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WORMSKIN

Ye Ruined Abbey of St. Clewd

PART I

ADDITIONALLY

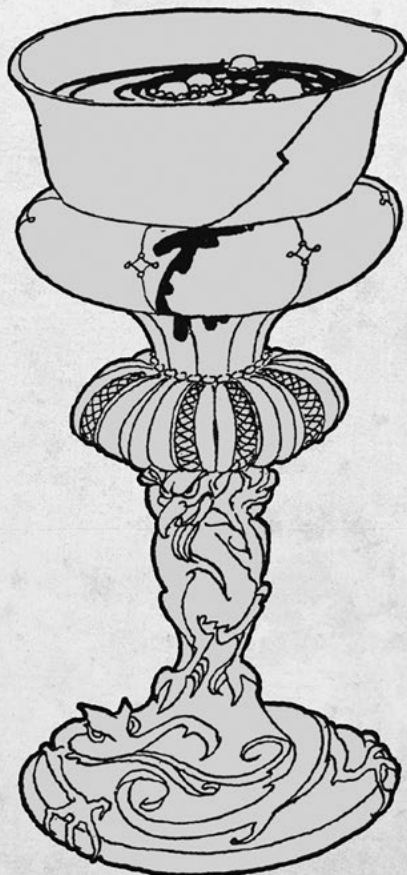
Summerstones & Witching Ring,
Languages used in Dolmenwood,
History, Lore, Monsters & more...

WORMSKIN

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Wormskin – Issue Three

This issue delves into the lore of the Dolmenwood campaign setting, giving an overview of the history of the wood, since prehistoric times, and describing the most important languages which have seen currency over this period. An exposition of the ley lines of the wood is also begun; in this issue, you will find details on the most unusual of Dolmenwood's leys: the artificial, circular line which girdles a large portion of the forest's western reaches and is known by the simple, rustic folk of the wood as the "witching ring".

Additionally, a cluster of hexes to the east of the great Lake Longmere are expounded. In this region can be found one of the most significant historical sites of the wood: the ruins of the former Abbey of St Clewd. An in-depth revelation of the secrets which this location holds, the treasures which still lie there unclaimed, and the odd beings who now make their lairs there, is begun. This is a location ripe for plunder and adventure.

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OF MEN, GOATS, AND FAIRIES IN DOLMENWOOD



What follows is a brief telling of the history of the forest known as Dolmenwood since ancient times, beyond the memory of all but the most old. This information is invaluable to the referee in understanding the historical interactions of the various factions which inhabit the wood, but it is not to be taken as common knowledge — the everyday folk of the wood have their heads filled with such reams of myth and superstition that any scraps of half-truth are concealed with great efficacy. Knowledge of anything much beyond the concerns of the previous generation is possessed by very few who now live in the forest. As such, this historical summary represents what may be known by those learned few who have studied the lore of Dolmenwood in depth.

All dates are specified relative to the present day. What exactly the present date is must be decided by the referee.

- **BEFORE 2,000 YEARS AGO:** The ultimate origins of culture in Dolmenwood are fundamentally of fairy origin. Prior to mankind's arrival, the Wood was completely under the sway of a fairy lord known only as "the Cold Prince" and was considered an extension, in the mortal world, of his domain. In these primaeval days, Goatmen dwelt in the forest (which was already ancient beyond measure) and served the fairy prince. Certain men, inhabitants of neighbouring lands, would traffic with the Prince's people, bringing them various oddments in exchange for fairy objects and knowledge.

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- **2,000 YEARS AGO:** The commerce between humans and the fairy dominion in Dolmenwood eventually attracted cunning men — the occult cabal known as the Drune — who ventured into the forest and began to build dwellings there. These sorcerers came to discover that Dolmenwood was located on a powerful confluence of Ley Lines, which they learned to harness for their own ends. With the Drune came Drune-wives, and with the Drune-wives came the beginnings of witchcraft in Dolmenwood.

- **1,800 YEARS AGO:** The second Drune lodge¹ was established in the forest around Droun Loch. In this intermediate era, the Drune and the Cold Prince worked together, calling up many of the ley stones from the earth. The Drune ventured to the great lake in the heart of the wood, where they discovered an ancient and potent magical energy in the waters. The exact nature of this force — referred to by the name of Gheillough, at the time — has been lost to history; sources only refer to it in vague metaphor and obscure occult attributions. A small number of other men and women — not affiliated with the Drune, though perhaps of the same racial stock — began to settle in Dolmenwood during this era, founding hamlets in the south-western corner of the forest, eking out a living as woodcutters and hunters, and worshipping the spirits and fairies of the forest. The fate of these people has largely been lost to history. It is likely that they were enslaved by the Drune² or simply assimilated into the culture of the folk who followed them.

- **1,200 YEARS AGO:** A second, more organised wave of human settlers entered south-eastern Dolmenwood, bringing their strict, monotheistic religion (what is now called the Church of the One True God) with them. They rapidly settled the area and appropriated the small number of extant settlements as their own, forcing the wood-folk to convert (if, initially, in appearance only) to their faith. The Drune themselves withdrew to the deep woods and became ever more obscure.

- **1,100 YEARS AGO:** The Kingdom of Brackenwold was established by the invaders, culminating in the construction of Castle Brackenwold. A frosty truce was made with the Cold Prince and his people. Many shrines and churches to the One True God were constructed in and around the forest at this time.

- **1,000 YEARS AGO:** A capstone of sorts to the Church, the great Abbey of St Clewd was constructed at the site of the saint's death, in the heart of the wood.

- **900 YEARS AGO:** The influence of the Cold Prince waned at this time, his attention being drawn away from the wood into his kingdom in Fairy, Frigia. In the south, the gradually disappearing fairy aristocracy was replaced by the goatmen who had served as their aides. The goatman lordship over the High Wold was thus established. The northern goatmen became wild and unruly.



- **800 YEARS AGO:** Seeing an opportunity to monopolise the occult energies of the forest, the power-hungry Drune initiated an unlikely alliance with the Brackenwolders and the Church, colluding to divert the energy of the ley line Ywyr into a great ring encircling the western region of the wood, where the gates to the fey kingdom of Frigia lay. The Cold Prince was thus banished from Dolmenwood, forced into exile in Frigia. Since that time, a creed of nonviolence has existed between the Drune and the Brackenwolders.

- **500 YEARS AGO:** The Kingdom of Brackenwold was annexed by a neighbouring kingdom, becoming a Duchy under foreign rule.
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- **400 YEARS AGO:** The wild goatmen of the northern wood became organised under the banner of the warlord Fraggleshorn. Skirmishes with the Duke's soldiers ensued.
-

- **350 YEARS AGO:** The Abbey of St Clewd was sacked in a nighttime raid by a mysterious force. It was never rebuilt, despite several attempts to revive the brotherhood, and has lain in ruins ever since. This date marks the decline of the Church in Dolmenwood. The reason for this is not understood, but it is as if the forest itself began to repel worshippers and their shrines.
-

- **300 YEARS AGO:** At this time, it became clear that a toxic, supernatural presence had established itself in the northern wood, gaining the fealty of many of the wild goatmen and oozing a chaotic energy into the whole forest. The Nag-Lord entered the folk tales and superstitions of common folk — as a bugbear and trickster, half-devil, half-fairy, also known as “the King of the Wood”. The learned know this beast as Atanuwe Nine-Legs and perceive it as the source of the supernatural malaise which warps the wood, but even those versed in the deepest lore of Dolmenwood do not know the truth of its origin. Reference to a great monster in Lake Longmere (known colloquially as “Big Chook”, in modern times) can also be traced back to this period.
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- **100 YEARS AGO:** Under external pressure from the Church, the recent Dukes have begun to question the ancient truce and persecute allies of the Drune, outlawing the mention of their name.
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¹ The scant records from this time state that the first Drune lodge was located beside Lake Hallowbrine in the Forest of Claws and Hooks. These places are now legendary. Among themselves, the Drune maintain that the first lodge does, in fact, exist and hides a vast, lost hoard of their most secret magic.

² A small number of Drunic texts refer to these early wood-folk, calling them “interlopers”. It is clear that, even in these early days, the Drune viewed themselves as masters of the Wood and had no more respect for other folk than they do now.



LANGUAGES OF DOLMENWOOD



It is at times useful for the referee to have some knowledge of the tongues spoken by the inhabitants of the forest, both contemporary and antique. Standing stones carry carvings in a plethora of tongues and scripts, pilfered books and documents may turn out to be written in antique tongues, and communication may be carried out in secret cants, stymying understanding by those not meant to hear. The most commonly encountered languages are as follows:

- *The Immortal Tongue of Fairy*: Spoken in the modern age by a vanishingly small number of individuals only the most ancient fairies who still venture into the Wood — this is the language of the most elevated denizens of the fairy realm. It is a language of such primal potency that its honeyed tones may be understood by all beings, mortal and immortal alike. No mortal may speak the undying tongue and those who attempt to study its treasury of words are beset by madness and misfortune.
- *High Elfish*: The language of the fairy nobility (the Cold Prince and his retinue, for example), a derivative of the immortal fairy tongue. The predilection of fairy nobles for the outlandishly baroque is reflected in their speech, which is regarded by human scholars as the most fiendishly complex language ever devised. Due to this intricacy, this tongue is, unlike its ancestor, in no way comprehensible by other beings. Even fairies of the lower castes find it impenetrable.
- *Sylvan*: The common speech of the fairies and fairy-kin of Dolmenwood, also a distant, debased form of the undying tongue. Learning this language is within the intellectual grasp of mortals, even though they invariably sound like fools when speaking it (to the endless amusement of its native speakers).

