WARLOCK

22

Druids

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WHITE FOREST: THE UNTAMED WOOD

by Ashley Warren with Wolfgang Baur

This enormous forest of pine and elm separates the Magdar Kingdom from the White Mountain Marches and was once part of the same elven lands as the Gennecka Forest to the east. As with other ancient forests of its size, the White Forest remains a relatively untamed place filled with beasts and the ruins of elven settlements, both of which occasionally attract explorers and willing adventurers. For the most part, the area is ignored or bypassed by travelers seeking an easier journey.

The White Road ley line bisects the western portion of the White Forest, dipping south over the mountains toward Zlato Mine and snaking upward toward the east, connecting the magical wellsprings of the Magdar Kingdom to the Dragon Empire. The Magdar Kingdom's city of Cronepisht is the only settlement of any size with an interest and the resources to exploit the forest. Melana and Triolo, nearby polities of the Seven Cities, are focused elsewhere, and the Mharoti have their hands full subduing the White Mountain Marches to the south. So the White Forest remains largely wild, deeply magical, and privy to secrets it rarely shares.

Within the Trees

Though the White Forest is deeply wild and the vast majority of the forest remains primal and overgrown, it does enfold numerous ruins, small settlements, and native humanoids of various kinds, including gnomes, alseids, humans, and occasionally river elves, cousins to those in the Arbonesse. Those who choose to make their home in the White Forest often live in harmony with it and have sought it out precisely for its wildness, though some, like Gellert the Gruesome and the Magdar city folk in Cronepisht, prefer to harness, hunt, and study it.

In botanical terms, both gnome and human artisans make use of this abundant bounty. Bushy, round hazelnut and walnut trees surround towering, ancient pines with trunks large enough for one to live inside. Birch trees grow along clearings and borders of the forest. And the occasional twisted-trunked willow marks a clearing, which may be occupied by the remnants of fey settlements.

The White Forest is well known for its singular and usually silent grove of treants at the eastern edge of the foothills. These tree shepherds keep the forest's deepest reaches unsullied by roads, axes, and

settlements, but they are far too old and sleepy to care about humans and dwarves at the forest's eastern and western extremities. Their leader is Gatherer-of-Moss, a fine treant of many centuries age whose limbs have a tendency to crack and pop when she moves. Some believe she also guides a community of pineys, plant-like creatures also seen in the Margreve.

The climate leans toward cooler temperatures, especially along the Griffoncrag foothills. During the winter, a thin blanket of snow coats the ground, but the soil remains fertile year-round. The rivers keep the soil saturated, and verdant moss covers much of the ground. Ley lines flow strong and sure, and magical springs, glades, and stone circles can be found in Erdovar and near Redtower and Margado.

Many druids seek out the White Forest precisely for its potent magic. Alchemical supplies are aplenty for use in a wide array of tinctures, tonics, and poisons. There is much to eat although knowledge of foraging is helpful as similar varieties of plants can have very different results on a person.

A few pocket communities of servitor gnomes inhabit the White Forest, families making their homes in the rotted trunks of dead trees, restoring the cavernous wooden bases into cozy and comfortable abodes. When nestled inside their houses with their moss-covered doors pulled shut, it's easy for explorers to overlook these families entirely, and that is how many gnomes prefer it. Though the presence of a laundry line or a small woodcutter's axe may betray a gnome hamlet. They see themselves as caretakers for the departed elves, and some touch of magic from the Court of Winter Love in the Summerlands is said to protect their settlements from outside observation. These gnomes are not sworn to the Eleven Hells as those of Niemheim are, though they rarely leave the boundaries of the forest either. Some who've had reason to speak with a gnome chieftain or reeve claim that the majority of their trade is still with the elves through portals to the Summerlands.

Center of Turbulence

The forest's location and the presence of the White Road ley line has attracted many arcane practitioners over the years.

Those wizards and druids who protect it as a neutral, wild zone are often at odds

with others from Triolo or Cronepisht who leverage its strategic location as a beacon of importance. The druids are usually gnomes or humans in the western or northern sections of the forest; the more practical, timber-and-power-harvesting practitioners are wands from Cronepisht, wind mages from Triolo, or ring mages from Melana, seeking owlbear hearts and enchanted bezoars for their mercenary endeavors.

Notable Locations in the White Forest

Much of the forest is home to small villages and communities although some of the region's most notable locations are also found here. Most keep to themselves, but there is occasional conflict among those who attempt to infringe on other's land.

CRONEPISHT

On the outskirts of the White Forest, where the tree line ebbs to verdant plains, is the great city of Cronepisht. Nestled within a bend of the River Cirkno (and primarily on the far bank away from the forest), this capital city is known as the "Jewel of Magdar." Home to more than 30,000 citizens, Cronepisht has spilled over into the White Forest since the construction of the Queen Malaya's Bridge—and the resulting conflict with eastern forest druids and gnomes is occasionally violent. Many citizens have formed small hamlets among the trees near the city. Wealthier Cronepisht residents choose instead to live on the hills on the far side the River Cirkno, less rustic and more secure from forest wolves, hungering bears, double eagles, or bands of goblins.

According to local legend, the forest west of Cronepisht was once home to a community of "wild women"—or perhaps hags or alseids or elfmarked druids. Tales alluded to these strange women who lurked among the thickets, and their homes were said to be under ancient walnut trees or in caverns near an ancient stone circle. Although hags and alseids do live in the White Forest, most keep to themselves and are only hostile to those who provoke them (which the occasional adventuring party is inclined to do). The tales do attract explorers and elderly women from neighboring areas who seek to find this settlement of wise women and join it. Some do vanish into the forest and never return.

Another notable event at Cronepisht is the Queensmeet, which is an annual tournament that takes place in Low Summer. The primary spectacle of the

Queensmeet is the grand melee, though many visitors use the event as a chance to mingle, socialize, and make deals. The gnomes of Middlebrook and the alseid often come to the Queensmeet as "representatives from the Summerlands," claiming the right to compete in contests of archery and magic and selling both herbs and skilled woodcarving. At the end of the fair, gnomes and alseid alike wander back to the west and enter the forest for another year.

MARGADO

Known as the Town of Ink, Margado makes good use of the White Forest's resources, including its walnut timber and iron. But it's the ink they're most proud of: produced at the Thoth-Hermes monastery, it is revered for its smooth, satiny texture and for drying quickly without fouling quills. This ink is sold throughout the Seven Cities and sometimes as far away as the Mharoti lands or Bemmea. Still, Margado's main export is oak, walnut, and ash timber for Magdar barrels and spears.

Most of its inhabitants are the monks who live at the monastery. An old stone structure with grand stained-glass windows, the monastery remains in good condition, and devout volunteers make occasional pilgrimages to it both to engage in faithful practices and to help in occasional repairs, expansion, and upkeep. The ink cellar alone is worth visiting. Black ink is the most popular, and the monks make it entirely from components from within the White Forest: walnuts and gall and iron of course but also petrified wood shavings ground to a powder, and a unique blend of oils is added to give the ink its unique qualities. The cellar is stocked with an array of colorful bowls of powdered dyes. Any ink color can be made, and although the monks offer their skills freely to the illiterate, their inks are put toward making new books glorifying Thoth-Hermes, lord of words and magic.

As a monastery of Thoth-Hermes is always associated with both trade and scribes, the building's sizable library houses numerous titles on religions and politics of the Seven Cities, on inkmaking and alchemy, and on dragons and creatures of the forest and plains as well as sacred texts and the life books of prior abbots and monks of Thoth-Hermes. These old tomes remain shackled to shelves and cannot be removed although visitors can freely peruse the stacks.

