SLAVES TO FATE

Slaves to Fate

To live is to suffer. Will you survive?

Snow began to fall as the Betrayer placed a trinket on the raised stone altar in the middle of the Haunted Forest. The chirps of birds and howls of beasts sounded in disapproval. Each distant noise rising up through the forest in a fever pitch of panic. A cold wind whipped through the trees, chilling man and beast alike. The prophecy had come to pass, and so began the curse of Forever Winter. The Long Winter would haunt the land for decades and all life across the land fought for its very survival. But the ultimate fate of the world is in your hands, for good or ill. Slaves to Fate is the prelude module that requires Old-School Essentials Core Rules. It can be used with other modules, different campaigns, or as a one-shot adventure.

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Slaves to Fate

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INTRODUCTION

Snow began to fall as the Betrayer placed a trinket on the raised stone altar in the middle of the haunted forest. The chirps of birds and howls of beasts sounded in disapproval. Each distant noise rises up through the forest in a fever pitch of panic. A cold wind whipped through the trees, chilling man and beast alike. The prophecy had come to pass, and so began the curse of Forever Winter. This winter would haunt the land for decades and all life across the land will fight for its very survival. But the ultimate fate of the world is in your hands, for good or ill.

Forever Winter is a series of modular adventures meant for a wide range of characters. Most adventures within this adventure series are completely modular.

Forever Winter can take place in any setting you wish. The exact location is left up to the GM. This allows the GM free reign to use Forever Winter however they wish. Each module is compatible with other Forever Winter modules. These modules are also suitable for one-shot adventures, or with any other Old School Essentials or OSR campaign.

Any GM wanting to run a game in a bleak winter, dark fantasy apocalypse, can find this book helpful. Slaves to Fate is the prelude to Forever Winter, and should be used first in the series. It can also be used completely independently of Forever Winter. The ending might not bring winter, but some other calamity, if the GM wants to use it for that purpose.

Slaves to Fate is suitable for any 1st-3rd Level character. Each encounter is scalable, if the GM would like to use this adventure for more experienced characters.

REFERENCES

Slaves to Fate may make references to other Old School Essentials publications. In order to cut down on the wordiness of those references, readers will see an abbreviation along with the section of the book whenever they are required. Slaves to Fate does not reference page numbers; layout updates, new print editions, and other such changes can cause errors with such methods of reference.

OSE = Old School Essentials

PRELUDE

Two weeks ago an expedition left a nearby settlement for the haunted forest. It was not clear how this group of lumberjacks had gained rights to work the forest's outskirts. The expedition consisted of dozens of slaves. These slaves would be put to work felling as many trees as possible.

The truth is that the machinations of a dangerous cult were to blame for it all. The expedition was a front for a dangerous ploy that would throw the world into an apocalypse of snow and ice. Forever Winter awaits on the horizon.

SETUP

The expedition forced the slaves north, driving them from the civilized lands toward the wilds far away. Those in bondage were primarily men of low birth, but also many other races of the land. Their days and nights filled each with terror. The overseers set back breaking work schedules of sixteen to eighteen hours a day. These poor souls had enough free time to eat and sleep, but nothing else. They were lucky if they woke up at all, as disease was common in camps such as this. It was a never-ending cycle. Their overlords would use them to fell as much lumber as possible, and then ship it back home for a handsome profit. When a slave died, more would make the trek to the forest. The wealthy lords funded this expedition themselves and could afford such expenditures.

This expedition had been the first of its kind in over twenty years. Lumberjacking along these woods had ended in disaster many times before. Rumors of haunts and other creatures that drove those working the woods mad were common. The truth of evil spirits was unclear, but the place did have a sinister look and feel. And yet, time heals all scars and fades all memories. The profit the expedition and those that funded it stood to earn was enough to ignore such fears.

Slaves to Fate is the prelude to Forever Winter. In this prelude, the long winter has yet to occur. Slaves to Fate will involve the PCs in the formation of this apocalypse. This module requires each PC to play a slave. Each should be a slave to put them on equal footing with the rest of the characters.