- *Caprice*: The native tongue of the goat-folk of Dolmenwood: a crass (almost bestial) language of bleats and gurgles which may be understood on a rudimentary level by mundane goats and sheep. Though it is of utterly different origin, caprice has come to share a small number of words with the sylvan language.
- *High Caprice*: A language evolved among the goatman aristocracy of the High Wold, encompassing greatly simplified elements of the High Elfish tongue and the more erudite components of low caprice. On balance, this tongue is of equivalent complexity and expressiveness to the languages of humans. A large canon of literature exists in this language, written at times in a reduced form of the High Elfish script and at times in the scripts of men.
- *Ancient Drunic*: The sacred tongue of the Drune folk who entered Dolmenwood some 2,000 years ago. This esoteric language was, at that time, already of great antiquity. It is now virtually a lost language, only found in the most secret and antique records of the Drune.
- *Drunic*: The direct descendant of the ancient Drunic tongue, this language and its intricate script are a closely guarded secret of the Drune. It is used for everyday communication among the Drune and also in ritual, scripture, and historical records.
- *Liturgic*: A language of entirely foreign extraction which is now widespread through the expansions of the Church of the One True God. Nonetheless, it remains a purely scriptural language and is seldom spoken outside of sermons.
- *Old Woldish*: The language of the folk who entered Dolmenwood and founded the Kingdom (now Duchy) of Brackenwold. Although Old Woldish is no longer spoken, its study is common among the well-educated and an extensive body of historical texts exists, especially in the libraries of Castle Brackenwold.
- *Woldish*: This is the modern tongue spoken by most of Dolmenwood's inhabitants. Practically, it may be treated as a dialect of the Common tongue which is spoken in the wider world beyond the Wood.



THE SUMMERSTONES AND THE WITCHING RING



Those who wander far in the western reaches of Dolmenwood speak of a vast ring of stones, spread so widely that the connection between them is almost imperceptible. Yet the stones at six of the seven sites in the ring are exactly alike and the ring itself is possessed of an arcane force which binds the stones so strongly together that the area which they encircle — some 36 miles in diameter — has supernatural qualities quite distinct from the rest of the forest.

Modern folk know these sister-stones as the “summerstones”, the great ring which they demarcate as the “witching ring”, and the area contained within as “Maghswoold”. Those more learned in the lore of the forest know the ring as Chell and understand its potency as a ley line, of sorts.

The true origin of the ring was some 800 years ago, when the Drune, in collusion with the Church and the King of Brackenwoold, undertook the construction of an artificial ley line². The ring was founded by tapping into the energy of the ley line Ywyr, at its southernmost nodal — the circle of dolmens called the Pelloryons. From this foundation point, the energy of Ywyr was siphoned, in a counterclockwise direction, into ring of arcane energy surrounding the area of forest wherein the gates to the fairy kingdom of Frigia lay. Five great stones were called from the earth at points around the ring, tethering it. A final, central stone was summoned from the silt of Lake Longmere and, with great ritual, the ring was made permanent.

¹ The term “witching ring” is completely inaccurate, borne of ignorant superstition. Neither the formation nor the supernatural potency of the ring of stones are in any way related to the witches of Dolmenwood.

² The few who, in modern times, know of this magical working wonder at its potency — the arts employed to achieve this feat are long since lost to mortal ken.



THE RING OF CHELL, *Maghsword*

- Υ 0503 Eoel, the Horn
- ⚡ 0304 Sigil, Sigil's Finger, Sunfinger
- Π 0204 Uruzur, Wetstone
- ⚔ 0207 Rhadhd, the Stone of Law
- ⚔ 0509 Pelloryons (the), the Three Sisters
- ⚔ 0804 Hadrwyl, Sagestone
- ⚔ 0506 Drodh, the Stone of Repentance

The Ring

The forest bounded by the ring of Chell, known as Maghsword, lays under an enchantment of great power. The following strictures hold true about the ring and the contained area:

- No fairy may set foot within the ring of Chell and no gateways to the fairy realms are to be found. It is not even possible to forcibly carry a fairy across the ring.
- Magic of translocation (that is, teleportation, summoning, and dimensional travel) is utterly ineffectual. Magic items of this kind are nullified, when inside the ring.
- Magic of illusion or charm is weak and hazy, having a 33% chance of failure.
- Magic of warding or divination, on the other hand, is strengthened. A spell-caster who awakes within the ring may memorize such spells as if they are one level lower than their true level.
- The full energy of the ley line Chell is tapped to power the ward about the ring. It is thus not possible to harness this energy for any other purpose. Vorpall travel along the line of Chell is likewise not possible¹.

The Stones

The placement of the stones is not by happenstance: they are positioned at locations where, in ancient times, access to the fairy kingdom of Frigia was possible. No sign whatsoever of the fairy gates which once stood close to these locations remains. Nevertheless, these sites are clearly enchanted: the power of the stones touches the surrounding woods (up to 120' distant), bringing about a hazy warmth and a balmy stillness of the forest air, reminiscent of the intoxicating days of early summer. These glades are never touched by frost or snow, even in deepest winter.

Physically, the summerstones (i.e. the six summoned stones, excluding the pre-existing Pelloryons) are all alike: massive shards of basalt (a black, volcanic rock), approximately 8' in diameter and 15' high, partially concealed in a mass of bracken and brambles, which must be cleared by anyone desirous of a closer inspection. Once cleared, the following facts about the stones may be perceived:

- The stones are warm to the touch, reminiscent of the radiance of a wall, bathed in the heat of the sun on a high summer's day.
- If *detect magic* or similar is employed, a faint but potent and far-ranging ward will be noted on the stones.
- The stones are inscribed with three decorative bands, one at the bottom, flush with the surface of the earth, one at head-height, and one two feet below the summit. The lower band depicts a procession of fairies, of all shapes and sizes, rimed with frost and icicles, apparently frozen. The middle band carries a runic inscription, in the Old Woldish tongue, describing the provenance of the stones (see below). The upper band shows a curious collection of knights, bishops, and mysterious, hooded figures, standing with heads bowed and arms at their sides, as if in contemplation or remembrance.
- In the morning, a rime of white powder clings to the stones, giving them the semblance of deep winter. The powder is, curiously, not in the least cool. This substance has strange properties and is sometimes used as a drug, known as witch dust (see *Wormskin* issue two). Scraping this powder off of a summerstone is not without risk: there is a 10% chance of one who does so being struck with a madness whereby he or she can only drink wine and eat pork— and both only at night.

The inscription on the middle band reads as follows:

*“This stone stands by decree of the triple-authority of Tolmenwode²:
King Magh of Brakenwold,
The High Abbot of St Clewd,
The Elder Phanatarch of the Wood.
Hereby knows fire dominion over frost.
The gates of Frigia be shut.
The Lord of Winter may pass no more.”*

Each stone has its own special properties, in addition to those noted above. These are explained in the descriptions of the hexes in which the individual stones stand.



¹ An elite group of Drune, called the Audrune, control the ley lines of Dolmenwood and know the secrets of entering and travelling along the lines. This sect and their powers will be discussed in a future issue of *Wormskin*.

² An archaic name for Dolmenwood.

Breaking the Ward

The magic which maintains the ward is of a potency and scale which modern magicians cannot equal. It is not, however, completely impervious to a concerted eldritch attack. Two main possibilities for breaking or suspending the ward exist: the source of the ley energy, the Pelloryons, may be disturbed or the summerstones may be tampered with.

Disturbing the Pelloryons

As the foundation point from which the energy of the ley line Ywyr is siphoned into Chell, the Pelloryons are the most vulnerable node of the warding ring. Naturally, this means that they are also the most vigilantly guarded. Indeed, shortly after the construction of Chell, the Drune proceeded to lay a further series of enchantments around the Pelloryons, concealing them at the centre of a maze of glamours and illusion. One who manages to navigate this eldritch labyrinth may come upon the glade wherein the Pelloryons stand. The glade is under the constant watch of an Audrune, who will protect the stones with his life, should any come with malice in mind. If the final guardian is overcome, the stones may be toppled with mundane might, bringing about the following:

- The ring of Chell and its warding enchantment are destroyed forever.
- The earth throughout Dolmenwood shudders as the diverted energy of the ley line Ywyr flows back to its original course. The ban is completely broken and the Cold Prince himself is able to return to the mortal world. His wrath brings a fey winter onto Dolmenwood for all eternity.

Disturbing the Summerstones

The magic about the summerstones is very strong, but it could be destroyed by the exertion of sufficient arcane might. The summoned stones are impervious to all mundane damage and to magical energy attacks of all kinds (including disintegration). They could, however, be destroyed by appropriate artifacts, relics, or specially constructed magic items. *Dispel magic*, cast by a spell-caster of 16th level or higher, can dissolve the enchantment on a summerstone for one night. (The power of the ley line running through the stones would reinstate the enchantment at dawn the following day.)

Were the warding about one or more stones to be broken or suspended, the following events would transpire:

- **One stone:** The fairy kingdom of Frigia is made once more accessible, via a subtle doorway adjacent to the stone. After 1d4 hours, frost elves and spies of the Cold Prince emerge from Frigia and race through the wood, plotting their master's return. These fairies carry fey jewellery of frost-silver and gems of crystal ice to tempt mortals to their cause. Their first goals are to contact the Prince's embassy (located in the caverns concealed behind the Falls of Naon in hex 0504) and to locate and destroy the remaining warding stones by any means possible. They know of the weak-point at the Pelloryons and may choose to focus their attack on those stones.¹
- **Two stones:** A freezing wind wracks the forest. In spring or summer this causes the trees to drop their leaves, in a premature autumn. Frost elf knights and their icy steeds march into the forest. They carry blasting horns which may disrupt stone and seek out the remaining summerstones, bent on reducing them to rubble.
- **Three stones:** The armies of the Cold Prince are unleashed onto Dolmenwood, accompanied by deep snow over the whole wood. All waters freeze.
- **Four stones:** Chell is utterly destroyed. The earth throughout Dolmenwood shudders as the diverted energy of the ley line Ywyr flows back to its original course. The ban is completely broken and the Cold Prince himself is able to return to the mortal world. His wrath brings a fey winter onto Dolmenwood for all eternity.

¹ Although the Cold Prince and his servants are unable to step into the mortal world, the Prince possesses powers of scrying which may cross the immortal boundary. His long pursuance has revealed the weakness in the warding ring, but he has been unable to pierce the veil of illusion around the Pelloryons to determine their precise location.



Sean
Teppe



THE WOODS EAST OF LAKE LONGMERE



0705 — *The Scrabey Who Forgot His Name*

Deep in the oak woods at the north of this hex is a glade where stands an ancient tree, twisted and gnarly in its old age. Two features of the tree stand out: the profusion of bees and wasps which buzz around it, their nests high in the branches; the many small holes and tunnels among the roots.

Beneath the tree, in a warm, sandy burrow composed of one large living chamber and a dozen store rooms, a **scrabey** (see *Monsters of the Wood*) makes his lair. The tunnels leading to the surface, between the tree's roots, are narrow (1' wide, or less), so the scrubey can only come and go at this point in worm form, which he does only in emergencies. Larger passages lead from the lair into the trading tunnels of the subterranean kingdom of the scrubies.