MIDDLEBROOK GNOMES

The "largest" gnome village in the White Forest is a settlement of perhaps 100 or 200 souls in a place called Middlebrook, located along the banks of the Templine River, in alignment with the White Road ley line and connected to the west by a game path called the Old Elf Road by humans in Triolo. Certainly, gnomes are rare in Midgard—and those not connected to Niemheim even rarer—so it is frequently assumed that Middlebrook gnomes are in fact somehow related, but Middlebrookers take great offense at such suggestions.

Even stranger is the relationship between these gnomes and the river elves who live nearby. Historically, gnomes were one of the primary servitors of the elves, and the elves' departure left many gnomes without a purpose or a cause to serve. Along the Templine River however, these gnomes hold on to the old ways, and they share a mutual enemy with the river elves: Gellert the Gruesome, sorcerer of the Scarlet Citadel.

Middlebrook gnomes make their homes in tree trunks, they keep to themselves, and they wish others would do the same. Their leader, one High Reeve Shendoltz Berryman, follows a course of isolation and patience, trading only with elfmarked or gnomish visitors and driving humans and dwarves away with entangling spells, clouds of spores, endless traps, thefts, and ambushes. As a result, sightings of gnomes

are surpassingly uncommon. One may glimpse a Middlebrook gnome while on a mushroom-foraging excursion, but it is highly unlikely.

When spotted in one of their enclaves, the gnomes seem far more sedate and harmless than their reputation. They still grow the traditional elven strawberries (the size of a human fist), they carve wooden scrollwork in doorways and pillars and totems, and they protect the local wildlife from wandering into Gellert's clutches. In particular, they keep a few forest drakes and lantern dragonettes as pets, scouts, and guardians—apparently these were beloved by the elves, and they remain loyal to the gnomes. Although this doesn't always work, Middlebrook is well-fortified, preventing the White Forest's gnomes from ending up at the Scarlet Citadel as involuntary apprentices.

SCARLET CITADEL & THE RUINS OF ERDOVAR

In the northwest of the forest sits the Scarlet Citadel and the ruins of Erdovar. The area is lorded over by Gellert the Gruesome, the Keeper of the White Forest as far as the feudal Magdar is concerned. Gellert is the sorcerer who resides in the Scarlet Citadel, a towering stone fortress perched on a small hill (see *Warlock 20: Redtower*).

Rumors abound of Gellert's contributions to the fall of Erdovar. Located on the Templine River, it was once a bustling town due to its timber trade as well as its role as an elven center of the worship of Yarila and Porevit. Timber, walnuts, and venison were sold and sent north to the Magdar Kingdom and west to elven Valera. Fine houses and wooden temples in Peltzenheim and Neusonnenstein are built from timber sourced from Erdovar, and nut-based dishes and delicacies are still prominent in much of the cuisine found in these cities. However, Erdovar is now a ghost town compared to its heyday with little left to show of its twin temples, its wineries, or its famed spinners and tapestry weavers.

The town was torched many years ago, and a great cave dragon all but demolished the area. Some claimed that Gellert had kept the dragon captive beneath the town; others blamed the Mharoti or the darakhul for bringing the beast, named Bulukanna and sometimes referred to as "grandmother" to avoid speaking its name. Regardless of who brought it, the attack was followed by a wave of undead soldiers chasing the survivors, and the resulting chaos led to a fire that brought Erdovar to its knees. The town was quickly abandoned by humans, gnomes, and elfmarked, and the dragon Bulukanna lived there for many decades. Some believe she remains there still, though like many cave dragons she hunts by night or underground and is rarely seen.

Presently, the occasional bandit party ventures through Erdovar, but those who linger often meet ghosts or more sinister undead. Some believe a particularly dark cult has taken the ruins for its own. Certainly, shadow goblins, wights, and evil priests have been seen there, perhaps seeking some profane object or some elven relic for their own ends.

TEMPLINE RIVER & THE WESTERN EDGE

This labyrinthine river weaves like a snake in the northwestern section of the White Forest down toward the Triolo coast. At one time, it was said to be part of the seat of a river elf lord near the village of Redleaf (now Redtower), and the last of these lords, Yngerassos the Elder, is said to be buried beneath the Templine in a riverine tomb as was the custom of many river elves. Finding any such tomb is another matter; this portion of the White Forest is particularly lush as the banks often break, leading toward marshy conditions.

This ever-present moisture inspires the growth of fungus, and during the spring, the river is surrounded by a vibrant spectrum of colorful mushrooms not unlike a field of pastel wildflowers. These unique mushrooms attract alchemists and naturalists from all over: the frilled bonnet mushroom is a delicacy among the elves and their followers, and the meaty stonepilz is beloved among the gnomes. Both fetch stunning prices in Middlebrook, Triolo, and Valera.

Those who understand these mushrooms best are the local gnomes and river elves, though both seem quite eager to keep the harvest for themselves. A few of the more outgoing elves here choose to serve as guides and lead mushroom foraging excursions for interesting visitors, especially for elfmarked or humans with a connection to the wilderness.

Some timber from Redtower does float down the water to Triolo and the coast, but most of the time, it is easier to get oxen to pull a wagon than to guide logs down the sluggish sections of the Templine. It is a popular area for hunters, rich in waterfowl along the western forest edge, and full of ponds and fish within the forest proper.

WHITE ROAD

It's impossible to talk about the White Forest without talking about the White Road, which shares its namesake and draws many seeking to harness its power. Despite being off the beaten track and farther away from the more heavily peopled areas, this ley line's usage rises in direct proportion to the ongoing tensions between human and dragonkin, and its presence was crucial to the Mharoti in the invasion of Illyria. Adventuring parties might quickly find themselves roped into some political scheme or other—whether or not they want to be involved.

Random Encounters in the White Forest

The White Forest provides no shortage of activities for adventuring parties. Adventures may put the characters in the middle of an arcane scheme, an encounter with a ferocious beast, or a pleasant stroll through the trade fair or a day at the Queensmeet. Roll on the table below to determine what characters may encounter while traveling through or near the White Forest.

d6	ENCOUNTER
1	A river **elf** named Bella invites the party on a mushroom foraging excursion near the Templine River. The characters can spend downtime to collect edible mushrooms to add to their rations. After this excursion, characters are able to identify safe-to-eat mushrooms with a successful DC 11 Intelligence (Nature) check. Failing this check means that picked mushrooms have a 20% chance of being poisonous.
2	An injured **goblin** named Greggo has escaped from Gellert the Gruesome's clutches at the Scarlet Citadel. The goblin may be hostile at first, but if the party makes no further attempt to harm him, he warns them of the "evil mage who lives in the citadel."
3	A group of 1d4 **bandits** attempts to rob the party.
4	A band of Mharoti **spies** lies in wait. Bound for Valtros with the intent to infiltrate the castle, the dragonborn approach the characters and ask for their help to "deliver a package." (The package contains a magic stone that acts as a mobile scrying sensor to spy on the goings-on within the castle.)
5	A group of intoxicated revelers makes their way to the Queensmeet and invites the party to join them.
6	An old pilgrim heading to the Thoth-Hermes monastery asks the characters for help safely reaching the monastery. In exchange for this help, the pilgrim gives the party a healer's kit and teaches one character how to use it.

