

TROPHY DARK

JESSE ROSS

Trophy Dark

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Visit the website for character sheets and other game materials

TROPHYRPG.COM

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The Forest





The map was off. The eastward bend in the Naveh River came up more quickly than documented, leading to a dispute that pushed well past sunset. It was Amar—our ranger—who saw the ruins first. Even by torchlight, the crumbling stone face of some vaguely human effigy was apparent through the hanging vines and foliage.

The forest had already reclaimed so much. Once-proud pillars lay flat against the ground, as though victim to the unholy tantrum of a primordial child. Copper basins had tarnished to that familiar shade of sickly green. The weather-beaten slab that once served as a roof had fully collapsed in, providing only one obvious—and perilous—entry point to the temple's inner sanctum.

Sheets of cobweb crisscrossed the roughly carved passageways, though they were easily dispatched by Amar's torch and Lineta's saber. Lineta was well regarded for her skill with a blade, both in her surgery practice and when negotiating with thugs. Her healing talents had already served us well during our journey through the razor-root grove. I would have lost more than three fingers had she not amputated and sutured as swiftly as she did. It was a shame I couldn't return the favor.

Amar, again, was first to see what the temple had kept hidden all these centuries. Four black clay urns stood unmolested at the center of the circular room that terminated the main hall. Wordlessly, though with much exertion, Amar slid off their covers one by one, allowing Lineta and me to our own discoveries. Four desiccated human husks each clung to a single golden metal stonefruit.

Any doubts we had about the treasures of ancient Kalduhr were dashed the instant we saw those stonefruits. Using my good hand, I pried one from its mummified cradle and inspected it further. Inscriptions in the style of the mage-scribes of King Argiol Seo wound around the golden fruit. I could scarcely read it, but running my finger along the indentations opened something in the recesses of my mind. I saw the empire burning as four nobles were embalmed and placed in black clay urns. I lingered on the funereal process—on every word and ritual and prayer and plea—for what seemed like days. I watched it play over and over and over in my mind, slowly pulling apart the meaning behind the words that the death priests spoke. All the while, flames licked at the temple building as the kingdom of Argiol Seo burned.

When my mind pulled back, a fire raged in the circular room. I know not what happened, but one of Amar's arms lay severed on the ground, cleaved by Lineta's deft hand. He had backed her into a corner with nothing but his torch, which had already left horrible burns upon her face.

I ran.

I ran past my two travel mates. I ran through the corridors of the temple. I ran through the night, following the river as best as I could.

I made my way back here to Fort Duhrin, the birthplace of all bad ideas involving a journey into the forest. At least you can start out with a map better than the one I was given. I would go myself, but my second encounter with the razor-root didn't benefit from the presence of Lineta, and a hunter with one foot and seven fingers isn't long for those woods. Four golden stonefruits sit, protected by nothing but six corpses and my discretion. Three of those are all yours, as long as you bring one back for me.

So I ask: Are you ready to claim your trophy?

We followed the old man's map. Despite all his confidence in this route, we hit the bend in the Naveh River much earlier than anticipated. Fenek—ever the stubborn one—refused to travel any further until we reoriented ourselves and corrected the map, so we set up camp for the evening.

It was during my watch that the sound started. I thought at first it to be a bear, which was enough to warrant waking up Fenek. He wouldn't rouse, and so I set out to investigate on my own. I tracked the sound for but a few minutes before it disappeared and I stumbled—literally—onto the temple.

Rather than enter in the dead of night and without my companion, I noted my route, returned to camp, and awaited daylight.

Fenek woke with the rising sun, and I told him of my discovery. He was eager to venture ahead, especially so since it was he who had originally met the old man in Fort Duhrin and obtained the map. Underneath his desire, I felt—or heard?—something else.

We traced my path to the temple. The patina-caked copper basins were there, just as the old man said. The fallen pillars as well. It was all as he described. Fenek pushed forward, and I lost him in the darkness of the temple halls. The sound was there again, ahead of me, where Fenek should be. It was like the roar of a fire, all-consuming and violent. I heard Fenek scream my name, then a series of slashes and a slump to the ground. The sound rose, and a voice emerged with it. Fenek's, but not his. Then the blackened husk of my dear companion crashed out of the darkness at my feet, burning and moaning.

I ran.

I made it to the forest. It is night as I write this. I think Fenek—or whatever wrapped itself in his burnt skin—is still hunting me. When I smell his charcoal flesh, I hear that sound again.

I pray the Sisters deliver me to Fort Duhrin.

What is This?

Trophy Dark is a roleplaying game about a group of treasure-hunters entering a haunted forest that doesn't want them there.

The game tells the story of the treasure-hunters' physical and mental descent as they move deeper and deeper into the dangerous forest. Their journey ultimately brings them to ancient ruins that hold the treasure they seek, and the monstrous entities that dwell there. This is not a hopeful story of brave and daring adventurers that slay dragons and drag bags of gold back to town. This is a horror story of entitled pillagers meeting tragic ends.

Welcome to the world of Kalduhr. Welcome to the forest.



Player's Guide



Creating a Treasure-Hunter

In *Trophy Dark*, you play a treasure-hunter intent on entering the forests, ruins, and other haunted spaces of the world in search of riches. However, your treasure-hunter is doomed—in the end, the forest always claims those who enter. Most never return, and those that do come back with their minds and bodies broken. Fight to survive, but know that you are marked. You will be claimed. You will be the forest's trophy.

For each table on the following pages, you can simply choose your favorite option, or roll a dark die and light die to select one at random. You can also work with your game master (GM) to make your own, or use the character creation options found in other *Trophy* supplements.

1. First, choose your *Name* and pronouns. Your name can be anything, but should feel like it fits in thematically with the list of sample names provided.

2. Next choose your *Occupation* and *Background*. These determine which *Skills* you have. Skills increase the odds of success when taking on a task. Narratively, your Occupation indicates your role in this expedition and an area of focused expertise. Your Background reveals what you used to do or be. When you choose your Background, think about what made you leave that life and why you can't ever go back to it.

3. Next, choose your *Drive*. Your Drive is the reason you hunt for treasure. The GM will ask you to reflect on your Drive during play, and will almost certainly use it as a knife that they twist in your back.

4. Finally, choose your *Rituals* and mark your *Ruin*. Rituals are dangerous spells you can cast to perform miraculous feats. All treasure-hunters can learn and use Rituals, regardless of Background or Occupation. You can start with 0, 1, 2, or 3 Rituals, but you must mark 1 Ruin for each Ritual you choose. Beware, each Ritual drives you one step closer to the end. You will lose yourself upon marking 6 Ruin.



TROPHY DARK

NAME PRONOUNS

OCCUPATION SKILLS

Your Occupation is the role you serve in the party now. Your Background is what you used to do or be before entering this life.

BACKGROUND SKILL

DRIVE

RITUALS

Any treasure-hunter can learn and use Rituals, regardless of their Background or Occupation. You can start with up to 3 Rituals, but your starting Ruin goes up by 1 for each Ritual you know. You can never lower your Ruin below your starting Ruin.

RITUAL
EFFECT

RITUAL
EFFECT

RITUAL
EFFECT

RUIN

~~1~~ 2 3 4 5 6

CONDITIONS

Mark 1 Ruin for each Ritual.

Example: If you choose 2 Rituals, you start with 3 Ruin marked.

Conditions are physical and mental transformations you undergo when your Ruin goes up. The GM will offer suggestions, but work with them to determine how you are affected.

Download character sheets at
TROPHYRPG.COM

CHARACTER IDENTITY OPTIONS — *Roll once and use a single row, or roll three times (once for each column)*

NAME	OCCUPATION — *Skills*	BACKGROUND — *Skill*
Akaleh	**Antiquarian** — *artifacts, myths, obfuscation*	**Abandoned Squire** — *aiding*
Alina	**Artificer** — *alchemy, invention, traps*	**Banished Dancer** — *grace*
Aram	**Astrologer** — *darkness, stars, symbols*	**Cured Beastbitten** — *transformation*
Baso	**Blacksmith** — *endurance, metal, weapons*	**Defrocked Priest** — *omens*
Benah	**Bodyguard** — *protection, speed, vigilance*	**Devoted Widow** — *patience*
Daian	**Chain** — *commands, elements, rituals*	**Disgraced Courtesan** — *flattery*
Desarim	**Champion** — *commands, ferocity, presence*	**Disinherited Noble** — *appraisal*
Elisio	**Cook** — *food, improvisation, poisons*	**Emboldened Ratcatcher** — *lairs*
Esfahen	**Demonologist** — *demons, negotiation, trickery*	**Enlightened Miner** — *paths*
Fion	**Geomancer** — *construction, paths, patterns*	**Errant Knight** — *dueling*
Foret	**Guide** — *foraging, hunting, paths*	**Escaped Cultist** — *deception*
Ifori	**Hedge** — *improvisation, rituals, spirits*	**Expelled Apprentice** — *lore*
Inda	**Herbalist** — *perception, plants, remedies*	**Failed Pilgrim** — *saints*
Kasien	**Intercessor** — *charm, persistence, rituals*	**Flockless Shepherd** — *soothing*
Kel	**Lamb** — *innocence, sacrifice, rituals*	**Grounded Sailor** — *ropes*
Kiva	**Lancer** — *balance, coordination, precision*	**Hapless Peddler** — *trading*
Lora	**Leech** — *blood, deduction, surgery*	**Heretical Inquisitor** — *secrets*
Mahera	**Lockpick** — *acrobatics, security, silence*	**Impeached Official** — *lies*
Masero	**Magician** — *performance, rituals, trickery*	**Imprecise Barber** — *injury*
Moradi	**Medium** — *spirits, vigilance, willpower*	**Injured Whaler** — *hunting*
Neven	**Merchant** — *bribery, focus, persuasion*	**Liberated Prisoner** — *deals*
Nima	**Naturalist** — *beasts, plants, silence*	**Lost Child** — *hiding*
Obeha	**Nest** — *coordination, rituals, vermin*	**Lured Innocent** — *temptation*
Orlen	**Oracle** — *interpretation, rituals, trances*	**Opportunistic Graverobber** — *death*
Osto	**Ox** — *destruction, persistence, strength*	**Oppressed Laborer** — *rebellion*
Parda	**Poet** — *passion, persuasion, rituals*	**Orphaned Manikin** — *mimicry*
Pela	**Ranger** — *beasts, hunting, traps*	**Plagued Farmer** — *corruption*
Rasei	**Sellsword** — *athletics, defense, surprise*	**Reckless Moneylender** — *ambition*
Revel	**Smuggler** — *dexterity, spontaneity, stealth*	**Reformed Thug** — *intimidation*
Sareh	**Snake** — *charm, trickery, performance*	**Retired Soldier** — *tactics*
Sibil	**Sorcerer** — *alchemy, rituals, symbols*	**Runaway Kingsguard** — *tracking*
Talia	**Spider** — *surprise, traps, vermin*	**Traitorous Cupbearer** — *betrayal*
Teodan	**Vessel** — *attraction, rituals, surrender*	**Uninspired Artisan** — *crafting*
Toram	**Witch** — *homes, plants, rituals*	**Unmasked Faeborn** — *illusions*
Valen	**Woodcutter** — *beasts, strength, trails*	**Usurped Royal** — *commands*
Vero	**Zealot** — *interrogation, rituals, strength*	**Wandering Refugee** — *disguise*

CHARACTER DRIVE OPTIONS — *Roll once*

	DRIVE		DRIVE
11	Acquire the Gleaming Cache before it is too late	61	Find the resting ground of the Morning Knight
12	Arm the resistance against Lord Haffir's tyranny	62	Free the kindly followers of the Piper
13	Attend Countess Shima's Forbidden Festival	63	Give your betrothed the present they crave
14	Become part of the Swirling Court	64	Inscribe your mother's name in the Azure Archives
15	Become the only patron of Ansem the Wistful	65	Locate the jewel that haunts Eriol's dreams
16	Break the geas placed by the Witch of Nevask	66	Pay the toll of the Emerald Bridge
21	Break the siege on your sibling's fortress	41	Pay your father's debt to Bright-Teeth Assyrio
22	Bribe the justiciars so they erase your crimes	42	Publish your discoveries from ancient Kalduhr
23	Bring freedom to Tirollis	43	Rebuild Hisham's Fountain
24	Buy the orphanage where you were mistreated	44	Repay your losses to the Southern Pass Company
25	Buy your brother's freedom from Barsul Prison	45	Restore the lost glory of the Caliginous Grove
26	Commission a glorious statue of your deity	46	Restore the Temple of Tanahlot
31	Destroy the work of Ajino the Debauched Painter	51	Resurrect the Cult of Derawan
32	Earn the respect of the Governor of Fort Duhrin	52	Retire in comfort in the Rose District of Ambaret
33	Earn the right to your family's name	53	Retrieve the lost banner of the Nameless Legion
34	Establish an estate in the Levasti countryside	54	Seize absolute control of Kormoran's Wheel
35	Finance an expedition into the Blossoming Sea	55	Take Cyrus' place at the Earthen Council
36	Find the artifact that proves the king's true nature	56	Win the heart of the heir apparent of Naganeh

What does this mean?

Many of the Occupations, Backgrounds, and Drives refer to individuals, events, locations, and identities that are not fully explained: What is a *Beastbitten* or a *Faeborn*? Is a *Snake* a smooth-talking charlatan, or a literal serpent-person? What happens at *Countess Shima's Forbidden Festival*? Who is *Cyrus*, and why do you need to take their place at the *Earthen Council*? What even *is* the *Earthen Council*? A player who selects one of these options should feel free to make up an explanation for them, either during character creation or during the course of the game.

Some of these references do get explained a bit more fully in the *Trophy Loom* setting book and in select incursions, but don't let any "official" explanations have any bearing on your game if you don't want them to. It's much more important to make something memorable and immediately useful at the table—that everyone is invested in the story and feels able to expand on it during the game.

Rituals are also intentionally left vague, and the exact limits of their effects are fluid and uncertain. When a player uses a Ritual, they should work with the GM to determine the scope and specifics of their magic in that moment.

CHARACTER RITUAL OPTIONS — I OF III — *Roll once on each page, and keep none, 1, 2, or, all 3*

RITUAL — *Effect*

- **Army** — *create illusory copies of yourself that mimic your actions*
- **Ashes** — *burn something irreplaceable to turn a creature or object to dust*
- **Aura** — *ascertain a creature's emotional state, truthfulness, and true form*
- **Beacon** — *nearby hidden creatures or objects shine with a fiery glow*
- **Beast** — *take a form halfway between human and animal*
- **Bewitch** — *a creature will follow a simple command if given a gift*
- **Bind** — *hold a creature in place for as long as you stay motionless*
- **Blink** — *a creature you touch teleports to a spot you can see*
- **Blur** — *touch a creature to blur their form, making their details and boundaries hard to determine*
- **Bolt** — *throw a crackling arc of heat and energy*
- **Bottle** — *force a spirit into an object*
- **Brimstone** — *grow scorching hot to the touch*
- **Burrow** — *move through the ground*
- **Carve** — *alter a creature or object via sorcerous subtraction*
- **Channel** — *allow a spirit to act through you*
- **Circle** — *a creature within a ring of salt cannot inflict or suffer violence*
- **Clay** — *use your hands to rearrange and reshape inanimate material*
- **Clock** — *time in a small area moves at an unnaturally fast or slow speed*
- **Compel** — *force a creature to perform a non-lethal task, or free a creature from a prior Compel*
- **Crucible** — *heat a metallic object to melting*
- **Darkness** — *a living shadow snuffs out all nearby light*
- **Dazzle** — *distract and confuse nearby creatures with colorful moving lights*
- **Doom** — *make a creature feel a sense of impending doom*
- **Door** — *draw a door on a solid barrier to create a portal through it*
- **Drain** — *remove all water from a creature*
- **Dryad** — *stay still to transform into a tree and communicate with other trees*
- **Elegy** — *appear as deceased*
- **Emote** — *heighten or dampen the current emotions of all in your presence*
- **Endure** — *touch a creature to allow them to withstand temperature extremes*
- **Enliven** — *give flesh and breath to an effigy*
- **Entangle** — *cause plants to twist and grasp, holding or slowing a creature*
- **Ether** — *a touched creature or object becomes spectral and intangible*
- **Fantasy** — *observe and alter the dreams of a known creature*
- **Fault** — *strike the weakest point of an object with phantasmal force*
- **Feather** — *reduce the density of an object*
- **Feral** — *increase the size, temper, and monstrosity of a creature you touch*

CHARACTER RITUAL OPTIONS — II OF III — *Roll once on each page, and keep none, 1, 2, or all 3*

RITUAL — *Effect*

Float — *hold your breath to gently levitate*
Flow — *shape and command bodies of water*
Fountain — *a forceful spring of water bursts forth from a location you touch*
Future — *an object disappears, then reappears a short time later in exactly the same spot*
Gale — *conjure and guide a mighty wind*
Gardener — *consume a plant to absorb some of its memories*
Germinate — *compel plants to furious growth*
Ghoul — *animate a dead body*
Glamour — *appear more charming and attractive*
Gleam — *a luminous spirit is bound to an object to project light*
Guide — *conjure a thread to follow*
Hand — *concentrate to mentally move a small object you can see*
Haunt — *summon a spirit to torment a creature*
Hold — *a sigil prevents passage through a space for a short time*
Hollow — *push a spirit from a body*
Hospitality — *maintain peace while you share food and drink*
Immolate — *engulf your body in flame*
Inhabit — *possess a creature*
Inscribe — *create or alter a written or carved message*
Kindle — *produce fire from yourself*
Knock — *open nearby portal that is shut*
Leviathan — *draw forth a creature of the deep*
Liar — *contact a spirit who can answer any question, but only falsely*
Lift — *temporarily reverse gravity in a small area*
Martyr — *touch a creature to transfer their Conditions to you*
Mask — *cover your face to remove yourself from others' senses*
Maze — *the surrounding environment warps into a labyrinth with you at the center*
Medium — *surface thoughts of nearby creatures enter and overwhelm a target*
Messenger — *send a message via a creature*
Mirage — *create an illusion that is obviously fake only on close inspection*
Mirror — *take on the form of a known creature*
Nightwalk — *move untraceably through darkness*
Numb — *reduce sensation within a creature*
Obscure — *hide a creature or object from the view of one other creature*
Orchard — *conjure a few dozen apples, some poisonous*
Parse — *divine the meaning of any word, writing, sound, sign, or symbol*

CHARACTER RITUAL OPTIONS — III OF III — *Roll once on each page, and keep none, 1, 2, or, all 3*

RITUAL — *Effect*
Provoke — *force an opponent to make a choice: freeze, fight, or flee*
Rebirth — *force a known spirit to be reborn in a new body*
Repel — *push away a creature with spiritual force*
Rewind — *slightly push a creature back in time*
Rubber — *the body of a touched creature becomes elastic and can stretch beyond normal limits*
Rustle — *an illusory sound of your choosing appears to come from somewhere nearby*
Scale — *double or halve the size of an object you touch*
Scent — *navigate a space by smell alone, or follow the scent trail of a known creature*
Scramble — *touch a creature to make them forget their known rituals until the next sunrise*
Scry — *observe a location in spirit form*
Sever — *you can detach and reattach a body part, and still control it while removed*
Shell — *your skin grows a tough outer layer which acts as armor*
Shroud — *as long as they remain motionless, a group of creatures are hidden from others' senses*
Silence — *deafen all nearby for a short amount of time*
Siphon — *detect and extract poison from food, water, or a creature*
Sleep — *send a creature into a deep slumber*
Smite — *strike with a spiritual weapon*
Spark — *touch to revive a newly dead creature, a second touch—even accidental—kills instantly*
Statue — *touch a creature, object, or surface to turn it to stone*
Steed — *summon a spectral mount which can walk on air and water*
Summon — *draw a known creature to you*
Swarm — *trade favors with a colony of vermin*
Switch — *touch to swap bodies with another*
Tadpole — *keep your own mouth closed to allow a creature to breathe, regardless of environment*
Tripwire — *a predefined illusory scene is triggered by an event of your choosing*
Unravel — *pull the threads of a Ritual to uncast it, and recast it somewhere else*
Vapor — *a noxious cloud fills a small area*
Voice — *alter your voice or make it come from somewhere nearby*
Void — *remain silent to prevent the casting of any Ritual in your presence*
Wail — *produce a disorienting sound*
Wall — *create a dense wall of fire, ice, stone, thorns, or water*
Ward — *stay concentrating to protect a small area*
Web — *produce webbing to cover a creature or reach something nearby*
Wither — *reduce plants to ash and rot*
Writhe — *transform sticks and branches into serpents which follow your command*
Yoke — *apply the strength of a spectral bull to a situation*

How to Play



After you create your treasure-hunter, you are ready to start playing *Trophy Dark*.

Your GM will start by describing the game as a whole, setting expectations for the session, and making sure everyone understands the safety tools used in the game. After that, they'll share the *incursion* you will play. Incursions are themed adventures with a set structure of five *Rings* the treasure-hunters move through, bringing them further and further into the forest or other haunted environment found in this session. Each Ring has associated *terrors* trying to destroy or push back the treasure-hunters, and *temptations* trying to draw them deeper in.

During game play, the GM explains the rules as they are needed—specifically how you can use your treasure-hunter's skills and Rituals to make dice rolls, and how those rolls impact your Ruin, Conditions, and the story.

This chapter details the game's dice rolls, as well as the principles and safety tools you should use to be an active and thoughtful member of your gaming group.



Player Principles

Principles are your guidelines for playing *Trophy Dark*. Whenever you feel stuck about what you should do, look to these three principles and try to match your actions to them.

Embrace tragedy. Your character has taken on this work out of desperation. Their prospects are not good. Play up the inherent sadness and desperation of their situation. When presented with a choice, always take the option that pulls at your heartstrings and makes you feel for them and their predicament, especially once you hit Rings 3, 4, and 5.

Don't hold back. *Trophy Dark* is a game of ever-increasing stakes and pressure, but there are built-in release valves. When your character is on the line, push them. When coming up with Devil's Bargains for other characters, go hard against them. They can always reject your offer if it hits too hard.

Play to lose. At some point, your luck will run out. Embrace your end, and make it memorable.

Rolling the Dice

Trophy Dark consists of five different rolls described on the following pages. The rolls call for *dark* dice or *light* dice, so each player should have a handful of six-sided dice in two different colors. Only players make these rolls. The GM only uses dice for rolling on random tables.

RISK ROLL

The Risk Roll is the beating heart of *Trophy Dark*. At its core, it tells us how well your treasure-hunter performs risky tasks. However, it also creates space for the other players and the GM to suggest story details, and offers the GM idea fodder for future scenes. Anyone—especially the player rolling—can veto any elements they don't want to see in the game.

When you attempt a risky task, say what you hope will happen, and ask the GM and the other players what could possibly go wrong. Then gather dice.

- Take a *light* die if the task is something you are skilled at because of your Occupation or Background. You only get one light die for your Skills, even if multiple Skills apply. If you don't have any relevant Skills, then you cannot take this die.
- Take a *light* die for accepting a Devil's Bargain from another player or the GM. Devil's Bargains are complications that happen no matter the outcome of the roll. You can only accept one Devil's Bargain. See the next page for more information about Devil's Bargains.
- Add a *dark* die if you are risking your mind or body to attempt the task. You must include this die whenever you perform a Ritual, or if the GM declares that it applies.

Roll the dice. If your **highest** die is a:

1–3: You fail, and things get worse. The GM describes how, which may or may not be connected to one of the ideas offered when you asked what could go wrong. The GM may also allow you to succeed, but things will get worse in some other way.

4–5: You succeed, but there's some kind of complication. The GM describes the complication, then you describe how you succeed, or vice versa. The complication may be connected to one of the ideas offered when you asked what could go wrong, but it doesn't have to be.

6: You succeed. Describe how, or ask the GM to describe it.

If your **highest** die is a dark die, and the dark die is **higher** than your current Ruin, mark 1 Ruin then work with the GM to define a Condition describing how the forest changes you—see *Conditions* on page 19. When you mark your last Ruin, you are lost—see *Losing Yourself* on page 19.

- If you are unhappy with your roll and your highest die is a light die, you may add a dark die to your dice pool and re-roll them all. You may keep adding a dark die and re-rolling until you're satisfied with your result or until your highest die is a dark die.

THE FOREST'S RULE: *When dark and light dice are tied, the dark die is considered the highest.*



Risk Roll

SAY WHAT YOU HOPE WILL HAPPEN

Ask the GM and the other players what could go wrong.

GATHER YOUR DICE

- Take a light die if the task is something you are skilled at because of either your Occupation or your Background.
- Take a light die for accepting a Devil's Bargain from another player or the GM.
- Take a dark die if you are risking your mind or body. You must include this die whenever you perform a Ritual or if the GM says you must.

ROLL ALL THE DICE AND COMPARE

Did you roll a dark die **equal to or higher** than the highest light die in your roll?

YES / NO

RUIN

Is the dark die **higher** than your current Ruin?

YES / NO

+1

Mark 1 Ruin.

RISK

Are you willing to risk your mind or body for a better result?

NO / YES

RE-ROLL

Add a dark die.

READ THE HIGHEST DIE

1–3 You fail, and things get worse. The GM describes how. The GM may also allow you to succeed, but things will get worse in some other way.

4–5 You succeed, but there's a complication. The GM describes the complication, then you describe how you succeed, or vice versa.

6 You succeed. Describe how, or ask the GM.

FIGHTING MONSTERS

The world of *Trophy Dark* is a dangerous one, filled with a variety of creatures capable of causing harm. These creatures can be divided into two groups: folk and monsters.

Folk are people—sometimes strange or magic-using people—but people nonetheless. They can be fought and removed from play through a successful Risk Roll.

Monsters are something else. They relentlessly serve the forest and cannot be defeated by mere treasure-hunters. If you attempt a Risk Roll to incapacitate or kill a monster, you will die. Instead, roll to hide, roll to escape, or roll to use a Ritual against it. If you fight something that is not monstrous or if you fight a monster without an intent to defeat it (for example, to fight your way past it), say what you want from the fight, then roll normally.

DEVIL'S BARGAINS

Treasure-hunters laugh at danger, fueled by the folly of their pride. But failure nips at their heels, waiting for the perfect moment to strike. When you gather dice to make a Risk Roll, the GM or any other player can offer you a bonus light die if you accept a Devil's Bargain from them. Common Devil's Bargains include:

- Causing collateral damage or unintended harm
- Getting lost or separated from your companions
- Sacrificing an item or piece of treasure
- Betraying a fellow treasure-hunter
- Attracting unwanted attention

The Devil's Bargain occurs regardless of the outcome of the roll. You make the deal, pay the price, and get the bonus die. The Devil's Bargain is always a free choice. If you don't like one, just reject it (or suggest how to alter it so you might consider taking it).

Anyone may veto or suggest alterations to a proposed Devil's Bargain, especially if it would also impact their treasure-hunter. You may only offer and accept Devil's Bargains when making a Risk Roll.

HELP ROLL

If another player is making a Risk Roll that includes at least one dark die, you may offer help to improve their odds of success—either before or after they roll.

- If they accept your offer, say how you expose yourself to danger and roll one *light* die.

They may include your light die's result when considering their overall success. But if your light die's result **matches** *any* of the dark dice in their roll, mark 1 Ruin then work with the GM to define a Condition describing how the forest changes you—see *Conditions* on the next page. When you mark your last Ruin, you are lost—see *Losing Yourself* on the next page.

You can only mark a maximum of 1 Ruin when helping on a roll. This is particularly relevant when a player re-rolls a Risk Roll. The helping player doesn't re-roll their light die. However, you still mark 1 Ruin if any re-rolled dice show the same number as your light die (provided you haven't marked 1 Ruin already due to this roll).

More than one player may offer to help, in which case each player rolls their own light die. The helped player can incorporate all of the light dice into their own Risk Roll.

CONTEST ROLL

The Contest Roll manages situations where treasure-hunters act against each other. Sometimes multiple treasure-hunters are competing to be the first to a piece of treasure, are trying to achieve their own individual aims in opposition to their party members, or are aiming to inflict harm on one another. To engage in a contest, first agree on what's at stake. Then each competing player gathers dice:

- Take one *light* die if the contest is something you are skilled at because of your Occupation or Background. You only get one light die for your Skills, even if multiple Skills apply.
- Take one *light* die for each mark of Ruin you currently have. For example, if you have 4 Ruin, you get 4 light dice. This is the forest giving you an advantage commensurate with how much it has dug its claws into you.
- Take one *dark* die if the contest itself is inherently deadly or dangerous.
- Take as many additional *dark* dice as you are willing to risk.

Count all **6s** you roll. Whoever has the most 6s wins the contest. In case of a tie, count 5s, then 4s, then 3s, then 2s, then 1s, until a winner is determined.

For *each* dark die in your roll that shows a **1**, mark 1 Ruin then work with the GM to define a Condition describing how the forest changes you—see *Conditions* on the next page. When you mark your last Ruin, you are lost—see *Losing Yourself* on the next page.

RUIN ROLL

Your Ruin shows how much the forest has dug its claws into you, including the physical and mental harm you've suffered. It starts at 1, plus 1 for each Ritual you start the game with.

When you witness or undergo something disturbing, roll one *dark* die.

If you rolled **higher** than your current Ruin, mark 1 Ruin then work with the GM to define a Condition describing how the forest changes you—see *Conditions* below. When you mark your last Ruin, you are lost—see *Losing Yourself* below.

REDUCTION ROLL

The forest wants revenge. Humans have stolen its secrets and gifts and given nothing in return.

When you mark 5 Ruin, you may now reduce it by acting in the forest's interests: destroying treasure, preventing the use of Rituals, or sabotaging your fellow treasure-hunters' exit from the forest. You should do these acts in a way that does not draw attention to yourself. The more it looks like an accident or simple bad luck, the better.

Each time you act in the forest's interest, roll one *light* die.

If you rolled **less than** your current Ruin, your betrayal goes unnoticed and you remove 1 Ruin. If you rolled **higher than or equal to** your Ruin, you decide whether or not to remove 1 Ruin. If you do, someone notices the attempted betrayal—otherwise, your attempt goes unseen.

You may continue reducing your Ruin in this way when your Ruin drops below 5, until you are back at your starting Ruin. Your Ruin can never go below the amount you start the game with.

CONDITIONS

Conditions are physical and mental transformations you undergo when your Ruin goes up. When you mark Ruin as the result of a *Risk Roll, Help Roll, Contest Roll, Ruin Roll,* or other custom roll, the GM will offer suggestions for Conditions, but you can work with them to determine exactly how you are affected. Conditions are often tied to the theme of the specific incursion you're playing. For example, in *The Flocculent Cathedral*—an incursion themed around *Moss*—the following Condition is provided as an option:

A visible cloud of fine jade-colored spores spews out of your mouth whenever you exhale.

LOSING YOURSELF

When you mark your last Ruin—meaning all 6 Ruin boxes are marked—you lose yourself to the wilds that have been growing inside you. You choose whether you become a monster in service to the forces of nature (and the whims of the GM), or whether you simply die. This is an important moment: Everyone focuses on your last actions before you run screaming into the shadows, turn violently against your fellow treasure-hunters, or take your final breath.

The GM may allow you to take on a co-GM role, helping describe the terrors of the world—especially any terrors that directly connect to your now-lost treasure-hunter.

Safety Tools

When playing any game, always remember that people come to the table with their own experiences, traumas, and perceptions. Make a habit of requesting or seeking consent for things that may be uncomfortable.

Sometimes, content enters a game that causes problems for players despite everyone's best intentions. There are many great safety toolkits available, but we recommend *Script Change* by Beau Jágr Sheldon, as it contains specific tools for navigating difficult content and uses terms that will be familiar to most people. Script Change comes with four core safety tools: *Pause*, *Rewind*, *Fast-Forward*, and *Frame-by-Frame*. The GM should explain that anyone can say these terms at any time to:

PAUSE

Pause the game to take a break from an intense scene, or to discuss or clarify what is happening in the story.

REWIND

Rewind the story back to a point before a piece of content entered the scene. The group can then narrate a different course of action to avoid the thing that caused the rewind.

FAST-FORWARD

Fast-Forward over something they don't want to dwell on in the story, or to simply move time forward.

FRAME-BY-FRAME

Frame-by-Frame through a scene they want to approach with care. This slows the story down so everyone can pause where needed and check in with each other.

Lastly, take some time *after* the game to debrief and check in with each other. This can be a chance to reflect and discuss anything hard that's still sticking with you, or just highlight moments of description or roleplay that you loved.

No matter what, remember that no game is more important than the people playing it. Take care of yourselves and each other.



Game Master's Guide



Running the Game

Before You Start

PITCH THE GAME

Trophy Dark is thematically and mechanically different from a lot of other fantasy roleplaying games, so it's especially important to make sure the game master (GM) pitches it appropriately. It won't be the right kind of fun for all groups, and that's okay. The key things to focus on are:

The game is highly collaborative and improvisational. Players have a lot of say over the world itself and can introduce story elements that no one—not even the GM—was expecting. The game runs best when everyone feels comfortable offering up their ideas.

The characters will probably die. This isn't the beginning of the characters' story—it's the end. Everyone needs to be on board with losing their characters, and for being the instigators of the destruction of the other characters.

For a short introduction to the game, you can use the following:

Trophy Dark is a game about doomed treasure-hunters entering a forest or other haunted space that doesn't want them there.

MEDIA TOUCHSTONES

If you want to compare *Trophy Dark* to other forms of media, here are some inspirations and related books, films, television shows, and games.

Aguirre, the Wrath of God (1972 film)
Annihilation (2014 novel and 2018 film)
Apostle (2018 film)
Black Swan (2010 film)
The Blair Witch Project (1999 film)
Dark Souls (2011 video game)
A Field in England (2013 film)
Midsommar (2019 film)
Mythago Wood (1984 novel)
Old Gods of Appalachia (2019 podcast)
The Ritual (2009 film)
The Ruins (2006 novel and 2008 film)
The Wicker Man (1973 film)
The Witch (2015 film)
The Witcher – The Last Wish (1993/2007 novel)
YellowBrickRoad (2010 film)

GATHER SUPPLIES

You need one GM to moderate the game and portray the dangers of the world, and one or more players to portray the treasure-hunters (2–3 is ideal). A game of *Trophy Dark*—called an *incursion*—plays in a single session of about 3–4 hours. The GM doesn't typically roll dice, but may want a few for rolling on random inspiration tables. Each player should have:



- A handful of six-sided dice in two different colors (referred to as *light* dice and *dark* dice)
- A copy of the character sheet
- A pencil (for in-person games)

You can find copies of the character sheet at TROPHYRPG.COM. There, you will also find *Trophy Dark* play-throughs and other resources to help facilitate your game.

SET EXPECTATIONS

To make sure everyone is on the same page, describe the game, aim, tone, and subject matter with everyone present. These descriptions can be read as is, or adjusted as appropriate for the particular session or group:

Describe the game. *Trophy Dark* is a game about doomed treasure-hunters entering a forest or other haunted space that doesn't want them there.

Describe the aim. You will play treasure-hunters motivated by a near-impossible goal to seek out riches in the forgotten places of the world. You are not heroes, but entitled or desperate pillagers there to secure your wants and needs. The treasure-hunters are doomed, and they probably won't achieve their goal. Instead, they are very likely to die by the end of the game, and watching how they go out is part of the fun.

Describe the tone. The tone of *Trophy Dark* is desperate and often tragic. You will likely encounter conflict or tension between treasure-hunters, where players are encouraged to backstab or betray their companions in pursuit of their goal.

Describe the subject matter. This game will be R-rated. Your treasure-hunters are risk-takers willing to make dangerous choices. The game will likely be violent, terrifying, and include scenes of bodily horror and loss of self-control. *Call out any other particular subject matter or warnings featured in the incursion you are playing.*

Ask everyone at the table if there are things they want to see or don't want to see in the game. Note these additions in a list, and keep it where everyone can see. This list should be a living document that can be added to throughout the game.

USE SAFETY TOOLS

To help everyone have a good time and feel comfortable exploring the difficult topics that can sometimes be present in *Trophy Dark*, take a few minutes to explain the safety tools on page 20.

Game Master Principles

Principles are your guidelines for playing *Trophy Dark*. Whenever you feel stuck about what you should do, look to your principles and try to match your actions to them.

Address the players as their treasure-hunters. If your friend's name is Jeff, but he's playing a treasure-hunter called Baso, don't say, "Jeff, what does Baso do?" or, "Jeff, what do you do?" Instead, say, "Baso, what do you do?" This helps everyone think of the players as the treasure-hunters and gets each player in their own treasure-hunter's head.

Address the players as co-storytellers. This is a game which thrives on collaboration. When you are looking for player input during a moment where their treasure-hunter might not be involved, address the player directly. If your friend Hannah hasn't been a part of the action for a while, during a Risk Roll you can say, "Hannah, what do you think might go wrong here?" This helps the player know that they should be thinking outside the context of their own character knowledge in that moment and instead be thinking inside the context of the overall story.

Make the treasure-hunters' stories dangerous and tragic. We're here explore the descent of the treasure-hunters, but we need to care about them first for their ends to be meaningful. Give them early victories, allow them to reveal their heartbreaking pasts, let us feel for them and hope for success. Then don't let up when you start pushing them to the edge.

Make the world haunted and hungry. The forest operates on its own logic. Time moves too quickly or too slowly. Paths reorient themselves. The world is alive, active, and malicious. Give even the darkness and the trees their own personalities. Use poetic details and rich descriptions to show the players how the world is out to get their their treasure-hunters.

Ask pointed questions and build on the answers. Players are naturally invested in things they've had a hand in creating. Ask players lots of questions about their treasure-hunters, and use their answers as the spark for the next fire you burn them with.

Drive wedges. The treasure-hunters start out as travel companions, and maybe even friends. But they shouldn't end up that way. Cast aspersions and make them doubt what they believe about each other and themselves. When you offer up rewards, treasures, and victories, be sure to always give the right thing to the wrong treasure-hunter.