In a corner of one store room — among a neglected array of dusty barrels and crates stuffed with the scrubey's goods — is a 5'-long silk cocoon. Within it, a young woman lies in an enchanted sleep. She is the bride of a man named Alfolonious Heape, a merchant of some minor, local renown who lives between Fort Vulgar and Castle Brackenwold. The woman was kidnapped by the scrubey after her husband attempted to double-cross him in a business transaction.

The scrubey's plans to extort a ransom from the unscrupulous merchant were scuppered when he was cursed by the witch Haeroth (hex 0704): his memory of anything beyond the last hour disappears. He has thus forgotten everything about his past, including even his own name. If his name (Horticule) is returned to him, the hex will be broken and his other memories, including the kidnapped woman (and the spell to awaken her from her slumber), will also return.

The scrubey keeps a wand of twisted, charred willow in a leather knapsack at his side. It has the power to (safely) separate and reattach parts of a creature's body, by touch. He has forgotten the command word for the wand, but retains a vague sense of its importance.



0706 — *The Phantom Isle*

A small isle shaped like a broken cup, only visible in the autumn, but drifting nearby in ethereal form, at other times of year. The weird island, when it manifests physically, is an object of fear for those who fish the waters of the Longmere. The Phantom Isle is surrounded by high cliffs on three sides that appear to be upended slabs of limestone pocked with clutching, rust-red weeds and inedible vines. Its concave interior — filled by a cove of dark and ancient cypresses — is accessible through its open western shore, where a crude stone dock is situated. Many mausoleums, mounds and grottoes dot the surprisingly expansive interior of the isle — the bones of many forgotten elf-lords and ladies are interred here.

A **black elk-goddess** named Yhende haunts the island. Her [roll 1d3: (1) long-term depression spiked by isolated fits of self-loathing rage; (2) sexual advances toward a particular party member; (3) psychotic machinations] should be dealt with in a careful and considerate manner. It is said that Yhende was magically chained to the phantom isle to guard the mausoleum of the mighty fairy known as the King of Lilies and Harts and that she alone knows the secret location of his treasure hoard.

Yhende: HD 10 (55hp), AC 3, Att: 1 × 2d6 (antlers) and 1 × 1d8 + deformity (staff), Def: immune to mundane damage, half damage from cold, Ml 10, Mv 120' (40'), XP 4,500. The elk-goddess is able to cast the following cleric spells once per day: *detect evil*, *detect magic*, *light*, *animate dead*, *cure or cause disease*, *detect lie*, *speak with plants*, *quest*, *wind walk*. Her staff has the ability to bend flesh: a hit from it in battle causes limbs to be deformed (save versus petrify to avoid); three times a week it may be used to heal deformity.



0804 — *The Spire and the Summerstone*

The Summerstone Hadrwyl (the Sagestone)

Evergreen glades of beech and hawthorn surround the site of the summerstone named Hadrwyl, by those who study such things. In addition to the magical properties described previously in this issue, this summerstone emanates an aura of sickening romance (during the day) and carnal lust (at night). All who enter the glade (within 60' of the stone) must save versus spells or be overcome. Any who come here at night, resist the glamour about the stone, and sleep closeby will receive a prophetic dream containing symbols and allusions hinting at the answer to a question which perplexes them.

continued overleaf

Hoglyn's Spire

In the eastern reaches of the hex, a turret of white marble pierces the canopy of the forest, jutting high on a hundred feet above the tops of the trees. The Spire is all that remains of the petty tyrant Hoglyn's Palisade, sacked and burned long ago by the goat-men. Now a recondite group of anthropomorphic badger-magi inhabit the surviving turret. Their quarters are found on the topmost (fifth) storey, a cramped library-loft maze of dusty and precarious stacks and over-packed bookshelves.

An open archway at the base of the tower leads into a series of empty halls and stairs, leading eventually to a room containing an illusion which conceals the door leading to the stairwell that connects the fourth and fifth storeys. The door is glamoured to have the appearance of a massive oak desk packed with papers. Each paper bears a rune of redirection (save vs spell permitted) that will compel the afflicted to leave the Spire at once and have no desire to return for at least 1d3 days.

The three badger-magi are bespectacled and wear adorable sweaters. Their names, in order of eldest to youngest, are Vannard (N, M-U 4), Ivol (N, M-U 3) and Segwine (N, M-U 3). They spend much of their time reading from their vast collection of occult documents and folios. They are concerned about the growing influence of the sorceress Ygraine (hex 1802) and may pay for intelligence on her doings or cooperate with those who seek to undermine her.

Vannard: HD 4 (7hp), AC 8, Att: 1 × 1d6 (claws) or magic, Ml 8, Mv 90' (30'), XP 135. Memorized spells: *charm person, read magic, arcane lock, phantasmal force.*

Ivol: HD 3 (9hp), AC 8, Att: 1 × 1d6 (claws) or magic, Ml 9, Mv 90' (30'), XP 65. Memorized spells: *magic missile, sleep, detect invisible.*

Segwine: HD 3 (4hp), AC 8, Att: 1 × 1d6 (claws) or magic, Ml 8, Mv 90' (30'), XP 65. Memorized spells: *shield, sleep, locate object.*

0805 – *Prigmarinn Hill*

The fort road passes through the hushed, forlorn woods of this hex, passing close to the southern side of a low hill, some half a mile in diameter. The hill's presence may be noted by an upward slope of the land and (50% chance) by the sporadic moans which emanate from its direction. Climbing the hill reveals a wide, flat, treeless plateau of flint pebbles and clumps of twisted, scrubby grass. There is no sign of the moaning sounds, which disappear once the summit is achieved. At the centre of the plateau stands a 20' tall column of roughly hewn chalk. Approaching the column, a brisk wind picks up, blotting out any sounds from the wood below. Upon close inspection, the column is covered in many hundreds of names — both exotic and utterly mundane — carved into the chalk. By carving his or her name into the column, a character, wittingly or unwittingly, promises his or her soul to the forgotten godlet Ambule, who lies sleeping in the chalky chasms beneath the hill. This act has the following consequences:

- The nullification of one curse or baleful enchantment which currently plagues the character.
- A permanent +2 bonus to saving throws against curses.
- Nightly dreams of being chained to the chalk column on this hill and (roll 1d6): 1. bathed in wine by headless nymphs; 2. venerated by bowing sheets of muslin; 3. devoured by golden hawks; 4. scrutinised under the awful gaze of a forbidding chalk giant; 5. being consumed, over the course of millennia, by mosses and lichens; 6. licked in infuriating places by a ghostly tongue.
- Upon death, the character's spirit will be summoned to this place and bound to eternal servitude. The character cannot be resurrected by normal means.

A cleric who signs his or her soul away in this fashion may, inspired by the dreams, choose to become a worshipper of Ambule.

Carving another's name into the column has no effect, as does defacing or removing names from the chalk.

0806 – *The Bestial Barrier*

The energies of the ring of Chell are warped and hazy in this hex¹. Fairies are sometimes able to enter the warded area here (a successful save versus spells allows entry) and, all along the curtain of the warding line, phantoms and ethereal wisps may be seen flitting.

Crossing the ward here is dangerous — all who do so unprotected must save versus spells. Fairies who fail the save are stricken permanently insane and are unable to cross the boundary. Mortals are affected temporarily (leaving the witching ring ends this enchantment immediately), but in a more striking manner, their faces taking on a savage, rapacious aspect over the subsequent 1d4 hours, and their hearts being overwhelmed with paranoia, suspicion, greed, hatred, and even hunger for human flesh.

0905 – *The Hermitage and the Mouse Shrine*

The land falls away in a cliff which marks the western end of the Valley of Wise Beasts. A small shrine to Saint Vinicus (patron saint of mice and beggars) stands upon the verge of the cliff, with its rear windows revealing a picturesque view of the valley below. The shrine is well maintained, its oaken door beautifully carved with a diorama of mice and shrews floating on barges around a flooded church. The door is locked, concealing a foot-high, silver crucifix (500gp) standing upon the altar at the feet of the saint.

A tidy pathway beside the shrine leads along the cliff edge to a clearing containing a thatch-roofed hut and a pile of neatly stacked firewood. The friar who lived here as a hermit and had restored the shrine has met a grisly end: his decapitated head rests atop the hut, his blood staining the thatch. A **mogglewomp** (see *Monsters of the Wood*) lives here now.

If the beast can be dislodged from its appropriated lair, the friar's possessions may be found, including: the key to the shrine, a set of antique religious books (200gp), and a map of Lake Longmere with "lost shrine of Saint Galaunt" annotated in red, close the the western bank.

¹ This is due to the crossing influence of the vorpal ley line which passes from west to east through this hex. The vorpal line and the temporally-vague monoliths which mark its path will be discussed in a future issue of *Wormskin*.

0906 – *The Ruined Abbey*

Travellers who follow Swinney Road eastward through this hex will arrive at the foot of a rocky hill, where the road splits: a well-used track runs around the base of the hill and joins Fort Road; an overgrown path winds up, via a series of paved avenues and stairways, to the summit of the hill and a location of great historical import: the ruins of the Abbey of St Clewd the Righteous. This

road passes through the toppled frame of the old gate and into the former central courtyard of the monastic complex.

