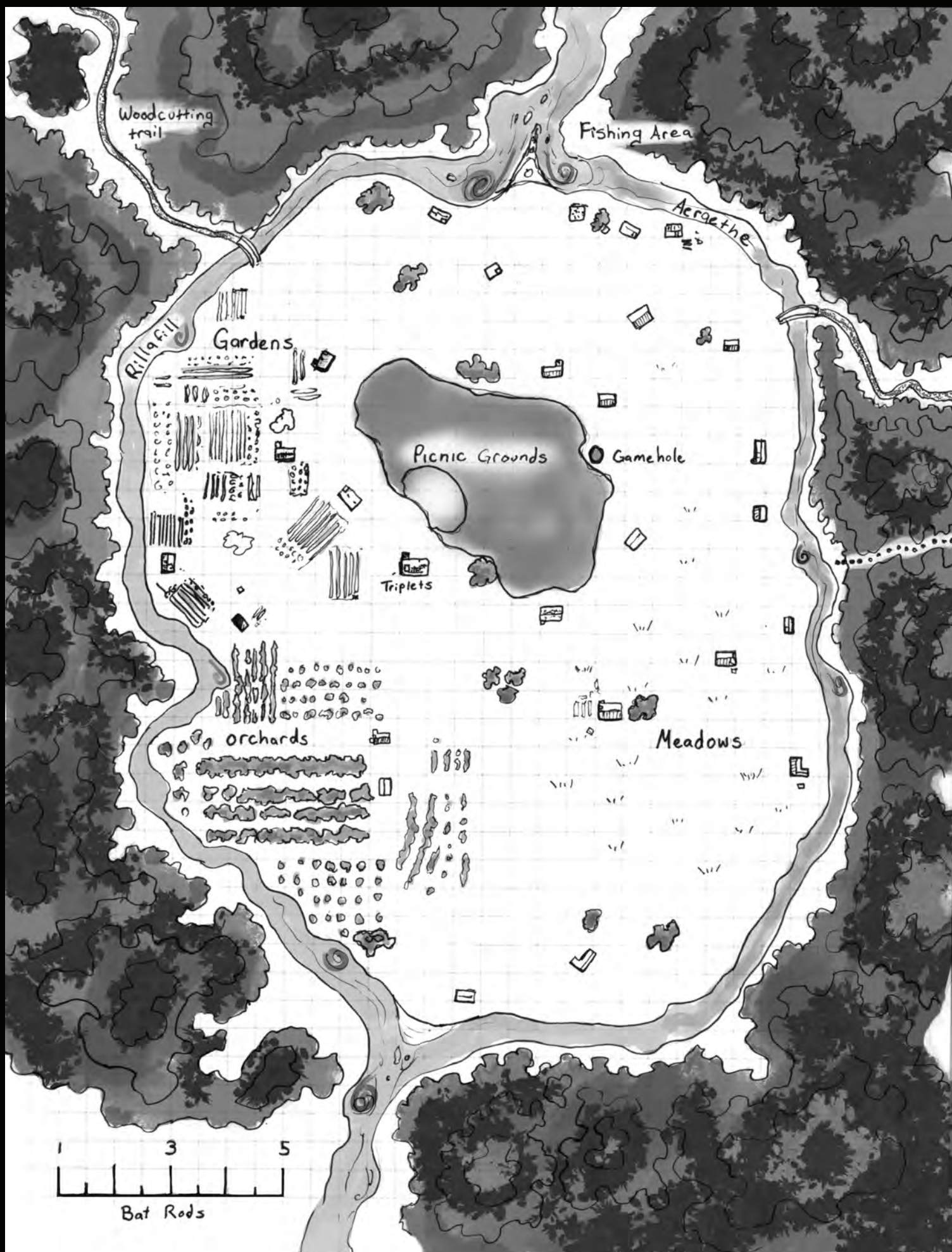


THE DRUID IN THE DARK FOREST

BY ED GREENWOOD





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An Adventure for 4-6 Characters Levels 2-4

By: Ed Greenwood



Credits:

Author: Ed Greenwood

Story by: Jason Knutson

Editor: Alex Kammer

Cover Artist: Dan Fransee

Interior Illustrators: Terry Pavlet and Lloyd Metcalf

Cartographer: Lloyd Metcalf



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Introduction-

Rodham's Legacy, to be shared with the players:

Those few folk who've heard of it at all know "Rodham" is the abbreviated name for Rodney's Hamlet (also known to its inhabitants as Rod's Wood). Situated in deep forest some 25 miles west of Ockney's Hold and the Oriana River, Rodham is a remote, intentionally isolated forest commune of about nine square miles, founded 90 years ago and almost entirely unknown to the wider world. Eighty humans (15 families) call it home.

Its namesake and founder Rodney Eveningbloom intended Rodham to be a natural utopia. Rodney was an educated and debonair lumberjack, who after becoming disillusioned by what he perceived as the ongoing disintegration of moral fiber in the world's cities, built the small village of Rodham far from the dangers and dramas of "modern" civilization. Since its founding, several additional families have chosen to join Rodney's heirs in Rodham to live communally and under a set of simple rules established by Rodney himself.

Though not fully understood today, the founding tenets Rodhams sought to live by were:

Do not deal in hypotheticals.

Friction equals fire.

Share.

Live simply.

The Animal precedes progress.

The residents of Rodham try to adhere to these tenets, but aren't religious zealots; they don't worship Rodney as a god or even a prophet. Rather, he's seen as a man who had the good idea of founding a simple community of like-minded folk who would treat each other decently. Rodhams are not druids; they consider themselves caretakers of their natural surroundings, but are completely comfortable cutting down trees or killing animals to insure their own continued comfortable lives.

As do most nigh-closed societies, Rodham has developed its own distinct ways. All Rodhams wear a decorative bead woven into their hair, as a reminder of Rodney's founding tenets. As soon as a child has grown enough hair for weaving, it is given a bead. Rodham females have developed a system of signaling each other by flicking their beads with their fingernails.

The community also has its own units of measure. While one might expect distances to be measured in "rods," they are actually described in terms of "bat feet" or "bat yards,"

and both terms mean the same distance, which is about what someone in the outside world would describe as six yards (so a Rodham "bat yard" is about six outside-world yards). All directions are given as if the very center of the village was the center of the world. So a Rodham might say a bird flew "Rod south about 50 bat feet and landed," but an outsider seeing that same flight would see that the bird was flying towards magnetic north for several hundred yards.

The center of the village is a lush meadow known simply as the "picnic grounds." It's the village meeting place, and also where all Rodhams take their meals communally, picnic-style. Rodham legend insists it's the spot where Rodney and a beautiful woodland nymph writhed as one, and made the plans for this harmonious woodland sanctuary. Several current residents of Rodham claim lineage traced back to this union, but none of them have the appearance or abilities of a nymph.

Adventure Summary:

(If you are a player, stop reading! This is for DM's only)

Much of Rodham's oral history is true. It was founded and built by a goodly woodcutter named Rodney, and intended to be a new community based on his peaceful tenets. But it has a darker past known only to older residents, about half of all current Rodhams; the others are unsuspecting innocents.

Eighty years ago, a decade after Rodney had founded Rodham, he was exploring the forest when he met what he thought was a beautiful woodland nymph named Trina. She seduced him, and became pregnant.

Trina was actually a **Baobhan Sith** named Urina. A few weeks after their coupling on the future picnic grounds, Urina murdered Rodney, draining and spilling his blood in the meadow. This cruelty was witnessed by forest animals who reported it to a nearby druid named Rynne. Eight months later, Urina gave birth to triplets, two of them boys whom she named Shwan Eveningbloom and Rind Eveningbloom; the daughter she called AnnMarie Eveningbloom. Shwan, Rind, and AnnMarie are now known to Rodham collectively as "the triplets" or "the elders."

Led by Rynne the **druid**, the animals expelled Urina, but her children remained in Rodham and were dutifully raised by its residents. During their childhood, Rodney's skeleton was found in the woods; his death was attributed to an animal attack. Years later, Urina covertly returned to Rodham and spoke with her children. She told them

the half-truth that she was their mother, but that their father had been murdered by a druid living in the woods who conspired with the woodland animals to kill Rodney. She empowered them with the ability to conceal their true alignments to instead seem lawful good, and taught them how to make the enchanted beads that are woven into the hair of all Rodham residents. She informed them that the source of their power was the meadow where she had bedded Rodney, and that every summer solstice the blood of a **lawful good** man must be spilled there to perpetuate their protection from the forest creatures around them. She also instructed them to mate and populate Rodham, and eventually the surrounding area, with their descendants.

Discovering that Urina had returned to Rodham, Ryanne dispatched another animal attack. This time Urina was dragged away by a pack of wolves. The triplets were told Urina had been killed, and they mourned her, secretly vowing to take revenge against Ryanne and his animal companions. Yet they knew they were woefully underpowered for a fight, and would need help to vanquish the druid and his wild beasts.

Every year since their mother's death, the triplets have concocted ways to lure a lawful good human to Rodham for the annual sacrifice on the picnic grounds. This year the triplets have devised a plan to kill three birds with one stone. They have sent word out to the nearest cities that their peaceful village has been under regular attack by a group of forest animals led by a corrupted druid intent on ruling the forest. They have issued a public plea to "righteous adventurers," to come to their aid by killing the druid and neutralizing his animal minions. Unbeknownst to the well intentioned adventurers, they are in fact being asked to kill a good druid and his goodly animals. Once their assigned task has been accomplished, the adventurers will be sacrificed on the picnic grounds en masse in an attempt by the triplets to amplify their power and begin the expansion of their domain beyond Rodham.

