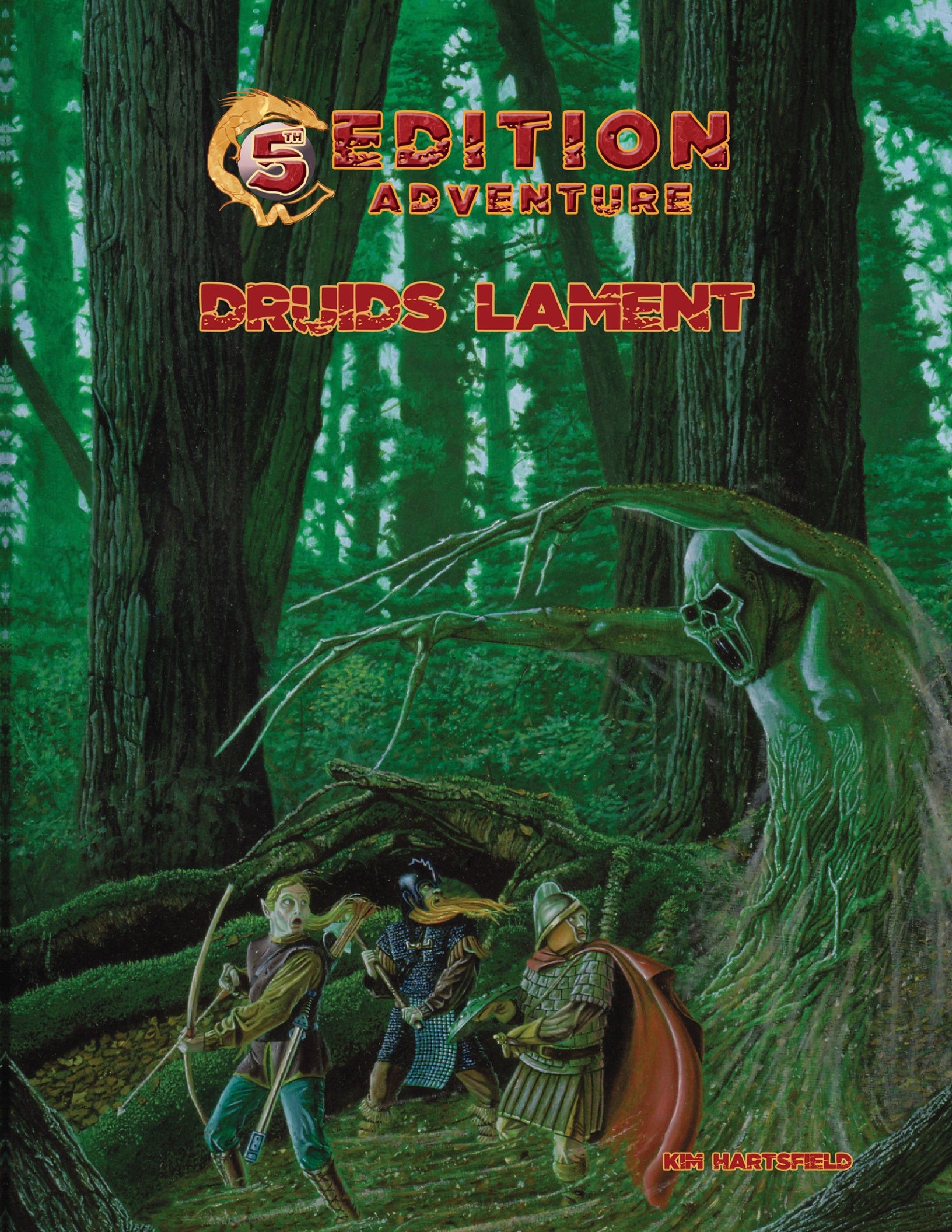




5TH EDITION

ADVENTURE

DRUIDS LAMENT



KIM HARTSFIELD



DRUID'S LAMENT

BY KIM HARTSFIELD

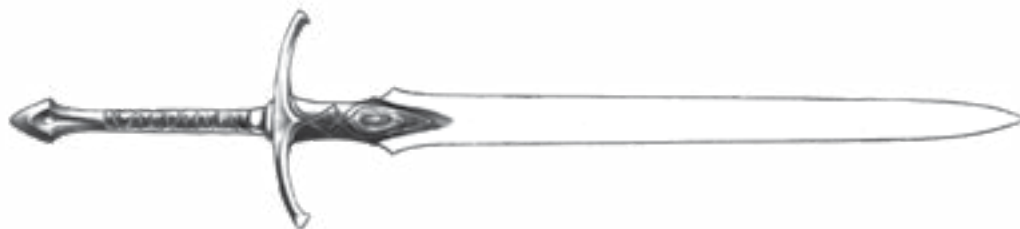
CONVERSION: ROSS THOMPSON

5TH EDITION DEVELOPER & RULES EDITOR: JASON VEY

EDITOR: TIM BURNS, MARK SANDY

FRONT COVER: DAVID MONETTE INTERIOR ART: PETER BRADLEY

ART DIRECTION/ CARTOGRAPHY: PETER BRADLEY



1818 North Taylor, #143, Little Rock, AR, 72207

email: troll@trolllord.com

website: www.trolllord.com or

www.castlesandcrusades.com

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Printed in the United States of America

The prayers of the old gods are sometimes answered swiftly and without question. These are times you should fear them the most.

This adventure takes place in the mythical world of Valunci, a fantasy world not unlike many fantasy worlds that dot the proverbial gaming landscape. As such, it can easily be modified ever so slightly and placed in any such world of your choosing.

This adventure is made for the mid-levels, ideally for a group that averages 7th level.

REGARDING NPCs

This adventure contains a number of nonplayer characters with whom your PCs are meant to interact. Many of these NPCs are not given full stat blocks, as they are not intended as enemy combatants. Enough information will be provided, however, for the Castle Keeper to create statistics quickly if necessary. Generally this will include the class levels and ability scores for each, allowing the CK to improvise specific abilities as needed.