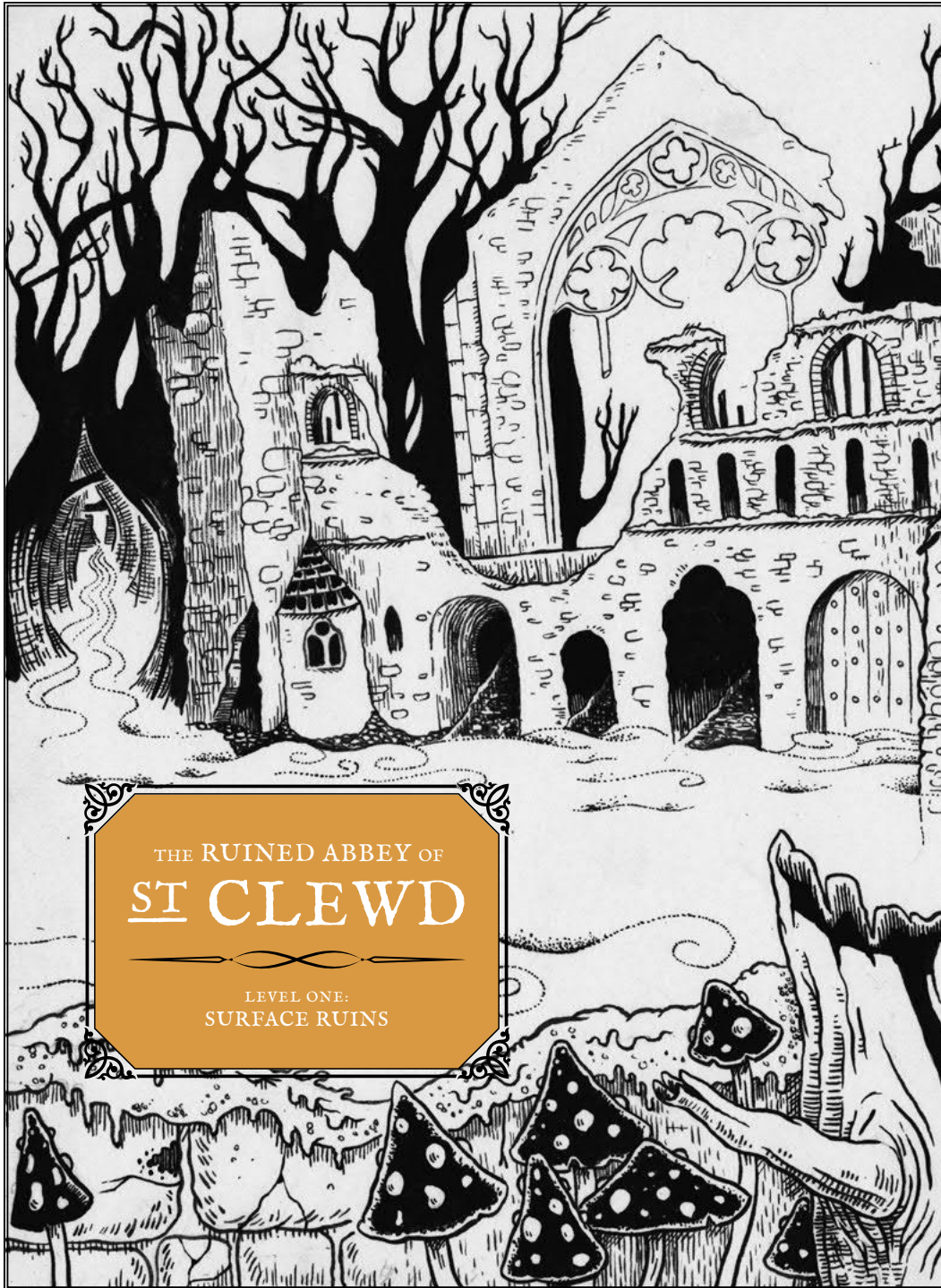


Most of the buildings are reduced to rubble, now so overgrown as to pass almost unnoticed. The main chapel, though heavily damaged, remains largely intact and may be explored by the curious. Indeed, beneath the tapestry of climbing plants which now line its walls, something of the chapel's former glory may be glimpsed: a series of mosaics depicting the life and deeds of St Clewd.

Behind the chapel, at the north-west corner of the complex, a collapsed bell tower marks the end of the once-holy ground, as the Fort Road heads down a

steep, wooden stair (now somewhat rickety) and onwards into the northern reaches of the forest.

The surface ruins of the abbey are described in detail in the next section. The crypts beneath it will be featured in the next issue of *Wormskin*.



THE RUINED ABBEY OF
ST CLEWD

LEVEL ONE:
SURFACE RUINS



Overview

Geomantically speaking, the abbey is located at a very auspicious point: the crossing of the ley line Lamm — following a direct north-south axis, through this hex — and the Sinkhole Creek — running underground at this point, through the abbey's crypt, connecting the cold waters of the fathomless Groaning Loch with the enchanted waters of Lake Longmere, to the west. The location is also a site of great historical import: it was here that the great saint Clewd died.

The story goes that the revered St Clewd, in the wandering days of his old age, came to Dolmenwood in pursuit of an evil black unicorn known by the name Sallowbryg. The beast had travelled through many lands — leaving disease, discord, and warfare in its wake — and St Clewd had sworn to bring it to justice. Following it to the heart of Dolmenwood, the saint battled the beast in the circle of standing stones that then marked the point where Lamm crosses the subterranean waters. The two combatants — beatific and bestial — were evenly matched and slew each other with one final blow. The saint's disciples, following some days behind discovered the now-mythical scene: the saint and the black unicorn, dead amid the pagan ring of stones. In honour of this mighty final deed, an order of monks was created, dedicated to the saint, and an abbey founded at the site of his death, St Clewd's body and relics being interred in the crypt.

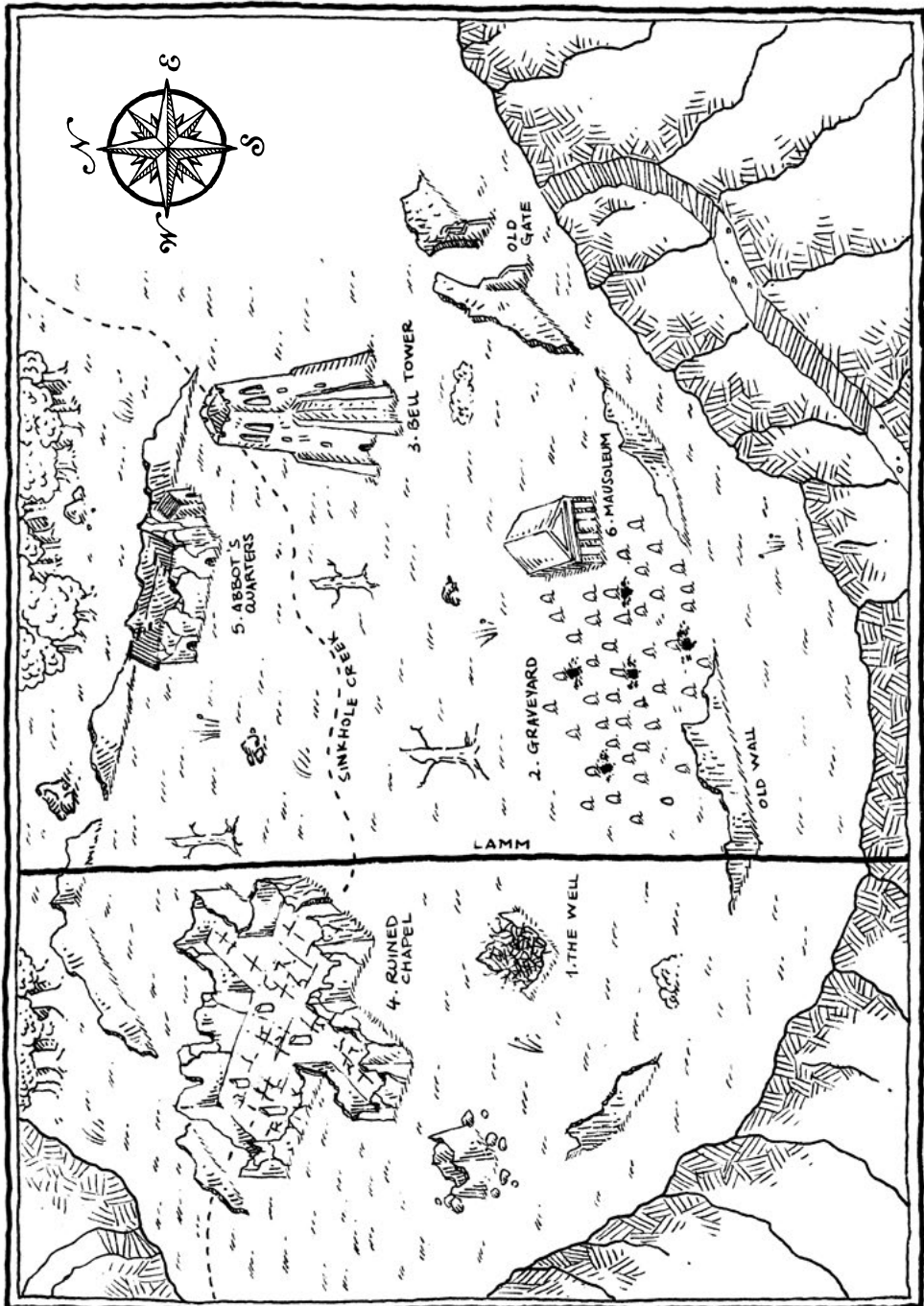
Many centuries have since passed. The abbey now lies in ruins and the order of St Clewd is no more than a side-note in the annals of ecclesiastic history.

The causes of the abbey's ruination may be discovered in the crypts beneath the chapel, to be detailed in the next issue of *Wormskin*. The ghosts of the monks which haunt the surface ruins (see random encounters, later) were present at this calamity and remember it, twisted through the lens of personal prejudice and ancient memory. Those who are communicative with the living may describe a great force of chaotic beings, led by a mighty goat-lord, bent on the utter destruction of the abbey and all who dwelt there. None know the origin or driving force of this rapacious horde.

Rumours About the Ruined Abbey

The ruined abbey features prominently in the folklore of Dolmenwood, frequently playing a role in local tales of adventure and magic. Broadly speaking, the abbey has come to symbolise, in the minds of local people, the nobility or folly (depending on whom one asks) of mankind's battle against the force of Nature. The following rumours that may peak the interest of adventurers can be heard in public houses:

1. A secret vault beneath the chapel lies untouched, warded against intrusion by the holy presence of the relics of St Clewd. (*Partially true: the vaults do lie untouched, but the presence of the relics is not the cause.*)
2. The crypts beneath the abbey have been desecrated and are now haunted by an unnatural presence. Several parties of clerics have delved into the crypts, but none have returned. (*True.*)
3. The Lady Harrowmoor, mistress of Harrowmoor Keep, on the southern bank of the Groaning Loch (hex 1105), desperately seeks her daughter, Violet, who has disappeared and is believed to be in the hands of brigands making camp in the region of the ruined abbey. The Lady would pay handsomely for the safe return of the child. (*Partially true: Violet is actually in the thrall of a gloam, see area 3b, below.*)
4. Travellers speak of observing unnatural lights moving through the ruined church and wretched noises coming from the belfry at night. (*Based on truth: phantoms flit through the ruins and a gloam roosts in the belfry.*)
5. The dead find no rest on the grounds of the abbey; anyone buried there will soon climb out of the grave to take part in unhallowed Masses. (*Untrue.*)
6. The abbey was built on a site of great geomantic energy, which attracted the interest of the occult sorcerers known as the Drune, even during the abbey's heyday. (*True.*)



Area Descriptions

1. Ruined Well

Partially intact walls to the south of the church demarcate a small courtyard which once served as an ornamental garden. The flower beds are long since overgrown with wild, forest plants and the paving stones cracked. At the centre stands a crumbling stone well, now almost completely concealed beneath a thicket of dense, thorny brambles (players have a 2 in 6 chance of noticing it, unless they actively search the area).

