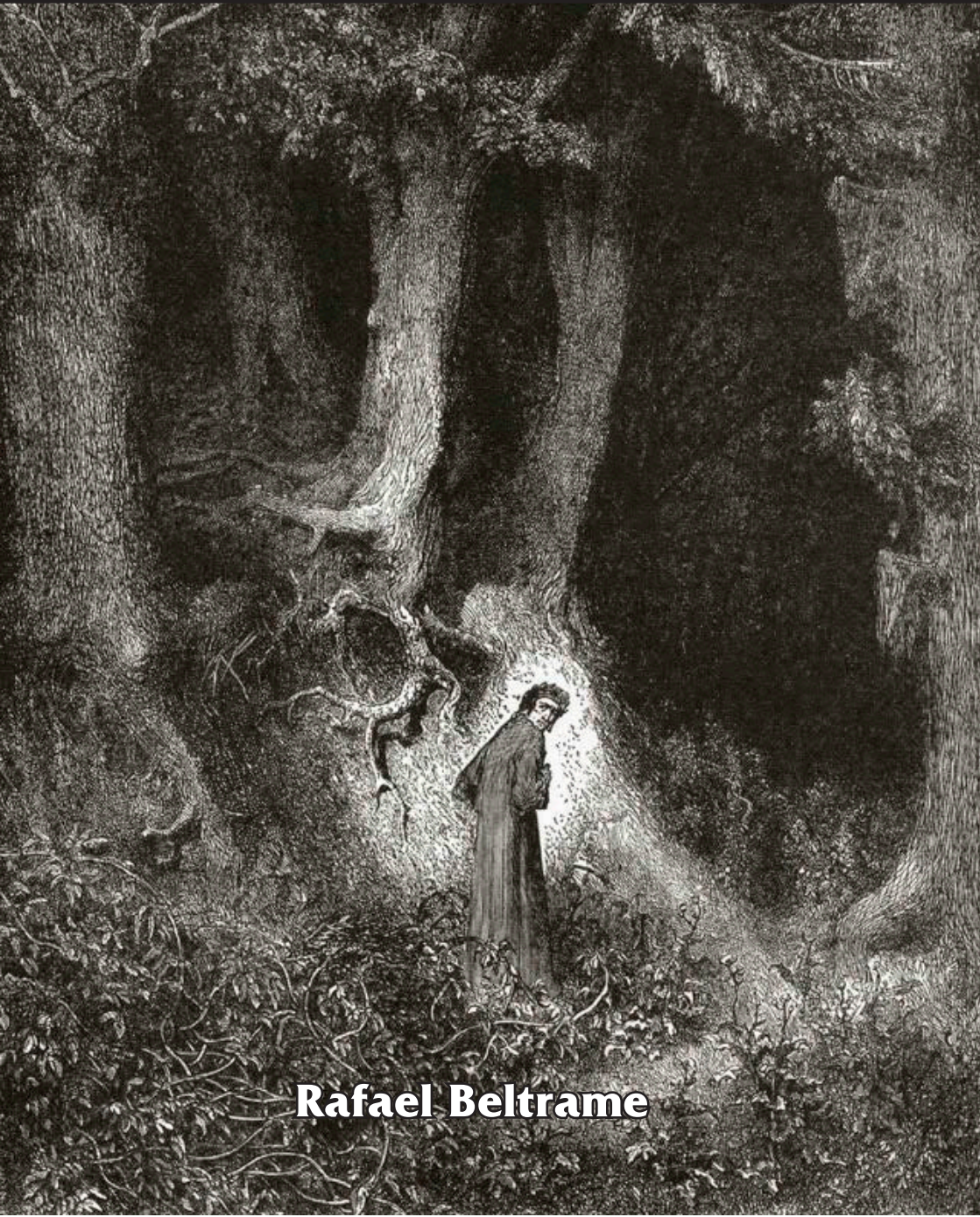


The Forest's Shadow

for Sword & Wizardry Continual Light



Rafael Beltrame

Introduction

On a rainy night, the group receives a cry for help from a child, who has lost his little sister in the forest. Everything indicates that an old witch must have kidnapped the little one, but maybe things are not as simple as they seem.

“*The Forest’s Shadow*” is a very short adventure made by *Moostache* for 2013 Halloween. It can be used as a “one shot” or as a hook for something bigger. Created for low level characters, this adventure is more fun if the Referee creates a mood of suspense. We suggest that you should limit the off-game conversation to a minimum and maybe dim the lights. *The Forest’s Shadow*, on the other hand, can be used to introduce various fantasy elements from our common knowledge. Were the brothers Hansel and Gretel? Is the witch, Baba Yaga? What about the shadow, perhaps Peter Pan or the Slender Man?).