Circle of Fermentation: Life in the Winewood

by Ashley Warren

A strange and pleasant, if not slightly funky, scent emanates from the Winewood. Neither one of the larger nor smaller forests in Midgard, the Winewood is renowned largely for its main export, which is more its main influence upon the world: fermentation. The Winewood has an abundance of wild yeast that permeates the air, turning berries sour even after they've ripened. Travelers may accidentally kick over a jar filled with unidentifiable sludge—containers of flour and water, capturing these natural yeasts to use in other efforts like bread and beer. Brewers around Midgard send barrels of their finest brews to the forest to age and to infuse with that unique, intangible atmosphere.

Those who live in the Winewood are affected by this atmosphere in mostly positive ways. A circle of druids, known as the Fermenters, make use of the "strange air" of the forest to brew and ferment, well, nearly anything really, from varieties of beer and wine to funky, sometimes foul teas, from aged meats and cheeses to pickled produce. But beyond just brewing, these druids leverage fermentation as a magical effect, harnessing the passage of time on organic materials to reap its benefits while wielding its dangers, like rot, to inflict harm upon their enemies. The circle is guided by an elder known only as Mother, who is the chief fermenter and master of the circle's starter, an ever-fermenting vat of yeast and bacteria. Every member of the circle receives a vial of the starter, which infuses the druid with the magical effects of fermentation.

As a member of this circle, your magic is influenced by the processes in nature that cause organic material to change. You as well may be at the whim of these unpredictable patterns.

BONUS PROFICIENCY

When you choose this circle at 2nd level, you gain proficiency with artisan's tools (brewer's supplies). If you already have this proficiency, you gain proficiency with artisan's tools (alchemist's supplies).

EFFERVESCENCE

Inspired by the bubbling, fizzy side effect of many fermentative processes, you lift and strengthen your comrades' spirits. Starting at 2nd level, you can use a bonus action to expend one spell slot and touch one creature other than yourself to bestow a pleasant, giddy sensation that improves their stamina and focus. The creature can roll a 1d4 and apply the result to an ability check or saving

throw. This Effervescence die lasts for 1 minute or until used, and a creature can have only one such die at a time. You gain an additional die to give away per level of the spell slot expended.

MOTHER'S GIFT

Starting at 2nd level, you can use a vial given to you by Mother. The vial is filled with a sample of the circle's starter, a slimy, sour-smelling, yeasty mixture. Consuming this starter gives you an additional slot for 1 day. Upon consumption, roll 1d4 to determine how many days the vial takes to refill. The result of this roll also determines the level of the spell slot obtained on consuming the next dose; the result must be of a level you can cast, so if you roll higher, use the highest level you can cast from 1st–4th level. Only you can gain this benefit in consuming this mixture.

CIRCLE SPELLS

Your connection to wild fermentation in nature grants you access to certain spells. At 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th level, you gain access to circle spells related to alchemy and fermentation. Choose from the list below.

Upon selecting a new circle spell, you always have it prepared and this spell doesn't count against your daily prepared spells.

CIRCLE OF FERMENTATION

Druid Level	Circle Spells
3rd	*gust of wind, protection from poison*
5th	*plant growth, speak with plants*
7th	*blight, control water*
9th	*contagion, mass cure wounds*

BRINY MURK

When you reach 6th level, you can use your reaction to saturate the ground around you with a potent brew, creating a noxious, marshy area of difficult terrain in a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on you. Creatures not in contact with the ground are unaffected. You can dismiss the effect as an action.

Additionally, you can use a bonus action to expend one spell slot to further charge your briny murk for 1 minute per level of the spell slot expended. When so charged, each creature that is within the area at the start of its turn must succeed on a Constitution saving throw, or their movement is reduced to 0. Creatures that don't need to breathe or are immune to poison automatically succeed on this saving throw.

All members of your circle are immune to these effects.

FERMENTATIVE ENGINE

Starting at 10th level, you are immune to necrotic energy, and you can't be frightened.

TOUCH OF ZYMURGY

By 14th level, you have learned to better direct the "strange air" both within you and without. You can use your action to end one condition on yourself or on another creature that you touch.

You can use this feature a number of times equal to your Wisdom modifier (a minimum of once). You regain expended uses when you finish a long rest.

New Spell

The following spell was developed by druids inspired by fermentative processes.

ZYMURGIC AURA

7th-level necromancy (druid)
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Self
Components: V, M
Duration: Instantaneous

A wave of putrefaction surges from you, targeting creatures of your choice within a 30-foot radius around you, speeding the rate of decay in those it touches. The target must make a Constitution saving throw. It takes 10d6 necrotic damage on a failed save or half as much on a successful save. Its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the creature takes a long rest.

Druid Background: Zymurgist

You are a naturalist who has studied the fermentation process and its effects on organic materials. Yours is a community of druids, alchemists, witches, and various artisans and crafters—though many others regularly seek out your expertise. You appreciate that change is a part of life everywhere in the multiverse. Rather than resent that, you see the beauty and potential to apply these processes to your life, and to your magic.

Skill Proficiency: Nature, Medicine

Tool Proficiency: One type of artisan's tools (alchemist's supplies or brewer's supplies)

Equipment: A set of artisan's tools (either alchemist's supplies or brewer's supplies), an apron, glass vials and jars filled with bubbling substances, and a pouch containing 10 gp

FAVORED FERMENTS

All who follow the call of fermentation have a certain specialty, some favorite variety of fermented substance they tend to focus on. Select a specialty from the Favored Ferment table or roll randomly.

d10	FAVORED FERMENT
1	wine
2	beer
3	mead/cider
4	cultured dairy (yogurt, cheese, kefir)
5	kombucha
6	pickled vegetables
7	vinegar and brine
8	beans/bean paste
9	fish
10	bread (sourdough and natural yeast breads)

FEATURE: LOCAL SOURCING

You have a knack for sourcing food anywhere you go, even if the nature of that food might be distasteful to your fellow party members. You can make something palatable out of almost nothing and can preserve whatever you make for weeks and even months. This makes you a resourceful traveling companion, especially for longer journeys where finding sustenance may prove difficult.

SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

There is no one type of zymurgist although you all share a passion for living sustainably on the natural world. You are curious folk. Those who are outgoing may become evangelists for the benefits of fermentation, urging their party members to seek out fermented substances to aid in skill development and even healing. Those more introspective love to get lost in their brewing. Your personality may be similar to that of a studious wizard or to an eager alchemist.

d6	PERSONALITY
1	I love being out in nature and learning as much as I can about new biomes.
2	Nothing grosses me out, and I'm not afraid of germs.
3	I'm enthusiastic about strange things in nature and often go off the beaten path, literally, to investigate something.
4	I'm resourceful and sometimes this makes me snobby toward city folk who can't rough it outdoors.
5	I'm known for being a bit kooky and eccentric, even among others in the community.
6	I'm a collector and often have lots of interesting things on my person. Usually in jars.
7	I'm always looking for the next cool thing to try, to ferment that thing no one else ever has.
8	I prefer to perfect one thing, to make it the best, and then to carefully tweak the recipe to see what happens.

d6	IDEAL
1	I love being out in nature and learning as much as I can about new biomes.
2	Nothing grosses me out, and I'm not afraid of germs.
3	I'm enthusiastic about strange things in nature and often go off the beaten path, literally, to investigate something.
4	I'm resourceful and sometimes this makes me snobby toward city folk who can't rough it outdoors.
5	I'm known for being a bit kooky and eccentric, even among others in the community.
6	I'm a collector and often have lots of interesting things on my person. Usually in jars.

d6	BOND
1	I love being out in nature and learning as much as I can about new biomes.
2	Nothing grosses me out, and I'm not afraid of germs.
3	I'm enthusiastic about strange things in nature and often go off the beaten path, literally, to investigate something.
4	I'm resourceful and sometimes this makes me snobby toward city folk who can't rough it outdoors.
5	I'm known for being a bit kooky and eccentric, even among others in the community.
6	I'm a collector and often have lots of interesting things on my person. Usually in jars.

d6	FLAW
1	I love being out in nature and learning as much as I can about new biomes.
2	Nothing grosses me out, and I'm not afraid of germs.
3	I'm enthusiastic about strange things in nature and often go off the beaten path, literally, to investigate something.
4	I'm resourceful and sometimes this makes me snobby toward city folk who can't rough it outdoors.
5	I'm known for being a bit kooky and eccentric, even among others in the community.
6	I'm a collector and often have lots of interesting things on my person. Usually in jars.