ACT I: Help the Rodhams

SCENE I: TO RODHAM

In shop after inn after tavern, the PCs hear that Rodham's elders are asking for help. It seems the woodland village has recently been repeatedly attacked by wild beasts led and goaded by an evil **druid**.

After deciding to answer the call, the PCs travel to the village. Along the way, if the party asks other travelers or

inhabitants about Rodham and its recent troubles, they can learn as much of Rodham's public history as the DM desires, or determine randomly using the (roll a d20) table below:

01-06: *Rodham? Some sort of deep-forest share-all, supposed to be better than life under any king or baron. Don't know much about it, don't hear much; they keep to themselves. Tree-lovers. The fellow who founded it got killed by bears, or some such; Rodney something or other. These things never end well.*

07-08: *Rodney Eveningbloom's village? Keep to themselves, seem happy enough, but there's something odd there, something not quite as it seems. What, I really don't know. Priests and do-gooders who head there seem to disappear.*

09-10: *Rodham? Deep in the wild woods—and the woods around there really are wild. There's a druid thereabouts, name of Ryanne; a good man. If it wasn't for them, the forest beasts would have us all for raw meat meals!*

11-12: *Don't trust them Rodhams. They all wear beads, and those beads are magic. Hide what they really are—so well that I don't know what they really are! But that usually means fey, and tricky fey usually mean bad things happen to plain human folks within their grasp!*

13-14: *Seem happy folk, in Rodham. Keep to themselves, unless you're lawful, and good. Then they befriend you, and want you to visit . . . and you're never seen again.*

15-16: *Rodham? No one visits that place much; evil beasts thereabouts; keeps a druid there right busy, keeping them down!*

17-18: *Rod's Wood, they used to call it, but the Rod who founded it got killed. By wild animals, or by treachery. Happy communal place, but very private. Want nothing to do with most of us; invite in only the real hard-law good types. Who stay there, it seems; we never see them again. So I suppose it's a very law-abiding, orderly, good place, deep in the woods and keeping to themselves there.*

19-20: *Rodham? Good place to stay well clear of. They've got wood nymphs there, and evil druids, and a lot worse! Armies of hungry wild beasts, and fey behind them!*

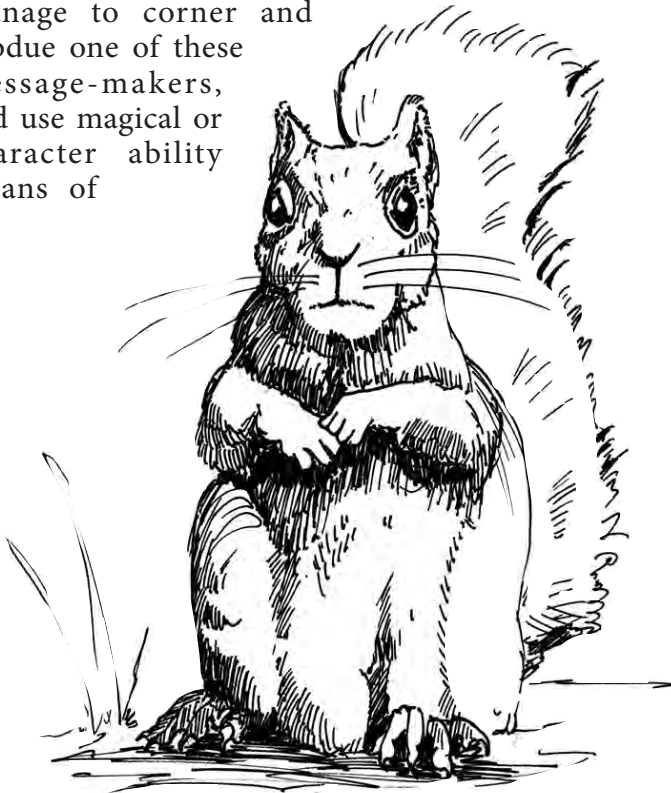
Into The Forest

Although few travel to Rodham, it can be found easily enough, because everyone seems to know it stands in a triangle between two streams, known locally as the Aeraethe (“Air-WRAITH”) and the Rillafil (Rill-ah-FILL”) that join together as they flow away from Rodham. Old woodcutting trails along the banks of both streams can be followed to where the streams meet, and if either stream is then crossed to get to the inside of the triangle and followed, even a far-from-home wayfarer can’t help but find Rodham. (These directions can be given by dozens of folk in taverns, inns, shops, and on the roads that the PCs meet; no one gives different details.)

Very soon after the PCs enter the forest and begin the trek to Rodham, they’ll notice they’re under constant surveillance by ravens (small groups) and the occasional lone owl, perched in trees and regarding them silently.

They will also find crude messages scratched in the mud of the trail, in Common: usually “Turn Back” but more rarely “Danger Awaits In Rodham” and “Don’t Become The Next Sacrifice.” These are freshly made, and if the PCs ever leave a message intact but later turn back, they will discover the message has been scratched away into illegibility.

Eventually, they will see that the messages are being scratched by a brown bear or a black bear or a badger or a giant owl, who will depart hastily before the PCs can catch them (if the PCs do manage to corner and subdue one of these message-makers, and use magical or character ability means of



communication, they’ll discover the beasts don’t entirely understand the messages they’re leaving, but are performing “standing orders” left to them by a druid, Rianne, whom they regard as kind and good (a friend to all animals and plants, who tries to understand and safeguard the ways of the wild in the forest), and that Rianne is a leader they are happy to work with or even serve, and that there is an evil in Rodham that concerns Rianne, who keeps watch over it and sometimes must fight it; an evil centered on three humans who are not quite humans.)

The wildlife will flee from PCs, never fighting or menacing them—even if the PCs attack to kill (or to butcher, cook, and eat).

Arrival

The PCs’ first inkling they’re approaching Rodham is an encounter with six young children gathering berries into hide “sleeve-sacks,” swarming nimbly up trees to pluck berries from trunk-climbing vines as well as burrowing for them under thick-leafed bushes (darlan-vine berries and shadelily berries, respectively; both deliciously edible). The children are utterly unafraid of being out in the “wild” forest, but will react warily to the sight of strangers with weapons (the PCs), and will climb trees or put themselves hastily on the far side of large tree trunks that they’ll peer from behind, and ask the PCs who they are and why they’re here.

If the PCs say they’re here to help Rodham with its “evil druid” problem or its beast attacks, the children will react with bewilderment about animals attacking (what beast attacks? They’ve seen or heard of none!) but will nod at any mention of the evil druid and confirm they’ve heard about that (not personally seen or experienced, but they’ve overheard three of the elders—the triplets—telling their parents and other adults of Rodham about the evil druid, Rianne, who’s the enemy of the village and has to be watched out for). If the PCs threaten or attack the children, the children will vanish into the forest, moving aloft in the forest canopy, and slip away beyond any hope of the PCs catching or tracking them. If the PCs don’t threaten or attack, the children will be happy to guide them to Rodham and introduce them.

Regardless of whether they’re escorted by the children or not, the PCs reach Rodham about an hour later, three days before the summer solstice. Regardless of how their interactions with the children went, they are greeted warmly by the Rodhams (the DM should roleplay this interaction so as to make the players feel that Rodham

is the kind of place anyone would want to defend; if the any children were harmed by the PCs or fled from the PCs, they've gone elsewhere, not yet reporting what happened to the community).

The trees thin, and you see sunlight ahead: sunlight lancing down through a large gap in the nigh-endless canopy of leaves overhead—a large clearing. Birds are calling, and you hear faint creaking noises ahead, of wood under rhythmic stress. Boughs are groaning gently as hammocks hanging from them swing back and forth, back and forth. You can see buildings—small, rustic log cottages with living grass roofs, and other dwellings that look more like grassy hills with windows inset into the slopes—and people sitting on low wooden lounge chairs, making large salads in wooden bowls by washing and cutting up heaps of wild leafy plants and tubers.

They see you, and nod and smile; no one reacts with alarm. Some villagers lounging in hammocks sit up so they can see you, and some children stare in excitement and then dash off to various cottages to spread word of your arrival. Some of the salad-makers look like hardy middle-aged folk. They smile at you and say, “Welcome to Rodham!”

Aside from the knives the salad makers are using, and a small hatchet nose-buried in a stump beside a pile of freshly-split kindling, there's no sign of any arms, and no one is wearing armor or heading to get the hatchet or any other weapons; there's no sign of any sentinel or village constable. Although there are farms and ponds beyond, the heart of Rodham is right in front of the PCs: a large clearing with about twenty small, simple cottages arranged irregularly around it. Most have clotheslines running from beside the front door to a nearby tree. Birds are calling, and although you can hear faint, unintelligible murmurs of human chatter coming out of the open doors and windows of some of the homes, Rodham is much quieter than most settlements the PCs have visited, large or small. (There are no animals, pets or wild, to be seen; though this needn't be mentioned unless a player asks. Almost any passive Wisdom (Perception) PC score will succeed at noticing this, if any alert “examine surroundings” PC activity occurs. See hereafter for what the villagers may say about the lack of animals.

Although some of the homes blend in with the forest because of the manner of their construction, the layout

of Rodham is simple and plain, with nothing walled or hidden. Most of the children have never been outside the forest, and are enthralled by all visitors, the PCs included. They will watch the PCs from a distance, wide-eyed and fascinated.