A NOTE ABOUT TERMINOLOGY

As you read this adventure, you will notice some terminology that may seem confusing at first. For example, instead of the normal term for the person running the game, our products call the game master a Castle Keeper, or CK. We do this as it is a term that has become associated with our company, and is an identifier of a Troll Lord Games product.

INTRODUCTION

The world of Valunci, south of The White Wastes and north of the lush hinterlands of The Fire Jungle, there lies a once idyllic forest nestled in the foothills of the Hundar Mountains. The elves that originally populated these woodlands named it Minya Mare', or First Home. When man came and began to force the elves out, they bastardized the name and called it The Minnimar Forest. As time passed, the humans wandered out and the Minnimar became a pleasant, if unremarkable, woodland. The humans, having become civilized, built a town on the edge of the Minnimar, on the banks of the Blue River (which also flowed through the Minnimar) and named this town Sherwood. The men of Sherwood hunted the woods, and took a small amount of timber as they needed it, but for the most part left the woods alone.

A few decades ago a young half-elf woman named Aspasia ventured into the Minnimar. Born to her elven mother and raised among the fey folk, Aspasia had love and respect for the sylvan land. Her grandmother had lived in the Minya Mare' centuries before and Aspasia traveled here to again reconnect with her ancestral home. Learned in the ways of the woods, Aspasia began cultivating an existence here, caring for the forest as if it was her own. And in time, it became her own. She would leave periodically to buy supplies and visit other people, but she was largely self-sufficient and happy among the trees and wildlife.

A few months ago, things changed. Humans from the north, hailing from the great city of men known as Saxulum, began taking timber from her woods at an ever quickening rate. Indiscriminate and boorish were these men, untouched by the beauty of these woods. Aspasia went to them and asked them to stop, but they only taunted and laughed at her. She ran from them, afraid of their evil ways. A few nights later, she crept into their camp, intent on convincing them to leave using less than honorable ways. To her utter horror, the men had slaughtered her pet, a great buck she had named Romba, and were feeding on his flesh. She lashed out, using her druidic magic, but the men accosted her and beat her, sending her back into her home bruised and afraid.

That night, she plotted her revenge. Praying to the old gods of the forest, she summoned a great spirit to exact her revenge. Her plan was to have the spirit kill a few of the worst of the men and run the others away. Alas, when asking for the help of the old gods, results can be unpredictable.

The spirit fell upon the camp, slaughtering the men without quarter. The men fought back, but to no avail, the spirit was too strong. Aspasia, a benevolent person with a good heart, was horrified. She pled with the spirit to cease, but it would not rest until all the men lay dead, many massacred beyond recognition. To make matters worse, the spirit did not leave once this task was over. The spirit decided to linger.

For months, the spirit of the forest patrolled the Minnimar, searching for new enemies. Aspasia tried in vain to dismiss the creature, but it did no good, her prayers went unanswered. She realized she had summoned this thing in a rage and it was still full of the violence and fury. Unlike Aspasia, it had little room for regret. It killed any creatures that entered the Minnimar, never stopping to ascertain why they were there or even caring. The victims were not missed, however, as they were wandering humans or, worse yet, orcs or goblins. Until about a week ago...

A human family from Sherwood entered the Minnimar to spend a day among the beautiful forest. It was a bright, spring day and the family seemed happy to fish the Blue and hang their bare feet among the waters as they ate cheese and bread. The father was showing his daughter, a girl of six named Maddie, how to bait a hook when the spirit entered the glade they had found. It killed them all, drowning the young boy last as he tried to run. When Aspasia learned of this, she wept all through the night. This was her doing, she had caused this. She must now end it.

This adventure starts in the small town on the edge of the Minnimar where the Blue River runs. The town of Sherwood is small, the people bucolic and friendly, if a bit insular. The death of Burt the grocer and his family has effected them all. When the party enters (for whatever reason), they will find the town in mourning. Unknown to the town, Aspasia had taken the bodies from the glade where they died and borne them to the edge of town, knowing the humans would care for their dead in ways she could not. She dare not be seen for fear of reprisal. When the townsfolk found the bodies, they immediately feared the forest, for the bodies were horribly massacred.

Initially, the townsfolk will implore the party to investigate the cause of the deaths and delve into the Minnimar to ascertain what evil lurks there. After they enter, the spirit will attempt to kill them. Later, Aspasia will come to them and tell her tale. She will assist the party if they ask, but is loath to offer her help as she has had enough of death and sorrow. Once the party learns of the spirit of the forest, it will redouble its attacks. The party must journey to the very center of the forest and enter into an ancient tree, its roots digging deep into the soil of the woods. Here, they will confront the spirit in all its glory. To vanquish its evil and rebalance the scales of righteousness, they must kill it here.

THE TOWN OF SHERWOOD

Blessed with fertile fields to the west, the (once) beautifully lush woods to the east and seated upon the banks of the Blue River, the small town of Sherwood has strangely never outgrown its small, quaint size. The residents consider the small hamlet a hidden treasure, and most hope it stays that way. They enjoy the relaxed, pleasant manner of life here. The Blue powers the gristmill, supplying flour to the bread maker, who supplies bread to the populace. Trappers and hunters bring back droves of venison and smaller game, farmers grow huge vegetables and the apple orchards to the north supply beautiful, ripe apples. With a tinker visiting twice a year, the town is pretty self-sufficient and needs not anything from the outside world. This isn't to suggest the townsfolk are stand-offish or rude, for they are not. Most are friendly and are welcoming, if a bit insular. By all accounts, Sherwood is as idyllic as any town can be.

Upon entry to the town, the party will witness the funeral for the doomed family. They will, of course, be expected to be reverent and respectful during this time. Doing otherwise will bring evil look and whispered curses, for the town will not broach anyone disrespecting this poor family. Afterwards, many will retire to the tavern, many others to the church. If the party enters either, they can speak freely and learn of the massacre.

