Trail Tree	Stone Piles
19	Treeline Heights	Swaying Plants
20	War Route	Tree Carvings

Monster

Monsters are any dangerous creatures one might encounter in the forest. This does not mean they will attack intruders by default! Monsters are not "waiting around" for characters to stumble upon them, but have their own wants and goals. Some monsters can talk, reason, and even beg for mercy. People can be monsters, too.

Roll 1d20 for each column and combine.

d20	Monster	Activity
1	Bandit	Burrowing
2	Blink Dog	Burying
3	Blood Elk	Destroying
4	Centaur	Devouring
5	Dryad	Dying
6	Ettin	Fighting
7	Gargoyle	Foraging
8	Green Dragon	Guarding
9	Grizzly Bear	Hiding
10	Killer Bees	Hunting
11	Naga	Killing
12	Night Cat	Mating
13	Owlbear	Mourning
14	Pixie	Patrolling
15	Skeleton	Prowling
16	Treant	Recuperating
17	Unicorn	Scouting
18	Will-o-Wisp	Stalking
19	Wolf	Torturing
20	Wood Troll	Trapped

Ruins

Forests are wild places, but that does not mean people haven't tried to tame them. The remnants of these attempts still show up from time to time, hinting at the folly of those who would stand against the Wood.

Roll 1d20 for each column and combine.

d20	Ruin	Feature
1	Abandoned Manor	A Forest Spirit, Ready to Die
2	Broken Sundial	A Hag, Foraging for Ingredients
3	Chipped Bell Tower	A Mirror of Itself
4	Collapsed Megalith	A Self-Obsessed Sprite
5	Crumbled Watchtower	A Silent, Ghostly Concert
6	Decomposed Canoes	A Very Tiny Ruined Village
7	Entangled Pavilion	Bound by an Unbreakable Curse
8	Exposed Workshop	Bound Creature
9	Flooded Monastery	Broken Portal
10	Moldering Farmhouse	Fresh Corpses
11	Neglected Shrine	Hidden Cache
12	Overrun Estate	Hooded Men Completing a Ritual
13	Petrified Campsite	Inaudible Whispers from All Directions
14	Rotted Mill	Marked by Battles Of Yore
15	Ruined Cloister	Overrun with Unusual Flora
16	Rusted Market	Realistic Toy Soldiers
17	Shattered Bridge	Remnants of a Failed Ritual
18	Splintered Obelisk	The Veil Between Worlds Is Thin
19	Sunken Gazebo	Visions of the Past
20	Toppled Statue	Warded Grounds

Shelter

Despite its wild and unpredictable nature, there have always been those brave, skilled, or foolhardy enough to try and build a life in the Wood. And some do succeed, leaving their mark via smoldering campfire or gray tower, offering a welcome respite to weary travelers.

Roll 1d20 for each column and combine.

d20	Shelter	Feature
1	Bandit Hideout	Abandoned, for Now
2	Falconer's Tower	Attracts Wild Beasts
3	Fishing Hut	Built in Defiance of Customs
4	Forgotten Ruins	Constructed Within a Giant Tree
5	Hermit's Cabin	Forest-Knight Offers a Challenge
6	Hidden Village	Guarded by Trained Animals
7	Hillside Cave	Haunted by Unhelpful Ghosts
8	Hollow Tree	Hides a Powerful Artifact
9	Hunter's Lodge	Hunting Is Forbidden
10	Hut with Legs	Inhabited by a Supernatural Entity
11	Ivy-Wrapped Tower	Occupied by Army Deserters
12	Lean-To	Overrun with Cultists
13	Lumber Site	Pale Folk Dinner Locale
14	Monastic Retreat	Parasitic Foliage
15	Mossy Pool	Pig Folk Hunting Grounds
16	Night Market	Popular with Smugglers
17	Pale Folk Stable	Presents a Ready Meal
18	Ranger's Outpost	Protected by a Playful Spirit
19	Smoky Cabin	Site of an Ancient Murder
20	Tattered Windmill	Thieves' Camp

Hazard

The Wood is a dangerous place and not to be trifled with. The forest and its inhabitants do what they must to survive, and even sated, are still preparing for their next meal. The trees, the plants, and the earth itself will leave deadly traps and dangers to root out those unworthy to pass beneath the boughs.

Roll 1d20 for each column and combine.

d20	Hazard	Feature
1	Animal Trap	A Pet Basilisk
2	Bog Shadows	A Spell Gone Wrong
3	Bone Orchard	Animated Armor
4	Bramble Tunnels	Bird Spies
5	Frozen Troll	Bleeding Trees
6	Giant Spider Nest	Ghosts Trapped in Crystal
7	Insect Swarm	Giant Rodent Feeding Grounds
8	Moving Thickets	Highly Localized Weather
9	Poisonous Plants	Howling Stones
10	Psychic Fog	Injured Creature
11	Sap Trap	Invisible Webs
12	Sleeping Giant	Living Scarecrows
13	Slippery Moss	Memory Stealers
14	Slow Quicksand	Mimic Vines
15	Spiked Pit	Paths that Change Randomly
16	Stinging Nettles	Scavengers that Wait
17	Thorny Thickets	Watchful Dead
18	Toxic Spores	Tracks Erased by Mist
19	Troll Den	Trees that Grow From Bones
20	Unstable Ground	Will-o-Wisps Congregate

Example Forest

——————— Old Logging Road	═══════════ Treeline Heights
——————— Foraging Path	||||||||||||||||| Dry Riverbed
·················· Hunter's Track	– – – – – – – Hidden
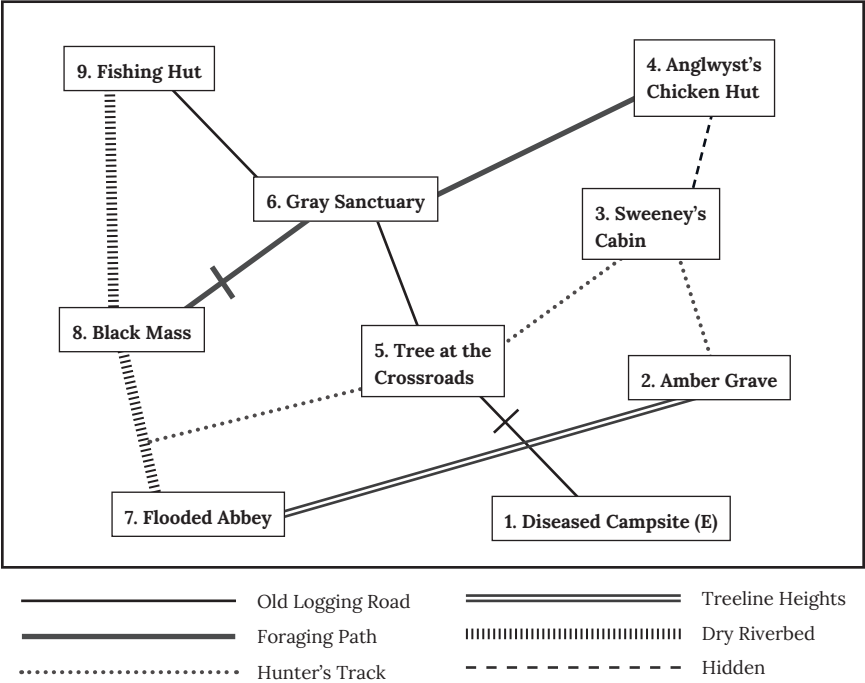
The Forest

DESCRIPTION
Diseased, Frozen

- A thick forest infected with disease and rot. Parts of it are frozen solid.

DENIZENS
Traits: Stable, Territorial

- Wish to return to the stability they once knew, but are threatened by ancient forest boundaries.

FOREST AGENDA
Traits: Purification, Infestation

- The spirit of the forest wants nothing more than to purify itself of the disease that has taken hold. An infestation of Giant Spiders (9) has spun webs throughout, killing far too many creatures and undermining the ecosystem.

FOREST THEME
For decades, the order and stability of the forest was maintained through an agreement between the forest witch Anglwyst and Sweeney, the Wood's champion. The witch would use her magic to keep the trees and animals healthy, while the champion would ensure that hunters never kill any creatures deemed essential to the Wood (indicated by a shock of white in their fur). Their pact was permanent and immalleable, and the forest was divided, barring both the witch and the champion from crossing its boundary.

After the old witch died, one of her spells grew wild, then dangerous. Now a magical disease has begun to infect the trees and creatures, threatening to consume the entire forest. Hunters call it the Withering, because it drains the life of everything it touches.

Trails

OLD LOGGING ROAD, TREE CARVINGS
The path between 1 and 5 is blocked by a broad cliff face, requiring climbing gear to ascend. Carvings from the original loggers of this forest still mar the surface of some trees.

TREELINE HEIGHTS, STONE PILES
The monks at 7 left piles of stone alongside the path for each of their fallen members.

FORAGING PATH, DISTANT SINGING
Anglwyst survived largely on the plentiful fruit found on this trail. Her magic was so powerful that echoes of her presence still mark the path: those who travel it can still hear her faint, chipper singing.

DRY RIVERBED, FRESH SPIDERWEBS
A river once ran through the West end of the forest, but it dried up after a drought. Giant spiders travel the path as they make their way to 8, spinning their web along the trail.

HUNTER'S TRACK, DAMAGED FLORA
Sweeney allows outsiders to hunt their quarry on this trail and no other, so long as they never kill any creature with white in their fur.

POIs

1 - Diseased Campsite [Entrance]

▌ **Ruin**: Petrified Campsite, Overrun With Unusual Flora

At the forest edge is a dead **campfire** with piles of dark gray **bedding** laid out close by. Plants, flowers, and other **flora** grow thickly over the campsite. A **trail** to the North leads into the forest.

- **Campfire**: The remaining wood is stained a deep gray, is very cold to the touch, and is as hard as iron.
- **Bedding**: Splinters of gray wood are stuck in the cloth.
  - » Icy cold to the touch. The space beneath the cloth is partly blue and red, but gray circles grow out of the wood flecks.
- **Flora**: Rare and unique species not common to these parts.
  - » Skilled pruning and a few minutes of careful work produces a Healing Salve (restore 1d4 STR, 1 use).
- **Trail**: Long grooves in the rough shape of a tree trunk are cut into the ground.
  - » Fine spiderwebs block the forest entry, as if no one had walked through in a long while.

2 - Amber Grave

▌ **Hazard**: Sap Trap, Ghost Trapped In Crystal

A rounded copse of vermilion **trees** surround a wide **puddle** of bubbling sap. A pointy green **object** is just visible in the center of the pool.

- **Trees**: The base of each tree bleeds golden sap that runs into the puddle below. They do not appear to be diseased.
- **Puddle**: 12ft of sticky sap.
  - » Ankle-high and extremely sticky. Irritates the skin.
- **Object**: Appears crystalline in nature.
  - » Very slippery. Difficult and time-consuming to extract without adequate tools (gloves, a pole, etc.).
  - » Trapped inside the crystal is the spirit of a familiar called **Gundersnatch**.
  - » If shattered, the shadow of a great bird will rise above the party, then disappear. Any characters with the *deprived* condition will have it resolved.

GUNDERSNATCH
- Can communicate telepathically with anyone holding the crystal.
- Will plead for anyone to destroy the crystal. (A good whack with something hard will do it.)
- In exchange for his freedom, he will give the party a black feather, telling them that with it they can enter the Anglwyst's Chicken Hut at **4**.

3 - Sweeney's Cabin

▌ **Shelter**: Hermit's Cabin, Presents a Ready Meal

Atop a small hill is a wooden **cabin**. Small **logs** are arranged in rows on the West side of the building, and a tall **rack** is installed on the East wall.

- **Cabin**: There is a 3-in-6 chance that Sweeney is here. Otherwise, he is out hunting. A ring of white dust is sprinkled across the doorway.
  - » If the dust is disturbed, Sweeney will know, then make his way to the cabin.
- **Logs**: Arranged in rows of four by four.
  - » A stained outline of an animal (bear, rabbit, beaver, etc.) is drawn on each. A drop of white is painted on the rabbit. It looks new.
- **Rack**: Various animal skins are stretched tightly across, drying.
  - » Stitched together, the skins are equal to two sets of protective clothing (1 Armor) and are highly resistant to environmental damage.

INSIDE THE CABIN
Very austere, with only a simple **cot** and small dining **table**.

- **Cot**: Speckled with green moss and twigs. Smells faintly of rain.
  - » The floor beneath the cot is thick with green moss. If Sweeney places his hands on the moss, it falls away, revealing an underground tunnel to **4**. Only Sweeney can activate this passage.
- **Table**: On the table is a fully prepared meal of roast duck and root vegetables, equal to a full meal for 2.
  - » A gift from Anglwyst. If eaten, the meal on the table will reform in d12 hours.

SWEENEY
12 HP, 2 Armor, 13 STR, 15 DEX, 17 WIL, yew bow (d8)

- A cantankerous, mossy old man.
- If he is injured, the Wood will protect and even heal him. Each time he dies, he returns more green than before.
- Would like to stop the Withering, but cannot enter 6 due to his pact with Anglwyst. As a test of their honor and skill, he will ask the party for help expelling the Giant Spiders at 8.
  - » If the party successfully completes their first task, he will give the party a Pendant of Karnon, as well as the promise of further riches if they can undo the magic that is ravaging the forest at 6.
  - » If the party is able to disrupt the Withering, he will open the secret path to 4, telling them that they may enter the hut there.

PENDANT OF KARNON
A wooden amulet of a bearded, horned man. When in the forest, add a Fatigue to borrow the senses of any nearby creature. *Petty.*

4 - Anglwyst's Chicken Hut

▌ **Shelter**: Hut with Legs, Hunting Is Forbidden

A cylindrical, chimneyed **hut** covered in thick **foliage** sits at the edge of a small clearing. A wooden **sign** is pressed into the ground at the West entrance. A long spool of **chicken wire** is installed on the North side.

- **Hut**: The front-facing windows are dark, and there is no light or smoke coming from inside.
  - » The door has no keyhole and will only open to friends of Anglwyst, Sweeney, or Gundersnatch.
  - » If the door is forced open or the hut is threatened, two legs will sprout from underneath and the hut will quickly retreat into the forest.
- **Foliage**: Both the roof and the windows are covered in thick leafy vines.
  - » None of the vines touch the ground, as they would be torn were the hut to stand.
- **Sign**: Covered in vines. In red letters it says: "No Hunting Here. Harsh penalties."
  - » The witch cast a spell of protection over this place. If an animal is killed here by anyone capable of speech, their killer immediately turns to stone (no save).
  - » Nothing dangerous will follow the party into this part of the wood.
- **Wire**: Encircles a small, shriveled garden. A vine-covered stone statue of a young hunter stands in the middle.
  - » The shocked-looking hunter (a victim of the clearing's spell) holds a limp rabbit upside-down, a knife held to its throat.

INSIDE THE HUT
Lavishly decorated. A tall wooden **barrel** is set near the North fireplace, a long broom sticking out. A large **stove** is installed on the East wall. A **string** of herbs and root vegetables hang from the ceiling.

Barrel: Joined by thick mortar. Free of dust and empty save for the broom.

- » The barrel can fit up to one person and is capable of flight. (Use the broom to "paddle" the air.)

Stove: Warm, and large enough to sleep on. A red scarf is tied around one of the iron handles.

- » The scarf given to Anglwyst by Sweeney that is otherwise mundane. Sweeney would love to have it back.

String: Goods of rare and extinct quality. Worth 500gp to the right buyer.

- » A mandrake root hangs from the string. If fed water daily, it will indicate a lie when it hears one. Screams loudly if cut.

5 - Tree at the Crossroads

▎**Monster**: Grizzly, Guarding

A long **tree** lays across a small glade at the intersection of two **trails**. A sharp **cliff** to the South offers a steep climb to the bottom.

- **Tree**: Enormous and at least partially hollowed out. Bear prints mark the East entrance.
  - » A Grizzly Bear and her three cubs make this tree their den. In the winter they hibernate, but any other time they are awake. The mother will attack anyone entering the tree (skip the reaction roll).
- **Trails**: Broken leaves and tree rubbings on the trail are clear evidence of the bear's habitation.
- **Cliff**: Metal hoops are pounded into the cliff face.
  - » Installed when the forest was still being logged, but still solid. Perfect for ropes.

GRIZZLY BEAR
6 HP, 15 STR, 13 DEX, 5 WIL, claws (d8+d8)

- Reddish-brown bears commonly found in mountains, woodlands, and prairies.
- Prefer to eat fish and meat, and will attack the rare unfortunate who crosses their path.
- **Critical Damage**: Bites the victim for an additional d6 STR damage. They bleed out very quickly.

6 - Gray Sanctuary

▎**Hazard**: Frozen Troll, A Spell Gone Wrong

A gray forest **sanctuary** stands at the intersection of four trails. In its center, two enormous **statues** appear to be wrestling.

- **Sanctuary**: All nearby plant life is lifeless and dull, as if all color has been bled away.
  - » The air shimmers with magic, emanating most strongly above the two statues.
  - » The Withering effect is evident even before entering the clearing, as the Withering has begun to spread in all directions.
  - » Plant matter brought into the clearing will soon begin to petrify, even without direct contact.
- **Statues**: Two wood trolls are fighting over a shiny object held high in the air by the larger of the two.
  - » The object is a **Yore Glass**, a mirror Relic whose magic has disrupted the delicate spell that once made this place a verdant haven for forest life.
  - » The Witch's spell can only be disrupted by removing the mirror from the area or by destroying it completely. It is tightly held by the statue but can be removed by the application of grease, or by breaking the troll's arm.
  - » If the spell is broken, the magical effect will end, and the trolls will slowly awaken. They will immediately try to reclaim the mirror.

YORE GLASS
- Once per day, the holder can replay 5 minutes of their life from the third-person. Long-term use can be addictive. Suffer deprivation if not used regularly.
- **Recharge**: Catch another's reflection in the glass without them knowing.

WOOD TROLL
10 HP, 15 STR, 12 DEX, 7 WIL, bite (d8), club (d10)

- Large humanoids with elongated arms made of bark or root. They live in forests, sharing a deep connection with the vegetation around them.
- If killed, they will slowly regenerate unless their corpse is taken out of the forest or burned with fire.
- **Critical Damage**: Moss and twigs begin growing out of the target's wounds.

7 - Flooded Abbey

> **Ruins**: Flooded Monastery, Hidden Cache

Three flooded **buildings** sprout from the center of a small pond, their conical **roofs** peaking out from beneath the waters. On the North side, a dry riverbed runs directly into the pond. The Eastern path is lined with dozens of piled **stones**.

- **Buildings**: Archaic, with subtly beautiful religious iconography. Obviously an abbey.
  - » Flooded after the dam at **8** was destroyed.
- **Roofs**: The tallest of the three buildings has a glass window high above the water.
  - » The window is rusted shut but can be pried or broken open to enter the abbey's Chapter House.
- **Stones**: Piled along the Southern side of the Eastern path. Names are engraved on most.
  - » The monks left piles of stone alongside the path for each of their fallen members.

CHAPTER HOUSE
Tapestries line the walls of this circular room, its wooden **floor** all but rotted away from water damage. A collapsed bannister on the Southwest side is all that remains of the flooded **stairwell** down into the rest of the building.

- **Tapestries**: Moldy and unsalvageable.
  - » Originally depicted the abbey in its former glory and the monks who lived here.
- **Floor**: One of the wooden boards is less withered than the others. It smells faintly of something floral.
  - » Below the board is a hidden Spellbook, *Yearning Path*.
- **Stairwell**: Completely underwater. The rooms below contain only floating corpses and ruined books.

YEARNING PATH
Shows the shortest path to the object of a heart's true desire. Smells of lavender. Adds an extra Fatigue if read more than once per day. The process is cumulative.

8 - Black Mass

> **Hazard**: Giant Spider Nest, Injured Creature

A black **boar** limps noisily near a large **mass** of black thread and trees. Fat, desiccated **carcasses** hang in spun silk from the treetops. A dry **riverbed** to the South is filled with piles of wood.

- **Boar**: Half-wrapped in thick black silk, it mews plaintively.
  - » Poisoned by the spider bite in its hind quarters. If the party comes to its aid, the Wood will remember.
- **Mass**: Threads of thick black silk hold together a 10ft pile of wood.
  - » The nest is home to 3 Black Silk Spiders. They will attack anyone that that interacts with their food or gets too close to their nest.
  - » 200gp of black silk can be carefully gathered from the nest. It makes a fine rope (about 60ft) that is also incredibly strong and is sought after for its hydrophobic qualities.
- **Carcasses**: Mostly animal corpses. A human shape is visible through the black webbing.
  - » The human was a hunter who ignored Sweeney's warnings and hunted North of the Hunter's Track. On the corpse are Rations (2 uses left), 33gp, and a hip-knife (d6).
- **Riverbed**: Large piles of wood are thrown about. Bits of black silk can be seen tied around the longer pieces.
  - » A former beaver dam that kept the water to a trickle. The spiders brought the dam down to build their nest. The subsequent flooding destroyed the monastery at **7**, but the river only dried up after a drought earlier this year.

BOAR
4 HP, 12 STR, 5 DEX, 6 WIL, tusks (d6+d6)

BLACK SILK SPIDER
4 HP, 4 STR, 13 DEX, 5 WIL, bite (d8)

- **Critical Damage:** Poison paralyzes the victim and deals an additional d4 DEX damage. The victim is then dragged to the spider's nest to be eaten.

9 - Fishing Hut

> **Shelter**: Fishing Hut, Occupied by Army Deserters [Exit]

A ramshackle **hut** built beside a small **lake** to the North. **Smoke** streams from a cooking rack on the West side, and loud **voices** echo through the South-facing window.

- **Hut**: Built from simple logs tied together with rope, which appears fresh. Fishing wire can be seen leading out of the North side and into the lake.
- **Lake**: Placid, but filled with bugs. A path on the West side leads away from the forest.
  - » The lake hasn't been fished for some time and has become overpopulated. Fishing is easy pickings.
- **Smoke**: Spills from a wooden cooking rack adjacent to a pile of fried fish (4 x Rations, 3 uses each).
- **Voices**: Laughing and muffled speech. At least two voices can be heard from inside.
  - » There are three ex-soldiers squatting in this hut. They are pacifists who were forcibly conscripted into military service. They are seeking refuge in the abbey at **7** but haven't made it that far yet. They are jovial and kind-hearted but absolute cowards.
  - » They know little about the forest, other than that there used to be a river running South from the lake that ended somewhere near an abbey.

d6	Encounters
1	A tiny bearded man argues with a squawking raven. It holds something shiny in its beak.
2	A dryad sits atop a stone, a purple fungus lining her arms. There is violence in her eyes.
3	A patch of quicksand is disguised as soft ground. A broken spool of rope lies nearby.
4	A snarling pack of wolves surround a fresh kill. They are not keen to share.
5	Wild berries grow here in abundance. None have been eaten, not even by birds.
6	A trap, hastily set and poorly concealed. It smells strongly of urine.
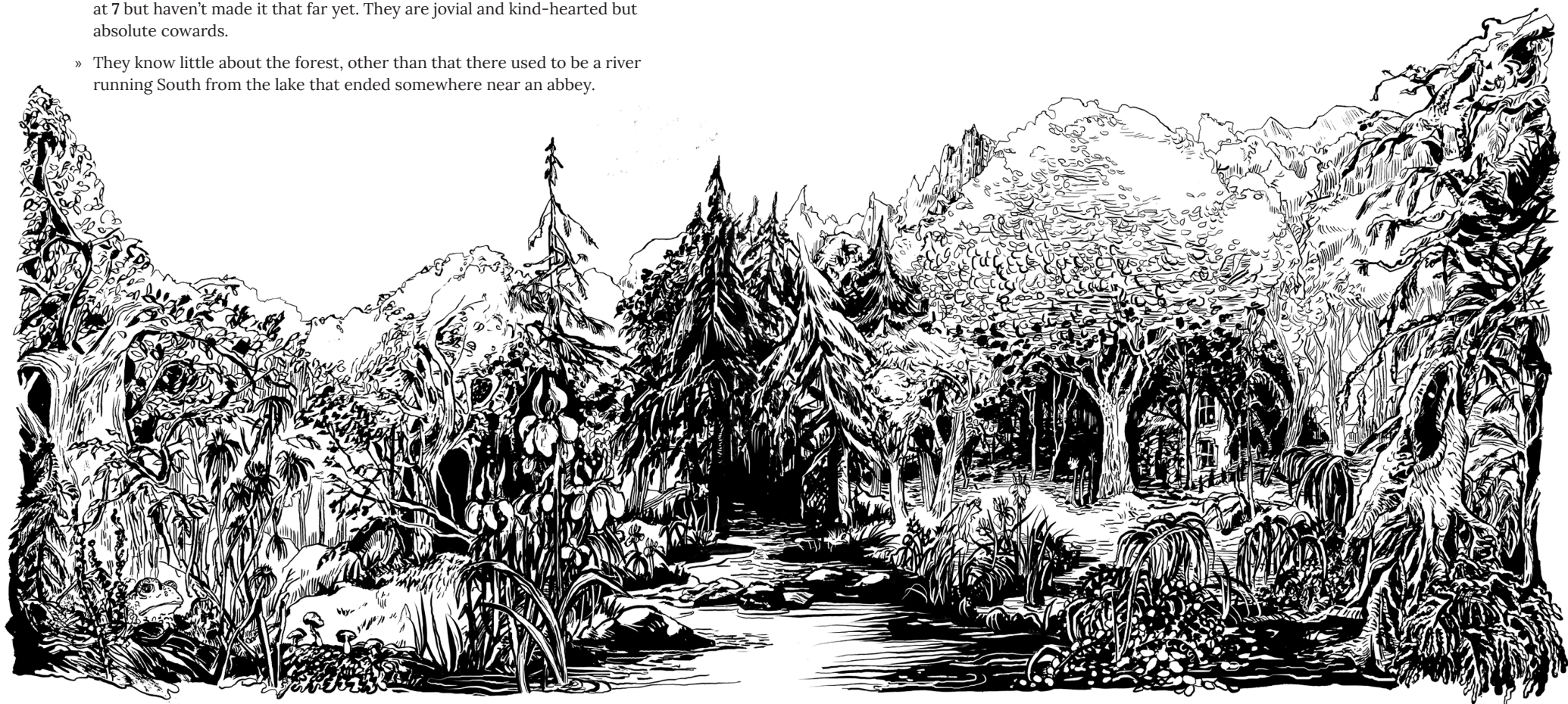
Warden Tools

A collection of tools for Wardens, including a bestiary, procedures for creating and converting monsters, spellbooks, naming, character advancement, and advice.