The adults are the epitome of “laid back” and friendly. They will hail the PCs and ask if they are lost, or need help, but won't rush to escort them everywhere, seem nervous at their presence, or “keep watch over them.” The PCs can wander freely, entering any home they want and peering at everything; as a Rodham will explain, “Take what you want; we share everything.”

No one in the village appears to have any armor or martial weapons; rather than hunting with spears and bows and clubs, the Rodhams use snares and fishhooks and “fish baskets” submerged-in-the-river traps. There is no town guard or constable. Helpful adult Rodhams will volunteer that “We need no lawkeepers, for we have no crime. We settle disagreements peacefully, by debate and suggestions and voting. Nothing ‘belongs to’ anyone; everything belongs to all of us.”

The villagers will explain that, as much as possible, everything is shared equally. Nothing is private or off limits. The PCs are welcome to make themselves at home wherever they choose, including in the elders' lodge. (Should the PCs investigate the elders' lodge, home of the triplets, they will find it cramped, crowded with refuse, and unpleasant with a lingering stench of rotting meat.)

By the way Rodham is described, the PCs should assume the village is full of good folk; if suspicious players try to learn the alignment of various residents, some of the villagers are truly good, most of the rest are ignorant or naïve to the truth about the triplets, and all Rodhams wear a bead in their hair that—whatever their behavior or professed views—makes their alignment seem lawful good.

The Rodhams see their village as the best place to live, home to the best way of living life that can be attained. “We all live in harmony, and the children laugh and play because they are happy!”

When not staring at the PCs, the children of Rodham spend much of their time playing games near the meadow, in a play area they call the “gamehole.” The gamehole is a shallow round depression centered on a sandpit full of carved wooden toys (such as tiny blunt swords, little castle towers, dragons and giant snakes and other monsters, and some jointed “people”). Around the sandpit are some hard-packed spots where the children often

skip rope, and there are stakes to toss vine-rings at, a clothesline where skipping ropes are hung when not in use, and some “sitting logs.” The children of Rodham often spend hours playing tag or jumping rope in and around the gamehole.

The only oddity that may strike perceptive PCs is that there are no animals within sight or sound of Rodham. If asked about this, any of the children will honestly say they don’t know why, but will guess “the evil druid” might have something to do with it. Any adult villager will unhesitatingly state that they believe the druid Ryanne has turned “the beasts of the forest” against Rodham, and that of course the wiser, warier animals probably keep their distance because they know the villagers eat animals for food.

If any such discussion occurs involving, or within hearing, any of “the triplets” (Shwan, Rind, and AnnMarie Eveningbloom), (see descriptions below) the triplet(s) involved will tell the PCs that after some of the recent animal attacks, “we” have been forced to be more aggressive with the woodland creatures, and that has led to their absence. They will, however, assure the party that mere “bat yards” beyond Rodham’s edge hundreds of animals lurk, poised to attack unwary villagers who stray too far.

If PCs ask about the druid (recent sightings, what he does, etc.) they’ll be told grimly: “The wolves watch. The wolves watch, and he among them.” The villagers will point into the trees.

(And sure enough, after night falls, many creature eyes peer into the village from the dark depths of the forest. PCs who charge at them will find nothing, as the critters will easily elude the PCs in the darkness, melting away into the forest. If the PCs persist in trying to follow beasts they see, stalking and listening and being as quiet as possible, they should eventually find trails leading to the druid’s lair.)

If the PCs ask “Who rules?” or “Who’s in charge?” in Rodham, they will be told, “The elders decide. We all voice opinions, but the will of the majority holds sway.” Any of the children will, however, bluntly voice what PCs who spend time watching or listening will quickly and readily notice: what the triplets (the brothers Shwan and Rind Eveningbloom, and especially their sister AnnMarie, to whom the brothers defer) say is what the rest of the elders echo and agree with; all of the adults always look to the triplets for direction and approval.

Shawn Eveningbloom has dark golden hair, emerald-green eyes that seem to see everything (constantly darting glances this way and that), dark brows, and a very handsome face. He is slender, as graceful as any dancer, and has paler skin than most of the villagers. [His game statistics appear later.]

Rind Eveningbloom has dark golden hair, emerald-green eyes, and a very handsome face. He is slender (but is noticeably plumper than either of his siblings), as graceful as any dancer, and has paler skin than most of the villagers. He seems the most lazy or placid of the triplets, and has sideburns that his brother Shawn lacks. [His game statistics appear later.]

AnnMarie Eveningbloom looks almost like an elf: her ears are pointed, she moves with catlike grace, and has a sleekly curved body with pearl white skin. Her long, unbound hair is bright golden, and her eyes snap with her commanding, forceful personality. She visibly dominates the Rodhams she’s closest to; they look to her to speak first or to voice an opinion when asked their own, defer to her if she interrupts them, and they are never rude to her or disagree with her; if she says something contrary to what they’ve said, they instantly shift their attitude, decision, or stance to fall into accord with hers. [Her game statistics appear later.]

Gifts For the PCs

Laughing and giggling, a group of most of the Rodham children approach the PCs, and shyly present each party member with a beautiful decorative bead to be worn in their hair. They say this means the PCs are “friends of Rodham,” and will show the PCs that they are all themselves wearing such beads. They will claim that the beads “bring us good luck, and make us happy in sad or lonely times.”

While their parents watch, the children take great pleasure braiding or weaving the bead into the hair of each player character.

The children have been instructed to do this by the triplets (but don’t know the real reason the triplets want the PCs to be wearing beads: they hope the beads will confuse or provoke Ryanne into believing the players are either evil, or at least allied with the triplets). A refusal by any PC to accept a bead will not be taken well (“Do you find us so untrustworthy?”) but the triplets will try to soothe any dispute, and gently tell the PCs that “we also wear them for protection against the evil druid.”

The beads are magical, but the triplets will say their enchantment just wards off “dark druidic magic” and that the beads “were given to us by a wandering holy man.” (The truth is that the beads are made and enchanted by the triplets, and are pierced lumps of pretty ceramic that bear a permanent variant of Nystul’s magic aura that will detect as an illusion, and that masks the true alignment of any creature that has such a bead on their body, to seem lawful good.)

The Dark Druid

No matter who among the adult Rodhams the PCs try to discuss the “wild beast attacks” with, the villagers will take or direct them to one of the triplets (because “they know the troubles best”).

If the PCs ask or say nothing about Rodham’s call for aid, one of the triplets will raise the subject with them.

What they tell the PCs boils down to this: an evil druid named Ryanne dwells in the forest, and is the enemy of Rodham. Ryanne wants the village destroyed and all humans except himself and other druids of like mind to be gone from the forest. His wild beasts spy on the village constantly, and the Rodhams in turn watch out for him, because “experience has shown them” that if the villagers are ever scattered and weak (too many of them sick, or asleep, or weary from exhausting work), Ryanne will send his beasts to attack—brief raids intended to wound or kill a few individuals who can be caught alone. The animals then flee, leaving a wounded or dead villager behind; Ryanne is seemingly content to wear down the villagers slowly and patiently, rather than standing forth to face them in pitched battles.

Once, the triplets will tell the PCs, there were many more Rodhams than there are today (this is true, but the population decrease is due to hard winters and accidents, skirmishes with some of the fiercer wild animals, and departures of some families who disagreed with or feared the triplets, not because of anything the druid has done).

It has reached a point where the triplets fear for the survival of Rodham—not right now, but when the coldest depths of the next winter come, and the wolves grow hungry; there are now too few villagers to fight off a determined attack by the massed wolves of the forest, when they hunt in a pack. And still the druid schemes, his wild watchers and their forays growing bolder . . .

(Any villager will corroborate this; there have been more skirmishes, and they’ve been told by the triplets that the druid is behind the increasing troubles with wild beasts

so often that they accept it as proven truth when it is really no more than insistently repeated—and false—opinion. The triplets haven’t warned the entire village of their winter wolfpack fears, but they have spoken of this “worry” individually, with every single adult villager.)

So, the triplets add, they have spread word by means of every woodcutter or peddler or passing traveler they encounter, that Rodham needs aid: the swords and spells and bravery of adventurers looking to battle evil. Evil is right here in the forest, in the person of “the dark druid” Ryanne. Ridding the world of him will be an act of heroic good that this entire region will benefit from. But the PCs must act fast, for the summer solstice is only days away!

SCENE II ~ THE FIGHT FOR THE FOREST

The PCs should soon venture into the surrounding forest to reconnoiter, and find and confront Ryanne and the beasts that serve him. If they delay, the triplets will grimly remind them—repeatedly, if need be—that the summer solstice is fast approaching, and “Ryanne’s power will be at its peak then. It is imperative he be stopped before then!”

(If for any reason the PCs turn against the Rodhams rather than proceeding with this mission, the triplets will attack, ganging up on one PC and trying to knock them cold, as well as snatch any obvious PC magic item. The triplets will then flee into the forest with item and incapacitated PC, trying to lead chasing PCs into the encounters that follow.)

Many narrow “game trails” depart Rodham in every direction, plunging into the deeper forest. If asked by PCs what direction the druid lives in, the villagers will be happy to point out the right way—but will all point in different directions, except for the triplets (all three of them will indicate the correct one).

Regardless of what trail the PCs take, they will find the woods alive around them, with frequent rustlings on all sides, squirrels rushing along high branches and leaping from branch to branch to accompany the PC party, and birds making similar “short hop” flights from high branch to high branch as if escorting the PCs. Larger forest animals (bears, elk, deer, dire wolves, and panthers) will be seen often in the distance, but will turn and flee from the PCs.