The man that runs Sherwood has done so for years. A long while ago, Sherwood had bi-annual elections, but Ronn Garrison won every time. After ten years, they stopped having elections and Mayor Garrison became mayor until death. No one was bothered by this as Mayor Garrison was a kind, just man liked by all. The mayor is closing in on seventy, but is still a spry, sharp man.

MAYOR RONN GERRISON (LN Medium Human): HD1d8 (HP 4), AC 10, Mv 30ft. Str 10 Dex 10 Con 10 Int 16 Wis 10 Cha 10. Perception 10, Knife +2. He wears common clothing and carries a dagger (1d4) and 100-200 gp worth of jewelry and coin.)

In the last week, the town has become aware of the problems in the woods to the east. The massacre of the family has deeply shaken this small burg. Mayor Garrison will quickly ascertain the strength and vocation of the party and will approach them to investigate the deaths.

The Double Silver, the local tavern, has a few rooms in the back it will rent out, though they are quite rustic and plain. The food

is good, but like the rooms, would never be considered fancy. The tavern owner and bartender is a man named Osbourn "Oz" Blackmon. Oz is a tall, gaunt man with a pipe perpetually shoved in his mouth. His signature beer, Blackmon's Black, is said to contain at least a small bit of ash from Oz's pipe. He is grumpy and arguable, but is rarely mean or even confrontational.

OZ BLACKBURN (CG Medium Human): HD1d8 (HP 4), AC 10, Mv 30ft. Str 10 Dex 10 Con 14 Int 10 Wis 10 Cha 10. Perception 10, He wears common clothing and carries 20gp in coin.)

The church in town is dedicated to Basel, the Lord of Light. It is manned by Brother Paul Ellis, a young man with a broad smile and a welcoming handshake. When first met, Brother Ellis will of course be somber and quiet, due to his current activity of burying the dead, but will quickly shake off his melancholy and be at least gracious and welcoming to the party.

BROTHER ELLIS (NG human cleric 4) HP 17 (HD 4d8), AC 14(16), Spd 30ft. Str 10 Dex 16 Con 10 Int 10 Wis 16 Cha 12. Perception 13 (+3). Medicine +7, persuasion +3, religion +4. Sv: Wis +5. Mace+4(6). SA Channel Divinity. Spellcasting (Save DC 13, +5 attacks): Cantrips – light, sacred flame, thaumaturgy; 1-level (4 slots), 2-level (3 slots).. He wears leather armor and a +2 cloak of protection, and carries a +2 mace (1d6+4), scroll of heal, potion of healing, and 40 gp worth of jewelry and coin.)

The only other places of interest in Sherwood are the city barracks, headed by Stephon Graybeard, the general store, run by Kenneth Wills and the stables, run by Kirrin Aloysius. Less than a hundred souls call Sherwood home.

The barracks house only a dozen men. Ostensibly in service to Lord Jarrod of Whitedove, the county where Sherwood resides, the militiamen are all locals. Each man is proud and loyal to Lord Jarrod and Captain Graybeard, their commander. At any given time, a third of them men can be found in town, a third here relaxing and a third here asleep. If given an hour, all men can be fully awake and ready for trouble.

CAPTAIN STEPHON GRAYBEARD (LG Human Fighter 7) HP 45 (HD 7d10+7), AC 19, Spd 30ft. Str 16 Dex 15 Con 12 Int 10 Wis 10 Cha 13. Perception 13 (+3). Athletics +6, Insight +3, Intimidation +4. Sv: Str +6, Con +4. Flail +8 (1d8+5) SA Defense, Second Wind (d10+5; 1/rest), Action Surge (1/rest), Battle Master, Extra attack. Superiority Dice (d8) 5, Student of War, Know Your Enemy. Manuevers: Rally, Commander's Strike, Pushing Attack, Manuevering Attack, Riposte. He wears full chain mail, a shield, and ring of +3 magic resistance, and carries a +2 flail and 250 gp worth of jewelry and coin.)

CITY MILITIA, 12 (NG Human Fighter 2) HP 16 (HD 2d10), AC 16, Spd 30. Str 15 Dex 13 Con 10 Int 10 Wis 12 Cha 8. Perception 11(+1). Athletics +5, Intimidation +1. Sv: Str +4, Con +2. Attack +4. SA Defense, Second Wind (1d8+2; 1/rest), Action Surge (1/rest), Crit 19-20. Challenge 1 (200 XP). They wear scale mail and carry a pike (1d10+2)

or axe (1d8+2) (50/50) and short swords (1d6 +2), and have 20-60 gp worth of jewelry and coin upon them.)

The general store is run by a bear of a man named Kenneth Wills. Kenny Bear, as he is called, is a gregarious, happy man with a thick beard and deep voice. He hates thieves in general and will take it upon himself to beat them to a pulp if he catches one in the act, especially in his store. His shop is small and caters to townsfolk, so it is rare that he carries much in the way of arms or armaments.

KENNETH WILLS (CG Medium Human): HD1d8 (HP 8), AC 10, Mv 30ft. Str 17 Dex 10 Con 12 Int 10 Wis 10 Cha 10. Perception 10. He wears common clothing and carries a short sword (1d6+3) and 20gp in coin.)

The stables, while not very important themselves, are run by a half-elf named Kirrin Aloysius. Kirrin knows a great deal about the Minnimar, more than any resident in town. He knows of its past, but not of what is happening now. He has met Aspasia, as they share a common ancestry, and finds her quite pleasant to be around. He has not spoken of her for fear she will be bothered by these inquisitive humans.

Since the troubles started, he has been worried for her but has not voiced these concerns to anyone. If the party agrees to assist the town, and Kirrin gets wind of this, he will approach the party with what little information he has and ask that they seek out Aspasia, not only for her assistance, but to ensure she is well, for Kirrin is worried about her.