Clearing the thorny plants from the choked well is quite some work (1d4 turns), but reveals a 60' deep shaft to an underground cistern. The cistern is connected to the crypt beneath the chapel, thus the well can be used as a secret way into the subterranean area.

2. Graveyard

Crumbling stone walls — now sprawling with ivy and buckled by the intruding roots of looming yew and holly trees — surround the abbey's graveyard, wherein lie the remains of several hundred monks of the lower orders (the more senior monastics were interred in the crypt beneath the chapel). A thorough inspection of the dates of the graves reveals that no one has been buried here during the last 350 years. It is also noticeable that many of the graves are in the process of being carelessly dug up. There is a 2 in 6 chance of one or more of the children described in area 3b being present in the graveyard during the day.

3. Bell Tower / Chapel of St Woad

A subsidiary chapel, in the form of a tall, square tower, topped with a belfry, stands largely undamaged, close to the ruined gateway where Swinney Road enters the abbey grounds. Dark birds are usually to be seen roosting in the belfry at the summit of the tower. The tower has four levels, connected by a spiral stairway in the southeast corner. A **gloam** (see *Monsters of the Wood*) and its charges, three human children, dwell here.

continued overleaf

3a. Ground Floor

The heavy, wooden door of the church opens easily, revealing the old shrine to St Woad, which still contains a set of ancient wooden pews, decayed and worm-riddled. The marble statue of the saint stands undamaged in the alcove in the south wall. An inscription states the saint's name, his domains of patronage (bakers, bears, and hammersmiths¹), and the founding date of the shrine (almost a thousand years in the past). This area is put to no use by the current inhabitants, other than as a means of entering and leaving the tower.

3b. First Floor

Originally the quarters of the warden of the abbey's eastern gate, the wretched remnants of this room are now home to three children, unkempt and dressed in ragged clothes. Their hands and nails are caked with dried mud from the graves which they spend much of their time unearthing (see area 2). They are utterly enthralled by the gloam (which they call "Mister Rag-n-Bone"), willingly obeying its every command.

Bilbry Worms: HD 1 (1hp), AC 9, Att: None, Ml 7, Mv 60' (20'), XP 5.

A waif-like, blonde boy of 5 years.

Violet Harrowmoor: HD 1 (3hp), AC 9, Att: 1 × 1d4 (silver dagger), Ml 8, Mv 90' (30'), XP 5.

A dark-haired, dark-eyed girl of 6. Violet comes from an aristocratic family (see Rumours About the Ruined Abbey), a fact given away by her manner of dress and speech. She secretly carries on her person a motherloquet, which she uses to magically converse with her mother. Being charmed by the gloam and unaware of her location, she cannot convey any useful information in this manner in order to bring about her rescue.

Willy Hodgeheg: HD 1 (4hp), AC 8 (DEX), Att: 1 × 1d2 (fists), Ml 8, Mv 90' (30'), XP 5.

The eldest, at 8 years of age. A strapping boy whose matted black hair cascades over his glowering eyes.

¹ St Woad is primarily famed for miraculously dissuading a rampaging dragon from destroying a town by parlaying with it. The beast was appeased when offered a fresh load of buns from the local baker's oven.

3c. Second Floor

The former bell-ringing chamber has been converted into a home for the gloam's objects of obsession — stuffed animals with the teeth of the devoutly religious (dug up, by the children, in the graveyard) carefully sewn into their jaws.

An array of woodland creatures with macabre dental structures fills this room, some arranged in dioramas on the floor, others hanging from the threads of the bell ropes. Anyone disturbing the figures risks the wrath of the gloam, which flits in and out of this chamber.

3d. Third Floor

The belfry, with a great bronze bell (1,500gp) still in functional shape. The gloam dwells here in the hours of daylight, perched in flock form among the rafters, filling the chamber with eerie shadows. At night the gloam often flies abroad, spying on the few humans who dwell in the surrounding woods and looking for further victims to charm.

“Mister Rag-n-Bone”: HD 7 (32hp), AC 5, Att: 2 × 1d10 (claws) or 1d4 (swarm attack) + disease, Def: half damage from normal weapons, MI 9, Mv 120' (40') / flying: 180' (60'), XP 1,840. (See the gloam entry in *Monsters of the Wood* for full details.)

Motherlocket

A plain, oval-shaped silver locket on a delicate chain. Unclasping the locket reveals a miniature portrait of the viewer's mother. The portrait has qualities in common with those of a mirror — each person who looks into it will observe a different image, that of their own mother, and the images themselves reflect the current state of the woman depicted. It is in this way possible to know something of the well-being of one's mother by looking at the locket. Those whose mothers are deceased will be presented with a grisly impression of the state of her corpse; often simply a grinning skull.

Further to the locket's ability to show still but life-like images, it also enables the one who carries it to converse with their mother. This ability may be used but once per day, and only for a period of 1d6 minutes, but allows a full two-way conversation to be held. The magic of the locket even transcends the mysterious dimensions which separate the living from the dead, allowing converse with the spirit of the deceased mother, wherever it may reside. Motherlockets are thus cherished by loving sons and daughters, often beyond their objective value as magical artifacts.

4. Ruined Chapel

The abbey's main place of worship is a weather-beaten, dilapidated ruin. The roof seems to have been destroyed centuries ago, as in a great explosion, evidenced by rafter fragments and debris strewn about the outlying grounds and courtyard. An unnerving, metallic, wheezing and scraping sound emanates from within the ruined chapel (see area 4c).

The interior is overgrown with proliferous vines and climbing plants; sickly yellow fungi push up through the paving stones and extensive colonies of bracket mushrooms infest the rotted pews. A number of tapestries and banners, once sporting vivid designs and colours, now worn by time and the elements, hang listlessly from soot stained pillars. The main altar in the chancel shows signs of more recent use: stumps of candles, wilted flowers and spoilt offerings, stains of an unknown origin.

Several areas of specific interest are described in more detail below.

4a. Mosaics

Walking through the aisles of the nave and the transept, travellers may still glimpse through the creeping vegetation the masterly mosaics that were once the source of delectation for honoured guests and worshippers visiting the abbey: a series of seven tableaus which depict the life and times of St Clewd. The name of each scene is inscribed above the mosaic and would be well known to any adherent of St Clewd. The seventh and final mosaic adorns the chancel wall, behind the altar.

1. *Of Faith Waxed Full.* A beatific boy of very young age, adorned with a halo, gazing up to the heavens, in a clearing amid dark and twisted trees. A deer and badger walk up to him, their heads deferentially lowered, while a sparrow rests on his outstretched left hand. His right hand is raised in greeting. As a child, St Clewd became lost in the dangerous woods, having strayed too far from the forest edge where his parents worked the fields for a rich farmer. In his darkest hour, God answered his prayers and sent woodland creatures to guide him home safely, the boy miraculously able to communicate with the animals.

2. *The Stone Uncast.* St Clewd, a powerful young man clad in white robes, adorned with a halo, stands next to a road snaking through bountiful fields and verdant forest. Before him, a fat, miserable man is on his knees, supplicating. St Clewd levels a withering gaze at the creature, while his right arm is pointed at a building on the hill in the centre of the scene, storm clouds gathering over it. St Clewd, returning to his ancestral home after studying medicine in the city, discovered that his parents had been evicted by their greedy landlord, his father dying from a fever shortly thereafter. He meets the wicked man on the road, and speaks his famous words “Even now I leave the stone uncast, for in my heart I harbour no hate toward you; but repent of your evil ways, for truly you are the harbinger of your own ruin.” As the tale goes, the landlord’s farm was struck by lightning three days later, burning it to the ground.

3. *The Pure Unfettered.* St Clewd, middle-aged with a short white beard, adorned with a halo, stands in the centre of the picture, showing a bivouac. He points with his right hand to a group of soldiers and a centurion on the left side of the mosaic, who recoil. To the right, several young men and women are depicted with shackles lying at their feet. The wandering St Clewd came upon a procession of prisoners, whose only crime was to have healed enemy soldiers as well as their own after a brutal battle. Outraged, he rebuked the justice of that land and, while he spoke, the bonds fell off the prisoners and would not close again.

4. *The Wicked Punished.* St Clewd, middle-aged with a short white beard, adorned with a halo, stands in the centre of the picture, showing a court of law. He points with his right hand to a burning man on the left side of the mosaic. Two bailiffs try to douse the man with buckets of water, but the water rolls off of the flames. In his left hand, St Clewd holds a coin purse. To the right, a young man and woman are pictured genuflecting. Another parable of the wandering St Clewd, *The Wicked Punished* is a companion piece to *The Pure Unfettered*. St Clewd had taken it upon himself to pay the fine for a young couple who had engaged in scandalous behaviour, as they had shown themselves truly penitent. A third accused, a scoundrel and war profiteer, had begged St Clewd to do the same for him, exclaiming he should burst into flame if he was not truly repentant.

continued overleaf

5. *The Sanctimonious Exposed.* St Clewd, middle-aged with a short white beard, adorned with a halo, stands in the centre of the picture, showing the throne room of a magnificent palace. He points with his right hand to a royal figure, seated on a golden throne on the left side of the mosaic, who looks down at a bowl of golden fruit on his lap. To the right, a throng of dishevelled, emaciated villagers look on. The final piece depicting the parables of the wandering St Clewd. St Clewd was asked by the starving villagers of a war-torn land to intercede on their behalf with their king, who claimed to be a godly man. At the audience the king however showed himself arrogant and uncaring, and unwilling to part with even a single gold coin to feed his poor subjects. As he berated St Clewd, the crowd began to notice that everything the king touched now turned to gold; it is said the king died weeks later in terrible pains, with a belly full of gold.

