A Witch's Desire

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Design Team

INTRODUCTION

Your hamlet has somehow survived the unnatural winter. It is a boon against all the tragedy in the world, and you live in relative comfort. But is the price too high? The Witch of the Wilds once again calls on you to complete a task. What does she want this time? Is it a bauble? Is it a dangerous trek? Soon you will find the truth and either perish at her whim or earn her favor and secret.

The struggle of the group was hard, but not unbearable. This simple spot of land was untouched by the wintry woes, and the people that lived on this plot had access to all that they needed to survive, though not thrive. The curse of the Long Winter was in its prime, snow whitewashing away all but the most determined to survive. This hamlet, while downtrodden in better times, could be viewed by those in the snow as a paradise. But paradise comes at a cost, and every peasant knows that A Witch's Desire is never to be taken lightly.

A Witch's Desire is meant to be a continuation module for the **Forever Winter** adventure. It may follow any other module within this book. However, it can of course be changed and altered to fit as a one-shot or even an interlude in a pre-existing campaign in whatever applicable setting the GM chooses. A Witch's Desire can be centered anywhere in your campaign that makes sense for the GM's story.

After surviving several journeys from previous modules, each testing the party's will, they will have come into an uneasy agreement with the Witch of the Wilds. She is enigmatic and potentially dangerous, but far less so than the Ice Queen in interactions thus far. A messenger sent with her words and sigil prompt the party to begin their quest, which could have dire consequences if ignored. How far will the PCs trust her? Do they have any choice?

The Long Winter

Winter has fully taken hold of the world and affects nearly everything you do. When the sun is not visible, many skills are more difficult to perform. Penalize any STR, DEX, and CON Ability Check by adding +1 to their roll in this scenario.

Travel Rules

A Witch's Desire makes use of new travel rules presented here. GMs should feel free to use these rules in campaigns that explore the difficulties of arduous expeditions. Players should following these steps in order to develop and enact a travel plan.

Step 1 – Determine Route

The players will determine the general route they are looking to take. The players may route the trip exactly across a map, or simply give general guidance to the GM. Likely requests cold be, "the fastest way", or "the safest way."

Step 2 – Determine Route Planner

The players may choose the Route Planner. The Route Planner is a pre-travel role that attempts to plan the trip before the group gets started. The more segments included in the route, the harder this planning becomes. The ideal ability for a Route Planner is **Intelligence**.

Step 3 – Determine Travel Segments

The GM must determine how many segments the Travel Plan contains. There is no set distance that each segment represents, instead, use a new segment when factors of the journey change. The GM should split a route into different segments when terrain or hostility changes.

Step 4 – Assign Segment Details

Each segment has four parts that identify it. Repeat Step 4 for each segment.

Step 4a – Length

The estimated time it will take to traverse the segment. All segments must have a length assigned.

- 3 days or less
- Less than 1 week, Greater than 3 Days
- Greater than 1 week

Step 4b – Terrain

The predominate terrain of the segment. All segments must have a terrain assigned.

- Plains
- Hills
- Light Forest
- Deep Forest
- Swamp
- Mountains

Step 4c – Weather

The weather of the segment. Assign weather only if the GM wishes. Otherwise this is random.

- Calm [20-11]
- Inclement [10-3]
- Extreme [2-1]

Step 4d – Hostility

The hostility rating of the segment. This is the inherent danger of the area. All segments must have a hostility assigned.

- Peaceful
- Unrest
- Violent

Step 4e – Compute Danger Rating

Use the following tables to compute the Danger Rating. Add the Danger Rating of each element of the segment.

LENGTH

Danger	Length of Travel
0	Less Than 3 Days
1	Less Than 1 Week, Greater than 3 Days
2	Greater Than 1 Week

TERRAIN

Danger	Terrain Type
0	Plains/Fields/Light Foilage
1	Hills/Light Forest
2	Swamps/Mountains
3	Deep Forest

WEATHER

Danger	Terrain Type
0	Calm
1	Inclement
2	Extreme

HOSTILITY

Danger	Terrain Type
0	Peaceful
1	Unrest
2	Violent

Step 5 – Assign Travel Roles

The players must assign roles. The main role is that of the Guide. The players must assign the Guide role.

The Guide: The guide's role is to lead the group through the countryside safely. They use the information and skills of the rest of the group to aid in the trek. The Guide will decide the success or failure of each segment that the group travels, although they receive help from the other roles. The guide's most important ability is **Wisdom**. Only one character may take the Guide role.

The Sentry: The sentry ensures the safety of the group as they travel. This could be as a lookout, coordinating defensive positions, or setting watches. The Sentry's most important ability is **Strength**. Multiple characters may take the Sentry role. Likewise, no Sentry must be set.

The Scout: The scout finds the best path through whatever terrain they pass. The scout's skills can provide a recourse for difficult terrain. The Scout's most important ability is **Dexterity**. Multiple characters may take the Scout Role. Likewise no Scout must be present.

Step 6 – Test Route

The Route Planner must make an **Intelligence Ability Check**. For each segment in the route greater than the first, add a +1 penalty to the Ability Check. Also determine if the Route Planner has traveled this Route before. If they have, add a -1 bonus to the Ability Check. This ensures the Route Planner's Route is planned correctly.

- Pass: Subtract 1 from the Danger Rating of Encounter Tests in each segment.
- Fail: Add 1 to the Danger Rating of Encounter Tests in each segment.

Step 7 — Travel

The characters begin to make their way along the Route.

Repeat this step for each segment. Add the Test Route result and other situational modifiers to the Danger Rating of each segment.

Step 7a — Situational Modifiers

Positive Modifier Examples:
- Roads
- Favorable Winds
- Easy Access to Supplies

Negative Modifier Examples:
- Impassable Bridges
- Polluted Air
- Mosquitoes

Positive Modifiers subtract 1 from the Danger Rating; negative modifiers add 1 to the Danger Rating. Apply both in Step 7c: Segment Outcome.

Step 7b — Situational Modifiers

All characters assigned a role must make a test to determine the overall group success in following the segment. This includes keeping themselves safe, finding food, and sticking to the path.

Sentries make **Strength Ability Checks**.

Scouts make **Dexterity Ability Checks**.

For each Test determine the success or failure.

- Pass: Subtract 1 from the Danger Rating of Encounter Tests in each segment.
- Fail: Add 1 to the Danger Rating of Encounter Tests in each segment.

Step 7c — Average all Modifiers

Add any bonuses or penalties from Step 6: Test Route, Step 7a: Situational Modifiers, and Step 7b: Test Role Proficiency. Apply any bonuses or penalties to 7d: Determine Segment Outcome.