Circle of the Weald: Blood on the Leaves

by Jerry LeNeave

Druids of the Circle of the Weald dwell in the areas where the trees grow so thick that the forest's undergrowth is starved for life, the sunlight nearly choked out by the gnarled canopy above. Within these copses, you'll find an order of druids who consider themselves warriors, soothsayers, prophets, and catalysts for keeping the fate of the natural world in balance. They consider their faithful to be the most devoted among those who would worship the very lands themselves. They adorn themselves with raiment of blood and bone, embracing death as a path to enlightenment, and they consider it the ultimate way to enter into true symbiosis with nature. They erect macabre effigies of sacrificial animals around their groves, further ostracizing them from society as well as other druidic circles.

Typically hailing from regions such as the outskirts of Björnrike or the northernmost uncharted forests of Midgard, druids of the weald are typically motivated to venture out of their communities in search of adventure out of what they see as necessity. Though their groves are most commonly known in these northern regions, they can also be found in the depths of the Southlands amid oases of palm trees and dressed in the hides of hyenas and goats. Of all the variations of their order, two things remain central to them regardless of region: a penchant for sacrifice and a belief in a relatively unknown and elusive god.

Animal Worship & Sacrifice

Circle of the Weald druids covet and cherish their animal friends and companions, though in a different way than most. They believe that beasts sometimes best serve their order when used as a food source or as vessels for becoming closer to nature. They often sacrifice animals for this purpose and believe that consuming them gives them some of that creature's stamina, strength, and speed—that creature's very essence. When complete, these carcasses are used as ceremonial displays in their camps and on the borders of their lands, also doubling as a grisly warning to those who might encroach.

Another common practice among their kind is that of preserving aging animal spirits within trinkets they create called *wraithstones*. Typically when an animal is reaching the age when it would die

naturally, the beast is euthanized in a special ritual consisting of sacred ashes, powders, and salves in order to preserve the creature's essence within one of these stones. *Wraithstones* are carved from the petrified roots of their most ancient trees into the shape and likeness of the creature being immortalized within. This process, while usually done in order to preserve faithful companions and longtime family members, can also be used to trap tainted or corrupted animal spirits in order to stop them from causing harm or else to harness their volatile spirit for future use in rituals.

Aside from sustenance and ceremony, animal parts are also harvested to create unique items only found within the circle and sometimes with those who trade with them or adjacent hubs of commerce. Many a specialized candle, powder, and pigment have been created throughout the ages of the circle's existence, and they are always finding new ways to leverage blood, bark, and bone to mix with natural elements in order to create brand new creations and concoctions. No part of an animal ever goes to waste within a Circle of the Weald community.

Circle Initiation & Beliefs

Unlike others, those of the Circle of the Weald typically worship only one god, the one they call the Ancestor, who serves as the embodiment of all of nature itself. The Ancestor appears genderless as a tall humanoid with the head of an obsidian-eyed stag. They wear long earth-toned robes and bear a round shield made of taught hide stretched over a section of oak trunk and smeared with bloody sigils. In their other hand, they wield a long wooden club carved into the shape of a femur and inset with angular glowing amber sigils.

In the Ancestor's wake, a trail of sinew and dark-red blood is left behind as it ambulates with the grace of a deer and the speed of a charging boar. It is said that what is hidden beneath the robes of the ancestor is neither form of beast nor person but instead a glistening mass of floating viscera, pulsating rhythmically and dripping with blood.

In order to complete the initiation process and become a full member of the circle, those who aspire to join must undergo what is referred to as the Catharsis, wherein they must crawl within the carcass of a beast they themselves have sacrificed to the Ancestor. A circle elder will sew the carcass shut, leaving a space for the initiate to breathe from within, and there they must remain for a full 48 hours. During this time, it is said that initiates first undergo an intense dream state where they are the closest to the spirit of the Ancestor, granting them portents not only of their own life paths but of the future of the world itself.

These brief glimpses into the future can provide the initiate with a lifetime of contemplation—and sometimes trauma. Those who follow the circle claim that the Ancestor only ever answers inquiries with responses so vague that they only beget more questions. The second stage of the Catharsis is often said to be extremely peaceful, a form of astral projection where the initiate wanders beyond time and space in what is often described as an emerald dreamland, or hellscape, depending on one's perspective.

Ongoing Practices

After joining the circle, its members still sometimes utilize the Catharsis, hoping for portents to guide their hand, especially when situations are dire. Unfortunately, after the initiation, the experience loses some of its potency and only provides slivers of guidance, which are not always helpful.

Being so close to death, whenever an animal or one of their own dies, it is considered a celebration. Animals that

aren't used for other means or placed within *wraithstones* have their bones displayed within the trees above to watch over the community always, serving as eerie wind chimes to outsiders. Whenever one of their own dies, they are buried in more traditional manner with the exception of the skull, which is removed and placed within the gaps and hollows of trees to help watch over their community. When elders die, their skulls are placed within sacred trees grown specifically to display them and where over time the subsequent fungal growth resembles the elders' mortal forms.

Circle Features

As a member of this circle, your magic is influenced by the ecstatic fervor with which you celebrate nature.

MARROWBARK FORM

When you choose this circle at 2nd level and are transformed by Wild Shape, the beast form you choose also has the antlers of a stag (sized relative to the creature), and it is covered in tree bark and the bones of its own kind. The beast is granted a gore attack if it does not already have one as well as +1 bonus to its AC. While in this form, you may use your Wisdom bonus plus your proficiency bonus for attack rolls if it is better than that of the beast's form.

> ***Gore***. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +X to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit*: 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Alternatively, you can choose to expend a use of Wild Shape in order to instead remain in your humanoid form with the following: you gain a +1 bonus to your AC and 1d6 temporary hit points, and you can use your Wisdom bonus for attack rolls in place of Strength or Dexterity. This duration is the same as if you transformed into a beast.

CIRCLE SPELLS

Your connection to the deepest wood grants you access to certain spells. At 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th level, you gain access to circle spells related to the dying lands, viscera, and the spiritual journey of death. Choose spells from the list below.

Upon selecting a new circle spell, you always have it prepared and this spell doesn't count against your daily prepared spells.