This module works best for starting characters. Where necessary, the module will give advice as to different encounter levels to be used. This module is not for the faint of heart, as Forever Winter is a dangerous campaign. Character death is a real possibility. If that is not to the GM's taste, feel free to back down any challenges you feel are too difficult.
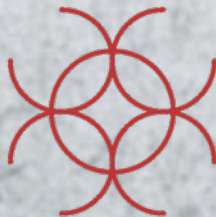
WEARY

The day is long and exhausting. The slaves' muscles ache and quiver from exhaustion. Their minds dull from the near rotten ale served at every meal or break, but it helped keep disease at bay among the filthy conditions of camp. The constant, intense physical labor tears down even the boldest and strongest. None seem to have the strength to fight back or cause trouble.

Two guards watch over those gathered around a small campfire. The slavers tie each slave to a central pole with enough slack to allow them to crawl into a small, threadbare, tent.

A huge pot hangs above the fire, but unfortunately what was inside was less than appetizing to most. There was always ale, but never enough to give the slaves courage against the fear of death or torture. A tankard here and there to slow and fatigue the mind was enough.

THE BETRAYER

This adventure works best when one PC plays Winter, who is discussed in greater detail below.

This character is deceiving others to bring forth the cataclysm of Forever Winter. The adventure references this character as "The Betrayer." Regardless of their class, their goal should be the same. The GM may NPC the Betrayer if they believe no player wishes to play the role. This is less satisfying in the end, but may be best for your play group. If a player does become the Betrayer, it is important to give them information on the character before play begins.

NEW MECHANIC: CORRUPTION

Those near the Amulet of Winter, a vile artifact which the Betrayer holds, are subject to Corruption.

Create a Corruption Pool, the maximum is the characters' WIS. Each time the character is subject to Corruption, the player should save versus spells. If the player fails, they roll 1d6. Add that number to the Corruption Pool. The PCs find themselves loyal to whomever holds the amulet. The GM should describe their Corruption in such a way to reinforce this loyalty. If their Corruption should ever meet or exceed their WIS score, they are fully controlled by the will of the amulet and will do whatever they can to see the Betrayer succeed.

AT CAMP

Use this scene so that PCs can get to know each other and RP. Players that use original characters may use shared backgrounds if all players involved agree.

Make sure the players roll for Corruption, but do not tell them why.

Shared backgrounds can enhance RP and make characters come to life. The Betrayer may also share a background, but not before their capture. Real knowledge of The Betrayer's history would not be available to other characters.

With the PCs chained to the pole, it is impossible to approach the guards. If the PCs attempt to break their bonds or uproot the pole, the guards attack immediately. Any PC may engage the guards in conversation, but only through a successful **CHA check**. Otherwise the guards will ignore the PCs or respond with disdain. The guards do not know many details of the expedition. But the guards can give the following facts and provide certain benefits.

RUMORS

- The guards' employer is called the Bright Company.
- This encampment is the deepest in the woods of the entire operation.
- There have been no signs of hauntings and such talk is dismissed.
- The guards will give an extra ration to anyone who succeeded their CHA check.

NEW MECHANIC: STARVATION

GMs may make use of Starvation rules. A character is considered *Starving* when they have not eaten or drank anything significant in at least 3 days. Afterward, the character begin taking penalties on all rolls. The first day they are *Starving,* they take a -1 penalty, the second day they take -2, and so on.

When a character reaches -5 in penalties the character must make a **CON check** with a penalty of X. X is the Starvation penalty. On a failure, the character dies of hunger. It is unlikely that Slaves to Fate will see characters starving for 5 days, but this mechanic can be used in any game the GM wishes.

WINTER

Winter was raised among a death cult fixated with bringing an ever-lasting winter to the world. Among his peers, Winter was the most devious and fanatic. Gifted with the ancient Amulet of Winter, the changeling took the name of his destiny and began his journey.

He is responsible for the entire expedition to the haunted woods, and through his guile, persuaded the Bright Company to bring him to the very spot where he would bring forth Forever Winter. Disguised as a slave named "Lorg", Winter hopes to trick other slaves into helping him reach the inner-most sanctum of this holy place to begin the apocalypse. If Winter is being played, encourage the player to create the character. If no one is playing Winter, the GM can use a Doppelganger (OSE - Monster Descriptions) as an NPC. The GM can also create their own NPC if they so wish.

ESCAPE

Each character is suffering from Starvation. The PCs each currently have a -1 penalty. Extra rations will ensure the PCs stave off Starvation longer. If Starvation lasts into the next day, those PCs take a -2 penalty, and so forth as stated by the Starvation rules. Meanwhile, escape is now possible, but difficult.