Until . . .

Wolf Attack

When the trail the PCs are using dips down into a hollow filled with ferns and overhung by trees whose leaves form a thick canopy, and the PCs follow it into the hollow (its climb back up the far side of the hollow and out can clearly be seen), wolves will wait until the PCs are in the middle of the hollow, which is circular and about 120 feet across, and rise up out of the concealing ferns all around the PCs: a **Dire Wolf** leading 4 **Wolves**.

DIRE WOLF

Large

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 37

Speed 50 ft.

STR 17 (+3) **DEX** 15 (+2) **CON** 15 (+2)

INT 3 (-4) **WIS** 12 (+1) **CHA** 7 (-2)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +4

Senses Passive Perception 13

Advantage on Wis (perception) checks relying on hearing or smell and on attack rolls if non-incapacitated ally within 5 feet.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Attack:* +5 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target, *Hit:* 2d6+3 piercing dmg plus DC 13 Str save or be knocked prone.

WOLF X 4

Medium

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 11

Speed 40 ft.

STR 12 (+1) **DEX** 15 (+2) **CON** 12 (+1)

INT 3 (-4) **WIS** 12 (+1) **CHA** 6 (-2)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +4

Senses Passive Perception 13

Advantage on Wis (perception) checks relying on hearing or smell and on attack rolls if non-incapacitated ally within 5 feet.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Attack:* +4 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target, *Hit:* 2d4+2 piercing dmg plus DC 11 Str save or be knocked prone.



They will streak to the attack, pouncing and snapping and snarling. They seek to disarm and tug away packs and clothing, not to maim or kill; to frighten the PCs off rather than slay, but if pressed, will try to injure PC wrists and hands and ankles, so as to try to get free of the fray and flee again.

If the PCs use non-violent means of overcoming the wolves (magic, for example), and also avoid using fire, the wolves will travel to the sentinels (see below), and that encounter will change from a fight to silently offering the PCs an escort (though the sentinels will attack the PCs if the PCs attack the druid when they reach him).

Sentinel

If PCs press on through the forest after the Wolf Attack, through the trackless leaves, moss, thorny vines and fallen trees or along a trail, they'll eventually come to a crude barricade: a tree has been felled across the trail, and behind it stand a **black bear** and a **brown bear**, with an **owl** perched on the shoulder of the brown bear.

This trio will watch the PCs approach. Then the owl will fly off to report (their numbers and descriptions and weaponry and what they say) to **Ryanne**.

BLACK BEAR

Medium

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 19

Speed 40 ft. (*climb* 30 ft.)

STR 15 (+2) **DEX** 10 (+0) **CON** 14 (+2)

INT 2 (−4) **WIS** 12 (+1) **CHA** 7 (−2)

Skills Perception +3

Senses Passive Perception 13

Advantage on Wis (perception) checks relying on smell

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Bite + Claws

Bite. *Melee Attack:* +3 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target, *Hit:* 1d6+2 piercing dmg

Claws. *Melee Attack:* +3 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target, *Hit:* 2d4+2 slashing dmg

BROWN BEAR

Large

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 34

Speed 40 ft. (*climb* 30 ft.)

STR 19 (+4) **DEX** 10 (+0) **CON** 16 (+3)

INT 2 (−4) **WIS** 13 (+1) **CHA** 7 (−2)

Skills Perception +3

Senses Passive Perception 13

Advantage on Wis (perception) checks relying on smell

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Bite + Claws

Bite. *Melee Attack:* +5 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target, *Hit:* 1d8+4 piercing dmg

Claws. *Melee Attack:* +5 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target, *Hit:* 2d6+4 slashing dmg

The bears will stand their ground and fight, trying to drive the PCs back, and will die “holding the line” here if they have to. A weasel is hiding in the underbrush as a backup spy, and will stay hidden to listen until spelled by other weasels, in “spying shifts” not showing itself or joining in the fighting.

If the PCs use non-violent means of overcoming the bears (magic, for example), and also avoid using fire, the bears will silently offer the PCs an escort (though they will attack the PCs if the PCs attack the druid when they reach him).

OWL

Tiny

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 1

Speed 5 ft. (*fly* 60 ft.)

STR 3 (−4) **DEX** 13 (+1) **CON** 8 (−1)

INT 2 (−4) **WIS** 12 (+1) **CHA** 7 (−2)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +3

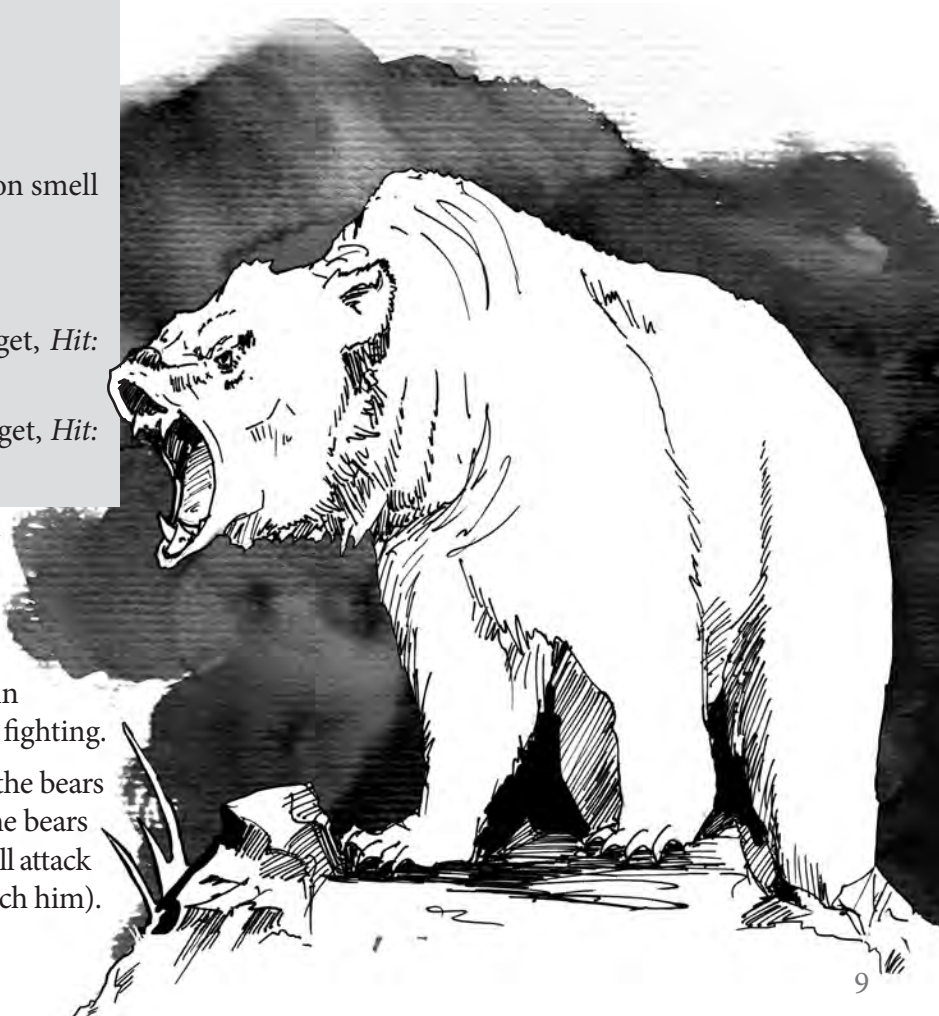
Senses Darkvision 120 ft., Passive Perception 13

Advantage on Wis (perception) checks relying on hearing or sight

Doesn't provoke opportunity attacks if it flies out of a foe's reach

ACTIONS

Talons. *Melee Attack:* +3 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target, *Hit:* 1 point slashing dmg



WEASEL

Tiny

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 1

Speed 30 ft.

STR 3 (−4) **DEX** 16 (+3) **CON** 8 (−1)

INT 2 (−4) **WIS** 12 (+1) **CHA** 3 (−4)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +3

Senses Darkvision 120 ft., Passive Perception 13

Advantage on Wis (perception) checks relying on hearing or smell

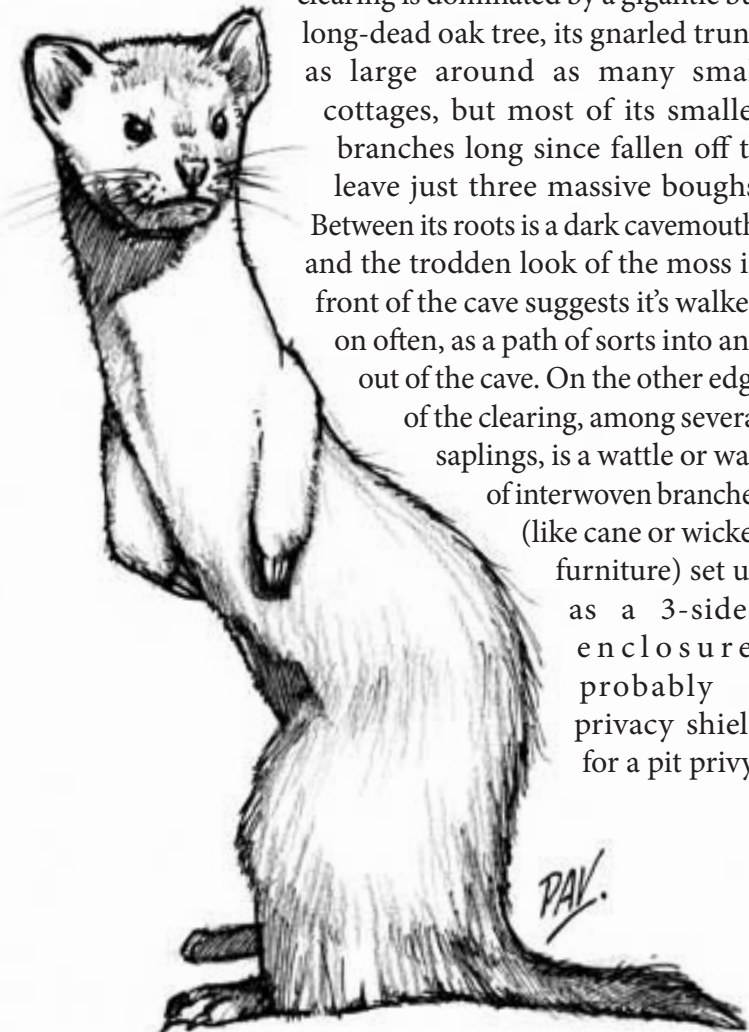
ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Attack:* +5 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target, *Hit:* 1 point piercing dmg