CIRCLE OF THE WEALD

Druid Level	Circle Spells
3rd	*inflict wounds, misty step*
5th	*fear, major image*
7th	*blight, confusion*
9th	*antilife shell, commune with nature*

DREAMLAND TRAVERSAL

Your initiation with the circle has taught you how to leverage the Catharsis, and you employ it to gain insight when needed. At 6th level, you may re-enter this state by spending 8 hours of uninterrupted rest within the carcass of an animal that you've hunted or trapped and sacrificed yourself. The animal must be at least the same size or larger than you, and you must have another willing participant to sew or otherwise close the animal up once you are inside of it. Once inside, you focus on asking the Ancestor for guidance regarding a specific course of action you plan to take. Once this process is complete, you awake with a number of bone fragments in your hand equal to your Wisdom modifier (a minimum of one), and you emerge from the carcass having gained an omen per the *augury* spell.

When events transpire pertaining to the omen delivered by the Ancestor, you can evoke one of the bone fragments as a bonus action to gain advantage on an ability check, attack roll, or saving throw related to the omen's outcome. Once used, the bone fragment dissipates back into dreamstuff. If you have at least one unused bone fragment remaining at the end of a short or long rest, a new bone fragment will materialize (up to a total maximum of your original starting number).

You may perform Dreamland Traversal once every 6 days, when any previously unused bone fragments dissipate. If your rest

is interrupted or other circumstances cause this to fail, it does not count as being used, and you may try again in another 8 hours.

WRAITHSTONE CREATION

Like the elders within your circle, you've gleaned enough knowledge of the natural world to be able to preserve the spirits of beasts. Beginning at 10th level, you can trap the soul of a natural beast inside a piece of petrified wood or a stone carved to resemble it. This is called a *wraithstone* (see *wraithstone* in "Baubles of the Darkened Druids" page xx).

In order to create a *wraithstone*, you must spend 1 minute focusing on the beast's spirit and transferring it into the stone. If the target creature has died within the last hour or is at or below 1/4 of its maximum hit points, the process automatically succeeds. Otherwise it must succeed a Will saving throw, in which case you cannot try again for another 1 minute. Successful creation of a *wraithstone* binds the creature's soul to the stone.

While anyone can receive the benefits of a *wraithstone*, as an adept of the weald, you gain the following additional options when using their charges, which others do not:

- ***Consult Specter***. As an action, you can commune with the animal's spirit, asking it a question regarding something it would have known or observed in life or something it can currently observe within 30 feet using truesight from beyond the grave. It answers you telepathically.
- ***Imbue Senses***. As a bonus action, you can call upon the spirit of the creature within to grant advantage to your next ability check, attack roll, or saving throw.
- ***Siphon Fortitude***. As a reaction, you can borrow from the beast's spirit, granting yourself or a friendly creature within 5 feet of you 2d6 temporary hit points.

Additionally, as part of the Circle of the Weald, you can call upon the spirit within the stone in a way that extends its charges: in your hands, a *wraithstone* has twice the number of charges it normally would.

ANCESTRAL POSSESSION

At 14th level, you can expend two uses of Wild Shape to manifest not only the likeness but also some of the powers of the Ancestor. You grow to a height of 8 feet tall, your head becomes that of a stag, your feet become cloven hooves, and a club and shield manifest in your hands, merging whatever was previously held into your new form. You gain the following bonuses for a number of hours equal to your druid level divided by 3, rounding down:

- Your AC can't be less than 18 for the duration of your new form, otherwise as the barkskin spell.
- You can speak and understand Sylvan, even if you did not previously, and can cast spells as normal.
- Beasts, plants, and undead creatures will not attack you.
- Your speed increases by +10 feet.
- Difficult and hazardous terrain made up of natural organic elements such as vines, brambles, or cacti no longer slows you down or hurts you.
- You wield a club that counts as a +3 club, and when unnatural creatures are struck by this club, they must succeed a Strength saving throw or immediately become restrained to the ground, as the *entangle* spell.

BAUBLES OF THE DARKENED DRUIDS

by Jerry LeNeave

Druids are some of the most resourceful individuals you'll find, always managing to take what is readily abundant around them and create something useful. Not just useful, according to certain tales some of the creations of druidic circles can be credited for saving the world more than a time or two. The Circle of the Weald druids are no exception, and some of their elders, soothsayers, and nomads wander Midgard selling baubles and other magical items as part of the path laid before them by the Ancestor.

Below is a sampling of these magic items.

ASH OF THE EBON BIRCH

Potion, uncommon

This salve is created by burning bits of bark from a rare tree unique to the groves of the Circle of the Weald and then mixed with oil and blood to create a cerise pigment used to paint the body with profane protections.

Sigils. The following sigils can be painted on your body for a specific effect:

- *Antlers*—You gain the effect of the *see invisibility* spell (save DC 13).
- *Beak*—You are immune to being charmed and cannot be scryed upon for 1 hour.
- *Claw*—You cannot be surprised for 1 hour.
- *Hoof*—Your remains are prevented from rising or being animated as undead for 24 hours.

Smear. Swathes of your body can be smeared with the ash for a specific effect:

- *Arms*—You gain a +2 bonus to Strength for 1 hour.
- *Chest*—You gain advantage on one type of saving throw (your choice of Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma) for 10 minutes.
- *Eyes*—You gain truesight to 30 feet for 10 minutes.
- *Legs*—You increase you speed by +10 feet for 1 hour.
- *Stomach*—You gain a +2 bonus to Constitution for 1 hour.

BRAMBLESEED

Wondrous item, uncommon

You have a handful of tiny seeds that resemble pinecones. When a command word is spoken (no action required), they sprout into hardened clumps of bramble, acting as caltrops. Creatures injured by these caltrops must succeed a DC 13 Strength check or become restrained until the end of their next turn.

CINCH OF THE WOLFMOTHER

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)

This belt is made of the treated and tanned intestines of a dire wolf, enchanted to imbue those who wear it with the ferocity and determination of the wolf.

While you wear this belt, you can use an action to cast the speak with animals spell at will. You also gain the use of the *druidcraft* cantrip and have advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

Cursed. This belt is cursed. Attuning to it curses you until you are targeted by the *remove curse* spell or similar magic. Removing the belt fails to end the curse on you.

If you are reduced to 0 hp while the belt is worn and fail two death saving throws, you die immediately as your body violently erupts in a shower of blood as a **dire wolf** emerges from your entrails. You assume control of the dire wolf, and it gains additional hit points equal to half of your character's maximum hit points prior to death.

If the wolf is targeted by a *remove curse* spell, then the dead character will be reborn when the wolf dies, just as the wolf was born. However, if the curse remains after the wolf dies, the character remains dead.

HALLOWED EFFIGY

Wondrous item, rare
(requires attunement)

These small totems, crafted from animal bones and the skull of a tiny woodland creature, all bound in thin leather strips, serve as a boon for those loyal to nature and as a stinging trap to those who threaten it.

You can use an action to secure the effigy on any natural organic substrate (such as dirt, mud, grass, and so on). While so planted, it pulses with energy in a 15-foot-radius sphere, and at the beginning of each of your turns, it activates to effect all within range: you and any creature friendly to you regain 1d6 hit points, and any creatures hostile to you must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 1d6 necrotic damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.