As described above, the slavers have attached the PCs to a pole by thick hemp rope. A successful **WIS check** will allow confirmation that their restraints are different. The expedition has bound other slaves in chains. The reason for this is the Betrayer, who has bribed guards before the expedition set out.

Slavers give the PCs no sharp implements at camp, so cutting the very thick rope is hopeless. The GM should not allow an escape to be easy at this point. ogres PCs, and others with similarly sharp teeth, may attempt to chew through the rope. Chewing might be impossible for some ancestries, and the GM should feel empowered to disallow this action. PCs could also try to slip their bonds or dig up the pole.

SHARP TEETH & THIN WRISTS

Attempting to chew through the rope would take a very long time. It would likely take hours, and it is only possible if the GM deems it so. They may also choose to try to slip their bonds. Doing either in the open would immediately require a **DEX check** or be seen. Luckily, if the PC thinks about it, they can tuck themselves away in their tent and try it there. This requires no test to remain unseen.

Chewing through the bonds is a **STR check** with a -2 penalty. Slipping the bonds requires a **DEX check** with a -1 penalty. If the PCs fail a test to escape in their tents, the guards will use a whistle to signal trouble. Slipping free or chewing through the rope is very time consuming, and any failed attempt precludes them from attempting again. A guard will approach the PC or PCs that attempted to escape and bash them with a club for 4 points worth of damage. The PC cannot dodge and is hit automatically.

Afterward, the guard triples. As punishment, they force the slaves to sleep outside. The guards poke and prod the slaves, keeping them awake as punishment. The PCs suffer from the next level of Starvation. If the PCs untie themselves or tear through the rope, they may attack the guards, or try to flee. Unlike the other opportunities, digging up or pulling the pole free is impossible to hide. Doing so will instigate combat immediately. The guards position themselves based on previous RP. They might be closer if the PCs struck up a conversation earlier, or further away if not.

PULLING UP THE POLE & COMBAT

Getting the pole out of the ground requires a total of three successful **STR check** with a -3 penalty. Any PC can contribute to the total number of successful tests. Unfortunately for the characters, using this method still keeps their hands tied. All further physical based checks are at a -1 Penalty.

Resolve combat when the PCs flee, defeat the guards, or the PCs lose. At the beginning of combat, the guard will use their whistle, and in 1d4 rounds, 4 additional guards arrive. The slaves have no weapons, and so the likelihood of defeating the guards is very low.

The PCs may flee, even if the guards are already alerted. If combat has already started, fleeing is still an option. PCs may roll a DEX check to escape off into the night unseen. They must be a reasonable distance from the nearest guard. The PC may also try to sneak away if the nearest guard is fighting another PC. Characters that can see in the dark make this test with a +2 modifier. If a PC fails, they are the subject of all the guards' reactions, and the guards will give chase.

If the guards defeat the PCs in combat, aside from the Betrayer, they are immediately executed. The Betrayer is able to use their contacts to stay alive for the time being. The Betrayer waits for a different opportunity to escape. PCs that succeed should advance to **The Bridge**. If the Betrayer is the only PC unable to escape, the Betrayer will find the other PCs the next day. The way they escape is up to the player. Their story could be the truth or a lie. If the PCs never enter combat, advance to **Work Day**.

For guard statistics, use Veterans (OSE - Monster Descriptions). The GM should use as many as they see fit; 4-8 guards are likely suitable in this scenario.

WORK DAY

The sound of axes upon trees were loud, but not loud enough to drown out the grunts of slaves and the barks of slavers. The morning was cold and damp; rain fell from the heavens, but the thick canopy of the forest above pushed most aside. A half dozen slaves were already getting started here, swinging axes and using a massive saw. The guards had chained them together, surrounding a single tree. They were moving quickly, making short work of the trunk. Nearby, a pair of slaves pulled on a rope lassoed high around the tree. When the tree fell, they drug it off into a clearing, cutting it up into smaller pieces for transport.

The PCs are immediately put to work. The slavers attach each slave to one another by the ankles. As mentioned in **Weary**, chains are not used, based on the Betrayer's previous planning and bribes. Guards seem to ignore this point, as if someone told them to ignore it, or perhaps they simply do not care. This may become a point of interest, as cutting through rope is quite easier than breaking through chains.