This total equals the Segment Danger Rating.
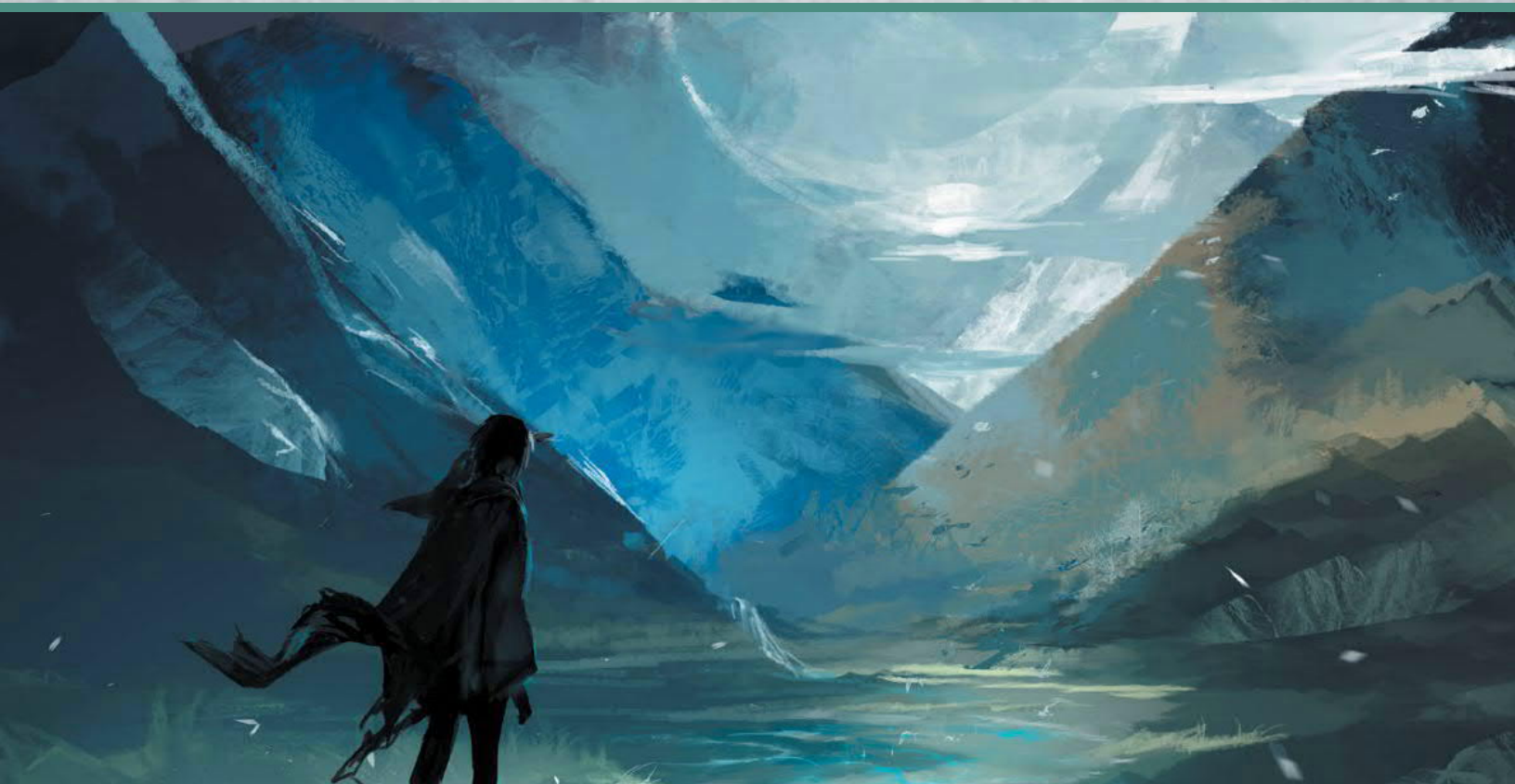
Step 7d — Determine Segment Outcome

The Guide makes a Wisdom Ability Check. Compare the result of the Wisdom Ability Check to the Danger Rating of the current segment. Determine Danger Rating from Step 4: Assign Travel Details, Step 6: Test Route, Step 7a: Situational Modifiers, and Step 7b: Determine Role Proficiency.

Compare the result of the Guide's Wisdom Ability Check to the following tables.

DANGER RATING <= 1

Result	Encounter Rating
Success > 5	None or Positive
Success	1-5 HD of Monsters
Failure	6-10 HD of Monsters

DANGER RATING 2

Result	Encounter Rating
1	None or Positive
Success > 5	6-10 HD of Monsters
Success	11-15 HD of Monsters
Failure	16-20 HD of Monsters

DANGER RATING 3

Result	Encounter Rating
1	None or Positive
Success > 5	11-15 HD of Monsters
Success	16-20 HD of Monsters
Failure	21-25 HD of Monsters

DANGER RATING >= 4

Result	Encounter Rating
1	None or Positive
Success > 5	11-15 HD of Monsters
Success	16-20 HD of Monsters
Failure	21-25 HD of Monsters

The Encounter Ratings gives the GM an understanding of what type of threats are present in the segment. The GM should feel free to design them as they wish. In Witch's Desire, the encounters are pre-built to be appropriate for this adventure.

Repeat Step 7 for each segment. Resolve encounters individually. Players may not end the Route unless changing the Route in Step 1: Players Determine Route. This route must be different than any upcoming segments of their journey.

The GM should never suggest how many segments a trip will take before Step 1. This should help keep the players from attempting to take short trips and combining them as 1 segment routes. Even if a path appears short, the GM should make multiple, short segments, with punishing difficulty.

The GM may present traps, environmental effects, or any sort of mental or physical challenge.

A Witch's Desire

At the onset of A Witch's Desire, the party has survived a difficult winter by staying within the boundaries of the hamlet. The workings of the Witch have allowed the hamlet to be livable, though they are not thriving. The constant worry of their arrangement with the Witch may also hang heavily over the player's heads. As tensions are created between the Witch of the Wilds and the Ice Queen, an uneasy stalemate that cannot last forever. While the party stays at the hamlet, a message arrives from the Witch of the Wilds requesting the party's assistance. Denial could mean that the cold grip of winter closes in on their paradise…

The Witch's Influence

While in the witch's domain, the effects of the Long Winter can be ignored. This includes the hamlet where the PCs begin and the surrounding areas. The snow turns into rainfall, strange mixtures of ice and mud, as well as violent winds that still lead to difficulties within the area.

A Strange Illness

The GM may decide to infect one of the PCs with an illness. This can give motivations for the characters throughout the adventure. These illnesses can also be given to NPCs that may be important to the PCs. These could include other members of the hamlet, or better yet any NPC that is close to the PCs from previous adventures.

This illness has the same effect as Cause Disease. It is clear the PCs must find a cure quickly. If one of the PCs has Cure Disease, it does not cure this particular illness. There is but one cure and the Witch has it.

The Message

A solitary boat sails the calm river, a small figure laboring the oar that drives the craft. Clumsily crashing into the shoreline, the hooded figure scampers from the boat and quickly ropes it to a nearby tree limb. The little green figure is one of familiarity, the goblinoid grin of Meepa is one that has become known in these parts. For when Meepa comes, he often brings tidings from his master.

Meepa speaks with the group, explaining that the Witch has a task for them. This task comes with the promise of reward, with the implications of displeasure if it is not undertaken. After all, the witch's magick is what makes the hamlet survivable in the hells of the endless cold. A decision must be made, as her desires cannot be easily ignored.

Meepa is a goblin and messenger of the witch of the Wilds. He was formerly dominated by a hag, who he claimed made him her slave. The witch freed him of that life, but bondage is bondage, and Meepa desires freedom.