The Druid's Lair

The trail abruptly opens out into a small clearing where the sun's rays lance down through a gap in the seeming endless canopy of leaves to fall on a small patch of bushes surrounded by mottled green mosses. One side of this clearing is dominated by a gigantic but long-dead oak tree, its gnarled trunk as large around as many small cottages, but most of its smaller branches long since fallen off to leave just three massive boughs. Between its roots is a dark cavemouth, and the trodden look of the moss in front of the cave suggests it's walked on often, as a path of sorts into and out of the cave. On the other edge

of the clearing, among several saplings, is a wattle or wall of interwoven branches (like cane or wicker furniture) set up as a 3-sided enclosure, probably a privacy shield for a pit privy.



In the sunlit clearing in front of you, a man is washing underwear, a trio of worn and simple smocks or robes, a cloak, and two washcloths in two half-barrel “big buckets” (washwater and rinsewater) and spreading them over the sunlit bushes to dry. He works quietly and contentedly, listening to the calls of a swarm of forty or more small twittering birds (of all sorts) who seem to be talking to him. He is aware of your presence, and does not look surprised to see you. His back is to the cavemouth; it might be his home.

The man is about six feet tall, but rail-thin, mere flesh draped over bones (you can see the two bones in each forearm and calf). He has shoulder-length straight black hair on the right half of his head, and is bald on the left half, because he's been in some sort of fire in the past that left his skin—both his cranium and the left side of his face—melted, disfigured, and drooping grotesquely. He has large eyes, and their hue is jet-black. He is barefoot and barehanded, wearing a simple nut-brown-hued smock robe gathered at the waist with a cloth belt of the same color (the style of clothing many monks wear). He lets the last garment fall into the rinsewater and faces you.

“I am Rynanne,” he announces flatly. “You look like mercenaries, or adventurers.”

If any of the PCs are wearing Rodham beads, Rynanne spots them, and will add coldly, “Working for the despoilers of Rodham, are you? If so, you are not welcome here.”

It's impossible for the PCs to surprise the druid, no matter how stealthy they are, for birds and squirrels and voles see and warn of their approach, though he will not act as if he is aware of the PCs until they show themselves to those in the clearing. (He will cast barkskin on himself at their approach.)

If the PCs begin by hurling a spell rather than advancing to confront Rynanne, or charging him, they or the spell will rebound off an invisible barrier in the air in front of him (just before they reach him, he has pressed the face of a cube of force he wears in a deep pocket inside his robe that raises a barrier nothing can pass through, expending 5 of its charges so it only has 5 left). If the PCs start hostile spellcasting, Rynanne will push the cube's face

again, to win himself 1 minute of this same “nothing can pass” barrier—which will exhaust the cube’s magic.

When Ryanne first speaks to the PCs, the birds will all fly away in a huge whirring cloud, but a **panther**, an **eagle**, an **elk**, and 2 **brown bears** will move out of hiding (from behind the old dead oak tree and other trees) to flank the druid protectively.

Ryanne is stern and speaks coldly, assuming the PCs are evil. However, he will be civil and not attack (and the animals will await his cue, none of them fighting until he does or they are themselves attacked by the PCs) until he has parleyed with the PCs. If the PCs ask the right questions (and any of them are wearing Rodham beads), they’ll learn he mistrusts them because they bear Rodham beads (he knows what the beads do, and believes non-Rodhams would wear such beads only to conceal their true natures).

Ryanne will tell the PCs that some of the villagers are Rodham are naïve innocents (good folk), and others are under the sway of the “evil” triplets, who are “not human.” Some Rodhams are as greedy and nasty as the worst city-dwellers, and obey the triplets because they want to. The triplets must be destroyed—or all Rodham, he cares

not which, but “the forest cannot rest easy until the Evil Three are gone.”

Ryanne will not agree to surrender or depart, and will refuse to steer clear of the Rodham night ceremony on the summer solstice. “That foulness must be disrupted—for it involves human sacrifice, and if I am not sacrificed, beware: it may well be one of you!”

If the PCs ally with the druid, he will prove a staunch ally. If they try to trick him and deliver him into the hands of the Rodhams (he will not agree to go anywhere near the village, and if the PCs assure him the triplets are dead or gone, will demand proof, such as their severed heads), the PCs will find him shrewd and wary and with backup plans involving forest beasts who will attack en masse to let him get away.

Ryanne will let the PCs freely enter and examine his house, which is indeed under the roots of the old dead oak. It is a simple one-room, hollowed-out-of-the-earth cave, containing a cot of interwoven pine boughs, a spring of drinking water that seeps out of a cleft rock that forms the back wall and fills a few clay bowls before overflowing to run down into the floor, a horizontal wedged dead sapling forming a hanging-pole for clothing, and an apothecary-bench for treating animals with herbal pastes and mosses. It has a back entrance “escape tunnel” that

also forms a larder of sorts, with various clay pots with lids tucked into fissures and clefts along its walls storing fruit and root vegetables packed in sand or straw; this tunnel runs about forty feet to come to the surface behind an old dead log that looks huge and heavy, but is tinder-dry and light enough to be easily shifted. There is a chamberpot under the cot, and a pair of old, very well-worn boots. A coiled snake lies on the bed (a harmless pet that will rear up and hiss if PCs get near).

Aside from his cube of force, Ryanne has two treasures: a stone (which looks like just a normal stone, and Ryanne uses it on his bench to weigh down drying herbs) that when touched and willed glows with a soft reddish faerie fire (and so functions as a lamp), and (thrust deep into one of the back tunnel clefts) a stainless steel vial that’s cork-stoppered, wax-sealed, and unlabeled—and is a potion of superior healing (restores 8d4+8 lost hp).

Ryanne will warn PCs away from his watle-enclosed privy, saying “the plants back



there make your skin blister and burn-itch for days.” This is true, and if PCs ask why he doesn’t clear those plants away, RYANNE will tell them that “All living things have their place. We humans are the intruders here, not the fireleaf bushes. And they have their herbal uses.”

Herb-lore is RYANNE’s enthusiasm and a way to win his friendship, for PCs who discuss herbs with him.

However, neither he nor his animals will back down from the PCs, or agree to leave or be taken into custody; this is their home, and PCs who are aggressive will be met with standing-their-ground aggression in return; PCs who goad will be attacked.

Once fighting begins, the animals flanking RYANNE will “go for” PCs fearlessly, and RYANNE will snatch up a quarterstaff (he has six of them scattered around the clearing, leaning unobtrusively against various living saplings) and fight, using his thunderwave spell if pressed, to push PCs back—right at the wattle walls, which will be hurled back; until moved, the walls are guarding a 40-foot-deep, 10-feet-across-circular pit trap (any PC falling in takes 4d6 falling damage).



RYANNE

Medium Human

Armor Class 11 (16 w/ barkskin)

Hit Points 40

Speed 30 ft.

STR 10 (+0) DEX 12 (+1) CON 13 (+1)

INT 12 (+1) WIS 15 (+2) CHA 11 (+0)

Skills Medicine +4, Nature +3, Perception +4

Senses Passive Perception 14

Languages common, druidic, elvish

4th level spellcaster Wisdom, spell save DC 12, +4 to hit w/spells:

Cantrips (at will): druidcraft, shillelagh, thorn whip

1st level (4 slots): cure wounds, entangle, speak with animals, thunderwave

2nd Level (3 slots) barkskin, flame blade, hold person

ACTIONS

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target.

Hit: 1d6 bludgeoning dmg or 1d8 if two-handed or w/shillelagh.

BROWN BEAR X 2

Large

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 34

Speed 40 ft. (climb 30 ft.)

STR 19 (+4) DEX 10 (+0) CON 16 (+3)

INT 2 (–4) WIS 13 (+1) CHA 7 (–2)

Skills Perception +3

Senses Passive Perception 13

Advantage on Wis (perception) checks relying on smell

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Bite + Claws

Bite. *Melee Attack:* +5 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target, *Hit:* 1d8+4 piercing dmg

Claws. *Melee Attack:* +5 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target, *Hit:* 2d6+4 slashing dmg

EAGLE

Small, MM p322.

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 3

Speed 10 ft. (fly 60 ft.)