Never let a good idea go to waste. When a player offers up a delicious suggestion that doesn't make sense in the moment, keep it in your back pocket and reincorporate it later on. If a player shares a story about the emerald stag that hunts those who trespass in its woods, later in the game, when everyone but you has forgotten about it, that stag should emerge and gore their treasure-hunter.

Return to the theme. Incursions are built around a theme, and a rewarding session is one that brings the theme to life. If you go afield from the incursion's outlined story beats, you can always use the incursion's Moments and Conditions to draw attention back to the theme.



Anatomy of an Incursion

Classic fantasy roleplaying games are designed to be played within the structure of pre-written adventures or dungeon modules. The equivalent structure for a session of *Trophy Dark* is called an *incursion*. An incursion is a thematic skeleton for you to flesh out during the session, with an outline of details, dangers, and rewards for the treasure-hunters to encounter. The following pages present the elements found in an incursion and advice for how to use them.

THEME

The theme is typically a single evocative word, such as *Sleep*, *Water*, or *Masks*. Every part of an incursion flows from the theme, and when you're running an incursion, this is the thing you should always return back to.

INTRODUCTION

The introduction is how the players are brought into the incursion. This might be information about the geography or history of the area, or a suggestion for how the treasure-hunters learned about this location. Many incursions include a poem or other evocative language to set the mood. Typically, you can just read the introduction aloud to the players.

MOMENTS

Moments are short, descriptive scene fragments that reinforce the theme. A Moment in an incursion with the theme of *Sleep* might be "thousands of dragonflies in torpor, attached to trees and tents." For *Water*, it might be "pools fill in your footprints as you lift your boots from the thick, gray mud." Pepper Moments into your narration as the lead-in to a new Ring, when you feel stuck about where to go next, or whenever seems appropriate.

Moments are also good opportunities to reveal the fates of previous adventurers bound for the same treasure. For example, a game with the theme of *Water* might have the moment "three bloated bodies float face down amongst the mangroves."

CONDITIONS

Conditions are the ways the forest manifests in the treasure-hunters when they mark Ruin. For the theme of *Sleep*, that might be "your dominant arm is plagued by a constant feeling of pins and needles" or "you find written words illegible, as if in a dream."

The Conditions provided with an incursion are always just suggestions. You and the affected player should work together to modify them to suit the particular situation and the player's view of their treasure-hunter. Once a Condition has been added to a treasure-hunter, future Conditions they acquire can be entirely new, or escalations of those they already have.

RINGS

As the treasure-hunters go deeper into the scenario, they move through five different Rings, starting at Ring 1. Each Ring contains terrors that seek to drive them away, and temptations that pull them further in. The treasure-hunters cannot move to the next Ring until they've

encountered at least one terror and one temptation from the current Ring. But once they do, go ahead and jump right into the next Ring.

Many Rings also have explicit questions that can be asked of the players. Later Rings will often suggest ways to build on the answers provided. Don't limit yourself to just the questions listed—always feel free to ask your own questions so you can reincorporate the answers as you see fit.

RING 1



TERRORS

The terrors in Ring 1 exist to make the treasure-hunters feel **confident**. There should be clear signs of the terrors' lethality, but the treasure-hunters should overcome them with relative ease.

EXAMPLES: *A wounded bear or other large mundane predator, a band of rival treasure-hunters, members of the kingsguard patrolling for poachers on the edge of the forest.*

TEMPTATIONS

The temptations in Ring 1 are **ephemeral**: rumors, whispers, and glimmers of hope. Connect them to broad promises of wealth and fame.

EXAMPLES: *A hermit who knows the way, a familiar location on your roughly-scrawled map, a fearful goblin offering help if his life is spared.*

Of all the Rings, this is the one to try to run as closely as possible to what is outlined in the incursion. The encounters here are set up to push the players immediately into action and to begin revealing who their treasure-hunters are as individuals. You don't need to explore everyone's backstories here. In fact, those are often better examined in Rings 2 and 3.

RING 2



TERRORS

The terrors in Ring 2 are **environmental**. They make travel difficult and separate people from one another. Their role is to show the fury of nature.

EXAMPLES: *Torrential rain and mudslides, noxious clouds of psychotropic spores, carnivorous trees and choking vines.*

TEMPTATIONS

The temptations in Ring 2 take the form of overwhelming **evidence**. They exist to show the treasure-hunters that they are on the right path.

EXAMPLES: *Temple ruins, a rough stone pathway, ancient and weather-beaten statues.*

This Ring is the most like a traditional fantasy adventure, since it is so focused on overcoming environmental challenges and finding proof that the treasure they seek is near. Be sure to let the forest—and those treasure-hunters with forest survival skills—shine here. Call for plenty of Risk Rolls and push for Devil's Bargains when you're in this Ring.

Additionally, if you are considering expanding your playthrough of an incursion to a second session, this Ring is a great place to spend the time really exploring the world and facing danger.

RING 3



TERRORS

The terrors in Ring 3 exist to create **suspicion**. They should make the treasure-hunters question the motives of their companions.

EXAMPLES: *Dreams of impending betrayal, your items discovered in another's pack, the realization that you've been walking in circles.*

TEMPTATIONS

The temptations in Ring 3 are **personal**, evoking the treasure-hunters' Drives.

EXAMPLES: *A reminder of your Drive, food or songs from home, a taste of creature comforts.*

The middle of the incursion is the downtime Ring. After the challenges of Ring 2, and before the horrors of Ring 4, this is a place where the treasure-hunters can take a breath, learn about each other, and discover reasons to begin mistrusting each other. This is an excellent place for making camp, sharing around the fire, and having flashback scenes—and for sowing the seeds of betrayal by calling for Reduction Rolls.

If you are playing a single 3-hour session, aim to wrap up Ring 3 near the 2-hour mark.

RING 4



TERRORS

The terrors in Ring 4 are **monstrous**. Their role is to pursue the treasure-hunters and drive them into the final Ring.

EXAMPLES: *A mass of undefined flesh covered in hungry mouths, shadowy claws that are visible only in your periphery, children carved from granite approaching with blood-speckled mining tools.*

TEMPTATIONS

The temptations in Ring 4 should make the treasure-hunters **desperate**. The bounty is right there, just out of reach. All the treasure-hunters need to do is push a little bit further.

EXAMPLES: *Golden bracelets and necklaces woven with precision into a massive web, a vast and untouched library accessible only through a tight crawl space, a pile of gemstones glimmering at the bottom of a pool.*

Ring 4 is the beginning of the end. This is where the forest brings out its guard dogs in one final, monstrous display to get the treasure-hunters to turn back. Focus here on sensory details, and make everything feel immediate: the monsters are breathing down their necks while they see the shine of the treasure they seek. Make every choice a difficult one.

It is highly likely you will have lost a treasure-hunter by this point. If so, let them become one of this Ring's monsters and take on a more active role in describing the terrors and temptations here. By now—after multiple Devil's Bargains have introduced new narrative threads—you may be well off-script, so don't worry about one of your "co-GMs" bringing something unexpected into the game.

RING 5



TERRORS

The terrors in Ring 5 are **psychological.** They exist to pit characters against one another and make them relent to their eventual fate.

EXAMPLES: *Monstrous promises in exchange for attacking your fellow treasure-hunters, isolation and abandonment, doppelgangers.*

TEMPTATIONS

The temptations in Ring 5 are always **possessions** of the other treasure-hunters, or things they are perceived to be in possession of. If there is something one treasure-hunter desperately wants, it should fall into the hands of another.

EXAMPLES: *Manifestations of important figures from your Drive, another treasure-hunter holds the thing you always wanted, a Ritual that grants your wishes after you make a sacrifice.*

This Ring is where everything falls gloriously off the rails. Fates are reversed with a single roll, heroes become villains, and everyone starts leaning into the tragedy. Use what the incursion provides in this Ring if it still makes sense, but don't feel beholden to it if it doesn't. This is your last chance to reincorporate anything shared from earlier in the session—Drives, unchosen Devil's Bargains, bits of backstory—and try to tie as many loose ends as possible.

EPILOGUE

This isn't an official part of an incursion's structure, but only because it's entirely personalized to the individual treasure-hunters in your game. In many ways, it's the most important part of the session, so don't neglect it. Epilogues give characters—and the players portraying them—a sense of closure and finality.

Go around the table and ask each player to take a few minutes to describe what has become of their treasure-hunter in the days or years to come. For those who survived and escaped, ask them how they carry the curse of the forest back with them. For those who marked 6 Ruin and were lost, ask them how they serve the forest now or how their absence is felt back at home.

After the epilogue, take some time to debrief. Collectively share your favorite moments from the game, and discuss anything that's still sticking with you.

Additional Tips for Play

In addition to the guidance found in the previous section, *Anatomy of an Incursion*, and the rules and rolls found in the Player's Guide *How to Play* chapter, below are some tips for making your session of *Trophy Dark* the best play experience possible.

CONSIDER THE NUMBER OF PLAYERS

Trophy Dark is an intimate game that works best with a small number of players in a single, tight gaming session. While you can certainly run the game with 4 or more treasure-hunters, you will find the most success when playing with 2 or 3 other players. Games with just 2 treasure-hunters are particularly intense, as each player only has a couple of places to turn when things start to spiral: to the other player—whose treasure-hunter is on the path to betrayal—or to the forest.

A good rule of thumb is to allow for a number of hours of play equal to each player, plus the GM. Thus a game with 2 treasure-hunters should take about 3 hours, and a game with 4 treasure-hunters will likely take 5 or more hours, and may need to be split into multiple sessions. Give incursions time to breathe, and don't feel bad about needing to stretch over multiple sessions if the game is going well.

FOLLOW WHERE THE COLLABORATION LEADS

An incursion gives you a lot of material to draw on, but don't feel like you need to lock yourself into the story as it's presented. Think of a *Trophy Dark* incursion like an outline rather than a script. The real story happens during the negotiation of stakes that occurs before a dice roll. When players suggest how things could go wrong, or when they offer Devil's Bargains, they are saying a lot about how the rest of the story is going to go.

When you don't emphasize the collaborative nature of the game up front, the experience tends to be one where the players simply sit back and wait for you to deliver story to them.

START IN MEDIAS RES

Like any good movie or novel, the best roleplaying sessions start with the characters already in the middle of the action. *Trophy Dark* is no different. After the characters are created, jump right into the incursion. Don't dwell on Drives, backstories, or even how the treasure-hunters know one another. It's not important in the beginning—it will all be revealed during play.

Trophy Dark works well as a one-shot because the game essentially picks up the treasure-hunters during the last leg of their journey. And yet there is still an opportunity to see where they came from—via in-character conversations, flashbacks, questions posed to the players, and even the epilogue—so the game feels like a complete story.

DON'T ROLL IF THE STAKES DON'T MATTER

Outright failure doesn't occur very frequently in *Trophy Dark* because of the ability to re-roll with the Risk Roll and help via the Help Roll. Look at each roll as a chance to ask, "what is the character putting on the line here?" That could be injury, magic, trust, or the attention of the forest. Find that thing and make the roll about that, or just let the player succeed without a roll.

FRAME YOUR TRANSITIONS

When the treasure-hunters are about to transition from one Ring to the next, you don't need to ask "What do you next?" We know what they're going to do next, they're going to press deeper into the forest. If the next Ring is a camping scene, you don't need to say, "Hmm, you're probably getting pretty tired. Do you want to make camp?" Just jump ahead to them in a scene at camp and start introducing the terror or temptation that kicks off that scene.

Alternately, there are two other techniques that work well as transitions between Rings.

You can use one of the *Moments*—those short bits of narration in the black bar that run along the bottom of an incursion—to open a new Ring, then move from that into the opening terror.

You can *Paint the Scene*. With this technique, you simply ask the players what they observe about the scene that reinforces the theme of the incursion. For example, if the theme is *Water*, you might ask, "As you enter the deepest caverns, what do you observe that lets you know that this portion of the temple was submerged for millennia?"

In either case, be wary of lingering for too long. Use these techniques to kick things off and set the scene, but then get right into the action.

LINGER ON THE MAGICAL AND MONSTROUS

Trophy Dark is a game of dark fantasy, so take time to indulge in those moments where the dark and fantastical are at the forefront, particularly whenever a Ritual is performed and whenever a treasure-hunter reaches 6 Ruin.

Rituals are dangerous, and so are typically only used when the stakes are high. Using Rituals requires negotiation between you and the player, so the game will naturally slow down as you discuss and agree how its magic manifests. And whether or not the player succeeds on their Risk Roll, don't just let a Ritual happen: Ask the player to describe how they prepare the spell, what it looks like when they cast it, what it costs them, and how the world around them responds to the presence of magic.

Likewise, slow down any time a treasure-hunter reaches 6 Ruin. This is a momentous event, both mechanically and narratively. Some players will use this as an opportunity to make a final noble sacrifice, while others will relish in the chance to take revenge on their companions. Either way, give that player the spotlight to describe their treasure-hunter's state of mind and the forest's influence on them. If the treasure-hunter has any Conditions, ask the player how they foreshadow any transformations they undergo. Let the player shape the story at this point (while still ensuring they don't affect the other players' characters without their consent). And if they are open to it, invite them to keep participating in the story by adding terrors and describing the environment.



Using with Other Games

While *Trophy Dark* was designed as a self-contained game to play in a single session, it can also be connected to ongoing campaigns of other fantasy games.

FLASHBACK

Trophy Dark works well as an interlude between campaign arcs or modules, and is particularly appropriate for laying the groundwork for an upcoming adventure. Before your regular party of heroic adventurers explore a dungeon, play a single session of *Trophy Dark* as a flashback. Show the terrible fates of past treasure-hunters who explored here—and set up the threats that lurk here now.

FUNNEL

A *Trophy Dark* incursion can also be played as a funnel in the lead up to a *Trophy Gold* campaign. Funnels have players portray a group of (traditionally weak or inexperienced) characters who are pushed through a brutal gauntlet to see who makes it through. The survivors of the incursion become the main treasure-hunters in the *Trophy Gold* campaign, with a built-in reason to work together and a shared history to reference.

FRAMEWORK

Trophy Dark incursions can also serve as the connective tissue of an overarching campaign. In the following pages you'll find a set of optional mechanics to create such a campaign. These rules are written with a *Trophy Gold* campaign in mind, but technically any fantasy campaign that could tie in to *Trophy Dark* one-shots can use this framework. Refer to *Trophy Gold* for a full explanation of the terms and structures presented here.

The Scoundrel's Quarter

There's a district of Fort Duhrin that plays host to some of the most desperate treasure-hunters. It's a rough and tumble place, looked down upon by the city's grandees and conspicuously underserved by the kingsguard. But, for the foolhardy who seek the forest's bounty, like you and your ilk, the Scoundrel's Quarter is something like a home.

DEFINING THE SCOUNDREL'S QUARTER

Use the following tables to define the Scoundrel's Quarter for your campaign:

LOCAL LANDMARKS

Every district has famous or infamous points of interest. This neighborhood's landmarks happen to be particularly notable to treasure-hunters.

LOCAL LANDMARKS
Statue of a nameless saint, obscured by coins that are nailed to her. Successful treasure-hunters will nail their first coin to the statue upon returning from the forest.
Dry fountain, converted into an arena for street games by local children, who often pretend to be bold treasure-hunters battling terrible monsters.
Eccentric museum of curiosities that treasure-hunters couldn't sell anywhere else. The elderly curator is convinced there is great meaning to be derived from the ephemera of adventuring.
Incomplete mosaic, commissioned to celebrate the return of a famed treasure-seeker. The celebration proved premature.
Dilapidated centennial fairground, where effigies of famous leaders of Fort Duhrin now serve as target practice for aspiring treasure-hunters.
Neglected standing stone, once considered the center point of Fort Duhrin. The city has grown and shifted since, and the stone is now most notable for the old markings on it that many believe point to treasures within the forest.

THE KEEPER OF THE BESTIARY

Individual treasure-hunters may perish, but knowledge, well... knowledge endures! Keeping that knowledge enshrined in a bestiary is the work of one trusted figure within the Scoundrel's Quarter.

THE KEEPER OF THE BESTIARY
Phino, a bibliophile who keeps the bestiary in a great tome. Phino maintains the book in exchange for rare bookbinding materials adventurers find on their travels.
Rosma, an enthusiastic tinkerer who etches the bestiary onto metal sheets to ensure its longevity. Rosma's dog, Rivit, is always excited to greet returning adventurers, especially if they bring treats.
Salis, an aristocrat that fell on hard times who uses beautiful calligraphy to add the bestiary to an ever-extending scroll. Salis lives for tidbits of court gossip from beyond Fort Duhrin.
Willan, a minstrel who sets the bestiary to song and commits it to memory may perform on demand—but will save the best shows for those who bring them a never-before-heard tune from far away.
Therakis, a tattoo-artist who inks the bestiary onto his own body, will tattoo pertinent entries onto the bodies of treasure-hunters in exchange for rare inks and beautiful bits of design inspiration.
Bastina, a healer who teaches bestiary entries to her flock of birds that have learned to imitate human speech. Bastina, devoted to the obscure Saint Seraph, is eager for any lore about her the treasure-hunters can bring.

These celebrations bring the inhabitants of the Scoundrel's Quarter together. Even when the observance commemorates a serious event, the mood is one of solidarity and conviviality.

SEASONAL FESTIVITIES	
⚀	The summer **Song of Sunset** brings residents to their windows or rooftop to sing a haunting tribute to the saints and soldiers who shed their blood for the people of the Crown.
⚁	The **Harvesttide Honey Festival** sees street vendors selling honeyed confections, children dressing as bears and demanding treats, and secret offerings left out to ward off the vengeance of the great bee, Mother of Millions.
⚂	**Hesterday** is the great yearly feast in honor of Saint Hester of the Full Table. Everyone in the Scoundrel's Quarter chips in a little gold to lay out a lavish public banquet, presided over by a sculpture of the saint herself rendered in rich, yellow butter.
⚃	**Greentide** is a festival imported to the Scoundrel's Quarter from outlying fishing villages. At the first frost of the year, a representative is sent bearing gifts from the neighborhood to the nearest body of water, to ask the Queen of Tides for good fishing and vouchsafe that winter will not last forever.
⚄	On **Nightsend**, everyone stays up throughout the year's longest night, sharing stories of spirits and heroes, releasing floating lanterns, and keeping watch for the first glimmer of blue in the morning sky.
⚅	The **Violet Parade** honors the royal family of Ambaret. Guilds compete to create the most elaborate flower-festooned floats, and the winner is crowned king of the Quarter for a week and a day, or until the violets of their crown wither.

NEIGHBORHOOD RUIN

The forest can take root even below crowded precincts and cobbled streets.

Your neighborhood has its own Ruin, representing the hold the forest has over it.

Its Ruin starts at 1, and—like a treasure-hunter—it will be wholly claimed by the forest if its Ruin reaches 6. Answer a question about where that Ruin is visible in the neighborhood:

What part of the Quarter always seems overgrown, even after careful weeding?

What dwelling in the Quarter never holds a tenant for long?

What shrine in the Quarter do local children give a wide berth to?

What wild animal skulks in the back alleys of the Quarter, and what has it whispered to you?

During a *Trophy Gold* incursion, **the GM or another player can offer you a neighborhood Ruin Roll as a Devil's Bargain.** This functions like any other Devil's Bargain: If you accept it, you take an extra *light* die, but the consequence comes to pass regardless of the result of your roll.

The consequence of this Devil's Bargain is simply a Ruin Roll on behalf of the neighborhood. After the roll, pause the treasure-hunters' story to focus on the neighborhood. The GM might frame a scene or montage showing what is occurring back in the Scoundrel's Quarter. Then roll a single *dark* die. If the *dark* die rolls **higher** than the neighborhood's current Ruin, add 1 to the neighborhood's Ruin then work with the GM to describe how the forest warps the physical and social space of the Scoundrel's Quarter.

PROPITIATING THE FOREST

If the neighborhood reaches 6 Ruin, the wilds claim the neighborhood completely. Any households established in the neighborhood are lost, and all treasure-hunters take on an additional *Burden* from the cost of relocating to an unfallen district. Refer to *Trophy Gold* for details on Burdens.

To reduce the neighborhood's Ruin, you may decide as a group to sate the forest's hunger with a *Trophy Dark* incursion. This incursion can represent a sidestory or flashback about another band of treasure-hunters. Or it could be set in the present day of your campaign, with a sacrificial crew of treasure-hunters. It needn't literally be an incursion into the woods of Kalduhr—it could be another place where ancient malice has taken root, whether palace or plantation. The forest works in mysterious ways.

For every treasure-hunter claimed by the wilds during the incursion, reduce the neighborhood's Ruin by 1. Describe the propitiated wilds receding as the neighborhood returns to itself... for now.

Treasure-hunters who survive the incursion may return as background figures or even player characters in your campaign, whatever makes narrative sense. A surviving treasure-hunter might even become an antagonist in your campaign, especially if they bring back dangerous treasure from their incursion. See the following incursion for one way to play out that conflict.

To connect the story you tell in *Trophy Dark* to your ongoing campaign, the doomed treasure-hunters could be:

Ancestors of the campaign characters

Rivals driven to desperation by the campaign characters

Mysterious doppelgangers of the campaign characters

Spoken of frequently in whispered gossip in the Scoundrel's Quarter

Depicted in graffiti in the Scoundrel's Quarter, but never spoken of

Motivated by unrequited love for one or more of the campaign characters

TROPHY GOLD — A Small Memento

ALEXI SARGEANT

This is a sample *Trophy Gold* incursion which can serve as a framework for playing a series of *Trophy Dark* incursions in a shared world with recurring characters. Refer to *Trophy Gold* for a full explanation of the terms and structures presented here.

A successful treasure-hunter named Zeroah recently bought up the abandoned Panops Manor at the edge of the Scoundrel's Quarter. Whatever Zeroah found in the forest made him rich enough to not only buy the home but to begin restoring it. Everyone envied the handful of prominent citizens who were invited to an exclusive banquet to survey the restoration and celebrate Zeroah's success.

The banquet was several days ago, and no one has emerged from the house since then. Compelled by curiosity, greed, and perhaps even public-spiritedness, you're going to break into the manor and find out what became of Zeroah and the guests.

Sometimes what you bring back from the forest is as dangerous as what you overcame along the way.

theme INVASIVE

This is an incursion about the consequences of introducing species where they don't belong. Of course, treasure-hunters are themselves an invasive type. But the forest is more than capable of invading back, as Zeroah and the guests discovered.

This incursion is designed to be modular. If you are using it as a way to tie surviving *Trophy Dark* treasure-hunters into a *Trophy Gold* campaign, feel free to slot those characters in for Zeroah, or to slot in terrors and temptations from their adventure for the traps and treasures in this one.

SETS



CONCLUSION

If the treasure-hunters do not uproot the forest outgrowth under the manor, it will continue to spread below the neighborhood, acting as a spy network for Old Kalduhr. This is an excellent prompt for further illustrations of neighborhood Ruin.

While the growth continues, any monsters the treasure-hunters fight will be forewarned of and forearmed against them. This means that the treasure-hunters will not receive the benefit of surprise attacks, and treasure-hunters using a monster's Weaknesses against it will not reduce its Endurance.

The Manor's Threshold

At first glance, the manor seems sealed up tight. There are a few possible entry points—door, window, and roof—each with their own drawbacks. You'll have to case the joint carefully, then choose how to enter.

GOAL	Break into Panops Manor
MOMENTS	A side door swings open, only to reveal a bricked-over doorway.
	A line of birds perch on the manor rooftop, swiveling in unison to track the treasure-hunters.
	A sign reading "No entrance save for artisans and workers" trampled into the dirt.
	Unfamiliar new flowers in exotic colors freshly planted in beds around the house.

PROPS	TRAPS	TREASURES
The front door. The grand doors to Panops Manor are carved with an elaborate depiction of a great conquest by the royal family of Ambaret's military. They appear to be firmly locked and bolted from the inside.	Attempts to force one's way in through the front door will activate the **living armor** guarding the front hall.	The front hallway is hung with brand new banners, depicting a heraldic device of a tree with many eyes. Worth 2 Gold.
A side window. Almost every window has been boarded up. One small window high up on a side wall is not. The climb up the old stone wall is long but shouldn't be impossible for a daring treasure-hunter like you.	Another **living armor** is stationed by the side window. If the window is opened, it will jab a polearm out to push off anyone trying to climb the wall.	A carved gargoyle on the side of the house has sapphire eyes. Pried out, they're worth 1 Gold each.
The roof. If the window is deemed too risky, you can climb all the way to the roof. It's obvious where fresher, lighter new tiles have just been installed. Perhaps some aren't fully secure yet?	A number of roof tiles are loose because its refurbishment was interrupted. Stepping on one can send you sliding right off the edge of the rooftop.	Going through the roof drops you into an attic room, unremarkable save for a child's toy perambulator where a bird has made a nest. An antique porcelain baby doll, found near the perambulator, is worth 1 Gold.

ADDITIONAL TRAPS

Falling off the house is likely to hurt—especially because of the thorny creepers all round the edge of the house. The thorns give you the Condition *Pricked*, which will cause other forest flora to target you.

ADDITIONAL TREASURES

A thief's lockpicks, lying abandoned.

LIVING ARMOR

WEAKNESS — *Magnetism*

8

A full suit of plate mail, etched with scenes of punishment for trespassers, that moves on its own with no one inside.

- Clanking along a corridor.
- Standing perfectly still among normal suits of armor.
- Staring at a reflection of its empty helmet.
- Taking practice swings with its halberd.
- Saluting someone perceived as a liege lord.
- Chasing down an errant gauntlet or greave.

Reassembling — If a piece of the armor is knocked off, it can add it back. A living armor defeated by equaling its Endurance (rather than exceeding it) will wait a moment, then reassemble itself and ambush its attackers.

Banquet Leftovers

However the hunters enter the manor, they'll find largely empty rooms—some dusty and untouched, some in the midst of being repainted or refloored. The only noise in the house is the occasional clink of cutlery from the banquet hall. In the hall, they will find a grand table covered in the remnants of a feast, a set of large, potted topiary plants lining the walls, and a rich carpet spread before a cold hearth.

GOAL	Uncover the fates of the partygoers
MOMENTS	Furniture bearing the sigils of prior owners of the manor, piled haphazardly in a corner.
	The carcass of a dog, tongue lolled out happily, small green shoots rising from its nostrils.
	A large armoire with clothes strewn about it. Opening the door releases an angry cloud of moths.
	A music box plays a rustic tune when disturbed. The melody plays over and over again in your head.

PROPS	TRAPS	TREASURES
Grand table. Set for a dozen people, but only one seat is occupied. An elderly woman in lavish clothing sits, placidly eating the scraps that remain in front her. When she finishes one plate, she delicately takes another and continues eating. She is confused by any questions and repeats only, "Wonderful spread. Simply wonderful." Her skull bulges strangely, and a few small mushroom caps poke out of her ears.		The centerpiece of the table, an abstract sculpture of many staring eyes radiating from a vase, is worth 1 Gold.
Topiary plants. The many potted and shaped trees along the walls give the hall the feeling of an indoor forest.	Among the topiary lurk **overgrown guests**, eager to spread their greenery. They will wait to ambush the party, focusing on anyone with the Condition *Pricked*.	
Rich carpet. A knotted pile rug with a complex design weaving together deep burgundy and forest green.	Small dark red snails blend in with the carpet's patterns. If one touches you, its slime has an immediate anesthetic effect, and you take the Condition *Numbed*.	The rug itself is worth 2 Gold, though it will take help to roll it up. Underneath the rug are several loose floorboards. Prying these up will give access to the hidden basement.

ADDITIONAL TREASURES

Some last banquet scraps of exotic fish and meat. Gilded tableware worth 1 Gold.

OVERGROWN GUEST

WEAKNESS — *Chemical weedkiller*

7

A human shape entirely swathed in the thick greenery of the weed known as Saint Barnaba's arrowroot.

⚀ Blending in with topiary.	⚃ Changing positions when no one is looking.
⚁ Attempting to strangle an intruder.	⚄ Spreading to smother another plant.
⚂ Whispering poetry very softly.	⚅ Letting out a strangled gasp of horror.

Spreading — If a guest gets a hold of a treasure-hunter, the arrowroot will plant itself in the treasure-hunter's skin.

Below the Floorboards

Only scattered gleams of light filter down to the manor's hidden basement, where Zeroah broods on a throne of casks, watching the progress of the miniature forest he's cultivating down here. If the treasure-hunters descend, he will address them pleasantly and invite them to view his progress.

GOAL	Uproot the forest below
MOMENTS	The dirt floor rumbles unwelcomingly underfoot.
	A piece of wood breaks in your hand, and the splinters bury themselves deep under the skin.
	A broken wine cask is host to a large family of rabbits, their fur stained purple.
	An insect crawls lazily out of your nostril. How long has it been there?

PROPS	TRAPS	TREASURES
Throne of casks. Zeroah has created a seat out of the ancient wine barrels in this basement. He cradles a small memento from his expedition, perhaps a medallion of the Old One of the Forest.	Knocking over the wine barrels of Zeroah's throne will cause several to shatter, dousing anyone nearby in sticky, pungent wine that stains deeply and makes it impossible for you to hide from the keen senses of the **overgrown guests**.	Three wine casks are small and stable enough to carry out. Each is worth 2 Gold.
Bonsai forest. Planted in small barrels or in the dirt floor of the basement, an attempt to recapitulate the forest in miniature.	If you tamper with the miniature trees while **Zeroah** can see you, he will leap into action to put a stop to you. Partially buried among the miniature trees are more **overgrown guests**. These ones are more quiescent, but a sufficient commotion will arouse them.	Threaded onto the branches of the trees are bracelets and rings from Zeroah's guests worth 2 Gold total.

ADDITIONAL TRAPS

The dirt floor could give way and drop someone into a tangle of Kalduhr roots.

ZEROAH — WEAKNESS — *Losing his memento* — 9

A hard-bitten adventurer returned with a little too much of the forest in him.
Consider using a surviving player character from a Trophy Dark sidestory in place of Zeroah.

- Fretting over having misplaced his memento.
- Cradling his memento.
- Tending to his minature forest.
- Offering "wisdom" he's gained from his experiences.
- Detailing the awesome might of the Kalduhr.
- Describing how his forest will consume all of the city.

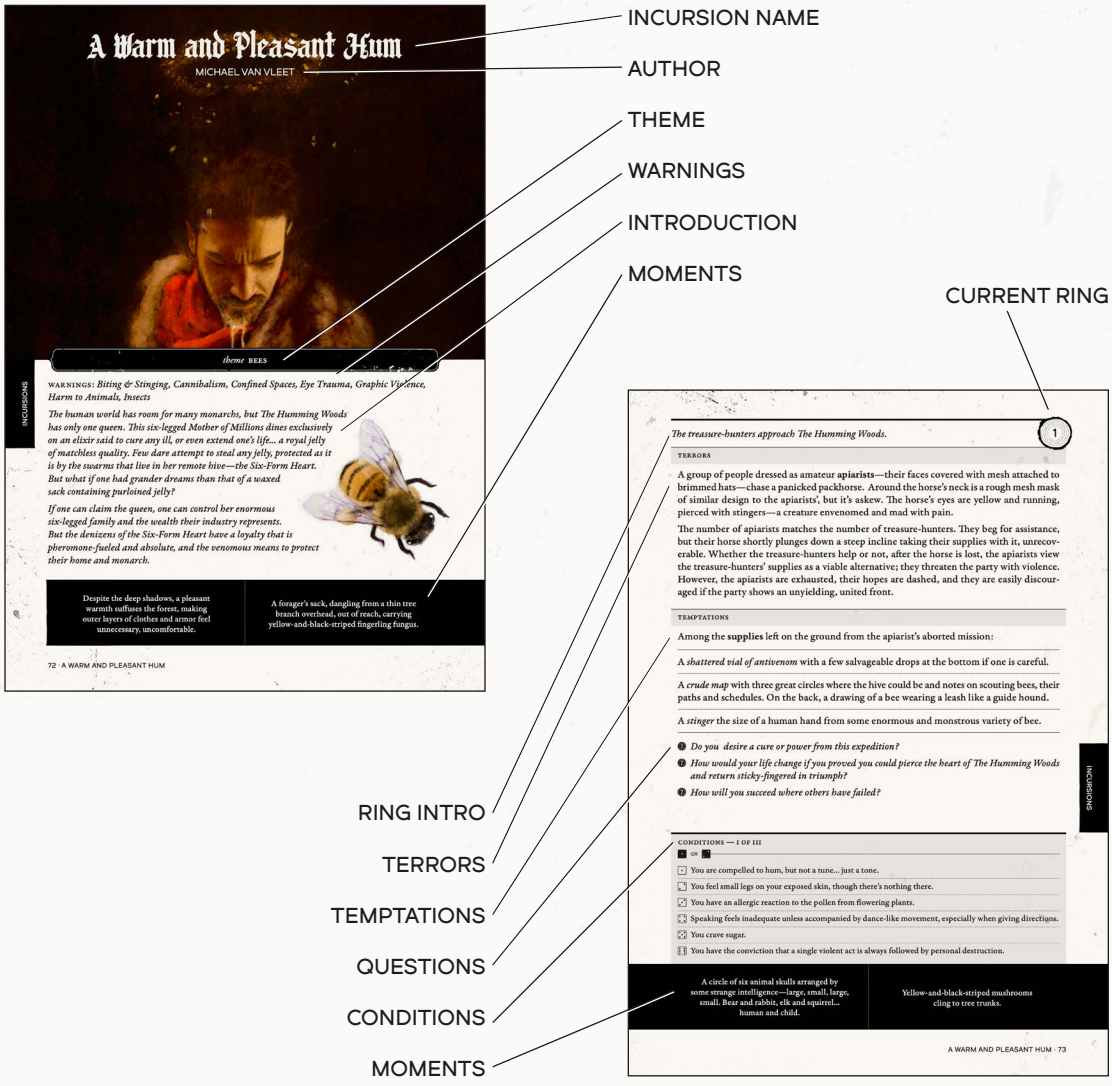
Ritualistic — Zeroah knows several Rituals. You can use the Rituals from the *Trophy Dark* sidestory, or have him use *Reduce* (shrink a person or animal to tiny size) to turn treasure-hunters bite-sized before attempting to eat them.



Incursions

Incursion Overview

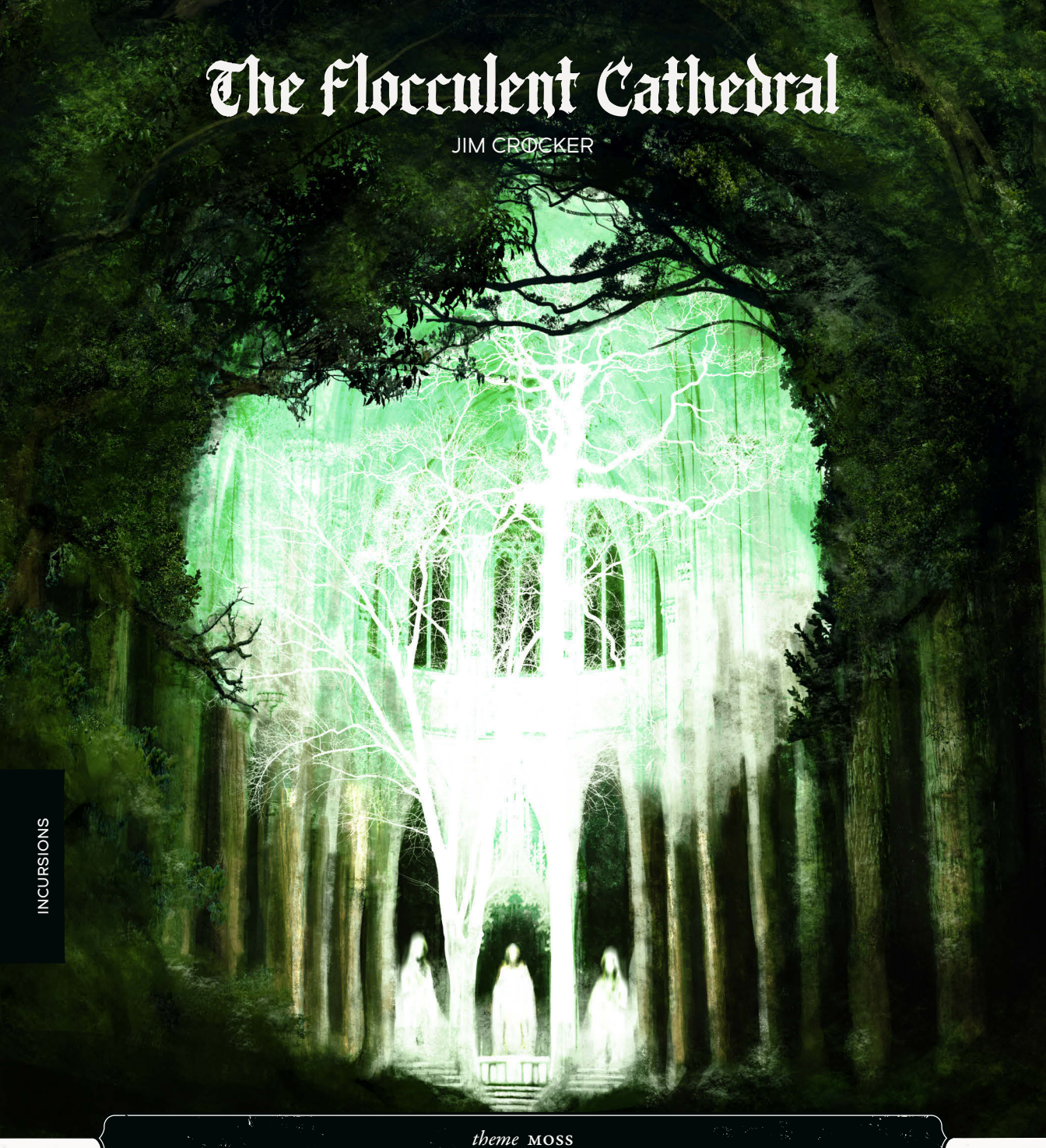
The remainder of this book is a collection of incursions for use with *Trophy Dark*. Because the game often takes place over a single session, each incursion is self-contained, so simply pick the one you'd like to play, have the players create their treasure-hunters, and start the game. All incursions follow a similar structure, both in terms of content and layout. Each incursion is six pages, with the first page providing the name of the incursion, the theme, and any content warnings. Each subsequent page is one of the five Rings, with a short introduction to the Ring, that Ring's terrors and temptations, and any other relevant information, such as a random inspiration table. Along the bottom of all or most of the pages you will find Moments to pepper into your narration as needed, and a few of the pages will also contain Conditions tables for when a treasure-hunter marks Ruin.