The Adventure

The adventure takes place in the community of Fewsteps, a tiny village in a forest that was originally built to house a family of lumberjacks hired by a duke, who aimed to expand his fleet. Fewsteps, as the name suggests, is a small place, extremely dependent on third-party production. Thus, locals constantly travel to neighboring villages for food, barter or simple opportunities. The problem begins when the adventurers are resting in the local tavern, a long, narrow house, built so that only the tavern keeper and two helpers are inside. A horizontal slit allows them to serve customers, who are seated outside, protected by a tent that covers from the sun and rain.

Small logs are positioned like benches and all dishes served are composed of stuffed breads, soups or pieces of meat in small wooden sticks. Drinks range from fruit juice to beer. Tired from their journey, sheltered from the rain and lining their empty stomachs, the group at first has no reason to leave the place. Thunder draws everyone’s attention to the skies, causing uncertainty whether the village among trees would be the best place to hide from a storm. Suddenly, between lightning and thunder, a child appears in front of the group. Bleeding, with several thin cuts along his arms and face, the child does not look more than 10 years old, and is in panic.



As soon as they can calm him down, he babbles something about how “The witch has returned.” At this point, one of the attendants of the tavern drops a glass on the floor, and goes to the group to hear the story better. With eyes wide open, he begins to question the child, who seems even more frightened now by the man’s aggressive questioning.

Regardless of whether the group pushes the attendant away or not, the child tells them that he was playing with his little sister and she has been captured by a witch in the woods. He describes her as an old woman, her face disfigured and as marked as an old tree. He finally indicates the trail he followed and asks the group for help.

In the Past ...

When the woodcutters from Fewsteps began to consume the forest six of years ago, something strange happened. Many of the employees gave up, claiming that the trees whispered in their ears, or that the plants made strange movements. One day a lumberjack disappeared and a search party was set up to look for the missing worker. They entered dark and strange regions of the forest, until they found a hut. No one is sure about what happened next, but some say the group set fire to the cabin, which burned for three consecutive days. From that date no one approaches the “black area” of the forest.

The child does not have any more information that can help, but adults can give the location of the black area. They will refuse at all costs to join them, fearing some kind of witch’s revenge.

The Trail

The trail follows quietly for a while, where suddenly the trees begin to look fire damaged. However, their treetop are full, but the leaves are grayish and the trunk has strange bluish veins, like fat stretch marks. The earth is marked with coarse salt, scattered on the floor, drawing a semicircle delimiting where the black area begins.

A few dozen of meters after entering, the adventurers note that the trail crisscross between dead trees, toward a strange hut. The



sound of an infantile cry seems to call the group, but in fact, it is a Deadly Vine that is emulating the sound of the girl, trying to attract the characters. She is entwined in the trees, next to the witch's hut.

Deadly Vine (minor)

AC: 6[13] HD: 3 Attack: +3, Whip (1d6-1) Move: 1

This evil vine can mimic any sound it hears. Also, it can only be damaged by sharp weapons (swords, spears, axes, etc).

Those who try to advance through the trees will have a lot of work to cross them: as soon as they start the journey along this route, the forest closes as if they were guards blocking the passage. If they try to advance with fire, the forest will retract, allowing the passage with a strange irregular sharp sound. Either way, it is possible that the group gets lost and comes out of the black area (60% chance). The witch's hut is small and baleful, with no windows, radiating heat even though it is not warm to the touch. Dried leaves cover the entire floor, varying in color between orange and red. Any character who tries to enter through the front door without looking for finding traps will step into a bear trap and must make a Saving Thrown. Being successful, you will receive 2d6 + 5 points of damage, and if not, will have his foot ripped off.

The Referee shall apply the penalties he deems necessary, including reduction of movement, Dexterity, etc. Regardless of whether they passed the test or not, at this point the Referee should ask for a Wisdom test for all players: those who succeed will notice a tall, thin shadow in the trees at a glance. If no player passes, maintain the atmosphere that they are missing out on some important information, saying something like "you think you saw something moving through the trees, even if you did not hear any sound. It is more of an uncomfortable impression of observation than something palpable" (in fact, this can be said even if they pass: what is important is the atmosphere). Any player who tries listening for some noise from inside the house will hear a low, monotonous chuckle.