KIRPIN ALOYSIUS (CG Medium Human): HD1d8 (HP 4), AC 10, Mv 30ft. Str 10 Dex 10 Con 11 Int 15 Wis 10 Cha 10. Perception 10. He wears common clothing and carries 50gp in coin.)

The bodies of the family were found by Ellis Wolfe, a hunter that has called the Minnimar home for years. He normally spends a month or so in town and a couple of months in the Minnimar hunting and trapping. After finding the bodies, and the subsequent discussions of what may lurk there, Ellis has refused to enter the woods. Owing that he is coming off his month's rest in Sherwood, he hasn't been in the Minnimar in a month or so and has no plans to enter. He will show the party where he found the bodies and answer their questions, but will not enter the woods until all of this is over.

According to Ellis, the man was decapitated, the woman and young girl were beaten and the young boy was drowned. It was the work of the spirit itself, but of course, no one knows this. The creature ripped the head off the man with brute strength, slammed the woman and young girl into the ground and trees and held the boy under the waters of the Blue. Aspasia found the bodies and dragged them to the edge of the woods. She was reverent and placed them in a manner befitting their life. All were lined up beside one another. The hands had been placed over the chest and, with the man, his head placed on his chest. Aspasia tried to clean them, but quickly realized the task was daunting and soon gave up. This is how Ellis found them.

If the area is searched, especially if a ranger tracks about the area, drag marks will be found that lead into the woods.

ELLIS WOLFE (CN Human Fighter 1) HP 12 (HD 1d10+2), AC 14, Spd 30. Str 17 Dex 13 Con 14 Int 10 Wis 12 Cha 8. Perception 11(+1). Athletics +5, Intimidation +1. Sv: Str +4, Con +4. Broadsword+4 (1d8+3). SA Dueling, Second Wind (1d8+2; 1/rest). He wears hide armor and carries a broadsword and 20gp in coin.)

THE MINNIMAR WOODS

The party should follow the drag marks to the small glade where the massacre took place. The blanket and picnic basket are still there, obviously in a state of disrepair. Blood can be found on the grass and even ten to fifteen feet up the trees, where the spirit grabbed and slammed its victims. Since the spirit flies, and Aspasia walks with nary a trace, no tracks will be found leading away from the massacre site.

The Minnimar is quite large, covering a few hundred square miles. Reaching the center from Sherwood will take about twenty-four hours. Since it is assumed the party must rest at some point, the journey will take all of one day and some of the next. Traveling in any way other than by foot is impossible unless magic is used.

The party should deduce the target of the evil lurks deeper in the woods. If they do not, the CK should drop hints that the object they seek is hidden somewhere inside the Minnimar. If any party member can speak with animals, per spells or class abilities, the animals of the Minnimar treat them as interlopers at best (druids, rangers, etc.), enemies at worst. Unless the creatures are charmed, they will not parlay with the group. If pressed, they will attack.

This general anger that permeates the forest is obviously grown from the spirit. It has poisoned the minds of the creatures here. The CK can arrange for attacks from the creatures of the forest as he sees fit, depending upon how the party acts toward the creatures and the forest itself.

Regardless of the CK's decision, a group of cave bears as well as an encounter with a Hangman's Tree will occur.

BEAR ATTACK

As the party makes it way to the center of the woods, a group of three cave bears will move from the woods and attack. They are mean, aggressive and ferocious. They will attack without provocation and will not yield less strong magic is used. It should be noted that the bears, or any creatures of this forest, will not attack any druids in the party. They have been told to eliminate outsiders and they are cognizant that druids belong in the forest and will not hold them as enemies.

CAVE BEARS (Unaligned large beast) HP 42 (HD 5d10+15) AC 12, 40, Spd. 30(swim). Str 20 Dex 10 Con 16 Int 2 Wis 13 Cha 7. Perception 13 (+3). Bite +7 (1d8+5) Claws +7 (2d6+5) . SA Multiattack (Bite and Claw each round), Keen

Smell (advantage on smell based Wisdom(Perception) checks)
Blood Rage (at 10 HP gains +2 on all attack rolls until -0 HP reached), Hug If claw attack is successful, target is grappled (DC 15 escape).

HANGMAN'S TREE

At about nightfall, a steady rain will start to fall. As (bad) luck would have it, the party finds a large oak tree with large boughs that can be used to stay relatively dry during the night. The tree, however, is not as it appears. Once a normal tree, the spirit has corrupted it and changed into a hangman's tree. It will wait until the party is sleeping and attack.

HANGMAN'S TREE (Evil huge plant) HP 59 (HD 7d12+14)
AC 13, Spd 20. Str 19 Dex 6 Con 15 Int 10 Wis 10 Cha 7.
Perception 10. Slam +6 (3d6+4), Choke +6 (1d6) and grappled (DC 15 Str save to escape) Acid (2d6 if target grappled for full round). SA Vulnerable to fire damage, Resistant to piercing, bludgeoning; False Appearance. It will attempt to deposit grappled targets in its central maw, filled with acid. The acid will do 2d6 points of damage per round.)

ASPASIA

As the party begins its journey the following day, Aspasia will approach them with her tale of woe. She is embarrassed at what she has done and is reticent to divulge too much. She does, however, understand that the information she has can help the party and will slowly but surely tell the entire story. She will direct the party to The Great Tree in the heart of the forest, but is loath to help kill the spirit. She understands it was sent by the gods because of her prayer and sees it as almost sacrilegious to attack it, no matter how horrible it is. Once her story is told, and any advice given, she will ask her leave and retreat back into the forest.

If Kirrin's name is brought up, she will smile sadly and request the party tell him she is fine. She hints that she will attempt to reach him once this is over herself.