Of the 22 incursions, all but one are suitable for use with the default character creation options. Only *Blackberry Jam* provides custom options, as the players portray young children known as "berry-pickers" in that incursion. Those options, as well as some additional guidance for the GM, are featured as a prelude to the incursion, on the first two pages.

The Flocculent Cathedral

JIM CROCKER



theme MOSS

WARNINGS: *Alcohol, Body Horror, Drowning, Insects & Spiders, Manipulation, Religion*

Two dessicated corpses sit across from each other atop a flat rock, the rotted remains of a picnic lunch laid out between them. Each has a hand placed in the other's mouth, which is filled with a fistful of loamy soil.

Two dozen skulls, their tops neatly sawed off, have been arranged to form planters from which garishly-colored carnivorous pitcher plants grow; fat, iridescent horse-flies buzz languidly around them.

The treasure-hunters stand at the edge of the Gloaming Mire, a mangrove-dense fen that is rumored to hold the Flocculent Cathedral.

1

TERRORS

A **gang of forest bandits** lurk in a mangrove maze on the edge of the mire to evade the king's rangers. They are, at a glance, filthy and degenerate, but appear well-fed—the forest provides, for a price. The mismatched pieces of kingsguard regalia and gear they openly wear indicate that they are hard folk used to defying authority with force of arms.

- *What sign does each treasure-hunter notice that living on the edge of the mire takes its toll on those who dwell here in a way that city life never would?*

They allow any who enter in peace to join them in revelry, but demand tribute to pass into the Ring beyond. They can be bought off for the right price, beaten back by sufficient force, or waited out until they fall into drunken stupor. Either way, their wheezing, sickly laughter rings in the treasure-hunters' ears as they pass deeper into the forest.

One or more of the bandits may be induced to travel with the treasure-hunters under sufficient duress or inducement, but they will not prove reliable, able, or durable companions. Wield them appropriately.

TEMPTATIONS

The bandits sing **drunken songs and shanties** about those who found their way to the Flocculent Cathedral, but promptly squandered the riches they brought back from the depths of the Gloaming Mire before it managed to reclaim what was stolen, by sorcery, trickery, or simple ill fortune. The songs can be heard echoing through the mangroves as the treasure-hunters approach, and snatches may be caught on the wind in later Rings after they leave.

- *What overheard bit of doggerel verse does each treasure-hunter take note of that reminds them of their background? How will this verse help them avoid the fate of those other poor fools who were motivated only by greed?*

Saint who spilled their blood for me
Lain in flocculent reverie
I seek your light upon my brow
I would be your trophy now.

Chained within this dank domain
Your relics all that I retain
All your teachings I avow
I would be your trophy now.

This foul entombment of your will!
I would not see you slumber still!
No quarter to what men allow!
Take me as your trophy now!

A broad, shallow pond filled to capacity with foot-long koi, each with a thick, mottled coat of slimy, multi-colored moss covering it like fur.

An ancient but still-standing well of rough but carefully-fit, moss-covered stones. A powerful smell of damp mold rises from it. Fat, violet slugs line the inside stones where the sun does not fall.

Wherein the treasure-hunters pass out of the mangrove maze and into an area of thick brambles and stunted trees with marshy soil.

2

TERRORS

Thick swarms of **buzzing, biting, and stinging insects** beset the treasure-hunters from all corners. The bugs get in eyes, ears, hair, and mouths. Masses of centipedes writhe around their feet and wriggle into their boots. They swarm so thickly that the treasure-hunters lose sight of each other and stumble into bogs and brambles. They buzz so loudly that the treasure-hunters must bellow to be heard above the cacophony. They may be hidden from or driven off for a few moments, but they always return with increasing persistence until the treasure-hunters escape the Ring.

TEMPTATIONS

Shrines, set along the path, each depicting an **effigy of one of the Sisters** worshipped in the Flocculent Cathedral. Each treasure-hunter should describe the Sister who is a patron saint of their Occupation in a sentence or two when her shrine is discovered. They may give her a name or simply call her *"The Holy Mother of [Occupation]."* Take note of their descriptions. These oases provide a temporary reprieve from the swarms, which seem unable to approach within seven feet of each one.



CONDITIONS — I OF III

⚀ OR ⚁

- ⚀ Colors wash out and everything has a patina of dull green. Anything already green looks verdant, almost glowing.
- ⚁ A minor wound you took now seems to have a permanent cloud of tiny, bright, crimson gnats hovering around it.
- ⚂ Every step feels as if something viscous and lukewarm squeezes between the toes of your left foot.
- ⚃ Your clothing and armor sprout a coat of reddish tendrils, soft to the touch and swaying to an unseen breeze.
- ⚄ You hear a wet sound, like maggots feasting on a corpse, if you come within arm's reach of your companions.
- ⚅ Sticky spider webs, populated with tiny, barely-discernible, dark green spiders, sprout between your fingers.

The remains of a campsite atop a vast bed of turquoise moss. Ragged, rotting bits and pieces of tattered and trampled gear are scattered across it. A powerful smell of animal musk hangs in the air.

A cold river thunders down a waterfall to form a large pool, the water tinted a dull green. Drinking it tastes like eating a fistful of ground-up grass, but it is not poisonous. The pool is filled with tiny, sickly albino freshwater crawfish.

A narrow band of stone outcrops and more solid ground provides a place to get a view of the woods ahead and the large area left behind.

3

TERRORS

The ordeal with the swarms have left the treasure-hunters ill and feverish. They fall in a heap and experience terrible **fever dreams** of drowning and disintegration before myriad mandibles and stingers. When they awake, each has been visibly scarred by their encounter.

? *What outward manifestation of the swarm's malignancy lingers in the treasure-hunter of the player to your left? How will it threaten your success if not kept in check?*

TEMPTATIONS

You discover somewhere on your person or amongst your gear that a loved one or friend has included a **physical token** to remind you of your Drive.

? *What do you discover, and what one- or two-sentence memory does it evoke?*



CONDITIONS — II OF III

OR

- Strands of thick, foul-smelling kudzu sporadically spring from the wood of your weapons and tools.
- Your teeth fall out one by one, and thick, fibrous morels grow in to replace them.
- A smell of mold permeates every breath. Actual mold smells like spilled wine left to turn.
- Whenever your blood is spilled, it contains masses of minuscule tadpoles that swim slowly through it.
- Hair on your body grows wetter and heavier until it is soaked through and dripping. It will not dry out.
- Sounds are muffled and indistinct due to a forest green moss continually growing in your ears.

A wide, shallow pool—perhaps sixty feet across—filled to overflowing with clutches of frog eggs the size of fat grapes.

A handful of ancient practice dummies stand in an ankle-deep bog. They have been impaled with rusting swords and rotting arrows. Sprays of dark red moss grow from the "wounds" in a pattern reminiscent of bloodstains.

The treasure-hunters encounter thick, gnarled cypress trees, draped with copious moss of all sorts. It's easy to get separated, and there are thick networks of roots underfoot.



TERRORS

A **colossal, rutting stag the color of jade**, 15 feet high at the shoulder, with a rack of razor-sharp antlers overgrown with thick moss and lichen. Its nostrils spew clouds of foul-smelling spores that will poison any who inhale them. It appears suddenly from behind a gigantic tree, and though it approached silently, its hooves shake the ground when it charges.

Former treasure-hunters, bloated and reeking of rot. Hundreds of black and purple mushrooms the color of ugly bruises sprout everywhere from their skin. They squat around a long-dead campfire in some reenactment of their former life. They gurgle your names in a parody of human speech. There is one for each of you, bearing some rotting or rusted signifier of your profession. They pursue the treasure-hunters doggedly unto the threshold of the Cathedral.

Visions of the other patron saints appear to each treasure-hunter, pleading with them to reach the Cathedral first. They will suggest "hidden paths" and "shortcuts" that lead to sucking bogs, quicksand, and harrowing, leg-breaking falls into gullies and pits.

TEMPTATIONS

Visible through the trees are glints of silver and jade. You can hear hymns in the voice of the Fen. **The Cathedral itself** is a natural grove of massive, tightly-packed trees, utterly overgrown with thick layers of moss and lichen that are many feet thick. They encrust the tiny gaps between the boughs, but you can just make out the smooth altar of meteoric iron, the delicately-wrought silver candelabra, the intricate statues that make up the Stations of the Saints. A heavy tome, bound in verdant green leather and banded in intricately worked copper, rests on the smooth stone lectern. And surrounding it all, stone pews draped in thick moss, decadent and somnolent.

There are but **two remaining entrances** to the Cathedral.

1. Through the dizzying height of the **bell tower**, after climbing the sloping sides to the roof, a thick thatch of detritus fallen from above, fecund moss, and packed leaves, to the heights of the tower itself, a single massive hollow tree, from which bone-shattering falls are all too likely.
2. Plunging into the **pool** and swimming through the sluice that feeds the Cathedral's well. It is twisty, pitch-black, and narrow, and only the strongest swimmers will be able to keep from drawing breath while submerged.

A moss-covered wall of ancient stones, waist-high, extends in a jagged line in both directions, disappearing into the woods. The wall moans softly for a few moments if any stones are removed.

Three leather-armored corpses, their helms staved in, lie in the root cluster behind a huge mossy tree. A massive, intricate spider web glistens between their bodies. Exactly thirteen emerald-green spiders scuttle along its strands.

At least one treasure-hunter makes their way inside the Cathedral.



TERRORS

The saints fully manifest, looming over each treasure-hunter in a monstrous distortion of their previous beauty. Each treasure-hunter sees hideous apparitions hovering over the others, in contrast to the beatific figure revealed to them.

- *How is your saint even more sublime than you understood, and what does the fell spirit that possesses the treasure-hunter of the player to your left look like?*

The saints demand action, now, and deliver visions: in the well, on the pages of the tome, in the flickering light of the candles.

- *You have visions of your companions seeing their own Drives fulfilled, and casually partaking of the fruits of your Drive as well! How do these reveries lead to your ruin?*

TEMPTATIONS

The saints show the treasure-hunters the **object of their fondest desires**, locked away in the crypts below, buried beneath the altar, grown into the wood of the walls, resting at the bottom of the font, suspended in webs in the rafters. All that's required, in the end, is blood. Blood to open the crypt, blood to part the waters, blood to peel back the boughs. Blood that has come from outside, that has been tempered by the Fen. The more they can spill, the easier their path; the saints are very clear on this.

CONDITIONS — III OF III

OR

- Your feet slowly curl and harden into cloven, moss-covered hooves. Any footwear causes excruciating pain.
- Your tongue begins to fold in half and grow sticky. You are unable to hold down any food that is not insects.
- Protuberances like a slug's antennae sprout from your tongue, which slides across your mouth of its own volition.
- You feel the dirt under your fingernails as it begins working its way under the entire length of your nails.
- Any significant impact on your skin leaves an ugly indentation as if there were just loose soil underneath.
- A visible cloud of fine, jade-colored spores spews out of your mouth whenever you exhale.

The oddly-shaped arch that rises a score of feet over the trail is actually a pair of colossal antlers, overgrown with brown moss. Digging into the soil below the arch reveals a hard surface that is the color and consistency of bone.

The decapitated head of a colossal statue lies face-up to the sky, half-sunken in the wet soil. Brackish, algae-scummed water fills its gaping mouth and pools in its eyes. A cloud of dragonflies copulate in the mid-air as they flit above.

Gift of the Sea

GABRIEL ROBINSON

Who knows what secrets dwell beneath the ocean vast and wide
Or what became of those who tried to fight the turning tide
The night is dark, the storm is fierce, but nothing should we fear
Come 'round and light the candles bright, for Spring is almost here

We bind the saplings, wreathed in green, as folk did long before
We crown a maiden as our Queen, and cast her from the shore
For as the land gives gifts to those who sow and reap the grain
The sea in turn must have its due, when Greentide comes again

Oh Mother of the Endless Tides, Oh Queen of Depths Unseen,
Accept these humble gifts we bring, upon your mantle green
Fill up our nets with gleaming fish, and spare our sailors brave
For all the rest, take what you must, beneath the rolling wave

theme TIDE

WARNINGS: *Body Horror, Drowning, Human Sacrifice, Religion, Sharks, Shipwrecks, Storms*

Beyond the forest lies a jagged rocky coast where, for generations now, a small seaside village has observed the rites of Greentide. Each spring, as the first green shoots emerge, village elders weave sapling branches and seaweed into an effigy in the likeness of a young woman. The sculpture is filled with gifts before it is cast into the waves as an offering to the Queen of Tides, along with prayers for a bountiful catch and protection from storms.

This ancient tradition harkens back to an age when the ancestors would crown a young woman as the Tide Queen and offer her to the sea in sacrifice. Chieftains and princes would travel far to attend the ceremony, pledging gold, jewels, and the finest of crafts. To this day, local fisherman never leave shore without paying her their respects—for the tide, they say, must have its due.

Strange as the customs of an isolated village may be, it has not escaped the notice of keen treasure-hunters such as yourselves that centuries of offerings and shipwrecks have left a great hoard of untouched riches beneath the waves. You know of the island offshore where the offerings are tipped overboard. You have heard rumors of a cove there, just visible at low tide. Superstitious villagers avoid it, but you know better than to believe their tales.

MOVEMENT OF THE TIDES

This incursion aims to convey the presence of the sea as a living, powerful entity. Consider this rhythm throughout the journey of the treasure-hunters as they pass through each Ring. As the tide comes in, waves pound savagely against jagged rocks, flooding tidepools and underwater caves. As the tide retreats, lost secrets and new paths are revealed. Make the treasure-hunters feel this urgency, as if the tides could shift at any time and reverse their fortunes.

The tide is low, waiting to rise and meet the shore, as you approach the village.

1

TERRORS

The treasure-hunters have all heard tales of the horrors at sea which await those who cross it carelessly. Roll on the table below or ask them: ❓ *What tales have you heard?*

- ⚀ The spirits of cursed sailors, trapped in the form of hungry sharks, circle endlessly.
- ⚁ An ancient sea serpent sleeps under the rocks, causing whirlpools when it wakes.
- ⚂ A group of merfolk wait to lure you beneath the waves with their mesmerizing songs.
- ⚃ A hungry forest of kelp grasps and devours anything it can reach.
- ⚄ A vengeful sea witch dwells on the island, calling storms upon those who wronged her.
- ⚅ A sunken watchtower, once luring ships to their ruin, now traps the spirits of the drowned.

❓ *Why do you suspect there is some truth to these tales?*

An **old fisherman of the village** hobbles over to the treasure-hunters. With a sly wink, he says:



"You are not the first to seek the riches of Her sea."

HE WANTS TO

Share the location of the hidden cove, for a price.

Report the party to the village elders and demand a bribe for his silence if the party rejects his offer.

HE DOESN'T WANT TO

Be hurt.

Resort to violence, due to his old fishing injuries.

TEMPTATIONS

The village is in full revelry for the Greentide festival. On the shore, the elders are crafting **the effigy of a tall woman**, her features taking form as seaweed and reeds are woven over a crude driftwood skeleton. Songs are shared and offerings placed inside the effigy, as flowers and ribbons are woven into her hair of kelp. The ritual is strangely mesmerizing to watch; the final result equally beautiful and unsettling. Each member of the village comes forward to make an offering, speaking their prayers aloud. As guests of the festival, the treasure-hunters are encouraged to join the proceedings.

❓ *What offering do you leave? What do you ask for?*

❓ *What feature of the Tide Queen effigy makes you uneasy?*

Give each treasure-hunter a moment to describe how they engage with the ritual, and prompt them to recall their Drives when they make their offerings and prayers. Any closer examination of the effigy prompts a Ruin Roll.

If they choose not to participate, ask them: ❓ *How do the villagers treat you differently?*

A submerged skull, overgrown with seaweed like long, waving hair.	Scraps of clothing and stolen tools woven into a huge osprey nest.	A fish-filled pelican is suddenly dragged under the waves by a shark.

The tide comes in, bearing the ocean's bounty.

2

TERRORS

At dawn, the party may join a **procession of fishing boats** as they head for the island to complete the ceremony. Everyone is wearing bright colors and the boats themselves are decked with ribbons, bells, and the first flowers of spring. The sky is grey and overcast in stark contrast to this vibrant display.

On reaching their destination, a rousing song is joined and **the effigy is tipped overboard**. Anyone who looks directly upon the Tide Queen as she plunges under the waves must make a Ruin Roll as they glimpse a very human and anguished expression on her face.

Almost immediately the sea begins to roil and churn, forming a **whirlpool** which threatens to fling the treasure-hunters' boat against rocks like rows of jagged teeth. The ocean itself seems to surge with angry intent, separating the party from the other boats. Their only chance is to scramble ashore or risk being pulled under.

- *How do you survive the sudden wrath of the ocean?*

TEMPTATIONS

Those who manage to scramble ashore are soon driven to seek shelter as a **storm gathers** over the island. Scattered across the rocky slopes are a few coins, fragments of ornate pottery, waterlogged books—evidence of recent shipwrecks and more treasures waiting to be claimed nearby. A **shattered rowboat** holds an oilskin satchel containing supplies from a previous explorer: hooks, diving fins, and rope, but also a small bottle of wine, a wedge of cheese, and dried fish.

- *What comforts do you miss from home, in this wild place?*
- *What luxuries will you spend your gold on, when this journey is over?*

INCURSIONS

CONDITIONS — I OF III

⚀ OR ⚁

- ⚀ Your body feels weightless, your movements become buoyant as if submerged in water.
- ⚁ All sounds are muted, as if you are underwater.
- ⚂ Even on dry land, you continually feel as though you are drowning, and then you cough up seawater.
- ⚃ You understand the speech of sea birds, but realize they are mocking you and predicting your tragic fate.
- ⚄ Barnacles and seaweed grow on your skin.
- ⚅ When others speak, you only hear the shrieking of seagulls.

Fog rolls over the land and sea, bringing with it a chill and dead silence.	Sea shanties echo on the salty air, tragic tales and dire warnings.	A flooded field, tall grasses and crops slowly wave underwater.

The tide ebbs low, revealing secrets kept beneath the waves.



TERRORS

The island is little more than a great barren rock, inhabited only by cackling sea birds. And yet, the treasure-hunters hear snatches of **old sea shanties on the wind**, recalling the tales of tragedy from earlier.

Those who manage to sleep receive a **vision of the Tide Queen**, now resting beneath the waves. Her woven figure is alive. She spreads her arms wide to embrace the dreamer, wrapping them in fronds of seaweed and tangled netting. Another treasure-hunter dreams of being drowned by their companions.

Upon waking, one treasure-hunter discovers the **item they offered in the Greentide ritual**, now corroded and covered in barnacles. Was it rejected? Another finds a small bottle at their feet containing a scroll with cryptic warning, addressing them by name. Each of these moments should easily provoke a Ruin Roll.

The party's boat has been damaged beyond repair and shows clear signs of sabotage. Food and supplies are missing. There is no sign of any other inhabitants on the tiny island.

Who among you cannot be trusted?

TEMPTATIONS

Low tide reveals **the entrance to the cove**—a tall, narrow cleft in the rock. The water rises and falls gently, inviting easy passage for the party to wade deeper. The cave walls are lined with brilliant starfish and bright-shelled snails. Beneath the water, anemones of vibrant purple and green wave gently as iridescent fish flit among their fronds like tiny jewels. The majesty of the sea is on display, hinting at greater treasures waiting below the surface.

What treasure do you spot before anyone else?

CONDITIONS — II OF III

OR

- You are mesmerized by the ebb and flow of the sea, distracted by its endless patterns and soothing waves.
- You feel anxious at the thought of being out of the water.
- Your hand moves of its own accord, snatching at any small creatures within reach.
- Small crabs and scavenging creatures are drawn to you, picking at your flesh as if you were already a corpse.
- Your flesh begins to unravel in delicate strands, as if you were a woven basket.
- Strange webbing forms between your fingers and toes. Your hands and feet begin to feel stiff, like fins.

A gathering storm on the horizon approaches with unnatural speed.	A beached whale, fins and tail tangled in seaweed.	An abandoned cottage overlooks the sea, empty but for a single rocking chair.

The tide floods in, reclaiming its domain.



TERRORS

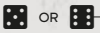
Deep inside the cove floats a **group of bloated corpses**, piled upon one another in an apparent struggle over a rotting wooden chest. Tiny fish and crabs nibble at their flesh as they sway gently in the current. The features of each corpse are still clearly recognizable as those of the treasure-hunters themselves. Within the chest are items personally meaningful to each member of the group, but rusted and decayed as if left under the sea for a very long time. Any treasure-hunter identifying their corpse makes a Ruin Roll.

The rocks underfoot are slick with algae. Strands of seaweed tangle the limbs of the treasure-hunters, as if pulling them deeper into some gaping maw. Jagged coral and stone slice their skin, tinging the water crimson. The incoming tide surges without warning, flooding the entrance behind the treasure-hunters completely. From the sea, **something approaches**, drawn by the scent of blood. Recall any horrors of the deep that the party previously heard tales of. Make them tangible now. Reveal them to be far worse than they imagined.

TEMPTATIONS

The walls of the cove become smoother, forming ridges like stairs, or the inside of a great shell spiralling downward. The rock walls now appear as carefully arranged stones, hinting at the structure of an **old sunken tower**. A soft glow emanates from below, illuminating the passage downward... or upward. The tide floods the tunnel, reversing all orientation of up and down. As the treasure-hunters are pulled deeper through the passage, pieces of the Greentide effigy swirl in the current—loose branches, coins, and gifts. They are close now, if they can endure the current and hold their breath a little longer.

CONDITIONS — III OF III



- You have an insatiable hunger for catching and consuming live prey.
- Your teeth begin to fall out, pushed from your jaw by rows of sharp new ones which are hooked or pointed.
- You suspect that your companions are planning to sacrifice you at the end of the journey.
- You are compelled to craft an effigy of objects from the sea, for good fortune.
- You shift suddenly between a need to feel close to one of your companions, and being repulsed by them.
- When you find something precious to you, you swallow it to hide it away from others.

The glint of colorful shells and semi-precious stones at the bottom of a tidepool.	The full moon, silver light reflecting over the waves, calls you onward.	A pair of boots, overgrown with barnacles and bound to a boulder with old rope.

The tide takes what is due.

5

TERRORS

The curving steps open into a submerged chamber, like the pinnacle of a lighthouse. At its center, the form of a **tall woman rests upon a nest of bones and the splintered timbers of ships**. Here sits the true Queen of the Depths in all her power. Her body undulates with the current, constantly forming and reforming in beautiful patterns of coral, shells, and fish scales. Her hair is bright seaweed of purple and green, her eyes luminous pearls. Spectral jellyfish circle her head, pulsating like small moons. She is attended by eels, sharks, and other hungry things of the deep—monstrous writhing creatures with whip-like tentacles and distended, toothy jaws. As she turns to look upon the group, the hungry things creep forward to consume and devour everything the treasure-hunters have left.

As the fibers of your mind and body unravel, what is left? What are they worth, in the end?

TEMPTATIONS

Pouring from the ribs of the Queen are **bright gems, pure gold, and priceless treasures**, seemingly untouched by the elements. Her voice murmurs softly through the water. Her words are melancholy as she tells the group:

"Since the beginning, every gift has come with another demand. Every effigy an empty husk as pitiful as the prayers attached to it."

SHE WANTS TO

Consume something worthy of her title and power.

Grant a gift to those who most please her.

SHE DOESN'T WANT TO

Be placated, tricked, or pacified.

Give more than she is given.

She has consumed everything sent to her, all the hopes and fears of those above, and it has made her powerful, but no less hungry.

With a hollow body that overflows with riches, she holds up the offerings of the treasure hunters mockingly. Do they not understand that the sea gives and takes in equal measure?

Her words become stern as the water churns violently within the chamber.

Have you at last brought something to satisfy the hunger of a hundred lifetimes?

Perhaps she will allow free passage to the one who pleases her the most. Perhaps she will grant them a gift. The Queen demands a sacrifice.

How do you prove yourself worthy?

The unworthy remain below as a hollow shell of themselves, left to sing the glory of the Queen Below the Waves.

A gnarled octopus locked in a death struggle with a giant purple crab.

The keening song of whales beneath the waves, mournful and haunting.

A lone seal watches from offshore, vanishes under the waves and surfaces again.

To Make My Bread

JESSE RØSS

Fi, fai, foh, fum.
I smell the blood of a little one.
Be you alive or be you dead,
I'll grind your bones to make my bread.



theme BONE

WARNINGS: *Body Horror, Graphic Violence, Harm to Animals, Manipulation*

Just inside the edge of the forest, a half day's journey from Fort Duhrin and nestled into the banks of the Naveh River, are the ruins of a massive, old mill known as Kormoran's Wheel. Given the strategic location of the mill ruins, a tent city has sprung up around it—an unlicensed gathering point for treasure-hunters and those seeking to profit from their journey. The Fort's governor has sent in the kingsguard four times to toss out the squatters and tear the tents down, and four times the city has been rebuilt bigger than before.

The residents of Kormoran's Wheel have little fear of the kingsguard or any other so-called authority figure with fancy proclamations and fancier horses. What they do fear—and are right to fear—is the fine, white mist that sometimes drifts from the mill ruins, and whatever draws the young folk away from home, never to be seen again.

The treasure-hunters are starting an expedition into the Kalduhr, but have stopped in the tent city of Kormoran's Wheel to get provisions for the journey.

1

TERRORS

The party buys fresh bread from a kindly old woman named **Risti.**

What do you see in Risti's tent that reminds you of a beloved family member?

When the treasure-hunters step away from Risti's tent, a **fight breaks out.** Joban, a tanner, accuses Risti of murdering his adult son, Jakob, who has been missing for two days. Joban found a golden tooth in a roll he bought from Risti, and Jakob had just such a tooth. Risti swears she is no murderer and begs the party to help her. When pressed, she admits that the roll came from the mill ruins, saying:

"My hands. They are too stiff to knead the dough. Thankfully, the forest has blessed me with a daily delivery of goods to sell."

SHE WANTS TO

Find out what happened to the missing young folk.

Remain in the good graces of the forest, at any cost.

SHE DOESN'T WANT TO

Be left behind or forgotten.

Lose an ally who could protect her.

Risti will guide the treasure-hunters to the mill, to defend her good name and help learn the truth behind Jakob's disappearance.

TEMPTATIONS

Risti offers the treasure-hunters her eternal gratitude. If that's not enough, she says that deep in the mill ruins is a **pile of treasure**—offerings to the forest—which she herself would take, but for her bad joints and fragile bones. A journey to the mill would surely take less time than the treasure-hunters' planned expedition deeper into the forest.

INCURSIONS

A chalky, white mist drifts from deep in the mill ruins.

Your mouth moistens as you inhale the warm aroma of fresh-baked bread.

The treasure-hunters arrive at the ruins of the mill.

2

TERRORS

The mill ruins are treacherous—over the centuries, river migration drove the collapse of its foundations. **Slips and falls** are likely as the party traverses the tunnel-like remains of the mill's outer walls. Call for frequent Risk Rolls just to navigate the ruins, with any increases in Ruin leading to broken bones.

Eventually, a **cave-in** happens, forcing the party to search for an alternate route to Risti's promised treasure.

TEMPTATIONS

True to her word, Risti eventually leads the party to the treasure she spoke of. Over the years, grateful residents of the Wheel have ventured to the ruins and tossed coins and other trinkets down a deep shaft, treating it as a makeshift **wishing well** and altar to the spirits of the forest. The sunlight just barely reaches the bottom of the well, but where it does, hints of gold sparkle under the water.

Among the gold is a small flock of white **geese**, their presence proving that reaching the bottom is possible. The cave-in has opened a new route which should provide access, though getting there will be slow-going, especially since Risti demands to be brought along.

CONDITIONS — I OF III

OR

- Even minor trips or falls break your bones.
- You see the wheels within wheels that are the sacred geometry underlying everything.
- Every joint in your body aches with the heat of an oven.
- Everything is cold, and you have goosebumps that refuse to go away.
- All the fat on your body melts away, making you appear gaunt and skeletal.
- You feel compelled to follow the lullaby of a flute only you can hear.

The millstone begins turning,
the deep grumble of stone on stone.

A delicate and playful melody pricks the air—
a deftly-played bone flute.

A rumble from above threatens a second cave-in, but it's quickly followed by a rhythmic grinding. A millstone is turning.



TERRORS

Risti laughs upon hearing this sound, but whether it's nervous or knowing laughter is hard to determine. If anyone accuses her of knowing more than she lets on, or of acting on behalf of the forest spirits, she deflects and draws attention toward any **strange behavior** being exhibited by a treasure-hunter. She will aim to ally herself with whoever has the highest Ruin (assuming they're showing her sympathy). She will then subtly push her ally to identify the other treasure-hunters' flaws and weaknesses—especially the ways in which they could betray her ally or the party as a whole.

A mess of **blood and organs**—but no bones—are discovered while looking for a route down to the well. Investigating the remains reveals them to be one or more birds, given the white feathers. Embedded in the viscera are a few pebbles of pure gold.

TEMPTATIONS

Risti slips on a wet bit of rock, injuring herself and asking for the party to sit and rest with her for a few minutes. She offers everyone sweet rolls (which she claims she made herself; they're not gifts from the forest) and plays **familiar tunes** on her bone flute. The songs remind each treasure-hunter of a loved one.

Who are you reminded of, and how does the memory of them encourage you?

INCURSIONS

CONDITIONS — II OF III

OR

- You want to seek high ground, but everything feels heavy.
- Small nubs burst through your skin, sprouting into downy feathers.
- Your teeth crowd and merge, growing into a hard beak.
- Your arms feel empty and look extremely large and distended to you.
- Your own voice sounds like honking, though others understand you normally.
- Your fingers stretch into featherless wings, making your hands unusable.

Slippery and noxious plants grow around the mill, buzzing with slow and stupid flies.

The air is burnt and heavy with black ash.

The treasure-hunters make their way deeper into the mill, where they are overwhelmed by the smell of baking bread and the heat of an oversized oven. The oven is so huge it blocks most of the treasure-hunters' view.



TERRORS

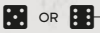
Dozens of large and misshapen **geese** wander aimlessly, tripping up the treasure-hunters and getting in their way. The geese honk strenuously, surprised and uncertain at the sounds they make. A few seem to be trying to choke out words. Their movements are also confused and unpredictable. They do not behave like any other geese the treasure-hunters have ever encountered, because these things were not always geese. These are the lost young folk, transformed by the spirits of the forest. Just as the residents of Kormoran's Wheel make offerings to appease the spirits, the spirits make offerings to appease the people: Bread made from the bones of peculiar geese, the very same bread Risti has been selling.

It is dark behind the impossibly-large oven which fills the room. Without warning, a hand as large as a full-grown human emerges from that darkness and sweeps around blindly. This is the **giant** of the mill, an ancient colossus who has made these ruins its home and workshop. Eventually, the giant's hand plucks one of the geese from the gaggle and carries it away. A pained honk is heard, followed by the snapping of bones.

TEMPTATIONS

The bones of the geese contain **liquid gold** that is poured out into a huge vat near the oven. The hollow bones are then ground under the mill wheel and used by the giant as flour for the bread it bakes. Around the vat, nuggets of solidified gold are visible and recoverable, but would require the treasure-hunters to put themselves dangerously close to the giant, the oven, the mill wheel, and the vat of molten gold. Any treasure-hunter who approaches must make a Risk Roll or be noticed by the giant.

CONDITIONS — III OF III



- Your boots keep falling off as your feet and legs feel awkward to walk on.
- Things become difficult to swallow, and your neck feels long.
- You must collect and hide away every golden or shiny object you see.
- The sweat trickling down your forehead is flecked with gold.
- Your skin loosens and begins to slough off, revealing the muscle and bone—and flecks of gold—underneath.
- Your belly swells and bursts as an orb of pure gold spills out.

An anxious bird flops around on the ground, its wings no match for its heavy body.

A man screams, though maybe it was only the cry of a bird.

The giant turns its gaze toward the treasure-hunters.

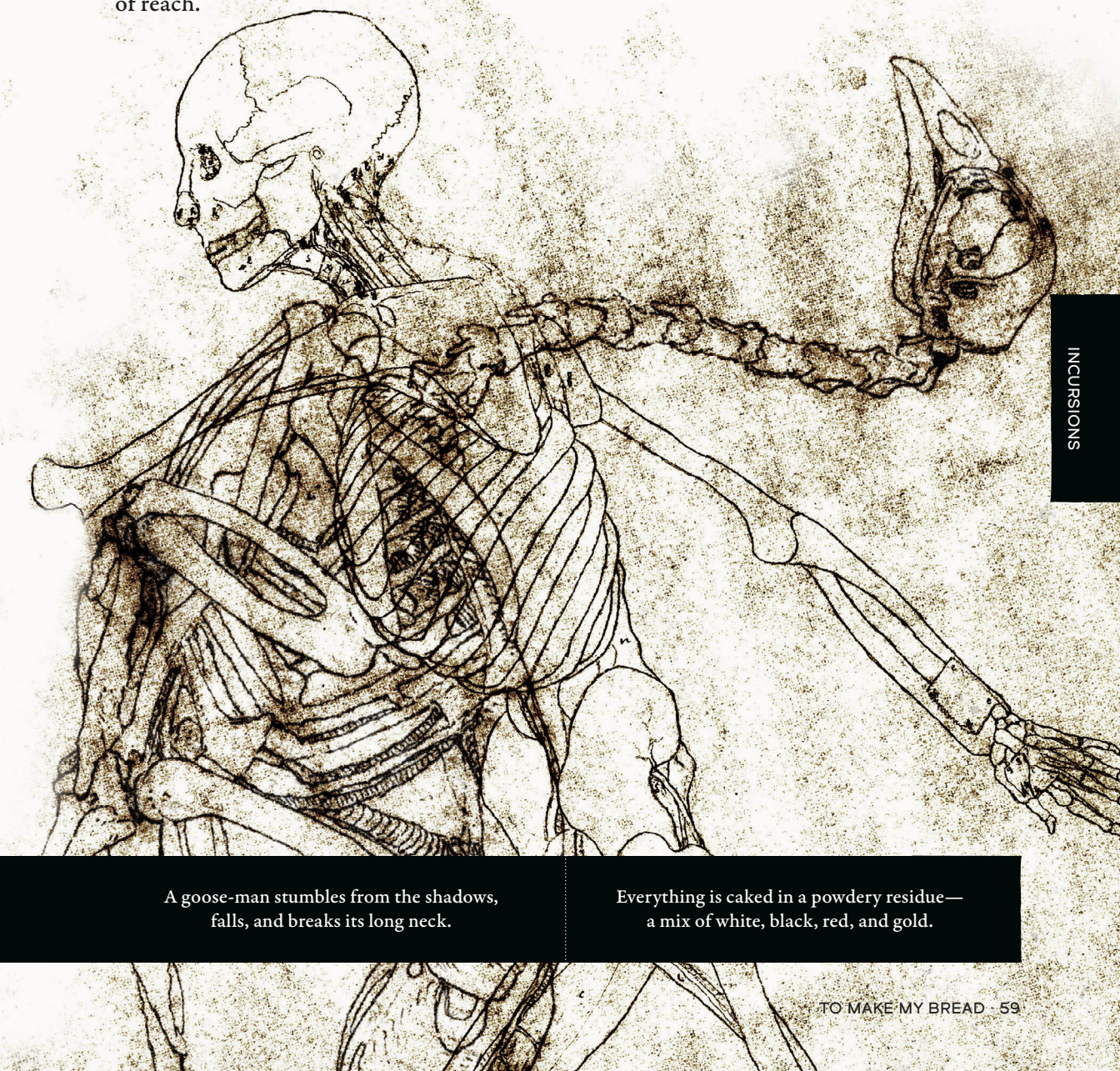
5

TERRORS

Risti plays her flute loud enough for the giant to hear, drawing it away so the treasure-hunters have an opportunity to take the spoils. It will smash anything it can to get to her—including the vat of gold, which bursts through the roof and **opens up an exit** for anything that can fly out. This gives the treasure-hunters and any remaining geese a chance to escape. A treasure-hunter who increases their Ruin from now on will notice gold weeping from their wounds, which everyone present also notices.

TEMPTATIONS

A treasure-hunter who sees **gold spilling** from one of their companions must succeed on a Ruin Roll or attempt to get all the gold out of the victim by any means necessary. Clear blue sky is visible overhead through the gash torn in the mill roof. It seems impossibly out of reach.



A goose-man stumbles from the shadows, falls, and breaks its long neck.

Everything is caked in a powdery residue—a mix of white, black, red, and gold.

Throne of the Forest Queen

DAVID MORRISSON



theme GLAMOUR

WARNINGS: *Body Horror, Cannibalism, Graphic Violence, Harm to Animals, Manipulation, Slavery, Torture*

The constant drizzle that has accompanied you through the tangled woods abates as you come into a lush glade baked in golden sunlight. The stink of mud and leaf mold is cut through with a cleaner scent of pine and crisp mornings. A stag at the edge of the clearing casts a lazy glance at you before trotting further into the wood, its flashing tail an invitation to follow. You have reached the Queensweald—rumoured home to salvation, inspiration, cures to fantastical diseases, and wonders conjured only in dreams. Only the stout of heart enter the realm of the Forest Queen—fewer still return.