Meepa uses a Goblin's statblock and is no real challenge to any adventurer. If attacked, Meepa flees instantly. GMs may remind players it is in their best interest to parlay with the little beast if they want a cure for the disease they have encountered.

ASSUMPTIONS

It should be assumed that the PCs have some knowledge of the Witch of the Wilds. The GM can introduce them to the hamlet in this adventure as newcomers if they wish, however the PCs should at the very least be told of the witch and her ability to keep the village safe.

Starting beginning characters in the village is also possible. It is up to the GM to decide how these characters come together in this location. This should leave a great deal of flexibility to connect this adventure to any others.

Meepa, a servant of the witch, has brought her bidding. This is a boon to be performed by the party from this hamlet. To establish a history, her favor has been exchanged in return for services previously rendered. This favor has been beneficial to the PCs; the hamlet is one of the only survivable areas in the endless winter, truly a haven compared to those lost souls in the North. The Witch's motives are unknowable, but the PCs will have a familiarity with both her and the Ice Queen, both important figures in Forever Winter setting. Neither are known for being merciful, though the Witch has been cordial and mostly honest in the party's dealings with her thus far.

TO THE WITCH

The party may roleplay out the decision to assist the Witch. Meepa should be mostly sympathetic and friendly to the PCs, but he also fears the Witch. Any suggestion of ignoring the witch's request should carry with it the potential for great and terrible retribution; the witch's power and resources are vast, and it is unlikely she will be amenable to reason if she is outright ignored.

After initial roleplay between the party, a journey up the river is necessary to find the Witch's hut. Along their travels, the harsh climate will adjust to a warm, temperate, environment with warm air and peculiar smells. As they come closer to the hut itself, civilization will become more apparent as treehouses, small huts and guard towers begin to line the river's edges. Strangely dressed men and women wielding all manner of weaponry will eye the party warily, but will not attack unless very greatly provoked.

The hut is nearly indistinguishable from many around it save that it is left completely alone and has no other buildings around it. PCs with abilities or proper magic may have an advantage finding what they are looking for. This allows them to sense the powerful magicks in play nearby to guide the party if they succeed. Other characters may use a **Wisdom Ability Check** to be able to notice the solidarity of the structure compared to the rest of the area, though this information should not be a guarantee that this is the correct place.

If the PCs fail to spot this hut and travel too far down the river, they will encounter a group of armed warriors challenging their presence. They will request that the PCs allow themselves to be disarmed. If this command is heeded, they will speak with the witch. The witch would then allow the players to enter her hut. Players can attempt to convince the guards with a **Charisma Ability Check** to allow them to keep their weapons. The guards will be unlikely to allow anyone in the presence of their leader whilst armed. On a failure, the guards will demand once more that the party submit to having their weapons taken. Refusal will lead to the guards attempting to take them by force, and combat may be joined.

Displeased Guards

This could become a hostile encounter depending on how the players react. The warriors should be a moderate challenge if this conflict is created; not unbeatable, but at least on par with the party in terms of effectiveness. Retreat will not be possible in this encounter, as the party is deep within the territory of the witch and would be found by her patrollers eventually.

After a few rounds of combat, however, the Witch would intervene to prevent any further damage. This would create a negative relationship between the warriors and the PCs, and the witch may have some choice words for the party as well. If the encounter with the guards does not progress with combat, then advance to the Witch.

Use 2d8 Bandits if these scene becomes violent.

The Witch

A woman in a strange hut stands bathed in the firelight of a large fire pit central in the room. All around, there are strange trinkets; a deer hoof hung on the wall, a wolf's head with strange jewels in the eyes, and a large collection of liquid-filled jars with indiscernible material floating within. The woman is beautiful, alluring. But there is a strange presence about her, a creeping, suffocating tension that assails the nerves. This is the Witch of the Wilds, the subject of fable and fear.

The interaction with the Witch should be straightforward, but with some things reserved. She requires water to be recovered from the ancient ruins deeper within the woods. A fountain will contain mystical water that she requires for her work. She will provide an escort through the woods with a few of her men (between 4-5). These men will be the same from the potentially hostile encounter to provide tension. This will lead to conflicts during the travel. If there was no encounter with them, the men will be wary of the party but mostly cooperative.

The Witch does not volunteer much more information about the task. Players can ask questions of her regarding the ancient ruins, the travel to the location, or what to expect within. The witch is only aware of the location and the item that is within. She does not know what may lurk inside, or what the characters may encounter on their travels other than a muck-ridden swamp and large mushroom caps surrounding the landscape near the ruins. This part of the forest had been endlessly changing between a freeze and thaw for years, and as such the terrain had changed. She is also aware that others have tried to go to these ruins. If questioned about previous visitors, she will remark that they never returned.

Any successful **Wisdom Ability Check** will show that The witch appears to be truthful about the information she provides. However, she does not reveal her need for the item to the PCs. If prompted, she will answer only that it is needed for her magics. If pressed, she will become annoyed with whatever PCs are pressing the issue and try to bring the conversation to a close with no further questions being answered.

Regardless if the PCs believe she is lying or being truthful, accusing The Witch of lying brings the conversation to a close as she demands they leave her hut. She will tell the PCs to think carefully about displeasing her, before offering a minor display of her power to intimidate them. Further annoyances of the witch could create a combat scenario.

Remember, to the witch, the PCs are simple play things. The GM may play her as aloof, angry, or manipulative.

If nothing further is pursued in the conversation, the party can choose whether or not to pursue the quest for the witch. This will bring the PCs to the next scene in The Swamp.

Unadvised Combat

Regardless if the PCs believe she is lying or being truthful, accusing The Witch of lying brings the conversation to a close as she demands they leave her hut. She will tell the PCs to think carefully about displeasing her, before offering a minor display of her power to intimidate them. Further annoyances of the witch could create a combat scenario.

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If this scene would somehow devlove into combat, use 2d8 Bandits as above, and an 8th Level magic-user for the Witch of the Wilds.

The Swamp

The musk of nature intermingles with foul bubbles and burbles in this murky wasteland, visible trails of sour smells simmering from the pools of green-brown liquid. Sloppy footsteps reverb through the mud, singing the song of a difficult journey. Strange noises and splashing in the water warns of hidden threats among the stench-ridden marshes.

The party and their escort will depart the witch's camp rather quickly and begin their journey to the ruins. The journey will take a few days, with one of the major points within the swamp being a stretch of untamed muck full of difficult trenches and hidden dangers.

Traversing the swamp is difficult. Players should use the Travel Rules presented earlier in this adventure to navigate the swamp to their destination.

Trip Details

Step 1: Determine Route - The route is provided from the witch and her minions. These men and woman are willing to lead the PCs into the swamp, but they do not have any great knowledge on the exact path.

Step 2: Determine Route Planner - A PC or one of the Displeased Guards can act as Route Planner.

Step 3: Determine Segments - There are at least 2 segments in the trip. The GM may add segments if they wish, and develop them on their own.

Step 4a: Length - All segments are 3 days or less.

Step 4b: Terrain - All segments should use Swamp terrain.

Step 4c: Weather - The GM may use a random weather choice or calm.