Bestiary

Acolyte

4 HP, 1 Armor, 8 STR, 11 DEX, 14 WIL, ceremonial dagger (d6)

- Holy servants bound to a particular deity. Typically travel in groups of four or more.
- Carry a holy symbol (*Ward* once per day).

Bandit

4 HP, 1 Armor, 12 STR, 12 DEX, 9 WIL, shortsword (d6) or short bow (d6)

- Outlaws who raid settlements, attack ships, or ambush travelers. Groups of four or more are a detachment.
- A detachment always travels with one leader wearing chainmail or similar (2 Armor) and a long sword (d10) or crossbow (d8).
- **Loyal**: When testing Morale, save using the leader's WIL (13). If the leader dies, the others will flee.

Aranea

6 HP, 13 STR, 12 DEX, 15 WIL, bite (d8)

- Enormous spiders with greenish-black skin and large brains. Can shapeshift into human form at will.
- Conduct their magical research in dark, web-filled caverns. Carry the *Charm* and *Command* spellbooks at all times.
- Fire damage against Aranea is *enhanced.*
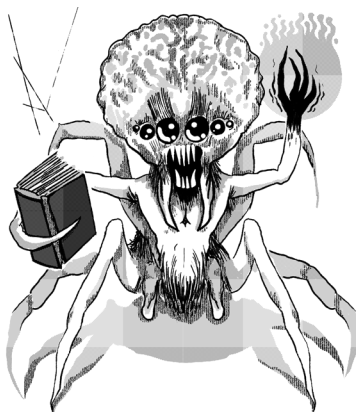
Banshee

8 HP, 6 STR, 12 DEX, 15 WIL, ghostly touch (d8)

- Incorporeal spirits that linger long after death to haunt the living.
- Unharmed by cold, heat, or the elements. Iron weapon damage is Enhanced.
- **Wail**: Anyone in earshot must make a WIL save or fall unconscious.

Basilisk

10 HP, 1 Armor, 12 STR, 13 DEX, 13 WIL, bite (d10)

- Long, serpentine lizards that nest deep below the earth or in brambles just underfoot.
- Fighting a Basilisk without meeting its gaze is difficult. (Attacks facing it are impaired.)
- **Gaze:** A target facing the Basilisk is slowly petrified from the bottom up and completely frozen after three rounds. An antidote can be brewed from the Basilisk's gizzards. The creature's reflection is harmless.

Blink Dog

5 HP, 11 STR, 14 DEX, 5 WIL, bite (d6)

- Teleporting canines in service of a powerful master.
- Can phase out of reality at will. Melee attacks against them are *impaired.*

Blood Elk

4 HP, 12 STR, 13 DEX, 5 WIL, horns (d8)

- Born from violence resulting from a greedy or selfish act.
- Kill their victims for sustenance, but gain no succor. They're always hungry.
- **Critical Damage:** Gores its victims by ripping out their entrails.

Boggart

3 HP, 4 STR, 17 DEX, 13 WIL

- Wild, hairy tricksters that prize shiny trinkets above coin.
- Boggarts have true names that describe their true nature. Knowing these names gives a person control over them.
- Magic: The Boggart can bring objects to life, sow confusion, create magical disguises, use telekinesis, and teleport.

Bugbear

8 HP, 1 Armor, 14 STR, 12 DEX, 11 WIL, club (d8)

- Large, goblin-like creatures covered in fur.
- Prefer stealth and trickery to gain an advantage.
- Often command parties of like creatures (typically goblins).

Burrowing Horror

6 HP, 1 Armor, 16 STR, 11 DEX, 4 WIL, bite (d10), acid squirt (d8, *blast*)

- Huge insectoids with multiple legs and shiny black eyes. Subsist from dirt, roots, and flesh.
- Burrow just beneath surfaces to ambush unsuspecting creatures.
- **Critical Damage:** Target loses a body part. Roll 1d6. 1: Head, 2-4: Leg, 5-6: Arm.

Bone Construct

8 HP, 3 Armor, 15 STR, 5 DEX, 3 WIL, sharpened arms (d8+d8), *detachment*

- Gigantic, four-armed constructs made of bone and sorcery.
- Mindless guardians that stand ready to attack any creature other than their creator.
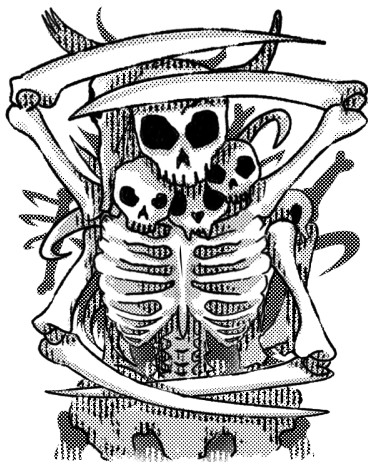
Cave Locust

2 HP, 6 STR, 12 DEX, 3 WIL, bite (d6)

- Giant plant-eating crickets that dwell in caves. Immune to most types of poison.
- Their natural coloration allows them to blend in with the stone. They emit loud shrieks when threatened.

Cobblehounds

12 HP, 2 Armor, 14 STR, 1 DEX, 8 WIL, bite (d10)

- Immobile constructs typically used as guardians to great tombs or artifacts.
- Unaffected by mundane persuasion techniques, but love a good bone.

Centaur

6 HP, 1 Armor, 14 STR, 12 DEX, 14 WIL, spear (d8) or short bow (d6)

- Creatures with the lower body and legs of a horse, but a humanoid upper body.
- Rarely found alone, preferring the company of their own.

Creeping Vines

8 HP, 10 STR, 12 DEX, 2 WIL, vines (d4, *blast*)

- Appear as inert, typical vines. Attack passing creatures to use their corpses as fertilizer.
- **Critical Damage:** Target is pulled into the air where they asphyxiate within a few minutes.

Crypt Guardian

12 HP, 12 STR, 11 DEX, 14 WIL, ethereal claws (d8+d8)

- Animated skeletons clothed in billowing robes. Their eye sockets are hypnotically red. Defend crypts and tombs, but will not attack if left undisturbed.
- Non-magical attacks against them are impaired.
- Can teleport any target in eyesight to a random room nearby.

Dryad

4 HP, 8 STR, 12 DEX, 14 WIL, knotted arms (d6)

- Shy, protective tree spirits that manifest as beautiful, green-skinned humanoids.
- Unable to travel far from the tree they are bound to. They perish if the tree is destroyed.
- **Befuddle:** Target becomes confused, gradually moving further and further away from the host tree. WIL save once per round to break free.

Eye of Terror

15 HP, 9 STR, 8 DEX, 16 WIL, bite (d8)

- Floating spheres with large mouths, enormous eyes, and several small eyes set atop long stalks.
- They are highly intelligent, intensely greedy, and completely insane.
- Can cast the following spells at will: *Charm, Phobia, Telekinesis, Sleep, Shuffle, Vision*. Magic used against them requires a WIL save or it fizzles out.

Ettin

10 HP, 16 STR, 8 DEX, 6 WIL, club (d10)

- The two-headed kin of giants. Prefer caves and underground hovels.
- Cannot be surprised.

Frost Elf

14 HP, 1 Armor, 8 STR, 13 DEX, 14 WIL, icicle dagger (d6)

- Beautiful, amoral, and long-lived.
- Resistant to most forms of magic.
- Can cast the following spells at will: *Sleep, Teleport, Detect Magic*.

Gargoyle

8 HP, 3 Armor, 14 STR, 4 DEX, 12 WIL, claws (d8+d8)

- Magical, slow-moving statues of monstrous winged creatures, typically employed as guards or watchdogs.
- Prowl at nights but fear the day, when the sun's light freezes them in place.
- Immune to charms and magical sleep.
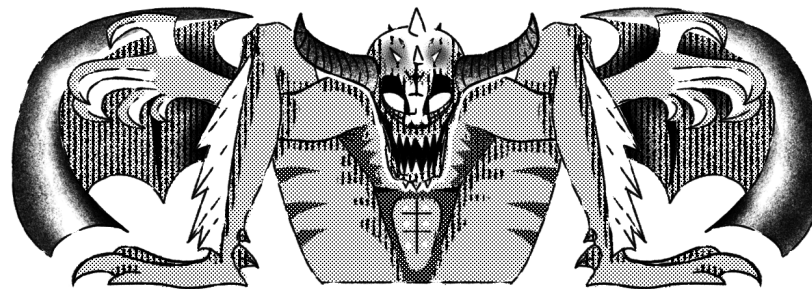
Gelatinous Ooze

8 HP, 1 Armor, 15 STR, 6 DEX, 3 WIL, devouring touch (d8)

- Large shapeless masses of transparent jelly. Mindlessly hunt for food in dungeons and underground caverns.
- **Critical Damage:** The target is engulfed, losing d6 STR damage per round until they are consumed.

Ghost

8 HP, 14 STR, 12 DEX, 15 WIL, life drain (d6)

- Incorporeal spirits of the restless dead, vulnerable only to magic and specific anointed rites.
- **Critical Damage:** Target must save WIL or is possessed, acting only on behalf of the ghost's whims.

Ghoul

6 HP, 14 STR, 8 DEX, 3 WIL, elongated claws (d6+d6)

- Grey-skinned man-things wearing shredded clothes that crave only the flesh of the living.
- **Critical Damage:** Target is deprived due to their necrotic wound, dying in d4 days unless treated by a priest or skilled healer. If the body is not burned, it later rises as a Ghoul as well.

Giant Scorpion

8 HP, 1 Armor, 11 STR, 12 DEX, 4 WIL, claws (d10+d10)

- Horse-sized arachnids commonly found in dry terrain or caverns.
- **Critical Damage:** The stinger's poison liquifies the target's insides for an additional d8 STR damage. The STR loss is permanent.

Gnoll

6 HP, 1 Armor, 12 STR, 14 DEX, 8 WIL, spear (d8)

- Ferocious humanoid hyenas spawned from arcane experiments long ago.
- Deadly warriors, they attack as a pack (as *detachment*) or on their own.

Goblin

4 HP, 8 STR, 12 DEX, 8 WIL, dagger (d6) or sling (d6)

- Small, grotesque humanoids with skin in earthly tones of green, brown, and grey.
- Avoid combat, only attacking when advantageous, using hit-and-run tactics.
- Sometimes are found using dire wolves as mounts.

Green Dragon

12 HP, 2 Armor, 14 STR, 15 DEX, 18 WIL, bite (d12), *detachment*

- Forest-dwelling snakes topped with tall green scales. Collect great hoards of treasure.
- Use intelligence and cunning to manipulate the weak into their service.
- **Chlorine Gas:** Anyone nearby must make a DEX save to escape its reach or lose 1d4 STR and becomes deprived.
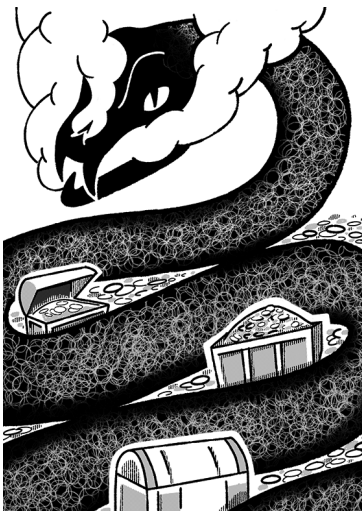
Griffon

7 HP, 14 STR, 15 DEX, 12 WIL, claws (d6+d6), *detachment*

- Ravenous hybrids, with the head and wings of an eagle and the lower body of a lion.
- Can be used as mounts if taken young and properly trained.
- Fly and attack at astonishing speeds, diving in to scoop up their prey.
- **Critical Damage:** Tears flesh and bone from its victim with its razor-sharp beak.

Grizzly Bear

6 HP, 15 STR, 13 DEX, 5 WIL, claws (d8+d8)

- Reddish-brown bears commonly found in mountains, woodlands, and prairies.
- Prefer to eat fish and meat, and will attack the rare unfortunate who crosses their path.
- **Critical Damage:** Bite the target for an additional d6 STR damage. The target bleeds out very quickly.

Harpy

8 HP, 7 STR, 12 DEX, 14 WIL, claws (d6+d6)

- Hideous monstrosities with the body of a giant eagle and a humanoid head.
- Their movements and flight are clumsy due to their unproportional size. Rely on charmed victims to do anything of note.
- **Song:** Anyone nearby must save WIL or be charmed by its voice, following the harpy and defending it from any threat.

Hellhound

8 HP, 12 STR, 15 DEX, 9 WIL, bite (d8), fire breath (d6, *blast*)

- Monstrous, intelligent dogs that dwell near volcanoes.
- Immune to fire and heat damage. Hot enough to melt iron simply by biting it.

Hobgoblin

6 HP, 2 Armor, 14 STR, 8 DEX, 11 WIL, mace (d8)

- Large and burly relatives of goblins. Dwell in underground fortresses until called for war.
- Automatically succeed in Morale Saves if a commander is present.
- Trained to fight together. Damage dealt is enhanced if an ally is also engaged with the same enemy.

Hooded Men

12 HP, 9 STR, 12 DEX, 14 WIL, leystaff (d8)

- The Watchers of the Wood; a cult that derive their power from leylines, rune stones, and the like.
- **Critical Damage:** Leech a part of the victim's soul (1d4 WIL damage).
- Carries two of the following spellbooks: *Charm, Hypnotize, Push/Pull, Shield.*

Hydra

12 HP, 2 Armor, 13 STR, 7 DEX, 12 WIL, bite (d12, *blast*), *detachment*

- Large reptilians with nine serpentine heads. Very difficult to throw off once their quarry is detected.
- On taking Critical Damage, the hydra loses one head. It then continues fighting until no heads remains.

Invisible Stalker

8 HP, 12 STR, 12 DEX, 15 WIL, fists (d4+d4)

- Intelligent beings shaped into reality by a powerful wizard. Completely invisible and silent.
- Attacks deal direct STR damage (subtracting Armor).

Killer Bees

6 HP, 6 STR, 14 DEX, 8 WIL, sting (d6), *detachment*

- Oversized bees that build underground hives. Hyper-aggressive, attack anything that comes near.
- Produce special honey that heals 1d6 STR. 3 uses.
- When the bees cause STR damage, the stingers are lodged into the target, dealing d4 damage each round until removed.

Kobold

3 HP, 8 STR, 13 DEX, 4 WIL, bite (d6), spear (d8)

- Hairless humanoids with canine-like features and scaly skin. Can see perfectly in the dark, but are harmed by direct sunlight.
- Use traps and ambush to defeat opponents. Often act in service of a more powerful creatures.

Lamia

6 HP, 11 STR, 12 DEX, 16 WIL, toothy bite (d8)

- Centaur-like creatures that prey on the life force of others, seducing their victims through heightened charm and intelligence. Their upper bodies are typically humanoid, the lower half any number of animal hybrids.
- Inherently magical. Can create illusions, charm creatures, and disguise themselves at will.
- **Critical Damage**: The target takes d6 WIL damage as their spirit is slowly sapped away. They then become enthralled to the Lamia, obeying its every command while in its presence.

Lich

14 HP, 1 Armor, 8 STR, 8 DEX, 18 WIL, soul dagger (d8)

- Powerful sorcerers that paid the ultimate price for immortality: their own life. Now their thirst for power knows no bounds.
- Maintain unlife by binding themselves to an earthly artifact, which is typically protected by at least d6 other undead servants.
- Carry up to six of the following spellbooks: *Animate Object, Arcane Eye, Deafen, Disassemble, Elemental Wall, Frenzy, Gate, Hover, Hatred, Identify Owner, Knock, Pacify, Raise Dead, Raise Spirit, Shield, Sleep, Smoke Form, Telekinesis, Telepathy, Teleport, Vision, Wizard Mark.*

Manticore

6 HP, 15 STR, 14 DEX, 12 WIL, claws (d6+d6), tail spike (d8)

- Spiteful monstrosities that wear a humanoid face, a lion's body, wings of a bat, and a scorpion's tail. Dwell in mountainous regions, abandoned castles, and forgotten dungeons.
- Tail spikes act like darts, regrowing after a few days. A single spike is worth 150gp to a collector.
- **Critical Damage**: Target is deprived until they get a good night's sleep. Until then, they act boorish, selfish, and cruel (or more so, if that already is their nature).

Mimic

9 HP, 2 Armor, 13 STR, 6 DEX, 12 WIL, bite (d8)

- Malicious shapeshifters that take on the form of inanimate objects commonly found in dungeons.
- Remain motionless while in disguise, surprising anyone that comes near.
- The mimic's saliva is extremely sticky and difficult to remove. Alchemists will pay up to 150gp for even the smallest vial.

Minotaur

12 HP, 1 Armor, 16 STR, 12 DEX, 8 WIL, two-handed axe (d10), charge (d12)

- Large humanoids (typically male) with the head of a bull. Dwell in mazes or dungeons.
- Extraordinary trackers with an excellent sense of smell and navigation skills.

Mind Lasher

12 HP, 8 STR, 12 DEX, 18 WIL, tentacles (d6, *blast*)

- Humanoid creatures with purple skin and squid-like heads. Dwell deep underground or in spacefaring vessels. Feed on the brains of other humanoids, absorbing their memories and life essence. Highly intelligent, but evil beyond belief.
- **Mind Blast**: Nearby targets must save WIL or lose 1d4 WIL and become paralyzed.
- **Critical Damage**: A tentacle rips the victim's brain out of their skull.

Mummy

6 HP, 12 STR, 8 DEX, 6 WIL, necrotic touch (d10)

- Undead humanoids wrapped in funerary cloth. Found in pyramids, ruins, temples, and tombs.
- **Critical Damage**: Target is infected with mummy rot, and is unable to recover STR until they are cured by a specialist healer. The target is also deprived.

Naga

6 HP, 1 Armor, 14 STR, 12 DEX, 14 WIL, sword (d6), bite (d10)

- Humanoids with the lower body, tail, and neck of snakes. Dwell in hot jungles and temples lost to time.
- Use cunning and hypnosis to capture other creatures to be enslaved.
- **Gaze**: A target facing the Naga is hypnotized, falling under its will. Its victims cannot be compelled to violence.

Night Cat

6 HP, 9 STR, 14 DEX, 5 WIL, claws (d6+d6)

- Intelligent, nocturnal marsupials that make their homes in forests and swamps. Hunt in packs.
- **Critical Damage**: The Night Cat begins to eat the target (d4 STR damage) while they are still alive.

Night Hag

8 HP, 9 STR, 11 DEX, 16 WIL, talons (d8+d8)

- Hideous old women that dwell in dead forests, swamps, and bogs.
- Carry three of the following spellbooks: *Arcane Eye, Disguise, Fog Cloud, Identify Owner, Smoke Form.*

Nightmare

8 HP, 15 STR, 12 DEX, 8 WIL, flaming hooves (d8+d8)

- Intelligent, demonic horses with eyes like burning coals, smoldering nostrils, and flaming hooves.
- Melee attacks against the Nightmare are impaired due to the thick clouds of smoke it produces.

Ogre

6 HP, 1 Armor, 16 STR, 8 DEX, 6 WIL, club (d10)

- Massive, gluttonous brutes of ill-spirit and low intelligence.
- Easily impressed by shiny materials, keeping sacks of gold and treasure in their lairs.

Owlbear

9 HP, 16 STR, 12 DEX, 5 WIL, beak (d10), claws (d8+d8)

- Bear-like carnivores with the face of an owl. Found in dense forests. Rumored spawn of a magical mishap.
- **Critical Damage**: A piece of armor is rent and destroyed.

Phoenix

4 HP, 15 STR, 13 DEX, 12 WIL, talons (d10+d10)

- Intelligent, hawk-like spirits of pure flame, found in isolated deserts and high mountains.
- If killed, they explode in a burst of flames. They are reborn 1d3 days later from the ashes.
- Their feathers are highly-sought after for their healing properties.

Pixie

3 HP, 3 STR, 15 DEX, 13 WIL

- Tiny humanoids with insectoid wings. Naturally invisible.
- Can cast *Sleep* and *Masquerade* at will.

Purple Worm

18 HP, 1 Armor, 18 STR, 8 DEX, 6 WIL, bite (d12), *detachment*

- Gargantuan worms that lair in enormous burrows deep underground, only coming to the surface to eat. Found in high deserts and hot tundra.
- **Critical Damage**: The target is devoured, taking d8 STR damage from the acid in the worm's stomach.

Root Goblin

4 HP, 8 STR, 14 DEX, 8 WIL, spear (d6)

- Avoid combat unless they have the advantage (such as greater numbers).
- Guard their stolen goods to the death.
- Root Goblins prize spellbooks and are always willing to trade.

Red Cap

6 HP, 6 STR, 12 DEX, 8 WIL, dual sickles (d6+d6)

- Born from blood left to rot in the land of Fairy. Their hats are a deep red from the blood they bathe in.
- Ignore those with little to live for, as there is no pleasure in their murder.
- **Critical Damage**: Target is eviscerated, the spray of their blood restoring STR loss suffered by the Red Cap.

Reptilian

5 HP, 1 Armor, 14 STR, 12 DEX, 5 WIL, bone spear (d8)

- Amphibian humanoids that live in large tribes near swamps and jungles.
- Craft their armor and weapons from the bones of their prey. They will eat anything, including humanoids.

Root Witch

8 HP, 9 STR, 16 DEX, 14 WIL, tuber-fingers (d6)

- Excellent tunnelers that hide underground near water. Wiggle tiny fronds into the air as lures.
- Above-ground, appear vaguely humanoid with the face of a rotted tree stump.
- Will exchange rare minerals for a "fresh corpse" of any kind.
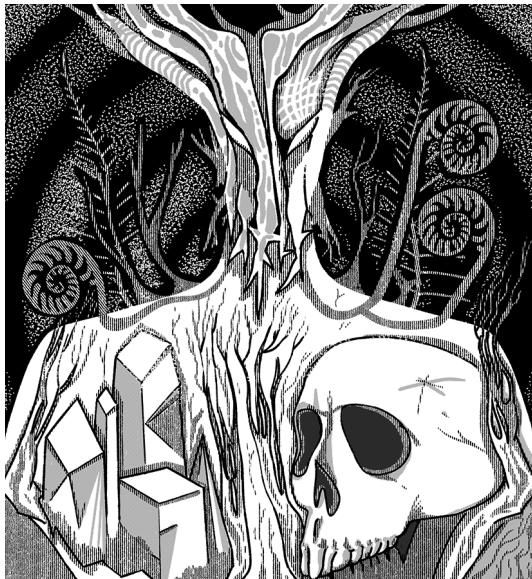
Rust Monster

5 HP, 16 STR, 13 DEX, 5 WIL, bite (d6)

- Armadillo-like creatures with club-like tails and long antennae. Feed on iron and rusted metal.
- Any mundane metals their antennae touch instantly become rust. Can smell metal from a long distance away.
- **Critical Damage**: Metal armor rusts into useless weight.

Sea Hag

6 HP, 11 STR, 15 DEX, 14 WIL, long claws (d6+d6)

- Ghostly, green-skinned hags that dwell in seaweed forests and warm shallow waters.
- Immune to magic from spellbooks.
- **Hideous Gaze**: A target is overcome with fear (HP drops to 0). WIL save each round to break the spell.