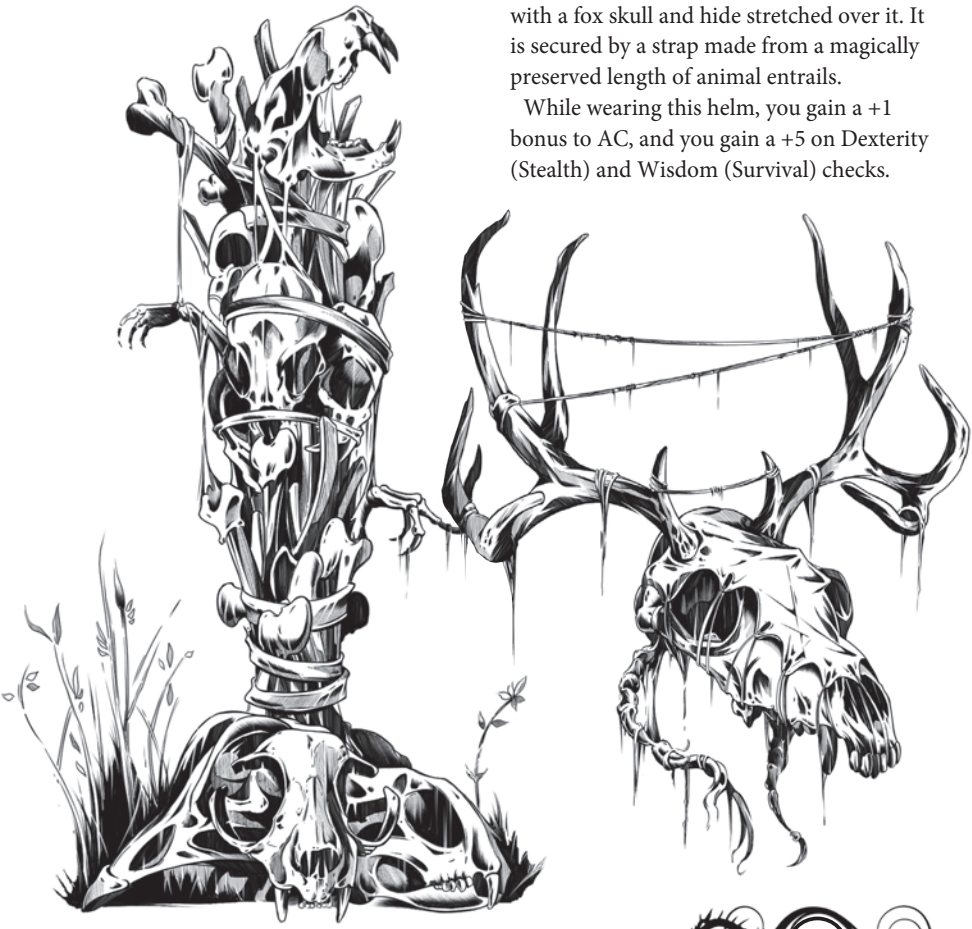
This totem has 9 charges. Each round it activates, it uses 1 charge. While planted, it activates automatically each round unless you pick it up, it runs out of charges, or it is destroyed. It regains 1d6 + 3 charges daily at dawn. If it ever runs out of charges, it must be purified once again by a druid of at least 5th level to be reused.

LUPINE CROWN

Wondrous item, rare

This grisly helm is fashioned from the leather-reinforced skull and antlers of a deer with a fox skull and hide stretched over it. It is secured by a strap made from a magically preserved length of animal entrails.

While wearing this helm, you gain a +1 bonus to AC, and you gain a +5 on Dexterity (Stealth) and Wisdom (Survival) checks.



MANTLE OF THE FOREST LORD

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

Created by village elders for druidic scouts to better traverse and survey the perimeters of their lands, this cloak resembles thick oak bark but bends and flows like silk.

While you wear this cloak, you can use an action to cast the *tree stride* spell on yourself at will, except trees need not be living in order to pass through them.

OCULI OF THE ANCESTOR

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

An intricately depicted replica of an eyeball, right down to the blood vessels and other fine details, these items are carved from sacred hardwoods by soothsayers using a specialized ceremonial blade handcrafted specifically for this purpose.

When the orb is placed within the eye socket of a skull, it will reveal the last thing that was experienced by the person before they died. This lasts for up to 1 minute and is limited to purely visible and audible elements and no other perceivable senses. The flashback is delivered telepathically to you.

PRIMORDIAL PODS

Wondrous item, legendary (requires attunement by a druid)

These seemingly innocuous pellets are actually a mixture of leaves, spores, sacrificial ash, and rare powders made from the ground bones of ancient beasts, and they bring power to those willing to suffer. Sowing pods beneath the flesh gives them purchase to blossom as fungus covers the body in a layer of hardened growths. This disease is curable by a casting of *lesser restoration* in the first month. After that, *greater restoration* or more powerful magic is required. Once cured, unless the pods are removed or otherwise destroyed, they will reinfect the host after 1 week of dormancy.

To activate the pods, you must embed them within your flesh, dealing 1d4 damage to yourself and creating a wound to house them. After 24 hours, the spores will begin to suffuse the surrounding tissue and a thickened, bark-like fungus will spread across your skin, granting a +1 bonus to AC. This process itches immensely and is extremely uncomfortable. As the fungus spreads, the changes become more dramatic. After 4 months, unless cured, if you ever drop to 0 hp, you can't be brought back—but your corpse provides the perfect nursery for another generation of spores.

DURATION	EFFECTS
1 month	You have a +1 bonus to AC and blindsight to 20 feet. However, your hit point maximum is reduced by 2d4 + 2.
2 months	You have a +2 bonus to AC and blindsight to 40 feet. However, your hit point maximum is reduced by 4d4 + 4.
3 months	You have a +2 bonus to AC, resistance to nonmagical damage not from an adamantine weapon, and blindsight to 60 feet. However, your hit point maximum is reduced by 8d4 + 8.

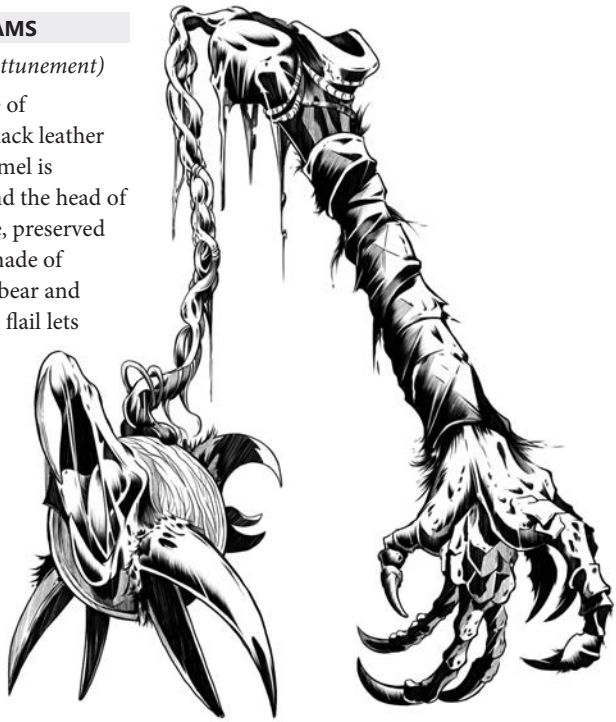
TENEBROUS FLAIL OF SCREAMS

Weapon (flail), rare (requires attunement)

The handle of this flail is made of mammoth bone wrapped in black leather made from bat wings. Its pommel is adorned with raven's claws, and the head of the flail dangles from a flexible, preserved braid of entrails. The head is made of petrified wood inlaid with owlbear and raven beaks. When swung, the flail lets out an otherworldly screech.

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon, and the target takes an extra 1d6 psychic damage.

When you roll a 20 on an attack roll made with this weapon, the target must succeed a DC 15 Wisdom save or be incapacitated until the end of its next turn.