ASPASIA (NG human druid 4) HP 30 (HD 4d8+8), AC 16, Spd 30ft. Str 11 Dex 14 Con 15 Int 15 Wis 16 Cha 14. Perception 14(+4). Persuasion +4, Religion +4. Sv: Int, Wis. Scimitar +5 (1d6+3) SA Wild Shape, Natural Recovery.. Spellcasting (Save DC 12; +4 attack) Cantrips – druidcraft, guidance, resistance, sacred flame; 1-level (4 slots) – Charm person, cure wounds, entangled; 2-level (3 slots) – barkskin*, flame blade, darkvision, moonbeam, spider climb* (*circle spells). She carries +1 scimitar, +2 hide armor and 200 gp worth of jewelry and coin.

THE GREAT TREE

At the heart of the woods, the party will find a once great tree of immense beauty and grandeur. Over the last few months, however, it has become gnarled and twisted by the spirit that now resides inside it. While spring is in full bloom throughout this region of the world, the Great Tree looks to be in the grip of winter.



Unbeknownst to any living entity, save the spirit itself, centuries ago a long-dead race built a domain underneath the tree. Even then, it was huge and imposing. The spirit now resides in this underground fastness. It has been buried for centuries, however, and short of digging up the area around the tree, cannot be entered. (An ingenious party may, however, find another way. Players can sometimes surprise even the most experienced CK).

The civilization that built the underground domain is long since gone from this world. They were a race of men, black of heart and strong in magic. No human alive now has ever heard of them, save a very few sages that deal in esoteric and forgotten civilizations. Possibly a few elves and other long live races as well. They were known as the Salis and, in their day, ruled over most of Valunci. Now, their language is forgotten, their existence not even a memory.

The CK could adapt the Salis to a race or civilization more befitting his campaign. If there is nothing in your particular campaign that can substitute for the Salis, you should incorporate them into your existing game. It is up to you to insert them, but remember that there is almost no chance anyone in the party has ever heard of them, even if your party contains an elderly Elven bard. Their existence is almost universally forgotten.

Finding the underground dungeon can be difficult for a party, so the CK should start dropping hints if the party seems at a loss. Druids or rangers may sense something and possibly deduce the tree is being corrupted from below. Wizards may sense a dark magic deep from the earth. Clerics or paladins may sense the very faint, but very real, sense of malevolence from below...

THE FORGOTTEN DOMAIN OF THE SALIS

The party should dig or teleport (or, arrive in some way) to the entry to the place. The door has strange writing upon it, in the language of the Salis. The party will be unable to read it unless magic is used. The following is written:

*I lurk behind every corner
I chase you not, but will always catch you
Young men fear me, old men welcome me
Speak my name and enter my domain
I welcome thee*

The CK should present the runic version of the writing to the party as presented on page 12, and have them attempt to break the cryptogram and deduce the language and riddle for themselves. If this becomes tedious, the CK should have the characters roll Intelligence (Investigation) checks, setting the DC as you see fit, and drop hints.

The answer to the riddle is 'death'. Speaking this word will allow the party to enter. However, the current language of man (common) was not in existence when the door and riddle were created. A language older than man must be used, for the door will not understand common. Dwarf, elf and (in Valunci) orc, among other languages, can be used. In Valunci, man is a relatively young race (indeed the Salis were the first men), so almost any language other than common would suffice. Again, the CK must make adjustments as he sees fit.

Room 1

This dark, dank room has not been seen by mortal eyes in ages. Your torch seems frightened to shed its light into the room and your voice seems muffled by the darkness. There is a real sense of dread everywhere.

This room is empty. It was once a vestibule for the area, a place for visitors to pray and contemplate before proceeding further. A few carved runes (in Salis) dot the walls, extolling visitors to pray to old, forgotten gods.

The door to the north has two locks, both locked. The keys are found in rooms 2 and 3. Doors to east and west.

Room 2

This long, thin room is empty save for cobwebs and dust. Like the entry room, there is an overwhelming feeling of dread and mystery that encapsulates the area. At the north end of the room, you see a single raised sarcophagus.

One of the keys to the door in room 1 is hidden in the sarcophagus. It lays underneath a corpse found there. However, the sarcophagus is trapped. When the lid is removed, a thick, green gas begins seeping from small holes found along the top of the walls. (The holes can be discovered if the party searches diligently before opening the tomb, Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) DC 15). The party must pass a Constitution save (DC 12) or be rendered unconscious. While

in this unconscious state, the victim will take 1d4 damage per round while still in the gas. Once free (which would be outside of this room), they will continue taking 1d4 damage for a number of rounds equal to 3 – x, where x is equal to their Constitution bonus. (i.e., someone with a Constitution of 18, which has a bonus of 4, will take no further damage while someone with a Constitution of 10, which has no bonus, will suffer damage for three more rounds. Low constitution scores could actually extend the time beyond three rounds). Aside from the corpse and the key underneath it, there is nothing else of import in this room.

Room 2

This long, thin room is empty save cobwebs and dust. Like the entry room, there is an overwhelming feeling of dread and mystery that encapsulates the area. At the north end of the room, you see a single raised sarcophagus.

Inside the sarcophagus is an Evil Oculus of Ice and Fire. Its face is covered by a shawl when the lid is removed. Initially, it appears as a corpse with its face covered. After one round, the creature will stand upright in its tomb. The next round, it will attack (with its left eye, dropping an ice storm on the party). The creature wears an elaborate crown, dotted with small gems along the side but with a huge ruby at the forefront. The crown is worth 12,500gp, with the majority of the wealth centered on the ruby, alone worth 10,000gp. This gem was originally used the house the life essence of the skeletal warrior found in room 4. In the folds of its robe, a key for the door to room 1 can be found.