Step 4d: Hostility - Both segments should use violent as the Hostility Rating. This is a dangerous place.

Step 4e: Danger Rating - Compute the Danger Rating.

Step 5: Assign Roles. - Assign Roles to each PC that wishes to participate.

Step 6: Test Route - If the Route Planner is a guard, grant a -1 bonus to this test.

Step 7a: Situational Modifiers - There are likely few positive modifiers possible. The same cannot be said for negative modifiers. It is ultimately up to the GM to decide if any modifiers exist.

Step 7b-7c: Test Role Proficiencies & Average Modifiers - Test each role to determine travel modifiers.

Step 7d: Determine Outcome - Determine the outcome of the segment and repeat Step 7 for each segment. Below you will find various swamp related encounters for each Danger Rating and Outcome.

Trip Encounters

The GM may choose any of the following encounters.

Positive or None:

- The PCs find an alternate route through the swamp that speeds their way. This should only be used on the first segment, but can add a positive Situational Modifier to the next segment.

- The PCs discover an artifact. This could be a special item the GM feels suitable to the adventure.

- The PCs find a guard that was lost in a previous expedition. They will follow the PCs in gratitude and attempt to aid them; they will act as if a Mercenary to the PC and are completely loyal. Use Footman, Light statistics.

1-5 HD:

- A group of bog beasts or monsters make an attack of opportunity against the party and their traveling escort. If you wish for this to be a longer encounter, account for the size of the PCs' escort as well. Otherwise, it is best to keep the focus on the players for the battle and narrate the events of the NPCs if the GM is inclined to. Use Insect Swarms (OSE - Monsters) statistics for these strange creatures.

- A localized event will take place, causing hazards in the swamp. This could be geysers shooting burning hot liquid into the air, or strange whirlpools that can drag the PCs or their NPC escort deep into the swamp. Use **Dexterity Ability Checks** to evade or power through the obstacles. NPC escorts could be used to suitably announce the deadliness of this event. Damage should be 1d4 on any failure. Use 2 or 3 of these challenges. You can switch it up by having the players make **Wisdom Ability Checks** to avoid the geysers completely.

6-10 HD:

- The GM may include an encounter in the swamp of a much more dangerous horror lurking within the murk. This should be an encounter that the players escape from, and will require several Ability Checks in order to achieve. There are several options for the GM to craft this encounter, but the rolls should be focusing on noticing the threat and attempting to evade it.

- Use combination of **Dexterity**, **Constitution**, and **Wisdom** Ability Checks. These horrors will reach out and attempt to take travelers out one-by-one without facing them directly. Actual combat can occur if the GM wishes, but it is not necessary as the creature shrink back into the swamp after attacking. Use any suitable monster as desired if the PCs come to blows with their attackers.

- The GM may have the PCs failure on this Ability Checks require an additional segment is added to the trip. If so, assign a new segment with all details as usual.

- Alternatively, the PCs may be attacked by a giant swamp creature that attempts to leap out of the bog and attack by surprise. Use the Giant Swamp Creature below.

Giant Swamp Creature

These creatures attempt to stay hidden and isolated in the swamps of the world. Only when defending their young or territory do they become aggressive. They have a thick shell on their back and a long neck that is attached to a beak. They attempt to rip and tear with the beak until no threat remains.

AC 5 [14], **HD** 10 [44hp], **Att** 1 (6d4), **THAC0** 19 [0], **MV** 30 ft, 120 ft swimming, **SV** D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (3), **ML** 9, **AL** Neutral, **XP** 850, **NA** 1, **TT** V

» **Surprise**: 1-4 on 1d6.

11-15 HD:

- A series of insurmountable smaller creatures are stalking the travelers. These should use the Insect Swarm statistics. There are dozens if not hundreds of these creatures. The PCs should use Ability Checks that match the RP presented. All Ability Checks should be made with a +1 penalty. Three checks per PC is appropriate. When the PCs fail, they take damage equal to the difference between their result and their target.
- Use the Hazards as in 1-5 HD but make them more difficult. Geysers, quickmuds, etc, may be nearby and in the PCs' path. Each of these Ability Checks are against a +1 penalty instead of 0. Increase damage to 1d6.
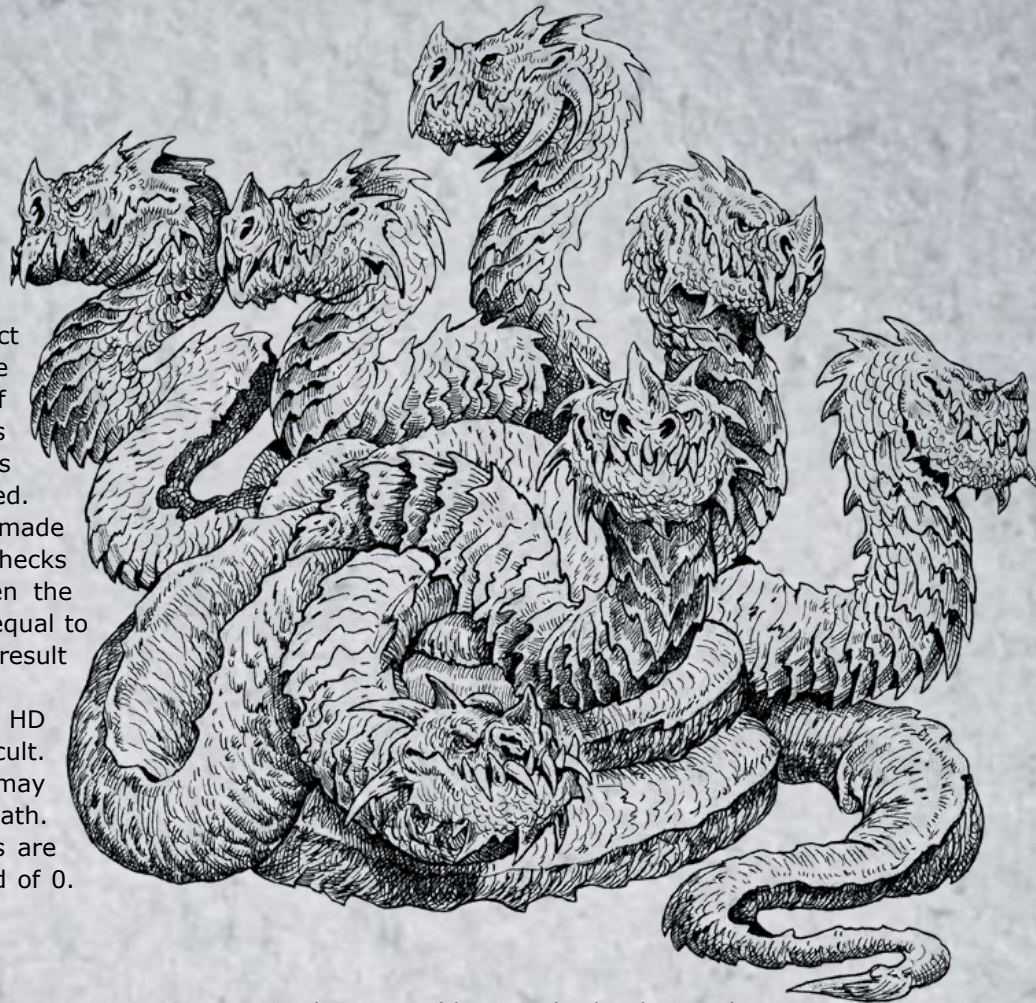
16-20 HD:

- A large swamp creature should make its presence known. GMs may create any kind of visual they would like. If they wish to stat the monster, they may use two 10 headed Hydras (OSE - Monsters). Combat with the monsters should be avoided; players are unlikely to defeat the beasts if they engage it, and the escort will flee rather then help them. Instead, a series of Dexterity Ability Checks should be made to attempt to escape the various attacks from the monsters.
- If players make it to the tree line, the beast will no longer pursue. If one of the players is caught by the creature or they slip, they must make an appropriate Ability in response; If the Hydras grab them with their teeth, the PCs should make Strength Ability Checks made to break free from the creature, while Dexterity Ability Checks should be made to quickly recover from a fall. Failures should be punished with 1d8 points of damage as a result.