Shadow

14 HP, 1 STR, 18 DEX, 14 WIL, draining touch (d6, ignores armor)

- Incorporeal monsters that look like animated shadows. Unharmed by mundane attacks, sleep or mind control.
- **Critical Damage**: Target loses d4 STR. If reduced to 0 STR, they become a shadow as well.

Shambling Mound

9 HP, 15 STR, 6 DEX, 8 WIL, tendrils (d8+d8), *detachment*

- Tall humanoids made of slimy vegetation. Dwell in dark swamps and damp undergrounds.
- **Critical Damage**: Target is swallowed whole and dragged away.

Skeleton

5 HP, 1 Armor, 8 STR, 13 DEX, 0 WIL, rusty sword (d6) or bow (d6)

- Frequently found serving a master or necromancer, often in groups of 3 or more.
- Found wearing whatever was on them at the time of their death.
- If a skeleton is killed and its bones are not scattered, it reforms.

Sky Giant

12 HP, 1 Armor, 16 STR, 12 DEX, 14 WIL, mace (d10), *detachment*

- Towering, white-skinned giants that live in castles high in the mountains.
- Missile attacks against them are impaired due to the powerful winds surrounding them.

Sphinx

18 HP, 12 STR, 13 DEX, 18 WIL, claws (d8+d8, *blast*), beak (d10)

- Mythical beasts with the upper body and head of a human, the wings of an eagle, and the body of a lion. Immune to magic of any kind.
- Poses riddles to anyone they meet. Failure to answer correctly is usually met with death. They know almost everything worth knowing.
- **Roar**: Anyone in earshot must save WIL or flee in fear.

Storm Giant

18 HP, 2 Armor, 18 STR, 16 DEX, 18 WIL, great sword (d12), *detachment*

- Building-sized humanoids with bronze-hued skin and light-colored hair. Live on the highest mountain peaks and rockiest coastlines.
- Unharmed by lightning, can summon storm clouds at their will. Can fly with the wind as a their chariot.
- **Thunderclap**: Deals 4 STR damage against a single target. Targets wearing metal armor take double damage.

Swine Thing

9 HP, 16 STR, 8 DEX, 13 WIL, gore (d6+d6)

- Obese humanoids that transform into massive porcine monstrosities to feast on human flesh.
- Prefer to hunt in isolated settlements close to forests and wetlands. Can only shapeshift at night.
- **Charm**: Target obeys the swine's every command until it is killed. WIL save once per round to break free.

Titan

18 HP, 3 Armor, 16 STR, 15 DEX, 18 WIL, lightning sword (d12), *detachment*

- Mythical, humanoid giants of radiant beauty and powerfully athletic bodies. Beneficent of character, but prone to megalomania.
- Natives of other planes of existence, but sometimes have strongholds in the mortal world.
- Can levitate, shapeshift, and sculpt elements at will.

Triton

6 HP, 12 STR, 15 DEX, 12 WIL, trident (d8)

- Aquatic humanoids with silvery skin, blue-green hair, and scaled legs ending in fins. Dwell in warmer waters close to land.
- Lair in beautiful castles sculpted from sea rock and coral. Command vast schools of fish for both protection and food.

Treant

10 HP, 3 Armor, 15 STR, 3 DEX, 12 WIL, roots (d8+d8, *blast*)

- Sentient, bipedal trees with a vaguely humanoid face on their trunks.
- Speak slowly and ponderously, with a deep voice. Timeless, living for thousands of years.

Troll

14 HP, 1 Armor, 14 STR, 12 DEX, 4 WIL, claw (d8), club (d10)

- Giant, warty humanoids of flesh and bark. Dwell underground or in deep forests, as well as the ruined homes of their former victims. Carnivorous.
- When taking critical damage, a Troll will continue fighting, despite loss of flesh and limb. Only when their STR is 0 are they truly killed. Unless their heads are bathed in acid, fire, or powerful magic, they will fully regenerate within 1d4 days.

Unicorn

6 HP, 14 STR, 12 DEX, 14 WIL, horn (d10, ignores armor)

- Magical horses with a single long horn on their foreheads. Timid, but proud and willful, are seen as divine beings.
- Their hair is worth a small fortune due to its powerful healing properties.

Viper

3 HP, 5 STR, 12 DEX, 3 WIL, bite (d6)

- Poisonous snakes often found in caves, pits, and other dark places. An antitoxin can be made from their poison sacs.
- Use heat and smell to track their victims.
- **Critical Damage**: Target is poisoned, dying in 1d12 hours without a cure.

Warp Panther

8 HP, 13 STR, 16 DEX, 12 WIL, tentacles (d8+d8, blast), bite (d10)

- Grotesque panther-like predators with long razored tentacles growing out of their backs.
- Resistant to magical attacks. Caster must make a WIL save for the intended effect to succeed.
- Can teleport a short distance away at will. Hate Blink Dogs.

Vampire

12 HP, 1 Armor, 14 STR, 12 DEX, 16 WIL, bite (d10)

- Charming, undead creatures that drink the blood of mortals. Act at night and sleep in a coffin during the day. Can change into a bat at will.
- **Regeneration**: A damaged vampire regains 6 HP when it bites a target that has blood. If killed, it becomes a cloud of gas and retreats to its coffin, reforming at the next nightfall. Can only be killed if exposed to sunlight or if the coffin is destroyed.
- **Critical Damage**: The vampire drains the target's essence, dealing d12 damage to WIL. If the target reaches 0 WIL this way, it dies and is raised as a thrall of the vampire.

Warrior Snail

4 HP, 2 Armor, 14 STR, 6 DEX, 3 WIL, tentacles (d8+d8)

- Giant armored snails with heavy, club-like tentacles.
- Some species have colorful shells that can reflect magical attacks.

Water Elemental

14 HP, 15 STR, 16 DEX, 4 WIL, spray (d8)

- Rare spirits of lakes, rivers, and seas.
- Mundane attacks against the Water Elemental are impaired.
- **Critical Damage**: Target is enveloped by the water and drowns in three rounds.

Werewolf

8 HP, 15 STR, 14 DEX, 6 WIL, claws (d6+d6), bite (d8)

- Ferocious lycanthropes that can transform into a wolf-shape at will.
- Mundane attacks are impaired against werewolves, but attacks with weapons made of silver are *enhanced*.
- **Critical Damage**: Target becomes infected with lycanthropy, transforming into a werewolf by the next full moon.

Will-o-Wisp

3 HP, 6 STR, 17 DEX, 12 WIL

- Nocturnal spirits of cool flame, commonly found in dense woodlands, marshes, and swamps.
- Known to lead travelers astray, to a corpse, or back home again.

Wolf

6 HP, 12 STR, 14 DEX, 8 WIL, bite (d8)

- Large canines that dwell primarily in forest or tundra.
- Can be trained with effort if captured at a young age.

Wight

12 HP, 3 Armor, 16 STR, 8 DEX, 12 WIL, longsword (d10)

- Grotesque, fallen warriors, raised from death for ill purpose. Often astride equally nightmarish steeds, leading lesser undead creatures into battle.
- **Critical Damage**: On a fail, any STR loss is permanent.

Wood Troll

10 HP, 15 STR, 12 DEX, 7 WIL, bite (d8), club (d10)

- Large humanoids with elongated arms made of bark or root. They live in forests, sharing a deep connection with the vegetation around them.
- If killed, they will slowly regenerate unless their corpse is taken out of the forest or burned with fire.
- **Critical Damage**: Moss and twigs begin growing out of the target's wounds.

Wyvern

11 HP, 15 STR, 14 DEX, 13 WIL, stinger (d10)

- Large, intelligent, winged reptiles. Dwell in any terrain, but favor dry cliffs.
- Shy away from other creatures, preferring to silently stalk their targets from afar.
- **Critical Damage**: The victim is impaled and held in place. The wyvern then bites their head off.

Zombie

2 HP, 12 STR, 6 DEX, 3 WIL, jagged nails (d6)

- Re-animated corpse brought back through necromantic ritual or fell influence. Immune to all mind-influencing effects.
- If not utterly destroyed (by fire, complete dismemberment, etc.), the Zombie will rise again within a few minutes.
- **Critical Damage**: Target is infected and becomes deprived. Without the services of a specialist or healer, they will become a zombie in d4 days.

Creating Monsters

Overview

To create a unique monster, follow these steps:

- Roll on the **Monster Appearance** table.
- Roll on the **Monster Traits** table.
- Roll on the **Monster Attacks** table.
- Roll on the **Monster Abilities** table.
- Describe the creature's appearance, abilities, and attacks in plain English.
- Create the creature's stats according to the principles, definitions, and stat block format below.

Principles

- Use **Critical Damage** to lean into the threat or strangeness of any aggressive NPC.
- Use flavor and style to help creatures stand out. Players will remember a pig-faced humanoid looking for his missing sheep more easily than a generic goblin archer.
- Always adjust creature stats based on what is fun and interesting.

HIT PROTECTION

A creature's ability to avoid danger, whether through toughness, speed, or skill. Give average creatures 3 HP, give hardier ones 6 HP, and give serious threats 10 HP or higher.

ARMOR

For some creatures, this represents their natural toughness; for others, it may be from something that is worn or carried. If a creature is able to withstand an attack without moving, raise this number.

ATTRIBUTES

3 is deficient, 6 is weak, 10 is average, 14 is noteworthy, and 18 is legendary.

STRENGTH

Tracks overall health, physical power, and resistance to poisons. It is the ability of a creature to survive a direct hit, not its ability to avoid danger!

DEXTERITY

Start with 10 as a base, and if the creature is particularly quick, agile, or nimble, increase the number as necessary. If it is slow to respond, bulky, or clumsy, lower the number.

WILLPOWER

Determines a creature's ability to withstand the influence of another, as well as their power over others. It also acts as a measurement of their defense in magical or spiritual matters.

ATTACKS

Typically an object (e.g. sword or bow) or a natural weapon (e.g. claws or teeth).

ABILITIES

A unique action or power the creature can utilize both in and out of combat.

- If an ability can be meaningfully avoided or defended against through traditional means, it is an Attack and interacts with HP.
- If an ability cannot be meaningfully avoided or defended against through traditional means, it is an Ability.
- If an ability only affects a single PC, it should generally have an immediate effect with no chance to Save in that round (see Basilisk, pg. 83).
- If an ability is capable of affecting a group of PCs, it should generally call for an immediate Save (see Green Dragon, pg. 88).

Monster Stat Block Format

X HP, X Armor, X STR, X DEX, X WIL, Attack (dX, special items, qualities)

- An engaging descriptor of appearance, demeanor, or living habits.
- A quirk, tactic, or peculiarity that distinguish this creature.
- Special effect or consequence of critical damage.

MONSTER APPEARANCE

Roll 1d20 for each column and combine.

d20	Physique	Feature
1	Albino	Antennae
2	Black	Beak
3	Crystalline	Carapace
4	Emaciated	Claws
5	Eyeless	Fangs
6	Feathered	Feathers
7	Gelatinous	Fur
8	Glowing	Gilled
9	Hardened	Horns
10	Headless	Markings
11	Horned	Scales
12	Hunched	Shell
13	Iridescent	Snout
14	Polyocular	Tail
15	Scaled	Talons
16	Segmented	Tentacles
17	Skeletal	Trunk
18	Slimy	Tusks
19	Translucent	Voice
20	Twisted	Wings

MONSTER TRAITS

Roll 1d20 for each column and combine.

d20	Quirks	Weakness
1	Alters Its Size at Will	Alcohol
2	Changes Color at Will	Cold
3	Collects Rare Flowers	Conversation
4	Collects Trophies	Flattery
5	Does Not Die of Old Age	Games
6	Draws Symbols	Gifts
7	Fascinated by Fire	Iron
8	Hoards Books	Loud Noises
9	Loves a Specific Color	Mirrors
10	Reborn Each Day	Bright Colors
11	Loves Shiny Objects	Moonlight
12	Mimics Voices	Music
13	Moves in a Straight Line	Prepared Meals
14	Narrates Everything	Puzzles
15	Obsessively Cleans	Religious Icons
16	Plants Grow in Its Wake	Salt
17	Sleeps Upside Down	Silver
18	Speaks in Rhymes	Sunlight
19	Sweats Rare Minerals	True Name
20	Reproduces Asexually	Weak Spot

MONSTER ATTACKS

Roll 1d20 for each column and combine.

d20	Type	Critical Damage
1	Bites	Asphyxiates
2	Blunts	Bleeds
3	Burns	Blinds
4	Freezes	Breaks
5	Gases	Crushes
6	Kicks	Decays
7	Punches	Dissolves
8	Shoots	Ensnares
9	Slams	Explodes
10	Slashes	Grapples
11	Slices	Incapacitates
12	Smashes	Lacerates
13	Sprays	Liquefies
14	Squeezes	Paralyzes
15	Stabs	Petrifies
16	Stings	Poisons
17	Throws	Punctures
18	Touches	Severs
19	Whips	Tramples
20	Zaps	Weakens

MONSTER ABILITIES

Roll 1d20 for each column and combine.

d20	Ability	Target
1	Absorbs	Body
2	Amplifies	Dreams
3	Attracts	Element
4	Binds	Emotions
5	Camouflages	Energy
6	Conjures	Health
7	Controls	Hearing
8	Disables	Illusions
9	Duplicates	Light
10	Grows	Memory
11	Manipulates	Metal
12	Reflects	Plants
13	Regenerates	Spirit
14	Resists	Stone
15	Reverses	Surroundings
16	Shapes	Time
17	Shrinks	Vision
18	Transforms	Water
19	Traps	Weather
20	Zaps	Weakens

Monster Example

- **Appearance**: Hunched + Carapace
- **Traits**: Moves in a straight line + Weak Spot
- **Attack**: Smashes + Grapples
- **Abilities**: Disables + Hearing

A snail-like creature with a hard shell. It moves only in straight lines, and has a soft underbelly. It rolls into opponents, pulling them into its wild orbit. The roar of its movement drowns out any other sounds.

This creature is physically tough, with higher than average **STR** and strong armor. It is probably fast but not maneuverable, and likely doesn't rely on skill or dexterity to avoid danger. It is brutish, but it is still a wild beast and only as willful as any creature just looking for its next meal. It attacks by rolling in a straight line and should impact multiple targets.

THUNDER SNAIL
6 HP, 2 Armor, 14 STR, 6 DEX, 4 WIL, smash & roll (d10, *blast*)

- Thick-shelled beasts that attack by rolling over their opponents in a straight line. The noise of their tumbling shells is deafening.
- **Critical Damage:** Target is pulled into its rolling momentum, losing an additional 1 STR per round until freed (STR save to escape).
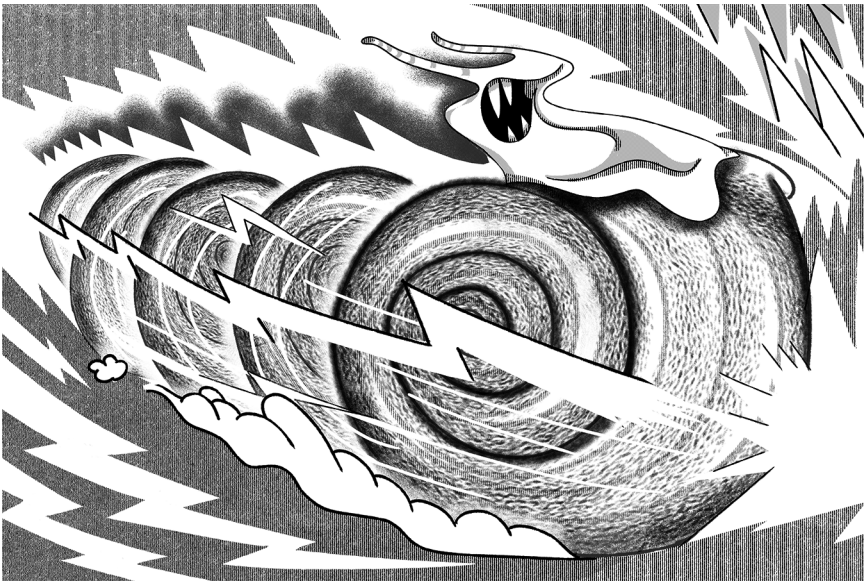
Converting Monsters

There is no perfect system for converting from other systems. Here are some tips that might help with the process!

- **Hit Protection**: A good rule of thumb is to give the creature +1 HP for every **HD**, on top of a minimum **3 HP** (the average person). I usually think of **HD** as equivalent to a d6, which has a *mean* of 3.5. Always start with a creature's **HP** *first*, *then* do their **STR**.
- **Armor**: Look for phrases like "as leather" and "as plate" in the original stat blocks. When converting from B/X style games like Old School Essentials, ignore THAC0 and use descending AC whenever possible (7 = Leather, 5 = Chainmail, 3 = Plate mail). If only ascending AC is given, you can use (12 = Leather, 14 = Chainmail, 16 = Plate mail). Whichever system you're converting from, the Armor values range from 1-3 only.
- **Strength**: Look at the creature's **HD** and **HP**. If a creature is difficult to kill but *not* because they are nimble or skilled, give them more **STR** (but *not* more **HP**). Start with 10 **STR** (the average) and go up or down from there.
- **Dexterity**: Start with **10** as a base, and if the creature is particularly quick (often referred to as "speed" or SP), agile, or nimble-fingered, raise the number. If it is slow to respond, bulky, or clumsy, lower the number. See Saving Throws (pg. 112) for more!
- **Willpower**: Morale (**ML**) can be a good guidepost, and it typically ranges between 2-12. The greater the creature's personality, spirit, or presence, the higher the WIL they should have. The following table offers a decent guide on converting **ML** to **WIL**.

Converting Morale to Willpower				
ML	4	8	10	12
WIL	6	12	15	18

Saving Throws

- You can rely on *saving throws* to glean more information about a creature's abilities, specifically their ability to avoid death by physical trauma, magic, or poison.
- Stat blocks will use a shorthand like (E1) or (F1) (Level 1 Elf or Fighter respectively). These are really helpful for quickly identifying the creature's abilities.
- Consider adding descriptive tags such as "immune to toxic gas" or "good at dodging" based on the saving throws. The following table should help determine which saving throws should result in an increase in one of the relevant ability scores.

Converting Saving Throws	
Death or Poison	STR
Wands	DEX
Paralysis or Petrification	WIL or STR
Breath Attacks	DEX or STR
Spells, Rods or Staves	WIL

Combat

- **Damage Die:** Can typically be copied "as is" from most OSR systems, but it's a good idea to check with the weapons listed in the Marketplace (see Player's Guide) first.
- **Multiple Attacks:** Convert to *blast* or to multiple dice (e.g. d6+d6).
- **Devastating Attacks:** Consider making the damage *enhanced*, assign the *blast* tag, or giving the attack multiple dice.

Abilities

- Sometimes the mechanics of the original system simply *do not translate*. That's OK! Try to focus on what's most interesting about the creature, and write a "version" of their ability more appropriate to Cairn.
- Abilities can sometimes be made into attacks (with a damage die), leaving Critical Damage to reveal the real impact.
- If the monster has an attack that asks the PCs to attempt to dodge or save against some ability, consider making the ability an out-of-combat "trap" that the PCs can trigger. Otherwise, make it succeed automatically. Combat is dangerous, and it is up to the Warden to properly telegraph danger before the fighting begins.

Magic

- Magical creatures can "know" a bunch of spells without needing to carry Spellbooks. In this case, make their corpses magical (and dangerous)!
- Spells are tricky; you can give magic-users Spellbooks, but remember, they might *drop* them when defeated.
- Consider making some of the dropped Spellbooks implode (use the Die of Fate to determine which).

Use the Fiction

The easiest way to convert a monster from another system is to read the original stat block and any associated text, then write a few sentences about the creature in plain English. Finally, convert what you've written to the Cairn monster stat block.

Take for example this creature:

FOXWOMAN
Can take the form of a fox or a 7' tall fox-headed woman.

HD 5, Speed 120', Armor 14, Morale 11, Attack: +4 d8hp (claw, bite or choke)

- **Defense:** Cannot be harmed by metal
- **Special:** Can transform into a fox or a maiden with one fox leg hidden (same stats) at will

Using the example above, I can see that she:

- She appears as a 7-foot tall human woman with the head of a fox.
- She doesn't have super high HP, and she's quite fast.
- Her **ML** is pretty high, and she's obviously quite willful.
- She is agile and lithe.
- She attacks with teeth and claws (choking her prey if possible).
- She can transform into a fox at will.
- She is immune to metal weapons.

What can we learn from this?

- She's fast, and probably savvy in a fight. If we start from 3 HP and add 1 HP per HD, that means she has 8 HP.
- I don't think foxes have protective hides, and she's otherwise human beside her head. No Armor.
- She is decently strong. A normal human has 10 STR and she's a little bigger. 12 STR.
- I can imagine her hunting prey over the snowy tundra. She's fast. 14 DEX.
- Her ML is high, and foxes are known for their cunning. 15 WIL.
- For her attacks, I'd go with claws (d6+d6) and bite (d8).

This information leaves us with the following:

8 HP, 12 STR, 14 DEX, 15 WIL, claws (d6+d6), bite (d8)

Now on to her abilities:

This is pretty straightforward. We simply read the fictional stat block we created earlier!

- She appears as a 7-foot tall human woman with the leg of a fox.
- She can transforms into a fox at will.
- She is immune to attacks from metal weapons.
- She chokes her victims into unconsciousness.

The final result:

Foxwoman

8 HP, 12 STR, 14 DEX, 15 WIL, claws (d6+d6), bite (d8)

- Can take the form of a fox or a woman with a hidden fox leg.
- Immune to attacks from metal weapons.
- **Critical Damage**: Victim is choked unconscious.

Monster Categories

d20	Group Type	Monsters
1	Avian	Phoenix, Roc, Wyvern
2	Beast	Blood Elk, Grizzly Bear, Killer Bees, Night Cat, Viper, Wolf
3	Behemoth	Green Dragon, Purple Worm
4	Construct	Bone Construct, Cobblehounds, Gargoyle
5	Demon	Hellhound, Nightmare
6	Extraplanar	Eye of Terror, Mind Lasher
7	Fey	Boggart, Dryad, Frost Elf, Pixie, Red Cap, Night Hag, Sea Hag, Will-o-Wisp
8	Giant	Ettin, Sky Giant, Storm Giant, Titan
9	Goblinoid	Bugbear, Goblin, Hobgoblin, Ogre, Root Goblin, Troll, Wood Troll
10	Humanoid	Acolyte, Bandit, Frost Elf, Gnoll, Hooded Men, Triton
11	Hybrid	Centaur, Manticore, Minotaur, Owlbear
12	Incorporeal	Invisible Stalker, Shadow
13	Insectoid	Aranea, Burrowing Horror, Cave Locust, Giant Scorpion
14	Lizard	Basilisk, Hydra, Kobold, Naga, Reptilian
15	Magical	Blink Dog, Warp Panther, Water Elemental
16	Mythical	Banshee, Griffon, Harpy, Hydra, Lamia, Unicorn
17	Plant	Creeping Vines, Root Witch, Shambling Mound, Treant
18	Shape Shifter	Swine Thing, Werewolf
19	Undead	Crypt Guardian, Ghost, Ghoul, Lich, Mummy, Skeleton, Vampire, Wight, Zombie
20	Unusual	Gelatinous Ooze, Mimic, Rust Monster, Warrior Snail

Naming Procedures

Principles

- Settlements are often named after their unique features: the shape of the river nearby, or the large windmill in the town center. The residents then add a noun or adjective: *Windy Gulch, Black Tree Fort*, etc.
- Important places should have important names, like those of heroes, religious or political figures, and other events. *The Chalet of Saint Ibiz, Queen's Harvest, Light of the Nine*, etc.
- Proper nouns can be added to or even replace parts of a name, e.g. *Bruna's Ugly Gulch*.
- Wild and dangerous places are named after obvious hazards: *Poison Lake, Foggy Cliffs*, etc.
- Some names tell a story: *Luka's Folly, Dead Man's Path*, etc.
- Use the region's local terrain and the location's details where appropriate.

Generating Names

- Roll on the **Names Formula** table for each POI.
- Roll on the **Adjectives** and **Nouns** tables where appropriate.
- To roll **1d100**, roll **2d10**, using one die for the tens place, and one die for the ones place.