Unlike in **Weary**, the PCs have an easy route to break their bonds. Their axes will work well here. A swift chop of their axe should cut their bonds and allow at least partial freedom to flee. However, there are many guards standing watch. Doing so would immediately provoke the guards to attack. The GM should float the rumor that any escape attempts ended with the execution of anyone that tried.

Make sure the players roll for Corruption, but do not tell the PCs why.

DENIZENS OF THE WOODS

Regardless if the PCs try to escape or not, the GM should describe strange noises coming from the woods. **WIS checks** with a +1 bonus are a good way to increase the tension within the scene. It is helpful if the GM can explain what the PCs hear to the players in secret. These noises are from the horde of bugbear approaching the work site. The bugbear are part of a tribe from deep in the forest, venturing close to the edge of the woods. The bugbear could be looking for anything, including slaves, gear, and food. They have consolidated many other tribes, and have superior numbers. This prompts them to attack without care. A larger bestial creature, called the Horned Goat, spurs the bugbear forward. With the attackers numbering more than double the guards, they show no fear. The leader is not overly interested in attacking personally, instead preferring to wait and allow its servants to lead the charge.

The PCs should face no more bugbear than the number of PCs at the beginning of the attack. A large chunk of the bugbear attack the armed guards, not the bound slaves.

The bugbear attempt to steal the slaves as their own. They primarily attempt to disarm or subdue the PCs unless they begin to injure the bugbear in the attempt. There is a never ending wave of adversaries, and if the PCs continue to fight, the bugbear will continue to attack. After three rounds, the Horned Goat will step in and attempt to finish the PCs off. This would be very challenging, and the GM should make it clear of the danger if they do not attempt to flee.

Narrate the bugbear attack on the guards. The attackers are victorious, killing or capturing most the guards and their gear. Each PC may make a **DEX check** to flee into the woods so long as they are not engaged with a bugbear. Bugbear will continue to attack until they have defeated PCs or the PCs have fled. A combat victory by the PCs is impossible. The bugbear could capture the PCs here. Characters captured should be removed from the game. The GM can introduce new PCs in the next scene. If the attackers catch the Betrayer, he is able to stash the secret amulet on another PC. That PC will carry the amulet unwittingly until later when they become the Betrayer.

For the Horned Goat, please use a Minotaur (OSE - Monster Descriptions) if its statistics are required.

In the event the bugbear defeat all the PCs, the GM may end the adventure with the PCs' deaths, or continue with the PCs as slaves to the bugbear. Once resolved they can continue with this module, beginning in **The Bridge**.

THE BRIDGE

They will find a narrow bridge in ill repair that spans over a shallow river. The bridge has three sections, and between each of those are huge rock formations. These provide stable footing which the planks of the bridge do not. It looks unnatural, but soon the escapees will have little time to debate. The first section provides no issues while crossing. Beneath them is a rapidly flowing river that appears to dangerously crash against the bridge's supports.

The wave of bugbear appears unending. It does not take long for the bugbear giving chase to find the bridge with the intent to cross and capture the PCs. The bridge is not very stable, and the PCs could knock it over in sections if desired. This would halt the advancement of the bugbear.

The second and third section requires a **DEX check** with a -1 penalty. If the PCs engage the bugbear on the bridge, all participants must make the same roll. Failure means the character topples over the edge and will drop into the river.

The GM could allow them a **STR check** with a -1 penalty to try not to drown after falling. If they cross the bridge successfully or navigate the river, the PCs continue to the next scene. Afterward, any bugbear remaining will give up the hunt.

Make sure the players roll for Corruption, but do not tell them why.

REFUGE FROM THE COLD

Dark shadows move as an old torch burns bright. It lights the room enough to see what peers down at those seeking sanctuary. Trees, both large and small, intermix and grow upward. This seemingly unnatural room encloses everyone as if an above ground cavern. Three of those trees are massive, with different carvings marking their trunks. They appear haunted, in agony, and stare at each of you as if you were the terrible hand that sculpted them.

The PCs have crossed the river and found safety on the opposite bank. They are now entering the inner domain of the Protector of the Forest. The protector, an ancient creature part elf and part tree. They are little known to any but those that delve deep into the forest. Sometimes they are referred to as "dryads". She awaits the prophesied scion who comes to curse the land. The snows have now intensified, and forces the PCs to look for shelter.