WENDIGO TALLOW CANDLE

Wondrous item, rare

Lighting one of these translucent, milky-white candles lets off an immensely foul smell, the flame bending toward the nearest lone traveler while the caustic black smoke drifts off in the direction of the nearest evil-aligned creature. After one of these candles is snuffed out after being lit for at least 10 minutes or burns through, it will begin to snow in the area for at least an hour, regardless of the current climate or the time of year.

WRAITHSTONES

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)

These stones are carved from petrified roots to reflect the shape and visage of an animal. Within one of these stones is the soul and spirit of a sacrificed beast. They are used to grant immortal life to animal companions, banish troublesome predators, and more. The creature's essence stays within until the stone is broken, upon which point the soul is released and the creature cannot be resurrected or reincarnated by any means.

While carrying this item, a spectral representation of the animal shows up beside you, resembling the creature's likeness while in its prime. The specter follows you at all times and can be seen by all. It can be dismissed and brought back as a bonus action. So long as you carry this

stone, you can interact with the animal as if it were still alive, speaking to it if able, though it cannot physically interact with the material world. It can gesture to indicate directions and communicate very basic single-word ideas to its user telepathically.

Wraithstones have a number of charges, depending on the size the creature stored within them. Note that the more charges, the bigger the beast, the more expensive the stone will be. See Wraithstone Charges table.

CREATURE SIZE	WRAITHSTONE CHARGES
Tiny or Small	6
Medium or Large	8
Huge	10
Gargantuan	12

As a bonus action, you can activate a wraithstone to perform one of the following:

- ***Bestial Vigor***. You can deal an additional 1d6 damage on your next melee attack.
- ***Natural Selection***. You can gain advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks and increase your speed by +5 feet for 1 minute.
- ***Wisdom of the Wilds***. You can gain advantage on your next Wisdom (Animal Handling) or Wisdom (Survival) skill check.

Each time a wraithstone is activated, it depletes some of the soul of the animal preserved within and consumes 1 charge. After all of the stone's charges are used, the animal's spirit is completely drained, and the stone becomes a mere bauble.

Elven Druids of Midgard

by Mike Welham

When you think of nature, you inevitably picture the elves and their empires, whether current or past. The forests they claim are testaments to the power they held over the natural world. Before the splintering of the elves, druidic practices remained largely unchanged, barring the rare shift among their leaders. But once the majority of elves retreated, those same awe-inspiring forests began to dwindle, so the remaining elven druids adapted, changed their relationship to the wilds and to the creatures living among the trees, owing to their new circumstances.

Druid Aesthetes of the Arbonesse

The elven druids of the Arbonesse Forest hearken back to the days of elven dominance. In defiance of the decline of elven civilization in the Arbonesse, the druids strive to create vibrant displays of beauty among the plants and animals within the woods they maintain. They used to take their cues from the Imperatrix's Court, but Her Majesty's current incapacitation has given them considerable autonomy in their aesthetic dictates. Gold and orange flowers have given way to vibrant purples and blues. The druids exert extensive control over the trees in the Arbonesse, extending autumn to maintain their glorious coloration. They further use their magic to blunt the destructive effects of winter to preserve the leaves. A tree that sheds its leaves before the druids deem it acceptable becomes firewood instead of standing as an eyesore. In late winter, the druids encourage new leaf growth, which pushes out the preserved autumn leaves.

Animals receive similar treatment at the druid's hands. The elves husband the animals to ensure pleasing appearances, from animals' coats to the shapes and sizes of tails and ears and even minute details like eye color. The beasts often have coloration and patterning found nowhere else on Midgard, making tales of purple-striped tigers seem unbelievable. The animals' beautification makes them seem less threatening, but the druids do very little to blunt the instincts of predators, except perhaps to ensure the animals leave elves unmolested.

The druid orders wield considerable influence among the elves populating the Arbonesse. Since they control the forest's plentiful beasts and plants, druids have significant resources at their disposal if disputes arise with the other elves. They generally don't abuse their implicit power since they are more concerned with the forest's appearance than with waging war. However, they do ensure clothing worn by inhabitants and visitors alike does not clash with their carefully curated color schemes.

Concurrent with their goal of aesthetic perfection, Arbonesse druids cultivate poisonous and aggressive plants that hide behind an attractive facade. The flowers of these plants release pollen that entices prey to come close, so then the plants can puff out a more concentrated packet of toxic pollen or otherwise attack. The druids use their magic to ensure the plants recognize elves and refrain from harming them. Likewise, the animals roaming the Arbonesse have an appealing and harmless mien, making it easier to trick potential prey into underestimating their capacity for violence or focusing on them to the exclusion of hidden predatory animals. The druids of the Arbonesse teach other elves about the locations and properties of the plants and animals. Though the elves enjoy protection from the dangerously enhanced flora and fauna, they need to know about them in the rare case they entertain non-elf visitors.

NEW SPELLS

The druids of the Arbonesse wield potent magics.

CHARMING AESTHETICS

3rd-level enchantment (druid)

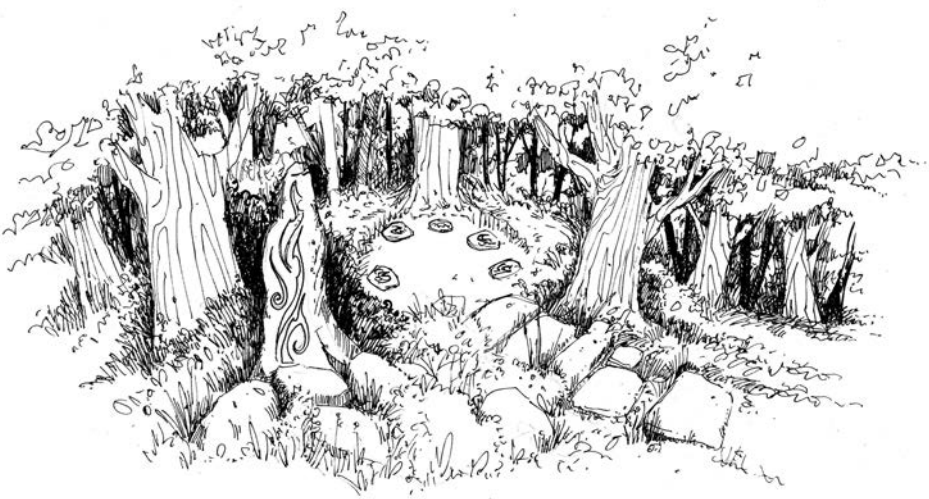
Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S, M (a preserved flower or tuft of animal fur)

Duration: 1 day

You affect a group of the same plants or animals within range, giving them a harmless and attractive appearance. If a creature studies one of the enchanted plants or animals, it must make a Wisdom saving throw. If it fails the saving throw, it is charmed by the plant or animal until the spell ends or until another creature other than one of its allies does anything harmful to it. While the creature is charmed and stays within sight of the enchanted plants or animals, it has disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks as well as checks to



notice signs of danger. If the charmed creature attempts to move out of sight of the spell's subject, it must make a second Wisdom saving throw. If it fails the saving throw, it refuses to move out of sight of the spell's subject. It can repeat this save once per minute. If it succeeds, it can move away, but it remains charmed.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 4th level or higher, you can target one additional group of plants or animals for each slot level above 4th.