6. *The Miraculous Resurrection.* St Clewd, an old man with a long white beard, adorned with a large, resplendent halo, hunches over a cadaverous figure lying on a stone slab in a dark, cavernous tomb. A small, faint halo adorns the man's head, and his eyes are half opened, as St Clewd lays his right hand on the man's forehead. A sobbing woman lays at the saint's feet, clutching the hem of his robe and kissing it. Gondyw was a cruel and wicked man who abused his post to persecute the followers of the true God. When he died, his sister Addal, secretly a true believer herself, implored St Clewd to return her brother to her, as surely he was doomed for all eternity. This mosaic depicts St Clewd descending into the tomb and resurrecting Gondyw, who would become his most trusted disciple and a saint himself.

7. *Of Evil Vanquished.* St Clewd, a very old man with a long white beard, a halo — once set with gemstones, now long removed — adorns his head. The mosaic depicts him in a stone circle in Dolmenwood, his white robes stained with blood as he attempts to pull himself of the ground. To the right, a black unicorn lies dead. In his old age St Clewd came to Dolmenwood and there did battle with a black unicorn, a vile devil which was surely the incarnation of Man's sin. His faith his only weapon, St Clewd managed to slay the creature after a terrible battle, but in the final moments he was so grievously injured that, in the end, he succumbed as well.

In *Of Evil Vanquished*, St Clewd is pictured as wearing a ruby ring on his right hand. This fragment of the mosaic can actually be pried from the wall, revealing it to be a small cylinder which is indented in a complex and irregular pattern. The cylinder can be inserted into a keyhole, which is camouflaged as part of a decorative border on the nearby main altar. Inside can be found: a large gilded crucifix (75gp), a solid gold solar monstrance (400gp), a solid gold chalice (200gp), a gilded decanter (60gp) and an electrum paten and ciborium (35gp each).

4b - Stairs to the Crypt

From each transept a stone spiral staircase leads down to the crypts. On the surface level an adorned iron gate once barred entrance, but the rusted chains lie broken on the floor. The stairs twist down until they reach a narrow landing which terminates in a plain stone door, lacking any handle or keyhole. In olden days, the door would simply have to be pushed, but now a magical seal has been placed on them from the inside, by the monks who still inhabit the crypt. As the object of the seal is to prevent anyone from leaving, rather than to keep trespassers out, those approaching the door from the surface will be able to break the seal without much difficulty. Any magical means of unlocking or removing the seal will prove effective, or the door can be forced open with triple the strength it would normally take.

4c - Organ

The chapel's organ, once an object of great pride, is now home to a colony of strange birds which have evolved (in the magical sense) in the unique environment of the ruins. Hundreds of individuals nest among the pipes and airways of the organ, causing an eery, amplified, screeching sound to emanate from the instrument. At dusk, the birds spew out of the bass pipes to hunt among the trees. The few locals who venture into the ruined abbey know the birds as **ghost crows**, owing to their transparent, shade-like appearance. They are not fully incorporeal, but exist partially in ethereal form.

Anyone tampering with the organ will be attacked by 2d6 ghost crows, defending their lair.

Ghost crows: HD 1 (2hp), AC 6, Att: 1 × 1d3 (claws/beak), Def: half damage from normal weapons, Ml 8, Mv 120' (40'), XP 6.

5: Abbot's Quarters

The abbot's quarters were once a set of chambers much more luxurious than the small, spartan cells of the average monk, consisting of a separate parlour, study, and bedroom with its own privy. The rooms stand semi-intact among the ruins, but have, over the years, been thoroughly pilfered, so that nothing of value remains. The remaining furniture, being a large oaken fourposter, dresser, book shelves, and desk, seems to have been spitefully destroyed by the looters and is only good for kindling. Hidden behind a ruined book shelf in the study, a secret staircase leads down to the crypts (to be detailed in *Wormskin* issue four). The accumulated grime of the centuries covers the walls, so that players only have a 1 in 6 chance of spotting a telltale discoloration which reveals the location of the hidden entrance.

6: Mausoleum of Archimandrite Heccadedicon

The opulent tomb of the archimandrite Heccadedicon, once an abbot of the abbey himself, towers over the funerary monuments dotted around the graveyard. It is in better shape than most of the surviving structures, though the delicate statues of angels and other celestial beings are damaged and weather-worn, missing limbs and the occasional head. The heavy tomb doors stand ajar. Above the threshold an inscription in Liturgic reads: In Death all Men are equal.

The mausoleum has been plundered. Heccadedicon's tomb has been crowbarred open and the gisant lies in pieces on the floor. A **scryke** (see *Monsters of the Wood*) lurks inside, attempting to reassemble the bones of the archimandrite's shattered skeleton. Its teeth have gone missing and the scryke will offer to reveal secrets about the abbey if they are returned.

Surface Random Encounters

While exploring the surface areas of the ruined abbey, player characters may encounter creatures such as the following (roll 1d10):

- 1-3. The ghost of a monk who was slain in the sacking of the abbey. See generator tables, following.
4. 1d3 of the children from area 3b, either playing hide-and-seek in the ruins or gathering berries, roots, mushrooms, or other forest vittles.
5. The gloam from area 3d, either flying overhead in flock form or creeping around in humanoid form.
6. A band of 2d4 scavengers picking over the ruins (normal humans, 50% chance of a 1st level fighter, thief, or magic-user as leader).
7. 1d6 trappers carrying cages of wrought silver with which to catch the ghost crows which haunt the ruins (see area 4c). (The drug celestial is manufactured from the vertebrae of the birds.)
8. 2d4 men-at-arms, in the employ of Lady Harrowmoor (hex 1005), searching the ruins for signs of her missing daughter.
9. A lone friar, come to see what remains of the abbey.
10. A wandering creature of the woods. (The referee may roll or select creatures such as wild animals, monsters, or fairies.)

Ghostly Monk Generator

When the PCs encounter the phantom of one of the abbey's former inhabitants, the following charts may be used to flesh the ghost out (as it were). Either roll 1d8 and read the indicated entry from each section or roll 1d8 per section, for a greater variety of results.

All ghostly monks have the following combat stats: HD 2, AC 9, Att: see chart, Def: can only be harmed by magic; turned as if 6HD, MI 9, Mv 120' (40') (incorporeal), XP 56.

Name

1. Adalbert
2. Cadfael
3. Growedd
4. Pontyth
5. Frewdric
6. Legworth
7. Hoadry
8. Mumsalot

Appearance

1. Emaciated
2. Poxy
3. Portly
4. Gangly
5. Humpbacked
6. Undead — Cadaverous
7. Undead — Skeletal
8. Undead — Wraithlike

Rank

1. Postulant
2. Novice
3. Lay Brother
4. Monk
5. Hieromonk
6. Hierodeacon
7. Subprior
8. Prior

Character

1. Helpful
2. Zealous
3. Mute (vow of silence)
4. Insane
5. Unaware (does not know he's dead)
6. Lecherous/drunk
7. Stuck between two planes (cannot see/hear PCs, but may be contactable by magic)
8. Corrupted

Position

1. Almoner. (Distribution of alms to the poor.)
2. Cantor. (Choir and music.)
3. Cellarer. (Supplies.)
4. Infirmerer. (Caring for sick or elderly monks.)
5. Kitchener. (Preparing food.)
6. Librarian. (Books and scriptures.)
7. Sacrist. (Holy items and relics.)
8. Treasurer. (Jewels, gold, and precious ornaments.)

See overleaf for ghosts' attack forms, last wishes, and useful secrets.



Attack form

If roused to combat.

1. Incorporeal bludgeoning (no effect)
2. Sanctimonious ranting and raving (no effect)
3. Presents holy symbol (generally ineffectual, but may be able to turn thoroughly evil or chaotic characters)
4. Utters a curse (affects one target per use). The target must save versus spells. If the save fails, the target is cursed such that he or she will be wracked with pain (-2 to hit rolls and saving throws; unable to cast spells) upon attacking a holy man of the Church or doing harm to Church property. (The curse is permanent.)
5. Touch causes fear. Save versus spells or flee the abbey grounds. The aversion to the place remains for 1d6 days.
6. Touch drains STR: 1d3 points per hit. (Lost STR recovers at a rate of one point per day of rest.)
7. Touch causes aging: 1d10 years.
8. Touch drains one energy level.

Wish

The ghost's last desire, the consummation of which will finally lay it to rest. Characters who help a ghost in this way may be granted a favour, such as the revelation of a secret about the abbey.

1. That the garden should be returned to its former beauty.
2. That the monk's skull be placed in the undercroft in the crypt, among his brothers.
3. That the remains of all brothers slain during the sacking should be given a proper burial.
4. That a letter be delivered. (This is, of course, not possible, by normal means, as the letter is destroyed and its recipient long since dead.)
5. That a great concert should be played in the chapel.

6. That the spirit of St Clewd be rescued from its limbo state in the Otherwold and put to rest. (This monk's wish, though it may sound obscure and perhaps irrational, is actually based in truth. The monk has seemingly accessed secrets in its wanderings in the world of the dead. The unfortunate fate of St Clewd will be discussed in the next issue, along with the second level of the ruined abbey.)
7. That the walls of the chapel be painted with whisky.
8. That the monk's own remains be located and given a decent burial in the abbey graveyard.

Secret

1. The ruination of the abbey was brought about by a forbidden ritual, conducted in the crypt.
2. The abbey was founded on the actual site of St Clewd's death. The ring of standing stones was (naturally) destroyed, but the pagan power of the site is believed to be intact.
3. The chamber of records, containing the abbey's most precious historical documents, lies in a secret level beneath the crypt.
4. Under the last abbots, a regime of interrogation began and unbelievers were taken into the crypt for conversion.
5. A secret escape tunnel was constructed in the abbot's quarters — a much later alteration that few were aware of.
6. The sacrist stored valuable paraphernalia in a hidden compartment of the main church altar.
7. A special key was required to activate the mechanism which opens the hidden doors of the underground vault. The key was held by the prior, who kept it on his body day and night.
8. Brother Barris obsessively stole from the poor box for years. He hid his ill-gotten gains in the undercroft, inside of skulls which he marked with a red cross on the cranium.