STR 6 (–2) DEX 15 (+2) CON 10 (+0)

INT 2 (–4) WIS 14 (+2) CHA 7 (–2)

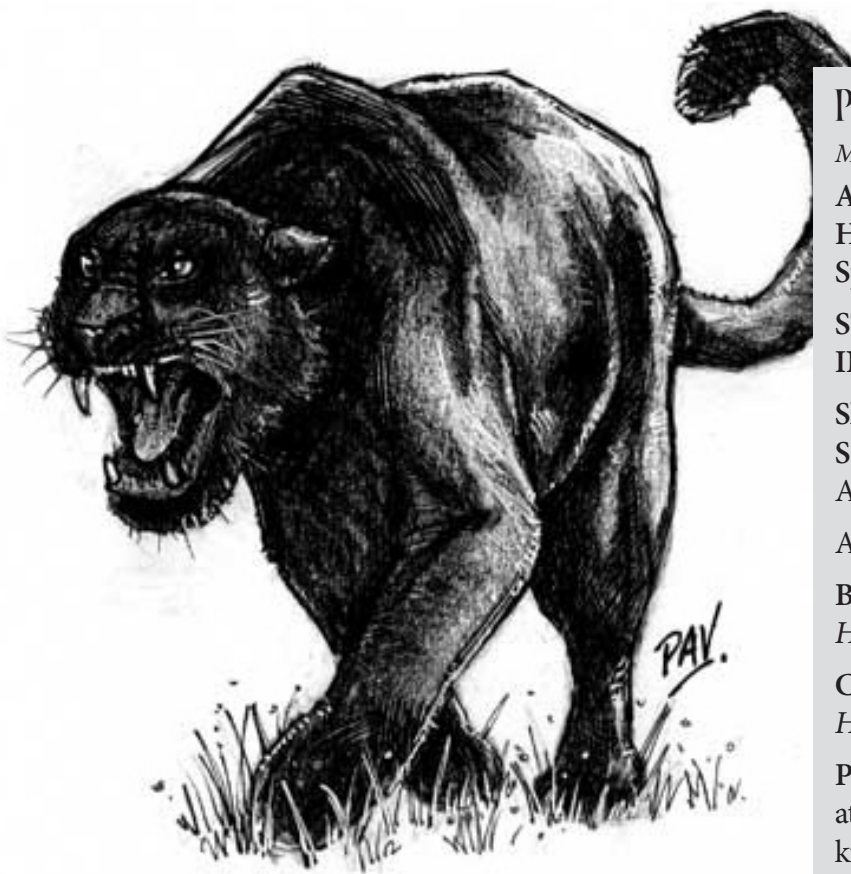
Skills Perception +3

Senses Passive Perception 13

Advantage on Wis (perception) checks relying on sight

ACTIONS

Talons. *Melee Attack:* +4 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target, *Hit:* 1d4+2 piercing dmg



PANTHER

Medium

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 13

Speed 50 ft. (climb 40 ft.)

STR 14 (+2) DEX 15 (+2) CON 10 (+0)

INT 3 (-4) WIS 14 (+2) CHA 7 (-2)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +6

Senses Passive Perception 14

Advantage on Wis (perception) checks relying on smell

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Attack:* +4 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target, *Hit:* 1d6+2 piercing dmg

Claw. *Melee Attack:* +4 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target, *Hit:* 1d4+2 slashing dmg

Pounce. 20 foot straight move ending in claw. Normal claw attack, plus forces target DC 12 Strength save, fail means knocked prone and panther gets immediate bonus bite attack)

ELK

Large

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 13

Speed 50 ft.

STR 16 (+3) DEX 10 (+0) CON 12 (+1)

INT 2 (-4) WIS 10 (+0) CHA 6 (-2)

Senses Passive Perception 10

ACTIONS

Ram. *Melee Attack:* +5 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target, *Hit:* 1d6+3 bludgeoning dmg

Hooves. *Melee Attack:* +5 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 prone creature, *Hit:* 2d4+3 bludgeoning dmg

Charge. 20 feet straight move ending in ram. Adds 2d6 damage to ram, also forces DC 13 Str saving throw or target knocked prone.



If the fight goes against RYANNE, he will swiftly flee, around the pit trap (he knows exactly where its edges are) and down another concealed (behind a woven mat of living leafy vines) pit, that lies beyond the pit trap, a pit that drops four feet into a long tunnel sloping down 60 feet into the earth, that opens out into an old cave (irregular, but 60 across and more than 80 feet long) that has fourteen other passages opening off it.

There, PCs will lose track of which one RYANNE vanishes along, because in the old cave and down its passages await many wild allies of RYANNE, that will rush forward to attack the PCs in waves, blocking their way to pursue the druid.

The first wave will be charging boars, backed by both sorts of wolves, with hawks and eagles racing around the edges to harry the PCs, followed by ravens. Then both sorts of bears will hit, with panthers seeking to hamstring and rear-attack, followed by bats and weasels and everything else.

BADGER X 4

Tiny

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 3

Speed 20 ft. (*burrow 5 ft.*)

STR 4 (−3) **DEX** 11 (+0) **CON** 12 (+1)

INT 2 (−4) **WIS** 12 (+1) **CHA** 5 (−3)

Senses Darkvision 30 ft., Passive Perception 11

Advantage on Wis (perception) checks relying on smell

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Attack:* +2 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target, *Hit:* 1 point piercing dmg

BAT X 12

Tiny

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 1

Speed 5 ft. (*fly 30 ft.*)

STR 2 (−4) **DEX** 15 (+2) **CON** 8 (−1)

INT 2 (−4) **WIS** 12 (+1) **CHA** 4 (−3)

Senses Darkvision 30 ft., Passive Perception 11

Advantage on Wis (perception) checks relying on smell

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Attack:* +2 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target, *Hit:* 1 point piercing dmg

BLACK BEAR X 4

Medium

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 19

Speed 40 ft. (*climb 30 ft.*)

STR 15 (+2) **DEX** 10 (+0) **CON** 14 (+2)

INT 2 (−4) **WIS** 12 (+1) **CHA** 7 (−2)

Skills Perception +3

Senses Passive Perception 13

Advantage on Wis (perception) checks relying on smell

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Bite + Claws

Bite. *Melee Attack:* +3 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target,

Hit: 1d6+2 piercing dmg

Claws. *Melee Attack:* +3 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target,

Hit: 2d4+2 slashing dmg

BOAR X 8

Medium

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 11

Speed 40

STR 13 (+1) **DEX** 11 (+0) **CON** 12 (+1)

INT 2 (−4) **WIS** 9 (−1) **CHA** 5 (−3)

Senses Passive Perception 9

Relentless. If boar suffers 7hp or less dmg that would bring it to zero hp, instead only brings it to 1 hp.

ACTIONS

Tusk. *Melee Attack:* +3 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target,

Hit: 1d6+1 slashing dmg

Charge. 20 feet straight move ending in tusk. adds 1d6 damage to tusk, also forces DC 11 Str saving throw or target knocked prone.



BROWN BEAR X 2

Large

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 34

Speed 40 ft. (climb 30 ft.)

STR 19 (+4) DEX 10 (+0) CON 16 (+3)

INT 2 (-4) WIS 13 (+1) CHA 7 (-2)

Skills Perception +3

Senses Passive Perception 13

Advantage on Wis (perception) checks relying on smell

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Bite + Claws

Bite. *Melee Attack:* +5 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target,

Hit: 1d8+4 piercing dmg

Claws. *Melee Attack:* +5 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target,

Hit: 2d6+4 slashing dmg

DIRE WOLF X 2

Large

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 37

Speed 50 ft.

STR 17 (+3) DEX 15 (+2) CON 15 (+2)

INT 3 (-4) WIS 12 (+1) CHA 7 (-2)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +4

Senses Passive Perception 13

Advantage on Wis (perception) checks relying on hearing or smell and on attack rolls if non-incapacitated ally within 5 feet.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Attack:* +5 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target, *Hit:* 2d6+3 piercing dmg plus DC 13 Str save or be knocked prone.

EAGLE X 2

Small, MM p322.

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 3

Speed 10 ft. (fly 60 ft.)

STR 6 (-2) DEX 15 (+2) CON 10 (+0)

INT 2 (-4) WIS 14 (+2) CHA 7 (-2)

Skills Perception +3

Senses Passive Perception 13

Advantage on Wis (perception) checks relying on sight

ACTIONS

Talons. *Melee Attack:* +4 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target, *Hit:* 1d4+2 piercing dmg



GIANT OWL X 2

Large

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 19

Speed 5 ft. (fly 60 ft.)

STR 13 (+1) DEX 15 (+2) CON 12 (+1)

INT 8 (-1) WIS 13 (+1) CHA 10 (+0)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +4

Senses Darkvision 120 ft., Passive Perception 15

Advantage on Wis (perception) checks relying on sight. Doesn't provoke opportunity attacks if it flies out of a foe's reach.

Understands PCs' speech.

ACTIONS

Talons. *Melee Attack:* +3 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target, *Hit:* 2d6+1 slashing dmg

GIANT WEASEL X 6

Medium

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 9

Speed 40 ft.

STR 11 (+0) **DEX** 16 (+3) **CON** 10 (+0)

INT 4 (-3) **WIS** 12 (+1) **CHA** 5 (-3)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +4

Senses Passive Perception 13

Advantage on Wis (perception) checks relying on hearing or smell.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Attack:* +5 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target,

Hit: 1d4+3 piercing dmg

HAWK X 2

Tiny

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 1

Speed 10 ft. (*fly* 60 ft.)

STR 5 (-3) **DEX** 16 (+3) **CON** 8 (-1)

INT 2 (-4) **WIS** 14 (+2) **CHA** 6 (-2)

Skills Perception +4

Senses Passive Perception 14

Advantage on Wis (perception) checks relying on sight.