> To name regions based on Terrain, swap out "POI" with the terrain type, and consult the Terrain Synonyms table for inspiration.

d6	Names Formula
1	(The) [Noun] [POI]
2	(The) [Adjective] [POI]
3	[POI] of (the) [Noun]
4	[Adjective] [POI] of (the) [Noun]
5	(The) [Noun] [Adjective] [POI]
6	[POI] of (the) [Adjective] [Noun]

Terrain Synonyms

Terrain	Synonym
Beaches	seaside, shore, coast, seaboard, foreshore, marina
Bogs	marsh, quad, morass, slough, fens
Canyons	ravine, gully, chasm, abyss, gulf, gulch
Caverns	grotto, cavity, tunnels, dugout, cave
Cliffs	precipice, face, crag, bluff, ridge, escarpment, steep
Desert	dunes, sands, vasts, wastes, blight, erg
Farmlands	tillage, holding, acreage, steading, grange, plantation
Forest	bush, woods, woodland, weald, grove, copse
Grasslands	pasture, steppe, savanna, fields, greenery
Hills	hillock, mound, mount, knoll, hummock, slope
Hollows	dip, hole, pit, cavity, crater, trough, holes
Jungle	See forest
Lakes	pond, pool, tarn, lagoon, loch, bayou
Mountains	peaks, ridge, range, summit, pinnacle, butte
Oasis	spring, well, fountain, haven, watering hole, refuge
Plains	heath, meadow, veldt, flats, lowlands, sward
Plateau	uplands, mesa, highlands, downs, reach
River	waterway, stream, brook, runnel creek, channel
Sea	See beaches
Swamp	mire, morass, quag, moors, sump, wetlands
Thickets	chaparral, boscage, covert, coppice, fells
Tundra	expanse, prairie, boreal, ley
Valley	dale, vale, basin, gorge, gap, glen
Wasteland	See desert

Adjectives

d100	Adjective	d100	Adjective	d100	Adjective	d100	Adjective
1	Aging	26	Crimson	51	Furious	76	Peeling
2	Amber	27	Crumbling	52	Gaping	77	Plunging
3	Ancient	28	Curled	53	Gleaming	78	Ragged
4	Angry	29	Curling	54	Glow	79	Rotting
5	Ashen	30	Curved	55	Granite	80	Salty
6	Bare	31	Curvy	56	Grim	81	Savage
7	Battered	32	Dampened	57	Grizzled	82	Shifting
8	Bitter	33	Dark	58	Hazy	83	Shimmering
9	Blackened	34	Dazzling	59	Heated	84	Shining
10	Blazing	35	Dead	60	Hellish	85	Shivering
11	Bleak	36	Deathly	61	Hideous	86	Shrouded
12	Blighted	37	Diamond	62	Jagged	87	Singed
13	Blistered	38	Dismal	63	Lone	88	Sinking
14	Blistering	39	Dreary	64	Lonely	89	Slaughter
15	Blustery	40	Empty	65	Luminous	90	Smoky
16	Brisk	41	Endless	66	Lurching	91	Soggy
17	Bright	42	Fierce	67	Lustrous	92	Sour
18	Broad	43	Flaming	68	Miserable	93	Sputtering
19	Calm	44	Flashing	69	Misty	94	Stained
20	Celestial	45	Foggy	70	Mournful	95	Starved
21	Choking	46	Forbidden	71	Muddy	96	Stinking
22	Cold	47	Forgotten	72	Narrow	97	Stuffed
23	Colorful	48	Fragile	73	Ominous	98	Sunken
24	Copper	49	Frayed	74	Overgrown	99	Thin
25	Cracked	50	Frozen	75	Patched	100	Withered

Nouns

d100	Noun	d100	Noun	d100	Noun	d100	Noun
1	Abyss	26	Desolation	51	Have	76	Rot
2	Alliance	27	Despair	52	Horror	77	Ruin
3	Amber	28	Devil	53	Iron	78	Shadow
4	Ambition	29	Dirt	54	Island	79	Silver
5	Apple	30	Doom	55	Jade	80	Skull
6	Aurora	31	Doorway	56	King	81	Sky
7	Bastion	32	Echo	57	Lavender	82	Smoke
8	Black	33	Ember	58	Life	83	Snake
9	Blight	34	Fate	59	Light	84	Sorrow
10	Blue	35	Fear	60	Marble	85	Spark
11	Bone	36	Fire	61	Mist	86	Stone
12	Bright	37	Flame	62	Mold	87	Storm
13	Chasm	38	Folly	63	Moon	88	Sun
14	Chip	39	Fray	64	Mud	89	Tempest
15	Copper	40	Frost	65	Nightmare	90	Terror
16	Country	41	Fury	66	Patch	91	Thorn
17	Crack	42	Ghost	67	Peril	92	Thunder
18	Crimson	43	Giant	68	Purple	93	Toxic
19	Curl	44	Glimmer	69	Radiance	94	Tranquil
20	Darkness	45	God	70	Rag	95	Troll
21	Dawn	46	Gold	71	Rain	96	Valor
22	Dead	47	Green	72	Rainbow	97	Violet
23	Death	48	Harmony	73	Red	98	War
24	Decay	49	Harvest	74	Refuge	99	Whisper
25	Dent	50	Haunt	75	Regret	100	Zephyr

Faction Names

1. Roll on the **Faction Names Formula** table.

2. Roll on the **Adjectives**, **Nouns**, and **Group Types** table where appropriate.

d6	Faction Names Formula
1	(The) [Noun] [Group]
2	(The) [Adjective] [Group]
3	[Group] of (the) [Noun]
4	[Adjective] [Group] of (the) [Noun]
5	(The) [Noun] [Adjective] [Group]
6	[Group] of (the) [Adjective] [Noun]

GROUP TYPES

d20	Group	d20	Group
1	Assembly	11	Horde
2	Brotherhood	12	League
3	Circle	13	Legion
4	Clan	14	Market
5	Coalition	15	Ministry
6	Collective	16	Movement
7	Covenant	17	Network
8	Enclave	18	Order
9	Fellowship	19	Pact
10	Guild	20	Syndicate

Realm Names

1. Roll on the **Ruler Names Formula** table.

2. Roll on the **Adjectives**, **Nouns, Terrain,** and **Rulers** table, and add "of" or "the" where appropriate.

> Optionally, replace any value with the dominant terrain synonym, e.g. "The Misty Bluffs".

d6	Realm Names Formula
1	(The) [Noun] [Rulers]
2	(The) [Adjective] [Rulers]
3	[Rulers] of (the) [Noun]
4	[Adjective] [Rulers] of (the) [Noun]
5	(The) [Noun] [Adjective] [Rulers]
6	[Rulers] of (the) [Adjective] [Noun]

RULER TYPES

d20	Ruler	d20	Ruler
1	Alliance	11	Hegemony
2	Barony	12	Kingdom
3	Commonwealth	13	Monarchy
4	Confederation	14	Principality
5	Dominion	15	Protectorate
6	Ecclesiarchy	16	Realm
7	Empire	17	Regency
8	Federacy	18	Republic
9	Fiefdom	19	State
10	Grand Duchy	20	Union

Forest Names

- For the adjective, roll a d**10** twice, first for the **tens** place, and then another for the **ones** place. Then repeat the process for the noun.
- Change it up! The name *Welcoming Grove* might be more appropriate than *Beckoning Copse* for your setting.
- Use contrasting words (e.g. *Twisted Canopy*) to evoke an interesting point about the location.
- Make it sound nice. Alliteration and pleasing combinations can create pleasant sounds. *Whispering Woods* is more pleasing to the ear than *Tangled Woods*.

d100	Adjective	Noun
1	Abandoned	Arbors
2	Ancient	Arch
3	Beckoning	Blossoms
4	Blooming	Bogs
5	Bountiful	Boughs
6	Celestial	Brake
7	Charmed	Brambles
8	Crystal	Branches
9	Dappled	Briar
10	Dense	Bridge
11	Desolate	Brook
12	Distant	Brush
13	Echoing	Camp
14	Eerie	Canopy
15	Emerald	Cascade
16	Enchanted	Cave
17	Enigmatic	Cavern
18	Ephemeral	Chase
19	Eternal	Clearing
20	Ethereal	Clump
21	Exotic	Coppice
22	Fabled	Copse

d100	Adjective	Noun
23	Flourishing	Crags
24	Forgotten	Creek
25	Forsaken	Dale
26	Fragrant	Dell
27	Frosty	Dew
28	Gentle	Fell
29	Glistening	Fen
30	Gloomy	Ferns
31	Gnarled	Foliage
32	Golden	Forest
33	Grassy	Fungi
34	Harmonious	Gill
35	Haunted	Glade
36	Hidden	Glen
37	Hushed	Gorge
38	Illuminated	Granite
39	Jagged	Green
40	Lavish	Grotto
41	Leafy	Grove
42	Lonely	Growth
43	Looming	Heath
44	Lost	Henge

d100	Adjective	Noun
45	Luminescent	Hollow
46	Luminous	Horizon
47	Lush	Knar
48	Majestic	Knoll
49	Melancholy	Leaves
50	Menacing	Light
51	Misty	Loam
52	Moonlit	Loom
53	Mossy	Marsh
54	Murmuring	Meadow
55	Mysterious	Mire
56	Mystic	Morass
57	Opulent	Oak
58	Overgrown	Oasis
59	Precarious	Orchard
60	Primeval	Pass
61	Pristine	Passages
62	Quaint	Path
63	Radiant	Pathway
64	Roaring	Pine
65	Rugged	Roots
66	Rustling	Sanctuary
67	Sacred	Shade
68	Secluded	Shadows
69	Serene	Shelter
70	Serpentine	Shrub
71	Shadowy	Slope
72	Shimmering	Spring

d100	Adjective	Noun
73	Shrouded	Stirs
74	Silent	Stones
75	Smoky	Stream
76	Somber	Stump
77	Spectral	Swale
78	Splendid	Sward
79	Stark	Sway
80	Sturdy	Tangle
81	Sunlit	Thicket
82	Sunny	Thistles
83	Swirling	Timber
84	Tangled	Timberland
85	Timeless	Tower
86	Towering	Trails
87	Tranquil	Trees
88	Trickling	Trunks
89	Twilight	Underbrush
90	Twisted	Undergrowth
91	Unseen	Understory
92	Unyielding	Vines
93	Veiled	Waterway
94	Verdant	Weald
95	Vibrant	Wildwood
96	Weathered	Woodland
97	Weeping	Woodlot
98	Whispering	Woods
99	Wild	Yonder
100	Winding	Zephyr

Growth

Introduction

Unlike other roleplaying games, Cairn does not reward player characters for killing monsters, looting treasure, or exploring new places. Instead, it is a character's unique experience in the game world that has the potential to alter their health, abilities, beliefs, bonds, and even their minds.

Just as the in-game world continues to grow and change, so do the player characters. The events, experiences, and encounters of a play session can greatly impact a PC, sometimes in undesirable ways! Keep in mind however that with some notable exceptions (such as Scars), growth should always stem from a character's experiences in the game world. Character growth can also depend on the results of Downtime procedures that help a character focus on training or specialization, research, and faction relationships.

Principles for Growth

- Growth is never arbitrary but is tied to a specific experience happening in the fiction.

- It is more important for a character to become more interesting than to become more skilled or capable.

- Characters experience growth not simply because they've had a new experience but because that experience has affected them a significant way.

- Place opportunities for growth in as many places as possible.

- Characters grow as often during a play session as they do during Downtime.

- Growth should foster further interaction with the game world and its challenges.

- Growth is not a reward but the logical result of a character's actions.

- Growth happens most often when a character interacts with something they do not understand or something they were not meant to understand.

- Characters may change in a way that they don't like or may gain new abilities at a cost.

- Relics, treasure, factions, monsters, and important NPCs are all excellent potential triggers for growth.

- Characters can change slowly over time or by amassing significant, cumulative experiences around a single type of growth.

Triggers

Framework for Growth

As characters engage with the game world, they must increasingly adapt to new realities in the fiction. Some of these adaptations are minor and rarely revisited again. Others are cumulative, representing a collection of related experiences. And some experiences are so powerful that their impact is immediate and unparalleled.

For each of these it can be helpful to assign Triggers, or opportunities for growth. These represent significant turning points in a character's life and should be met with a permanent and related change! Good triggers depend on characters engaging in at least two of the following:

- A focused, consistent pattern of behavior around a single objective or course of action.

- Taking an obvious risk with potentially serious consequences, especially when the outcome is unknown.

- Interacting with a unique item, creature, or entity.

Growth Examples

INTERACTING WITH SOMETHING (OR SOMEONE) THEY DO NOT UNDERSTAND

Esme and her comrades were tasked with rescuing a merchant and his daughter that had disappeared into the Moon Hill Woods. On the way, Esme stumbled upon a fallen tree, struck by lightning. Daring to climb inside, she discovered a glowing, egg-shaped object: a Heartseed. Recognizing its value (but not its purpose), she took the seed, ignoring the mumblings of her friends.

Over the next few days, Esme noticed crows wherever she went: in the boughs, in the sky, on the trail. Late one night, she had a vision of a terrifying creature built from grass and twigs gazing deep into her soul. She awoke frightened but kept the visions to herself. She decided to keep the Heartseed, no matter what. Over the coming days, her visions increased in severity and regularity, as did the crows, which now appeared even in town, perched on roofs and doorways. Resolute, she ground the seed into bits with a hammer, then swallowed the resulting mess with water. Only then did the visions cease and the crows disappear.

The following day, her skin began to turn green, and small twigs were sprouting from her elbows and chin. Seeking advice from a Bog Witch she'd met in an earlier encounter, she was told that by consuming the Heartseed she had committed herself to the Wood, and that she would soon be bound to the forest forever. She would no longer consume rations, only sunlight and water. She would hear the words of the Wood, as well as the plants and animals that live there. But the witch said that there was a way out, and all that she required was a drop of Esme's blood...

> **Warden Notes**
>
> In this scenario, Esme made a series of decisions that quickly spiraled out of control: the choice to take the Heartseed despite her friend's warnings, ignoring the crows, disregarding the visions pleading with her to return it, and then finally the decision to ingest the seed itself.

LONG-TERM EXPOSURE OR MANIPULATION OF A SPELLBOOK OR RELIC

Throughout her adventures, Hazel made frequent use of a *Control Plants* Spellbook she'd "borrowed" from the abbey where she grew up. Often she would attempt to enhance its power, making WIL saves each time to expand its reach. Of course, not every attempt was successful, and occasionally she paid a heavy price. On one occasion, she and her companions were exploring a jungle temple and stumbled upon a horrific creature made entirely of plant matter.

Seeing an opportunity to use the creature's strengths against it, Hazel's allies gathered around her while she read from the Spellbook. The Warden then asked for a WIL save, as she was trying to cast the spell quickly and under duress. A success! The Warden declared that going forward, she would be able to read from her Spellbook while under duress or time pressure *without first making a successful WIL save.*

> **Warden Notes**
>
> Hazel had previously made multiple attempts to bend the Spellbook to her will with mixed results. She also took a major risk when she tried to cast the spell quickly, and as Spellbooks are unique items of great power, this made her success despite that risk all the more impactful.

FORGING A RELATIONSHIP WITH A BEING OF GREAT POWER

Aster and his comrades came upon a shrine deep hidden in a forest cave. After some research and experimentation (spearheaded by Aster), they were able to free the nearly-mad river god trapped within. As thanks, the deity offered its unknowable essence to anyone willing to receive it. Aster stepped forward and was bound to the god, forgoing his old life and adopting a new religion. A few days later, gills sprouted from Aster's neck after an impromptu dive in a raging river.

> **Warden Notes**
>
> Through his attempts to interact with the statue and determine its true purpose, Aster revealed a distinct pattern of behavior, and although the results were uncertain, he still took a serious risk by prostrating himself to an entity he did not know or understand.

OVERCOMING A LONG-TIME WOE, MISDEED, OR FOE

At long last, Oxrable Kinter (or Ox for short) had finally defeated the serial murderer Tibor Heimshern. But instead of killing him, Ox used the Spirit Siphon to pull the prone man's consciousness straight out of his body. Then to the surprise of everyone at the table, Ox proceeded to drink the man's spirit. The Warden called for a WIL save to overcome Tibor's powerful essence: a success! The Warden then asked the player to reroll Ox's Willpower attribute, saying he could keep the results if they were higher. And they were! However, the Warden also ruled that if at any point Ox had another enemy weak and at his mercy, a WIL save would be required to overcome the murderer's dormant tendencies within his psyche.

> **Warden Notes**
>
> Through the dogged pursuit of his powerful enemy, Ox demonstrated a distinct pattern of behavior. Drinking the spirit of Tibor represented a clear risk to Ox, and even though the Spirit Siphon was a known Relic, its ability to move souls between hosts was an obvious case of interacting with an object not fully understood.

INJURY OR CONTAMINATION

After days of searching, Madrigal the Fungal Forager had finally found the source of bellowing sickness that had stricken an impoverished village: a Liverbracket infestation at the bottom of the town's well. It took many hours of diligent work to uproot the fungi network, but in the end, Madrigal left the town in good spirits, his pockets heavy with gold. He then embarked on a ten-day journey across the Lava Flats in search of a Gate he'd heard about.

A week later, he noticed a strange discoloration on his canteen, and cutting it open, he discovered that he'd been drinking Liverbracket-tainted water! Strangely, he'd been unaffected by the side-effects common to ingesting the fungus. The Warden explained that this was likely because its effects were being counteracted by Madrigal's overcautious intake of Clustermelon Flower, a potent form of heat resistance, useful when crossing the Lava Flats. He spent a few hours fashioning a new canteen, then set out again. Two days later, Madrigal noticed series of small bumps on his skin, along with a familiar discoloration. Stranger yet, he'd completely lost his appetite for Rations. The Warden ruled that going forward Madrigal would no longer need to eat typical food but instead could subsist only on decomposed plants and animals. However, if he would ever be drenched in water, he must take a Fatigue, expelling spores the following day.

> **Warden Notes**
>
> This example involved only a minor risk, but the interaction between two unique items (the fungus and the flower) were powerful enough to justify a sort of passive growth experience. However, it was Madrigal's thoughtful (albeit potentially unnecessary) decision to ingest Clustermelon Flower that acted as the true Trigger in this instance.

LEARNING THROUGH TRIAL AND ERROR

Julius was bookish, nervous, and not particularly strong or dexterous. Over months of adventuring, he had developed a strategy to avoid direct confrontation in combat, which involved throwing a weighted net onto an opponent. While the target was prone and defenseless, Julius, without adequate protection from his allies, would be at high risk, especially when facing multiple opponents. Each time Julius attempted this, his player would need to explain exactly how he approached his target, and if the obvious risks weren't mitigated, the Warden would require a DEX save to succeed. After a particularly risky attempt failed, all of the players (including the Warden) were so impressed by the care and strategy that went into the attempt that the Warden ruled that going forward, Julius would no longer need to make a save when throwing the net in combat. Instead, it would succeed automatically, as Julius had clearly learned how to capture targets in his net safely.

Warden Notes

In this example, we can see that although Julius had occasionally failed in his repeated attempts to avoid direct combat by employing a unique battle strategy, the thought and preparation that went into each attempt coupled with the character's insistence to "get it right" were sufficient to grant that character a new ability. Remember that in a typical combat scenario, the PCs have already rolled DEX saves at the beginning of combat, so future DEX saves are really only required when a character puts themselves at further risk through an act of bravery, tries to flee combat, etc. A save isn't necessarily required from the target of an action either, as only the character most at risk saves.

SUCCESS OR FAILURE DESPITE A NATURAL TALENT OR ABILITY

Harrow and his comrades were pursuing a group of brigands led by a notorious werewolf. They'd followed the criminals back to their hideout, approaching at dawn when the outlaws would hopefully still be sleeping off the previous night's activities. Harrow led the party carefully alongside the camp, hoping to slip in silently. This proved to be more difficult than anticipated, as the brigands had posted guards at four separate outposts. The Warden ruled that as Harrow was leading the group and had the worst natural ability (his player had rolled a measly 5 DEX), he should make the save the party required to sneak in undetected. He succeeded, and the Warden declared that going forward, the Warden would no longer require Harrow to save DEX in similar situations, due to his character clearly having a natural affinity for sneaking.

Warden Notes

Here is a clear example of a character working against type. The Warden deemed that despite Harrow's relatively low DEX, his decision to lead the party and his ultimate triumph were sufficient triggers for growth.

FACTION ADVANCEMENT

Three weeks ago, Rui was tasked by the Order of the Helm with locating a Gate in the Wyskat Forest. She returned earlier than expected, having completed her mission with great aplomb. Her employers were so impressed with her work that she was formally invited to join The Order as an Initiate. The Warden explained that the position had no distinct requirements but paid a regular stipend and came with some fraternal benefits. The only requirement would be that she complete occasional tasks on behalf of the Order in pursuit of its cause. If she were to later pursue a higher-level rank, she would be required to formally pledge allegiance to the Order and take their Oath. Rui agrees to join as an Initiate for now, and the Warden describes the Downtime Milestones that track Rui's relationship with The Order:

- Complete one mission on behalf of the order.
- Complete two missions on behalf of the order.
- Complete three missions on behalf of the order.
- Train with a Protector.
- Take the Oath.

> **Warden Notes**
>
> This example relies on activities that occur both in the game and between sessions, utilizing two separate Downtime procedures (Strengthening Ties and Training). The Protector that Rui trained with acted as Master, and although we don't describe it here, there was likely a second tier of Milestones included in that aspect of her journey.

The Warden explains that Rui would be provided with a uniform, a shield (+1 Armor), and a fine short sword (d6). Along with the support she would receive at any faction outpost, she would also receive a stipend of 5gp per day while working on faction-related business. She would also be required to check in with a local Precept whenever possible. A few sessions later, the Order asks Rui for her assistance with an escort through the Falal Swamps. The entire party joins the mission, and despite a near-fatal encounter with a bog demon, the mission is completed successfully. Rui's player marks off the second Milestone, as she'd already completed the first prior to joining the faction.

Months go by, and Rui completes two more missions and trains with a Master from The Order. She learns both focus and swordsmanship, increasing her HP and the damage she delivers with a sword. She also learns the faction's true objective and decides their cause is just. She dons an iron helm (+1 Armor, petty) and takes their Oath, accepting that she can never again reveal her face to any living creature so long as she lives. The Warden explains that although Rui still required food, water, and sleep, she no longer becomes deprived from lack of them.

RESOLUTION OF A BOND OR OMEN

Cursed with a Stone Heart after running afoul of a pack of forest druids, Cobb was desperate for a cure. After months of adventuring, it had grown quite heavy, and so his player asked the Warden if he could spend a Downtime action researching a potential cure. The Warden provided the following Milestones:

- Find a Master. Typically that would be a witch, scholar, healer, or powerful spirit.
- Search out the Master and ask their requirements.
- Complete these requirements to cure the Stone Heart.

Cobb spent a few days between adventures talking to local healers and scholars to no avail. Eventually he spoke with a local tracker they'd hired who admitted she'd once seen a Woodwose deep in the forest nearby. In her story, she had tracked a large boar to a silver pool beneath a waterfall. It was there she saw it leap into the water and disappear. Moments later it rose again, but now it had taken the shape of a large man covered in thick green hair. She dropped her weapons and bag, placing them in front of her. The creature stepped from the water, then took some of her dried jerky and left. She said the next day she noticed that an old injury she'd been nursing had completely healed and that it was the Woodwose that had done it. The tracker offered to, for a price, take Cobb and his friends to the pond. He agreed, and the following day they set out to find the Woodwose from her tale (and his player marked off a Milestone). In the coming weeks, Cobb and his friends found the creature and won its favor, completing various tasks throughout the Wood. In the end, the Woodwose offered each character a Boon, and Cobb was able to finally rid himself of the curse.

> **Warden Notes**
>
> Cobb's player had rolled a 15 on the Bonds table during character creation, which reads: You crossed a creature of the Wood, and it cursed you with a Stone Heart (1 Armor). With each passing month, the stone grows heavier by one slot. Until your debt is lifted, you cannot truly die. In order to cure this illness, he must research the location of a Master, then engage them in a bargain. Fortunately he'd made connections with a hireling the party had utilized in past woodland jaunts, who was more familiar with the nearby Wood and its denizens.