Why then, if her favour is so hard to claim, do so many mortals seek it? Quite simply, it has value beyond gold. The queen's power is nearly limitless. She controls the fae court of the forest, and can make the dreams of mortals into reality if she so chooses. For so long as people desire the impossible, they will venture in search of her.

The treasure-hunters find a clearing in the Queensweald.



TERRORS

A winsome, young **goatherd** sits on a rock in the forest clearing, crying. He beseeches the party to look for his three missing goats. The rest of his herd watch the treasure-hunters with caprine disdain. As the party searches for the missing goats, they come across three other individuals in need—a fox with its leg caught in a poacher's trap, an old woman whose sack of honeypots was stolen by ruffians, and two lovers who are separated by a collapsing bridge. The treasure-hunters likely won't encounter violence unless the party go in search of the bandits, but assisting those in need should provide challenges. Perhaps they will be rewarded for their kindness further in the forest?

- *What in particular makes you empathize with this person's plight?*
- *What do you hope for their future, and how does this mirror your own dreams?*

TEMPTATIONS

If the goats are returned, the goatherd will offer the treasure-hunters rewards from his meagre **possessions**—a well-worn set of panpipes, a sturdy goat-horn comb, and a ripe green apple with a red blush. He also shows the party a hidden goat trail leading further into the forest, and offers warnings against the wiles of the fae, while speaking of the great boons that previous seekers gained. The apple is faerie food—it is delicious, and eating it provokes a Ruin Roll. The panpipes and comb are mundane, but if a treasure-hunter truly believes using it will have some mystical effect, the forest may amuse itself by allowing the item to be the focus of a Ritual.

- *Why do you think you will succeed where others have failed?*
- *Why do you help those who are in need?*

CONDITIONS — I OF III

⚀ OR ⚁

- ⚀ You are transfixed by the sheer beauty of life.
- ⚁ Little antler nubbins start growing from your forehead.
- ⚂ Benign forest creatures follow you everywhere, clumsily assisting with basic tasks.
- ⚃ If you perform a task imperfectly, you must repeat it over and over until you get it right.
- ⚄ Food from outside this forest tastes bitter and ashy, and the water from your canteen appears brackish.
- ⚅ Your clothes grow itchy; you long to tear them off and bare yourself to the forest.

A ring of mushrooms in improbably lush grass, a sweet scent in the air, and the lazy drone of flies.

The moon hangs low in the sky. Twisted shadows grasp for you as wolves howl in the distance.

As the treasure-hunters press further into the Queensweald, the landscape becomes more dramatic and difficult to traverse.



TERRORS

There are alpine hills rising into mountains that must be scaled. Large, fast-flowing rivers to be forded. Dense, dark forest in which they become turned around and lost. These varied **terrains** meld into one another with little rational explanation. Any attempt to examine their backtrail confuses them and makes no logical sense. They seem to be navigating on dream-logic. Wild beasts stalk and hunt them—bears, boars, wolves—all larger, sleeker, and smarter than they have any right to be. The world is full of primal, deadly beauty.

- *What are you really running from?*
- *What was standing in your way back home, and how does this obstacle remind you of it?*
- *What do you fear the most?*

TEMPTATIONS

The **landscape** is more beautiful than anything the party has seen before. Let them be warmed by the sun, and never dimmed by clouds. Refresh them with cool mountain waters. If they hunt any creatures or forage for berries and mushrooms, describe just how delicious everything tastes—though killing a majestic deer or eating the strange, vibrant plant life requires a Ruin Roll. The forest may be trying to kill them, but the treasure-hunters will see it is truly a paradise if they can survive. For each obstacle they overcome, show them they are on the right path—distant elf-song, a plume of hearth smoke rising above the trees, a secure cave to rest the night. Reward them with moments of peace and beauty.

- *What does the wilderness provide that you were lacking at home?*
- *What was the most beautiful place you had seen before, and how is the landscape here even more beautiful?*
- *What here gives you comfort?*
- *What tells you that you are on the right path?*

CONDITIONS — II OF III

OR

- Your senses sharpen, scenting prey. You long to chase, hunt, and devour.
- Flowers appear in your hair and cannot be removed—if you cut them out, you bleed and they regrow.
- Slowly but surely, your features become someone's ideal of beauty. What flaws are corrected?
- You realize a memory you once held precious is trivial. Forget it.
- For just a moment, you cannot think how many days have passed, or when last you slept.
- Something about another treasure-hunter's appearance repulses you. What is it?

A ripe green apple with a red blush drops to the floor, a single bite taken out of it.

A light sunshower breaks out, a rainbow forming ahead. The soft rain is pleasant against your skin.

As the sun begins to set, the party reaches a forest glade, strewn about with faerie-lights and glow-worms, giving it a festive air.



TERRORS

The inhabitants of the glade—playful fauns, willowy dryads, minor lords and ladies of Faerie—invite the party to a **banquet**. Refusing would be most rude. The food smells intoxicating and tastes even better, with all their favorite dishes laid out for them. The heady wine and sweet mead provide the soft warmth of drunkenness, with none of the ravages of excess. Their hosts are beautiful and attentive, catering to the whims of their guest without question or expectation of payment. They ask only for tales of each guest's past, and laugh at how foolish life is outside the forest. If the adventurers wish to eat their own supplies rather than the faerie-food, their hosts demand it be shared. There will not be enough, and it will not last. Again, eating the faerie-food requires a Ruin Roll. The fae are all monsters of the forest, and should be handled accordingly. They will take unkindly to any disrespect.

- *You spy your favorite food on the table. What is it?*
- *What is the most welcoming thing about this glade?*
- *Despite the beauty and grace of your hosts, what unnerves you about them?*
- *What about your appearance do you wish were more like your hosts?*

TEMPTATIONS

The fae hosts are universally alluring, and bedecked in fine silks and jewels. The cutlery is extravagantly sculpted and made of precious metals, and even the plates are carved of rare woods. Exquisite artworks hang from trees, like a sylvan gallery. If anyone shows interest in an item—or a person—offer it as a **gift**. Please. Insist. They simply must take it. These are, after all, mere baubles compared to what the Forest Queen can provide the fae. And the queen's palace is not far off now. The hosts give directions to the palace, and warn of the need to traverse the domain of the Horned Knight. If a treasure-hunter left a good impression on one of the hosts, explain how they may extract a boon from the Horned Knight if they capture him in his own hunt.

- *What is your most treasured possession? What here would you trade it for?*
- *Who here fills you with desire? Who do they remind you of?*
- *What tale do you tell the fae to justify your search for the Forest Queen?*

Wind whispers through reeds, fog rises from the marsh, odd lights move in the distance.

Warm, dry fingers in the small of your back, the scent of pine, a loving whisper.

The treasure-hunters enter the domain of the Horned Knight.

4

TERRORS

The last obstacle between the treasure-hunters and the queen's domain is the territory of the **Horned Knight**—a powerful, wild, and gorgeous monstrosity. The party spots him stalking the woods, walking like a man, crowned in antlers, entirely naked. He smiles lovingly as he chases the treasure-hunters down with his wild hunt of twisted goblins and warped beasts. Those he catches are gently embraced before being dismembered and eaten, or turned into hunting beasts themselves. Those quick or crafty enough to evade him will earn his respect, as well as passage to the queen's court.

- *Which features of the one you love do you see in the knight?*
- *The knight's musk stirs lustful thoughts. How does he smell to you?*
- *Which of the hunting beasts terrifies you the most? How do you know it was once human?*



TEMPTATIONS

The luscious **pelts** of the hunting beasts would make fine trophies for those able to best and skin them. If a treasure-hunter does so, ask them how they begin to take on aspects of the pelts they wear. Ask the treasure-hunters what wish they would request from the knight if they caught him. If they try, be prepared to describe the exquisite release as his antlers pierce their flesh and leave them dying on the forest floor. Give a cunning player who comes up with a plan to catch the knight everything they ask for and more besides—except an exit from the forest.

- *What would you ask of the knight if you caught him?*
- *Have you ever killed before? Who? What?*
- *How does it feel to have the powerful at your mercy?*

Thundering waters drowning out speech, cool spray in your face, treacherous rocks below.

Flower petals brushing your lips, the sun warming your hair, the throb of desire.

The treasure-hunters reach their destination—the Forest Queen's court.



TERRORS

The **queen** graciously extends her invitation to them, indefinitely. Abusing her hospitality—for example, by trying to leave early—results in gradual but inescapable punishment. The queen is no mere monstrosity—monstrosities serve her. While she is personable and curious of mortals, she brooks no disrespect. Her wrath is swift, sudden, and creative. Attempts to oppose her desires are doomed to fail. She wishes to bestow her love and gifts upon the greatest of her petitioners, and will not hesitate to play the treasure-hunters against one another until only one remains worthy. Only one can be the greatest, after all.

- *Why are you better than your compatriots, and more deserving of the queen's favor?*
- *How far will you go to prove your superiority?*
- *What can you give the queen that no-one else can?*
- *What makes you realize you will never leave here, alive or dead?*

TEMPTATIONS

There is a lake in the centre of a large clearing and, despite the soft warmth of the sun, a **palace** made of ice that rises from the lake's center. The palace is exquisite, and glitters in the sunlight like diamonds. It is filled with material wealth beyond the dreams of mortals. The queen offers great prizes for those who entertain her in contests of skill, wits, and valor. It is within her power to grant the treasure-hunters literally anything they may wish, and any such wishes are granted generously—though not necessarily without consequence.

- *What do you really want from the queen, more than anything else?*
- *Does your Drive really matter anymore?*
- *How could you serve in the queen's court?*
- *What about the queen makes you love her?*

INCURSIONS

CONDITIONS — III OF III

OR

- The touch of iron on your skin burns. You discard any iron on your person, and refuse to acquire more.
- Your companions are mere prey compared to you. Never let them forget that.
- Every time you try to lie, you feel your heart being crushed.
- If you are given a gift, you must give something you value in return.
- You can hear music in the air, and it compels you to dance.
- Everyone is better and more perfect than you; you must respond to their every whim and wish.

The rush of wind past your ears, claws sinking into flesh, thick copper blood on your tongue.

A pretty cottage in the woods—currently empty. It's warm, welcoming, and suffused with the scent of fresh-baked bread.



Clever Fingers

MADELEINE EMBER

theme ENTRAPMENT

WARNINGS: *Amputation, Body Horror, Cannibalism, Graphic Violence, Harm to Animals, Harm to Children, Manipulation, Mannequins, Suicide*

You and your fellow treasure-hunters have come to the Uncommon Bazaar—a market of exotic goods held outside the walls of Ambaret. Held on the longest night of the year, it stretches over a mile in diameter. Yet when morning comes, it vanishes in the blink of an eye. Many enjoy the goods available from the outermost booths. But the further one wanders into the market, the rarer the items for sale. You treasure-hunters seek the center of the bazaar—the tent of the Tailor. This being rewards those who seek them with what they most desperately desire—if they can still escape before daybreak. None who stay past the break of dawn ever return. And be warned, the world becomes strange and twisted if one delves too far.

WARES

Treasure-hunters may purchase a ware on their journey through the Uncommon Bazaar, which gives them an edge on a dice roll. If players use a ware, they receive one light die on any roll as if they had its associated skill (listed in italics). Inform players that they may only purchase one ware at the Uncommon Bazaar, only they may use it, and it can only be used once. Wares are available at Rings 1-4, but the cost is greater as the treasure-hunters become more desperate for aid.

RING 1 WARES (*skill*) — COST
A common-looking but well-made steel sword (*slashing*) — One precious thing you carry from a loved one.
A holly crown (*persuasion*) — A kiss to the ugly, toothless merchant.
A small boot dagger (*murder*) — All the money you have.
A locket with a blank slip of paper inside (*secrets*) — A secret you hold, spoken aloud.
A small book on sewing technique for proper ladies (*lore*) — A pinky finger, the stump sewn with red thread.

It's a clear night, and the torchlight is bright enough to flood out the stars above. The outermost edge of the Uncommon Bazaar is filled with sounds and smells, vendors hawking their wares, and performers dancing for coin.

1

As the treasure-hunters enter the outer edge, they are tempted by a stall offering wares that appear useful for folk headed to the deepest parts of the market.

? *What tool or item do you want to purchase?* See Ring 1 Wares on the previous page.

TERRORS

Once each treasure-hunter acquires or declines a ware, they find themselves surrounded by a performing troupe of **jugglers** dressed in gaudy outfits. The entertainers form a circle around the treasure-hunters and begin incorporating knives and torches into their ever-moving cage. The jugglers only use non-verbal communication. When inspected too closely, it's clear their mouths have been sewn shut, with stage makeup painted over the thread.

The jugglers are easily overpowered. When wounded or distracted, they fall apart into a pile of mismatched cloth. A new juggler then emerges from the crowd to seamlessly continue the juggling. Let it become clear to the treasure-hunters that one of them must join the juggling and risk Ruin or injury if they wish to progress. Of course, they can always attack the jugglers with increased violence. The jugglers do not count as monsters—a treasure-hunter won't immediately die if they make a lethal attack or engage the jugglers in combat.

If a treasure-hunter takes part in the juggling, they must make a Risk Roll. Failing the roll means they feel compelled to continue juggling objects, or find themselves unable to stop giggling, or suffer some other strange effect. The juggling treasure-hunter gains the power to stop the act, however, and will receive a portion of coin along with the other performers. The other performers non-verbally compliment or commiserate the performance and then part amicably. The gathered crowd claps and walks away.

? Ask the juggling treasure-hunter: *How does this experience mark you?*

If a treasure-hunter lethally attacks a juggler, that juggler staggers back dramatically and all others become stone statues. The items they were juggling clatter to the ground and the crowd claps. The wounded juggler stages a big, ridiculous death scene with much staggering, flailing, and twitching. Gathered people compliment the great show. Once the dead juggler finally stops moving, they unwind into coils of knotted red thread.

TEMPTATIONS

If a juggler was killed, amidst the red thread will be a bobbin containing a single strand of **thread** that leads deeper into the bazaar. If the jugglers all survive, the treasure-hunters can persuade them to reveal a narrow alley leading deeper in, but they themselves refuse to go. A child that was watching the performance, if caught in the act, reveals several coins she pickpocketed and a sewing needle that pulls in the Tailor's direction. The child is missing her right arm at the elbow—the wound appears very inflamed and is sewn together with red thread. She won't talk about it.

A mangy dog goes unnoticed by other bazaar patrons. A red scarf binds his frothing mouth.

A man selling intricate jewelry, the stones of each shivering slightly in the torchlight. They strain for release from filigreed shackles.

Deeper into the bazaar, the air is filled with the scent of food, sweets, and sharp spices.



There are gatherings of wide, deep baskets filled with grain, peppercorns, unusual fruits, nuts, and other less identifiable items under the colorful canopied vendor stalls. There's still a lot of bustle and ordinary folk in this area, but the edible items are more unusual here. If the treasure-hunters followed a thread, it ends tied to the first merchant's stall.

What is one item for sale that reminds you of the thing you most desire? Why would it taste bitter to you?

RING 2 WARES (*skill*) — COST
A hollowed bison horn filled with jerky chunks (*stamina*) — A tooth extracted laboriously by your own hand.
A perfect, fresh fig (*distraction*) — You must sing any one song verse of your choosing.
A cooked rabbit leg (*speed*) — The boots you are wearing.
A handful of unfamiliar, pungent spices which make you dizzy (*observation*) — Whatever is in your left pocket.

TERRORS

The scent of a butcher's stall tempts the treasure-hunters to it, enticing them with the succulent smell of roasting meat. The spread also offers revolting offal and old blood; the treasure-hunters' stomachs grumble. All other thoughts are driven from the treasure-hunters' minds. As they begin lusting after different cuts, the **butcher** himself explodes from a tent, chasing a small, white pig while bellowing nonsense. People scream as he chops his cleaver wildly through anything in his way. The treasure-hunters become trapped in this small area by panicked, fleeing patrons. The butcher can be overcome by brute force or by catching the pig. In both cases, he babbles endlessly about the ropes of intestines within, and how they are all tied together. He uses his cleaver to disembowel himself, bleeding out at the treasure-hunters' feet. The scent is arousing.

Have you ever wanted blood so sweet, the taste of meat, but more?

TEMPTATIONS

The treasure-hunters can sew the butcher's wound closed if they have the needle from Ring 1, but it will be too late for him. If a treasure-hunter catches the **pig**, they become compelled to consume it while it is still alive, covering themselves in gore. Once their hunger is sated, the pig's blood begins streaming uphill, leading them to the merchant's stall in the next Ring. If the pig wasn't slain, the treasure-hunters become ravenous over the thought of its sweet, rich flesh and chase it to the next Ring.

A bound boar is being roasted and cut rotisserie style. It is still alive.

A merchant sells faeries in decorative bottles. Many look sick, sad, or angry. Each of their little feet are tied to a white stone.

This series of merchant stalls are sought by only the wealthy, adventurous, or foolish.



RING 3 WARES (*skill*) — COST
An elaborate ruby necklace held together with delicate gold (*illusion*) — An arm and a leg, literally. The treasure-hunter can use a shop manikin's leg as a makeshift prosthetic, but it is uncomfortable and inhibits movement.
A pair of engraved silver scissors (*cutting*) — Your clothes—there is no hiding your nakedness.

TERRORS

Very few people walk these paths. Items for sale are obviously magical. A floating glass orb, fabric that shivers through different shades of violet, weapons of bone that whisper of glory. Wandering these merchant-lined alleys reveals no obvious way further in—or any way back out. As the night grows darker, panic builds in the treasure-hunters' minds.

The most interesting items for sale are the suits of armor and dresses draped over **manikins**. They are arranged across several stalls, standing like dancers at a ball. The treasure-hunter with the most Ruin feels especially drawn to this display. When they approach the manikins, they hear a high-pitched, sustained note, like the top string of a violin. Upon investigation, they discover that the sound is coming from the shopkeeper, who is also a manikin. All the manikins from this area—just short of a dozen in total—attack the treasure-hunters with poison-laced pins, stabbing at them over and over. The poison clouds the victim's vision with a veil of red threads.

- *Are you fighting back? If not, why? If so, who are you fighting to save?*
- *Do you give in to the thirst? Do you drink the blood of the fallen?*

TEMPTATIONS

Those who don't fight find red threads drawn about their hands and arms. The strands tangle their every movement and draw tighter with each step. Those who fight find the manikins bleed a sweet-smelling raspberry liqueur (if they are fighting for someone else), or warm, thick blood (if they are fighting for their own safety). When the last manikin falls, or when all the treasure-hunters are fully bound, the violin sound ceases and any threads binding the treasure-hunters slide loose. Anyone who tasted the manikin blood must make a Ruin Roll. On a failure, that treasure-hunter marks 1 Ruin and craves more blood, attacking the nearest treasure-hunter to satisfy their hunger. Other treasure-hunters must make a Ruin Roll for witnessing this event, though their failures do not prompt the same result.

- *Who do you think you are attacking, and why do you stop just as your teeth find their throat?*

When the fray is over, there are hundreds of **threads** coating the ground. When touched, they gather together in a rope, tremble, and retreat deeper into the bazaar. They slither behind the dressmaker stalls and through a large, unlit expanse. Beyond this stands a distant, solitary white tent. Unseen occupants cast contorted shadows against the tent's fabric. All the treasure-hunters can make out is the sound of scissors snipping and the whisper of moving cloth. The treasure-hunters each take a red strand, fallen like blood from the retreating rope, to lead them through the darkness.

A performer with tiny feet balances on a teacup. Later she can be seen removing her shoes and rubbing broken, deformed feet.

Sausages for sale. No one knows what the meat is. It is very stringy, but very sweet.

You follow the threads, wrapping them around your fingers and hands, gathering them up as you go.



RING 4 WARES (*skill*) — COST
A brass thimble (*protection*) — Your dominant hand.

TERRORS

If the treasure-hunters still have the needle from Ring 1, whoever carries it will feel it heat to a searing temperature before it burrows under their skin.

As they approach the tent, the moonlight reveals this grim place. The treasure-hunters are staggering through the **corpses** of women, animals, children, and grown men. All are torn ragged, limb from limb. The stench is heavy, the tent is white, and the flesh underfoot is soft.

? *Why have you always known it would come to this?*

Some half-formed bodies writhe in the midst of the carnage, reaching blindly to drag the treasure-hunters down. The treasure-hunters somehow know it wouldn't hurt to be torn apart. It would itch, like a healing wound. Like the sound of stretching stitches. If they do not push on, they will join the carpet of limbs and flesh. Behind them is only darkness, and there are no threads to lead them home. Each treasure-hunter feels a rush of envy as they watch their fellows steel their resolve and press onward. Such strength, such vigor, such rich, warm blood. "If only you could wrap them tight in the thread you are gathering. If only you could taste the red within them. Their beating hearts sing to you. The very air pulses."

TEMPTATIONS

Someone grasps your ankle—someone with a **familiar face**. They beg you to stop.

? *Who is it, and why is it so easy to disregard their concern?*

The treasure-hunters reach the tent when they are free of the bodies, but they have all lost something. The thread wound around their hands has cut their flesh. It's thicker than it was before, having drunk the blood that weeps from their wounds. Weak and faint, they reach for the flaps of the tent, smearing the white with red.

CONDITIONS — I OF II

⚀ OR ⚁ OR ⚂

- ⚀ Your skin grows dry and translucent at the joints. It feels too tight, and begins to split and bleed.
- ⚁ There are new pockets growing on your fabric. When you reach into them, small, warm hands reach back.
- ⚂ Moths hover around you, attracted to your glistening skin. Once they land, they cannot free themselves.
- ⚃ You are convinced you can trace the strange geography of this place, but you only lead everyone in circles.
- ⚄ You feel deeply claustrophobic and are terrified to be touched by anyone.
- ⚅ When others speak, you hear paranoid reflections of your worst fears and conspiracies.

You encounter a freak show displaying a two-faced cat. It blinks its strange, central eye and mewls piteously.

A human-like automaton without legs sits on a cart table, pleading with desperate eyes. The seller insists it is not for sale.

The treasure-hunters enter the tent.



TERRORS

The **Tailor** is a slight girl with long fingers, seated on a purple cushion in the center of the tent. She has eight eyes arranged in a starburst on her misshapen skull—all watching the treasure-hunters with frank curiosity. Limp, blonde hair hangs in irregular chunks. Her white shift is without blemish. Her hands, eight of them, are a blur of activity. She stitches together a fabric from the pieces of human and animal flesh around her—bloody flesh joined with blood-red thread. She drags the treasure-hunters to her by the threads around their hands. That which led them here now shackles them. They cannot pull free without letting something go.

- *What is life without those you love, without that which you most desire?*
- *Do you let her pull you in?*
- *Do you pull against her and feel your hands unwind? Your being, stripped from the bare roots of your weakening veins and arteries?*

TEMPTATIONS

If one treasure-hunter has the **needle**: "It sears within you, and you feel the certainty of the moment—an opportunity to strike. What does it look like as you leap at her, armed with her needle?"

- *What have you lost that can never be regained?*
- *Will you stay in the tent and let your flesh be sewn into the fabric while your blood stains the thread?*
- *Would you claim enough thread to knit your own desires into being?*
- *Is there enough of you left that you remember your own desires?*

No treasure-hunter is physically intact enough to crawl from this tent. To leave the tent and the bazaar itself, they require a nearly whole body. Who would take up the needle and knit pieces of their allies to their own body so they, alone, may return?

CONDITIONS — II OF II

OR OR

- Your fingernails have become very sharp and you start scratching yourself, looking for something hidden within.
- You are worried you will lose your possessions. You must sew them to yourself.
- A mesmerizing buzzing begins in your ears—the drone of a hurdy-gurdy that only you can hear.
- You see a faint red line connecting the hearts of every two people who interact. The lines never fade.
- You start coughing up fine red threads you must tear from your lips. They are knotted within you.
- You're desperate to hold hands with whoever is closest. Pain and sounds of ripping fabric follow if they pull away.

A merchant from a distant land sells leather and meat from a rare beast. The only way to kill the beast is to seal it in its own cave until it starves.

Several merchants have limbs missing. Their stumps look fresh and are stitched very neatly closed with red thread.

A Warm and Pleasant Hum

MICHAEL VAN VLEET



theme BEES

WARNINGS: *Biting & Stinging, Cannibalism, Confined Spaces, Eye Trauma, Graphic Violence, Harm to Animals, Insects*

The human world has room for many monarchs, but The Humming Woods has only one queen. This six-legged Mother of Millions dines exclusively on an elixir said to cure any ill, or even extend one's life... a royal jelly of matchless quality. Few dare attempt to steal any jelly, protected as it is by the swarms that live in her remote hive—the Six-Form Heart. But what if one had grander dreams than that of a waxed sack containing purloined jelly?

If one can claim the queen, one can control her enormous six-legged family and the wealth their industry represents. But the denizens of the Six-Form Heart have a loyalty that is pheromone-fueled and absolute, and the venomous means to protect their home and monarch.



Despite the deep shadows, a pleasant warmth suffuses the forest, making outer layers of clothes and armor feel unnecessary, uncomfortable.

A forager's sack, dangling from a thin tree branch overhead, out of reach, carrying yellow-and-black-striped fingerling fungus.

The treasure-hunters approach The Humming Woods.

1

TERRORS

A group of people dressed as amateur **apiarists**—their faces covered with mesh attached to brimmed hats—chase a panicked packhorse. Around the horse's neck is a rough mesh mask of similar design to the apiarists', but it's askew. The horse's eyes are yellow and running, pierced with stingers—a creature envenomed and mad with pain.

The number of apiarists matches the number of treasure-hunters. They beg for assistance, but their horse shortly plunges down a steep incline taking their supplies with it, unrecoverable. Whether the treasure-hunters help or not, after the horse is lost, the apiarists view the treasure-hunters' supplies as a viable alternative; they threaten the party with violence. However, the apiarists are exhausted, their hopes are dashed, and they are easily discouraged if the party shows an unyielding, united front.

TEMPTATIONS

Among the **supplies** left on the ground from the apiarist's aborted mission:

A *shattered vial of antivenom* with a few salvageable drops at the bottom if one is careful.

A *crude map* with three great circles where the hive could be and notes on scouting bees, their paths and schedules. On the back, a drawing of a bee wearing a leash like a guide hound.

A *stinger* the size of a human hand from some enormous and monstrous variety of bee.

- *Do you desire a cure or power from this expedition?*
- *How would your life change if you proved you could pierce the heart of The Humming Woods and return sticky-fingered in triumph?*
- *How will you succeed where others have failed?*

CONDITIONS — I OF III

⚀ OR ⚁

- ⚀ You are compelled to hum, but not a tune... just a tone.
- ⚁ You feel small legs on your exposed skin, though there's nothing there.
- ⚂ You have an allergic reaction to the pollen from flowering plants.
- ⚃ Speaking feels inadequate unless accompanied by dance-like movement, especially when giving directions.
- ⚄ You crave sugar.
- ⚅ You have the conviction that a single violent act is always followed by personal destruction.

A circle of six animal skulls arranged by some strange intelligence—large, small, large, small. Bear and rabbit, elk and squirrel... human and child.

Yellow-and-black-striped mushrooms cling to tree trunks.

The forest opens to a floodplain where recent rains have formed a shallow inland sea.



TERRORS

The entire floodplain is a riot of color, due to **flowering plants** that take advantage of the precipitation, their stalks poking skyward well above the waterline. The average plant comes to just past head height, their roots forming a rough and uneven carpet that is invisible under the water. Footing is treacherous and progress is slow. The swaying petals make it easy to lose sight of your fellow treasure-hunters, especially with one's eyes on the ground to safely navigate the terrain. Perfume fills the air, olfactory fireworks, as each bloom competes with its neighbors for the attention of pollinators. The treasure-hunters are overcome with a languor, a desire to tarry, though there's entirely too much ground to cover to seriously consider lingering.

In a scented haze, **the treasure-hunters drift apart**. Their legs and arms brush against exposed filaments that project from the flowers' stamens—a sticky, golden fuzz accumulates on their clothing. Puffballs of seeds float above on a soft breeze. For the unluckiest treasure-hunters, breathing turns labored and throats close as allergies awaken. A pitcher plant full of sticky rainwater tips on contact and drenches someone from the waist down.

- *What important supply or item is dropped into the water, or rendered useless by contact with the sticky pollen?*
- *What creature rustles among the flower stalks, navigating with ease while you flounder?*

TEMPTATIONS

An enormous **moose**, eight feet tall, parades past the treasure-hunters on its way out of the woods, unafraid. Its broad antlers are coated in honey and speckled with bees—some living and some dead. The beast's snout is sticky and slick. Its hoof prints are easy to trace in reverse even as the light begins to fade, a golden rind on each print catching the last rays of sun.

If examined, the gold layer on top of the soil is revealed to be a powdered layer of chitin—the remains of generations of bees, fallen to the forest floor. At night, the woods are nearly silent. All that can be heard are the sounds of the camp itself and a constant background hum.

The moose is proof that the journey is possible. It will, however, require that the treasure-hunters' combined might match or exceed that of this horned prince of the wood.

- *What folk knowledge about the moose lends inspiration and courage to the group?*

The discovery of a swollen body, half-rotted in a shallow pool. Its burned hands clutch a brazier.

A swarm of fuzzy bees the size of fists, crawling all over an armored forest creature. Though their stingers are ineffective, they bury the invader in a living ball, cooking it to death with their combined heat.

The trees become more crowded the closer one gets to the forest's heart.



TERRORS

Bee sightings become more frequent, from the smaller scouting variety to wingless soldiers as large as hounds. Care must be taken to appear harmless and unworthy of attention.

- *How are you willing to debase yourself when the antennae of a striped guard flicks your way?*
- *What do you visualize to remain still and calm as a curious bee's monstrous mandibles carefully prise away the pollen coating a treasure-hunter's limbs?*

A treasure-hunter discovers that their waxed **canvas sack** has a tear... no, the rent is too clean to have been torn. It was cut. The sack won't hold any fluid now, royal jelly or otherwise.

- *Who do you think would engage in sabotage this early in the expedition?*

One of the treasure-hunters has so many bees buzzing about their head that it resembles a seething **crown** in motion. A humming halo, entirely different from the ragged swarm that bedevils everyone else. What could this strange coronation mean? Is it... some kind of anointment? Have they been chosen by the bees? Them? Why them? This cannot stand.

TEMPTATIONS

The party camps for the night underneath a starlit sky. The woods reverberate with a constant hum, sometimes ignorable, sometimes leading a listener to imagine hidden harmonies—echoes of **lullabies** from childhood.

- *What were the songs about, that lulled you to sleep as children? The rocking of babies? The sweetness of honey? The warmth of the hearth?*
- *How will those memories help you sleep here, so far from home, sticky and in need of comfort?*

Out here, **constellations** can still be identified through the zigzag of branches.

- *What is the name of the constellation that will guide you home once you meet with success?*

CONDITIONS — II OF III



- You are sensitive to strong scents.
- The constant background hum makes parsing human speech impossible.
- You feel a sharp sting, then painful swelling in the joints and constricted airways.
- Your saliva is sweet, nutritious, and—if surreptitiously applied to your companions' food—keeps them healthy.
- If stung, you cling to your assailant, refusing to let it pull free of its stinger to die.
- You have a compulsion to prick holes and to stab, especially when frustrated.

Carved into the amber sap of a tree, an arrow pointing back out of the woods.

A constellation, familiar for navigation, dissipates into fireflies. The sky, black and empty.

The following morning, the treasure-hunters follow the rising hum to find a trail of outgoing bee scouts winging away from the hidden hive. The treasure-hunters navigate in the opposite direction of the trail, back to its source.

4

TERRORS

A tree, its profile warped by the presence of hexagon-shaped wax tiling. Not a hive, but some standalone structure. Where the trunk reaches the ground, a **miserable human figure** clings to life, embedded and immobile.

The figure wears the mesh mask of a beekeeper... another treasure-hunter, near the end of their failed journey. They beg the party for water. If someone approaches, they notice a hum emanating from the dying person's chest, which the bees have converted into a nursery chamber. Their shirtfront is sticky with honey. Beneath the cloth, their ribs shelter a comb of golden hexagons, where tiny, writhing grubs feed on honey and meat.

Disturbing this nursery triggers an attack by flying, stinging bees that erupt from the exposed chest. The activity also attracts the attention of a pack of dog-sized, ground-based soldier bees, who chase the treasure-hunters deeper into the woods.

TEMPTATIONS

The bees know that there's an invader in the woods. The **stench of sweat** pouring off the treasure-hunters marks them as outsiders to the pheromone-fluent population they're trying to infiltrate. Something must be done to render them invisible. What if they manage to kill a few bees (somehow, without getting swarmed), dig through their ruptured exoskeletons, then correctly identify and pluck out the wet organ that exudes the hive's passkey scent?

The party comes across the remains of several deer who wandered too close to the hive and were stung to death for their trespass. The carcasses are mostly intact. A mix of deer blood and offal could help to disguise oneself as something dead and harmless.

The hive is so close. The humming is a constant tickle in the ears, a thrumming in the chest, as if the woods themselves were trying to take flight. Are the patrols hunting them? Or herding them? Have they really been so successful at avoiding notice as they think?

CONDITIONS — III OF III

OR

- You must decorate yourself with blooming plants, sweet soil, a mane of petals: the objects of insect desire.
- If you don't keep talking or chewing, wax will seal your mouth.
- You must keep the bees apprised of all news, plans, intentions, and fears.
- You refuse to travel alone, matching the speed and direction of your companions.
- You can't pass a blooming flower without sticking a finger—or tongue—in it.
- You keep dark wet mud stripes on you to blend in and stay safe.

In a tree's bark at eye level,
an embedded ragged fingernail.

Light dims briefly, as a great swarm passing
overhead blots out the sun.

The treasure-hunters arrive at the Six-Form Heart, the hive fortress of The Humming Woods. 5

TERRORS

Comb structures engulf trees to their peaks, forming an **immense and irregular dome** surrounded by activity. The treasure-hunters get lucky: In the face of the structure is a tall, deep gouge, left by an immense and hungry forest creature. The ragged opening yawns wide enough for one treasure-hunter at a time.

? *Who goes first? Who decides?*

Inside, the treasure-hunters push through yielding walls, wax under fingernails. They struggle to stay calm under the unwelcome attention of the hive hounds who run antennae over their feet and click mandibles that could easily wrench one's limbs to the point of destruction. Trapped heat clings as the amber light dims, the hive growing darker and darker as they push further in. Though coated in scent to stay invisible themselves, which treasure-hunter realizes how easy it would be to pierce the perfumed armor of another?

The hive walls heal behind the party, wax extruded and smoothed over. Light vanishes. If they reach The Mother of Millions, what then? In the heart of her domain, who can steal from her the power granted by the woods themselves, surrounded for leagues in every direction by her family of protectors?

TEMPTATIONS

The only way out is blocked by **the treasure-hunters behind you**. The single-file passageway you carved is closing behind you as bees undo the damage to the Six-Form Heart. The only sure way to get back out without getting lost is to retrace your steps, hoping against hope that the walls are too soft and new to effectively resist the knife... but how does one grab the royal jelly or the queen herself and then convince one's fellows to step aside and let one squeeze past? Limbs pinned by the tight space, parading your treasure past their hungry eyes?

Which of the other treasure-hunters seems abuzz with the twitching energy of incipient betrayal? Weighing the Heart's treasure, and deciding it doesn't divide well at all? Imagining one swift act of violence, the pressing of cooling bodies into the soft wax floor, the claiming of their prize? Who else is having these thoughts, even though every surface bristles with the unblinking compound eyes of the enemy? When every panicked breath releases the scent of fear and meat to the queen's beloved guard?

The prize is here. The only way out is through.

The void can claim any who bar the way.



Wax drips from above, into eyes, over ears.
In a wax wall, a king's scepter, ignored.

Muffled, but audible through wax walls:
a baby's cry.

Forest of Blades

LEANDRO PONDOC



theme WAR

WARNINGS: *Abandonment, Burning, Graphic Violence*

1

It's an old story, but it's an enticing one. The day of shattered skies and broken steel—when warriors mighty in power and prestige proved their worth, and a thousand blades clashed. Scholars and priests differ on who led what side or what the battle was even about. Hence, its many names—the Sunset War, the Battle of Kalhmadur, the Skies Asunder, and more. The one consistent observation is that the battle's scale was beyond what anyone today could imagine.

A forest now grows upon that ancient battlefield. The old stories say that powerful artifacts lie within, weapons crafted to smite the ground and tear the sky apart—not to mention heirlooms of the past, the booty of soldiers still unclaimed. Any soul brave enough and clever enough to navigate the forest would surely come out with a sizable bounty. But the stories warn that the forest has been watered by the blood of the dead. And the dead prefer to be undisturbed.

The treasure-hunters meet the forest, and its first line of defense.

TERRORS

The forest's edge is guarded by a ragged **band of warriors** wearing mismatched armor and wielding rusty blades. They claim to be the "shield of the forest," remnants of a once-mighty company of warriors, now reduced to guarding the graves of their forefathers. Their raiment is old, meant to evoke the noble soldiers of the past they now claim to protect. Emphasize their nature as living ghosts, clinging to ancient tales.

Though they will brook no negotiation, these warriors are clearly pathetic scum. They will be no trouble for the treasure-hunters if they choose to engage in combat. Contrast the treasure-hunters, well-equipped and ready, to these poor sods clinging to the past. How they deal with these warriors will set the tone for the rest of the adventure—will violence meet violence or will the treasure-hunters sneak, talk, or buy their way past them?

TEMPTATIONS

The warriors boast about the prowess of their forefathers, the craft of their weapons, and the power of their magic. One claims to have a cracked **wooden ring** that used to contain magical power. Whoever gets their hands on it gets a sizzle—a shock of energy that briefly fills up their senses before fading entirely. Ask whoever claims it: ❓ *What power could that be?* Ask everyone else: ❓ *What would you do with such power?*

❓ *What do you know of the battle that created this wood and how it ended?*

Starved, emaciated dogs gorge on fresh corpses.	A wet, sticky fog that smells of rust and tastes of blood, engulfing your path.	The rhythmic marching of boots on marshy ground, always just beyond the trees.