MONSTERS OF THE WOOD



Gloom

HD: 7

AC: 5

Attacks: 2 × 1d10 (claws) or 1 × 1d4 (swarm attack)

Move: 120' (40') / 180' (60') — flying

Morale: 9

Number Appearing: 1-5: abroad (1), 6-7: lair (1), 8: lair (empty)

Alignment: N

Intelligence: Obsessive

Size: M

XP: 1,840

Possessions: Trinkets (eerie), collected items (see below)

Hoard: E/XVIII (eerie), collected items (see below)

Gloams are undead entities formed from the corpses of a multitude of crows, ravens, or magpies. They have two forms, at times appearing as a flock of ragged, cawing birds and at other times in the guise of a tall, gaunt man, constructed from the agglomerated feathers, bones, and beaks of the flock. Both manifestations are wreathed in shadow and accompanied by a creeping sensation of dread.

Possessing a cunning and single-minded intellect of human degree, gloams are able to speak both the common tongue and the cawing language of crow-like birds. Unlike many undead creatures, gloams are not inherently evil. They are, however, possessed of a ruthlessly avaricious nature, which oftentimes leads them into conflict with mortals. Gloams are obsessive collectors, with macabre and idiosyncratic taste. Some examples of the type of objects a gloam may collect are:

1. The corpses of children, which it binds with string and hangs in its roost.
2. Wedding rings and other tokens of love.
3. Condemned murderers, whom it abducts and keeps captive, tormented and on the edge of starvation.
4. Human corneas, dried and sewn into the dead eye sockets of its own constituent birds.
5. The mummified or stuffed bodies of animals, which it arranges in peculiar dioramas.
6. The teeth of the devoutly religious.

Special Abilities

Charm Innocent: Gloams have a curious connection with mortals of innocent mind — typically young children, but sometimes the mentally handicapped or, more rarely, adults of pure morals (each gloam has specific tastes in this matter) — who do not perceive the sinister atmosphere which surrounds the monster and are thus vulnerable to its charm-like ability, manifested by the twinkling of an eye. A saving throw versus spells is allowed to resist the charm, with failure indicating that the target places its implicit trust in the gloam, seeing it as a beloved parent or mentor. One who resists a gloam's charm becomes suddenly aware of its true nature.

Damage Reduction: Gloams suffer only half damage from normal weapons — silver or magical weapons inflict standard damage.

Transformation: A gloam can change freely between its two forms. The transformation between humanoid and flock takes a single round, during which a gloam may perform no other actions.

Flock Form: When in the form of a flock, a gloam can only be harmed by area effects such as flaming oil, breath weapons, or fireball spells. It is also able to make a swarm attack, targeting characters within a 20' radius of each other. One target may be attacked per 5 hit points the gloam possesses (rounded up).

Disease: The touch of a gloam carries a disease which can infect mortals, causing flesh to blacken and drop off in flaky chunks. Anyone damaged by a gloam in combat must save versus poison or be infected. The disease leads to death over a span of 1d6 weeks and can only be cured by magic.

Traits

1. Dresses in finery. (The garments fly with the flock, when transformed.)
2. Smoulders when exposed to light.
3. Hovers ominously a few inches above the ground.
4. Streaked with blood, which drips incessantly from the creature's eyes.
5. Largely skeletal: all bleached, white bones and shiny beaks, with only small, ragged clumps of feathers.
6. The creature's shadow moves independently of its bodily motion, shifting into forms expressive of its emotional state.

Encounters

1. A tall, sinister man (the gloam in humanoid form) offers bright candy canes to a pair of wide-eyed, young children who are gathering kindling in the woods near their home.
2. 2d4 youths of less than normal mental capacity attempting to release a raggedy man, near death, from an iron cage strung up on the branch of a great oak. A flock of sinister ravens roosts in the tree, overseeing the proceedings with almost-word-like caws.
3. The smoking remains of an old barn in an isolated wood, freshly razed. A dark figure (the gloam in humanoid form) sits nearby, weeping raggedly at the ruination of its home and precious items.
4. A gloam inspects the wares of a travelling pedlar of curiosities, taking especial interest in the collection of stuffed animals.

Lairs

1. The ruins of an old watchtower, standing now more by virtue of the brambles and wild roses which clad its surface than by any structural integrity of its own. The gloam roosts in the upper floors and hangs its treasures in branches of nearby trees. A lone maid lives in a makeshift camp nearby and is serenaded by the gloam at dawn and dusk.
2. A cluster of tall, twisted pines at the centre of a sinister, desolate wood. Several large colonies of songbirds live in the surrounding trees, driven to strange, bloodthirsty behaviour by the presence of the gloam.
3. An old wayside inn beside a little-used woodland road. The gloam lairs in the rafters of the attic, surrounded by its prizes: the carefully preserved and displayed skeletons of adulterers. The inn's proprietor, an aging woman who was betrayed by her former husband (now a part of the gloam's collection), lives in harmony with the monster, providing it a source of victims in exchange for its protection.
4. An oddly-shaped, tumbledown manor atop a rocky outcropping. The place is the former residence of a black magician and greatly feared by local people. The magician is long dead, but his legacy survives in the form of the gloam, which is the result of a summoning gone awry. The monster now lives as master of the manse and continues the wizard's occult research. It is accompanied by 2d6 children, whom it treats as pupils, schooling them in the black arts.



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Sean Poppe

Mogglewomp

HD: Varies, see below

AC: 7

Attacks: 2 × 1d10 (claws)

Move: 120' (40')

Morale: 7 (wandering) or 9 (domestic)

Number Appearing: 1-4: abroad (1),

5-8: lair (1)

Alignment: N

Intelligence: Slow-witted but curious

Size: Varies, see below

XP: Varies, see below

Possessions: Trinkets (rustic)

Hoard: Fine teas and paraphernalia, possessions of house's previous owner

Mogglewomps are a rare and greatly feared demi-fey¹ species found exclusively in Dolmenwood. They are parasitic upon mortals and their dwellings, having two distinct forms, depending whether they are currently housed or homeless: a wandering, humanoid form and a bestial, domestic form. These two states are described separately below. Mogglewomps in both states are able to speak the Common tongue, to a basic degree, and have a love of tea. They are entirely solitary; it is not known what happens if two mogglewomps meet.

The Wandering Mogglewomp

A mogglewomp without a home has the form of a slack-jawed, droopy-jowled humanoid, with shaggy mane and neckbeard. In this shape, it wanders the woods — dressed as a traveller with a floppy, wide-brimmed hat — and can pass as a human, if it is not forced to speak overly much. Mogglewomps in this state are greatly weakened, having no special attacks and being treated as a normal human, in terms of combat statistics (XP value 10).

A wandering mogglewomp seeks but one thing: an offer of shelter and a warming beverage. Once it has located a suitably charitable soul, been welcomed inside, and given a cup of hot drink, the transformation to its domestic form takes place with great rapidity (1d6 minutes).

The Domestic Mogglewomp

Within the roof and walls of a domicile, a mogglewomp has the appearance of a shaggy, four-legged beast, with fluffy brown fur, a sumptuous mane, great, yellow, saucer-like eyes, and fangs and claws of formidable aspect. Immediately following the transformation from its wandering form, a mogglewomp is of bulk roughly equal to that of a lion. It grows, however, at a rapid rate, expanding in size to, eventually, completely fill the dwelling in which it finds itself. The monster's

general bulk increases manifold and its body, neck, tail, and limbs extend into great mounds and coils of furry flesh. Even large domiciles of multiple floors can be overwhelmed by a mogglewomp. To accommodate its growth and to cement its position as the new master of the house, a mogglewomp makes fast work of eating, dismembering, or expelling the dwelling's former inhabitants.

In game terms, the growth of a mogglewomp is denoted by its increasing Hit Dice, beginning at 3+1 (XP value 135) and increasing by 1+1 for every additional room which it expands to fill (XP value must be calculated by the referee, on the basis of the monster's HD and two special abilities). A mogglewomp which grows to fill multi-room dwelling may, at the referee's judgement, no longer be able to effectively attack or defend itself. If pressed, it may be forced to exert its great bulk and destroy its home, in order to attack interlopers.

A mogglewomp which is cast out from its home or whose home is destroyed becomes weak and listless and, over the course of the following night, reverts to its wandering, homeless form.

Special Abilities (Domestic Form Only)

Grab and Bite: Mogglewomps seldom attack directly with their bite, preferring to rend and grab with their claws. However, if a claw attack roll comes up as a natural 18, 19, or 20 and hits the target, a mogglewomp may make an immediate free attack roll with a +2 bonus. If this second attack roll hits, the victim has been grabbed and dragged to the toothy maw, taking an additional 2d6 damage.

Resistance to severing: Beneath the fluff, the flesh of a mogglewomp is somewhat rubbery. Attacks from slashing or slicing weapons are less effective than normal, inflicting only half damage. If an appendage of a mogglewomp (e.g. tail, limbs, head, etc) is severed by some means, it can simply be reattached with an action.

Weaknesses (Both Forms)

Susceptibility to cold iron: Like all fairies, mogglewomps are especially vulnerable to attacks with iron weapons. They suffer double damage from weapons made with the metal.

¹ Fairy races known as "demi-fey" are folk who make their homes exclusively in Dolmenwood, having forsaken, for whatever reason, the immortal realm; they may enter Fairy on occasion, but do not dwell there. Such races have, over the course of many generations, been touched by time and are no longer immortal, though they are usually very long-lived, by human standards. In all other respects, they are treated the same as other fairies.

Traits — Humananoid

1. Bright, combed, ginger moustache.
2. Quizzical, rolling eyes.
3. Droopy, drooling lower lip.
4. Furry, bear-like paws.
5. Leonine tail.
6. Wheezy and hunchbacked.

Traits — Bestial

1. 6' -long, wiry whiskers.
2. Frilly, gingham bonnet.
3. Quivering, purple, rubbery lips.
4. Twirls its oiled moustache.
5. Wears a neck-ruff or bowtie.
6. Bright cyan fur.

Encounters

1. A wayworn traveller trudges through a small hamlet, stopping at each door to ask for a cup of tea.
2. A mooglewomp in bestial form, crawling forlorn through the undergrowth, moaning. It has been cast out from its dwelling by a rabble of men, some of whom follow after, intent on putting an end to the beast.
3. A wretched wayfarer lying in a muddy puddle and being mercilessly beaten by two yowling, estray grimalkin (see *Wormskin* issue one).¹
4. A scruffy wanderer carrying a china teacup in his outstretched hand as he asks for the way to the nearest settlement.