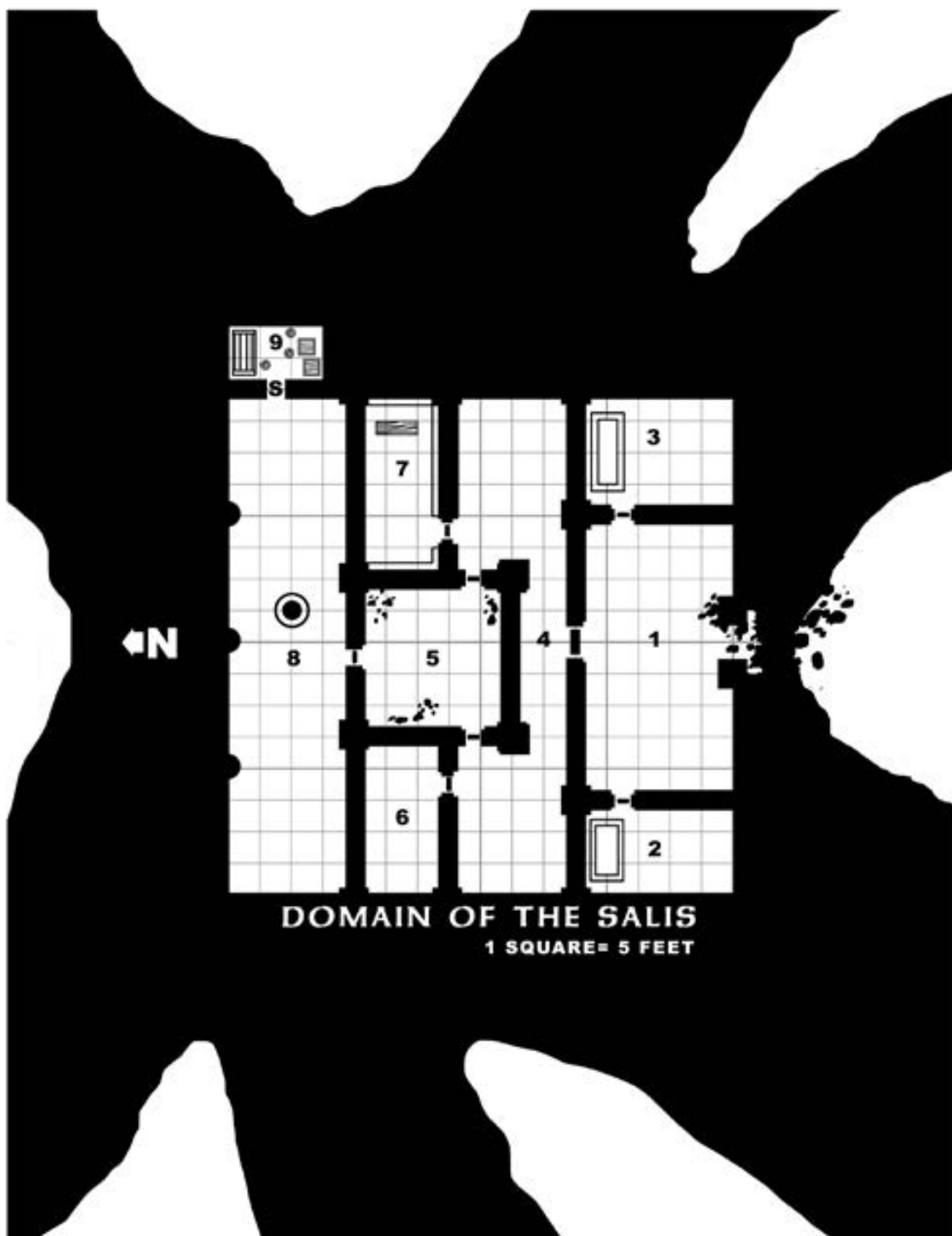
EVIL OCULUS OF ICE AND FIRE (CE medium undead)
65 HP (HD 10d8+20) AC 13 Spd 10 Str 12 Dex 16 Con 14
Int 16 Wis 14 Cha 14. Perception +4(14). Left eye (diamond):
ray of frost +7 (3d10); right eye (ruby): fire bolt +7 (3d8).
SA multiattack (each eye), darkvision 60ft, immune charmed,
exhaustion, poison, cold, fire. Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Room 2

This large room is bisected in the center, making it two smaller rooms connected by a short hallway. Like everywhere in here, the darkness seems oppressive. Faintly, you hear something creaking softly, like old metal rubbing against itself.

In this room is a skeletal warrior created centuries ago by the priests that lived here. The clerics have long since died, yet the warrior still remains. Its soul was trapped in the crown found in room 3. The creature tried in vain for decades to break out of this room to retrieve the gem, but has given up. When the door is open, it will try to regain the gem. If anyone is holding or wearing the crown, the skeletal warrior will attack with a fury until the one possessing the crown is dead. If it obtains and wears the crown, it will act as a heal spell for the creature.

SKELETAL WARRIOR (CE medium undead) HP 70 (HD 10d10+20) AC 18. Str 14 Dex 11 Con 15 Int 10 Wis 8 Cha 8. Spd 30 ft. Perception 10. Greatsword +4 (2d6+4) SA bludgeoning vulnerability, immune to poison / exhaustion, dark-



vision 60ft, spell resistance (advantage on saving throws against spells and magical effects).

Room 5

There are two doors leaving this room that lead to room 5. Both doors are locked. The keys can be found in rooms 6 and 7, which are not locked. Only one key is needed, but the key for the door on the west side of the room is found in room 7 and the door on the east side has its key in room 6. In other words, the keys to the respective doors are on the opposite sides of the room.

There is a cold in this room that seems unnatural and malevolent. There is a smell of death on the air. The room itself appears empty.

A shade has made this area its home. Like all shades, it drifts in and about the party in the shadows of this room. The creature is not alone, however, as three shadows also live here in thrall to the shade. The shadows will attack first, attempting to at least weaken the party and dispatch of any lighting for their master. Once they are dispatched, the shade will attack in force. In its former life, the shade was a cleric of the Silas god of murder (indeed, this entire area is a house of worship for this god). It still retains its abilities as a cleric.