The trees quickly occlude the sky, obscuring the senses, forcing the treasure-hunters to produce light.

2

TERRORS

If the treasure-hunters break for camp, they will find no signs of daylight, only an omnipresent **fog and trees** watching over them like sentinels. Emphasize the loneliness, the lack of fauna in view. But don't fill their journey with silence. There's always a shuffling of feet, a plaintive cry, a gentle whistling just inside their awareness. Emphasize the inability to know what's over the edge, where the horizon could be. There's always something in the corner of their eye. The uncertainty that is the fog of war has claimed them.

Keep the treasure-hunters moving using aural phenomena—the snivelling of a wounded soldier dying, the cheerful rhythms of ghostly marching tunes just beyond the trees. The perceived threats should be just out of sight to keep the treasure-hunters guessing.

TEMPTATIONS

The treasure-hunters find the remnants of a well-trodden **war camp** full of rotted tents, hastily-erected battlements, corpses stripped of their loot, and a lonely bonfire still lit by a broken staff. The bonfire resists any and all attempts to douse it. Some diligent searching may yield other bits of treasure from this camp, somehow still here despite the years. A treasure-hunter should make a Risk Roll to search the area. Keep the above terrors in mind should a failure or complication be invoked.

- *What did you expect to find in the forest?*
- *Why seek the loot of the dead—treasure wreathed in blood and violence?*



CONDITIONS — I OF III

OR

- Footing becomes imbalanced as the ground becomes uneven under your feet.
- You hear the din of battle constantly. The screaming and the clashing overwhelms your senses.
- The stench of rot refuses to escape your nostrils, no matter how hard you try.
- Every touch—even a handshake, a hug, or a helping hand—is an act of aggression.
- You find yourself suddenly covered in a combination of blood and mud.
- Color becomes increasingly bleached in your vision.

You hear the crying, snivelling pleas of a warrior at death's door in the distance.	A patch of land full of frozen, grasping hands poking from the dirt.	A row of fresh graves, hastily dug, with nothing but swords for headstones.

The forest begins to thin, and paths suddenly widen out.

3

TERRORS

Ask the treasure-hunters for signs of what movements and changes an army would visit upon the landscape. They then come across a run-down **inn**, derelict and abandoned to the elements, but seemingly intact—a perfect place to seek refuge. It is a cold and barren building, barely standing but chock full of sad tales.

Any seemingly-worthless treasure looted from the first two Rings begins to crackle with power as the treasure-hunters get closer to the center. That treasure disappears from the one who claimed it, and it appears in the pack of the one who wants it.

TEMPTATIONS

Remnants fill the walls inside the inn, not just of the battle from millennia past but of other treasure-hunters as well—**past adventurers** with maybe the same hopes, the same fervent desires as those in your party. Have them reiterate and reinforce why they came to this forest. Contrast those hopes with the remains in the inn. This used to be a place of refuge until war and death swept through it. Remind them of whatever home they might have outside the wood.

? *What did you leave behind to come here?*

CONDITIONS — II OF III

OR

- A desperate need to return home—back to comfort and civilization—grips you.
- Movement becomes heavier and harder, as if over-encumbered by armor and fatigue.
- You lose hearing suddenly, leaving you with nothing but a high-pitched whistle.
- The sobbing of a loved one, wishing for your presence, invades your ears.
- You refuse to put down your weapon, no matter what else you might need your hand for.
- You feel a trickle of blood seep from your body, staining your clothes, seemingly out of nowhere.

Trees sprouting from rusted armor, branches twisted to look like arms.	A recently deceased man, pinned to a tree by a storm of arrows.	Flowers hum marching tunes—songs to keep spirits up in desperate times.

The dead begin to wake.



TERRORS

Warriors reminiscent of those from Ring 1 attack the party, laying siege upon the inn. They are now far more deadly and terrifying than their sad descendants. This sudden attack should drive our hunters out of the inn. These are soldiers far from the epicenter of the battle. They are not so much crazed undead, but deserters who are hungry and desperate to escape. They see the treasure-hunters as an impediment to that escape and will try to kill them, wielding magnificent and terrifying weapons in doing so. Evoke the party's wants, expressed in earlier Rings, with what these soldiers wield. Their goal is not to kill the party, but to drive them towards the forest's epicenter.

However the treasure-hunters escape from the inn, they find that the forest has come to life with the drippings of the dead. **Animals made from corpses and steel** harass the party. Shambling suits of armor stuffed with vines and viscera appear. They see the party as aberrations, incongruous examples of life when everything here has long since passed. They seek to drive the treasure-hunters to the edges of the last Ring, where the forest hopes to claim them. Emphasize the stench and the rot of dead flesh. These aren't ethereal ghosts, this is the raw matter of the dead.

TEMPTATIONS

The treasure-hunters suddenly find themselves in a large, open field. The sky is still obscured, but they can see a small **beacon of light** in the distance, much like the warm, beckoning bonfire they found earlier. They just have to cross a large, foggy field where they can hear—and sometimes glimpse—the signs of an ongoing battle, where maddened warriors who see everything as a threat are forever locked in combat.

The run towards the beacon of light will be difficult. The fog occludes obstacles, such as trenches, barricades, piles of corpses squirming as they try to extract themselves from each other, and never-ending melees. The whistling of arrows, the relentless clash of steel, the desperate pleading of the damned—they permeate the air and surround the treasure-hunters. But the end is in sight. They just have to run fast without looking back.

CONDITIONS — III OF III

OR

- Your vision narrows to a tunnel, leading you towards a sight of home you can never reach.
- Scars start appearing all over your body, each with a memory of how they came to be.
- You see what seems to be soldiers coming for you, always in the corner of your eye but never actually there.
- You are convinced that everyone you see is dead—nothing but walking corpses and skeletons.
- Time seems to stretch out, every second becoming an hour, every minute an eternity.
- You begin having memories of dying in a myriad violent ways. A sword to the gut. An arrow to the face.

Carrion birds follow your every step, waiting for their next feast.	The sky is unseen, covered in a dreary fog, twisting one's perception of time.	A ditch of age-bleached bones—skeletons trying to climb over each other.

The light is coming from a funeral pyre within a small fort town, preserved well against the elements.



TERRORS

There are **living cadavers** here, only they wear familiar faces. Some are the treasure-hunters' family, loved ones, or figures from their past. Some are other groups of treasure-hunters, cackling over their ill-gotten gains. Some are just warriors—soldiers stuck between life and death. Here, you're allowed to break a fundamental rule of the game: These monsters are named. They're not shambling, faceless undead. They were people. They had lives, aspirations, and names—at least until death, cruel and pitiless, came for them.

The denizens of this fort town will not attack the treasure-hunters on sight. Instead, they reenact their time spent alive, muttering and cursing to themselves. Have these corpses speak truths that haven't been spoken out loud yet. The town itself warps into recreations of each treasure-hunter's past as it tries to confuse and divide them. Make no pretence that this is different from reality. This is their world now, too. The forest has long since gorged their fears, and it is ready to let them bloom.

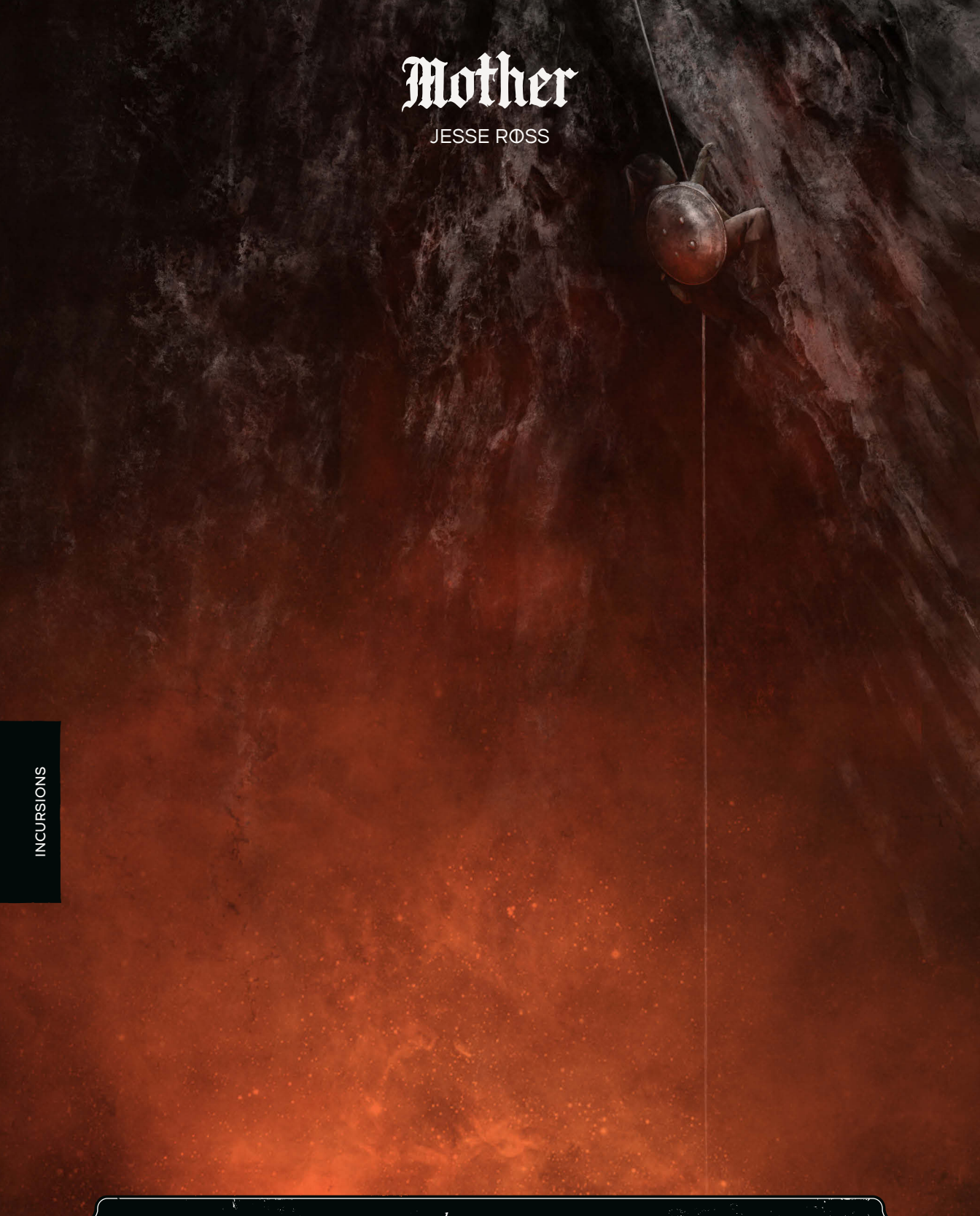
TEMPTATIONS

These walking corpses will each have **something valuable** on them. Connect these treasures to each treasure-hunter's Drive, expressed in earlier Rings. Have the corpses holding these treasures connect to the backstory of whichever character confronts them. Describe these treasures in detail—their make, their power, and their value. If these weapons have true power, use them to warp the surroundings, demonstrating their strength. Bring these treasures just within the treasure-hunters' reach, but ensure they'll have to fight before they get their hands on them. The parting with whatever treasure they hold will be horrible and traumatic for the cadaver possessing it. Deny a happy ending.

A path is paved in broken swords and shields, blades sticking out of the ground.	The whistling of an arrow passing close enough to have been a headshot.	Empty suits of armor litter the forest floor, reeking in rot, blooming in fungi.

Mother

JESSE RØSS



theme LABOR

WARNINGS: *Amputation, Body Horror, Confined Spaces, Graphic Violence, Harm to Children, Heights, Pregnancy, Slavery, Suffocation*

1

If you ask any experienced treasure-hunter to name the most terrifying thing in the forest, there is always one location that comes up more often than not. It goes by many names: The Fall, The Well, The Quarry. Despite its many names, it's always described the same way.

"The ground ahead of me had a slight decline, the descent eventually opening up to a massive hole as wide across as ten-score men lying foot to head. I got closer to see what might be down there. Every step forward filled me with vertigo, that I might fall in at any minute. I couldn't see the bottom. But I heard it. A thousand hammers tapping against a thousand chisels—plink, plink, plink."

Here the stories diverge. Some say there are miners down there, looking for gold, silver, or precious gems. Others say it's sculptors, crafting idols and rare artifacts for their chthonic gods. Whatever is down there hasn't seen the light of day for hundreds or thousands of years—anything brought back would surely be a unique trophy capable of fetching a sizable sum.

Oddly, the precise location of this vast opening never seems to be identified in the same place. Some say it is only a few miles off the south bank of the Naveh River, while others place it well to the north, nestled in the depths of the forest. These conflicting reports can almost certainly be attributed to the disorientation nearly all treasure-hunters suffer after time spent in the forest.

The treasure-hunters arrive at the quarry.

TERRORS

The treasure-hunters cannot see to **the bottom**, and dropping rocks down never results in a returning echo. They are strapped into their harnesses, rope in hand, rappelling down the face of a vast opening. Horizontal veins chase around the wall, indicating the layers and layers of history that have built up this land. Most of the veins are some shade of brown or gray—except for one, which is a blood-red clay.

- *How did you overcome the vertigo that hit you upon seeing the quarry?*
- *Why are you uncertain about how securely the rope is fastened?*
- *What legend do people share about the vein of blood-red clay?*
- *When your rope snaps, who tries to catch you?*

TEMPTATIONS

While rappelling down, someone notices a **pocket** carved into the wall. It's not far off their line, and just wide enough to crawl through. Echoing from deep within the pocket is a rhythmic tapping, like a hammer on a chisel.

- *One of the following gives you a strange comfort—the steady rhythm, the warmth of the earth, the tight space. Why?*

Your shoulder brushes against the clay, leaving a blood-red smear.	The twisting and straining of your rappelling rope—your lifeline.

The crawl begins.

2

TERRORS

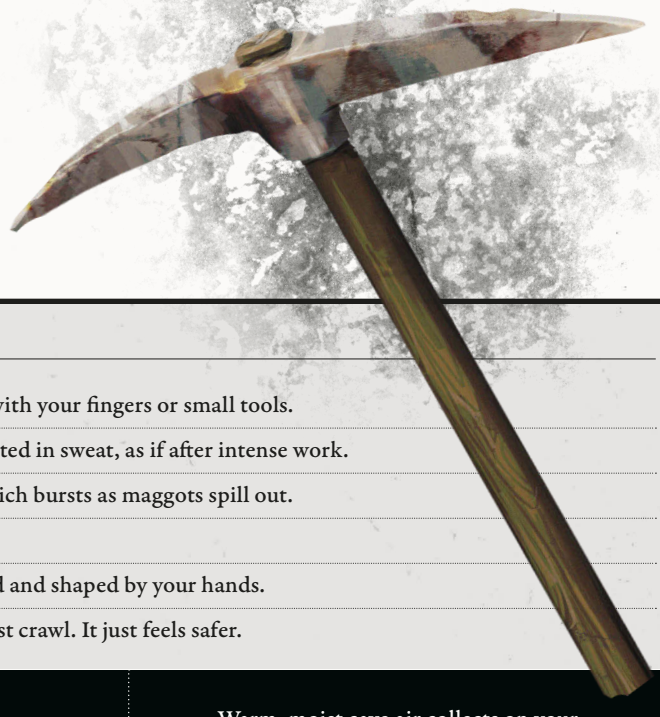
Crawling through the pockets in the wall leads to a series of **dead ends.** Doubling back leads to undiscovered paths. Eventually, the tapping gets louder, seemingly coming from below. The path is precarious. Any failure or complication on a Risk Roll here leads to a cave-in that splits the party.

- *How do you push against the darkness?*
- *How do you know the darkness is stalking you?*
- *What did you hear just before the cave-in that should have alerted you?*
- *What makes you think something untoward is happening to your missing companions?*

TEMPTATIONS

One half of the split party (preferably the part that was drawn away or further ahead due to the cave-in) finds a well-used hammer, and the head and part of an arm of an exquisitely carved, life-size granite **statue of a child.** Recovering an unbroken statue would more than fund this expedition.

- *Who does this statue remind you of, and why do you miss them so?*
- *Why do you neglectfully overlook the residual evidence of binding and bottling sorcery on the statue?*



INCURSIONS

CONDITIONS — I OF III

OR

- A desire to pick away at the rock face with your fingers or small tools.
- You are suddenly out of breath and coated in sweat, as if after intense work.
- A writhing bulge in your abdomen, which bursts as maggots spill out.
- Persistent nausea and imbalance.
- Everything must be worked and crafted and shaped by your hands.
- You refuse to walk anywhere—you must crawl. It just feels safer.

Tapping, steady and powerful like a titanic heartbeat.

Warm, moist cave air collects on your brow and mingles with your sweat.

Reunited, two hearts beat as one.



TERRORS

After what seems like hours, the treasure-hunters find their way back to each other. But each side believes that something seems different about the **companions** who were away.

- *What proves to you that they're not who they say they are?*
- *How far are you willing to go before you are convinced otherwise?*

TEMPTATIONS

The tapping re-emerges, though it doesn't appear to be quite as steady. A studious listen will reveal that there are two speeds of tapping—one regular and one an accelerated heartbeat. A **thin red vein** is discovered along the ceiling. It's currently impossible to get to, but it's clearly rough ruby. The vein widens the deeper the treasure-hunters go, presumably leading to the mother lode.

- *Chunks of unpolished ruby would be easier to transport than a large granite statue, so why does that statue still compel you?*
- *When do you realize that your heart is beating in sync with the accelerated tapping?*
- *Why does the tapping seem more important than the reason you originally came here?*

CONDITIONS — II OF III

OR

- You become violently aggressive when anyone slows down or rests.
- The earth calls to you with the voice of your mother.
- You only feel safe when you go deeper, so dig deeper.
- You can't touch anything because your hands are covered in calluses.
- The elemental language of stone and earth grinds away at your brain.
- You are profoundly paranoid when you look at your companions—they want to enslave you.

A smothering crawl, then the sudden and joyous release into fresh air.

Catching yourself caressing the cool, delicate face of a stone statue.

By following the vein deeper, the source of the tapping is finally visible.

4

TERRORS

Hundreds of masterfully carved stone figures the size and shape of **children** hammer at the earth. Occasionally one stops and cries out, like a lost child calling for their mother.

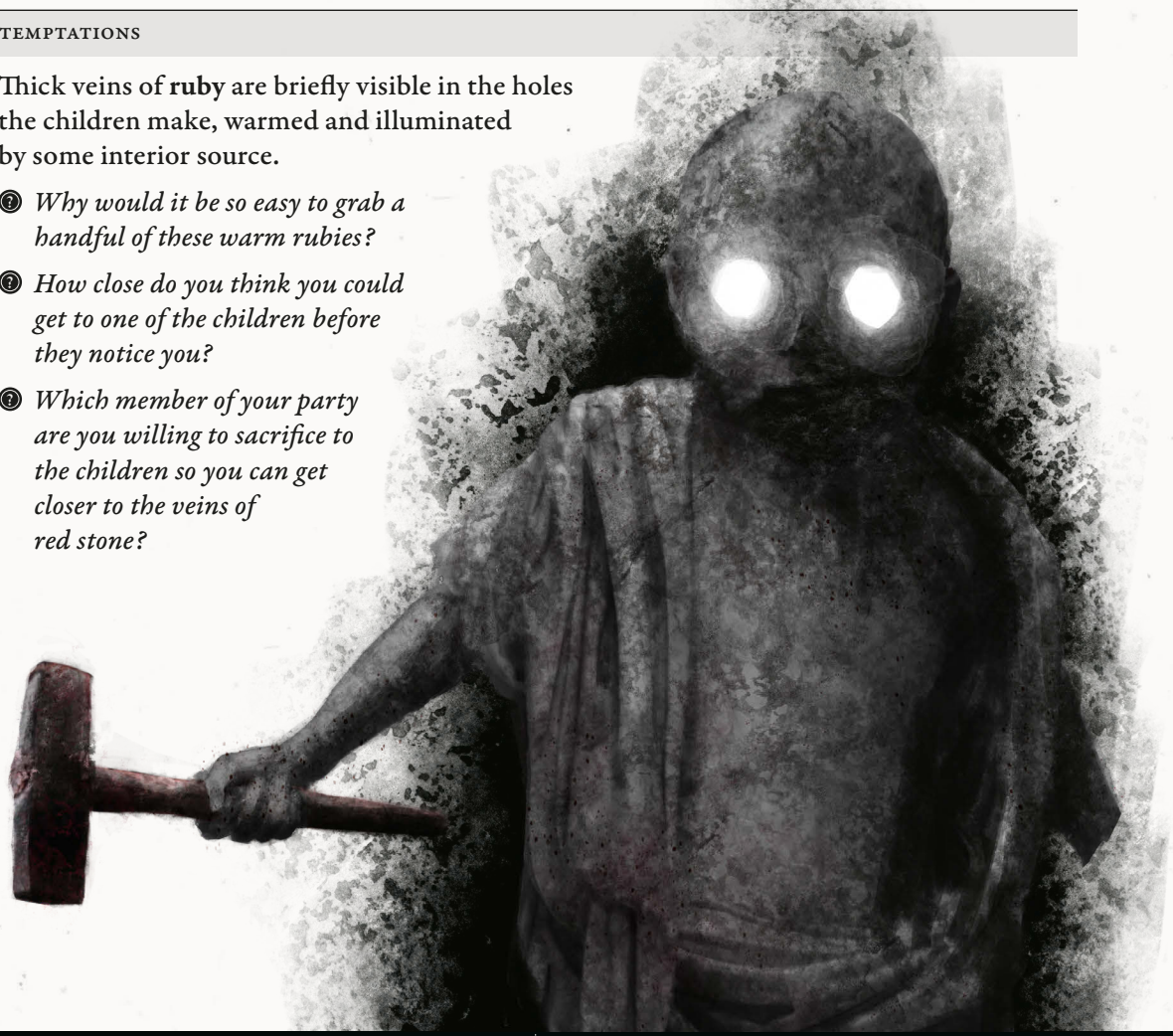
One stone child's hammer breaks. They fall to their knees and begin digging. Their fingers smash repeatedly against the hard earth and break into pebbles. Another child trips over them and gets in the way of their sibling's stump-like hands. The digging one smashes the fallen one to bits, oblivious to their presence. The screams of the fallen one are pulverized as soon as they escape their granite mouth. The earth itself trembles.

- *What folktales are told about the little people living in the earth?*
- *What ancient parable do you recall about a greedy king who imprisoned the earth itself to mine treasures for him?*

TEMPTATIONS

Thick veins of **ruby** are briefly visible in the holes the children make, warmed and illuminated by some interior source.

- *Why would it be so easy to grab a handful of these warm rubies?*
- *How close do you think you could get to one of the children before they notice you?*
- *Which member of your party are you willing to sacrifice to the children so you can get closer to the veins of red stone?*



The desperate wail of a frightened child ringing through abandoned tunnels.

Tears staining the granite face of your pursuer.

Mother's revenge.



TERRORS

Eventually the stone children will notice at least one of the treasure-hunters, likely as the result of a Devil's Bargain, failure, or complication. They refuse to let them take anything from "Mother" and will fall upon them with hammers. Shattering the children is possible, but every strike lands with a heart-wrenching scream and causes the earth to quake, threatening another cave-in.

The treasure-hunters could use a Ritual to push the earth spirits out of the stone children's bodies. However, the released spirits flow into the earth and bring to life a larger and more terrifying stone monstrosity, which targets the caster.

The **earth itself** cracks and rumbles, and tries to put out the party's torches or misdirect the party into attacking each other.

TEMPTATIONS

Someone gets into a position to **touch the veins of red stone**. Touching one washes the toucher's body in comfort and peace. Nothing hurts anymore, and nothing else matters—not the children's hammers, not the boulder crushing the air out of your lungs, not the blades of your companions. Your breath and heartbeat slow until they match the rhythm of the earth itself: still and eternal.

CONDITIONS — III OF III

OR

- You are convinced that you can bury your severed limbs to be reborn.
- A crippling fear that every crack stepped on will lead to a rock slide.
- You must water the earth with blood.
- Your fingers, your limbs, your body—all slowly petrifying.
- You see the stone children for what they really are—bound earth spirits.
- Return everything and everyone to "Mother" by any means necessary.

The pulsing, red heat of something primordial, unknowable, and abundant.

The eldritch tongue in which the children sob as they chisel into their mother.

Shifting Sands

LUIZ PAULO FERRAZ



theme TIME

WARNINGS: *Heights, Memory Loss*

They say a powerful civilization of untold riches once ruled over what is now an immense desert. Many believe an entrance to that people's lost seat of power lies somewhere in the sand, open to whoever can find it. You have a map from an old hermit who cried as you took it. They spoke of angry spirits that shape the wind and haunt the mind. Time to find out what lies buried in the desert—and what will remain there after your journey is done.

The treasure-hunters have wandered the desert for what seems like days when something other than sand emerges.

1

TERRORS

The treasure-hunters are surprised by a **decaying warrior** carrying a spear as they cross a rocky plateau.

How can you tell this frail soldier has been patrolling the ruins for centuries?

It immediately attacks the party with feeble strikes from its weathered weapon—it cannot be reasoned with. The warrior can be easily dispatched, turning into dust after taking a few blows. Its remains take to the wind or mix into the sand.

TEMPTATIONS

The warrior's cracked armor and faded fabrics indicate it was a palace guard. A couple of **gems and a golden necklace** can be pillaged from its remains.

CONDITIONS — I OF III

OR

- You suffer an alien, all-consuming sense of loss, like nostalgia for something you've never known.
- You have sudden bursts of personality that differs entirely from your own.
- You have difficulty remembering every other word.
- A song gets stuck in your head, growing louder with each minute—but you've never heard it.
- Every time you speak, you instinctively default to a foreign language that no one understands.
- Your loyal dog (which you've never actually had) goes missing.

The whistling wind sounds like a familiar tune you've never heard.	A distant sandstorm rages. Dark shapes move within it, but are gone when it ends.	The ruins of a stone house are revealed by the shifting sand.

The sand comes alive.

2

TERRORS

A sudden **sandstorm** whips up and engulfs the treasure-hunters. The sand scours the skin, clouds the vision, invades lungs, and turns people around.

Shadowy figures lurk within the sand. They grasp the treasure-hunters' limbs, tugging and pulling them in different directions.

TEMPTATIONS

The treasure-hunters break out of the storm and find themselves scattered, but in sight of each other. Two **stone pillars** mark the start of an ancient pathway, mostly drowned in the sand. The peaks of buried pathstones show the way.



INCURSIONS

A grove of petrified trees are, on closer inspection, an ancient fossilized ribcage.

The sun stops at its midday point for hours.

Every time you wake up from your fitful sleep, the stars are different.

As the sun finally sets, the temperature drops and the frosty night winds begin piercing the treasure-hunters' bones.



TERRORS

A circular, mostly collapsed structure provides shelter. The ground is solid, and offers a hole that could be used as a fire pit. The walls are covered in an ancient **mural** that depicts scenes of life, love, aspiration, and betrayal. The painted figures illustrating violence are shown backstabbing each other—they feel eerily familiar to a susceptible mind.

How do you see yourself pictured in the mural? Are you the betrayer, or the betrayed?

TEMPTATIONS

The scenes in the mural bring back all sorts of **memories**, as each onlooker fills in the lost history with their own experiences. They may also be foreboding predictions depicting their deepest fears.

What image do you see that reflects your past... or predicts your future?

CONDITIONS — II OF III

OR

- Your senses are dulled.
- Thoughts start sparking too fast; you jump from one idea to the other, barely processing any of them.
- Your skin gradually becomes spotted, wrinkly, and your hands become too smooth to maintain a good grip.
- A lethargy that seeps your will overwhelms you.
- Your clothes, armor, and weapons all begin to disintegrate and rust, ravaged by years of neglect.
- You see the world around you as it was a thousand years ago.

A sandy wind scours your flesh and erases a scar.	As wind passes through a rock formation, you hear the lament of a hundred voices.	A tall stone pillar stands mostly intact, with nothing around it.

The earth starts shaking.

4

TERRORS

The shouting of a thousand angry voices fills the air as a wraith-like **army of the dead** stomps the sand. They rush in the treasure-hunters' direction with blood in their eyes and rage in their war cries. The dead army starts taking the shape of a crescent moon, forcing the group up a nearby hill. Arrows made of bone rain down ahead of the army. Every time they find their mark, a treasure-hunter loses a moment of their past. The arrows steal their history, which becomes etched along the shaft in a language they can't read.

TEMPTATIONS

On the top of the hill, the sand is blown away by a sudden wind to reveal the **entrance**. It's little more than a hole in the ground—a passageway into impenetrable darkness. However, it bears the stone frame of the lucrative ruins they've been striving toward. After a long drop, the treasure-hunters find themselves at an underground crossroads. Three of the four paths are immersed in deep darkness—a strong, cold wind escapes the passages, extinguishing the torches of those who brave the dark. The fourth path is a walkway above a bottomless, ink-black pit. Huge metal pendulums, evenly spaced, swing steadily across the path. A mural made of gold sits at the end, depicting a large crowd kneeling below a ruler. Every single person in the mural is made of different gemstones. The ruler is sculpted from a beautiful diamond, impossibly shaped into a human outline.



A dead vulture drops from the sky; it's already decomposing.

The sand swirls into unrecognizable symbols, trying to communicate to you.

Many animal statues lie broken on the sand. Bones mixed in with the pieces.

The pendulum swings and the dead speak.



TERRORS

The treasure-hunters' **lost loved ones** start whispering from the shadows. Their whispers soon turn into moans and cries for help, beckoning the treasure-hunters to kill their companions so the spirit can inhabit a body once more. The people in the mural also beg the treasure-hunters to remove them from the wall, promising them wealth and fulfilment of their wildest dreams—with a catch: If there is only one heart beating in the ruins, the pendulums would follow their pace, making their return an easy task.

TEMPTATIONS

Time and money. Whichever otherworldly plea each treasure-hunter listens to, they can get something invaluable. Will they choose the return of a loved one, a second chance at a relationship they may have squandered? Or will they choose precious gems and gold, enough to afford any wish their heart desires? All it takes is a little murder.

CONDITIONS — III OF III

OR

- You develop a deep hatred for every modern object.
- Whenever something leaves your sight, you forget about it completely.
- You have sudden flashes of the imminent future that are always proven wrong.
- You briefly warp back in time to an earlier point in this journey.
- You find yourself regressing in age, acting as a youth, then a child, then an infant.
- You experience visions of yourself, from a parallel present.

Bird-like shadows pass overhead, but the sky is empty when you look up.	A snake hatches from an egg, quickly grows, sheds skin after skin, and dies.	The sand feels crunchy. Looking down, you realise you're stepping on bones.

Tomb of 10,000 Dreams

JESSE RØSS



theme SLEEP

WARNINGS: *Confined Spaces, Graphic Violence, Heights, Manipulation*

The forest is old and full of nightmares. But you know the path. Through the maze of brush and crushing darkness, you know where the tomb of a long-forgotten god-king—Argiol Seo—still lies. All that rests within it is yours for the taking. Will you tread carefully, and leave with riches and renown beyond your wildest dreams? Or will you learn—far, far too late—that the forest has awoken from its fitful slumber?

1

TERRORS

A member of the party hears a fallen branch snap behind them. A **rival band of treasure-hunters** has followed the party, willing to threaten and injure them to get information about the tomb. The rival band should feel familiar, appearing similar to the party itself in a few oddly specific ways.

How does one of the rivals remind you of yourself?

This can be an opportunity for the players to describe features and mannerisms of their own treasure-hunters by contrasting them against a third party. Whatever approach the party wishes to take, the rivals are easily overpowered and dispatched. The manner in which they're dispatched will show you the party's propensity for violence.

TEMPTATIONS

In the course of being driven off or taken out, the rival band reveals they know something about the tomb and its contents that the party was previously unaware of. Though none of them have been there before—hence why they were following you—one of them uses their last words to call the treasures inside the tomb "the stuff of dreams."

What do you dream of doing with your riches?

Found on the body of a rival band member, or left behind in their escape, is a fragment of a **funereal mask**. The gold has been scratched off, the jewels have been pried out, but it is clearly an ancient clay mask with its eyes closed. Anyone familiar with ancient artifacts, the arts, or history will know that this is in the style of the Seo dynasty.

Thousands of dragonflies in torpor, attached to trees and tents.	A gentle humming sound, like a lullaby.	A sudden warm breeze that smothers like a blanket.

Night comes more quickly than anticipated.



TERRORS

Because of the sudden nightfall, the party is forced to either set up camp or light torches to travel in the darkness. Either during the preparation of camp or in the continued travel, someone **trips and falls**, breaking or spraining their ankle. Luckily, another member of the party has materials for constructing a stretcher. This horizontal movement foreshadows the cave crawl in Ring 4.

If a treasure-hunter breaks off from the group for any reason, or if there is someone holding up the rear of the marching order during travel, that person temporarily **loses their way**. They notice the rest of their companions walking up ahead, run to catch up, but can't. Eventually the rest of the party finds the lost member, miles ahead of the direction the group was going. Whoever—or whatever—the lost member was following, there is no possible way it was the actual party.

TEMPTATIONS

Whether traveling in darkness or exploring during their overnight watch, a treasure-hunter discovers a garden of **stone statues** in an unmapped graveyard, with plaques or headstones listing the names of the king's advisors held in the final tomb.

? *What myths does your culture still tell about the king or how the old civilization met its end?*

Reincorporate these ideas in later Rings.

INCURSIONS

CONDITIONS — I OF III

⚀ OR ⚁

- ⚀ Your vision is blurry. You need to squint to see anything clearly.
- ⚁ The faces of your companions constantly swap with each other. You never know who you're talking to.
- ⚂ You are overwhelmed by a strong desire to lie down.
- ⚃ You know, for a fact, that you are in a dream. Climb a tree and try to fly.
- ⚄ You keep discovering things where they should not be: a beehive in your backpack, a knife inside a log.
- ⚅ Written words make no sense, rearranging themselves into arcane symbols and signs of things to come.

The cries of owls, frogs, and other night animals during daylight hours.	A bear in hibernation, unwakeable.	A garden of stone statues, nothing in common but their closed eyes.

Fitful dreams.

3

TERRORS

If the party decided to continue traveling at night, eventually they will be forced to make camp, whether due to the injured ankle or the exhaustion of travel. While sitting around the fire, pick one treasure-hunter to offer up a **ghost story** to entertain their companions.

- *What tales were you told as a child to keep you from entering the forest?*

During the night, each treasure-hunter who sleeps has frighteningly **vivid nightmares.** Ask each of them one or more questions from among the following.

- *What nightmare from your childhood still terrorizes your dreams?*
- *Which of the other treasure-hunters betrays you in your dream, and how do they do it?*
- *What landmark encountered on this journey reappears in your dream, and how do you know now that it was a bad omen?*

TEMPTATIONS

During camp, someone finds a **suprise item** in their backpack, surreptitiously added by a loved one before this journey into the forest began.

- *What do you find, and how does it remind you of home or of your Drive?*

Look for opportunities to connect the treasure-hunters to one another through their backstories, especially if you can show how one of them has held another back or kept them from their goals.

CONDITIONS — II OF III

OR

- You have vertigo induced by a feeling of falling.
- The exact actions of one of your companions or some other thing from the forest seem to mimic your own.
- Things from your dreams begin manifesting around you.
- One of your companions will not take that stupid face mask off. Take it off for them.
- You suffer from sudden time jumps which get worse and worse: Ten minutes, then an hour, then longer.
- If you close your eyes for too long, the monsters of the forest can sense you and find you.

A hole dug for a grave, left empty.	A slow breathing, seemingly emanating from the earth itself.	A fluttering form passes at the edge of your peripheral vision.

The forest begins to wake.

4

TERRORS

Things that should be **asleep and long dead start to rise**. The stone statues from the garden hunt the party. Vengeful spirits try to include the treasure-hunters in reenactments of the spirits' nightmares. The only refuge from this supernatural barage is the mouth of the tomb. Never describe these monsters in shorthand. There are no *golems* or *ghosts* here. These are *relentless chimeras bound in stone* and *violent winds that gnash at you like teeth*.

TEMPTATIONS

The **inside of the tomb** is glorious. Massive statues of the king in his various roles—god, rule-giver, diplomat, father—stand as if to greet the treasure-hunters. A few of the statues are intact, but many of them have fallen and broken, the result of years of plant growth and ground shifts. For a brief moment, the party may be concerned about these coming to life like the garden statues, but they never do. Some precious stones from the broken statues rest on the tomb floor. While picking them up, a treasure-hunter notices where a fallen bit of wall has blocked the main path deeper into the tomb, but has revealed an alternate route to the king's final resting place and his vast treasure hoard.

The king's hoard is clearly visible, but very hard to reach. To get to it, the party needs to make a tight, horizontal crawl through cold earth and descend a dangerous, vertical drop. Suffocation and falling are very real risks. They could use magic here, but anyone skilled in *rituals* notices some peculiar wards with unknown effects. Give the treasure-hunters only bad choices and see how they proceed.

CONDITIONS — III OF III

OR

- Every shadow you see seems to show a night sky full of stars.
- You wrap yourself in a blanket, fur, or other large cloth and refuse to remove it for any reason.
- You have the sensation of pins and needles in one of your limbs.
- If any of your companions tries to sleep, you must wake them up. Violently, if necessary.
- You are overcome by a temporary paralysis or unresponsive limbs.
- Weapons or other tools appear to you as snakes, food, or other strange objects.

Cricket chirps happen at increasingly greater intervals.	Memorable trees and stones appear in the wrong location.	Boots become heavy and walking slows, though the ground is not muddy.

Dreams and nightmares.



TERRORS

Before anyone actually enters the king's final chamber, each treasure-hunter has **visions** of their companions raiding the tomb and leaving them behind, penniless and dying.