- Players could certainly die during this encounter, and their fate should be suitably grim. If a GM is unwilling to kill players at this stage, you could also forgo the damage rolls and instead inflict casualties on the PCs' NPC escort. This will have an impact on the conclusion of the module.
- Use the Hazards as in Challenging but make them more difficult. Geysers, quickmuds, etc, may be nearby and in the PCs' path. Each of these Ability Checks are against a +2 penalty instead of 0. Increase damage to 1d8.

21-25 HD:

- The PCs happen upon 1d4 black dragons (OSE - Monsters) bathing in the mud. The PCs may attempt to sneak around them by using Dexterity Abilty Checks. Any failure will set the wrath of the creatures upon them.
- Use the Hazards as in Strong but make them more difficult. Geysers, quickmuds, etc, may be nearby and in the PCs' path. Each of these Tests are against a +3 penalty instead of 0. Increase damage to 1d10.

The GM is feel to use any applicable challenge for the play that meet the Difficulty Rating.

Escorts (Extra Encounter)

Tensions and distrust may cause difficulty with the escort provided by the witch. This is a very attractive option if hostilities were had between the PCs in an earlier scene. Players interested in preventing hostilities may attempt a **Charisma Ability Check** to attempt to calm tensions and bring the two parties into enough cohesion to press forward without incident. Players also have the option of doing battle with the escort, though this should be a difficult encounter. Players also have an option to bribe the escort with coin, this will create a **Charisma Ability Check** with a -2 bonus, though the players should have to agree to give up a sizable portion of their coin.

This encounter should likely happen regardless of the travel details. The GM may substitute this for any Ordinary encounter as well. Escaping this encounter is not possible; even if the PCs flee the fight, they would become hopelessly lost in the surrounding forest.

After resolving one, or several of these encounters, proceed to the next scene, The Ruins.

The Ruins

Harsh forest and uncomfortable silences give way to a strange and wondrous sight. Firebugs and wind-whispers fly lazily about a field of giant mushrooms, caps the size of small rooftops. There is a strange darkness from the obscuring trees all about, but the busy lights of both flora and fauna clearly light the way. A ruin of stone and bronze rests in the distance wrapped in vines, the grip of nature slowly tightening on the crumbling walls.

The PCs and their escort traverse through the trees, always on alert for danger but never stumbling into any. Strange noises reverberate through the twisting woods, the dins changing tunes to songs and growls never before heard made by unseen creatures in the bush. As the players approach the ruins, GMs can offer willing players to make a **Wisdom Ability Check**. On a success, those players are able to discern that there is no noise at all in the clearing surrounding the structure.

This lonely place has strange energies, and bizarre flora such as fungi the size of houses. The ruins give off wonder, and worry.

GMs should consult the digitally supplied map of the ruins which is number coded. They may also show a player facing map to their players, if they wish them to have a general idea of the ruin's layout.

Entrance (1)

The entranceway is covered in mushrooms and other flora that are colorful and exotic in appearance. The ruins themselves appear to be simple slab and rock, but with an exceptional design. A **Wisdom Ability Check** can reveal that certain sections that have crumbled away reveal craftsmanship and engineering for interlocking mechanisms underneath the simple design. However, some of these are being absorbed into these strange plants as well. Age and overgrowth may cause some mishaps.

One of the escort NPCs should attempt to enter through the entranceway. This NPC should make a **Dexterity Ability Check**, as the door is very much alive and has a mind of its own on when to open and close. The thick plantlike structure of the entranceway may snap close on a failed roll, maiming or even killing the NPC. Should a PC be bold enough to attempt entry during roleplay before this event occurs, they may replace the NPC in this event though it should end with damage instead of outright death.

Upon seeing this occur, the PCs can make a Standard Awareness Test to see if they can more closely view the doorway. This could reveal a potential pattern in the way the "door" moves, opening and closing. Other PCs could make an **Intelligence Ability Check** to determine if the doorway could be cleared or removed. This would be a good use of backgrounds that are relevant in order to implement them in the character's roleplay. A lumberjack or scholar with training in botany, for example, could discern areas of weakness in the plant to hack and chop away.

If players would prefer to, they can attempt a **Dexterity Ability Check** to simply pass through the doorway. Failure should carry with it the potential to suffer damage, as the "door" gets its pound of flesh from trespassers.

The escort will not proceed inside any further, as their orders were to escort the PCs to the ruins. None of their orders included searching the ruins. PCs may attempt a **Charisma Ability Check** +5 penalty to persuade them into coming in further. A roll of 20 may cause the escort to abandon them instead of waiting to escort them back. After resolving this scene, proceed to **Ruins Interior (2)**.

Ruins Interior (2)

The interior of the ruins is rife with a strange mixture of both life and death, plants and vines over-running broken cobblestones and shattered statues. The air is thick with dust and oppression, creating an overwhelming sense of tension and discomfort despite how spacious the main hall appears.

To the left and right, there are steps that proceed downwards into places unknown, while straight ahead is are barred pathways that are in disrepair. Silence fills the air, except the occasional creak and groan of what must certainly be the whisperings of the wind in the cracked walls.

The main hall of the temple will allow three options to proceed forward. The PCs will have to investigate the ruins in order to discover the artifact, a vial of water from the Fountain of The Forest.

GMs should make use of the digital map of the ruins supplied with this book. There are GM and player versions.