TOXIC POLLEN

2nd-level transmutation (druid)
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: 30 feet
Components: V, S, M (allergenic or poisonous pollen)
Duration: 1 year

Upon casting this spell, one type of plant within range gains the ability to puff a cloud of pollen based on conditions you supply during casting. If the conditions are met, an affected plant sprays a pollen cloud in a 10-foot-radius sphere centered on it. Creatures in the area must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for 1 minute. At the end of a poisoned creature's turn, it can make a Constitution saving throw. On a success, it is no longer poisoned. A plant can only release this pollen once within the duration.

Druid Militants of the Gennecka

While the druids of the Arbonesse are concerned with the appearance of their forest and its inhabitants, elven druids of the Gennecka Forest concern themselves with the inherent weaponry in the plants and beasts populating their forest. Gennecka elves shape trees to maximize the elves' camouflage, to form hidden stands from which they can comfortably shoot at trespassers, and to act as potential weapons waiting for the druids to animate them.

If the druids encourage any sort of plant growth, they do so with an eye toward harming their foes or impeding movement. Brambles and thick overgrowth cover the forest floor, and nettling bushes crowd forest trails. Similarly to their counterparts in the Arbonesse, the elves guarantee the plants can't slow down or inflict harm on elven inhabitants who don't have the druids' ability to move through hazardous plants.

Gennecka druids primarily raise predatory animals to protect the woods. These beasts have more aggressive temperaments than their ordinary counterparts and possess sharper teeth and claws (giving beasts an additional 2 points of damage with their melee attacks). Again, the druids work to protect other elves from predation by the beasts, but they haven't perfected their control. They usually destroy animals known to have harmed elves, or they transplant them in cases where they can't bring themselves to destroy perfect killing machines or when they can unleash a violent animal on their unsuspecting foes. When an animal becomes old or infirm to the point where their magic can't heal it, the elves also destroy the animal.

The druids recognize the necessity for prey animals and stock the forest with rabbits, deer, and other such beasts. However, they train prey animals to respond to their commands, permitting them to override the flight response and instead stampede targets to create a distraction or, in the case of hooved or antlered animals, inflict grievous wounds. Prey animals that become ill or (more rarely) old meet a similar fate, but one consistent with nature's course.

Gennecka elves are already on a war footing, so there is much cooperation between the druid orders and the other elves. The druids keep everyone apprised

of dangerous hunting grounds and make sure their efforts don't accidentally hinder the archers' ability to launch their arrows. They also craft and bequeath tokens, so the elves can animate plants or escape the notice of dangerous predators. A token is keyed to a particular elf to ensure it loses its effectiveness if it falls into the wrong hands.

Should Queen Osilessi return from the Summer Lands to reclaim the Gennecka Forest, the druids plan to restore it to its former glory, reducing its innate danger and making it more inviting to visitors. They feel like they don't have that luxury while they protect the woods from the Mharoti Empire's depredations, but they reason the queen will understand the forest's current state.

NEW SPELLS

The druids of the Gennecka wield potent magics.

RISE OF THE GREEN

8th-level evocation (druid)
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: 180 feet
Components: V, S, M (a cutting from a treant)
Duration: Concentration, up to 10 minutes

The spell gives life to existing plants in range. If there are no plants in range, the spell creates undergrowth and trees that persist for the duration. One of the trees becomes a treant friendly to you and your companions. Roll initiative for the treant, which has its own turn. It obeys any verbal commands that you issue to it. If you don't issue it any commands, it defends itself from hostile creatures but otherwise takes no actions.

The animated undergrowth creates difficult terrain for your enemies. Additionally, at the beginning of each of your turns, all creatures that are on the ground in range must succeed on a Strength saving throw or become restrained until the spell ends. A restrained creature can use an action to make a Strength (Athletics) check against your spell save DC, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature is restrained by plants at the beginning of your turn, it takes 1d6 bludgeoning damage.

Finally, the trees swing at each enemy in range, requiring each creature to make a Dexterity saving throw. A creature takes 6d6 bludgeoning damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.

You can use a bonus action to recenter the spell on yourself. This does not grow additional trees in areas that previously had none.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a 9th-level slot, an additional tree becomes a treant, the undergrowth deals an additional 1d6 bludgeoning damage, and the trees inflict an additional 2d6 bludgeoning damage.

Freerunner Druids of the Rothenian Plain

Rather than bend nature to their will as other elven druids do, the elven druids in the Rothenian Plain work with nature, seeking only to protect the grasslands and the animals inhabiting them. Outside elven observers view this approach as proof of the elves' feral existence and question whether the plains elves have any druidic ability at all.

The druids' approach to nature involves noninterference in the course of life on the plains. They acknowledge their role in the overall lifecycle as simultaneous consumers and protectors of the plains' resources. Thus, they make sure their numbers don't grow to unmanageable levels, where they are forced to make a decision between their own people and the food they eat. Freerunner elves have a more carnivorous diet than other elves,

which has become a necessity owing to their nomadic lives. Even if they remained in one place, the druids would be loath to farm the land, which opposes their decision not to intervene with the natural balance for their benefit. Very few druids wish to discuss their belief that many of the woes inflicted upon the elves are repayment for their hubris at exerting their will over nature.

This is not to say the druid orders completely leave the plains to their own devices. When fire spreads among the grasses, the druids snuff it out after deliberations among their number to determine whether the fire is ultimately harmful. They also produce water when they see signs of drought and manipulate the weather to avoid killer frosts or temperature extremes detrimental to the plains' plants and animals. Additionally, the elves help reduce the number of horses diseased by black strangles, and they intercede in cases where predators overhunt prey animals or where grazing animals destroy the grasslands in their hunger. When reducing the population of either type of animal, the druids use the meat to feed their tribes.

The druids of the Rothenian Plain carry tremendous spiritual clout among the elves, who are taught how to hunt to preserve the herds of grazing animals and the best methods for leaving little trace of their passing through the grasses. They were instrumental in the elves' retreat to the east, spurred in part by the centaurs' black strangles affliction. The druids have lately turned their attention to a cure for black strangles because they fear the disease will spread from the centaurs to others.

Given their attitudes toward other elves, it is unlikely for the plains' druids to return to the forests if the elves were ever to reclaim their might in Midgard. Their tribes see them as spiritual leaders, so most elves in the Rothenian Plain will follow suit. In kind, the elves living in the remaining great forests desire nothing to do with their undomesticated kin and would hardly consider inviting them back into the fold.

NEW ITEMS

The druids of the Rothenian Plain wield potent magics.

FREERUNNER ROD

Rod, rare (requires attunement)

Tightly intertwined lengths of grass, bound by additional stiff, knotted blades of grass, form this rod. While you hold it, you leave behind no tracks or other traces of your passing while you move through grasslands. Additionally, you move through plants in the grassland without being slowed by them and without taking damage from them if they have thorns, spines, or a similar hazards. Finally, beasts native to grasslands must succeed on a DC 13 Charisma saving throw if they wish to attack you.

The rod has 10 charges. You can use a bonus action to expend one charge to increase your land speed by 10 feet or by 20 feet if you are in grasslands. You can use a reaction to expend two charges when you become paralyzed or restrained, negating that effect. The rod regains 1d4 expended charges daily at dawn. If it is reduced to 0 charges, roll a d20. On a 1, the rod collapses into a pile of grass seeds. Among the grass seeds are 1d10 berries, useable per the *goodberry* spell.

If you inflict fire damage to grasslands or kill a grasslands beast without eating at least half of its flesh (yourself or sharing it with others), the rod's magic ceases to work for you, and you can never attune to this rod again.

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