Spellbooks

Spell description in regular text, *spellbook appearance and personality in italics.*

d100	Spellbook	Description
1	**Adhere**	An object is covered in extremely sticky slime. *Adjacent objects stick to the book with great force.*
2	**Anchor**	A strong wire sprouts from your arms, affixing itself to two points within 50ft on each side. *If a rope is pulled through the iron loop on its spine, it becomes as heavy as an elephant.*
3	**Animate Object**	An object obeys your commands as best it can. *Moldable like clay. Childish laughter sprouts from its pages.*
4	**Anthropomorphize**	An animal either gains human intelligence or human appearance for one day. *Whimpers, purrs and growls depending on its treatment.*
5	**Arcane Eye**	You can see through a magical floating eyeball that flies around at your command. *Needs a spritz of water to open.*
6	**Astral Prison**	An object is frozen in time and space within an invulnerable crystal shell. *Silent, abstract, faces scream in anguish within.*
7	**Attract**	Two objects are strongly magnetically attracted to each other if they come within 10 feet. *Nearby compasses spin uselessly.*
8	**Auditory Illusion**	You create illusory sounds that seem to come from a direction of your choice. *Produces random and occasionally inopportune sounds throughout the day.*
9	**Babble**	A creature must loudly and clearly repeat everything you think. It is otherwise mute. *When the text is read aloud, the words of others become unintelligible.*
10	**Bait Flower**	A plant sprouts from the ground that emanates the smell of decaying flesh. *Attracts flies.*
11	**Beast Form**	You and your possessions transform into a mundane animal. *Covered in thick fur, its edges lined with small teeth.*
12	**Befuddle**	A creature of your choice is unable to form new short-term memories for the duration of the spell. *Its contents shift and change each time it is opened.*

d100	Spellbook	Description
13	**Body Swap**	You switch bodies with a creature you touch. If one body dies, the other dies as well. *The front cover shows an image of the last creature to read it.*
14	**Charm**	A creature you can see treats you as a friend. *Warm to the touch, and smells of roses.*
15	**Command**	A target obeys a single three-word command that does not cause it harm. *Grows thinner over time, until finally disappearing forever.*
16	**Comprehend**	You become fluent in all languages for a short while. *Drips letters, staining whatever it touches.*
17	**Cone of Foam**	Dense foam sprays from your hand, coating the target. *Spongy and moist with a soapy residue.*
18	**Control Plants**	Nearby plants and trees obey you and gain the ability to move at a slow pace. *Leaves grow along the spine, and it smells faintly of decay.*
19	**Control Weather**	You may alter the type of weather at will, but you do not otherwise control it. *Highly resistant to fire and water damage.*
20	**Cure Wounds**	Restore 1d4 STR per day to a creature you can touch. *Smells of vinegar and thyme. Turns red after use.*
21	**Deafen**	All nearby creatures are deafened. *Nearby instruments occasionally sound off, as if in protest.*
22	**Detect Magic**	You can see or hear nearby magical auras. *Becomes warm to the touch if magic is used nearby.*
23	**Disassemble**	Any of your body parts may be detached and reattached at will, without causing pain or damage. You can still control them. *Regenerates any torn or defaced pages.*
24	**Disguise**	You may alter the appearance of one character at will as long as they remain humanoid. Attempts to duplicate other characters will seem uncanny. *The surface makes a perfect mirror.*
25	**Displace**	An object appears to be up to 15ft from its actual position. *Bits of string, clothing, and leaves are sometimes stuffed inside.*

d100	Spellbook	Description
26	Earthquake	The ground begins shaking violently. Structures may be damaged or collapse. *Sand dribbles from the corners, seemingly without stop.*
27	Elasticity	Your body can stretch up to 10ft. *Smells of taffy, and is very flexible.*
28	Elemental Wall	A straight wall of ice or fire 50ft long and 10ft high rises from the ground. *Skin and warmer substances stick to it after use.*
29	Filch	A visible item teleports to your hands. *An ally's prized possession may occasionally be found tucked between its covers.*
30	Fish Lung	A target can breathe underwater until they surface again. *Smells strongly of the sea. Attracts wild animals.*
31	Flare	A bright ball of energy fires a trail of light into the sky, revealing your location to friend or foe. *Faintly glows in complete darkness.*
32	Fog Cloud	A dense fog spreads out from you. *When submersed in water, the book eventually turns all the liquid to vapor.*
33	Frenzy	A nearby creature erupts in a frenzy of violence. *Rough, sandpaper cover that destroys any book it touches.*
34	Gate	A portal to a random plane opens. A large hole is carved into the center, ending in a void. *Items dropped within are never seen again.*
35	Gravity Shift	You can change the direction of gravity, but only for yourself. *Attaches itself to the largest object nearby.*
36	Greed	A creature develops the overwhelming urge to possess a visible item of your choice. *The cover changes depending on the owner, subtly hinting at their deepest desires.*
37	Haste	Your movement speed is tripled. *Pages flip wildly while open. Can cause paper cuts.*
38	Hatred	A creature develops a deep hatred of another creature or group and wishes to destroy them. *Long term exposure to the book can cause suspicion, paranoia and distrust of others.*

d100	Spellbook	Description
39	Hear Whispers	You can hear faint sounds clearly. *The reader's voice is amplified for a short period of time afterwards.*
40	Hover	An object hovers, frictionless, 2ft above the ground. It can hold up to one humanoid. *Floats if dropped.*
41	Hypnotize	A creature enters a trance and will truthfully answer one yes or no question you ask it. *Eye-catching, swirling spirals don its covers.*
42	Icy Touch	A thick ice layer spreads across a touched surface, up to 10ft in radius. *Gloves required. Nonflammable.*
43	Identify Owner	Letters appear over the object you touch, spelling out the name of the object's owners, if there are any. *The book's interior lists the name of its previous owner.*
44	Illuminate	A floating light moves as you command. *When held in light, the pages become a prism of vibrant rainbows.*
45	Invisible Tether	Two objects within 10ft of each other cannot be moved more than 10ft apart. *Its pages are not attached by glue or thread, yet stay together nonetheless.*
46	Knock	A nearby mundane or magical lock unlocks loudly. *Locked. A new owner "produces" the key after their next meal.*
47	Leap	You jump up to 10ft high, once. *When thrown, it just keeps going.*
48	Liquid Air	The air around you becomes swimmable. *Floats of its own volition, bouncing off of whatever it touches.*
49	Magic Dampener	All nearby magical effects have their effectiveness halved. *Relics within 100ft of the spellbook cannot be recharged.*
50	Manse	A sturdy, furnished cottage appears for hours. You can permit and forbid entry to it at will. *If left inside, both the book and the cottage vanish forever.*
51	Marble Craze	Your pockets are full of marbles and will refill every 30 seconds. *When jostled, makes a playful rattling sound.*
52	Masquerade	A character's appearance and voice becomes identical to those of a character you touch. *Extended use causes the owner to develop unconscious yet noticeable tics.*

d100	Spellbook	Description
53	Miniaturize	A creature you touch is shrunk down to the size of a mouse. *The text is ludicrously, comically large.*
54	Mirror Image	An illusory duplicate of yourself appears and is under your control. *Over time, the owner begins to question who is the original, and who is the duplicate.*
55	Mirrorwalk	A mirror becomes a gateway to another mirror that you looked into today. *Will not open unless the owner politely knocks on the cover.*
56	Multiarm	You temporarily gain an extra arm. *After use, the caster is wracked with phantom limb syndrome for a day.*
57	Night Sphere	A 50ft-wide sphere of darkness displaying the night sky appears before you. *Displays a prominent constellation on its cover.*
58	Objectify	You become any inanimate object between the size of a grand piano and an apple. *The owner experiences intense pareidolia for days after use.*
59	Ooze Form	You become a living jelly. *Slowly drips an acid that eventually eats away anything it touches.*
60	Pacify	A creature near you has an aversion to violence. *Smells of jasmine and incense. Attracts children.*
61	Passage	Creates a temporary path through wood, stone or brick. *An object dropped on top of the book inevitably falls through the other side.*
62	Phobia	A nearby creature becomes terrified of an object of your choice. *Over time, haunting, abstract art begins to fill its pages.*
63	Pit	A pit 10ft wide and 10ft deep opens in the ground. *A standard piton can be safely stored in its spine.*
64	Primal Surge	A creature rapidly evolves into a future version of its species. *The owner is haunted by strange visions of their own ancestors.*
65	Push/Pull	An object of any size is pulled directly towards you or pushed directly away from you with the strength of one man. *Any force against the book is comically amplified.*

d100	Spellbook	Description
66	Raise Dead	A skeleton rises from the ground to serve you. They are incredibly stupid and can only obey simple orders. *The owner becomes more and more fascinated with bones after each use.*
67	Raise Spirit	The spirit of a nearby corpse manifests and will answer 1 question. *The answers (but not their questions) are forever inscribed in its pages.*
68	Read Mind	You can hear the surface thoughts of nearby creatures. *Long-term possession can cause the reader to mistake the thoughts of others as their own.*
69	Repel	Two objects are strongly magnetically repelled from each other within 10 feet. *Closed by two powerful straps that spring open at inopportune times.*
70	Scry	You can see through the eyes of a creature you touched earlier today. *The owner's eyes turn milky-white for an hour after use.*
71	Sculpt Elements	Inanimate material behaves like clay in your hands. *Slowly decays on contact with wood or cloth. Bury in dirt or submerge in water to refresh.*
72	Sense	Choose one kind of object (key, gold, arrow, jug, etc). You can sense the nearest example. *The book's previous owner is always aware of the book's current location.*
73	Shield	A creature you touch is protected from mundane attacks for one minute. *Bound in rusty ring-mail and is quite heavy. If held, provides +1 Armor.*
74	Shroud	A creature you touch is invisible until they move. *Invisible to any but the book's current owner.*
75	Shuffle	Two creatures you can see instantly switch places. *If stolen but not yet read, it reappears wherever its owner last left it.*
76	Skillful Repair	You make minor repairs to a nonliving object. *Sewn from the vellum of one hundred books, no two pages are alike.*
77	Sleep	A creature you can see falls into a light sleep. *Soft as a pillow, but yields only fitful sleep.*

d100	Spellbook	Description
78	Slick	Every surface in a 30ft radius becomes extremely slippery. *Gloves are required for handling, lest the book is dropped in a most comical fashion.*
79	Smoke Form	Your body becomes a living smoke that you can control. *Smells of campfire. The pages cannot be burnt, but are very sensitive to moisture.*
80	Sniff	You can smell even the faintest traces of scents. *Expresses a strong odor detectable only by its owner.*
81	Snuff	The source of any mundane light you can see is instantly snuffed out. *If left in one place for long periods, nearby light sources eventually dim, then finally go out.*
82	Sort	Inanimate items sort themselves according to categories you set. *Rights itself when dropped or thrown.*
83	Spellsaw	A whirling blade flies from your chest, clearing any plant material in its way. It is otherwise harmless. *Wrapped in stained leather, it should be oiled at least once a month.*
84	Spider Climb	You can climb surfaces like a spider. *New cobwebs must be pushed aside prior to each use. They are hard to remove.*
85	Swarm	You become a swarm of crows, rats, or piranhas. You can only be harmed by blast attacks. *Easily broken into a dozen distinct parts that slowly move towards one another over time.*
86	Target Lure	An object you touch becomes the target of any nearby spell. *Attracts all manner of magical creatures, spell leaks, and scrying.*
87	Telekinesis	You may mentally 1 move item under 60lbs. *The owner can summon the book through mental command alone (WIL save or become deprived afterwards).*
88	Telepathy	Two creatures can hear each other's thoughts, no matter how far apart. *The holder can hear (but not respond) to the thoughts of whoever last possessed it, and vice versa.*
89	Teleport	An object or person you can see is transported from one place to another in a 50ft radius. *Can be destroyed to create a portal to another dimension.*

d100	Spellbook	Description
90	Thicket	A thicket of trees and dense brush up to 50ft wide suddenly sprouts up. *Wrapped in vines that must be destroyed again with each use.*
91	Time Control	Time in a 50ft bubble slows down or increases by 10% for 30 seconds. *Alternates its appearance as either impossibly old or freshly written.*
92	True Sight	You see through all nearby illusions. *Cannot be concealed by magic, and sticks out like a sore thumb.*
93	Upwell	A spring of seawater appears. *Hardened leather bindings caked in salt and living barnacles.*
94	Vision	You completely control what a creature sees. *An unnerving, lidless eye graces the front cover.*
95	Visual Illusion	A silent, immobile, room-sized illusion of your choice appears. *Filled with rich, colorful pages very much like a children's bedtime story.*
96	Ward	A silver circle 50ft across appears on the ground. Choose one species that cannot cross it. *The covers are decorated with bizarre, otherworldly creatures with thousands of eyes.*
97	Web	Your wrists shoot thick webbing. *The text is alien, yet somehow intelligible, for it is the language of dreams.*
98	Widget	A primitive version of a drawn tool or item appears before you and disappears after a short time. *Smells of iron and rust, sweat and effort. Faint sounds of harsh labor emanate from deep within its pages.*
99	Wizard Mark	Your finger can shoot a stream of ulfire-colored paint. This paint is only visible to you and can be seen at any distance, even through solid objects. *Inside the front cover is a small pocket containing a thin pad of paper, listing the name and date of death of all previous owners.*
100	X-Ray Vision	You can see through walls, dirt, clothing, etc. *Long-term exposure can cause hair loss, blurry vision, and fatigue.*

Reliquary

A Blade Called Hope

(d6)

- A thin, curved sword that glows with faint light, visible only in total darkness. When bathed in heavy sunlight, its first attack is Enhanced.

Assassin's Goblets

- A pair of fragile wine flutes. Any liquid poured into one is swapped with the other.

Babbleflask

2 uses

- A foreign language is automatically understood and can be spoken back with fluency, so long as the drinker's native tongue is neither spoken nor heard.

Barbed Epaulets

+1 Armor

- Spiked shoulder pads that poison anyone that touches them (STR save or lose consciousness).

Betterwand

2 charges

- Vibrates with increased intensity when pointed at the best of a series of objects.
- **Recharge:** Willingly accept a poor deal or trade while in possession of the wand.

Bloodmap

1 charge

- A blank leather parchment that absorbs any blood spilled on its surface before rolling into a tight scroll. Unroll to see a rough map revealing the current location of any remaining blood. The image disappears after a few minutes.
- **Recharge:** Pour a pint of your own life essence onto the map, blood for blood. You are deprived until you can rest and eat a Ration.

Coin of the Father

1 charge, petty

- Flip this worthless-looking hunk of flat metal in the air, and it will transform into d100 gold coins. The illusory coins disappear after one hour.
- **Recharge:** Carry the coin for three days without spending or earning any money.

Dryad's Tear

1 use

- Shatter this crystal to merge with a tree you can touch. You can perceive the goings-on within whatever forest that tree belongs to.

Empathy Rod

3 charges

- When two creatures touch this wooden pole at the same time, their physical and emotional states become fully intertwined until they let go.
- **Recharge:** Give the rod to a former enemy as a gift. This is a one-way transaction.

Eyestone

3 charges

- Choose an object created by living creatures. You can sense the nearest example.
- **Recharge:** Place in a bucket of rainwater overnight.

Falconstone

3 charges

- Perceive the world through the eyes and ears of a nearby bird of prey. You feel whatever it feels but have no control over it.
- **Recharge:** Kill and eat a common quarry, cooking the meat alongside the stone.

Footpad's Friend

- Soft leather shoes that adapt to fit any foot size. Leave behind footprints that scatter and turn in a confusing manner, making tracking nigh-impossible.

Gate Chalk

1 use, petty

- Draw a doorway on any flat surface to open a one-way passage to the Roots. Good luck.

Golden Wheat Paste

2 uses

- When mixed with water, this substance chemically bonds any two objects.

Gossip Box

1 charge

- Wind the crank to replay any sound made in the past day in your current location. Each crank goes back one hour.
- **Recharge:** Successfully spread one falsehood in the presence of the box.

Harbinger's Bell

1 charge

- Hang at chest height to ring when danger is imminent.
- **Recharge:** Melt and reforge. Each time, roll a d6. On a 1-2, it breaks forever.

Homunculus Nail

1 use, petty

- Prick a finger with the pointy end and hammer into any small object to form a loyal servant [3 HP, 4 STR, 13 DEX, 5 WIL] completely devoted to you. If not destroyed, it will outlive you.

Honest Earworm

1 use

- A foul-smelling, pinky-sized worm that feeds on earwax by crawling into the ear canal of a sleeping person. The victim then loses the ability to lie for 1d4 hours.

Jar of Ants

- Break to release a colony of fire ants [6 HP, 2 STR, 10 DEX, 1 WIL, bite (d10), *detachment*]. Consumes a ration every two days.

Last Breath

(d6), 1 charge

- A chipped short sword of dubious quality. Drive into the earth to form a crystal dome that encircles and immobilizes the wielder. The dome is impenetrable by mundane means and shatters once the sword is lifted again.
- **Recharge:** Deliver a killing blow with the sword, absorbing the dying victim's soul into the blade. There is a cunning intelligence within that speaks to the wielder, forever asking for more souls, more!

Lightsucker Candle

3 uses

- Once lit, this black tallow wax sheds darkness rather than light, even in the brightest of days.

Lover's Covenant

1 use

- A bottle of red-tinted ink, a broken heart emblazoned on the front. Write up a contract of any length. Any who sign are bound to obey by penalty of death.

Mace of the Kingslayer

(d8), 2 charges

- Hold the weapon aloft and shout an order or declaration. Any who fail a WIL save must obey, against their better judgment.
- **Recharge:** Deliver a fatal blow to the leader of a group or faction.

Moth Mirror

bulky

- A full-length, double-sided glass mirror. Step into the mirror to be transported to another mirror you know. You come out of the other side as an enormous swarm of buzzing moths, striking those around you with paralysis (WIL save to avoid) as they gaze upon you in horror. You can revert to your normal form at will. The mirror only operates in one direction.

Muffle Dust

2 uses

- A pouch of fine dust that muffles all sound in a 40ft radius when scattered.

Nightstone

1 use

- Rare moon-shaped stones dredged from underwater caves and jungle dolines. Swallow whole to relieve all fatigue and deprivation as if you had a good night's sleep and a good meal. The stone will eventually pass through your system. It isn't fun.

Obliteration Scroll

1 use, petty

- A single-page document filled with gibberish. Sign anywhere on the page to remove any knowledge of your existence from this plane of reality. No one will know or remember you, and any references to your name or lineage will vanish. The scroll disappears in a puff of smoke that smells faintly of sulfur.

Parliament's Promise

+1 Armor

- A helmet in the form of an owl's head. Its wearer can twist their head around like an owl and can see in darkness with perfect clarity. While wearing the helm, the wearer loses the ability to speak, uttering only the simplest of cooing noises.

Phoenix Ash

1 use

- Sprinkle over a corpse to resurrect the deceased. They return with full health but no memory of their past life.

Ring of the Snake

1 charge, petty

- A wrought-iron serpent ring. Place it on your finger and fall into a sleep so deep that most will think you are dead. If the ring is removed, you will awaken feeling refreshed. Otherwise, the effect will wear off after one month.
- **Recharge:** Bury the ring with a corpse. A month later, exhume the corpse and retrieve it.

Roc Feather

1 use

- Hold while falling to float safely to the ground from any height.

Skull Whistle

3 charges

- Produces a chilling scream that forces any who hear it (including the blower) to make a WIL save or become temporarily incapacitated.
- **Recharge:** Feed the instrument a clump of human hair pulled from a living skull.

Soul Clump

- A hard, fist-sized ball covered in small bumps. When rolled on a flat surface, it collects any objects smaller than its current mass, which subsequently increases as more items are attached to its surface. Only living creatures are immune.

Spystone

1 charge

- A smooth, flat stone that is slightly warm to the touch. Squeeze to record audio in a 40ft radius. Squeeze again to play it back, as many times as you like.
- **Recharge:** To record a new sound, skip the rock at least three times on a body of water and recover it.

Sticky Rope

1 charge

- A 100ft rope that can stick to any surface.
- **Recharge:** Cut off 10ft of rope, which then withers away.

Stone Eater

1 use

- A rodent-sized centipede that consumes and digests stone, capable of cutting a small tunnel in under an hour. It can be used more than once, but only if you can catch it (DEX 18).

Stonewax Gum

3 uses, petty

- Chew, then spit. The gum will harden and stretch, making a perfect, unbreakable seal.

Sponge Army

1 use

- A dozen miniature soldiers made of carved sea sponges. When splashed with water, they grow to full size [8 HP, 6 STR, 13 DEX, 5 WIL, hardened sponge (d6), *detachment*] and follow the orders of the person they see until they are destroyed or dry out completely (about 10 minutes).

Tupshead Crown

+1 Armor, bulky

- A beautifully rendered ram's head helm wrought from tough alpine oak. The horns can be used as weapons (d6+d6).

Veilsilk Grip

1 charge, petty

- A hand wearing this glove can phase through solid objects.
- **Recharge:** Snip off one of the fingers.

Voice of the Mountain

1 use

- A rough pebble imbued with the essence of a mountain spirit. Crush to call forth an earthquake or similar natural disaster. Do not expect to be spared.

Ward Stone

1 use

- A flat, unassuming river stone notched with faded symbols. Smash to release a silvery powder in a 20ft radius that pacifies anyone who breathes it.

Whispergale

1 use

- A balloon-shaped plant that captures a spoken message and delivers it to a location within a day's walk.

Whistle-Rope

- 15ft of highly flexible leather. Swirl in the air to generate a powerful subsonic effect that drives away wildlife. Also works underwater.

Wonder Bar

1 charge

- Pressing the switch on the side of this iron bar freezes it in place, even in midair. Once frozen, it cannot be moved by any force until the switch is depressed.
- **Recharge:** Hold the bar with both hands without letting go for one continuous hour (WIL save to succeed). You can make only one attempt each day.

Wraith Lantern

1 charge

- Write someone's name onto its glass, and the name will disappear. The lantern reveals a path to their current location, visible only to the holder (day or night).
- **Recharge:** Kill the last person found with the help of the lantern, trapping their spirit inside. The lantern must be nearby when they are killed.

Advice & Examples

Advice for creating content, converting rules and concepts from other games, examples of play, and general miscellaneous advice.

Creating Backgrounds

Introduction

In Cairn, a PC's background is the most important element of their character, representing their past as well as their present. Backgrounds can influence a character's knowledge, expertise, their connection with the setting, and much more. Backgrounds are also a filter for interpreting the results of a dice roll, or a reason to not roll at all. A Greenwise doesn't need to save DEX when cutting leaves from a poisonous plant, just as a Scrivener knows how to read the older form of a local tongue. Most importantly, backgrounds tell a story through the character's starting gear and unique history, connecting the PC to a setting and its themes.

Principles

- Players should be excited about rolling on the background tables.
- Backgrounds can be archetypal and familiar, but leave room for alternative interpretations!
- Backgrounds should tell the player something about the implied setting.
- Each table result should be unique, so that characters with the same background are still distinct from one another.

Anatomy of a Background

Theme

Prepare a list of common adjectives that describe your new background. If designing a profession, ask yourself what would lead someone to take on such a career. If writing something more unique (such as the Half-Witch, for example), consider how such a person's strangeness would alienate them from others or bring them closer. And as you write the background's starting gear and tables, keep in mind how the game world's implied setting, inspirational materials (books, film, etc.), and existing tropes might influence the results.

Starting Gear

Characters in Cairn are largely defined by their inventory, so starting gear should be the first place to start painting a Background's unique canvas. Each Background has:

- Gold, food, and some kind of light source. These should still be unique; a Background might start with unusual Rations, a candle helmet, and so on.
- Up to four *unique* items that reinforce the overarching theme. At least one of these items should be a weapon of some kind.
- Starting items should occupy no more than seven slots in total, so as to not overburden a character's inventory.

Tables

Tables are where a character's unique story really starts to come together. They also provide a level of diversity so that no two characters are alike. Each Background has a defining question, followed by six rows of answers. The first table question should be tailored around the character's distant or recent past and what experiences led to their present circumstances. The first table should offer the character a unique item, ability, or combination of the two. The second table question focuses on who the character is *today*, and the answers are typically related to a specific item or skill that broadly defines the character.

Pointcrawls

Pointcrawls are a way of displaying potential points of interest on a map, including their entrances, exits, and connecting paths. Unlike hexcrawls, which provide omnidirectional paths by default, pointcrawls provide a set number of focused routes between locations. This approach abstracts some of the elements common to wilderness exploration, while maintaining the more interesting tidbits.

Although the standard setting generation procedures in this book assume a pointcrawl by default, most old school adventures do not. Some are hex maps that vary in length, while others simply indicate distances using miles. Fortunately it's fairly simple to convert almost any map into a pointcrawl.

Converting a Map

The following method relies heavily on the Wilderness Exploration procedures in the Cairn 2e Player's Guide (pg. 74).

- Number any potential points of interest on the map.
- Identify potential routes between each point, noting obvious roads, trails, and waterways. Indicate any sites that lack connecting routes to other points.
- Indicate the rough travel time (in Watches or days of travel) between any two points, accounting for the party's speed, terrain, weather, and other elements of play that might affect the journey.

Example Map
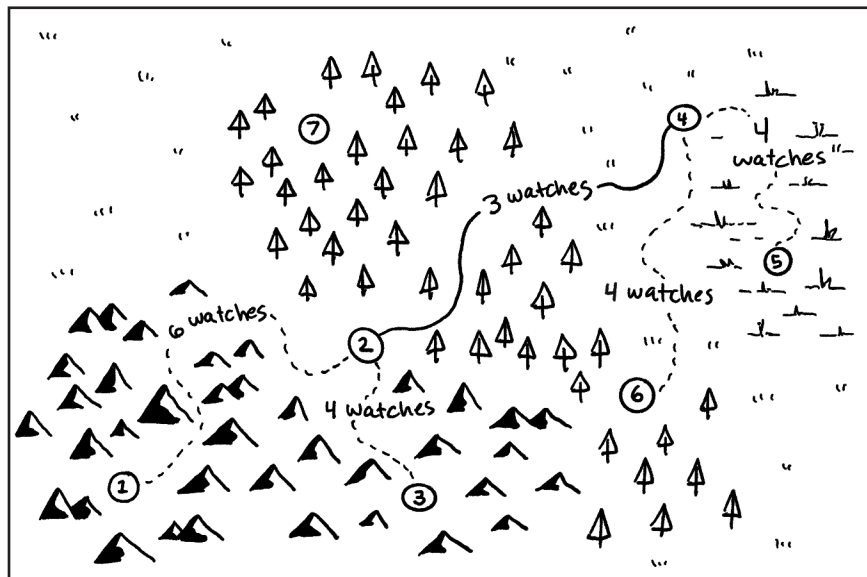
Conversions Explained

> See page 29 for Terrain Difficulty.