Lairs

1. A cosy wee cottage with smoke streaming cheerily from the chimney. The clink of china and a satisfied slurping can be heard, from within.
2. A small manor house among unkempt grounds. A mooglewomp has grown to enormous proportions inside: its face pokes out of the attic, its forepaws out of upper windows, and its tail trails from the front door. Emissaries of the original inhabitants — a rag-tag band of knights and men-at-arms — survey the house from a safe vantage point.
3. A resplendent teahouse beside a beautiful pool. (A poorly-trained apprentice failed to recognise the mooglewomp before pouring it a cup of the brew.) The proprietors and their servants have escaped and set up camp nearby.
4. A ramshackle shed, almost falling apart as the mooglewomp's furry flesh bulges out. The beast lies growling and grumbling to itself within, a mug of tea clutched in its forepaws, as it schemes a way to find a larger place to lair.

¹ Grimalkin can smell out mooglewomps and have a great animosity toward them, thought to have originated aeons ago, when the ancestors of mooglewomps dwelt in the fairy realm.

Scrabey

HD: 2+1

AC: 6

Attacks: 1 × weapon (dagger or short sword)

Move: 120' (40')

Morale: 8

Number Appearing: 1-5: abroad (1), 6-7: abroad (1d4), 8: lair (1d6)

Alignment: N

Intelligence: Shrewd

Size: S (4' tall)

XP: 47

Possessions: Trinkets (fairy or rustic), trade goods (see below)

Hoard: B/XXI and N/IX (fairy)

Scrabies are a demi-fey race of traders who make their homes in the fecund soil of the forest. They maintain an extensive and labyrinthine system of tubes and tunnels among the roots of the forest, allowing them to travel great distances in safety, dragging their trade goods along on sleds or, in some regions, on carts running on a network of iron tracks.

Physically, scrabies look like grubby, scrawny elves, 4' tall, with saggy, sallow skin, moonish eyes, and needle-like teeth. They dress in muted tones and appear to never wash their clothes or bodies. Their noses, curiously, are shaped like taps and indeed function as such: each scrabey is able to pour a particular liquid from its snout, at will (up to a pint per hour). Typical liquids are: 1. cheap wine, 2. iced tea, 3. honey water, 4. birch sap, 5. mead, 6. ginger beer. Despite their questionable origin, these liquids are perfectly potable and quite delicious. The giving of a nose-beverage is a gesture of trust and friendship; it may occasionally be done when sealing an especially satisfying deal.

Special Abilities

Worm-form: In a pinch (they find it distasteful), scrabies have the ability to transform into a long (5'), thin (1"), grey worm with their face at the tail end. The transformation takes one round, during which the fairy can do nothing else. When in this form, they are able to dive into the earth and burrow away at great speed.

Weaknesses

Susceptibility to cold iron: Like all fairies, scrabies are especially vulnerable to attacks with iron weapons. They suffer double damage from weapons made with the metal.

Scrabies are shrewd merchants and usually have 1d3 of the following items available for sale (they trade with many beings, both fairy and mortal, hence the varied nature of the goods they ply):

1. Addercorn. See goatman thrall, in *Wormskin* issue two. [2gp per portion (sufficient for a dozen humans, if diluted)]
2. Coal or lamp oil. [1sp per pound/flask]
3. Medicinal herbs¹. [Healing (1d3 hp): 10gp, soporific: 6gp, curative (vs common illnesses): 20gp]
4. Clay masks. [1d6gp]
5. Human livers or kidneys. [2d6gp each]
6. Distilled essence of dreams. [Sweet: 50gp, stormy: 30gp, nightmarish: 25gp]
7. Good, strong rope. [1gp per 50']
8. Tree faces. [Ornamental: 10gp, growling: 20gp, oracular: 100gp]
9. Psychedelic or magical fungi. [See *Wormskin* one for types and prices]
10. Fine, spirituous beverages. [2d6gp]
11. Cockles and winkles. [3sp a cup]
12. Wands (2d4 charges). [Divining: 50gp, poxing: 50gp, knocking (as per the magic-user spell): 100gp]

In return, they ask for the listed price in gold or copper (they spurn silver) or the exchange of an item (either from the list or of similar spirit) which they do not carry.

Traits

1. Wears a wooden mask of quizzical countenance.
2. Smokes unusual, purple weed in a long, clay pipe.
3. Listens to mercantile negotiations with great attentiveness through an ivory horn.
4. Bearded, worn in braids, down to the knees.
5. Refers to all strangers by the address “palanquin” and all friends by the nickname “spontywiff”.
6. Telescopic or jointed, unfurling fingers, seemingly without practical limit.

¹ More detailed lists of the medicinal herbs which are to be found in Dolmenwood will be presented in a future issue of *Wormskin*.

Encounters

1. Two scrabies lie listless by the roadside, drunken on some potent, subterranean brew. Their wares are strewn behind them, tumbled out of preposterously stacked packs. Despite their inebriated state, their bartering instinct is intact; their offers are, however, ludicrous and entirely fictional (moon cats, kings' jowl-fur, mermaids' toes, philosophical mares, and such like).
2. 1d6 scrabies with carts of wood, bricks, and tools, feverishly applying repairs to a section of tunnel exposed due to a cave in. Passersby may be enlisted to help, if willing to work in exchange for a gift.
3. A scrabey, slyly peeking out from a hole at the base of a tree, negotiating a deal with: 1. an irascible Drune carrying jars of pickled organs, 2. a local bumpkin with a crop of carrots, 3. an old woman carrying a mewling infant in a basket, 4. a foppish grimalkin with ill-gotten gold, 5. a shorthorn goatman with gloves of tanned man-leather, 6. a man-size wooden mannequin trading painted eggs.
4. A scrabey atop a sled packed with goods, wildly lashing the beast which drags it, frantically trying to evade the crashing footsteps of a giant in pursuit

Lairs

1. A long, spiralling tunnel which leads up, through the roots of a tree and into hollow portions of its mighty trunk. A stacked series of cramped stores, pantries, libraries, bed chambers, and smoking parlours are found within, ending with a glass-windowed observatory, high in the boughs of the tree.
2. A stone trapdoor in the forest floor, concealed beneath piles of leaves and twigs, opens onto a cold, drab, subterranean warehouse full of barrels and crates. In a corner is a small, cast-iron stove and scant cooking vessels. Bundles of woolen cloth serve as beds.
3. A deep, 30' wide pit, accessible by a series of 2' wide, clay pipes leading to narrow ledges on different levels. Some of these niches are stores and some act as resting places, with stacked wooden cots, chairs, tables, cabinets, and ladders balancing precariously close to the edge. The pit may end in the lair of some carnivorous beast (charmed to ignore fairies), or may be bottomless, leading to the dwellings of ever more absurd creatures as one travels deeper.
4. A low-roofed cavern into which a small stream trickles. The scrabies' goods are hidden in casks at the bottom of a cold pool, extracted by hooked poles. The fairies themselves also sleep in the water; one stays above the surface, on guard, and draws his companions out when their rest period is over.

Scryke

HD: 4

AC: 5

Attacks: 1 × 2d4 (area attack)

Move: 90' (30') / 180' (60') — flying

Morale: 7

Number Appearing: Solitary, no lair

Alignment: C

Intelligence: Shrewd

Size: M

XP: 245

Possessions: None

Hoard: None

Scryke are manifestations of chaotic energy, possessed of a devious intelligence. A scryke usually appears as a stunted, jet-black humanoid with only rudimentary features. A solitary being, it is drawn to places, items and people of corrupted holiness or order; greedily seeking out tokens and artefacts on which it relies as its sole form of sustenance. When feeding, the item/person is enveloped by the creature and consumed completely; this process is irreversible. Through the feeding the scryke learns the history of the item/person and the origin of its corruption (whether the scryke is actually sustained by the physical object or the lore gleaned therefrom is unknown).

In general scryke are not hostile towards other creatures, unless threatened. They are rather known to enlist other intelligent beings in their schemes to retrieve precious artefacts. While chaotic, the scryke is as a rule true to its word, though it will use its cunning and careful wordings to try and cheat those who help it. Quite often a reward will prove to be far less valuable or desirable than the duped party may have believed.

Scryke are solitary creatures; if two meet, they will fight until one of them is consumed or flees.

Special Abilities

Area Attack: When provoked, a scryke can shed its form, becoming a wispy, cloying fog which can envelop a ten ft. area; any creature caught therein takes 2d4 damage per round. A successful save vs Breath attacks will allow the character to dodge the attack or subsequently escape the area.

Fog Form: A scryke can enter any room through a crack or slit as small as one tenth of an inch in a matter of 1d3+1 rounds. When pursuing, it prefers its nebulous movement form, in which it is unaffected by gusts of wind both natural and magical.

Immunity: A scryke is impervious to mundane weapons.

Weaknesses

Aversion to sanctity: While it is drawn to fallen holiness, displays of pure faith and piety are particularly repulsive to a scryke. It is unable to enter or envelop any recently sanctified area, and the potency of its attacks against the devout is reduced by half.

Traits

1. Prefers to take on the form of a giant, expressive face.
2. Skin changes colour in hypnotically swirling patterns.
3. Reeks of decay.
4. Can only speak through material creatures, by touching them with a black tendril of mist.
5. Emits an aura of cold and leaves an icy residue.
6. Occasionally creates tiny, temporary tears in the barriers between planes, through which demonic voices/wailing of the damned/creatures from beyond the stars/etc can be heard.

Encounters

Scryke appear for the sole purpose of feeding, though never long enough to establish a lair, unable or unwilling to remain for more than a day or two. Once they are sated, they quickly return to their native plane.

1. An unmarked grave deep in the woods, the final resting place of a villainous cleric. A scryke is attempting to persuade two simpleminded locals to dig up the cleric's bones.
2. A vandalized shrine to a forgotten deity. A scryke is held from its object of desire; a small, semi-valuable statuette of said deity, because of a simple rosary draped around the idol.
3. A forest glade, in ancient days a place where law was spoken and justice meted out, until blood was spilled in a treacherous attack. A scryke wishes to reenact the bloodshed with the antique weapons it uncovered.
4. Two grave-robbers, being pursued by a scryke for a carved stone they pried from an overgrown cairn.