ACTIONS

Talons. *Melee Attack:* +5 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target,

Hit: 1 point slashing dmg

OWL X 2

Tiny

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 1

Speed 5 ft. (*fly* 60 ft.)

STR 3 (-4) **DEX** 13 (+1) **CON** 8 (-1)

INT 2 (-4) **WIS** 12 (+1) **CHA** 7 (-2)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +3

Senses Darkvision 120 ft., Passive Perception 13

Advantage on Wis (perception) checks relying on hearing or sight.

Doesn't provoke opportunity attacks if it flies out of a foe's reach.

ACTIONS

Talons. *Melee Attack:* +3 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target,

Hit: 1 point slashing dmg



PANTHER X 5

Medium

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 13

Speed 50 ft. (*climb* 40 ft.)

STR 14 (+2) **DEX** 15 (+2) **CON** 10 (+0)

INT 3 (-4) **WIS** 14 (+2) **CHA** 7 (-2)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +6

Senses Passive Perception 14

Advantage on Wis (perception) checks relying on smell

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Attack:* +4 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target,

Hit: 1d6+2 piercing dmg

Claw. *Melee Attack:* +4 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target,

Hit: 1d4+2 slashing dmg

Pounce. *20 foot straight move ending in claw.* Normal claw attack, plus forces target DC 12 Strength save, fail means knocked prone and panther gets immediate bonus bite attack)

SWARM OF RAVENS X 10

Tiny

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 24

Speed 10 ft. (*fly* 50 ft.)

STR 6 (–2) **DEX** 14 (+2) **CON** 8 (–1)

INT 3 (–4) **WIS** 12 (+1) **CHA** 6 (–2)

Skills Perception +5

Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing

Immunities charmed, frightened, paralyzed, petrified.
prone, restrained, stunned

Senses Passive Perception 14

Can occupy/move through another creature's space and pass through any opening a Tiny creature can use.

ACTIONS

Beaks. *Melee Attack:* +4 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target,

Hit: 2d6 piercing dmg (*reduced to 1d6 when swarm at 12 hp or less*)

VULTURE X 10

Tiny

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 5

Speed 10 ft. (*fly* 50 ft.)

STR 7 (–2) **DEX** 10 (+0) **CON** 13 (+1)

INT 2 (–4) **WIS** 12 (+1) **CHA** 4 (–3)

Skills Perception +3

Senses Passive Perception 13

Advantage on Wis (perception) checks relying on sight or smell.

Advantage on attack rolls if non-incapacitated ally is within 5 feet

ACTIONS

Beak. *Melee Attack:* +2 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target,

Hit: 1d4 piercing dmg

WEASEL X 8

Tiny

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 1

Speed 30 ft.

STR 3 (–4) **DEX** 16 (+3) **CON** 8 (–1)

INT 2 (–4) **WIS** 12 (+1) **CHA** 3 (–4)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +3

Senses Darkvision 120 ft., Passive Perception 13

Advantage on Wis (perception) checks relying on hearing or smell

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Attack:* +5 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target,

Hit: 1 point piercing dmg

WOLF X 6

Medium

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 11

Speed 40 ft.

STR 12 (+1) **DEX** 15 (+2) **CON** 12 (+1)

INT 3 (–4) **WIS** 12 (+1) **CHA** 6 (–2)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +4

Senses Passive Perception 13

Advantage on Wis (perception) checks relying on hearing or smell.

Advantage on attack rolls if non-incapacitated ally is within 5 feet

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Attack:* +4 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target, *Hit:* 2d4+2 piercing dmg plus DC 11 Str save or be knocked prone.



The beasts will pour out of all of the passages to confront the PCs, but will constantly race around, not stand clustered to be easily smitten with spells. Somewhere in the tunnels beyond them, the fleeing Rynne will scream, feigning mortal agony, as a ruse to make the PCs think some aroused monster or other “got him.”

The Waiting Ghost

Down one of the many passages (whichever one the pursuing PCs take) drifts the palely glowing phantom of a flying naga-like creature: a flying snake about 20 feet long with a huge human-like but bristling-with-long-fangs head. This silent, menacing apparition can do living creatures no harm, but will act as if it can, advancing menacingly on the PCs, opening its jaws to bite or devour, and persisting no matter what spells or other attacks are hurled at it (it passes through PCs harmlessly, chilling them and making them see strange visions, but doing no actual harm).

Neither the druid nor the triplets wholly understand this ghostly thing; it is the sole reason the triplets haven't attacked the druid themselves rather than luring the PCs to deal with him; they fear this thing. It is also why Rynne made his home above it, rather than elsewhere in the forest.

Raven Watch

From this point on in the adventure, the PCs will be continually watched, from a distance, by 1d4+1 ravens at a time; these birds will avoid combat, and will flee if pressed, but will always return. They act as spies and messengers for Rynne, and are keeping watch over the PCs and their movements and deeds for the druid, and frequently reporting back to him, in shifts.

RAVENS X 2 TO 5 AT A TIME

Tiny

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 1

Speed 10 ft. (fly 50 ft.)

STR 2 (–4) **DEX** 14 (+2) **CON** 8 (–1)

INT 2 (–4) **WIS** 12 (+1) **CHA** 6 (–2)

Skills Perception +3

Senses Passive Perception 13

Can mimic crying babies and animal calls (successful insight check (DC 11 Wisdom) for a PC to recognize these are imitations)

ACTIONS

Beak. *Melee Attack:* +4 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target,

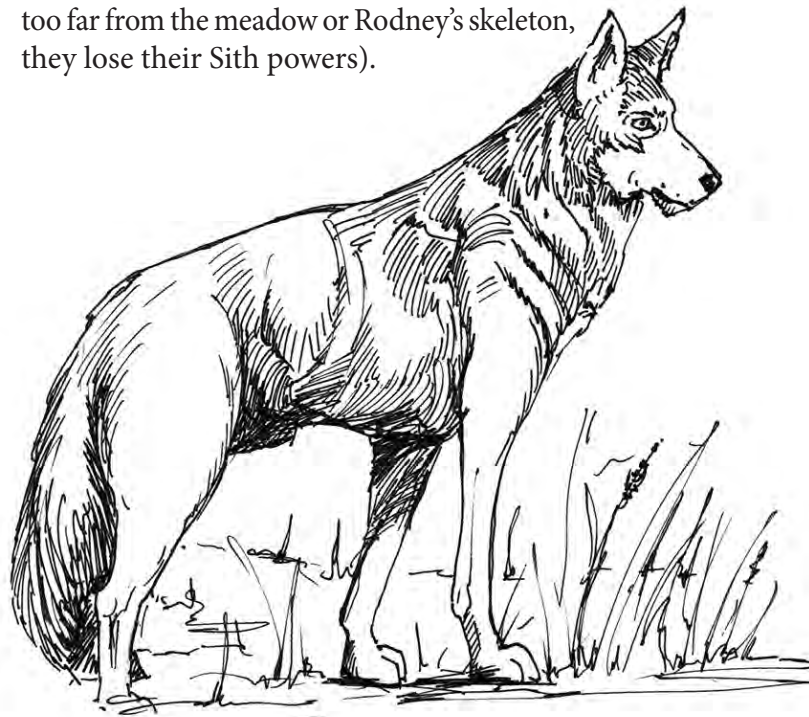
Hit: 1 point piercing dmg

SCENE III ~ ENEMIES WITHIN

Regardless of what news the PCs bring (or don't bring) about Rynne's fate, the triplets will send villagers to lure the PCs to Rodham for the summer solstice ritual if the PCs don't come to Rodham on their own (and if the PCs do, the villagers will throw a feast with potent alcoholic cider intending to get the PCs tired, tipsy, and off their guard, the feast being held in a big ring of benches and bench-like wooden tables in the meadow). If the PCs return to Rodham wounded, the villagers will tend them, giving them herbal drinks that send the PCs to sleep until just before the solstice feast (and sleeping PCs will have their weapons and any armor and magic items they possess taken away and hidden, shallow-buried under the dirt floor of the triplet's lodge; most of the adults know of this hiding-place, if PCs coerce them into revealing it).

At sunset, the feast turns into the sacrifice ritual in which the triplets will try to overwhelm the PCs, beginning with the “captivating dance” of the Sith intended to render the PCs helpless. In the dance, the triplets are supported by half the adult Rodhams, who assume this is part of the ceremony. The other half stand back, confused by what's happening.

Regardless of the success or failure of the Captivating Dance, Rynne and a force of 1 Dire Wolf, 4 Wolves, 2 Black Bears, and 2 Brown Bears will come charging out of the woods to disrupt the dance just before any PCs can be sacrificed (or overwhelmed in any fighting that's begun). Rynne's force concentrates on the Sith (and the Sith will stand and fight, for they know that if they stray too far from the meadow or Rodney's skeleton, they lose their Sith powers).



RYANNE

Medium Human

Armor Class 11 (16 w/ *barkskin*)

Hit Points 40

Speed 30 ft.

STR 10 (+0) **DEX** 12 (+1) **CON** 13 (+1)

INT 12 (+1) **WIS** 15 (+2) **CHA** 11 (+0)

Skills Medicine +4, Nature +3, Perception +4

Senses Passive Perception 14

Languages common, druidic, elvish

4th level spellcaster Wisdom, spell save DC 12, +4 to hit w/ spells:

Cantrips (at will): druidcraft, shillelagh, thorn whip

1st level (4 slots): cure wounds, entangle, speak with animals, thunderwave

2nd Level (3 slots) *barkskin*, flame blade, hold person

ACTIONS

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target. *Hit:* 1d6 bludgeoning dmg or 1d8 if two-handed or w/shillelagh.