These creature lives in total darkness, but the light will probably change when the party enters to at least shadowy darkness. Note that for both the Shade and Shadows can hide as a bonus action in dark or dim lighting, but get disadvantage in sunlight. The creatures will attempt, via its shadows and by itself, to return the room to complete darkness where it is the strongest.

SHADOW, 2 (CE Medium Undead) HP 16 (HD 3d8+3), AC 12, Spd 40ft. Str 6 Dex 14 Con 13 Int 6 Wis 10 Cha 8. Perception 10. Stealth +4/+6. Strength Drain +4 (2d6+2, plus 1d4 Str). SA Vulnerable radiant; Resist cold, acid, fire, lightning, thunder, nonmagical weapons; Immune necrotic, poison, exhaustion, fear, grapple, paralyze, petrify, prone, restrain; Amorphous; Hide as bonus action in dark or dim; Sunlight disadvantage.

SHADE – Cleric, death domain: (CE medium undead cleric 6) HP 33 (HD 6d8+6), AC 16, Spd 30ft. Str 11 Dex 14 Con 12 Int 16 Wis 14 Cha 18. Perception 12(+2). Deception +6, Persuasion +6, Religion +5. Sv: Int, Cha, Wis. Light hammer +4 (1d4+2; 20ft/60ft). Multiattack (2 hammer attacks); SA Channel Divinity (Control Undead, Deal extra damage (2+spell level) on cause wounds spells, Destroy life (as action, deal 20 damage divided among all creatures in a 30' area as she wishes; Wis save negates). Spellcasting (Save DC 12; +4 attack) Cantrips – guidance, resistance, sacred flame, thaumaturgy; 1-level (4 slots) – command, inflict wounds, shield of faith; 2-level (3 slots) – hold person, spiritual weapon; 3-level (3 slots) – animate dead, bestow curse; Channel divinity (2; command undead, smite good (+1d6 necrotic damage); necrotic healer (regain 1/2 damage dealt on attacks with ceremonial dagger in hp); Destroy undead (CR 1/2). SA Vulnerable radiant; Resist cold, acid, fire, lightning, thunder, nonmagical weapons; Immune necrotic, poison, exhaustion, fear, grapple, para-



lyze, petrify, prone, restrain; Amorphous; Hide as bonus action in dark or dim; Sunlight disadvantage. He wears full chainmail, and carries a +2 light hammer.

Room 6

This room is piled deep with bodies, abandoned corpses of some long-forgotten people. Time has taken its toll, leaving them dried husks of mortal remains. The pile reaches almost three feet in the center. All told, there must be a hundred bodies piled here. Against the north wall is erected a makeshift altar, fashioned with human bones. A skull rests atop the altar. Behind it, carved into the wall, is a grotesque symbol. A horned skull with long fangs appears to be feeding on human remains. The sense of evil is stronger in here than anywhere else, which is surprising, for the rest of this place was already dark enough.

The symbol is that of the god of murder for the Silas. Anyone can ascertain it is a symbol of evil, but no one in the party should be able to identify it exactly (which in itself may be important). Under the bodies, one can find a key to room 5. However, digging through the bodies can be hazardous. While the obvious bodies are dried and desiccated, the ones at the very bottom are still somewhat damp with blood and viscera. Touching these will force the victim to make a Constitution save or contract a wasting disease. This roll should be made in secret by the CK. Those failing will succumb to the disease in a few short hours. They will begin to lose 1 point of constitution every hour after 1d4 hours have passed. With this point of constitution, they also lose one hit die of hit points (i.e. fighters lose 1d10, clerics lose 1d8, etc).

The disease can prove fatal in short order, possibly a single day. Only a cure disease, or equivalent spell, can cure the affliction. Basic cure spells will restore lost hit points and restoration spells can restore lost constitution, but the disease will continue to take its toll until cured.

Room 7

This room appears a library as rows of shelves line the walls. In the center of the room are smaller shelves stocked with books and tomes. A chair sits beside the smaller shelves with a table on the other side of it. Seated in the chair is an ethereal figure reading. When you enter, it sits the book on the table and looks at you. A smile creeps across its ghostly face.

The creature is a specter, trapped here ages ago. While evil and cunning, it is somewhat lonely and bored. If approached correctly, it will not attack and will attempt to parlay with the party. It should be noted that, while very intelligent, it does not speak the current language of men. It does, however, speak elven and dwarven. Various spells could bridge the communication barrier as well.

The specter, once known as Viahla, desires stories and tales, especially those of the current world. A book or tome would be most welcome indeed. If approached with a sense of reverence, or at least friendship, the creature will speak with the party and give up the key it has to room 5. It has forgotten much of its life and has limited knowledge of its past, save for what can be found in these books. It will tell its tale, what it remembers, for a like story. If violence is set aside for diplomacy, this encounter can be quite rewarding for all parties involved. If violence is chosen, however, the specter will fight ferociously. It will attempt to kill one party member in hopes it can gain another of its kind.

SPECTRE (LE Medium undead) HP 22 (HD 5d8), AC 12, Spd 50ft (fly). Str 1 Dex 14 Con 11 Int 10 Wis 10 Cha 11. Perception 10 (0). Life Drain +4 (3d6 necrotic plus reduce hp maximum by damage taken until victim finishes long rest (DC 10 Con negates). Incorporeal movement; sunlight sensitivity; darkvision 60ft; immune to necrotic, poison, charm, exhaustion, grapple, paralyze, petrify, prone, restrained, unconscious; resist acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder, and nonmagical bludgeoning, piercing and slashing.

Room 8

This is a large room with a high ceiling. A single, huge brazier sits in the center of the room emitting an oily, black smoke. Aside from the now-familiar smell of death and decay, a different smell of smoke and sulfur mixes itself in. Your light barely penetrates the darkness and doesn't reach the upper reaches of this room. You see no doors leading out save the one you entered.