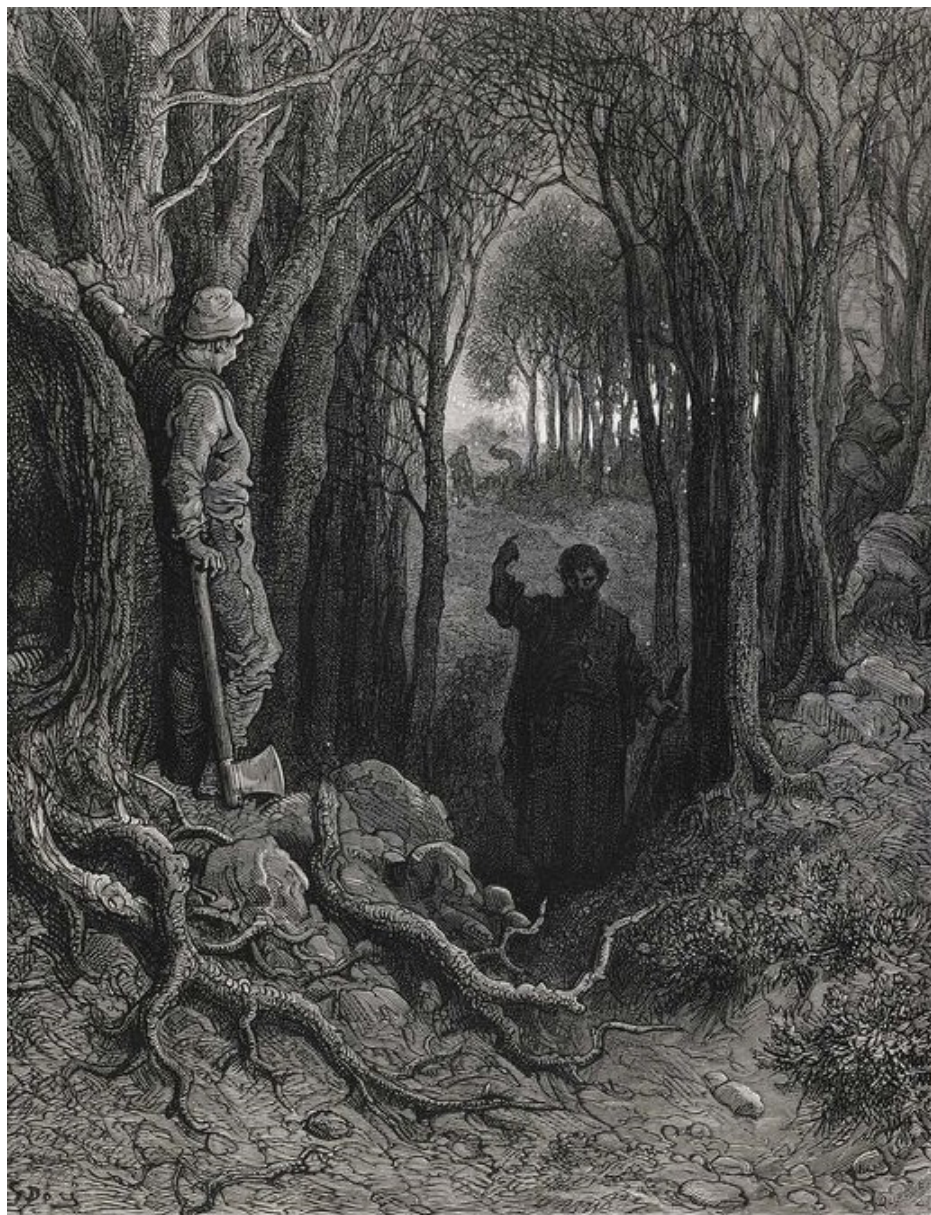
Inside, the witch laughs in a corner of the hut, curled up like a puppy, and exuding a terrible ferrous odor. Her black robes are



soaked, and her semi-toothed maw is stained with blood. She does not seem to give attention to the group, laughing in a hallucinated state, with a empty and haunted look. If forced to speak, she will just say “so tall ... so tall ... the darkness took the little one ... before I finished ...” She offers no resistance unless she is hurt. In this case, she will give a loud, shrill scream, and the house will begin to rise with artificial legs, and cast the characters out as if excreting them through a trapdoor. In the center of the house, a mystical circle was drawn on the floor, and a blurred mark is noted interrupting the drawing. Any magic-user or cleric can identify as a circle of invocation and imprisonment, and when broken, makes the invoker prey to his invocation. On the floor, beyond the circle, there are dull candles and some dirty, illegible papers. One seems to be a prayer to a “slender demon, the shadow of human perversion.”

The group does not find the girl, and even if they takes the witch to the village, she will not regain sanity. Her fate is in the hands of the citizens who fear her, and the heroes will receive no more than a pat on the shoulder. At the end of the day, as they leave the village, they learn from a passerby that the boy who had asked for help disappeared at dawn. It is said that a shadow has kidnapped him at night, and the mothers are terrified that it will come back to fetch their children. Will the group investigate? And what would this shadow be? A living dead, a demon, or something beyond that?





**Moostache
Books**

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