BROWN BEAR X 2

Large

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 34

Speed 40 ft. (*climb* 30 ft.)

STR 19 (+4) **DEX** 10 (+0) **CON** 16 (+3)

INT 2 (–4) **WIS** 13 (+1) **CHA** 7 (–2)

Skills Perception +3

Senses Passive Perception 13

Advantage on Wis (perception) checks relying on smell

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Bite + Claws

Bite. *Melee Attack:* +5 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target,

Hit: 1d8+4 piercing dmg

Claws. *Melee Attack:* +5 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target,

Hit: 2d6+4 slashing dmg

DIRE WOLF

Large

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 37

Speed 50 ft.

STR 17 (+3) **DEX** 15 (+2) **CON** 15 (+2)

INT 3 (–4) **WIS** 12 (+1) **CHA** 7 (–2)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +4

Senses Passive Perception 13

Advantage on Wis (perception) checks relying on hearing or smell.

Advantage on attack rolls if non-incapacitated ally is within 5 feet

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Attack:* +5 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target, *Hit:* 2d6+3 piercing dmg plus DC 13 Str save or be knocked prone.

BLACK BEAR X 2

Medium

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 19

Speed 40 ft. (*climb* 30 ft.)

STR 15 (+2) **DEX** 10 (+0) **CON** 14 (+2)

INT 2 (–4) **WIS** 12 (+1) **CHA** 7 (–2)

Skills Perception +3

Senses Passive Perception 13

Advantage on Wis (perception) checks relying on smell

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Bite + Claws

Bite. *Melee Attack:* +3 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target,

Hit: 1d6+2 piercing dmg

Claws. *Melee Attack:* +3 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target,

Hit: 2d4+2 slashing dmg

WOLF X 4

Medium

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 11

Speed 40 ft.

STR 12 (+1) **DEX** 15 (+2) **CON** 12 (+1)

INT 3 (–4) **WIS** 12 (+1) **CHA** 6 (–2)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +4

Senses Passive Perception 13

Advantage on Wis (perception) checks relying on hearing or smell.

Advantage on attack rolls if non-incapacitated ally is within 5 feet

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Attack:* +4 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target, *Hit:* 2d4+2 piercing dmg plus DC 11 Str save or be knocked prone.

AnnMarie Eveningbloom is a true Baobhan Sith; pronounced “Bhaavan Shee”); she has 67 hp and all of the abilities detailed in the Baobhan Sith monster entry that follows.

Shawn Eveningbloom (36 hp: 6d6+18) and Rind Eveningbloom (36 hp: 6d6+18) are both half-Baobhan Sith; they lack the captivating dance, dying words, and mass suggestion abilities, and can only cast entangle and suggestion 1/day, each. They each carry 2 daggers coated with serpent venom (1d4 damage plus DC 11 Constitution saving throw: failure means taking 3d6 poison damage, success means taking 1d4+1 poison damage), that are envenomed for 3 attacks and then exhausted. Each brother wears one dagger openly at their hip, and has the second sheathed up their sleeves, on the insides of their left forearms (as they are right-handed).

RODHAM VILLAGERS X 22

Medium, MM p345

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 8

Speed 30 ft.

STR 10 (+0) DEX 10 (+0) CON 10 (+0)

INT 10 (+0) WIS 10 (+0) CHA 10 (+0)

Senses Passive Perception 10

Languages Common

ACTIONS

Club. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1d4 bludgeoning dmg.

(hardier “Commoners” who will use their benches as clubs)

BAOBHAN SITH

Medium Fey, Chaotic Evil

Armor Class 20

Hit Points 67 (9d6+36)

Speed 30 ft.

STR 17 (+3) DEX 19 (+4) CON 18 (+4)

INT 16 (+3) WIS 16 (+3) CHA 19 (+4)

Skills Perception +5, Stealth +9

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., Passive perception 15

Languages Elvish, Common, Sylvan

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Fey Ancestry. The baobhan sith has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put the baobhan sith to sleep.

Innate Spellcasting. The baobhan sith's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14). The baobhan sith can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: detect thoughts

1/day each: mass suggestion

3/day each: entangle, suggestion

Blood drain. If a baobhan sith charms a target creature with its captivating dance and is then able to bite the charmed creature (ending the charm), or if the sith is able to bite a creature and claw it in the same round, the sith can as a bonus action drain blood from this victim, dealing it an additional 5 (1d4+3) hit points of damage due to blood loss.

Captivating Dance. When a baobhan sith dances, all living creatures within 30 feet that view the rhythmic swaying and movements of its body must succeed on a DC 19 Charisma save or become charmed (a creature that makes its save cannot

be affected by that baobhan sith's captivating dance for one day). A captivated creature cannot attack the baobhan sith or target the baobhan sith with harmful abilities or magical effects, and the sith has the advantage on any ability check while socially interacting with the charmed creature. These effects continue for as long as the baobhan sith dances. A baobhan sith can move and act normally (including using her innate spellcasting) while maintaining her dance, and can pick up and carry items, but a bound, entangled, grappled, prone, pinned, or directly engaged in melee combat sith cannot begin or maintain a captivating dance. Whether or not a baobhan sith is clad or unclad makes no difference to the effectiveness of its captivating dance.

Dying Words. When a baobhan sith is slain, a curse is instantly enacted upon its killer (usually the baobhan sith hisses out a curse, but there need not be vocalization or even consciousness and intent, for this ability to function; it can only not function if the target creature successfully saves (DC 19 Charisma save) or the sith wills the curse not to come. Otherwise, the killer suffers a bestow curse that lasts for 1d4 days per hp the sith had (at its healthy maximum), and this curse lowers the killer's highest ability score by 6 points.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The baobhan sith makes three attacks: a **bite** and two **claws**. Its bite can become a **blood drain** under the right circumstances. A baobhan sith customarily confronts possible foes with its captivating dance, and then entangles creatures that fail to succumb. If overwhelmed or outnumbered, a baobhan sith uses entangle and/or mass suggestion to aid it in fleeing.

Bite. *Melee Attack:* +5 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target.

Hit: 5 (1d4+3) piercing damage.

Claw. *Melee Attack:* +5 to hit, 5 ft. reach, 1 target.

Hit: 6 (1d6+3) slashing damage.

The Eveningblooms have little treasure: 68 gp, 13 sp, and 21 cp in a sack buried under the dirt floor of their lodge, and Shawn and Rind both have hollow right boot heels (lift the sole to access) packed with 9 gp each.

The bewildered “good” (and naïve) villagers will go babbling wild and aimlessly running with fear, plunged into terror when Ryanne’s animal attack jolts them out of captivation (as they watch the captivating dance of AnnMarie Eveningbloom), and they realize Rodham is not what they thought it was.

The evil half of the adult villagers will fight against the PCs and Ryanne and his beasts until the fight is clearly lost, and then flee, with their terrorized fellow villagers blundering into everyone’s way (fighters, the fleeing, and pursuers), in a scene of wild chaos in the deepening darkness of the night.

AnnMarie Eveningbloom will seek to get away if the battle is truly lost, but will probably leave her escape until too late to be successful. Her brothers will flee if they see her die, but she cares nothing for them or their deaths.

SCENE IV ~ SETTING THINGS RIGHT

If PCs tarry in Rodham until dawn, some of the village children and surviving adults will find them, and gather around them, and will talk, spilling all secrets in complete honesty. If the PCs ask the right things, they’ll eventually learn the truth about Rodham’s history. If Ryanne has survived the battle, he will insist on consecrating the meadow where Rodney was slain, and hunting down “any hint of sith taint.”

(And if he can, the druid, his animals, and nature itself will in time reclaim the village, not expelling any Rodhams who want to dwell there, but living in harmony with them.)

Ryanne rewards the PCs by anointing them with “sap from the heart of the forest,” that for 1 year allows every PC to speak with animals as if they shared a language. He also heals all PCs of their wounds.

The PCs are free to keep the Rodham beads (if any) woven into their hair. Ryanne will invite them to stay in the village with the honorable Rodhams, to help repopulate the village and preserve its good nature.

In the meantime, Ryanne has sent word via his ravens of what the PCs did, to many druids, and soon a traveling peddler brings a request to the PCs, to rid the distant town of Rawlinsriver of a “bold infestation” of werewolves.

It comes from a “finesmith” (jewelry maker) named Ontur Lazarl, a wealthy burgher of Rawlinsriver, and promises each PC their own weight in gold coins if they can rid the town of all werewolves.

If the PCs accept, the peddler provides them with directions, and Ryanne provides them with food, better directions, and a wolf companion—a grizzled old veteran named *Avorru*—to accompany them in their travels.

When the PCs depart for Rawlinsriver, so ends *The Druid In the Dark Forest* and begins the next module in this series, *Fur Will Fly*.



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AN ADVENTURE FOR 4 TO 6 CHARACTERS LEVELS 2 TO 4.

THE VILLAGE OF RODHAM IS AN ISOLATED FOREST COMMUNE. IT SEEMS THE WOODLAND VILLAGE HAS RECENTLY BEEN REPEATEDLY ATTACKED BY WILD BEASTS LED AND GOADED BY AN EVIL DRUID. WILL YOU ANSWER THE CALL? WILL YOU BRAVE THE WILDS AND HELP THIS DESPERATE COMMUNITY?



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