2a – Through the Bars

While the way is barred, the bars have heavily decayed over years of disrepair. A **Strength Ability Check** with a +1 penalty can be made to break the bars away, or a **Wisdom Ability Check** can be made in order to discern a bar that is loose and can be shifted away.
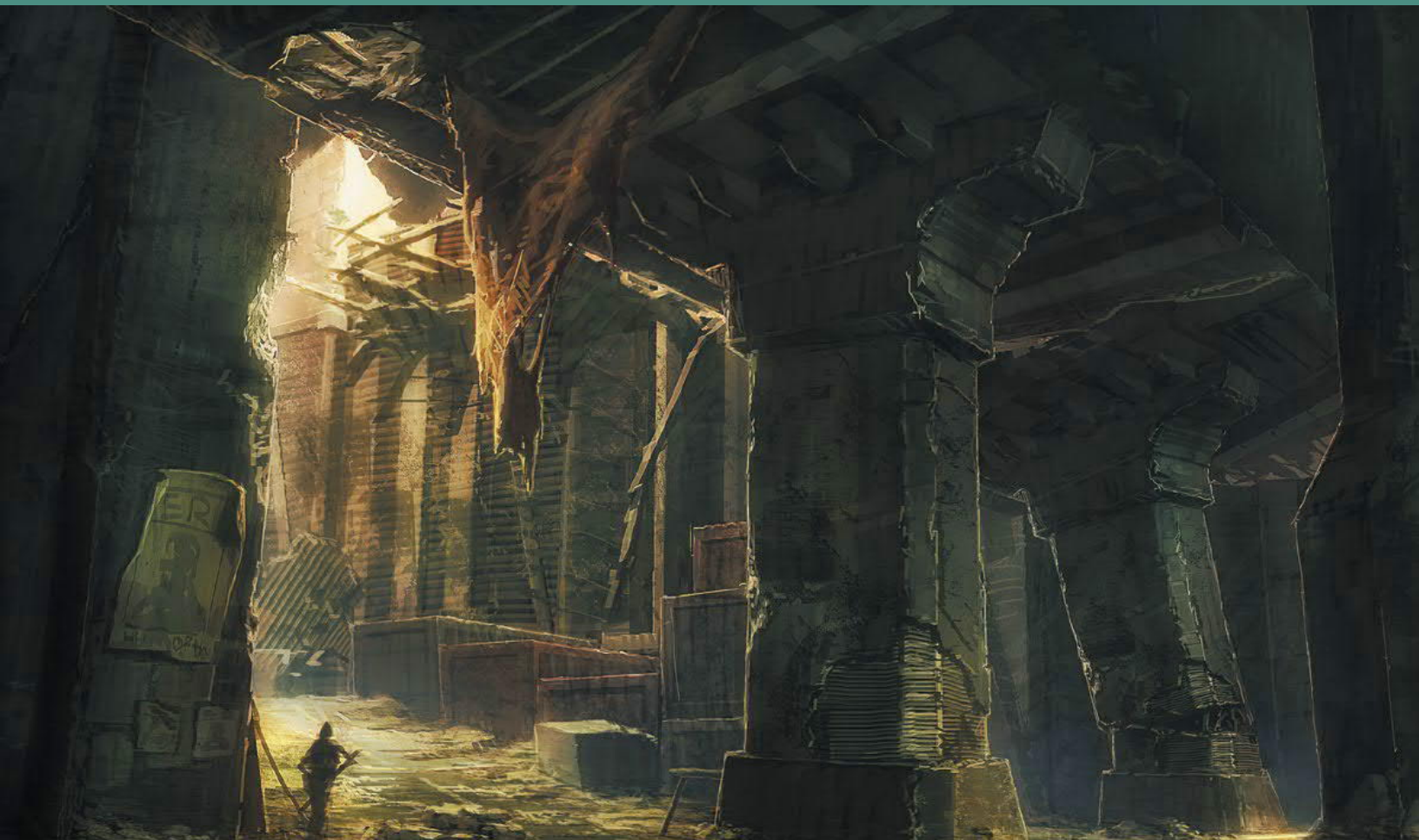
A Wisdom Ability Check could be made prior by a PC inspecting the bars. If successful, the **Strength Ability Check** would be without penalty and the **Intelligence Ability Check** would be at a -1 bonus. This route could also be ignored in favor of the other two routes. If the PCs proceed along this route, go to The Glowing Blade (4).

2B – To the Right

To the right are a set of stairs that lead down into darkness. If any **Wisdom Ability Checks** are made by the PCs regarding the pathway, the faint scent of musk and water comes to their noses. If the PCs proceed along this route, go to **The Fetid Pools (5).**

2C – To the Left

To the left are a set of stairs that lead down into darkness. If any **Wisdom Ability Checks** are made by the PCs regarding this pathway, barely perceivable echoes are heard coming from this direction. Whether they are light footsteps, wind, or dripping water depends on who hears it, though it should not be clear what is heard. If this route is selected, go to **The Altar (6).**

The Main Hall (3)

The main hall provides a wealth of engravings and statues that can be viewed. Many of the engravings will be tribal in nature, revealing a lost history of conquests, events that can be inferred upon and not understood. The last entry in the sequence of engravings should include a fountain as a centerpiece. The statues should have some heads missing, but many of them as very harsh and honest representations of who they might have been.

An unknown language is set in the base of the statues. In the event that someone in the party has a background as a historian or scholar of some type, they may be able to discern the writing as a dead language (this could be any that works for your campaign. The GM is encouraged to decide.)

The GM may have prepared names and histories for these statue descriptions, or may allow the player to make them up if they feel comfortable with the task.

If the escort entered into the ruins, they will not proceed any further and no amount of coin or persuasion will cause them to change their minds. Instinctual fear and reverence take hold, and the escort will wait warily for their charges to complete their task.

The darkness is overwhelming in certain portions of the ruins. The PCs should have torches available, or if they have some form of vision in the dark then this becomes a non-factor. Appropriate penalties should be applied for darkness after the PCs leave the main hall, though the main hall will have sufficient light from either the moon slipping in through large sections of the ceiling, or the torches of the escort.

The Glowing Blade (4)

Passing through the bars reveals a long hallway leading to a worn-down flight of dust covered stairs. The air is rife with the scent of iron and sulfur, a peculiar musk in what should be long-abandoned ruins. As the party descends the staircase, they encounter a grisly scene.

As the party pushes forward, they will come to a long hallway littered with corpses in various states of decay. Some are hardly still material; skeletons that are nearly reduced to dust. Others are more recent, the flesh just beginning to rot. A **Wisdom Ability Check** will reveal that some of these corpses share similarities in dress with the escort. This would reveal, if it was not already known, that The witch has sent others to attempt to claim water from The Fountain.

There are no traps in the area. **Wisdom Ability Checks** can be made to reveal this information, though the presentation of that discovery should change depending on success or failure. Certainty for success and uncertainty for failure can maintain some of the tension navigating through the halls.

Intelligence Ability Checks with a +1 penalty can be made regarding the corpses if the party wants to review the cause of their death. Varying information can be given. Skeletons appear to have been charred; more recent corpses are rife with bite marks with the occasional amputated limb. These limbs appear to have been pulled off rather than cleaved.

If the party proceeds through the hall, they will reach a dead end with an altar. The altar will hold up a glowing blue blade, its shining light illuminating the area around the altar in a brilliant display. The altar itself is made of solid gold in sharp contrast to the rest of the area, which is of more functional material such as copper and stone.

Party members with magical backgrounds or training can attempt to discern the blade's properties with a **Intelligence Ability Check** with a +2 penalty. Success reveals that it may contain a burning enchantment, though the effect should not be too apparent until its eventual use. Upon use of the sword, add 1d6 fire damage to successful strikes.

A party member may elect to take the blade. If the party goes this route, a loud chorus of groans grows from the direction they just came. Please see below for the encounter, as the party will face down the shambling corpses of the slain.