The Betrayer is able to lead their companions to an opening in the forest. It appears as if a door between a mass of tangled trees and branches. Inside, they find an outdoor, building-like, enclosure. There are statues carved from the trees, seemingly of fey and elves. They do not appear to be the first people to have found the enclosure. There are a half dozen skeletons, all wearing much thicker cloths than any of the PCs. Packs on the skeletons have a total of 1d6 rations. There are also two torches that remain dry and lay with the dead. If a fire is lit, the forest seems to complain, as there are many moans and unnatural vibrations in the trees. Anyone resting here may use this time to heal wounds, but the PCs have limited rations and will continue to Starve. However, the PCs may make **WIS check** with a -2 penalty to hunt or gather food. If successful, the PCs can collect 1d4 rations off their kills.

THE STATUES

The statues are a trap for the Betrayer. There are three statues in total, and each have a script written upon their chest. **INT checks** with a -2 penalty allow the PCs to find and determine that claws carved these scripts, not a cutting tool. The statues seem to look on horrified as their faces are stuck in agony. There is sap that seems to be leaking from the scripts, as if blood. Only PCs that can read elvish can read the scripts. The Betrayer should be able to read the script on each statue. If the Betrayer does not know elvish, the writing is a language they can read.

There is a clear sense of unease that should be described to everyone. The PCs feel as though there are eyes upon them, but as the weather changes outside and the hour grows late, what other choice do they have but to rest here?

Make sure the players roll for Corruption, but do not tell them why.

THE LADY OF RAPTURE

The statue appears to be a female elf, dressed threadbare, with her breasts exposed. She looks down into the room with pursed lips and a twisted glare. She represents pain in pleasure.

Her script reads: *"My lips await those who travel to the end. Release me from this state of everlasting bondage. I shall forsake the world as the Betrayer does, never again to care for the birds and the beasts, certain to suffer under the skies of a Forever Winter."*

THE CHILD OF WRATH

A fey creature, perhaps an elf, crouched forward with a sneer on his face. His arms are branches that seem to want to reach out and throttle anyone before him.

His script reads: *"Let my fingers grab your neck, I will only squeeze for a moment. I have such a fire in me, a fire that only wants to choke the life from everything I see. My roots will soon choke as the ground hardens and freezes. Give me this one chance to feel alive again."*

THE GUILTY WARRIOR

A tall elvish warrior, spear in hand, looking sternly forward. The carvings expose his chest, with a heart carved within the script.

His script reads: *"Take from me my heart that is black with hate. Take from me the guilt that I have brought upon myself. Each day I stand in duty is another day I lament my past. Do me this one boon so that I may not suffer the Betrayer's fate."*

THE NIGHT

At some point during the night the exit to the enclosure grows over. It is a slow process, and without a high level of vigilance it is difficult to spot it as it is happening. Anyone on guard during the night can make a **WIS check** with a -2 penalty to notice what is happening

If the group awakens, they do not recover any wounds naturally. They may attempt to escape, but doing so causes the forest to attempt to grow over the exit. The PCs may flee the exit with a **DEX check** with a -3 penalty. If a character fails, they take 1d6 damage as the forest stabs them with branches and thorns. The PCs escape regardless of the DEX check results.

THE PUZZLE

Escaping during the night is the easiest course of action. It is unlikely that someone on guard will be able to spot what is happening in time. If the PCs are unable to realize they are being trapped, the only way to escape is to solve the riddle posed to them here.

Each statue requires a specific trigger to pull back the vines and branches that bar the way. Each puzzle must be solved to ensure their escape. If a PC would attempt to burn the door open, the fire will quickly spread everywhere, making their plight even more dire.

SOLVING THE RIDDLES

- The Lady of Rapture must receive a kiss upon her lips
- The Child of Wrath wishes for a PC to place their neck within its hands.
- The Guilty Warrior desires a sword, or another weapon, to pierce his heart.

Once the PCs complete these three acts, the branches and vines holding the PCs hostage will begin to pull back. If the players are struggling with the puzzle, eventually some of the dead they found in the room before will begin to rise. These are Zombies (OSE - Monster Descriptions). The GM should use several to challenge the characters. Use more for more experienced characters. If the PCs are victorious, the door will open. However, the statues curse the PCs. Choose a PC at random, inflict the Dryad's Curse on that character until the conclusion of **Slaves to Fate.** The character may make a **spell save** in order to fend off the curse.

This curse requires the afflicted to roll again after every successful roll, giving them the opportunity to fail.