The forest spirit has taken up residence in this room. The smoke issuing from the brazier is, in fact, the creature. Known by men as a shelkerow, it answered Aspasia's summons months ago and has gained strength on our plane. This evil, dark tomb has only served to strengthen the creature. As such, it has maximum hit points and fights as if a *bleed* spell had been cast upon it,

permitting it add a d4 to all attack rolls and saves. It will retreat to the safety of the upper reaches of this room if it feels it is losing and attack after a few rounds quickly and silently. Its tactics will be strike and retreat.

SHELKEROW (NE Large Undead). HP 65 (HD 8d10+16) AC 17 Spd 30ft (fly). Str 10 Dex 16 Con 15 Int 12 Wis 16 Cha 15. Perception 12(+2). Life Drain +6 (2d10, plus reduce max. HP (DC 15 Con neg) until long rest. SA Improved grapple (on successful hit; escape DC 15/round; automatic life drain); Resist acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder, nonmagical weapons; Immune necrotic, poison, charm, exhaustion, grapple, paralysis, petrify, prone, restrain; Darkvision 60ft; Incorporeal, Sunlight disadvantage.

Room 9

This small room, just slightly larger than a closet, is dusty and dank, but does not seem to hold the malevolence one found in the rest of this place. If it is because the evil entity has been slain, one cannot say. The room itself contains a small chest sat under a shelf on the north wall. Three ceramic jars sat on the shelf, covered in dust.

In this small hidden room behind the spirit chamber lies an old, forgotten treasury for the Silas priests. The spirit had no need for the treasure, nor did any of the undead that populated the depths. It has sat untouched for centuries.

The jars each contain a thick, gray salve. Being magical, time has done little to lessen the effects. Each jar has three doses (totaling nine doses all together). Each dose can cure as the spell cure serious wounds. The salve can also be used to leach out poison, mirroring the spell remove poison. A dose can do but one. The chest contains 500gp, a ring of regeneration, a ring of spell penetration (see new magic item) and an amulet of companionship (see new magic item). The gold can be used freely in all areas of Valunci (as well as most fantasy worlds). Gold is spent by weight in most places so a gold piece is a gold piece. However, this gold is extremely old and the mark upon the coins is unknown throughout the realm. If sold to a collector, one can get five times its value (or 2500gp). Indeed, spending the coins will probably elicit an odd reaction from astute merchants as they try and place the mark.

An enterprising CK may use this information to kick start an entire story arc as the intrepid adventurers try to ascertain who this ancient civilization was . . .

After defeating the spirit, the party should make their way to the surface and in the shadows of the boughs of the great tree. There, they will find Aspasia kneeling in prayer. When the evil was slain, the forest changed drastically in just a few minutes and Aspasia instinctively knew the spirit had been slain and the party had succeeded. When they reach the surface, she will stand and thank each of them with tears in her eyes.

NEW MAGIC ITEMS

RING OF SPELL PENETRATION

Wondrous Item, rare (requires attunement)

When worn by a spell caster, this ring gives them a +3 on any spellcasting roll. Does not confer a bonus to spell DC.

AMULET OF COMPANIONSHIP

Wondrous Item, unique (requires attunement)

This appears as a rather ordinary necklace of copper with a small but elegant gem attached to it. The gem is orange in color, possibly a fire opal. Living inside the gem is a small, insignificant spirit from another plane. Once the amulet is attuned, the spirit will begin showing itself to its new owner, albeit very slowly. It will grow to learn the ways of its new master and, over time, begin to assist him in many ways.

If the new owner is a fighter, the spirit may give her insight into an opponent, giving the fighter a +1 to hit. If the new master is a cleric, the spirit may assist it in the turning of undead (undead save at disadvantage) or gaining maximum healing once per day.

However the CK chooses to use it, the spirit will be very weak at first and grow stronger, strengthening its new master the longer the amulet is possessed (+1 to hit may grow to advantage, for

example). The specific ways in which this powerful item grows are left to the discretion of the CK. The spirit can, and will, speak telepathically to the new owner and will use this form of communication to the wearer of the amulet. At first, the new owner may believe himself to be going insane as a weak, halting voice begins speaking to him in his head. The spirit (whose name is Olava) will not only assist its master by providing in-game benefits, but it will give advice and insight to certain situations. The CK should adjudicate these as he sees fit, but the spirit's master should get information that may otherwise be unavailable to him. This all comes, however, with a price. All experience points awarded to the amulet's new owner will be docked 10%. It is assumed this 10% now goes to the spirit in the amulet. For instance, if the amulet's owner is awarded 1000xp, he will only get 900xp and the other 100xp will go to Olava. The spirit will never 'level up', but it will get smarter and more experienced and this knowledge will be conveyed to its new master, potentially even adding the benefits of a different sub-class to the one the character already possesses.

Here ends this adventure. The CK is encouraged to use Aspasia as an on-going NPC in their regular campaign, if this adventure was used therein. She will grow in levels as she battles those enemies of the forest (though she will never again ask the old gods for any help). The Minnimar is vast and can be used to fuel many more adventures as well.

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5TH EDITION

ADVENTURE

A few decades gone a young half-elf woman named Aspasia ventured into the Minnimar. Born to her elven mother and raised among the fey folk, Aspasia had love and respect for the sylvan land. Her grandmother had lived in the Minya Mare' centuries before and Aspasia traveled here to again reconnect with her ancestral home.

So it was for a great while and she lived in peace. She spoke to the wild like no other and traveled with a stag who bore a crown of horns.

But in time, men came and they built homes as men do and for their homes they cut trees. And they feasted as men do and for their feasts they hunted the wild game. Thus it was that Aspasia found the men one eve feasting upon the Stag and she cursed them and she called on the forest gods to bring death and ruin.

And thus it was for the wood's ancient powers rose to her druidic call, but as it always is, the gods can be unpredictable.



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IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



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