If the party elects not to take the blade, they may further explore the area. There is nothing further of interest, and the equipment on the corpses is broken beyond repair. They may leave the area with no further encounter.

If the sword is taken and the party survives, this will trigger an awakening of the dead throughout the ruins. The escort at in the main hall may very well be slaughtered at the GMs discretion to add to the tension of the ruins.

Use 2d4 Zombies (OSE - Monsters). They should be positioned to bar the exit of the players, forcing them to fight through the zombies to freedom..

The Fetid Pools (5)

An unsettling plop and plop of bubbling masses shift along the edges of the room. What may have once been an opulent construction has been reduced to a foul, rank pit of filth. Not all noises in the dark sound of nature's ill bounties; creaking and cracking echoes off of the mossy walls, a cacophony of noise from what may be denizens of this place

Proceeding to the right-side staircase leads into an underground section with several twists and turns. This part of the ruins is over-ripe with natural growths and strange plant life, and has more in common with the swamp than any ruin. Murky water conceals hidden threats, and the plant life may be unsettling given the party's previous encounter with the living door at the entrance.

Players may make a series of **Wisdom Ability Check** to discern how this portion of the ruins came to be the way it is. A successful roll will reveal that several large holes in the walls and ceiling may have allowed water to pool here over an indefinite period, creating these foul conditions.

A **Wisdom Ability Check** may be made to study the pools that ripple all along the path. On a success, prior knowledge will reveal that these may be rife with disease. Players should avoid stepping into these pools or they may contract *disease* as indicated under Rats (OSE - Monsters).

A **Wisdom Ability Check** may be made by any PC wishing to try to discern the source of the creaking noises deeper down the path. A success does not reveal precisely what it is, but only that it is not rhythmic. There is a life to the noise.

PCs have the option of proceeding forward or going back to the main hall. GMs should also inquire if the players are attempting to be silent or not. If so, each player should roll a **Dexterity Ability Check**. This will be measured in group terms; if two or more players fail, they are unable to maintain stealth. If players decide not to be stealthy, no roll is necessary.

5a — Navigating the Pools

Players may choose to simply step through the pathway without much worry for the pools or try to navigate between them. An **Intelligence Ability Check** with a +1 penalty can be made to try to find the most optimal route through the passage. Only 1-2 players should be allowed the attempt. If the players do not attempt to navigate the pools and simply move through them, all of them will be required to roll the aforementioned **Constitution Ability Check** against disease.

Most of the pools will be anywhere from ankle to waist deep.

However, the GM should assign 1-2 pools to be deep enough for a player to all and be submerged. If a player steps into one of these holes, they may make a **Dexterity Ability Check** to avoid full committing to the step as their quick reflexes allow them to react before tumbling down. If the player fails and falls into the pool, they may contract the disease. They also must make a **Constitution Ability Check** against fear as they witness a horrific scene below the waters of writhing corpses, a variety of bizarre swamp plants growing from them.

Those that fail suffer a +1 penalty to all Ability Checks, attacks, or saves in their next encounter. If the players took the sword from The Glowing Blade, these corpses may stir from their simple movements and become part of a combat encounter. This could take place underwater, making the situation dire.

Whether the players avoid peril or push through it, they will come out into a large chasm with beauteous luminescence upon proceeding forward. A brilliant shrine of radiant gemstones will rest under a drizzling waterfall, the cavernous ruins all around will be covered in more vibrant flora that has a welcoming atmosphere. Players will realize that this is the Fountain that The Witch requested they seek out.

Players will become aware that this cavern is occupied; three humanoid forms will be seen across the room from the players, bodies shrouded in armor and tattered clothing. No roll is needed by the players to see what they are; the undead walk in the ruins, three skeletal figures creak and crack their way traveling some long-forgotten patrol route.

5b – The Undead Patrol

If they players elected to be stealthy, they may make a **Dexterity Ability Check** against the skeletal guards. Upon success, they will notice the party and begin moving to engage. A failure leaves them shambling about the area in a disciplined route. One player may attempt to discern the route with a **Wisdom Ability Check**. Upon success, this PC is able to get an idea of what route they may be taking. Players may use this knowledge to avoid or ambush the skeletal host.

If the party elects to avoid the guards, another **Dexterity Ability Check** should be made. If more players succeed than fail on any given check, then the group passes the action. If 2 or more characters fail, the group fails and surprise is lost. If the party also elects to attempt to gather some of the water, a single party member should go and collect some water from the Fountain. This individual should roll a single **Dexterity Ability Check**.

Success means that they are not spotted and gather the amount of water required. Failure means that the patrol notices the player and surprise is lost.

Players may elect to surprise the skeletons instead. Allow players to make reasonable moves to set up their ambush, the distance of a single move action is a good idea. If any one of the players want to cover more ground, then allow them the option of running with a **Strength Ability Check**. Success will allow them to move as if they made two move actions. Failure will cause surprise to be lost. Once the players are in position, determine when they would like to execute their ambush.

If the skeletons are defeated, players can collect water from The Fountain freely. Players may attempt to drink the water or store it in waterskins on their own. If any player drinks the water, allow them to remedy any disease immediately if they were afflicted by the disease.

Players may attempt to use **Intelligence Ability Checks** if they wish to investigate this cavern portion.

A successful Ability Check will reveal a small trove of coins hidden nearby (roll 3d10 for amount). It also reveals that this cavern appears to have existed even before the ruins, as scholarly training and inference shows many signs that this place was rarely used and has little to show that it was disturbed much at all. After collecting the water, players may proceed back to the main hall unhindered by the pools. They may choose to exit the ruins or continue exploring.

The GM can use 2d4 Zombies (OSE - Monsters) or any combination of undead such as Skeletons (OSE - Monsters), Spectres (OSE - Monsters), Wights (OSE - Monsters) and Wraiths (OSE - Monsters).

The Altar (6)

Winding passages and seemingly endless pathways twist and turn, some barring passage while others seem to encourage it. Ancient traps and tricks terrorize the unwary traveler, and shrill tongues seem to whisper deep in the darkness.

If the party chooses to go left down the staircase, they will find themselves in a section of the ruins that is remarkably well-maintained by comparison to the rest, with very little overgrowth or disrepair. The aesthetic of this place should be described as a mixture of stone and mural, again telling the lost tales of a long dead civilization. Curious players may make an **Intelligence Ability Check** to discern the images. GMs can have prepared material for this event, or allow the players to make up something on their own to add to the history for flavor. Upon proceeding into the area, make sure that the party's formation is clear. Ask who is leading the group through this area, as the narrow pathways will force players into, at most, a double file formation through the passageways.
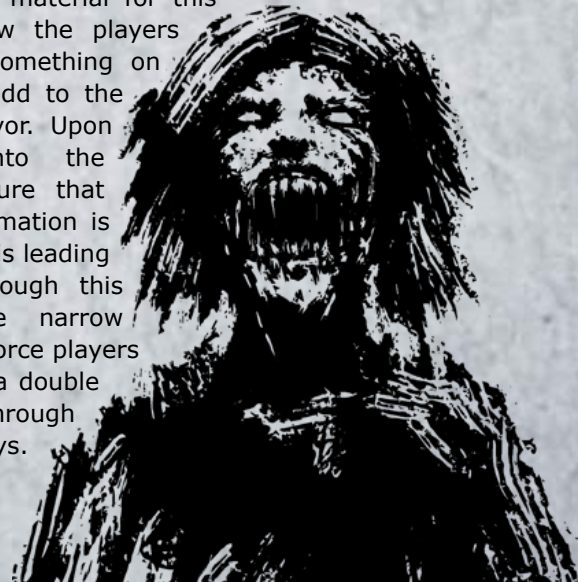
6a – Traps

GMs should set a series of traps throughout this portion of the ruins, as well as appropriate indicators for the inquisitive player. A few examples would be poison darts, wall spikes, swinging axes, fire traps, etc. A **Wisdom Ability Check** should be made when a player is assessing an area for a trap. Success will allow them to notice where the trap is, but not necessarily what it does. Context clues should be given as appropriate. For example, a line of perfectly symmetrical holes in the wall work as a good context clue that this particular trap launches something across the hall. Players may also notice certain triggers or mechanisms that assist them in avoiding traps.