? *How did you know it would always come down to this, you being merely a side character in someone else's dream?*

People, monsters, and other details of the treasure-hunters' **dreams and nightmares** from previous Rings begin manifesting. Now that the treasure-hunters are in the tomb, all the forest wants is to keep them contained here, until they are dead just like the king. The forest will play tricks on the treasure-hunters, making them confuse a companion for a monster, and shrouding or blocking the tomb's single exit.

TEMPTATIONS

Eventually the forest reveals **dream doors** to spaces which reflect the accomplishment of the treasure-hunters' Drives, but passage into the door is always blocked (inadvertently or purposefully) by one of their companions. Describe in exquisite detail the things each treasure-hunter desires just inside the door, and the barrier that is the bodies of their fellows. Promise them comfort and happiness and success and peace, and see how far they're willing to go.

If only one treasure-hunter is left standing at the end, give them everything they want. Let them accomplish their Drive, retire in comfort, and describe how perfect their life is. Then flash back to the present moment, and let them describe the peaceful smile on their face as they take their last breath inside the tomb.

The moon appears through the forest canopy, though it should be daytime.	A marker stone is discovered, covered with symbols evoking sleep.	Stones used as head rests during camp are later identified as gravestones.

Temple of the Sky

GABRIEL ROBINSON



theme HEAVENS

WARNINGS: *Body Horror, Burning, Heights, Human Sacrifice, Religion*

1

A vast stone spire stretches from a valley in the forest floor to the clouds. No one knows where it came from. Is it a rock formation from a time before the forest grew, a colony built by tiny creatures long perished, or the limb of a dead god? It is undoubtedly ancient—a towering refuge to flora and fauna from predators roaming below. But it's also known as the site of a small, ancient monastery, with steps carved into the stone by diligent monks of a forgotten order. They climbed the span of the spire to touch the heavens and escape the distractions of the mundane world. Some say they learned the secrets of long life from angelic visions and periods of extended fasting. Others say they kept priceless artifacts safe there—manuscripts of collected knowledge which only survived in the sky's vault.

Other would-be treasure-hunters have tried and failed to ascend the spire and enter the temple at its zenith. But you and your companions are wiser and better prepared. You observed the landscape, and read the omens of beasts and weather. You trained in the use of climbing tools for a careful ascent. Working together as a team, you are certain that the mysteries of the temple above will be known at last. Glory awaits those who are truly brave enough to ascend...

A tower reaching for the heavens is circled by an ancient guardian.

TERRORS

The stone spire towers over a clearing in the forest. The ground is bare in places, packed in strange grooves as if something had been dragged repeatedly in a continuous path around the spire. The treasure-hunters hear a great rumbling and rhythmic scraping as the form of a massive stone colossus shambles into view. It seems to be made from the same stone as the spire. If the party stays hidden, it soon passes and is easily avoided. A group of vultures circle overhead, watching the treasure-hunters as they approach.

- *Why does such a thing guard the spire?*
- *What else might be watching you from above?*

TEMPTATIONS

The surface of the stone is covered with thick vines bearing bright blue flowers. Their scent on the cool breeze is invigorating. Behind the vines are carved steps and hand holds in the rock, spiralling slowly upward. While the height is perilous, it is clear that someone long ago took great care to carve the path.

Feathers drift down from above.	The wind wails through small tunnels in the spire, as if playing an instrument.	Mottled lizards with long claws run up and down the stone, watching.

Strange and perilous weather. A shelter holds clues to what waits above.

2

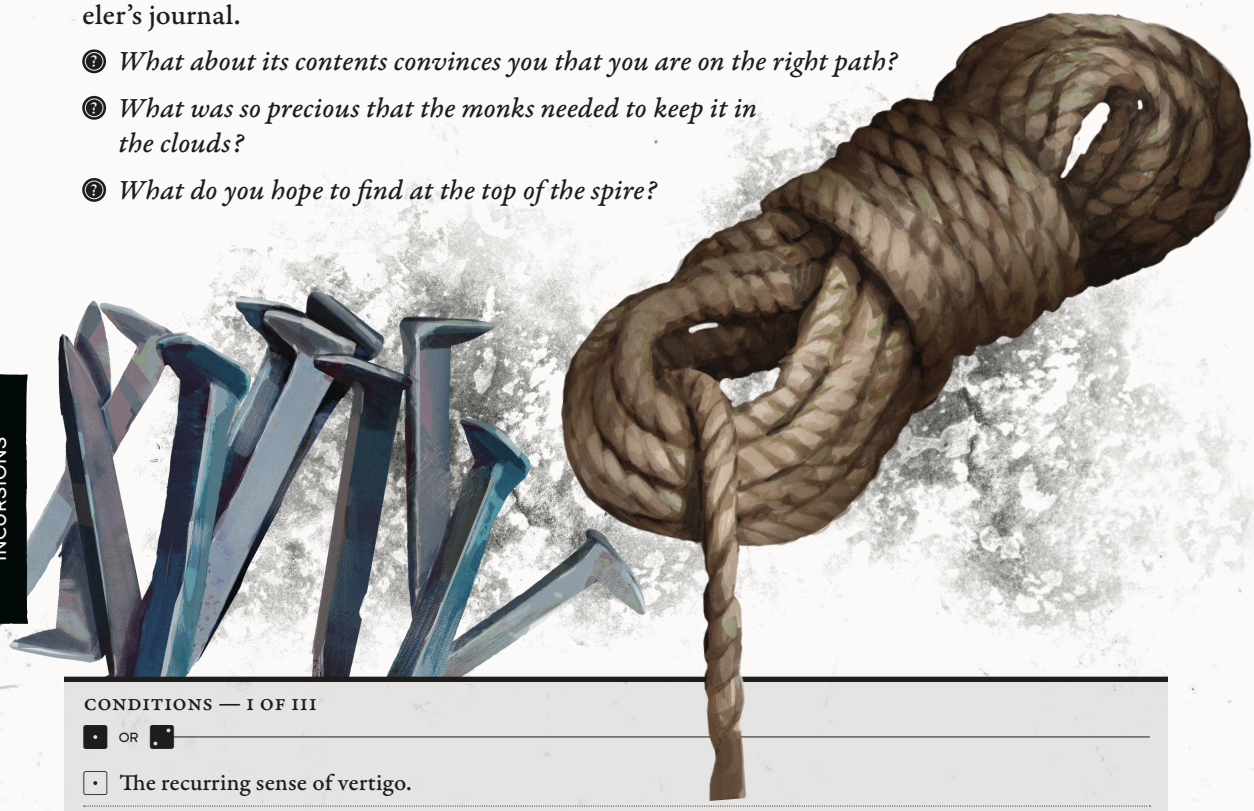
TERRORS

As the treasure-hunters scale the spire, the wind rises without warning. It pulls at their clothing and threatens to fling them to the ground below. The weather seems to follow its own patterns here—rain falls directly around the spire, even though the sky appears clear on the horizon. The stone ledges become slick as the rain falls, and the vines whip violently in the wind. The party is midway through their climb—attempting to descend in the storm would be certain death.

TEMPTATIONS

Midway up the spire is a narrow cave in the rock. It seems to have been used as a guard post at some point. A broken bow and empty quiver lie on the floor along with a length of rope, a hammer, and pitons for climbing. One of the treasure-hunters also finds a previous traveler's journal.

- *What about its contents convinces you that you are on the right path?*
- *What was so precious that the monks needed to keep it in the clouds?*
- *What do you hope to find at the top of the spire?*



INCURSIONS

CONDITIONS — I OF III

⚀ OR ⚁

- ⚀ The recurring sense of vertigo.
- ⚁ You understand the speech of birds—they seem baffled that creatures without wings would venture here.
- ⚂ You feel uneasy unless you are perching above everyone and everything around you.
- ⚃ You must move very slowly for fear of being swept off the spire.
- ⚄ You can no longer form words—only the chirps, shrieks, and calls of birds.
- ⚅ The wind calls your name, making concentration or sleep difficult.

Dessicated corpses hang, wrapped in vines like flies in a web.	A giant sloth—its fur green with moss—descends the spire with its hooked claws.	Smoke wafts upward from below—an intoxicating incense.

Unsettling imagery stirs restless dreams. Evidence of past pilgrimages.



TERRORS

The cave walls are covered in strange drawings, depicting winged beasts, a flame atop a mountain, and what appear to be winged human figures. The shapes are simply drawn but unsettling. The droning wind moves across the cave opening in a constant lull, pacifying the party into a restless sleep. Roll on the table below or ask them: ⓘ *What strange dreams have you had?*

- ⚀ An effortless ascent, aided by growing claws, a tail, or wings
- ⚁ Being hunted by leathery, winged beasts with beaks like spears
- ⚂ Entering the secret monastery alone, wreathed in flames
- ⚃ Rocks cracking, crumbling, collapsing from a great height
- ⚄ Falling endlessly into the void before waking with a start
- ⚅ Being pushed off the spire, into the sky by another treasure-hunter

TEMPTATIONS

The hollow of the cave is small but surprisingly comfortable. Carved in one side of the wall is a small alcove, which seems to have been used as an altar. Small gifts rest upon it, perhaps tokens from others who made pilgrimages here, perhaps the elements of a ritual. At least one artifact is clearly valuable.

ⓘ *What object on the altar reminds you of someone you miss from home?*

ⓘ *What represents a hope that you abandoned long ago, thinking it out of reach?*

ⓘ *What do you take without telling the others?*

CONDITIONS — II OF III

⚂ OR ⚃

- ⚀ Your skin becomes scarred as if struck by lightning—your entire body crackles with energy.
- ⚁ Soft down and golden feathers begin to emerge from your skin.
- ⚂ Your fingernails sharpen as your hands become talons.
- ⚃ A feeling of lightness, and the giddy confidence that you could fly.
- ⚄ The curious urge to look down... or the heedless desire to look only upward to the heavens.
- ⚅ You feel burdened. The weight of your fellow treasure-hunters and their equipment is too much for the spire.

Spiralling footprints of tiny birds in the mud.	Layers of fossils within stone, plants and creatures from a time before the forest.	An eagle's nest filled with boots and shredded armor.

Ancient terrors manifest. An illuminated passage marks divine transformations.



TERRORS

From far below, the treasure-hunters hear the sound of scraping against stone and feel the vibration of something huge climbing the spire. The treasure-hunters have awakened the temple guardians. The sky darkens and the air is thick with energy—a storm waiting to break. A horrible, guttural cackling echoes from beyond the clouds as the winged beasts from the stone drawings make their appearance. They are made of screaming wind and shadows, snatching whatever they can in their talons, carrying it away into the void beyond sight.

TEMPTATIONS

A winding staircase leads upward from within the cave. The way through becomes increasingly narrow, requiring the treasure-hunters to press themselves against the stone as they inch their way forward. The stone is roughly carved here, scraping and tearing at their skin. Just ahead, the air is cool and smells faintly of incense. The passage walls are painted in faded azure, gold, and vermillion, depicting more ornate versions of the cave drawings. The images show increasing sophistication, intricate icons, and flowing script hinting at the afterlife and the glorious fire of the heavens. The shapes of birds and people are increasingly merged, like angels bearing curved swords... or claws. Pressed close to the walls, the images are impossible to ignore. Inlaid in the paintings are gems and gold leaf, hinting at greater treasures above.

CONDITIONS — III OF III

OR

- Something watches you from the vast, open sky. You feel tiny and utterly insignificant.
- There is an unspeakable danger below—you must stay as far from the ground as possible.
- An angel speaks to you, wondrous and terrifying. You follow its words now, abandoning your previous Drive.
- Your heartbeat slows, matching the pulse of the stone spire. You are bound to it, now.
- A void grows within you. Winds from other realms breathe through it.
- A spirit haunts you—a monk from the ancient order, urging you to defend the temple from intruders.

The frayed end of a rope hangs drifting in the wind.	An explorer's satchel falls from a great height.	The shadow of a cloud passes over a grazing deer, which falls to the ground.

The sky temple is reached. A glorious path to ascension is offered.

5

TERRORS

The passage reaches the top of the spire, revealing the open sky. There are no walls here, only a circle of pillars supporting a massive, nest-like structure—a great orb woven from vines, tree branches, and bones. Unearthly golden light radiates from within it. At the center of the pillars, directly below the nest, rests a smooth stone bowl. It is darkened with ash and dried blood.

The remains of past treasure-hunters are heaped on the ground, their bones shattered and picked apart. Perched over them are monstrous birds of prey—giant owls, eagles, and vultures with bloody beaks and feathers caked in bone dust. Their screams herald the treasure-hunters doom, mocking them for climbing so high only to join their feast of bones. Their cruel talons and beaks will strip them bare of all that binds them to the world below... yet the purest one to survive the trial may be allowed to approach the golden nest above.

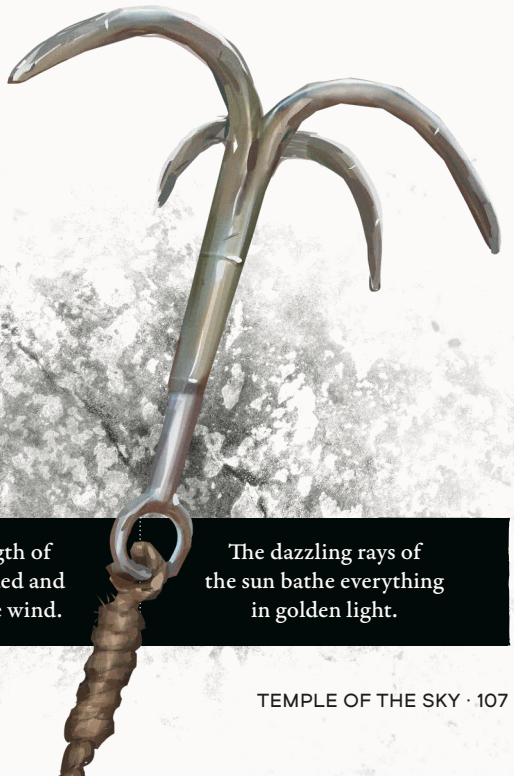
TEMPTATIONS

The polished stone pillars are impossible to climb—the only way to reach the nest is to fly. The wind rises stronger than ever, tugging at the treasure-hunters' clothes and possessions. If they just have faith, perhaps they can invoke the elemental energies of this place and ascend to the sky temple's zenith.

Any treasure-hunter may attempt to make a sacrifice using the stone bowl below the nest. If deemed worthy enough, they will be lifted above—whether by the winds or the fierce birds themselves.

Within the great nest, something stirs. Woven branches catch flame as radiant wings and gleaming gold talons emerge. An angel, impossibly beautiful and bright, gazes down upon the group, ready to embrace the most worthy. Its feathers are pure gold, its eyes liquid fire. All worldly desires pale in comparison to the beauty of its smile, its aura of scintillating light.

❓ *The way to the heavens is open to you. Are you prepared to ascend?*



A struggling bird trapped in a spider's web.

A tattered length of prayer flags, faded and fluttering in the wind.

The dazzling rays of the sun bathe everything in golden light.

The Forbidden Archives

GABRIEL ROBINSON



theme SECRETS

WARNINGS: *Body Horror, Confined Spaces, Dissociation, Heights, Insects & Spiders, Mannequins, Surveillance*

The lost Azure Archives of ancient Kalduhr are the subject of much speculation. The mysterious Keepers of the archives long ago locked away their secrets from the world outside. They say any knowledge can be found there, especially those writings deemed too blasphemous or revolutionary by various authorities. Grimoires of raw elemental power lie chained and sealed through techniques lost to all but the most practiced arcanists.

Those who claim to have entered the archives report that the entrance is forever changing, opening only in places of power at particular moments in time. Entire cults have formed to seek these entrances, each with their own prophecies. Miraculously, you and your fellow treasure-hunters pieced together an exact time and place when one of the entrances will open. You have done terrible things to come by this information, but it is a small price to pay. If the rumors are true, the right tome or scroll could grant you a luxurious retirement or clear you of a heavy debt. But perhaps you seek something more...

A miraculous entrance is guarded by a curious servant of the Archives.

1

TERRORS

The treasure-hunters have learned of a precise place and time when an entrance to the Azure Archives will open. Roll on the table below or ask them: *Where and when will the door open?*

- The shrine of a revered sage, on the day of their ascension.
- A statue of a famous poet in the Rose District of Ambaret, on her birthday.
- The former cell of a heretic in Barsul Prison, on the anniversary of his execution.
- The back door of a famous pub in Muckling, on the date of a brutal gang massacre.
- A tomb of the royal family, during the inauguration ceremony of a successor.
- Through a fortune-teller's tent flap in the Uncommon Bazaar, woven from scraps of nightmares.

As the door appears, the group encounters **a guardian of the Azure Archives**—a manikin servant formed from pieces of antique furniture and ornamental armor. The servant's appearance is worn, and its speech and movements are stiff and humorless. It attempts to dissuade the treasure-hunters from entering, insisting that the answers they seek lie elsewhere. The guardian is not especially strong or intelligent, however, and should prove easily outwitted or overcome by force.

TEMPTATIONS

Visible within the manikin's chest are shelves containing a small number of **books and crumbling scrolls** waiting to be filed. While not especially valuable, they are unusual and hint at the countless tomes waiting within the archives.

CONDITIONS — I OF III

OR

- Obsession with a seemingly trivial or useless topic of research.
- The compulsion to answer any question with a lie.
- The constant sense of being watched, your innermost thoughts being read.
- Prophetic signs of an approaching doom reveal themselves—only you can stop it.
- Strange writing appears on your skin in a language you do not understand.
- Your skin begins to peel, shedding as layers of dusty parchment.

The creak of an opening book, the abrupt thump as it closes.	The smell of old leather, mildew, and dust.	A voice whispering in hushed tones, always out of sight.

Dusty layers of history hide a priceless artifact.

2

TERRORS

As the group passes over the threshold, the door slams behind them with a shimmer of arcane energy, throwing them to the ground. Beneath their feet is layer upon layer of loose parchment, dry and crumbling underfoot. The treasure-hunters find themselves looking up a **long tunnel** formed entirely of old books from floor to ceiling. The floor is covered in a thick layer of dust and cobwebs. As they approach, the walls shift slightly, shedding a cascade of loose books and scrolls. The bludgeoning weight of falling books presses in from all angles, stirring a thick cloud of dust that threatens to overwhelm the party.

- *Why are you so sure you'll find what you seek, when everything here appears to be ruined and worthless?*

TEMPTATIONS

Most of the books are so decayed that they crumble immediately when touched, yet one of the treasure-hunters finds a **single, intact volume**. Ask the players what subject their Drives have in common. This book appears to discuss that subject with authority and at great length—yet no one has heard of it before. It is, undoubtedly, a rare and precious item.

- *Why do you deserve to keep this book, and not your companions?*



CONDITIONS — II OF III

OR

- ⚀ You find yourself unable to utter any falsehoods.
- ⚁ The continued discovery of written notes containing your personal, unspoken secrets.
- ⚂ The compulsion to uncover hidden messages in any written words.
- ⚃ You have read something your mind cannot bear—reality begins to unravel at the edges.
- ⚄ The urge to eat the very pages on which words are written, to digest their hidden meaning before anyone else.
- ⚅ You must record every word of your companions—they might lie about it later, or it may be prophecy.

The persistent rustling of pages, quills scratching on parchment.	A trail of keys on the floor leads to a pile of keys beneath a rusty locked door.	A spider weaves a coded message in its web, gesticulating in rapid signals.

Admission to the Archives is granted—and secrets are recorded.



TERRORS

The tunnel slopes upward to a wide circular chamber, lined and cluttered with books on every available surface. The room is illuminated by glowing glass spiders that hang from the ceiling. They occasionally drop down to retrieve a book before clambering up again to return it to the shelves. At the center is a twin spiralling staircase of ornate metals, branching outward like a massive silver tree. The staircase connects to layered balconies with more bookshelves that stretch above and out of sight. A series of writing desks surround the staircase, facing outward. Each one is occupied by an **Archivist**—tall, faceless manikins either hunched over ledgers or sorting piles of books. Their movements are uncanny and spider-like, as they appear to read and write simultaneously with a multitude of graceful limbs. Other, smaller manikins approach each treasure-hunter individually, ushering them toward the desks for admission to the archives beyond.

With the treasure-hunters alone and out of earshot from their companions, the Archivists ask each hunter why they have come to the Azure Archives and why they deserve entry... and whether they can trust their companions. The Archivists, expressionless as always, record the treasure-hunters' words dutifully. They are then warned that nothing must leave the archives, and that the upper tier is off limits to all visitors. Finally, as the key to admission, the Archivist asks each treasure-hunter what secret they carry. Anyone questioned by the Archivist must make a Risk Roll or be compelled to immediately learn the Ritual:

Extract — *compel someone to share a secret, exposing one of your own*

Learning this Ritual automatically increases a treasure-hunter's Ruin by 1.

- *How does the presence of the Archivist make you uneasy?*
- *What secret do you tell it, despite yourself?*

TEMPTATIONS

Whatever the treasure-hunters' answers, the Archivists appear to take their words at face value. Each treasure-hunter is given directions to an **archive section** of their choice, accompanied by one of the smaller manikin assistants. The directions are confounding, winding through corridors which appear to shift and change like a labyrinth. The assistants do not speak, but gesture gracefully and illuminate the way with their glowing eyes. The treasure-hunters are followed and observed. However, much like the guardian at the entrance, the archival assistants do not appear to read human expressions well and are easily deceived...

- *What do you seek in the archives? What will you do if you find it?*

Strange lights flicker in mesmerizing sequences—they must mean something.	The same book appears on every shelf you search.	An entire shelf of books takes flight abruptly, like a swarm of bats.

The ancient power animating the Archives stirs to defend itself.

4

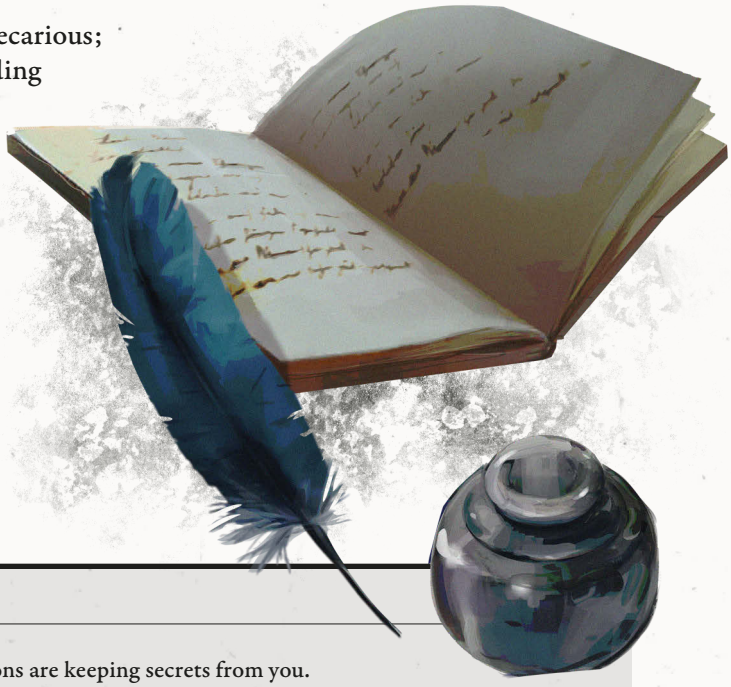
TERRORS

The archives awaken. Books take flight, shelves creak and constrict upon passages, and bound grimoires rattle their chains. Someone must have tried to steal or destroy an item. Every object, previously inanimate, now stirs to defend itself. From out of the paper-lined tunnels below slithers the dreaded **Bookwyrm**. It sheds pages as it winds its way over and between bookshelves, maw gaping with rows of sharp, inky quills. Flocks of sharp-spined booklets swarm upon the treasure-hunters, slicing their skin with thousands of tiny paper cuts. Books of barely contained arcane power fling themselves open, and strange words pierce the treasure-hunters' minds, threatening to devour all sense of sanity.

TEMPTATIONS

As the archives' guardians stir, the treasure-hunters are driven **upstairs** toward stained glass windows, where animated paper birds flutter in the luminous heights. The few books stored here are heavily secured, locked behind barred shelves or chained to pedestals like hunting birds—as prisoners waiting to be freed.

The way upward grows increasingly precarious; the ornate, flimsy metalwork of a winding ladder allows only one person to pass at a time, exposed to the open air at their back. The floor below is quite a long way down...



CONDITIONS — III OF III

OR

- The unshakable feeling that your companions are keeping secrets from you.
- A small locked door has formed on your body. You do not know what is behind it or when it might open...
- You hear the written words of every book nearby, an overwhelming cacophony.
- A whispering voice narrates your every action, adding critical commentary.
- Glimpses of the Archives' true form—breathing, pulsating, devouring secrets.
- Trapped powers resonate with any Rituals you know, demanding they be cast.

A pile of scrolls gently tighten and uncurl with the rhythm of a slumbering beast.	A feather quill writes of its own accord, duplicating a scroll over and over.	A mesmerizing row of prayer wheels. Sigils dance across them as they spin.

Terrible secrets yearn to be freed.

5

TERRORS

As the treasure-hunters traverse the archives' upper tiers, **scraps of paper** fall from far above like leaves. They spiral and twist toward the party where they stick to their skin. On them are written personal secrets about the treasure-hunters—things they haven't spoken aloud to anyone since entering this place. Those that are read wriggle away, rolling themselves into worms before attempting to burrow into the flesh of their subjects. The books on the final shelves begin reading aloud their contents with mesmerizing words in beautiful, forgotten tongues. They call to the treasure-hunters to free them, to open their minds and taste the power they offer. Some call for conquest, for spreading their truths to non-believers. Some texts demand to be sung so that the beings imprisoned within them can complete their purpose upon this plane. Others desperately want to be known and remembered, pressing their pages against anyone who opens them.

TEMPTATIONS

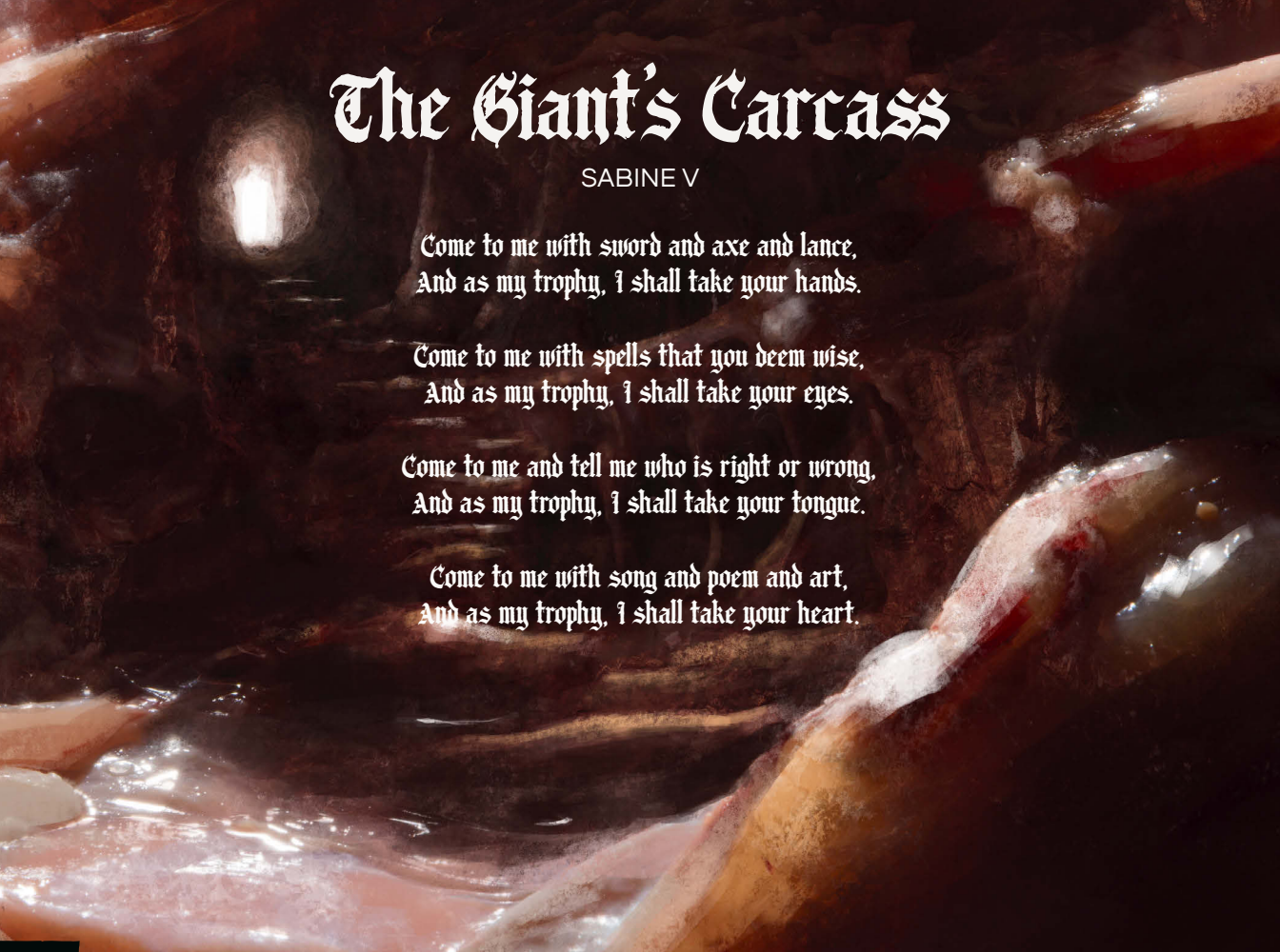
As the most **heavily chained tomes** compete for the treasure-hunters' attention, each offering more powerful secrets than the last, one thing is clear—they all desire to unite with one bearer above the others. All it would take is a little push toward the balcony edge, toward a ravenous book calling for fresh blood, toward the maddening texts that will overwhelm the mind of the reader...



A skeleton trapped between bookcases. Scrolls are tucked within its moth-eaten robes.

The shadow of a historian flits between shelves, endlessly pulling and replacing books.

Vast walls of books shift and rearrange themselves in new patterns.



The Giant's Carcass

SABINE V

Come to me with sword and axe and lance,
And as my trophy, I shall take your hands.

Come to me with spells that you deem wise,
And as my trophy, I shall take your eyes.

Come to me and tell me who is right or wrong,
And as my trophy, I shall take your tongue.

Come to me with song and poem and art,
And as my trophy, I shall take your heart.

theme BODY

WARNINGS: *Body Horror, Confined Spaces, Graphic Violence, Insects, Religion, Teeth*

Once, there lived a powerful sorcerer. Their magic was strong and unusual, but they wanted nothing more than to discover and learn. Legend has it that they ventured into the Kalduhr to wrest from it the magical secrets of immortality. The tales told speak of their success: They returned, greater than before, their greatness manifest in their now immense stature. As their greatness grew, so did their size. First, they overshadowed trees, then cities, then mountains.

That was when the gods intervened against the sorcerer-giant. The smith of the gods forged a mighty lance. The trickster of the gods laced the lance with a vile poison. The champion of the gods used the poisoned lance to pierce the sorcerer-giant's side. The giant fell with a mighty cry, levelling hills and forests under their enormous body.

And there they lie still, a giant's carcass—not alive, but not truly dead. The legends claim that the forest gifted the giant with the sigil of a Ritual, worn on their heart, which keeps them alive. Even more outrageous legends claim that brave treasure-hunters might enter the giant's carcass and retrieve the sigil, thus becoming immortal themselves.

The wound: The blood is dried, brownish, and smells of decay. It flakes at the touch.

1

TERRORS

Within the outer periphery of the wound, the **giant-delvers** have carved a home into the giant's half-living flesh. The giant-delvers revere the giant as some would a god, praying to them and carving tattoos and scars into their own bodies that reflect the giant's wounds. They will demand that the treasure-hunters do the same, and will turn to violent coercion if the hunters are reluctant. The delvers are wild-eyed and fanatical, yet they fight using only their bodies as weapons. They appear to enjoy each wound they take until they are quite overcome with ecstasy.

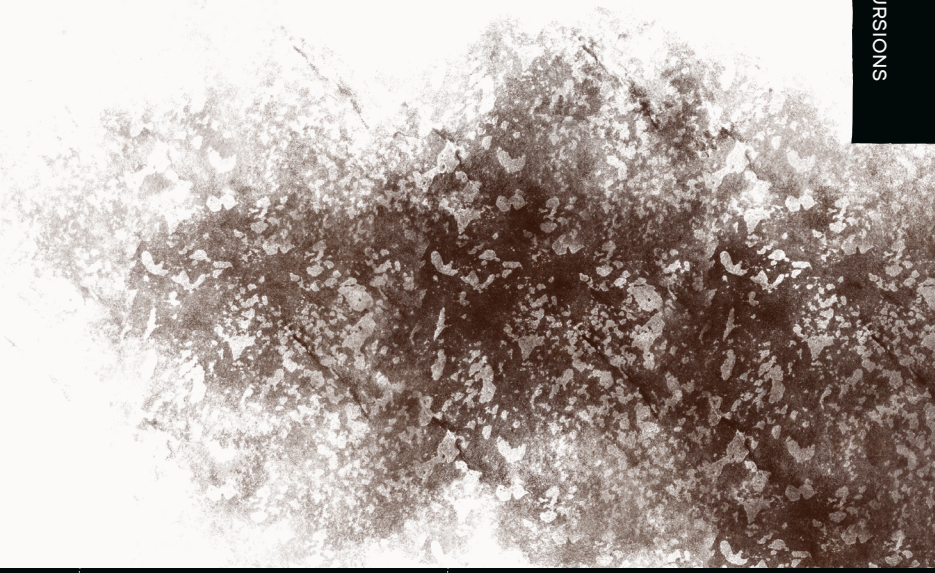
The giant-delvers breed larvae in the wound—grotesque, mouthless beings that make wet sounds and possess enormous eyes. These larvae feed on the giant's flesh. Their excretions make a powerful drug that numbs pain and makes every touch feel like the softest velvet imaginable.

TEMPTATIONS

There is a shrine that houses the **Higher Sigil of Black Bile** at the center of the delvers' camp, where the wound is intersected by another injury. If a treasure-hunter can cut the sigil from the giant's flesh, they may put it on their own, acquiring—and being acquired by—this new sigil and the Ritual that accompanies it.

Black Bile — *crush a person's hope and take their strength for your own*

The path along the wound is well-trodden, and there are many signs of previous expeditions. The giant-delvers will speak of previous treasure-hunters who returned from the carcass with strange flesh and mighty sigils.



A large scab falls and breaks apart, showering you with dry flakes.	Pus oozes from the wound's edge. It smells sharp and oddly clean.	The giant's bones glow with a dim, steady light. Everything feels sepulchral.

The lungs: The blood is a bright, cheerful red, full of oxygen and bubbles.

2

TERRORS

When the treasure-hunters arrive at the lungs, they feel a **steady wind** of stale air that smells of caves and something rotten. The pleural cavity is huge, filled with dripping bronchi and bronchioles. The treasure-hunters must cross the lobe to reach the next Ring—the spine. But the spongy underground is uneven, cresting in bronchioles and alveoli. The ground trembles, and the wind suddenly changes direction. It whips at the treasure-hunters and sends them tumbling into the cavity. Other things are pulled in—a tiny songbird, the skull of a grave maggot, a clot of flesh, blood, and hair—they buffet the treasure-hunters around, leaving them disoriented. The debris pushes the treasure-hunters deeper into the lungs, which expand as the giant inhales. The ground is unsteady with the earthquake-like convulsions. Will the treasure-hunters keep in sight of each other?

? *What does the maelstrom suck away from you?*

TEMPTATIONS

Like insects wrapped up in their cocoons, hermits live in the giant's lungs, ensconced in pulmonary lobules. They are bound tightly to their cells, contemplating the giant silently. They do not speak, and many of them have already grown into the giant. If one is pulled from their cell, they will weep and choke, speaking in rough whispers. One hermit carries the **Higher Sigil of Blood** and another the **Higher Sigil of Breath**. If the treasure-hunters are very, very careful, they might pull one of them off. But the hermits might wake and attack potential thieves with streams of bright blood or their air-stealing magic.

Blood — *give a person superhuman energy and power, or make somebody young*

Breath — *call up a hurricane or suck all life from a place*

INCURSIONS

CONDITIONS — I OF III

⚀ OR ⚁

⚀ Your hair falls out. Ask another treasure-hunter to describe the mark that becomes visible on your skull.

⚁ You become highly aware of every sensation in one body part and cannot ignore it. Which part?

⚂ You hear the sound of a heart racing in your ears. It's not your own heartbeat. Whose is it?

⚃ The giant's wounds begin manifesting on your body. Is this stigmata a sign of fortune or displeasure?

⚄ As long as you can hear a steady rhythm, you can do everything normally. If it stops, you are unable to move.

⚅ If you clench your hands, blood wells from beneath your fingernails. Why do you find the feeling reassuring?

Walking over the alveoli makes them pop like bubble wrap.	Macrophagic dust cells waft up like pollen.	The remnants of a delver are half-crushed into the ligaments of the lungs.

The spine: The blood is a deep, dark red and stains anything that touches it. It is sticky and clings to body parts.

3

TERRORS

The sharp-edged **vertebrae** that lead to the giant's heart are likely to draw blood. Once a character suffers an open wound, **corpse maggots** crawling around will notice them. On closer inspection, these maggots seem to have faces. Some have vestigial arms and legs. They crawl closer.

- *What details of their tattoos and skin markings appear familiar?*
- *Which of the other treasure-hunters carries a similar sign on their bodies?*

As the maggots come closer, the treasure-hunters witness their mouths, full of sharp, broken bones, hinged wider than they should be. They are hungry, those maggots, and they want to feed—maybe the treasure-hunters can placate them with a pound of flesh?

TEMPTATIONS

The maggots murmur and mumble. They are former delvers transformed. They speak their dreams and echo the treasure-hunters' desires.

- *What familiar phrases do you hear, and what speech pattern do you recognize?*

The **Higher Sigil of Yellow Bile** may be discovered on one of them.