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THE LAST TREK

Freedom comes at a steep price. There is no time to savior survival, the cold bites too deep and the wind stings too sudden. It is difficult to see beyond an outstretched hand, but the faintest sign of a trail is visible through the windblown snow. It is too late to turn back, but a feeling of dread lingers as thick as the clouds above.

After fleeing the "cave" the PCs find a terrible snow storm raging through the woods. The weather conditions obstruct their sight. The Betrayer is still very sure that he knows where to go and what to do. They should relay that message to the others with confidence, they are close to their goal and eager to complete their task. The Betrayer may make an excuse that they are looking for shelter. This may work if they had claimed knowledge of the woods beforehand.

Make sure the players roll for Corruption, but do not tell them why.

The PCs begin traveling through a wooded area, and it is not long before they run into others doing the same. The PCs should make a **WIS check** to spot several elves in wait. They are Elves (OSE - Monster Descriptions) equal to the number of PCs. Use more if the PCs are more experienced. The elves are guardians of the forest and the main underlings of the Protector of the Wood.

If the PCs spot the elves, the elves begin to ask questions. They speak the common tongue and elvish. They will fight a pitched battle if needed, but these elves prefer surprise tactics that give them an advantage. They will begin to ask why the PCs are going in the direction they are going, and warn the PCs they are entering forbidden territory. They will continue to say the PCs "Must not pass." The word "must" is important, as it could sound like a threat or command. However, it is in truth a warning of the encroaching doom.

Smart players may realize this, and either way, it may give PCs pause about going further. The Betrayer will attempt to force combat or some sort of conflict. They will not allow the elves to reach a deal with the others, as it would not allow them to proceed. If any PC attacks the elves or acts aggressively, the elves will attack the entire group without hesitation.

There is a high likelihood of combat with the elves. This is because they were either not spotted or because the Betrayer forces the elves to fight. If, somehow, the PCs are able to maintain a dialogue, the Betrayer will start to become troubled. The elves will admit that a curse is starting, but that the Protector can reverse it.

The elves state that they will allow the PCs to go back the way they came, but only if they allow them to search their belongings for "the key". The key is, of course, the Betrayer's amulet. If the key is ever found by the elves, they will attack whomever holds it until that PC is dead. If the other PCs help, the elves will also attack them.

If someone kills the Betrayer, and a PC recovers the amulet, the PC holding the amulet is quickly corrupted. This PC then becomes the Betrayer. If the elves take the amulet themselves, one of them become the Betrayer.

Are they Suspicious Yet?

The other PCs may be getting suspicious of the Betrayer. There is a possibility that you may require PCs to make a Test to try to catch the Betrayer in a lie. The Test is highly dependent upon the situation and skills of everyone involved. Consider using **INT checks**, penalized by the Betrayer's CHA bonus. At this point the PCs have very little options but to follow the Betrayer. No other PC has any idea where they are or where to go.

ELF ENDINGS

The encounter with the elves can go several different ways. Here are some likely scenarios.

• The elves are killed and the Betrayer or another PC retains the amulet. Move to The Altar.
• The PCs are killed and a elf takes the amulet. This signifies the end of the story. The elf places the amulet on the Altar. The start of Forever Winter should be narrated.
• The Betrayer is slain or captured. Move to **the Altar**. One of the elves or another PC becomes the Betrayer.

THE ALTAR

The cold bites deep into the very soul of even the strongest among the survivors. Not even the heaviest of furs can thwart the chill. The early fall heat is gone, vanquished by this unnatural conqueror. Snow impedes every step, making the path forward difficult and treacherous. When the trees begin to clear, hope may rise in every heart, but dare not to hope while this winter lingers.

In the clearing stood a tall and wide altar. Etched into the side are twirling symbols that glow a faint blue. Three steps reach to the top, but they made more of a ramp with the snow piles growing rapidly. This was not sanctuary. This was the finale riddle in a long trip into the heart of the Haunted Woods. A trip plagued by Mother Nature instead of malevolent spirits.

Make sure the players roll for Corruption, but do not tell them why.

Whomever the Betrayer is will move forward toward the altar. Depending on who the Betrayer is at this point, they may lie about their intentions. They could still be seeking shelter, scouting the area, or taking the PCs to meet the Lady. Anyone fully ensnared by the Lure of Winter would feverishly defend the Betrayer if attacked or otherwise impeded.