The travel times between each point were determined as follows (assuming that the party is traveling by foot):

- The journey between **points 1 to 2** is 6 watches:
  - » Add two watches for the *medium* path distance.
  - » Add one watch for the *trail* through the mountains and forests.
  - » Add two watches for the *perilous* mountain terrain and 1 watch for the forest.
- The journey between **2 and 3** takes 4 watches:
  - » Add one watch for the *short* path distance.
  - » Add one watch for the *trail* through the mountains.
  - » Add two watches for the *perilous* mountain terrain.
- The journey between **2 and 4** takes three watches:
  - » Add two watches for the *medium* path distance.
  - » Add no penalty for traveling on a maintained *road*.
  - » Add one watch for the *tough* forest terrain.
- The journey between **4 and 5** takes four watches:
  - » Add one watch for the *short* path distance.
  - » Add one watch for the *trail* through the swamp.
  - » Add two watches for the *perilous* swamp terrain.
- The journey between **4 and 6** takes 4 watches:
  - » Add two watches for the *medium* path distance.
  - » Add one watch for the *trail* through the forest.
  - » Add no penalty for the *easy* plains terrain.
- The journey **to 7 from any other point** should be at least 5 watches:
  - » Add two watches for the *medium* path distance.
  - » Add two watches for traveling through the *wilderness*.
  - » Add one watch for the *tough* forest terrain.

Frequently Asked Questions

> ### About the Example Party
> - **Wolfram:** A Hexenbane belonging to the Order of the Blank Eye. Besides the usual equipment, he carries a Voidglass Shard and the Disassemble Spellbook. He has taken a *Vow of Poverty*.
> - **Lucius:** A Mountebank. Besides the usual equipment he carries Bandages (3 uses) and Miracle Oil (2 uses).
> - **Freya:** A Cutpurse. Besides the usual equipment she carries Smoke Pellets (3 uses) and a Catring (2 charges).

Dungeon Exploration

Principles

- Always clarify what is about to happen. Does that flaming barrel look stable or like it might explode at any minute?
- Regularly restate a character's surroundings, where they are in physical space, and what their senses are detecting.
- Describe obvious threats and NPCs first, followed by any distinct and memorable objects in each room.
- Do not tell characters how they should feel, and only tell them what's happening right now, before their eyes.
- Provide hints about what lies beyond the next corridor, including odors, sounds, and elevation.
- Ensure that the players understand their character's place in the Dungeon Cycle. Remind them who has already moved, who has yet to take an action, and so on.
- The cost of dungeon exploration is paid in turns. If the party spends too long in one place, acts without caution, makes noise, or enters a new area, they risk a roll on the Dungeon Events table. Players should always be made aware of the cost.

Dungeon Exploration Example

Wolfram, Lucius, and Freya have entered the first level of Ein Eyton, a forest temple once rumored to house an infamous death cult. Each character has a torch, but only Wolfram has one lit. There are no light sources here beyond the Moon in the night sky. The first room is presented as follows:

THE COURTYARD
A wide courtyard exposed to the open **air**. The **ground** is sandy and rough. Rubble is piled near the center of the room. A full-sized **statue** holding a bident is placed in the exact center. A wooden **doorway** to the East is locked with an iron chain. An open stone archway leads towards the West.

- **Air:** The roof has collapsed, letting exterior lighting illuminate the room.
- **Ground:** Glitters in the light. A cursory investigation will reveal that the "sand" is actually pulverized bones.
  - » Rubble: Stone chunks from statues resembling people.
  - » A red jewel glints within a tight stone fist.
- **Statue:** One eye socket is empty, in the other is a red jewel.
  - » The cult's Death Goddess, marred by time. If the remaining eye is removed, the statue comes to life, slicing the bident in an arc for d6 STR damage. Contact with the bident turns the victim to stone.
  - » If the jewel from the nearby rubble is inserted into the statue, nothing happens. If it is removed again, the statue responds accordingly.
- **Doorway:** The door to the Storeroom has nearly rotted away, leaving cracks in the wood. The iron chain is clearly rusted.

Warden: "You enter a wide courtyard illuminated by moonlight drifting through the collapsed roof. The ground is sandy and sparkles chalk-white in the moonlight. Near the center, rubble piles around a statue of a woman wielding a bident. To the East, a wooden door is closed and chained, while an open archway leads Westward into a dark tunnel. What do you do?"

▌ The characters then declare their intended actions.

Wolfram: "I'll search the room for clues about its purpose, starting with that glittery ground."

Lucius: "I'll check out the wooden door, to see if I can figure out what's on the other side."

Freya: "I'm going to get a better look at that statue. What can I learn without actually getting too close?"

Warden: "Alright, let's start with Wolfram. The sand is white, grainy, and clearly not from any beach 'round these parts. Starting at a small lump in the ground, you recognize a half-decayed human skull, meaning that this 'sand' is actually bone! What do you do now?"

Wolfram: "Gross. I'm gonna poke at it a bit with my sword. Is there is anything hidden in the dust? Something valuable, maybe?"

Warden: "No. But you're at least convinced the ground is safe. And that's the end of your turn!"

| The Warden then moves to describe another character's actions, as they are happening simultaneously.

Warden: "Let's see what Lucius is up to."

Warden: "Lucius, the door is locked, ancient, and partly rotted away. It bears a rusted iron lock. What do you do now?"

Lucius: "As I have no lockpick, I think I'll put my ear to the door to see what's on the other side."

Warden: "You place an ear on the door, but hear only a faint rustling on the other side."

Lucius: "How busted is the keyhole? Could I see through it? What about the door itself? You said it was rotted."

Warden: "The keyhole is intact, and too dark to look through. You could shine a light through it, or you could use one of the gaps in the door."

Lucius: "That works. I light my torch and hold it aloft so that I can see through."

Warden: "Lucius, Through the cracks, you can see a gray cement floor. Something gleams on the ground, flickering in the torchlight. It looks like a large, wet footprint!"

Lucius: "Eek! I let the others know."

Warden: "Got it. Now let's see what Freya can find out about that statue."

Freya: "Right, remember that I'd like to take a look, but I don't want to get too close."

Warden: "You approach until you are about five feet away from the statue. The face looks chipped away, and one of the eyes is missing entirely. However, embedded in the other is a beautiful red jewel! The statue holds a white bident in its hands. Do you interact with the statue further or move along?"

Freya: "That's just creepy! I want no part in this, at least not until we learn more about what this room was for. I'd like to investigate that rubble you mentioned before."

Warden: "Alright, you move to the rubble adjacent to the statue. It looks extremely heavy and difficult to move. In the light from Wolfram's torch, you can see something red and shiny glinting in the cracks of the pile. What do you do?"

Freya: "I investigate further, of course!"

Warden: "You take a closer look, and spy a red jewel enclosed in a large stone fist. It looks valuable, at least 75gp. It also looks large enough to take up an entire slot!"

Freya: "I want it. Can I dig it out easily?"

Warden: "The fingers are wrapped around it quite tightly; you'll need to work hard to get it loose or spend an extra turn to extract it quietly. Either choice will likely trigger a dungeon event roll."

Freya: "Damn. Fine, I'll do it as quickly as possible, using the edge of my dagger and a block of rubble to pop it out. Noise be damned!"

Warden: "Alright, let's see how loud you are..."

| The Warden then rolls on the Dungeon Events table: Environment.

Warden: "Freya's clanging labor echoes against the exposed walls of the courtyard. The silence is broken by a shingle falling from the east wall, clattering onto the stone floor. Lucius, you hear rustling noises drawing nearer from behind the door! At that exact moment, the jewel comes loose."

Warden: "And with that, this cycle is over. What do you all do next?"

Lucius: "Um, something's coming. Can we please leave, NOW?"

Freya: "I'll quickly put the jewel in my backpack."

Wolfram: "I think we should head down that stone archway to the West. We can always circle back to this room on our way out."

Freya: "Hang on, what about this jewel I discovered? It looks like it could go in that statue's eye..."

Lucius: "What are you, nuts? For all we know that statue will come to life and attack!"

Freya: "Or maybe it'll open a secret door?"

Wolfram: "Enough, let's just move on for now. There is something on the other side of that door, and I do NOT want to find out what!"

| The party moves on to the adjoining hall and the adventure continues.

Detachments

Introduction

Detachments are large groups of enemies treated as a single entity. They are more difficult to hit and deal damage to multiple opponents at the same time. Crucially, they remain a single unit until they take critical damage, after which they are broken up or defeated entirely. Occasionally, a large creature (such as a dragon or giant) will be treated as a detachment as well.

Example

> The party is setting up camp deep in the forest, adjacent to a modest waterfall. It is nearly nightfall, and everyone is on high alert. Unbeknownst to the party, a colony of Traitor-Rats [3 HP, 5 STR, 15 DEX, 4 WIL, bite (d6), detachment] makes its home here.

Warden: "Just as the sun finally dips behind the trees, you each hear an unusual noise, not unlike the tsk-tsk-tsk of an overbearing uncle. As you listen, it begins to grow both in volume and tempo, then quickly becomes somewhat uncomfortable to listen to. As you survey the perimeter of the campsite, you see dozens of small, rat-like creatures with enormous eyes watching your party. They appear to be the source of the strange sound, and they are moving closer! By the way, we're going to treat these creatures as a detachment until further notice."

Freya: "Will we need to make DEX saves in order to attack before these things? Assuming they intend to do us harm, that is."

Warden: "No, you have enough time to make the first move."

Freya: "OK. I'm going to see how many of these things I can take out at once."

Wolfram: "I'm going to find their queen and shoot her. Assuming there even is a queen!"

Lucius: "I hate to do this, but I am going to sacrifice 1 use of my bandages to use as stuffing for my ears. Just in case."

Warden: "Let's start with Lucius, who sacrifices 1 use of bandages and stuffs them in his ears. The sound all but disappears. That ends his turn. Freya, go ahead and roll your attack dice."

> Freya rolls two d4 dice, resulting in a 2 and a 2.

Warden: "Freya, you run into the mess of creatures, stabbing two of them with the Twins. They perish easily, but two more quickly fill their place. Even at the edge of the swarm, the sound they make is intense. You start to feel confused."

Warden: "Wolfram, you move into the colony, passing through the swarm as you search for any sign of a queen. You spend your entire turn searching and are unable to take another action. However, in the fading light, you see a taller creature in the distance, a white stripe on its stomach."

Wolfram: "Bingo. That's the one. A careful shot, that's all I need."

Warden: "Standing amongst all the creatures, the sound becomes unbearable for both Freya and Wolfram. Please make a WIL save, each of you."

Freya: "Uh oh. I rolled a 15, a fail."

Wolfram: "I roll an 11, a success!"

Warden: "Freya collapses on the ground, the noise in her ears has grown so loud it has become an explosion of agony. Wolfram, you grit your teeth and carry on. Lucius is unaffected."

Freya: "Eek. Do I lose my next turn?"

Warden: "That's right, but you can try to succeed at a WIL save to snap out of it. A few of the creatures nearby begin to nibble at your clothes as you writhe around. Finally, they attack both you and Wolfram!"

> As a detachment, the Traitor-Rats have both the blast property and deal enhanced damage. The Warden rolls a d12 twice, dealing 1 damage to Freya and 6 to Wolfram.

Warden: "Freya, you do not have HP as you are prone. However, your leather armor has protected you from taking any damage from the rats nipping at your back. Wolfram, you take 6 damage, but your HP and armor absorb the bulk of it. Next time you might not be so lucky."

Wolfram: "That's OK, because there won't be a next time! I take aim at the taller creature and fire. I realize I have to roll a d4, but that's the best we've got!"

Freya: "All I can do is make a WIL save... and it's a success! Phew."

Lucius: "I rush towards Freya and try to drag her out of that mess."

> Wolfram rolls a 2, which is enough to deal damage to STR. The detachment must now make a Critical Damage save using its STR Attribute. The Warden rolls a 7, a fail.

Warden: "The crossbow bolt zings through the air, striking the white-furred creature in the heart. It screeches and keels over, and immediately the terrible noise stops, as the creatures begin to run off! Lucius, you pull Freya out of the danger zone just as she is coming around."

Wolfram: "Thank goodness that's done with. I'm going to go grab whatever I just shot, though. Might make for a good dinner."

> The party rests for the night, and dines well.

Wilderness Exploration

Overview

In Cairn, wilderness exploration and travel is mostly abstract, hand-waving away the minutiae of the journey while still giving the party ample opportunities for interactivity and character agency.

Exploration Example

The party is escorting an NPC between two POIs: a small village situated in the grasslands and a stronghold at the base of an impressive valley. The short journey should only take one day, as travel is limited to Easy terrain and is along a clear Trail all the way.

> At the start of the day, the Warden rolls for the local weather, then adjudicates its potential impacts on the journey that day. It is overcast and breezy (no impact). After each of the following Wilderness Actions, the party rolls 1d6 to see if they get lost, and the Warden rolls on the Wilderness Events Table.

DAY ONE / WATCH ONE
- The party takes the Travel action. They do not get lost.
- **Events Table:** *Sign.* One of the characters looks behind the party and spies something glittering in the distance behind them. It disappears after a few seconds. Could that be a spyglass, reflecting in the sun?

DAY ONE / WATCH TWO
- The party takes the Travel action again, continuing along the same trail and plain. They do not get lost.
- **Events Table:** *Environment.* The weather has worsened in the evening, and as a result, the plain is muddy and the trail harder to follow. The Warden adds 1 Watch to the journey, as the party is forced to slow their march considerably, only reaching the the edge of the grasses by nightfall. The party is forced to find shelter in the open plain rather than at their destination in the adjacent valley.

DAY ONE / WATCH THREE
- The party takes the Make Camp action. The party sets up a hastily-made shelter, and each member consumes a Ration. A lookout rotation is set, dividing the night between all four party members.
- **Events Table:** *Sign.* The sky clears up enough for the first person on lookout to see a light in the distance, flickering slowly. A campfire! Someone is definitely following them.

> Note: the party could have chosen to continue on through the night, but doing so could increase the chance of getting lost and put the party at greater risk!

Bonds and Omens

Introduction

Bonds and Omens provide new player characters with adventure hooks, starting gear, and abilities. And while they are distinct from character Backgrounds, they are equally useful for building a setting, or even a complete adventure!

Bonds

Bonds can often tie a player character to another PC, the setting, and its characters. A PC can resolve a Bond by discovering the truth behind its mysteries or by solving its root cause. In this case, the character should experience Growth of some kind, and the Warden can optionally create a new Bond for the PC. Player characters are not required to resolve their Bonds.

BONDS SHOULD...
- Give a character an item (often petty) or a unique ability.
- Encourage character engagement with the implied setting.
- Flesh out a character's history without relying on events tied to specific Backgrounds.
- Provide a character with a quest, opportunity, or plan of action.

Omens

Omens are the seeds of an adventure yet to come, premonitions of a future disaster, or the cause of a problem the characters are currently facing. An Omen is resolved when the characters reveal the truth behind its origin or resolve its dangers. Resolving an Omen should yield Growth of some kind, either for the party as a collective or to an entangled individual. If an Omen is ignored, it should come to pass and wreak whatever havoc it may.

OMENS SHOULD...
- Never rely on a specific player character for relevance.
- Alway tell the characters something about the setting they did not already know.
- Reveal a pattern or other obvious indicator that something terrible is going on.

Knowledge And Perception

Introduction

Cairn differs from many modern roleplaying games by not including mechanics for knowledge or expertise. Instead, it is assumed that a character has the necessary knowledge so long as it can be justified in the fiction. Similarly, there are no mechanics that govern a character's perception or ability to "detect" important details in their environment. Instead, the Warden should provide unlimited relevant information about every detail a character can perceive with their basic senses.

Knowledge

Character knowledge is limited only by what can be explained by elements in the fiction. If it is known that a PC comes from an impoverished background and learned how to survive by any means necessary, then their player may argue that their character is better able to track down a notable NPC hiding in the slums. They may know whom to speak to and what sorts of trades might be required to collect the information they need about their target's whereabouts.

If a character has no justifiable knowledge of a subject, then they simply do not know anything about it! However, the Warden may decide to roll the **Die of Fate** to determine if the character has a chance of knowing *something*. The higher the result, the more they might (reasonably) know.

Relics

When a character first acquires a Relic they are not familiar with, they can either spend time learning more about it (using a Downtime action) or experiment with it. The latter carries some dangers and may even require a successful WIL save to avoid negative consequences. However, it is often more interesting to allow the player to ask as many questions as they like about it and (eventually) to simply *tell them how it works*.

Perception

When informing the players of what their PCs can perceive, the Warden should provide maximal sensory information pertaining to the objects, characters, dangers, and interactive elements in the given situation. Consider what can be gained by limiting what the PCs know or do not know. Do secrets help create interesting choices and decision points? Do they raise interesting questions? Do they give the players a sense of control over their own actions? The answer to these questions is almost always an emphatic *No*.

Players should feel that the consequences of their character's actions are earned, and that they are *deserved*, even if the results aren't always in their favor. True agency comes from providing the players with everything they need to know to make an interesting decision, even if that is simply asking a question about what their character might perceive.

Take for example the following keyed location:

A colony of **bees** furiously circles a massive hive hanging from the branch of a large oak tree. A **man** observes in the shadows beneath the tree, and a rusted **sword** lies on the ground not far from the hive.

- **Bees:** Their buzzing is nearly deafening, creating a wall of sound around the tree.
  - » The hive is dripping with honey. It is delicious, and mundane.
  - » Any attempt to take honey from the hive is met with an aggressive response from the colony [3 HP, 3 STR, 12 DEX, 4 WIL, sting (d6), *detachment*].
- **Man:** Leans against a long staff, his gaze fixed on the hive. He appears unfazed by the swarm.
  - » The man is a magical illusion created by the beekeeper as a means to drive away any potential predators. He will not react to any direct stimuli.
  - » If the hive is damaged in any way, the man will scream very loudly, then disappear.
- **Sword:** Shoe prints in the earth lead towards it but stop abruptly a few feet away.
  - » The weapon belongs to the skeleton buried just beneath the earth. It is a regular short sword (d6), strangely preserved.
  - » Bloodvines [3 HP, 4 STR, 13 DEX, 1 WIL, tendrils (d6), *blast*)] attack anyone that steps close to the sword, sapping 1 STR per round from their target (STR save to escape after the first round).

In this example, there are three potential dangers: the bees, the man, and the Bloodvine plant. The danger from bees is more obvious, as the PCs can clearly see the danger and are familiar with bees already. The man is an unknown entity and could be friend or foe, while the Bloodvines are hidden and act as a sort of trap. The Warden should therefore communicate exactly what the PCs can see, hear, and smell.

The PCs will likely try to interact with the man first or perhaps ask questions about the sword, as these are both fairly passive ways to engage with the scene. When the PCs realize that the man does not respond, they may try to get a closer look or perhaps toss a rock in his direction (avoiding the hive), and so on. If the PCs ask questions about the sword or try to interact with it, the Warden should tell them about the shoe prints in the grass right away.

If the PCs decide to engage with the bee hive, the Warden should "warn" them with a hint of some kind: the bees begin to fly in a more aggressive manner, or the noise they create gets louder, and so on. It is up to the players whether to ignore the clues in front of them and continue, or to stop and ask questions!

Saves

Overview

WHEN TO SAVE

There are three common scenarios in which a player character should save:

- When avoiding the negative outcome of a risky action.
- When acting in opposition to another player character, NPC, or creature.
- When aiding one or more characters in a risky action.

Save Principles

- When in doubt, ask whether the party has the time, resources, skills, or advantage to overcome a problem. If the answer is "no," then a save is usually warranted. If the answer is "I don't know," a roll with the Die of Fate may be necessary.
- Feel free to say "no," but remember to offer an alternative. If the party cannot proceed due to circumstances beyond their control, give them another option to consider.
- Character death should never come as a surprise. If the risk is so great that the outcome might be fatal, make sure the player understands what they're getting into.
- Always provide multiple viable options for the PCs to choose from. The more choices, the more interesting the situation becomes.
- The outcome of a save need not be a simple binary. You can tailor the results based on the totality of input: the effort, forethought, resources, and skill that went into the roll.
- Be transparent with players. This doesn't mean revealing all of the world's secrets, but provide each player with the maximum information their character might have.
- Avoid requiring a dice roll whenever possible. If a PC can solve a problem using purely narrative components, do not ask for a roll.
- Replace multiple dice rolls with a single dice throw. Simplifying results to a single roll can increase tension while maximizing player input.

Traditional Saves

STRENGTH

Wolfram dashes through the underground jail cell, a bundle of cloth held tightly to his chest. Lucius and Freya are right behind, fighting off a very large guard and his pet wolf.

Wolfram: "Remember, they are innocents! They don't need to die!"

Freya: "Sorry, I can't hear you through the barks and snarling!"

Warden: "Suddenly, the guard stops and whistles, recalling his pet. He then pulls on a lever behind him, and a loud grating sound starts emanating from the other side of the hallway to the East. Then you see what he's done: a thick iron gate is coming

down from the ceiling. If it closes, you'll be locked in this section of the jail! Wolfram, you can probably make it through without any risk. Lucius and Freya will need to each make DEX saves in order to make it."

Wolfram: "I'm going to stop and hold the gate for as long as I can. What do I risk?"

Warden: "The gate is strong. It might break your bones, or you might get stuck underneath."

Wolfram: "I toss the bundle through to the other side, then take up a position to grab onto it. Lucius, Freya, you two run ahead. I've got this."

Lucius and Freya agree, and Wolfram rolls a 13: a success!

Warden: "You groan as the iron bars press down against your arms and shoulders. Just as you feel like the gate might crush you in two, Lucius and Freya jog past and into safety. You step back and the gate collapses onto the stone floor with such force that the mechanism itself breaks. There is no going back now! The large guard isn't getting through either, though."

Wolfram: "It's just as I've always said: 'Through strength, there is virtue.' Or was it, 'There is virtue in strength?' Ah, anyway... Hey, wait for me!"

DEXTERITY

Freya crouches atop the rafters of a decrepit tavern, spying on a gang of heavily-armed thugs below.

Warden: "After twenty minutes of cramped discomfort, the care and caution you put into this venture are finally rewarded as one of the men below speaks aloud the location of their hideout. Your mission is complete! What do you do now?"

Freya: "I need to skedaddle without these jokers knowing I was ever here. Does it look like they are nearly finished?"

Warden: "Actually, one of them is pulling out a deck of cards, and the others are nodding in approval. It looks like they'll be here for a while yet."

Freya: "Rats. Well, no time like the present, right? I'm going to sneak back the way I came."

Warden: "That's fine, but when you passed earlier there was no one here. That is no longer the case! You'll need to make a DEX save to avoid detection."

Freya rolls a 16: a fail!

Warden: "As you crest the final beam, it creaks. All six of the men look up and see you leap into the crawlspace leading out of the main hall and into the kitchens. They didn't get a bead on your face, but they know you're up there! They shout and draw their weapons."

Freya: "I have one smoke bomb left, and I plan on using it. I'm going to drop into the kitchens to find a pot. If I recall correctly, water makes the smoke go crazy..."

WILLPOWER

> Lucius has been captured after helping a client try to break into the ancient vault of Der Thunn. In a sudden glut of courage, he allowed himself be taken so that the others could escape.

Wolfram: "Pity about Lucius. But we have to deliver our client to the vault immediately. We can rescue him after."

Freya: "I am NOT leaving him behind. You should still go, but I'm going to get him out. I'm a cutpurse, so I have friends everywhere, right? Or perhaps there's some kind of thieves' cant I can use to make connections here?"

Warden: "Indeed. You can spend the night trying to make connections among your kind, if you like."

> The party splits up, and Freya learns what she needs to from a local fence. (It costs her one of the Twins, and she is not happy about it.) Lucius is awaiting his sentence in a jail beneath the constabulary.

Warden: "In the dim light of the early dawn, you notice a note slipped through the street vent. It reads, 'Speak the following, and you will be free: "The Pale Man Longs To Die." You have but one chance.'"

Lucius: "...What? OK. Someone gave this to me? And I have to speak it aloud... but at the right time, or to the right person?"

Warden: "You hear footsteps as the jailer approaches. He jingles his keys as if he intends to open your cell. What do you do?"

Lucius: "OK! This is not the right person, I think. Perhaps I'll talk to someone higher up?"

Warden: "He opens your cell and beckons for you to come out."

Lucius: "Hello friend! Might I speak to your superior? I have some important news that might be very interesting to them..."

Warden: "The jailer smirks as he unlocks raises a pair of manacles."