There is no limit on the number of traps a GM may set, but it is recommended to keep the number manageable to prevent this section from becoming over lengthy. Overcoming traps will depend on what the players attempt to do. Appropriate **Intellience Ability Checks** can allow players to try to understand the function of the traps and properly avoid them or their triggers. **Dexterity Ability Checks** with a +2 penalty can be made to skirt past or move through the traps. Players may get creative with their approach to handling the traps; use whatever Ability Checks are appropriate given their decision.

Traps could be nearly anything you can imagine, but we have added two new traps you might want to consider.

If you feel any trap is too harsh, feel free to lessen the difficulty of detection to what you feel appropriate.

Snake Pit

In the depths of these soft ruins rests a pit of snakes. The walkway above it is loose and would easily collapse if enough weight was set upon it. If these is intentional or not is not known. The outcome is the same either way.

The PC must pass a **Wisdom Ability Check with a +2 penalty** or plummet into the hole. The agitated snakes will immediately attack. There are dozens if not hundreds; combat is not appropriate. Anyone who fails must make a **Dexterity Ability Check** immediately upon falling inside. If they fail, they must **save vs. poison** or take 2d10 damage. If the succeed, they are not bitten.

The PC may attempt to escape each "round" afterward with a Strength or Dexterity Ability Check. If they have already been bitten, they continue to suffer 2d10 damage each round until they succeed at **save vs. poison**. If they have not been bitten and cannot escape, they must evade the attacks until they escape.

The poison lasts until they succeed at their save or die, whichever occur first.

Fire Geyser

The bubbling water might not seem out of place, but the explosive steaming water can prove to be deadly. The geyser erupts without warning and all the character can do is evade.

Characters must make a **Dexterity Ability Check** with a +1 penalty to leap aside the boiling water. If they fail, the character takes 2d8 damage.

6b – Making it to the Altar

If the players took the sword from **The Glowing Blade (4)** scene, then this area may have the dead walking through out it. The traps are indiscriminate; the zombies in the area could very well trigger these traps and create chaotic scenes and combat for the players depending on their placement.

If the players are able to navigate the traps without being killed, they will eventually reach a room with two coffin slabs and a large altar. The altar is intricately carved and inlaid with many different precious metals and gems. The most prominent feature is a central section of the altar that allows for a hand to be placed within.

Players can make a **Wisdom Ability Check** to check for traps. Whether success or failure, it will reveal that no traps are in the area. Depending on success or failure, the wording should allow for either certainty or ambiguity respectively.

Players can also make an **Intelligence Ability Check** to review the altar or the slabs, as the room is strangely well-lit and not difficult to see within. Success will reveal that the altar emits a faint white glow, and a small hole in the ceiling of the room allows for unknown light to illuminate the hand. The coffin slabs have carvings that follow a pattern of some unknown individual accomplishing what appear to be many tasks. Each slab has a different set of carvings that take the pattern of a life path. GMs may describe the images however they wish, but the history should not have certainty.

Players may choose to leave the room altogether. Though the area is large, there is nothing else of note besides the corpses (or zombies) in the hallways. If the players decide to leave, determine their route. If they take a known path, then you may allow them to ignore rolling to avoid any additional traps.

If players choose to open the slabs, they will find a corpse within each. The corpses will be withered and decayed, clothes and equipment also in a pitiful state. A **Wisdom Ability Check** will reveal up to 5d6 silver coins in each slab individually.

If a player approaches The Altar, they may attempt to place their hand within the depression on the altar. Whatever players chooses to do so may then take a free advance of their choosing. However, The Altar's glow will retract and the light in the room will give way to darkness. The players will quickly realize they are no longer alone in this place. The PCs must now face various undead. Use any combination of Zombies (OSE - Monsters), Skeletons (OSE - Monsters), Spectres (OSE - Monsters), Wights (OSE - Monsters) and Wraiths (OSE - Monsters).

Upon resolving The Altar scene, whether The Altar was activated or not, there is little else left in this area. Players may safely return to the main hall.

Resolution

Upon completing the quest to retrieve the water from The Fountain, or failing, the players may return to The Witch. This conversation can play out a number of ways depending on what occurred in the ruins.

If the water was retrieved and the escort returned, The witch will be greatly pleased with the performance of the PCs as well as their ability to preserve her men. She will continue to grant the players their safe haven in the hamlet, as well as offer each player a minor reward that is within her power. This could be simple coinage, but weapons or knowledge could be offered within reason, as the greatest reward is the preservation of their home against the endless winter.

If the water was retrieved, but escort lost, the Witch will still be pleased. She may note that it was an unfortunate loss of life in regards to her followers, but that it was certainly not in vain. The hamlet will be preserved by her going forward. If the water was not retrieved, the Witch will be sorely disappointed. She will tell the players that she will have to reconsider their arrangement for the hamlet unless she can find a suitable task for them to redeem themselves.

In any case, the witch will be quick about either granting rewards or venting displeasure in order to get the players out of her hut. She is deeply intrigued by the water, and appears to want to use it quickly for whatever purpose left indeterminable to the players.

Players may also elect to not return the water to the Witch. This will have consequences in any potential future sessions for the plotline.

Players attempting to bargain with the Witch for the water will find many of their attempts stifled, as the with is not to be bargained with. If the water is within reach, then she may even resort to combat should the players push their attempts too far. The same combat scenario from the Unadvised Combat scene can be used if players decide to push their luck.

Who Was the Ice Queen?

The Ice Queen is referenced several times within A Witch's Desire, but does not appear in the module. The Ice Queen could be many things, and the GM may feel free to decide who she actually is.

It is clear that the Ice Queen and the Witch of the Wilds are mortal enemies, and are constantly at a stand off for the region. A GM may use this module anywhere they see fit, and so region is non-descript. Regardless of what her true intent is, the PCs do not know the truth.

Ideas for the Ice Queen include the following

* A noble from a nearby country, attempting to steal the Witch's secrets.
* The sister or mother of the Witch, attempting to reunite her family through force.
* A powerful mage and former teacher of the Witch, who wishes to reclaim her stolen grimoire.
* A daemon looking to destroy the Witch and end her influence against Forever Winter.