As the group grows closer to the altar, the PCs can spot several sets of eyes in the darkness. The PCs may make a **WIS check** to spot them. The hiding wolves ambush the PCs if they fail. Regardless of how the battle starts, wolves begin coming out of the woods to protect the altar. They will attack anyone moving onto the altar, or anyone that attacks them. They have little interest in attacking anyone that hangs back. Clever players may realize this and decide to allow the wolves to attack the Betrayer. Use 4-6 Wolves (OSE - Monster Descriptions), depending on how challenging the GM wishes the encounter to be. This is the last encounter in **Slaves to Fate**.

SURVIVAL

Not unlike the encounter with the elves, the final conflict at the Altar has several likely outcomes.

- The PCs fail and are defeated. The PCs may have some difficulty against the wolves if they suffered wounds throughout the module. Victory is not guaranteed. If the PCs are unable to defeat the wolves, the PCs' last vision should be that of a dryad. The Dryad, who is the Protector of the Wood, takes up the amulet and fulfills the prophecy. Even she is not powerful enough to resist the Lure of Winter.
- The PCs defeat the wolves. The Betrayer immediately takes the amulet to the Altar. When this happens, the snow begins falling rapidly. The wind begins to howl and the Protector of the Wood finally appears.
- The PCs succeed but the Betrayer dies. If the Betrayer dies, either by the PCs or the wolves, the Protector of the Wood arrives. If the Lure of Winter has corrupted a PC, they will become the Betrayer and take the amulet to the Altar. Otherwise, the Dryad fulfills the prophecy herself.

FOREVER WINTER

The Betrayer is always confronted by the Protector of the Woods unless the wolves kill them. The Protector of the Woods is a dryad, carrying a longbow, and appears very dangerous. She is eager to attack anyone or anything coming too close. If the Betrayer has already laid the amulet on the altar, she looks morose, but will not engage in further combat If the GM requires stats for the dryad, use a Dryad (OSE - Monster Descriptions). She will now tell the characters the tale of Forever Winter.

Forever Winter is a curse and prophecy that claims a Betrayer will bring the ancient Amulet of Winter to The Haunted Woods. This is the place where a dark creature created the amulet with equally dark magic. She claims that place is here upon this altar. Her fore-bearers tasked her with keeping the amulet from the altar. She explains over the last few months that bugbear had decimated the woods, somehow driven into the forest and wreaking havoc. She makes a guess that outside forces had caused the incursion to keep her occupied. She repeats the prophecy for the PCs.

"When the snows come too soon, and when the trees shake and leaves fall, then Forever Winter shall be upon us. The snows and bitter cold shall stretch from the birthplace of a trinket. So innocent in appearance it is, but it holds a power unmatched. It is the will of destruction from beyond. They that bring it will have no choice. They that seek to stop it can only but delay the inevitable. The crop will not grow. The pig will not live. Life will starve. Only the cold shall spread until fate intervenes to give one last chance at salvation.

Now that the Betrayer has completed their task, the dryad will leave the Betrayer's fate up to the PCs. The PCs may do what they wish, even the Betrayer, who likely feels a great deal of relief that their quest is over.

If the Betrayer is a PC, it should be up to the player to decide why they wanted to cause the calamity. The amulet could have forced them to complete the task, or they could be a willing participant. The choice is the player's to make.

If the GM and the players wish to continue with other modules of Forever Winter, the GM should allow PCs to use characters from Slaves to Fate. It makes their characters unique in the fact they had seen the beginning of the apocalypse.. and even had a part in it.

A player could even use The Betrayer in later modules if they survive. It works well if the player wishes to play the part of a repentant character with a guilty conscious.

ALTERNATIVE ENDINGS

Although Slaves to Fate is meant to be the precursor to a horrific and unnatural winter, the GM could decide some other calamity works best. There are many options that can work, and the list below are only a few examples.

- The release of a monster or a hoard of monsters. These could be anything the GM wants to use, from dragons to undead.
- Instead of Forever Winter, the prophecy could be "Forever Night." In this scenario the world is covered by darkness, as the sun either fails to rise or is blotted out by some unnatural force.
- A plague could begin to ravage the towns and cities, spreading from the forest outward. People die by the thousands as a pandemic wrecks havoc across the land.
- The amulet could release the dryad from her bonds in the forest, allowing her influence to spread. She and her fey allies make war upon humanity and other non-fey races.

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