Lucius: ""THE PALE MAN LONGS TO DIE!"

Warden: "The jailer stops in his tracks, then lowers the manacles. He nods once, then gestures that you follow him."

Lucius: "Well, that was lucky. What is this, some code for jailers? Executioners? Well, whatever it is, I'm following."

Warden: "The jailer guides you into the darkness of the jail, far from the light. As he reaches the far wall, he taps three times on a stone high above his head. After a moment, the wall swings inward, and the guard walks confidently inside, where a dark-haired woman waits at a desk. She smiles at you and gestures that you sit at the chair across from her."

Lucius: "Uh oh. Can I go back to my cell, please? I kid, I kid. I take a seat."

Warden: The jailor leaves as you take a seat. The room is small, with only one door

on the other side of the woman. A very large man stands outside, his head visible through a small window on the door. The woman smiles again, saying, 'Welcome Mr... Well, it doesn't matter. There is only one reason you are here. You've spoken a code known only to thieves and scoundrels. And which one are you, I wonder?"

Lucius: "What happens now? I don't have anything to barter... Except for perhaps the truth? But that means I have to make a WIL save, right? So that I seem 'convincing'?"

Warden: "You'd need to make a WIL save even if you weren't telling the truth. You're definitely the most at risk here, and despite your experience as a charlatan, you think she can probably see through any lie. She and you might not be so different."

Lucius: "OK. Madam: I'll be straight with you. My friends and I are here to sneak into the vault of Der Thunn. I only learned of that phrase a few minutes ago. I believe one of my friends (a cutpurse named Freya, you might know her) left me that note. If you set me free, I'll be sure to mention... what's your name, again?"

Warden: "Katja. And please, tell me everything."

> Lucius describes the party's goal and their efforts so far. He makes a WIL save. He rolls a 5, a success! Katja is convinced of his sincerity.

Warden: "As she listens to your story, Katja frowns, then finally smiles. 'Alright, alright, I believe you. Let's make a deal! You introduce me to this "client" of yours whom you've so kindly escorted into my town, and I'll make sure no one is watching while you slip away. But we have to go right now, before this place implodes. And if that happens, even I can't guarantee your safety...'"

> An hour later, Lucius finds Freya, but not the others. She explains that Wolfram and their client have already left for the vault. She agrees to take them there, but says that she needs to make a quick stop first. Something about reclaiming one of her daggers...

Opposed Saves

> The party has cornered their opponents (two Bandits and their Hobgoblin chief) against a steep cliff side. Lucius and Wolfram are able to take their turns right away, but Freya failed her initial DEX save and has to go after their opponents. As her friends take on each of their smaller foes, she only narrowly avoids getting her head bashed in by the Hobgoblin!

Freya: "I don't think I can survive another bout with their leader, so I'm going to try and knock him off the cliff!"

Warden: "You are most at risk in this situation, meaning that if you try and push him, you will need to make the appropriate save!"

Freya: "And if I fail, I go off the cliff, right? Alright.. I think I can do this. But just in case, I'm going to make sure I'm wearing my Catring!"

> Freya rolls a STR save to try and grapple the Hobgoblin and toss him off the cliff. She rolls a 17, a fail!

Warden: "Their leader picks you up and flings you backward, sending you careening

off the cliff. Fortunately the Catring activates its final charge, and you are able to gracefully catch a tree branch jutting off the mountainside 10ft below. It will take you two turns to climb back up, or you'll need to make a DEX save to do it quickly."

Freya: "Damn. Well, hopefully my comrades will fare well enough without me until I return…"

Aiding an Ally

> The party have just arrived at the entrance to the second level of a long-forgotten mountain tomb. Freya leads the group, followed by Lucius, with Wolfram taking up the rear. Wolfram holds a lit torch, but the others have their hands free.

Warden: "The path to the North veers over a twisted archway positioned atop a dark chasm. To the East, a rocky path leads downward into the murk below. What do you do?"

Wolfram: "Our quarry is said to be at the top of this blasted place! I think we should press on to the North."

Warden: "The rest of you agree? Alright, then. Assuming you continue with the same marching orders…"

Wolfram: "Wait! Let me go first. My Order can reveal that which is hidden, and I feel something sinister lies ahead in the darkness. I will take the lead, stepping as cautiously as possible, my Voidglass Shard at the ready."

Warden: "Wolfram, you carefully start across the bridge, which moans and creaks with each step. It feels solid beneath your feet, though. As the party reaches the midway point, the ground begins to shudder violently, then blossoms with cracks. It looks like it's going to collapse from behind!"

Wolfram: "If we run to the opposite side, does it look like we can make it safely?"

Warden: "You and Lucius are the farthest ahead and likely the least at risk. But Freya is last and will need to make a DEX save to arrive there safely."

Freya: "You just had to take the lead, didn't you, Wolfie? I have a rope. Do I have time to toss it to one of the others?"

Warden: "Yes, you can do that. Wolfram has his hands full, so Lucius is your best bet. You can easily throw a rope to him, but a STR save will be required. As you will be the most at risk, you will need to make the save.""

Freya: "A friend and a rope still seems like a good deal to me. Let's do it!"

> Freya rolls a 5: a success!

Warden: "As the bridge collapses, Wolfram and Lucius dash to the opposite side with Freya right behind. Just as the ground disappears beneath her feet, she tosses Lucius her rope. As the bridge collapses behind her she slams into the wall, hanging onto the rope for dear life. Slowly, Freya climbs along the wall, panting as she strains to reach the ledge only a few feet above her. Finally, she pulls herself onto the dusty floor."

Freya: "That was fun. What's next?"

Variable Difficulty

Introduction

In Cairn, players are encouraged to overcome problems by asking questions, thinking critically, and working within the fiction of the game world to curry advantage. The following principles and examples should help Wardens create consistent and fair rulings that both challenge and reward players for their effort.

Principles for Variable Difficulty

- Reward thinking outside the box. This may be a simple mitigation of risk, a new piece of knowledge, character growth, and more.
- Modify outcomes according to the effort that went into them. If the PCs worked really hard to make something succeed despite the danger involved, enhance the result to match their trouble.
- Emphasize fictional consequences rather than mechanical buffs. Purely mechanical rewards are usually hollow and lack the potential of in-world benefits.
- Many dangers can be mitigated or extinguished given time, effort, and skill. If there is no real risk, just skip the roll!
- Create situations that emphasize non-mechanical solutions. A problem is more interesting when the key to solving it can be understood purely within the fiction.

Examples

EVENING THE ODDS

> Freya is facing off against a Wood Troll after being separated from the rest of the party. Pinned between the creature and a cave wall, she has no choice but to engage in direct combat. She has already passed her initial DEX save and thus gets to attack before her opponent.

Freya: "I know I can't beat this guy fair and square, so I'd like to know if there is anything nearby that might even the odds a bit. I grew up on the streets, which means I know how to fight dirty. I'd like to try and blind him without getting clobbered in the process. What are my options?"

Warden: "I'll roll a Die of Fate to see how dusty things are around here. A 4! Alright, there is definitely some dust between you and your opponent, but you might need to get close to him in order to scoop some up. You'll need to make a DEX save."

> Freya rolls a 13: a success!

Warden: "You grab a fistful of dust off the ground in front of you and toss it straight into your opponent's face. He staggers backward and is unable to defend himself as he fights to clear the grit from his eyes!"

> He cannot rely on HP in this state; damage will go directly to STR!

Freya: "I know I should run for it... but I can't help but take advantage of this situation. I'd like to introduce this fellow to the Twins."

> Freya rolls d6+d6 for her daggers (a 3 and a 5), dealing 5 damage directly to the Wood Troll's STR Attribute. The Warden then makes a Critical Damage save for the Troll, rolling a 19: a fail!

Warden: "You stab him with both blades, green blood gushing from open wounds as the creature roars out in anger. Let's see if it survives the attack! Oooh, it fails its STR save and takes Critical Damage! It's down!"

Freya: "Alright, I'm taking this as a sign. Time to make my exit!"

> Freya flees the scene (no DEX save required), leaving the Wood Troll to bleed out. If she had known that it can slowly regenerate its health, she might have stayed...

TEAMWORK

> Wolfram, Lucius, and Freya are investigating rumors of an invisible creature that has been attacking locals in the Wood. They've tracked the creature to its island den just 40ft from the shoreline of a poison lake. The lake is separated from the surrounding forest by heavy mud flats.

Warden: "The creature's footprints end at the shore of a roiling lake that bubbles and swirls violently. Knowing the history of the region, you realize that if the lake water doesn't kill you, the toxic fumes coming from its surface definitely will!"

Wolfram: "We know that the blasted thing makes its home on that pile of rocks out there. Obviously we can't swim across, but I have an idea about how we might draw it out! Lucius, I'm sorry but of the three of us, you're the most... soft. In other words, the perfect bait! Let's make it seem as if your cart is stuck in the mud. I've had a blanket rolled up in my pack for a while now. Perhaps. Freya and I can hide under it, then pounce on the creature at just the right moment?"

Lucius: "I knew I shouldn't have sported my fancy hat today! Fine, let's proceed."

Warden: "The party executes their plan as described, creating the perfect bait for their unsuspecting quarry. I'm going to roll a Die of Fate to determine whether the creature even takes notice... a 5! Alright, that means that the creature definitely wants to investigate the situation, but there's a wrinkle as well: it's starting to get dark."

Freya: "Presumably this means that Wolfram and I are able to spy on the island while we hide, right? And that Lucius is still looking the opposite way, pretending to fuss over a stuck wheel?"

Warden: "Correct. Both Wolfram and Freya can still see through the cart slats that something clambered out from beneath the pile of rocks on the island, scattering them as it moves towards the water. You can't actually tell what moved the rocks, though. It really is invisible! As you watch, something slips into the toxic waters, making a quiet splash. Its ripples are heading in your direction!"

Wolfram: "Well, I guess this is as good a time as ever to bring out my Voidglass Shard! It lets me see invisible creatures but packs a wallop! I won't be able to see out of one eye for an hour, during which time my fighting skills will be... less effective. Might I be

able to get a shot with the crossbow while looking through the glass?"

Warden: "You need two hands for the crossbow."

Freya: "I can hold the Voidglass Shard up to his eye."

Warden: "That will work, but you won't have an action of your own until after the creature has a chance to react."

Lucius: "Um, what about me? I won't be able to see the creature at all, let alone defend myself! I'd like to prepare an action for the moment Wolfram gets a shot off. I still have the large sack from our last caper. I wonder if I could leap on the creature when it approaches, trapping it like a giant fish?"

Warden: "That works! You each prepare yourselves for what is to come. Freya and Wolfram, you wait in silence as the ripples come ever closer. Finally, they stop! Freya places the Voidglass Shard on Wolfram's eye as he raises his crossbow. Wolfram, you see a slimy, fish-like creature climbing out of the water, yellowed scales crisscrossing its multi-limbed body. There is a brief, breathless pause and then a loud TWANG as he lets loose a crossbow bolt."

> Wolfram rolls a d8, resulting in a 6! As the creature was unaware of its attackers, the damage goes directly to STR. It makes a Critical Damage save, and the result is a 3: a success.

Warden: "The creature is impaled by the bolt, green fluid spurting out of its body. Where it lands, the surface hisses as if in contact with acid. It turns towards the cart, but before it can react, Lucius throws his large sack over it. The creature thrashes about inside the sack, twisting in every which way."

> The Warden makes a DEX save for the creature to see if it can quickly break free from the sack. Out of water, it has only 8 DEX. It rolls a 12: a fail. Unable to defend itself, the creature is quickly tied up and placed in the cart, along with a jar of the toxic water for the journey. Working together, the party quickly heads back towards town.

CHARACTER HISTORY

> The party are escorting an agent of the Alsace faction deep in enemy territory. Their destination is hidden in a small village protected by tall wooden walls. Their job is to sneak their client into the heavily guarded town and then into the ancient vault of Der Thunn. As they approach the village, the sun is just beginning to set, and Lucius has been sent ahead to investigate, posing as a troubadour from the South.

Warden: "You approach the walled village, following the dirt trail that leads directly to the town's front gate. Two guards stand on either side of the gate, which is closed. The guards are nearly identical save for a weak mustache sported by one."

Lucius: "Ho there, fine gentlemen! May one such as myself inquire as to whether entry to your village would be permissible on this fine evening? I've had a long journey but am flush with gold and would love to spread some of my good luck!"

Warden: "The men exchange a look. The mustachioed guard replies, 'No entry after dark. That's the rule.'"

> At this point, Lucius is putting on all his charm and is essentially trying to bribe the guards to gain entry. He is also the most at risk in this situation, as the two men are well-equipped to handle a lone traveler and have backup besides. If it were required, Lucius would make the WIL save and not the guards.

Lucius: "Yes, I understand. But it isn't quite dark yet, is it? The Sun is only just setting. May I please enter? I'd happily start sharing my newfound wealth with you two first, if you catch my drift. Perhaps I could bring you each a well-earned beer? To show my appreciation, of course."

Warden: "The two men exchange looks once more, but this time the other man replies, smirking. 'Well… perhaps this once. The Sun hasn't truly set just yet. And we are quite thirsty, after all.'"

> The Warden made a ruling based on what was known about these men: they were simple village guards, they'd been working a long day, and they love beer. Perhaps with another character, this wouldn't have worked, but Lucius is a Mountebank, and his capacity for winning the confidence of his targets has been well established. The guards let him in.

GREATER RISK FOR GREATER REWARD

> The party has sent Freya under the cover of darkness to spy on an enemy encampment. Her goal is to ascertain their enemy's total number as well as what sort of dangers might await there.

Warden: "Halfway to the camp, you see a light flickering along the trail. Someone is coming toward you! What do you do?"

Freya: "I slip into the foliage on the side of the trail, keeping as quiet as possible. Does that require a save?"

Warden: "No, because you've got enough of a distance from this person and you don't have any light sources lit. You may hide without risk of being found."

Freya: "If it seems to me like this person might belong to the same faction as our enemy, I would like to ambush them and steal their clothes. I don't want to raise the alarm, so I will need to be fast and furious."

Warden: "OK. They will need to make a DEX save to react in time to fend off your attack, then. It might not go as cleanly as you hope!"

Freya: "What if instead I just knock them unconscious by dropping a tree branch on top of them? I have a hand ax in here somewhere."

Warden: "That might work. You'll need to sprint back a bit, climb a tree, and then save STR to determine if you can cut the branch down at just the right moment, without notifying your target. If you fail, you will come down with the branch as well, potentially taking damage and putting yourself in a very vulnerable position."

> Freya rushes back down the trail, climbs a tree, and begins hacking at one of the branches with her ax. She rolls a STR save: a 7, a success! She thwacks the branch at just the right moment, and it falls atop the lone traveler below her, knocking them unconscious. Freya steals their clothes and their torch, then sets off down the trail towards the camp.

COMBAT IS WAR

> Wolfram, Lucius, and Freya are on the run from a detachment of twelve city guards [4 HP, 1 Armor, 11 STR, 14 DEX, 12 WIL, short sword (d6)], and they are taking shelter in a burnt-out old outpost at the edge of a forest, accessible only by a single ladder. The soldiers each carry a short sword and bow, except for their leader, a tall man with a bright blue epaulet on his shoulder. The soldiers know that the party has taken refuge in the outpost, and are talking among themselves at a safe distance away, just North of where the party is hunkering down. The detachment will be treated as a single entity until they take Critical Damage.

Warden: "The outpost is partly shielded by what remains of its walls, and through the slats, you see the soldiers split off: six head towards the Southwest, adjacent to the treeline, while the rest (including the tall man) move Southeast, where the walls are the most damaged. It looks like they are planning some kind of pincer attack. You have less than a minute to act before they reach the open-side of the shield wall! What do you do?"

Wolfram: "I was in the military, so I know how this goes. That man with the fancy tassel is their leader. If we take him out, the rest might flee. I'm going to wait until he is as close as possible, then fire my crossbow at him. If that leaves me exposed, then so be it!"

Lucius: "You're always so direct, Wolfie! I'm going to pour some of my famous Miracle Oil on the ladder leading up here. That should both prove effective and entertaining!"

Freya: "And what exactly will stop them from simply firing into our hiding spot from the giant holes on the South side? At the very best, they'll just wait until we run out of food. I have another idea: I'll poke my head through the trapdoor and toss Smoke Bombs towards each side of the building. That'll give us an advantage for when these other two plans inevitably fail!"

Lucius: "Uh, I guess I'll use my oil just after she tosses the Smoke Bombs, then?"

Warden: "That should be fine, yes. But be aware that combat officially breaks out as soon as Wolfram stands to fire. And since you're all at the ready, there is no need to make a DEX save: you go first."

Warden: "The soldiers continue their trajectory, until finally the leader draws his sword into the air and screams, 'Charge!' And the soldiers rush towards you. Everything happens at once. Wolfram stands and fires his crossbow at the leader. Since the leader is part of a detachment, Wolfram can only roll a d4."

> The result of Wofram's attack is a 3, and as the leader's helmet absorbs 1 point of damage, he loses only 2 HP.

Warden: "The arrow whizzes past the leader's shoulder, tearing his brightly-colored shoulder epaulet. He grimaces and rushes forward towards the East side of the building. Freya, at the same time, you pop your head through the trap door and toss Smoke Bombs on the East and West sides of the building - mark off 2 uses please. Lucius, you stand behind her, and the moment she moves away, you pour some Miracle Oil on the stepladder."

Warden: "As smoke fills either side of the building, it becomes impossible to tell friend from foe. A few of the men try to climb the ladder but immediately slide off, landing at the bottom in a heap. Your enemies have essentially lost their turn, but the smoke is starting to dissipate. Amidst coughing and shouts, you hear a voice cry, 'Burn it to the ground!"

Wolfram: "Well that bought us some time, at least. Hey, Lucius, how flammable is that oil of yours?"

Lucius: "Very. And it seems we may be running out of options."

Freya: "Well, it's been fun, but I'd rather die fighting down there than get burned alive up here with you lot! No offense."

Wolfram: "None taken. See if you can take out their leader while we try to open up an escape route."

Wolfram: "I'm going to cast Disassemble on myself, then scream 'he's going to tear my arms off!' I will then drop down to the ground and start running around in circles. Lucius, when my arms are removed, I want you to pick them up and come after me."

Lucius: "OK. I really hope this works… And if not, well at least we'll go down fighting! Or screaming. Probably the latter."

Warden: "Freya, who will be your target and with what weapon?"

Freya: "Their leader, and I'll be using the Twins."

Warden: "Alright. Freya leaps down to the smokey earth, making a beeline for the leader. She draws her twin daggers, but as she is still attacking a detachment, she must still roll only a d4 each dagger."

> Freya makes two d4 rolls, a 4 and a 1. She keeps the higher, and the leader's helmet again absorbs 1 point of damage. The remaining 3 damage is enough to trigger a Critical Damage save on the behalf of the detachment. The result is a 15 (a fail), and with the defeat of their leader, the detachment is both broken and routed.

Warden: "Freya slashes at the leader, but her dagger misses as he takes a lucky step back. He is less fortunate on her second attack, however, as she stabs him in the chest. He slumps over, and those closest to him shout in surprise; some even begin backing away. It is at this moment that you hear a scream, and then see Wolfram leap onto the ground from the outpost and begin running circles, followed by Lucius, holding both of his friend's arms. The others then pick up their leader and hightail it back to the edge of the hill amid screams of 'Sorcery!' and 'We weren't trained for this!'"

Wolfram: "I knew that would work!"

Freya: "I'm pretty sure this was all me, but whatever."

Lucius: "Who cares? Let's just get out of here while the getting's good."

Warden: "You have an opportunity to flee into the nearby woods, or across the open fields if you think you can run fast enough. What do you do?"

Combat

Introduction

Combat in Cairn is fast, hectic, and often lethal. In addition, the rules of combat are unique in a few key ways:

- **Side Initiative:** With the exception of the first round (when PCs must first save DEX to secure their turn), both the PCs and their opponents take turns acting together. The results of a side's individual actions occur simultaneously.

- **Attacks Automatically Hit:** Combatants typically deal damage to their targets automatically, without rolling to see whether an attack "hits." When multiple attackers target the same foe, only the highest dice result is used in the attack.

- **Hit Protection and Scars:** Hit Protection acts as a measurement of skill, stamina, resilience, and luck. It also refills automatically when the PC is safe and comfortable. If damage reduces a PC's HP to exactly 0, they receive a Scar, which can yield both positive and negative consequences.

- **Critical Damage:** Damage that reduces a target's HP below zero is subtracted from their STR by the amount of damage remaining. The target must then immediately make a STR save to avoid taking Critical Damage, using their new STR score. On a fail, the target is defeated.

Example

> After days of stepping through endless muck and gloom, the party has finally found the barrow belonging to the Cutlass King, the notorious bandit of a bygone age.

Warden: "Finally, you reach the point marked on your map, and in the early morning light, the barrow's entrance becomes visible through the thick mist. But as the rolling fog begins to clear, you see a flash of colorful movement near the tomb's entrance."

Freya: "Nothing is ever easy, is it? That must be our dear friends from the Ursine Conclave, trying to steal our thunder!"

Lucius: "Come now, we don't know that there is an immediate danger. Right?"

Wolfram: "It doesn't matter; we must be prepared for whatever comes next. Keep your weapons down, and I'll shout. Perhaps we can avoid bloodshed yet."

Warden: "You bark a traditional warning in the direction of the barrow. There is no immediate response, then only a snicker. They appear to be laughing at you! Moments later, three figures step out of the mist and directly into your line of view, each brandishing a weapon. The largest of the three grins as he wields a two-handed war ax, and the other two (a man and woman who are clearly siblings) carry identical swords. Everyone roll a DEX save to see if you can act before they do."

> Wolfram, Lucius, and Freya each save DEX to see whether they can take a turn in the first round. Wolfram and Freya succeed, but Lucius does not.

Lucius: "Well, shoot. I guess I fumbled my cane sword in all the excitement?"

Warden: "Indeed. Alright, Wolfram and Freya, each of you can move and take one action this turn. Assuming they survive, your three opponents will then have a chance to retaliate. Then it will be the PCs' turn to act, including Lucius."

Wolfram: "I don't have my crossbow ready, so I'm going to go after the big one with my silver knife. If we can take him down, the others might flee."

Freya: "Hey, that was my plan as well! Why don't we both go after him?"

> Wolfram and Freya each make individual attack rolls, but only the highest number counts as damage against the large man [8 HP, 15 STR, 7 DEX, 9 WIL, battleax (d10)]. Wolfram rolls a 4, and Freya a 5 and a 1 for each dagger respectively.

Warden: "You each rush the man with the war ax. He easily sidesteps Wolfram's initial jab but nearly isn't quick enough for Freya! He is nearly eviscerated as her twin daggers slice the air where he stood only a millisecond before. That was a close one!"

Freya: "Thanks. That isn't much comfort though."

> It is now the opponents' turn to attack or take an action. Although the description of these events is delivered consecutively, the results happen roughly at the same time. The Warden rolls an attack die for each enemy combatant, targeting each PC only once. The large man rolls a d10 but deals only 3 damage against Freya, while his associates each roll a d6, dealing 1 and a 6 damage against Wolfram and Lucius respectively. As the Warden narrates the results, each player records any lost HP or STR on their character sheet.

Warden: "Now your opponents will get a crack at it. The large man swings his ax at Freya, but it misses, leaving a wide gap between her and the ax edge. You don't know if you'll be so lucky next time, however. Next, the shorter man stabs at Wolfram, who is the closer of the three. Luckily, the man's blade only glances off his armor. Now on to the man's sister, who nearly takes Lucius's head off with her blade. Somehow the blade doesn't draw blood but instead knocks him back so hard he nearly keels over, and his vision is filled with bright lights and sparkling things."

Lucius: "Ouch. I think that takes me to exactly 0 HP. I should check the Scars table, right?"

Warden: "Yes, and you'll need to reference how much HP you lost in the attack. Now let's see... You had 6 HP but no armor, and you took 6 damage in the attack. That means you should receive a Reorienting Head Wound!"

Lucius: "You sound a little too excited about this. OK, it says I need to roll 1d6... I got a 3, which indicates DEX. Now I need to roll 3d6, and if the total is greater than my current Dexterity score, I get to keep it, right? Alright... hey, a 14! That's slightly higher than what I have already! Maybe getting knocked in the head isn't all that bad?"

Warden: "Perhaps. One point fewer and you'd have been diseased, and one point greater and you'd lose your hearing for a while. Write down your new DEX score. You really are lucky, you know that? Anyway, it's now time for the PCs to act again."

Wolfram: "I shall riposte against the shorter man!"

Freya: "I'm going to take another swing at the big fella."

Lucius: "I am going to try and stab that woman with my cane sword."

> Wolfram rolls a d6, dealing 2 damage to the shorter man, who has enough HP to absorb the attack. Freya rolls a d6 for each of her daggers, dealing a 1 and a 3. She keeps only the higher die, and the large man is able to absorb the damage, taking his HP down to 0 (but only PCs gain Scars). Lucius rolls a 6 against the woman [5 HP, 11 STR, 8 DEX, 14 WIL]. She loses 1 point of STR in the attack and so must then roll a Critical Damage save using her new STR score.