Yellow Bile — *make a person angry and give them strength or heal them*

CONDITIONS — II OF III

OR

- Blisters grow on your feet that peel off with every step.
- Your teeth feel loose. One loud word—one shout—would be enough to push them out.
- A strained voice in your head—the giant's. What deal are they offering you?
- The taste of blood is in your mouth. Did you bite yourself, or did you inhale a bit of the giant's blood?
- A leech-like creature has suckered itself to you, yet you want to keep it attached and protected.
- Hair sprouts on a body part it usually wouldn't. What does your culture say about people with hair in this spot?

Some of the ribs are fractured and will seem to claw at you as you pass.	You have to duck under the vertebrae. Each time you do, it's harder to stand up straight.	You touch a nerve, and a vast shudder comes from a distant part of the giant.

The aorta: The blood is deep red with flashes of oily colors—purples, blacks, and ochres. And sometimes, there is a rare flash of gold.

4

TERRORS

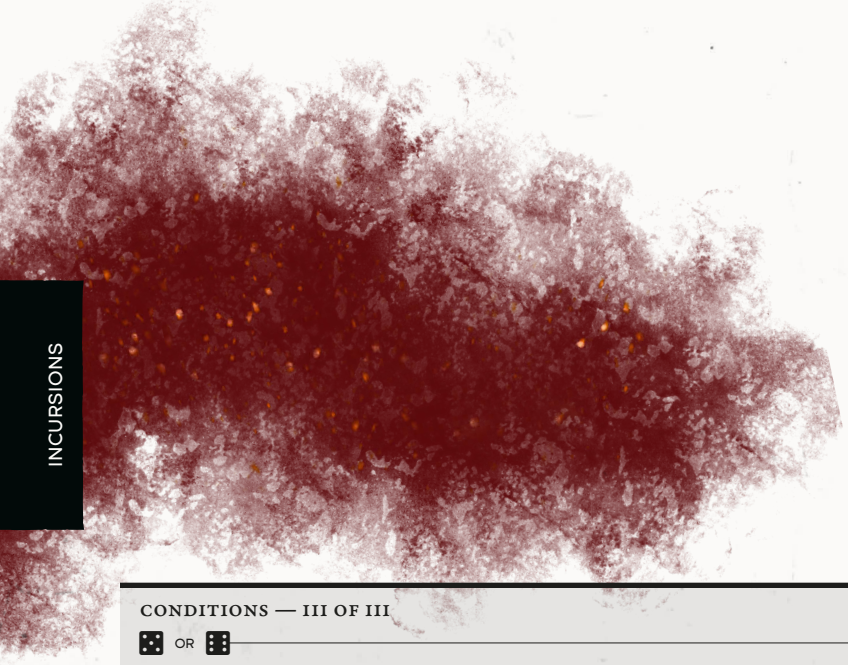
The aorta is a very **tight crawl**, and the fleshy walls seem alive. The walls shiver and attempt to embrace the treasure-hunters as they pass through this narrow tunnel. Their embrace targets precisely those parts of the body the treasure-hunters hate the most or like the best.

- *What will you give up to move quickly through this restrictive space?*
- *It almost seems like a birth canal. What do you envision you might be born as?*

TEMPTATIONS

The giant's **heartbeat** can be heard as distant thunder—the treasure-hunters are close! The **Higher Sigil of Phlegm** might be found lodged in the waving, undulating walls.

Phlegm — *age someone or something until it is old and frail*



INCURSIONS

CONDITIONS — III OF III

OR

- A body part splashed with the giant's blood feels young and vital. What if you bathed your whole body in it?
- Your intestines make noises that sound like words. What words do they repeat over and over again?
- With each new part of the giant you enter, you feel yourself growing taller, stronger... and angrier.
- Your companions' body language speaks more loudly than their words. You can't even hear their words anymore.
- Any kind or helpful act you witness makes your chest tighten and your heart hurt. The only relief is betrayal.
- With every breath, you hear the air whistle and wheeze. What word wants to climb out of your throat?

It has grown very warm in this tight space, almost too hot to breathe.	The walls move continuously in a smooth, almost soothing pattern.	A large blood clot blocks your way. Removing it unleashes a sluggish wave of blood.

The heart: Ask the players what color they think a giant wizard's blood should be. The blood here is precisely this shade.



TERRORS

The giant's magic is still alive here. The giant both resents the intrusion and yet welcomes the opportunity to share their nightmares and dreams. **Memories of the giant** and memories of the treasure-hunters start to intermingle and merge. Let the treasure-hunters tell you what spurred their desires, and mix that with the humiliations and triumphs of the giant.

There is only one Higher Sigil of the Heart here. Only one of the characters can attain it. Let them stumble through the memories, so that everyone has a shot at trying to be the first to grab hold of it.

TEMPTATIONS

The **Higher Sigil of the Heart** is on prominent display. It is the one thing that keeps the giant's carcass alive, and it can be grabbed by only one treasure-hunter. If this person successfully takes it into their body, it will make them immortal. However, the Sigil does not heal any harm that person might have suffered before.

Heart — *become immortal*

Someone erected a shrine to the giant in the cavity that houses the heart.	A spear sticks out of the heart, tiny and insignificant.	Human bones lie in front of the Sigil—a skeletal hand is extended, hopeful, greedy.

Witchwood

JESSE ROSS



theme OZ

WARNINGS: *Body Horror, Graphic Violence, Manipulation*

You hear a child singing sadly somewhere off the trail.

A sequence of strangely-colored birds flit about the trees—red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet.

1

When children escape to the woods seeking adventure or fleeing cruel parents, the part of Kalduhr they frequently find themselves in is known as Witchwood. Unlike some of the darker parts of the forest, Witchwood shines like a polished emerald. The animals there seem just a bit more vibrant than similar animals found elsewhere, and a rainbow can often be seen through the leaves of the canopy. But beware: Just because Witchwood seems like something out of a lullaby, the terrors that lurk there are every bit the nightmare as anywhere else in the Kalduhr.

The treasure-hunters enter the Witchwood in search of Dora, a young girl who ran away after telling her aunt and uncle stories about a "green fortress" she found in the forest.

TERRORS

Venturing into the forest, the treasure-hunters come across **a man bleeding out.** They know him to be a fellow treasure-hunter and tracker. He sputters out, "Witch... has... Dora..." He then asks a member of the party to share a message with his son back home, but dies before saying what he intended to tell him.

Further in, another body is found, crushed under a boulder too heavy for a person to lift. Only the legs are visible. Eventually, the party catches sight of the witch—a faeborn woman run through with a blade after facing the two now-dead treasure-hunters. She limps off, and disappears in a cloud of red smoke before the party can confront her.

TEMPTATIONS

Spilled on the ground near where the witch disappeared are a pair of **iridescent shoes.** They shift through a series of colors, but never green. They are also covered in arcane engravings of what look like crowns, hearts, and shields.

The shoes are warm to the touch, and pulse with a faint glow while moving toward a specific direction deeper into the forest. Like the dead messenger, they also seems to want to go home.

The treasure-hunter who puts on the shoes automatically marks 1 Ruin, but gains one of the following Rituals (player's choice):

Door — *draw a door on a solid barrier to create a portal through it*

Guide — *conjure a thread to follow*

Maze — *the surrounding environment warps into a labyrinth with you at the center*

The shoes can only be removed if the treasure-hunter dies or steps into the realm of Faerie.

A sudden gust of wind shakes the forest, threatening to knock down trees.

A diminutive face peeks through the brush, then disappears.

The treasure-hunters move deeper into the forest, following the shoes' pulses.



TERRORS

Though the shoes try to guide the treasure-hunters through the forest, the forest itself tries to keep them out. **Hungry trees** grab at the party, trying to burrow seeds inside them. The trees cannot uproot themselves, but are otherwise fully animate. Their twisted limbs grasp at the treasure-hunters, seeking to bind them or tear them apart. They can be hacked at, but cannot be fought. There are simply too many of them.

If a treasure-hunter fails a Risk Roll, or accepts a seed as a Devil's Bargain, they may begin taking on attributes of the hungry trees. They could develop bark-like skin, their arms could become long and branch-like, and—if they mark their last Ruin and are fully lost—they could become one of the hungry trees.

After dealing with the trees, pick any one treasure-hunter, but preferably the one with the lowest Ruin. All the other treasure-hunters begin noticing that their backpacks are lighter:

? *What crucial tool or precious heirloom is missing from your pack?*

TEMPTATIONS

The path into and out of the forest is marked by the occasional discovery of a **gold coin** or some other trinket sparkling underfoot—treasure dropped during a frantic escape, no doubt. The treasure can be collected, and the party may contemplate getting what they can and getting out better than the two men from the last Ring. Ask the treasure-hunters about their Drives, noting that this treasure only represents $\frac{1}{50}^{th}$ of what they would need to achieve their dream, to say nothing of locating Dora.

INCURSIONS

CONDITIONS — I OF III

OR

- Your limbs seize up, making it difficult to move.
- Overwhelming memories of home wash over you.
- Animals you encounter seem to speak to you. What do they say?
- A dominating, animalistic hunger rises in you.
- You can only see in black, white, and shades of gray.
- You break out in song or dance during moments of intense violence or fear.

Your foot kicks crumbled brick, proof that the path on which you walk was once paved.

Strange pink bubbles float from the trees, but each pops as it approaches.

A momentary stop in a luscious fruit grove.

3

TERRORS

After the encounter with the hungry trees and the treasure-gathering, the party stops to rest in a quiet grove of fruit trees. One by one, each of the treasure-hunters who had something stolen from them is approached in secret by a **small boy wearing a faded fancy blue outfit**. In a high-pitched, sing-songy voice, the boy says:

"Your friend, they were here before. They said they want you to die here. That's why they paid me to steal your gear. I'm so ashamed."

HE WANTS TO

Cause mischief and sow discord.

Be liked and praised.

HE DOESN'T WANT TO

Be touched.

Talk about witches.

The boy hands the stolen gear back to the treasure-hunter. He says he's returning the gear and sharing this information now for no reason other than to assuage his own guilt.

The boy is a fae creature and cannot be captured or harmed. He knows the forest better than the treasure-hunters, and can slip into the realm of Faerie at the first sign of danger, disappearing in a puff of blue smoke.

The boy knows nothing of Dora, but does know there are witches in the woods, and is afraid of them. He also knows the way to the green fortress, but will only tell the correct route to one of the treasure-hunters. He'll lie to everyone else.

TEMPTATIONS

One of the treasure-hunters finds a **rare fruit** growing in the forest that they haven't had since they were a child. The fruit was rumored to have been harvested out of existence.

? *When you taste it, what touching memory of home does it evoke?*

CONDITIONS — II OF III

OR

- All the colors around you increase in intensity, almost blinding you.
- You hear a cackling laugh after everything your companions say.
- Your companions are not real. How could you prove it to them?
- Your skin is slowly turning to burlap, metal, or fur.
- You suffer from a crippling terror when you are not holding the hand of one of your companions.
- A shadowy black hound only you can see begins following you.

The remains of a man are tied to a tree, a clear warning to stay away.

You see a half-finished log cabin ahead, and a rusted ax abandoned in a stump.

The king of the forest.



TERRORS

While resting, the treasure-hunters hear an approaching rumble—the roar of a **giant lion**. Somehow this creature has detected the presence of the party and now hunts them. Despite its size, the lion is a stealthy stalker, appearing suddenly and with little warning beyond the slight rustling of leaves.

Before the lion is seen, ask the party:

- *What do you imagine this terrible beast will look like?*

When it finally shows up, ask:

- *How is it worse than what you imagined?*

Anyone who fails a Risk Roll in the presence of the lion takes the Condition *Cowardly*, becoming easily frightened and willing to follow the commands of others.

TEMPTATIONS

In fleeing from the lion, the party comes across a stone structure overgrown with moss and ivy—this can only be **the green fortress**. Clearing away the growth reveals symbols similar to those found on the shoes. There are no doors, but the walls can be scaled. The structure's interior is a labyrinthine series of hallways lined in luminous moss that bathes everything in a dim green light.

The shoes stop pulsing and shifting colors as soon as the treasure-hunters enter the labyrinth, settling on a rich green hue.

CONDITIONS — III OF III

OR

- You feel the need to consume something peculiar, like brains, hearts, or fear.
- Directions are meaningless. You can no longer tell left from right, up from down.
- You bleed straw or oil when cut.
- Everything appears to you in shades of green, which makes it hard to navigate the forest.
- You see tiny, blue-clothed children following you, but only in your peripheral vision.
- You are convinced this is all a dream. Mistake everyone for someone else back home.

The roar of a large cat or bear rumbles some distance away.

A small pocket of red poppies fills the air with a heady fragrance.

There's no place like home.

5

TERRORS

The green fortress and its labyrinth are bits of the Faerie realm intruding into the mortal world. The fortress is protected by a powerful **fae guardian** who twists the routes of the maze to keep humans and other non-fae from entering.

If there is a faeborn in the party, they will not be blocked or tricked—they are welcome to return to Faerie, their true home.

For all other treasure-hunters, the fae guardian tries to convince them that none of this is real, and clouds their heads with dreamlike visions. The guardian offers exactly what each treasure-hunter wants in an attempt to trap them in the labyrinth while also pitting them against one another. It might offer one treasure-hunter a place to lie down and rest and another a table with a feast, with the latter not realizing they're about to stab into and eat the former.

If anyone should make it to the center of the labyrinth, whether due to their fae heritage or some other bit of cunning, they'll find the fae guardian, speaking in muffled whispers behind the curtain. After pulling away the curtain and exposing them, the fae guardian will give honest answers to any of the treasure-hunters' questions:

The witch who died was trying to give Dora enough time to make it through the labyrinth. Dora is a faeborn, and she will not be returning. She is home now.

TEMPTATIONS

The fae guardian provides the temptations in the form of **realistic illusions**. Connect them to the treasure-hunters' Drives. If a member of the party hasn't done so already, a treasure-hunter will eventually find the center of the labyrinth blocked by a curtain, with muffled whispers coming from behind. Tearing the curtain away dispells the fae guardian's illusions, allowing everyone to see the terrible results of their actions.

A tree's bark is knotted and warped in a grimace, as if a face in pain. Its branches seem to unfurl like stretching fingers.

A flock of winged, imp-like creatures shriek like monkeys through the canopy ahead.

The Plantation

NICHOLAS MASYK



theme HUNGER

WARNINGS: *Body Horror, Cannibalism, Graphic Violence, Harm to Animals, Starvation*

1

Deep within that blighted land which the vengeful wood has reclaimed lies the abandoned manses and forgotten manors of wealthy landowners and foppish nobles. Built in hubristic defiance of the old forest, tales spread among the border lands of one such manor—a lavish plantation atop sweeping hills that overlook terraced fields—where, before the spirits of Old Kalduhr reclaimed what was theirs, indolent lords and ladies gorged themselves on progressively rarer and more esoteric delicacies to sate their endless hunger, eventually consuming their servants and even each other in orgiastic cannibal gluttony.

The nobles are gone now. They fled the butcher's knives of their comrades and the vengeful cleavers of their would-be meals. Only the accumulated wealth of all of the region's nobility remains, hidden away under peeling floorboards and in dusty cellars, just waiting for an enterprising treasure-hunter hungry enough to find it...

TERRORS

On the far edge of the once-manicured grounds, the treasure-hunters encounter a party of timeworn **noble men and women**, garbed in shredded, gore-encrusted, and mud-smeared finery. They are hunched over the bloated, fly-shrouded corpse of a massive pig. The nobles stuff handfuls of raw meat, viscera, and entrails into mouths full of rotting teeth, heedless of blood and other effluvium that spatters their painted faces and powdered wigs. Their necks, wrists, and waists are bedecked with jewelry of gold and precious stones, and their pockets and undershirts are stuffed to spilling with coins and gems.

When approached, the nobles initially seem overjoyed by the treasure-hunters' arrival, bemoaning their fate of being ejected from the plantation by "ungrateful wretches" who have "denied them what is rightfully theirs." They plead for assistance, particularly food, claiming to have not eaten in "weeks or days." They become increasingly agitated, demanding whatever food and drink the treasure-hunters possess. Any attempts to deny them or leave will incite the nobles to assault the treasure-hunters with gore-streaked teeth and filthy, taloned fingernails.

? *What treasures from the nobles do you take, and how do you hide them from the others?*

TEMPTATIONS

Further past the nobles and the pig is an **overturned stagecoach** that looks to have been torn apart in a frenzy. Suitcases and bags of shredded and discarded finery are strewn about the road. The moldering, maggot-infested corpses of a pair of horses are still lashed to the wagon. The charred body of a footman is strung up under a tree, skin crisped black as the bark of an oak. A cookfire still smoulders beneath the body, fuelled by the remnants of muddy, ashen silks and satins. There are bite marks all up and down the footman's legs and side, and what's left of the skin of his face is pulled taut into a rictus grin.

? *What desperation and hunger has your background forced you to suffer?*

The most delicious smells waft past your nostrils, but are gone moments later.	A pack of starving, feral hounds snarl and snap over a bone.

The trek to the manor house.

2

TERRORS

The treasure-hunters emerge into the irrigated **rice fields** between them and the plantation's manor house. Tall, neck-high stalks of golden yellow jut out like spears from brackish, knee-deep waters. Overhead, the sky is ashen, and the air is thick with smoke that billows up from scattered fires throughout the fields. Everything smells of ash and charcoal; the faint, coppery taste of blood is in your mouth.

As the treasure-hunters descend into the rice fields, the cinders, smoke, and stalks of rice make navigation or locating each other impossible. The mud at their ankles is as thick as molasses. As they wade through the muck, swarms of biting flies descend over any exposed flesh. Despite the overcast, greyish atmosphere, the temperature is hellish and nearly unbearable. Strange rustlings and splashes and shadowy shapes move through the stalks, tugging the treasure-hunters in different directions.

? *What is weighing you down? Why can't you afford to simply discard it?*

TEMPTATIONS

When the treasure-hunters finally emerge from the rice fields, they find themselves scattered, but within eyesight of each other. The remnants of a largely **eroded road** lead up to the manor house, flanked at each side by withered willow trees stripped to the bark. The trunk of each tree has been charred by flames, and almost every other tree has a corpse tied or nailed to it. Like the footman's corpse from earlier, these bodies have all been gnawed upon. Unlike that of the footman, these corpses appear to have been flayed first, and the teeth and hair have been removed.

? *What do you think of those that jealously hoard riches, while others toil away in poverty?*

CONDITIONS — I OF III

OR

- Pain wracks your belly. You can't stop yourself from consuming anything that looks even remotely edible.
- Your feet harden and your toes twist and melt together, forming cloven hooves.
- Faint lines of ink begin to appear across your skin, marking choice cuts of meat like a butcher's diagram.
- Your mouth abruptly fills with thick saliva, but becomes as dry as a desert in the blink of an eye.
- You are distracted by an ever-present scent of smoke and cooking meats, which only you can smell.
- You uncontrollably and unconsciously clench your fists until your nails peel away the flesh on your palms.

The air is filled with the maddening, unending buzzing of flies.

Twigs burst like overripe fruit beneath your feet, spilling a fine mist of blood.

Decadence, decayed.



TERRORS

The **big house** of the plantation is a baroque monstrosity of neoclassical architecture fallen to ruin and disrepair—ivory columns turned a blackened yellow from the endless smoke, carefully-inscribed porch fence posts splintered and scattered about for kindling, cream-colored walls barely standing. A once-impressive doorway adorned with filigree and gilt engravings has had the gold stripped away, including the doorknobs and hinges, while the heavy oak doors lie carelessly discarded. Inside the shell of the building, the treasure-hunters observe remnants of a once-opulent mansion, picked over like a vulture picks over a corpse. The chandeliers have been emptied of gemstones, the silverware has been stripped of silver, and anything of value has been torn away by the root. The grounds are littered with despoiled skeletons—flensed of flesh, drained of blood, and bones cracked for marrow. Still more bodies are trussed up as if for slaughter, suspended from ropes lashed to rafters or nailed across door frames.

While searching the ruins for anything of value, the treasure-hunters notice any gold, gemstones, or jewelery taken from the nobles on the road.

? *Why do you now covet what your companions took? Why did they hide it from you?*

TEMPTATIONS

Despite the decay and disrepair, the ruins evoke the culmination of the treasure-hunters' wildest **dreams made manifest**—a big house, filled with countless rooms boasting priceless art and artifacts, perched high atop a hill overlooking a manicured lawn and the gently swaying fields of gold where their servants toil away. The scene also evokes foreboding predictions of losing everything they've worked so hard to attain, and a suspicion of those who would seek to take what is rightfully theirs.

? *What will you do with your share of the treasure? Who will try to take it from you?*

INCURSIONS

CONDITIONS — II OF III

OR

- Your front teeth burst forth from your lips, like tusks.
- You nervously bite at your nails, only to sink your teeth into the bone of your own finger.
- You thirst for any spilled blood, whether your own or someone else's.
- A wave of heat washes over you, and your skin reddens as if you were being cooked inside your own clothes.
- Bristly, coarse hair sprouts forth all over your body.
- You are overwhelmed with hunger for a highly specific food—nothing else will satisfy you.

A keening wail is heard from overhead as a lone vulture circles.

Pained screams of animals being dragged to the butcher's block. Some sound human.

Night falls swiftly as the treasure-hunters search the ruins of the manor.



TERRORS

Soon, the plantation grounds are illuminated only by whatever light source the treasure-hunters brought with them and the glowing embers of the fires scattered across the rice fields. As it grows darker still, eerie shuffling, rustling, and snorting sounds ripple through the swaying fields, punctuated by guttural grunts and barks. Shadowy shapes flit through the wave-like fields, the suggestion of twisted, unnatural forms. A horde of pallid, bloated **porcine figures** lumber slobberingly into sight; cloven hooves trample stalks of rice—some on two legs, some on four. As they advance, the treasure-hunters make out bristly fur splattered with mud and gore, boar's tusks and yellowed teeth, and gnarled hands clutching a motley array of butcher's tools—rusty hooks, blood-streaked knives, and dripping cleavers.

The horde gropes laboriously through the dark, encircling the big house. They appear fattened by their feasts, yet driven to consume all in their path—to cleave and flense and charr and gnaw and drink the blood to slake the thirst and gorge themselves on the red, red meat.

Who among you is the slowest? Who will you sacrifice to feed the pig-men's hunger?

TEMPTATIONS

One of the treasure-hunters nearly stumbles over a heavy wooden door on the floor of the manor house ruins. The faint gleam of brass on the door's ring has all but been worn away. The hatched doorway reveals a rickety, splintered staircase leading downwards into an unnaturally warm, sweet-smelling **cellar.**

As the treasure-hunters seek refuge in the cellar from the horde of hungry swine, they notice that the walls and floor are coated with a thick, dark crimson, dripping from a ceiling with arched rafters reminiscent of a giant's ribcage. Huge, rope-like maggots the length and thickness of a man's forearm wriggle and writhe across the floor. Fly-choked, flayed skins suspend from the rib-like rafters, conjuring images of obscene laundry. In the center of the room, the source of the unbearable heat, is a greasy firepit belching forth billows of black soot. Atop the firepit are dozens of overturned cast-iron cookpots and cauldrons, each overflowing with rivulets of molten gold that carry glowing piles of precious metals and gems.

Will you risk searing your flesh to fill your hands with gold?

There is a sizzling, popping sound, and the smell of burnt flesh and hair.

Rotting animals trussed up for slaughter are arranged in geometric patterns.

The promises of the queen.



TERRORS

A monstrously beautiful and beatific figure emerges from the shadows, clad in gore-streaked servant's whites: **The Sow Queen**. Her pinkish skin glows matronly beneath prickly fur as her cloven hooves crush powdered bone and splatter molten gold underfoot. She drags a sodden cloth sack the size of a grown man across the room and empties the contents—chunks of raw meat, organs, severed limbs, and seemingly gallons of blood—into one of the smoking, gold-filled cauldrons. She then stirs it with a jewelled, golden ladle. The smell is simultaneously savory and cloying, redolent and ambrosial—a rich, heady scent that is like nothing the treasure-hunters have ever smelled, but evokes insatiable, maddening appetites in them.

What does the fulfillment of your Drives smell like?

The smells bring forth visions of the treasure-hunter's ultimate triumphs... being partaken by their companions. In every flicker of the flames, every drip of deep crimson from the ceiling, every gust of bilious smoke, they are assailed by scenes and images of their companions fattening themselves, consuming more than their shares, growing bloated and satiated on the trappings of wealth and power, while they themselves are left to starve and wither away, unfed.

TEMPTATIONS

The Sow Queen's visions show the treasure-hunters the **uncountable wealth** hoarded away by her children: hidden away in cellars and caches throughout the plantation, buried among the golden stalks of rice, rendering in the blackened cauldrons. All the gold they could ever need, and all she asks for in return is meat and blood to slake her children's hunger and thirst. Meat and blood in exchange for gold, meat and blood they have not yet tasted. Meat and blood to pay for their deepest desires. Meat and blood to fill the cauldrons.

How much gold is enough to satisfy your hunger? How much meat? How much blood?

CONDITIONS — III OF III

OR

- Food turns to ashes in your mouth, but anything others possess looks and smells incredibly appetizing.
- You are fixated on one particular companion—you want just a small taste of them.
- Anything organic—food, drink, leather, wood—will go to mold and rot, unless you eat it now.
- Something writhes beneath the skin of your forearm.
- Your mouth and nose are slowly stretching and forming into an animal's snout.
- You are convinced that you will gain the strengths and powers of any monster—or person—you eat.

A rat scurries across your feet. It flops over and bursts open, writhing with maggots.

Blood leaks from broken barrels. Inside are flayed skins, packed with salt.



The Retribution Tree

SABINE V

My roots reached deep when I was young and free
And I knew nothing of the Retribution Tree

My stem grew straight, while jealous eyes were watching me
As I heard rumors of the Retribution Tree

My branches broke when hate and fear kept hounding me
I started longing for the Retribution Tree

My seed of hatred is so black, it's blinding me
Now I'm a trophy for the Retribution Tree

theme TREE

WARNINGS: *Body Horror, Graphic Violence, Human Sacrifice, Mannequins, Manipulation, Pregnancy*

Most people who intrude upon the forest of Kalduhr go for the gold rumored to be hidden in the ruins. Yet there is another legend that draws the desperate and the defiant into those hateful woods—the tale of the Retribution Tree. An enormous, old tree that knows the helpless hate in your heart, and will grant you retribution if your desire is cruel and deep enough.

So, is it?

Can you find your way to the old tree's children and grandchildren, and will they let you pass?

ROOTS & SEEDS

The GM should ask these two starting questions at the end of character creation.

What are your roots? These are things that ground your treasure-hunter, whether they're a person, object, idea, or principle.

Roots provide story ideas throughout this incursion. They trip up the treasure-hunters in Rings 2 and 3, becoming obstacles and hindrances. Yet in Ring 4, their roots strengthen them and give them courage.

What seed did you leave behind? This is something your treasure-hunter left unfinished, forgotten, or abandoned, whether an idea, person, object, or something else. It could also be something shameful or hurtful you've put behind you.

Seeds sour and eventually turn against the treasure-hunters. Ring 2 expands on what this seed means for each treasure-hunter, and the seeds in Ring 4 fuel monstrosities.

On the edge of the forest, young trees bear light green leaves. Their bark is smooth and has never shed. Occasionally, a treasure-hunter might glimpse a human-shaped bundle of leaves hanging from a branch, sometimes adorned with a token. They all appear recently made.

1

TERRORS

Walking is easy under the youthful forest's canopy, but at some point one of the treasure-hunters notices broken branches and old leaves that did not come from any nearby tree. Moans and rustling soon follow, and at last, they see **The Wicker Man**. The Wicker Man used to be a person, just like one of them. But time has rendered him into a thicket of tangled brambles that cut into his skin. When they come closer, they notice that he spills blood that is more purplish than red, like thick blackberry juice.

The brambles growing out of the Wicker Man's mouth prevent him from speaking clearly. He mumbles mostly unfamiliar names, like Orichalcum, Arkose, Tamarind. There is helpless pain in his voice and movements, and he flails at anyone who comes too close. He is not a monstrosity—he is just a man who lost himself to the forest. He might attack if provoked, and while he is easily overcome, the brambles will drink his death and grow large and grotesque on his corpse.

If he is asked about the Retribution Tree, he points deeper into the forest, and clearly enunciates the word "hate" over and over.

TEMPTATIONS

A narrow path leads the treasure-hunters to a small clearing surrounded by straight, adolescent trees. The scenery is peaceful—birds sing, a soft wind rustles through the leaves, and the smell of fresh garlic rests in the air.

Fifty or more corpses hang from the trees. They have decomposed somewhat and don't carry the scent of death. However, it seems they left this world through various brutal methods—bludgeoned, torn apart, hammered. A sign hangs over them: "For the crimes committed by the 7th Cavalry Regiment, justice has been served." The sign's lettering appears to have organically grown from the wood.

Every corpse with an arm points deeper into the forest, where the narrow path continues.

? *The 7th Cavalry Regiment is known for countless atrocities. What were these misdeeds, and how did these deeds directly affect you?*

A tree groans in the wind—the lonely and desperate sounds of dying hope.

A sharp crack echoes, a falling branch topples, followed by silence.



As the treasure-hunters follow the path, the trees age. Most are still strong and young, but some with stagnated growth stand there, stunted and twisted, barely alive. The person-shaped bundles of twigs and leaves take on more definition. They appear a little more human, though are still rough and lacking individual characteristics. Only some of them have eyes or mouths. The sky grows darker as the canopy thickens and the wind draws roiling clouds.

TERRORS

The **strong winds** bluster through the forest, breaking branches and toppling trees. The path is winding, making it difficult to predict the direction of each gust—it's almost as if the storm is herding the treasure-hunters. Branches fall in front of them, diverting their path. A loud, nearby crack announces a falling tree, and then another, and another.

When the treasure-hunters try to escape the cascade, roots grasp at their feet to trip them.

? *What about your own roots made you stumble, fall behind, or hesitate in the past?*

TEMPTATIONS

As the wind picks up, the treasure-hunters hear **names on the breeze**. If they inspect the manikin bundles, they notice that the tiny, scratchy whispers come from the figures with mouths. Each calls a specific name (Duhrin, Ambara, Olin, Sibel, Kel, Pyrite, Aurum) and no more than that. Let the treasure-hunters speculate, then tell them that they hear their own name among the whispers.

? *What wrong did you commit that warrants being called out by the forest?*

Try to connect their wrong to the seed they left behind.

CONDITIONS — I OF III

⚀ OR ⚁

- ⚀ You hear a strange, drawn-out sound. It is the trees growing, slowly and inexorably.
- ⚁ Metal and stone feel strange and unpleasant to you. Your hands crave the feeling of wood and plants.
- ⚂ Food is disgusting to you—you can only be nourished by the sun. Your hunger is overwhelming at night.
- ⚃ Your whole body becomes stiffer, and it takes more effort to bend.
- ⚄ The sky is cold and uncaring, so far away. Leaves and branches overhead are much more pleasant.
- ⚅ Small creatures are attracted to you. They follow you and climb on you. A few even nest on—and in—you.

Fallen leaves and twigs crackle under every step, a melody of movement.

A bird utters a warning cry, alerting the area to danger. It follows the party.

The trees are now older and more mature. Mighty trunks rise above, and the undergrowth is sparse. The human-shaped bundles start looking more like dolls, all sporting eyes and a mouth. They continue whispering names.

3

TERRORS

The trees' **roots** grasp tightly at the treasure-hunters' ankles now as the path becomes more overgrown. It is almost as if the trees themselves want the treasure-hunters to be with them. Eager branches reach for them, dragging them towards the tree trunks. A sacrifice, however, might satiate those hungry trees.

TEMPTATIONS

Shortly after entering this Ring, the treasure-hunters encounter the hut of **The Manikin Maker**. The Manikin Maker is an androgynous elderly person who will not reveal their name if asked—they instead reply that names have power, and they long since gave theirs up. They ask if the treasure-hunters wish to create manikins of those deserving revenge, claiming doing so will cause the targets no harm. However, if those miscreants ever enter the forest themselves, it will know them, and not favorably. The Manikin Maker just needs some twigs and leaves, a name, and maybe a token. Once complete, the treasure-hunter must draw upon their deep-seated hatred and spit on it.

The Manikin Maker tells the treasure-hunters that the Retribution Tree can offer them revenge if they want it enough. The Manikin Maker speaks of the tree's hunger, and tells the treasure-hunters to watch themselves so they do not become another's price.

If a treasure-hunter took one of the Manikin Maker's creations with them, it begins whispering the name of the hated one with all-consuming rage and bile. If they left the manikin behind, they still hear its voice somewhere in the forest. If any treasure-hunters chose not to make a bundle of their own, they only hear faint whispers of other names, including their own.

CONDITIONS — II OF III

OR

- Your feet grow small roots. They press painfully against your shoes, so you must walk barefoot.
- You move slowly. You want to remain as still as possible, letting the world move around you.
- Your skin becomes rougher and drier, and a bark-like pattern emerges.
- You think you can understand the slow and steady language of trees now. What they share is terrifying.
- Your limbs lengthen. Your arms, legs, fingers, and toes are long, spindly things now.
- Your companions are not real people—they are merely manikins made of twigs and twine.

Loud scrambling from the underbrush.
A small blackbird is making this ruckus.

The soft earth soothes your aching feet.
It teems with whispering worms.

The narrow path peters out at the foot of a steep incline. The trees that grow on this slope are gnarled and bent, old yet tenacious. They cling to the earth with tough, thick roots. It is possible to climb to the top, but it is not easy. The manikins in the trees are now life-like and many in number. Most are quiet and appear to be sleeping, but some murmur insistently, and a few others are all but screaming.



TERRORS

The treasure-hunters encounter **manikins** that look eerily familiar to them—take your inspiration from the starting question related to seeds and the questions in Ring 2. Each manikin resembles a treasure-hunter, encased in twigs, bark, or brambles. These manikins scream the treasure-hunters' names as they attack with the intent of pushing them down the steep slope. They are monsters, but they will mirror every wound their treasure-hunter takes. They also want their target to suffer, not merely die, and will act accordingly.

TEMPTATIONS

High up on the hill, the treasure-hunters spot the hunched figure of a **tree** with twisted branches. It stands as if it were expecting the treasure-hunters with terrible, greedy patience. The forest's roots continue to grip at the treasure-hunters feet—which isn't a bad thing given the steep incline.

? *What about your roots has always helped and supported you?*

CONDITIONS — III OF III

OR

- Leaves grow out of your ears, nostrils, and eyes, altering your senses.
- Any cut you suffer releases a thick, sugary sap rather than blood.
- A seed fell on your body and starts growing within you. You must hide its growth.
- All your hair starts falling out and blows away, like leaves in a strong breeze.
- With a crack like a dry branch, the next injury you suffer breaks one of your limbs cleanly off.
- You sneeze and release pollen into the wind. It has a surprising effect on your fellow treasure-hunters.

A brook, nearly choked by leaves and debris, with trees drunkenly leaning over it.

A silent wall of needle trees, standing to attention like soldiers.

The attacks from the manikins cease once the treasure-hunters reach the platform at the top of the incline. It is quiet up here—no birds, no wind, no murmuring bundles. The tree itself is bigger than it looked from the foot of the hill, rivaling the size of a castle or small village. Markings are carved into its bark, where wine-red sap runs from each ancient symbol.

TERRORS

Pulsing acorns hang from the branches, one close to the ground, the others higher up. They carry the seeds of the treasure-hunters' destinies. But do they ache for retribution or restitution?

As soon as a treasure-hunter picks up one of the acorns, they are taken away—into a **vision**, a **memory**, or maybe into the actual **moment**? The target of their revenge manifests.

? *In the haze of these visions, is it hope or hatred that guides you? Do you take your revenge, or do you make things right between you and your betrayer?*

TEMPTATIONS

Whatever choice they make in the vision, the Retribution Tree tells them that it can become true. They can have their retribution or restitution, but either way there must be a **sacrifice**. A life, given to the Retribution Tree. The tree cares not for who or what is sacrificed—the treasure-hunter making the choice or another treasure-hunter. Either way, it must be now, and it must be here. If no sacrifice is made, the tree allows them to leave, but their manikin is not that lenient...

The corpse of a huge tree, its hollows housing spiders and fungi.

A tree is decorated with woven bones and branches, like an altar or a grave.

The Spiral

JESSE ROSS



theme SERPENT

WARNINGS: *Body Horror, Confined Spaces, Harm to Animals, Hoarding, Manipulation, Snakes*

A strange mark has begun appearing on the doors of the homes in Fort Duhrin. A spiral, roughly carved and splashed with ink, first made its appearance on the door of a blacksmith's shop. Four nights later, a washerwoman found the same mark on her home. Four nights after that, the governor's inquisitors dragged folks from their beds, demanding answers for the mark found on the governor's wardrobe this eve.

The governor has halted all expeditions into the forest of Kalduhr until the perpetrators are apprehended. Information leading to their capture promises a sizable reward—with the forest expedition you had planned now stalled, that reward may be your best chance to make good on your debts.

The constellation of the Serpent hangs brightly in the sky.	A rodent stumbles across the floor, leaving a spotty trail of blood behind it.

The treasure-hunters stand outside the home of the governor.

1

TERRORS

One of the treasure-hunters knows an **inquisitor** who will grant you access to the governor's keep and quarters.

- *Why are they willing to risk their position for you?*
- *What might it cost you both if you were discovered here?*

Everyone at the Fort has heard **rumors** that the governor has peculiar tastes.

- *What rumors have you heard?*

Upon entering the governor's bedroom, it's finally clear **what he collects** and keeps hidden from all but his inner circle.

- *What bizarre, profane, and strange collection is piled up into a shrine, and how is it worse than any of the rumors?*
- *What do you take with you, and how do you hide it from the others?*

TEMPTATIONS

When they see **the mark** carved roughly into the wardrobe door, the initial impression is of a spiral carelessly splashed with black ink. Anyone in the group skilled in *rituals* knows better. This mark is similar to runes used in *Burrow*, *Door*, *Guide*, and *Summon*—Rituals of summoning and travel. It has long been speculated that these Rituals are all derived from an ancient, more powerful rite that could allow near-instantaneous travel between any two distant locations.