Warden: "Wolfram, you stab at the shorter man, but he deftly avoids your attack! Freya, your daggers slice at the large man with impressive speed and intensity, and it's clear that you've put him on the defensive, as you can see the sweat begin pouring down the sides of his head. He is running out of steam! Lucius, your cane sword pierces the woman in the stomach! She makes a STR save to see if she can stay in the fight. She rolls a 13, a fail! She goes down!"

> This is the first casualty of the fight, so the woman's allies must make a WIL save to continue or flee. The Warden rolls using the leader's WIL, and he fails!

Warden: "The short man sees his sister fall and screams a cry of anguish. He drops his sword and commands the larger man to drop his ax. 'Please,' he begs. 'I don't care about whatever is in that barrow. I beg of you: have mercy. Save my sister, if you have the means.'"

Wolfram: "My order takes mercy on all folk willing to forge a new path. If we save your sister with our skills and resources, will you vow to pledge yourself to a life of piety, poverty, and kindness?"

Warden: "The shorter man nods, then rushes to his sister. The larger man only smiles, then says, 'I ain't swearin' nothin'. But I do what he says, so long as he pays. Just let me keep my ax.'"

> The party bandage up the woman, stabilizing her. Had they not, she would have bled out within the hour. Now out of danger, the PCs take a quick swig of water and regain their lost HP. Lucius tries to impress Freya by showing off the new battle scar on his eyebrow, but it doesn't work.

Wolfram: "Alright, that's all sorted then. You lot make your way back to town, and we'll convene later. For now, we've got business with this Cutlass King I've read so much about."

The Setting of Vald

Introduction

The implied setting of Cairn is called Vald, encompassing all developed or settled lands, cities, towns, forests, etc. The specific ruler is irrelevant, as most adventures will take place in smaller towns and villages, the forest, and the margins of the realm. Most inhabitants (regardless of region) refer to the local centers of power as the Cities, occasionally as a pejorative.

Most towns and villages are built within a day's walk of one another, near sources of water and lumber. Larger villages try to be self-sufficient but may still rely on nearby farms and local hunters for food. Most settlements were originally organized around a specific industry such as lumber, brewing, fishing, or mining, and often a Fieldwarden or Beast Handler is posted to protect a community's most valuable assets.

Larger towns will elect a Reeve responsible for the community's well-being and external relationships. In the event of a crime or violence, a constable is empowered to enforce the local laws. Taverns and inns are common in villages close to trade routes, while large settlements often boast at least one temple or shrine.

Established trails between larger towns are fairly common, while maintained roads are almost non-existent except to the distant cities. Itinerant merchants, Kettlewrights, and various peddlers pass through settlements on a semi-regular basis, sometimes hiring Outriders to protect and escort larger caravans, or Rill Runners to help ferry passengers in the Riverlands.

Even the smallest village may play host to scholarly types from the cities: a Scrivener, Aurifex, or Greenwise with keen interest in nearby tombs, barrows, and Gates. Often a Bonekeeper or Fungal Forager will be hired for their expertise, while clever adventurers will ensure that a Barber-Surgeon is never far away, or a Cutpurse if there is unsavory business that needs tending to. Of course, Mountebanks and Jongleurs often accompany these sorts, riding their coattails in hopes that they too will benefit from the next major discovery.

Those who enter the Wood hire a guide familiar with the territory, such as a Prowler or Fletchwind, while the truly determined traveler will seek the wisdom of a Half Witch or Foundling with some connection to its darker secrets. Closer to the border, the Marchguard work to keep the realm free of outside influence, while the Hexenbane seek to protect it from forces within.

Vald Principles

- Keep it small. Adventures take place in smaller towns, villages, forests, and the margins of the realm.

- Keep it local. Major rulers (kings, queens, etc.) are far-off, almost irrelevant entities. They have power, but distance diminishes their impact.

- Most people are human. Some have a drop of Fae blood or are born of two worlds. But for the most part, everyone looks, sounds, and acts recognizably human.

- Distance matters. Most villages are within a day's walk from one another to ensure the safety of travelers. Camping is a last resort, and those that journey far rarely return.

- Language matters. Most towns and villages share a common tongue, but it loses intelligibility the farther one travels. Written, older forms are common in places people no longer tread.

- There is only one Wood. It is not one forest, but all forests. It is neither Good nor Evil but simply wishes to grow, to be free, and to protect itself.

- The Wood is a porous dungeon. It has rooms and traps and hazards but can also be traversed in different ways: one can always climb a tree. This makes it no less dangerous.

- The Roots are a foreign land. Time, logic, and matter operate by principles so alien as to make them unknowable.

- Magic is rare and dangerous. Relics and Spellbooks are not well understood, and attempting to manipulate their power may lead to self-destruction.

- Relics originate in the Roots. They cannot be created by humans, only found. They are ancient, and yet they sprout from rubble as if grown there.

- Monsters and other creatures do not follow the rules. They speak and act differently than the PCs and have abilities and magic beyond the reach of regular characters.

Religions & Beliefs

There are several major religions and spiritual beliefs popular among the smallfolk.

Tideborn

A hierarchical religious sect that worships Rivulus, a petty god of rivers and lakes. Even the unaffiliated are familiar with the group's initiation ceremony, a ritual drowning that occasionally kills participants. Survivors are dubbed Tideborn and adopt a new, water-related moniker (Carp, Reed, Oxbow, and so on). Only clergy need participate in the ritual; however, in recent years, their following among rural folk has increased, especially in villages near bodies of water. Within the clergy, there is little hierarchy, save for the Aqua Primaris, whom all obey without question.

The Tideborn are hardly the only faith in the realm, but their steady growth and zealotry have earned them the respect of some other factions, particularly the House of Burgesses. The continued expansion of their membership has, in turn, earned them some enemies, particularly from the other factions. Their enmity is such that today Tideborn clergy never attempt solitary travel through heavily wooded areas, lest they risk a beating or worse.

The White Raven

Popular among those who live close to the Wood, the followers of the White Raven (or "the Flock," as they prefer) believe strongly in the power of the Wood and in keeping its forests and creatures healthy. They are completely in awe of the Woodwose and obey the will of the Wood without question. They can be identified by tattoos of a white bird on their wrists, necks, or backs. Every settlement keeps a Flock unique to their community, and their devotees distrust organized religion as a whole.

The Five-Pointed Star

An older religion that owes its origin to the first peoples of the realm, who built stone structures to map the stars and constellations. Its worshipers adhere strictly to a set of religious principles that deny the legitimacy of all other beliefs, and local history is marked by its wars and forced conversions. Today, the Five-Pointed Star keeps temples in every major settlement, which often provide needed services, particularly for the poor. In recent years, its prominence has waned as other faiths have risen, prompting some of its members to join a reactionary order known as the Bleeding Star.

Tideborn	The White Raven	The Five-Pointed Star

The Wood

The Wood surrounds and divides the realm, representing not just one forest, but *all* forests. Denizens of the Wood are fiercely independent, believing they are subject solely to its rules. Its various peoples, creatures, and unrelenting natural elements have kept the outside world at bay since time immemorial. The Wood is the spirit of all forests, and they in turn are its flesh, and the life they support a sign of its health.

At the core of each forest is a Heart Tree and the place where the forest is at its most powerful as well as its most dangerous. Each Heart Tree is born from a single Heartseed, acquired exclusively from a Heart Tree that is dying or dead. The Heart Tree acts as a pinion to the plants, trees, and animals all around it, observing and reacting to any problematic incursions into its domain. In particular, Heart Trees fear humans.

Forests never live in isolation and will communicate with one another to give warning or ask for help. Aid can come in many forms, as the Heartseed has great reach. Raven Folk defenders may lay sap traps to capture stray hunters, while Dryads steal the hatchet from the lumberjack's toolbox. But none are more powerful (nor feared) than the Woodwose, the forest's true protector. A creature wrought from both plant and bone, the Woodwose lives for only one purpose: to protect the forest and any that live within its boundaries.

Despite its fearsome reputation, many tell tales of the wood's kindness as well. Green, muscular arms saving a child caught by a sudden rock slide. Will-o-Wisps revealing a hidden path once thought lost. Words of warning sung from a crow on a tree. And so, rangers and other outsiders will leave bowls of fruit and nuts alongside great rock piles as proof of their respect and admiration, in the hopes that they will be allowed to pass freely through a protected Wood.

Of course, the Wood is not empty of people. Hidden in the boughs and in empty glades are populated villages, rustic cabins, and the odd tower. Those who can survive (or even thrive) in such places learn to live according to the rules of the forest, for those who ignore or foolishly oppose these rules often meet grisly ends. The Wood is populated by creatures strange and wondrous, such as Goblins, Spirits, Treants, Trolls, Werewolves, Witches, and even talking plants and animals. Most are openly hostile to outsiders (particularly humans), but others will (on occasion) parley with those that have shown respect for the Wood. Of course, all demonstrate utter respect for the Fae (sometimes called the Pale Folk, or the Neighbors).

The Neighbors

Through the bramble and over the bush, there is a liminal space where the realms of mortals and the Faerie touch. If you look for it, you will not find it. But if you need to pass over, you will. The creatures that inhabit this place may look and sound familiar, but make no mistake: they are not like us. Tall, slender, pale as ice, and eerily beautiful, the Fae obey no mortal law, nor do they submit to its morality. And yet they are crippled by sterility, lacking the ability to create their own kindred. For this deed, they must cross the threshold into the mortal realm to treat with mortals. There are many names for their kind, but only one has ever escaped their lips: Neighbors.

The Neighbors are continually shrouded in mystery, and it can often be difficult to separate fact from rumor. There are some who say the Neighbors steal babes from their cribs, replacing them with a Changeling child. Others claim that they will pay great sums of wealth or bestow enormous power to those willing to give away their own flesh and blood. There is one truth that all agree on: to make deals with their kind is to invite ill luck not only to your life but that of your descendants as well.

Hunters swear that occasionally animals from the Faerie world will pass into ours, a white blaze burnt into their fur. They say that their meat is the sweetest you will ever taste and that afterward you will starve because of the lack of it. Worse, to be caught poaching these creatures invites a fate worse than death. Scholars have written that the Neighbors can spill magic as if it were water, having no need for Spellbooks or even Relics. They also claim that all magic has its origin in the land of the Pale Folk and that within each Spellbook are the trapped spirits of their most craven lawbreakers.

Those who make their lives in the Wood know to carry charms, gifts, and similar items in case of a chance meeting. And though the Neighbors rarely trouble the borders to their kingdom, they have been known to deliver harsh punishment to those that cross their boundary uninvited. However, it is common knowledge that the Neighbors are terrified of the Roots and will avoid Gates whenever possible.

The Roots

The Roots is a realm of mystery and horror underground, indifferent to the arbitrary divisions of the aboveground civilizations. Below, labyrinthine hollows stretch for immeasurable distances, connecting humble town sewers to far-flung ruins beyond the borders. Only the brave or foolish dare enter the Roots in search of forgotten Relics or profound wealth, and the few that do return whisper of the indescribable horrors and evil intelligence guarding these lost treasures. Stories tell of adventurers lost for centuries in the depths, only to emerge claiming that just a few hours have passed. Others claim to have made a week-long journey above ground in just one day, traveling through the tunnels beneath.

Entrances to the Roots, known as Gates, are scattered across the lands and are usually hidden or protected by powerful forces. Further, Gates cannot be opened without a proper key or alchemical pattern, and once opened, can never be shut again. Folk histories recount their openings as omens of great misfortunes, where creatures more vile than the darkest nightmare slink through, devouring nearby homes and villages. Others tell of great heroes raising their swords against these terrors, sealing away the Gates beneath rubble, mountains, lakes, or other impenetrable barriers.

What is known is that the Roots are made of vast underground caves as large as an emptied ocean, without even a hint of sunlight. A variety of fungal growths provide weak light in some places, as do various minerals and strange, shallow pits of blue flame. Very little is known about these pits other than that they are tended to by terrible three-eyed Ogres who thirst for blood as if it were the sweetest wine. The various creatures and wild animals

that survive in such harsh conditions have developed natural means to live in utter darkness, adapting their eyesight to function in even the dimmest light or eschewing vision altogether.

Of the various peoples and tribes, it is said they speak a harsh, guttural speech, sprinkled with familiar words and phrases. Their warriors carry weapons that spin of their own volition, glowing brighter with each rotation. When the blades are finally released, their heated edges can split flesh and even rock with deadly ease. To date, no one has successfully parlayed with the People Who Live Below. Some contend that there are bustling towns, cities, and even great palaces in the Roots! Of course, few scholars believe them, and those that do have been ostracized into obscurity by their peers. Still, explorers cannot deny the ancient husks of impressive architecture found throughout the Roots, the ancient cities and enormous ships of an unimaginable world. Hazy reports claim that one such ruin, a gargantuan ziggurat boasting hundreds of levels, still flickers with light and life. These rumors have yet to be substantiated.

Today, most know to avoid any mention of Gates, or keys, or related alchemy. But of course, there are always those that cannot resist its draw…

Factions

The House of Burgesses

An assembly of wealthy, land-owning lords and ladies. Cunning, assertive, and convinced of their own superiority, they can accomplish great things when acting as a single body. Unfortunately, their efforts are often undermined by individual squabbles, petty disputes, and their never-ending lust for power and prestige. Although there is a healthy distrust of the Order of Nine in the House, a Burgess will rarely speak ill of them in public. For their part, the House are openly friendly with the Tideborn, although internally there is much consternation regarding the upstart religion's recent increase in popularity.

The Order of Nine

A consortium of merchants, scholars, and the very powerful, the Order relies on their substantial wealth and a vast network of spies to accomplish their aims. Their primary focus is on the discovery, identification, and regulation of Relics. In recent years, they've turned their focus onto the Roots, as they believe this to be the origin of most Relics, and they pay handsomely for any information regarding Gates. The organization owes its name to the founding members of the Order, whose names and titles are kept secret. The Order detests Spellbooks and any that carry them. They see little reason to openly engage in politics, yet keep spies in nearly every faction.

The Order employs several distinct ranks and titles (in order of primacy):

- **Lector:** An initiate is deemed a Junior Lector until they've proven themselves, after which they are awarded the title of High Lector. Only the latter may use Relics in their work.
- **Keeper:** Protector of a Gate, akin to a typical soldier or mercenary.
- **Archivist:** A highly respected researcher or librarian, led by the Grand Archivist.
- **Chamberlain:** A master of Relics, charged with their protection, dispersal, and discovery.
- **Inquisitor:** The highest-ranking position within the Order, sharing power as a triumvirate (called the Three) and answering only to the Nine.
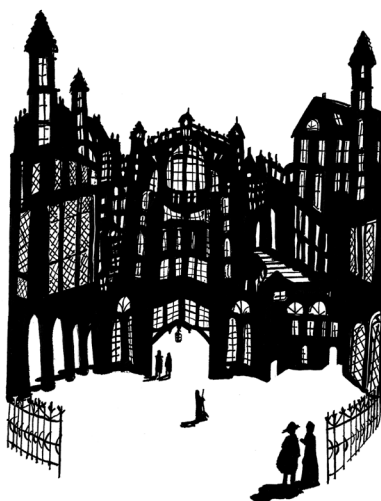
The Marchguard

At the margins of the realm and beyond the Wood lies a place so wild, so dangerous, that only the extremely brave or extremely foolish dare set foot. The borders of these lands are ever-shifting, growing, and changing along with the passage of time. And so the Marchguard was born. No one can remember when the Guard was formed nor who worked to create it, but all know their purpose: to protect the realm from any incursions that might cross the boundary and to prevent those attempting to cross without guidance.

The Guard bends to no kings, knows no religion, and obeys no laws but their own. They lack even a central leadership, instead providing a masked volunteer to represent them in external negotiations. New members adopt a Blood Oath so powerful it is said to be inescapable by all but death itself. Of course, joining the Guard is rarely a choice, as their ranks are largely composed of ex-thugs, disgraced scholars, neglected knights, misbegotten rangers, and the like. This is how it must be, of course. For who else would willingly devote their lives to stand against such unknowable horrors?

Bloodhounds are members of the Guard who have been awarded special commendations or have demonstrated true belief in their cause. These hunters have adopted a single purpose of duty: enforcing the Oath. Utilizing a network of spies, informants, and plants, they ensure that any who escape the Guard are forced to return or die.

The Guard sees little reason to engage in politics or other such short-sighted quarrels with the other factions. However, decades of living near the borders have caused them to broker an uneasy friendship with those who call the Wood their home, and they will even treat with them on occasion. And although it is never discussed, on rare occasions the Guard will come to the aid of those who live in the Wood as well.

NPC Tables

d20	Name
1	Alaric
2	Carver
3	Cleaver
4	Darnel
5	Eoin
6	Evander
7	Glyph
8	Hemlock
9	Herald
10	Lisbeth
11	Lucian
12	Luna
13	Lysander
14	Marius
15	Mend
16	Milo
17	Neria
18	Pan
19	Quill
20	Seraphine

d20	Name
1	Ainsley
2	Azura
3	Brave
4	Callan
5	Cedric
6	Crow
7	Finch
8	Gunnar
9	Harper
10	Liora
11	Lira
12	Lorelai
13	Lysandra
14	Marcellus
15	Shade
16	Shroud
17	Spade
18	Spike
19	Tanner
20	Thyme

d20	Name
1	Alder
2	Alistair
3	Caius
4	Dain
5	Dax
6	Dorian
7	Godric
8	Harkin
9	Hildred
10	Kael
11	Kavi
12	Mariner
13	Nazira
14	Onyx
15	Rolan
16	Rush
17	Sky
18	Storm
19	Taros
20	Thaddeus

d20	Quirk
1	Alert
2	Bald
3	Bright Eyes
4	Broad Face
5	Crooked Teeth
6	Gaunt
7	Good Posture
8	Grimy
9	Harsh Voice
10	Heavy Brow
11	Limps
12	Missing Ear
13	Muscular
14	Notable Hair
15	Pleasant Voice
16	Squints
17	Strong
18	Thick Eyebrows
19	Tired
20	Young

d20	Background
1	Academic
2	Assassin
3	Blacksmith
4	Farmer
5	General
6	Gravedigger
7	Guard
8	Healer
9	Jailer
10	Laborer
11	Lord
12	Merchant
13	Monk
14	Mystic
15	Outlander
16	Peddler
17	Politician
18	Spy
19	Thief
20	Thug

d20	Goal
1	Ascension
2	Cleansing
3	Conservation
4	Defense
5	Domination
6	Enrichment
7	Expansion
8	Freedom
9	Healing
10	Integration
11	Justice
12	Peace
13	Power
14	Preservation
15	Purification
16	Redemption
17	Revenge
18	Survival
19	Unity
20	Wealth

d20	Virtue
1	Cautious
2	Compassionate
3	Connected
4	Courageous
5	Disciplined
6	Discreet
7	Honest
8	Intelligent
9	Judicious
10	Loyal
11	Methodical
12	Meticulous
13	Polite
14	Popular
15	Pragmatic
16	Resourceful
17	Suave
18	Shrewd
19	Tenacious
20	Witty

d20	Vice
1	Aloof
2	Corrupt
3	Craven
4	Cruel
5	Cynical
6	Deceptive
7	Greedy
8	Impulsive
9	Incompetent
10	Inflexible
11	Manipulative
12	Mercurial
13	Naive
14	Pedantic
15	Ruthless
16	Sarcastic
17	Selfish
18	Stubborn
19	Vain
20	Xenophobic

The Vald Calendar

Overview

There are 24 hours in a day and 6 days in a week. Each month has 24 days (4 weeks), with 12 months in a year. The year is divided into 4 seasons (Dead, Dry, Wet, and Harvest), each lasting 72 days. Every 10 years, a 6-day "Leap Week" (Reclamation) is added, and does not belong to any particular month. This makes the average length of a year over a decade 288.6 days. Each year starts just before the Dry season begins. The current year is 7728.

Days of the Week

1. Market Day
2. Garden Day
3. Song Day
4. Tithe Day
5. Bathing Day
6. Resting Day

Reclamation Week
(Once per decade)

7. Recognize
8. Remember
9. Reward
10. Rejoice
11. Relinquish
12. Renew

Months

1. Mourning
2. Silence
3. Veil
4. Sunrise
5. Bright
6. Ashfall
7. Flood
8. Highwater
9. Rise
10. Quell
11. Bane
12. Sunset

Weather

d6	Dead	Dry	Wet	Harvest
1	Cold and clear	Hot and sunny	Light rain	Mild and sunny
2	Frosty mornings	Warm and sunny	Overcast	Cool and clear
3	Overcast skies	Warm and breezy	Breezy	Warm and sunny
4	Light snow	Hot and humid	Heavy rain	Warm and breezy
5	Snow showers	Heatwaves	Thunderstorms	Light rain
6	Freezing rain	Dry and windy	Showers	Heavy rain

Holidays, Festivals, & Events

1. Mourning

4th at Midnight (Tithe Day)
Dead Season begins.

24th at Dusk (Resting Day)
First Light: Commemorating the end of the first month of the new year. Torches and fire are lit all night, turning night to day.

2. Silence

10th at Midnight (Tithe Day)
Dead Equinox: Marks the midpoint of the Dead season.

11th from Dawn to Dusk (Bathing Day)
Whisper: Speaking above a whisper is taboo. Silent auctions are common.

3. Veil

9th at Midnight (Song Day)
Lift the Veil: The end of the Dead season is celebrated through solemn vows and humble gestures.

17th from Afternoon to Twilight (Bathing Day)
Veil's Edge: A day for honoring ancestors with offerings and prayers at family altars.

4. Sunrise

4th at Midnight (Tithe Day)
Dry Season begins.

14th at Morning (Garden Day)
Bartermoot: Representatives from the smaller towns and villages trade steel for lumber in ritual arrangement with the denizens of the Wood.

5. Bright

9th from Afternoon to Midnight (Song Day)
Dustset: A carnival marked by parades and masquerades, where participants wear masks to protect from dust and wind.

10th at Midnight (Tithe Day)
Dry Equinox: Marks the midpoint of the Dry season.

6. Ashfall

16th from Dawn to Afternoon (Tithe Day)
Boughmeal: A market day held exclusively within the Wood, where artisans and merchants from all over the realm meet to trade their wares.

24th in the Afternoon (Resting Day)
Parade of Ash: In celebration of the final day of the Dry season, participants mark their faces with ash and play music. Most kinds of labor are frowned upon.

7. Flood

4th at Midnight (Tithe Day)
Wet Season begins.

5th – 7th (Bathing Day to Market Day)
Splash Festival: Celebrates the abundance of water, with boat races, contests, gifts, and water blessings.

14th, all day (Garden Day)
Float: Communities build and decorate enormous boats or rafts to float down rivers.

8. Highwater

1st at Dawn to Midnight (Market Day)
Highwater Fair: A major trade event taking place when the waters are highest. Every major town and city celebrates with fairs and markets.

10th at Midnight (Tithe Day)
Wet Equinox: Marks the midpoint of the Wet season.

18th at Afternoon (Resting Day)
First Plant: A festival marking the beginning of planting season. Communities gather to plant the first seeds of the year together.

9. Rise

14th at Lunchtime (Garden Day)
Waterwish: Participants write wishes on scrolls, place them into holes in a boulder, and roll it downhill. When it stops, any remaining wishes are thought to come true.

19th-23rd (Market Day to Bathing Day)
Storm Dance: Dances and betrothals meant to please the masters of storm and rain for a fruitful Harvest season ahead.

10. Quell

1st at Midnight (Market Day)
Harvest Season begins.

4th at Afternoon (Tithe Day)
Harvest Festival: Celebrates the start of the harvest with feasting and communal gatherings to begin harvesting crops.

24th at Dusk (Resting Day)
Gathering Night: Communities come together to collect and store the harvested crops, followed by a night of storytelling and music.

11. Bane

12th, daylight hours (Garden Day)
The Golden Hind: Hunters from far and wide join a great hunt in search of a mythical stag amid great revelry.

18th, all day (Bathing Day)
Firelight: A day of kite-flying, wind chimes, and noisemakers. At night, massive bonfires are lit as dancers perform impressive fire dances.

12. Sunset

10th at Midnight (Tithe Day)
Harvest Equinox: Marks the midpoint of the Harvest season.

11th at Evening (Bathing Day)
Ember: Pays homage to the setting sun and the hard work ahead preparing for the Dead season. Lantern release ceremonies are a common practice.

24th at Evening (Resting Day)
Gloam: The final grand feast of the year, celebrating gratitude for the harvest, with the sun as centerpiece. Pregnancies are common.

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Cairn

Cairn is an adventure game for one facilitator (the Warden)
and at least one other player. Players act as hardened
adventurers exploring a dark & mysterious Wood filled with
strange folk, hidden treasure, and unspeakable monstrosities.