- *How might you be rewarded if you figured out how to perform this Ritual?*

CONDITIONS — I OF III

OR

- Your skin begins peeling and sloughs off. Underneath, you are someone new.
- You begin hoarding disgusting items.
- You have the urge to eat inedible things.
- You feel the need to hug, squeeze, and wrap your body around others.
- Your blood becomes acidic when it comes into contact with air.
- You will only eat things that are still alive.

A member of the kingsguard retches into a worn wooden bucket.

A peasant works furiously to put out a fire.

Inside the governor's quarters.

2

TERRORS

Peering inside the wardrobe reveals a hallway and a short staircase leading up to a **door**, which is ajar. This hallway makes no sense, given the layout of the governor's keep. Like a slithering serpent, the hallway ripples from one end to the other and briefly smells of bile, the air stinging your eyes and throat. The door at the top of the stairs starts to close. Anyone who rushes toward it can get to it. The door opens to the blacksmith's shop.

If the governor's door is closed and later re-opened, roll a die to find out what happens:

⚀ OR ⚁	They create a portal to the blacksmith's door.
⚂ OR ⚃	They create a portal to the washerwoman's door.
⚄ OR ⚅	They create a portal to a dream-like, subterranean tunnel. Anyone looking inside immediately makes a Ruin Roll. If the treasure-hunters enter the tunnel, immediately proceed to Ring 4.

The same process is true when closing and re-opening the door from either the blacksmith's or the washerwoman's premises, just with portals to the governor's door instead.

If the treasure-hunters leave the governor's keep and investigate one of the other marked locations—the washerwoman's or the blacksmith's—they find kingsguards attempting to keep watch. However, the guards are overwhelmed by a noxious, acrid odor emanating from the marked doors, forcing them to regularly step away from their posts.

? *How do you keep yourself from being attacked by the poisonous air?*

TEMPTATIONS

A few of the guards are attempting to remove—as quickly as possible—a collection of objects from the locations. Like the governor's estate, small hoards of strange objects can be found there—extracted from the homes under cover of darkness.

Careful investigation reveals that the blacksmith was collecting **dozens of iron cages** filled with dead, snake-like creatures, the length and width of a human arm.

? *What do the creatures look like, and—despite their size—how do you know these are juveniles?*

? *What do you take with you, and how do you hide it from the others?*

The guards at the washerwoman's home are removing **large barrels sloshing with liquid**. The liquid is clear and caustic. Glancing inside reveals a large, egg-shaped object floating within. Trying to dump the liquid out to retrieve the object will invariably cause the egg to break. Its shell is leathery, soft, and fragile. The egg contains a cloudy, viscous slime, and a pale, half-formed serpentine creature.

? *What do you take with you, and how do you hide it from the others?*

Regardless of how much the party searches, they will not find the blacksmith or the washerwoman. No one they talk to will know where they are. The kingsguard and the inquisitors will both claim to offer a reward for information about their whereabouts.

INCURSIONS

The moon is briefly blotted out by a strangely shaped cloud.

A young cutpurse tries to snatch one of your bags, but fails.

The dungeon.

3

TERRORS

One of the treasure-hunters notices **something that another took**, no matter how well hidden.

- *Why do you now want it?*
- *How do you believe it is connected to the traveling ritual?*
- *Why do you think they hid it from you, specifically?*

A **member of the kingsguard** is paraded around by the inquisitors. They loudly proclaim the guard's complicity in allowing criminals into the governor's keep, and her guilt in the theft of "sensitive artifacts." The party should assume these artifacts are whatever things they took in previous Rings. The inquisitors lead the guard to a pyre, bind her, and set it ablaze. The inquisitors shout to an assembled and terrified public that they know other conspirators hide among the citizens "like snakes in a garden."

TEMPTATIONS

During the speech, the treasure-hunters notice a scrawny figure wrapped in a dirty cloak skulking away in the shadows. From a distance, they see the figure briefly hunch over a **cellar** entrance, pull the door open for a second, and dash inside. Whoever approaches the closed cellar door finds the mark scratched into it.

- *What strange ritual implements did the figure leave behind?*
- *What insight do the implements give you into the traveling ritual?*
- *How will you achieve your Drive when you finally perform this ritual or capture this figure?*

Ask the following to the treasure-hunter with the highest Ruin:

- *Did you mean to start opening the cellar door?*

The door opens into a dream-like, subterranean tunnel. Everyone looking inside immediately makes a Ruin Roll.

Whether the treasure-hunters are interested in learning the Ritual or collecting the reward, following this figure into the tunnel is their best lead.

CONDITIONS — II OF III

OR

- You are now cold-blooded and find it difficult to stay warm.
- Your pupils are now slits, which makes people uneasy when they notice.
- A dark green, scaly rash is spreading all over your body.
- You feel compelled to file your teeth into sharp fangs.
- You have started sprouting a snake-like tail.
- When you are afraid, excited, or disgusted, you disappear and reappear somewhere new.

A rattling is heard from within a pile of hay, then stops suddenly.

Light from within a doorway is momentarily obscured by a person stepping inside.

The dragon.

4

TERRORS

The tunnel ripples, and a great roar follows. The walls shimmer, briefly flashing between glistening, violet muscles and black, stone-like scales. It's as if the tunnel can't decide whether it's the interior or exterior of a **massive, world-devouring serpent**. The walls constrict at points, squeezing the treasure-hunters. If they turn around, the door is gone, replaced by a long tunnel. At the end of the tunnel, teeth gnash and fire rages. An incomprehensibly massive mouth eats the body: an ouroboros of titanic proportions.

TEMPTATIONS

Moving forward, there are many doors within the tunnel. Each door shows a step in the process of creating **the ritual**.

? *How does a door reveal its knowledge?*

Treasure-hunters who are skilled in *rituals* must make a Risk Roll or be compelled to learn the Ritual:

Spiral — *create a portal to travel through the World Serpent*

Learning it automatically causes a treasure-hunter to mark 1 Ruin.

The World Serpent can open a door to any room storing a hoard of some kind, but it inevitably begins using the hoard to birth its children into the world. Its children turn the keepers of the hoard into protectors of the children and servitors of the World Serpent.

INCURSIONS

CONDITIONS — III OF III

OR

- Your vision is slowly being replaced by a thermal sense.
- Your tongue forks, making communication difficult.
- Your insides feel as though they are on fire, and you must cool the fire down or get it out.
- You are fixated on sorting and organizing any small collection you have or see.
- Pick a color. You must possess anything you see in that color.
- Your own body is a portal. Things you put in your mouth reappear somewhere within eyesight once you swallow.

Your heel is stung by something sharp. Looking down, you see two upturned nails.

A guard wolfs down a massive chunk of meat, nearly choking to swallow it down.

The final door.

5

TERRORS

The treasure-hunters who have learned the Ritual can open **doors to anywhere there is a hoard.** As soon as they enact the Ritual, they'll become paranoid.

- *What will your companions steal from you once they know the Ritual?*
- *How can you keep any of your possessions safe from them while they're still alive?*

Any treasure-hunter who doesn't learn the Ritual will find doors buried in the World Serpent's muscular walls. The doors open into random, monstrous hoards in the world where the World Serpent's children dwell: snakes, dragons, basilisks, wyverns, and hydras, consuming and destroying everything. Walls of fire and rains of acid eat away at everything.

- *What serpentine terror do you see through the door?*

TEMPTATIONS

Eventually, allow them to find or open **a door directly to their Drive** or that shows them how they can fulfill their Drive. Give them everything they want. They are the dragon and the world is their hoard. But like the fire inside the World Serpent, they'll always need to consume more and more and more...

- *Why is this—your dream of dreams—not enough?*
- *What will you consume next?*

A tremor shakes the ground beneath your feet.

A steadily dripping liquid burns and stings when it splashes you.

The Pit

AARON BURKETT



theme HELL

WARNINGS: *Body Horror, Eye Trauma, Graphic Violence, Manipulation, Mannequins, Religion, Snakes*

Ten years ago, 'neath the bleak sky
Ruby red stars fell from on high.

Oh the sun was choked by smoky haze
People thought it was the end of days.

Howlin' for saving they've yet to earn
You're my next witch to burn.

— "The Inquisitor's Lament" Verse 1

A shrike spears a mouse onto thorns.
The beast bleeds, but the dust doesn't drink.

Whenever you search for water, you
find only mirages and heat shimmers.

1

Over Fort Duhrin's walls and beyond the awful woods lie the Barrens, unwatched by the Sisters, saints, or idols. Once-rolling grasslands are now shambling knolls, after land, beasts, bodies, and minds were twisted by the impact of a fallen star. Despite the inquisitors' best efforts, doomsday cults led by prophets and doomsayers grew among the warped. They bought treasures from hunters for foul rites held in basements and back rooms before leaving the gossamer safety of civilization to mysteriously vanish into the trackless waste.

It seems they have returned, led by the mysterious Sybil, and set on terrorizing and pillaging the area. Waylaying caravans. Killing militia patrols. Looking for something. No one knows much about this Sybil, only whispered rumours of her dogged ferocity and appetite for wealth and conquest.

You have also returned from a lucrative expedition—you survived the woods, although some of your companions were not so lucky. Free of the forest's clutches, you thought fate was on your side—until Sybil's cabal snatched your prize away.

Now they flee across the Barrens, and you follow.

TERRORS

The treasure-hunters chase the **sorcerous cabal.**

- *What precious thing did the cabal run away with?*
- *How is the cabal outpacing the treasure-hunters?*

The forest's blood-flushed foliage thinned out a while ago, ceding the landscape to fierce yaupon, fleshy yucca, and rugged hackberry trees. Soft loam parts before shale's hard edge. Cabal initiates lie in wait with bows and rituals at the ready as the treasure-hunters skirt a sunbaked canyon.

- *Who were the companions you left behind to die in the woods, and how do the initiates you're fighting remind you of them?*
- *What is the cabal's brand?*

Though the cabal initiates aren't difficult to defeat, offer Devil's Bargains, and bloody the treasure-hunters' noses with cursed arrows, buffeting winds, or a swarm of ensorcelled snakes.

TEMPTATIONS

The initiates utter **prayers and incantations** with dying breaths, beseeching their patron for aid as the treasure-hunters liberate their spirits with steel. They offer cries of: "Let me look upon your face!" and "Shine your face upon me!".

- *How does the stolen treasure intersect with your Drive? Liberation? Revenge?*
- *What have you heard about the Sybil?*

Wounds don't bleed much. They trickle. There isn't enough fluid.

Vultures pull apart a corpse—layer by layer, they strip away skin, fat, muscle, bones.

The sun hides behind the horizon as the treasure-hunters arrive at the Pit.



TERRORS

The **opening** yawns wide, a half-ring of uneven stone pillars akin to rotting teeth. Weather-worn curses and warnings mar their surfaces, while the cabal's brand, freshly-carved, gazes out at them. A hot breeze periodically rolls out from the entrance.

- *How do you know this place is forsaken by the idols, Sisters, and saints?*
- *Do the treasure-hunters press into the night below or huddle together for warmth? If they camp, no one finds rest, as their dreams are dominated by sweltering heat.*

Pressing past the entrance, the treasure-hunters quickly begin tracking dirt through pitted and pebbled metallic **passages**—a maze of rust-sharpened fangs. Low light emanates from the passages' seams. It's not enough to see by, and merely casts everything in a feverish tinge.

- *What signs do the cabal leave behind as they escape further into the Pit?*

The torchlight seems to shrink from the darkness. It's easy to get lost in the labyrinth, canted as it is at odd angles. You feel like the floor could drop out from beneath you at any moment.

TEMPTATIONS

A portion of flooring comes apart in a cloud beneath the treasure-hunters' weight, dropping some of them into a **box** bristling with tines and a freshly-mangled cabalist. Something wrong stirs in their memories.

- *Where were you when the star fell?*
- *What awfulness stemmed from that dreadful night, and how does the corpse carry those marks?*

Take notes, for the monstrosities of Ring 4 will also bear the taint.

INCURSIONS

CONDITIONS — I OF III

⚀ OR ⚁

- ⚀ A row of scabby orifices pucker down your back. They're pleasurable to touch.
- ⚁ Wings strain to break through your back. When they fully emerge, bright and glorious, the feathers fall off.
- ⚂ Three barbed claws burst from your wrist, ruining your hand. Useless fingers and palm meat slowly sweat away.
- ⚃ Your flesh, hair, or eyes take on an unnatural hue. You feel the curious judgement of your companions.
- ⚄ Bright lights burn you like fire. Nothing else hurts anymore.
- ⚅ The skin on your extremities peels away, onion-like. The fat drips, and the muscle is now wound steel twine.

If you look closely, the hills surrounding the Pit resemble bodies clinging together.

Something bleats in pain at the bottom of a fall. Its back half is twisted 'round.

Cabling and cordage dangles from the ceiling and walls, poking through corroded plating. 3

TERRORS

The **heat** grows with each advancing footstep, dizzying and overwhelming. Treasure-hunters who are heedless with their footing sink like quicksand. The light intensifies, suffusing with the frothy mist that rises from the passages' black intestines, though the haze's moist warmth is no succor from the heat. The mist strangles the treasure-hunters' torches, rots their waterskins, and pits exposed metal. Thickening, clotting, and cloying.

In the voluptuous hues, shadows and movement become more noticable—richer, suggestive, intriguing. The mist shifts from promises of pleasure and unearthly delights to mirrors of pain—the panorama of your shared shortcomings laid bare for all to see.

- *What did you desire before you became a treasure-hunter?*
- *A treasure-hunter has an inappropriate response. Who is it? That treasure-hunter describes their response. But what do the other treasure-hunters intend to do about it?*

TEMPTATIONS

As curdled ambitions swirl around the treasure-hunters, they coalesce into the **faces** of people held responsible for the hunters' misfortunes—the architects of their circumstances.

- *Who do you blame for your failures? Think about—but do not speak—the punishments and righteous torments you wish for them.*

CONDITIONS — II OF III

OR

- A faint tearing noise as your eye blossoms, while mucus and tears trickle down your face.
- Sensations of pain and pleasure have been reversed for you.
- Hornlike growths rise from your temples—you realize you can "see" through them.
- You are driven to brand your body with arcane symbols you don't fully understand.
- You are easily suggestable to commands spoken in whispered tones.
- Your companions' steadily rising heartbeats stir your hunger.

A fallen torch flickers in the mud. It burns cool and dry, a respite from the humidity.

A black obelisk, scarred with the cabal's brand, glows with a faint white outline.

The treasure-hunters catch the cabal.



TERRORS

Pursuing their quarry through the heat and the dark, the treasure-hunters finally catch the cabal as the Pit's **defenses** rouse against all interlopers. The cabal's defensive ring of spears, shields, and sorcery has created some space; the treasure-hunters spy the Sibyl in the center, haloed with witchfire. The mist is now so thick, the treasure-hunters feel as if they're underwater—even breathing meets resistance. Muscles burn with fatigue. Murderous manikins burst from the braided undergrowth, connected via umbilicals to the larger structure. Every limb takes the form of spring-loaded skewers or scissors. The light shifts from surreal to painful.

Incorporate the fallen star's taint from Ring 2, and don't use shorthand. Don't say *mohrgs* or *skeletons*. They're *motorized bare bones skittering through the fog with uncanny grace. Clusters of eye hollows track prey mercilessly.*

The monstrosities won't immediately attack if the treasure-hunters strike the cabalists first.

TEMPTATIONS

If the cabalists' defensive formation breaks, the Sybil flees the scene, diving for a narrow opening. Clutching the **treasure**, she attempts to shut a grate behind her. She utters a bright peal of youthful laughter—a disquieting contrast to the screams of the dying and the rasping hiss of their killers.

INCURSIONS

CONDITIONS — III OF III

OR

- Cartilage and body fat melts away, leaving a waxy build up on your equipment.
- You rufuse to do anything asked of you. All authority is invalid.
- The light of a furnace can be seen in the back of your throat. Your red-hot teeth scorch your lips.
- You have claimed a small item as an idol. You must protect it at all costs.
- You find new tastes in the air, but only when you flick your tongue in and out. Greed is umami.
- A desire to punish and torment rises within you.

Scorched skeletons among weapons, insignia of the king's rangers around their necks.

In a moment of respite, you notice your skin peeling off, cooked muscle underneath.

The throne of the Prince.



TERRORS

The heat proves nearly unbearable as the treasure-hunters shoulder through the Sybil's feeble obstacle. The "**Prince**"—the subject of the cabal's worship—hangs here, enmeshed with the oily offal running through the Pit and a mandorla of etched obelisks. It's a poor excuse for a cosmic throne. The Prince's appearance varies based on how much Ruin the treasure-hunters have:

Ruin 1–2: A churning, soupy ball of guts, mangy wings, assorted skulls (ox, lion, eagle, and man), and eyes of molten steel. Ask a treasure-hunter what's most inhuman.

Ruin 3–4: A smooth torso with a beautiful face growing beneath the shoulders. Alternate between asking the treasure-hunters for details that are horrifying or attractive.

Ruin 5: A devil most sublime with a crown of flame and scalding eyes. Ask the treasure-hunters to describe this figure's beauty.

Anyone with 3 or more Rituals sees the cabal's brand among the other etchings on the structure's surface: The Child Upon Whom We Dare Not Look. Prince of Traitors. Desire Flowing Downward.

To gaze upon the Prince is to fall for him. The Sybil is rapt and steps past the obelisks. Under the oppressive fervor, she stumbles with the treasure outstretched. The smell of burnt hair and scorched pork fills the room. The Prince turns the Sybil around. Her skin shrinks like paper from open flame, and her flesh runs like wax. The Prince and the Sybil move their mouths in unison, where one sings and one speaks.

TEMPTATIONS

The Prince offers **shattered baubles and broken toys** if the treasure-hunters would just entertain him for a while. The Sybil and the Prince motion wide to the treasures littering the tangled floor in states of disrepair and dissection. Each treasure-hunter feels like they are the only one addressed, and the others' faces become those of their tormentors from Ring 3. Bile and cutting remarks slay the listener.

The tools they need to inflict their justice materialize on hand from the mist. They are cruel, barbed, alien, and organic.

? *How do you punish the traitor?*

A corpse is easily overlooked until the skull bursts, well-done brains dribble out.

Cords slither from holes in the walls, seeking to bury their ends in moist bodies.

That Silent Howl

MIKE MARTENS



theme VOID

WARNINGS: *Body Horror, Graphic Violence, Harm to Animals, Memory Loss, Pregnancy, Shipwrecks, Storms*

The boarding of the Orvoras *opened with a strong gale—smashing your raiding ship, the* Greenfly*, into its prey—and ended with the singed clouds of battle suspended around the battered vessels, a crimson fog of sulphur in the falling sun. As if a harsh penance for targeting the most renowned of the Southern Pass Company's merchant fleet, the wind died as the battle labored on. After the final howls of the* Orvoras' *gnarled crew, neither torn sails nor the sea itself shows an inkling of life.*

With the sun ceding its daily claim on the heavens, a horde of envious stars creeped forth—a milky slurry fermented with constellatory pacts. Beneath, like black glass, the untampered sea reflects its entirety with unfathomable precision, suspending the Orvoras *and the* Greenfly *in a seemingly infinite void—hobbled and lashed together, their fates now intertwined.*

You have two aims on your mind: Survey your loot and repair one or both ships.

Another Southern Pass Company ship can be seen in the distance, its sails limp as it signals for a report on who won the earlier battle, promising aid (or recompense) once the wind returns.

Bodies line the upper deck in rows like irrigated crops. As you pass by, you notice the motion of monstrous larvae nibbling at open wounds.

The crew of the Greenfly *take stock after winning the battle.*

1

TERRORS

The boarding party was a bloodbath for both sides. A few prisoners were taken from the *Orvoras*, while some badly injured crew on the *Greenfly* tend their wounds. The *Greenfly's* cook has absconded with exotic-looking provisions and concocted a bone broth stew. As dinner is served, the crew—in high spirits—rib each other over their sordid pasts.

One crew member responds to a treasure-hunter exaggeratedly—in coarse laughter or dazed aggression—before collapsing to the ground. A few moments later, in a seizure-like state, the unconscious crew member begins clawing in panic at the base of their rib cage.

Ivory spider-like legs pierce through the crew member's skin, tearing back into the victim's flesh in tandem with their own hands. After carving an opening, the legs invert outward, suspending a tankard-sized thorax. The creature makes shrill chirping noises and its body pulses—pained by rapid growth. It aggressively wants space and scurries quickly. A number are likely gestating in the bodies and corpses still occupying the ships.

TEMPTATIONS

In these initial moments, the treasure-hunters are ravenous and tired, having fought an arduous battle. The *Orvoras'* holds have not yet been explored, but other crew members whisper about the **hefty locks and volumes of inventories** they caught glances of during the skirmish. The *Orvoras* is also plainly superior to the *Greenfly*, and if forced to choose between the two vessels, it'd clearly be an upgrade.

"The sea is nothing except the plane
that severs the heights from the depths,
a turbulent void which seeks us separated
from our ships, from our crews, and from ourselves."
— Admiral Elena ils Noril, Southern Pass Company

CONDITIONS — I OF III

⚀ OR ⚁

- ⚀ You think you feel a maggot twisting inside of you, and fear what the others might do if they were to find out.
- ⚁ You believe you can smell a maggot incubating in the body of one of your companions.
- ⚂ You are convinced your companions are all secretly manikins.
- ⚃ You no longer believe yourself to be a living being.
- ⚄ The whispers of a lost friend or lover persistently follow you.
- ⚅ A drip of the creatures' fluid has burned and cauterized a hole through your body.

Staring overboard at the black water lapping against the vessel, you seem to see empty patches moving along the hull.

A mangy-but-cute ship cat nuzzles up to your legs. It soon bursts open with a monstrous larva.

The storm returns to break the silence.

2

TERRORS

Presaged by electric tendrils scrabbling across the sky, a **storm** breaks the serenity of the void with sublime violence. Cold, salty waves rush knee-deep across the decks, and the severely hobbled *Greenfly* smashes against the hull of the *Orvoras* with each blow—threatening to drag both ships into the abyss. Every movement above deck threatens to claim the crew members. Meanwhile, below deck, structural wounds seep the sea's black brine into the ship.

TEMPTATIONS

The Southern Pass Company's complex navigational equipment scatters from the deck-level cabins and threatens to plunge into the void. Meanwhile, **ornate and alluring rarities** tumble about the *Orvoras'* decks, washing past treasure-hunters. The maelstrom's chaos could provide a surreptitious chance to sweeten a treasure-hunter's share.



INCURSIONS

A dozen discoveries when delving into the navigation equipment of the Southern Pass Company's flagship.

STARS — *Telescopes and astrolabes might reveal the following.*

- The constellation of Sister Arion is missing its eyes, an omen of losing one's way at sea. Cling to this instrument if you want any hope of surviving this night.
- The distant planet Urses has reached its culmination. Your homeland has a strong superstition about this moment. What is it? Do you believe in it?
- The edge of the waning moon holds a red cast... It is "the thieves' glimmer," and wariness for the things one values is the only way to move forward.
- The final star in the constellation of Sister Erit has dipped below the horizon. Her followers believe she can only be called on when submerged.
- This device shows nothing. Even your naked eye sees more. Checking to determine if something is wrong, you find the name of the Company's missing founder etched in its side.
- Instead of the dark sky over the sea, you see the canopy of Kalduhr. It seems you can even feel the warm breeze and hear the shuffle of leaves. But when you remove your eye, there is just the dead, windless cold of your current predicament.

A powerful crack splits the air as a mast breaks and crashes onto the deck of its ship. Some are caught beneath its giant, tattered sail.

An injured crew member struggles with a monstrous larva hellbent on entering their mouth, ripping at and squeezing its body, spraying acidic bile across the deck.

Things go missing.



TERRORS

The fodder of thunder drifts into the horizon as the seascape settles into equilibrium. The lingering chop of the water's surface dizzyingly scatters its celestial reflection, and the treasure-hunters' attention has turned to inventorying the ill-omened spoils of the *Orvoras*. Although naturally disarrayed by the torrent, the treasure-hunters discover tools and relics conspicuously **damaged**, **disassembled**, and **missing** by unnatural means... A glint of self-reflection would be enough for a treasure-hunter to realize the storm provided plenty of opportunities for freelancing among the *Greenfly's* crewmates. Any **prisoners** unattended during the storm have disappeared from their restraints—although the shredded remnants of at least one body suggest this was not a rapturous opportunity for them. Anyone still paying mind to the ship's seaworthiness would also notice holes burned cleanly through boards and beams—the hallmarks of sabotage are all here.

TEMPTATIONS

There were likely **objects of particular significance** to individual treasure-hunters scattered amongst the mess and debris. This is particularly clear in the volumes of inventory and annotated cartography once stuffed into desks in the officers' quarters.

- *What sentimental thing of yours do you see sliding across the deck, but still recoverable if you act with haste?*

CHARTS — *Maps and records might reveal the following.*

- The course of the *Orvoras* is clearly marked, from the bay of Ambaret, to a distant region of the Kalduhr Forest accessible via the Southern Sea, and back again. What were they hoping to find there? Exotic spices?
- A series of notes are tucked under the page you were examining. Many are in unfamiliar languages, but the one you can read ponders whether the *Orvoras* should simply be scuttled with crew and cargo still on it.
- The document is covered in sketches of familiar creatures in strange form, as if drawn directly from a nightmare... Twisted, dark, ridged, and intensely contrasted, but somehow recognizable.
- You find a dedication signed by the admiral of the Southern Pass Company, Elena ils Noril. "Godspeed, you pale rider. You'll never want for reward again, so perhaps this is goodbye as well."
- A map is marked with annotations for countless locations, inventorying the quantity of coin and notable treasures obtained in each. Many are smeared and illegible, but one catches your eye, clear as day.
- Scrawled across the more rational data is a note in dried blood, "Speak, our cargo. That muted visage calls."

A dark patch of ink on a drenched map flows across the canvas, engulfing whole regions with its hue.

The rolling landscape of flickering stars fills you with the deep dread of insignificance. This all seems infinitesimal, like a marginal illumination on a single page in a vast library.

TERRORS

Separated among the *Orvoras'* holds, the treasure-hunters begin sensing something beyond their expectation on the ship. Deck planks creak in unnatural ways, accompanied by sharp hisses and deep screeches. Acidic smells waft through corridors, seemingly without source. Shadows shift unexpectedly. An escaped prisoner, their arm severed and dripping profusely despite their makeshift tourniquet. As a Southern Pass Company member backs away in desperate fear, a heavy obsidian clump falls to the deck floor from the darkness above. It silently unfolds upright—a **creature both reptilian and insectoid** with a twisting, predatory body. It reflects only a few catches of light, silver teeth bare and dripping with thick, glassy liquid. A tail of segmented blades curls into the air before piercing the torso of a Southern Pass Company member in a whiplike motion. A pack of these monsters have been prowling the decks, concealed in shadow. They now expose their positions, slaying challengers and herding the rest downward into the ship's lowest hold.

TEMPTATIONS

The *Orvoras'* lowest, ballast-level hold sits behind a perplexingly constructed **vault door**—an enormous, bulkhead-to-bulkhead, deck-to-deck, bulbous, carved face. Thick soot ropes stretch from between its lips to iron cleats around the space, tethering the gate shut. However, a fresh, heavy crack splits through the right side of its face, passing like a scar over a space where a polished ebony eye has been dislodged. That eye rolls along the floor planks with the pitch of the ship. The gap itself sits blankly dark... an unlit portal to this deepest compartment. Within its hollow stare, the treasure-hunters can feel a voice deep in their minds beckoning them through.

CONDITIONS — II OF III

OR

- The sea calls like a siren. You bind yourself to fixed objects to prevent a weak moment from claiming you.
- Sea water is all you can drink. Naturally, it never quenches.
- Your eyes are as black as night. You see dark as light, and light as dark.
- You have no patience for prayers to the Sisters, silencing any who call to them.
- You seek to destroy all records of where you have come from, to free yourself from the burden of your history.
- Memory of your Background only serves you when an associated record of it can be referenced.

A soot-covered prisoner with a broken arm and leg lunges from between several storage crates, thrusting a dagger that demands attention with its beauty.

A pack of monsters sit, unmoving, outside a hold like patient hounds, staring in with eyeless faces.

What the Southern Pass Company carried back from the forest.

5

TERRORS

The final hold practically suffocates with a warm musk. Sludgy tissue is draped and piled throughout the dark room. Although concealed in the void of light, the space is dominated by a hulking monstrosity, sacs of eggs bubbling beneath patches of translucent flesh. This **monstrous queen** wants life and soul to feed her power, but cannot gather it for herself. A shrill mental reverb emanates from her massive, elegant skull... relieved only when someone approaches her maw, whether by their own will or through another's. This is not something that the hold's disembodied temptations would leave unrealized to the treasure-hunters.

TEMPTATIONS

Human faces protrude from the queen's folds, whispering memories of the forest and its horrible magicks. When engaged, they ask about the state of the stars, reflecting on the seeming eternity they have been a part of the queen. Most promise peace, wisdom, and endlessness. One demands to be killed.



CONDITIONS — III OF III

OR

- You keep to the shadows, dousing light wherever it prevents your sanctuary.
- You cover yourself in the blood of the slain to prevent your own tracking.
- You grow convinced the road to absolution means giving the spoils of the *Orvoras* to the sea.
- A specific creature stalks you, but will not harm you.
- The smell of the creatures' bile overwhelms you with hallucinations of a long-passed time in your life.
- You do not recognize any of your companions.

A flock of migratory birds fly overhead. As they approach, they break formation into two wide lines—avoiding the perimeter of the dormant ships.

The weakened floorboards of a store filled with coin collapse, pouring the treasure and anyone inside downward into a locked, half-flooded hold.

Regicide

LUDOVICO ALVES



theme ROYALTY

WARNINGS: *Body Horror, Classism, Graphic Violence, Manipulation, Mannequins*

The gates of the Royal Palace of Ambaret have been breached. You are among the first to break ranks and seize the bounty that the ruling class seized for themselves. The realities of power are not what you expected.

The palace is filled with treasure, but also with the sins and secrets of the monarchy. Monstrous relatives. Monarchists without a job protecting a pretender to the throne. Other revolutionaries competing for pillaging rights. What will you find when you finally have access to the inner lives of the nobility?

The treasure-hunters cross the vast Royal Park, separating the aristocracy from mundane concerns and the consequences of misrule.

TERRORS

The Royal Park is a charming location—it's beautiful under the moonlight, and filled with artificial grottoes and cascades, transplanted ancient trees, and marbled belvederes. The idyllic paths lead to the entrance of the Royal Palace—a sturdy white wall protects a purely decorative gate, the stone decorated with **intricate tiles**. Those foolish enough to study the patterns on the tiles are assaulted by headaches and terrors.

- *Which wonder do you find within the park, and what rumors have you heard about it?*

TEMPTATIONS

Hooded lanterns illuminate a rag-tag group carrying improvised tools and weapons. The smell of grease and sweat clings to them. They salute the treasure-hunters and welcome them, especially if they have drink or bread to share. These are members of the **Corvine Militia**—volunteer guards keeping nobles, loyalists, and arsonists from entering the palace. Though bored and cold, they are optimistic about the dawning future. Despite their duty, they are cordial and de-escalate any hostilities. They only raise concerns if someone is carrying flammable material or displays symbols of nobility—if that is the case, they turn that treasure-hunter away, claiming they cannot allow entry to anyone that plays with fire.

- *Which of your possessions would comfort the militia?*
- *What do you hide from the militia?*

CONDITIONS — I OF III

OR

- You are compelled to exchange clothing with anyone who seems better dressed than you.
- You suffer from a romantic longing and speak fondly of "the good old days."
- A royal march is stuck in your head, which you continually murmur or hum.
- You continually address manikin and portraits as one would a relative or friend.
- You obsess over finding flaws in others, and comment on the flaws you encounter.
- You refuse to do anything unless you are bathed in perfumes and other overwhelming scents.

Rare moment of silence, interrupted by breathing and ruffling leaves.	A lifelike, painted manikin has real hair.	The fluttering of wings in an empty room.

The trees thin beyond the gate, barely thick enough to preserve the seclusion of the palace.



TERRORS

The palace's towers and halls loom over mazes, statuary, courts, and pavilions. The path takes the treasure-hunters across vegetable gardens, leading to the low, humble houses of what one would assume to be the servants' quarters.

The treasure-hunters instead find a village—or rather, a mockery of one. A hyper-real depiction of bucolic life as seen through the eyes and imagination of the obscenely wealthy and the grotesquely powerful. Fake houses, life-scale dioramas, simple and joyful dolls and manikins—a colorful joke at the expense of the masses.

A **manikin huntswoman** appears, wielding a flaming crossbow as she hunts the party across the mock village, shooting at meat and straw alike. She is hellbent on driving the treasure-hunters out of her hunting grounds. The thrill of the hunt consumes her—she will only stop pursuing the treasure-hunters once they enter the royal palace.

- *Why do you believe the huntswoman has marked you as her prize?*
- *What trap did the huntswoman lay while you explored the village?*
- *Why do you fear the royal palace more than the huntswoman?*

TEMPTATIONS

The treasure-hunters finally take in the vast doors to the royal palace. They rush inside, taking refuge from the huntswoman. The cavernous entrance opens into a grand hallway lined with **display ornaments and family heirlooms**, yet all appear to be undisturbed.

- *What small royal trinket do you pocket for yourself when no one is looking?*

INCURSIONS

ROYAL SECRETS — I OF IV

The magpies hold the nobility's secrets. Roll a dark and light die to hear what they whisper to you.

⚀ ⚀	Purple slippers, comfortable for hoofed feet.
⚀ ⚁	Ajino's masterpiece *The Surrender of the Kingsguard*.
⚀ ⚂	Letter from a prisoner in Barsul Prison cell 733.
⚀ ⚃	Duchess Pastry, meowing for treats.
⚀ ⚄	Reenactment of a family dinner, immortalized in dessicated flesh and platters of wax.
⚀ ⚅	Earl Jagrati Melino, never the same after they replaced his blood with lead.
⚂ ⚀	Non-Euclidian family tree.
⚂ ⚁	The true reason for the war.
⚂ ⚂	Deed to land held by another power.
⚂ ⚃	Aunt Ophelia Keshibel, still in her coffin.
⚂ ⚄	Lost symphony of Maestro Alexandra Jayfex.
⚂ ⚅	Forgery of a diamond diadem—whose original you already stole.

Two gilded carriages side by side.	Filigree ivy, climbing decorative marble columns.	Ghosts of dances past.

The royal gallery, where secrets of the royals are on full display.



TERRORS

The grand hallway gives way to a gallery, draped in rich velvet tapestry and exquisite paintings in gilded frames. Each painting captures the perfect image of a lifelike **magpie**. Each magpie is bound to the painting by their secrets—without the cowing presence of royalty, they see an opportunity for mischief and freedom. They will try to flutter invitingly, luring any curious treasure-hunters closer. They ask if the treasure-hunter would hear their secret—if they do, the magpie can release itself from the painting and fly free. However, the palace gains a foothold in the mind of any treasure-hunter who accepts.

Which secrets would you rather have the magpies keep?

TEMPTATIONS

All the secrets are absolute truths, but the magpies have experience twisting words and meaning. The magpies will try to manipulate the treasure-hunters into learning more, be it about their companions, about the royal family, or about the treasures within the palace. The cursed birds will set up situations that can be easily resolved by letting a magpie reveal a second secret—inviting further darkness into the inquiring treasure-hunter. Once a magpie unloads its second secret, it can leave the Royal Palace.

What knowledge do you hope to gain?

INCURSIONS

ROYAL SECRETS — II OF IV	
The magpies hold the nobility's secrets. Roll a dark and light die to hear what they whisper to you.	
⚀ ⚀	Embroidered handkerchief, folded over a royal kiss.
⚀ ⚁	Spectral curator of the Museum of Royal Conquest and Plunder.
⚀ ⚂	Peculiar diplomat of the Basalt King.
⚀ ⚃	Liver-soaked peach tree; its fruit heals the ailing old blood.
⚀ ⚄	Bottled, enchanted Serpent Starwatcher.
⚀ ⚅	Pickled hearts of patriarchs.
⚅ ⚀	Glorious hand of Kurius the Usurper, still grasping their crimson knife.
⚅ ⚁	Atlas of unconquered worlds and tearful seas.
⚅ ⚂	Imperial Lepidoptera and their purple appetites.
⚅ ⚃	Hourglass holding five stolen centuries.
⚅ ⚄	Bleached bones of the visage-thief, Countess Karine Hoggard.
⚅ ⚅	The last manifold-gemmed egg.

A music box plays in a loop.	A majestic bed—purple curtains embroidered in gold.	The scratching of fingernails into wood.

The quarters of the princess.

4

TERRORS

The Royal Quarters are filled with horrors—**transformed nobility, sycophants, and royal advisors**. They chase treasure-hunters down, trying to drive them into traps. False succor presents itself as a secret passage leading into the private quarters of a forsaken princess.

- *You could swear one of the horrors got to you, but you see no wound. How do you explain this?*

The **princess** is a living patchwork blanket of skin, eyes, silk, and ermine—a squirming assembly of discarded heirs. She moves impossibly fast, a flat millipede with extremities of teeth and broken bone. She can fold into a ball and slingshot herself over incautious treasure-hunters. The princess hides her horror with saffron and pine resin. Once provoked, she will try to kill any "rival" and wrap herself around the last survivor, turning them into a living puppet for her to control.

TEMPTATIONS

The princess is a dangerous horror, but the **wealth** of her room makes it all worthwhile.

- *What here is worth more than your life?*
- *Which words muttered by the princess resonate with you?*
- *How does the princess attempt to convince you to support her against the Royal Patriarch?*

ROYAL SECRETS — III OF IV

The magpies hold the nobility's secrets. Roll a dark and light die to hear what they whisper to you.

- Malign mouth of the royal confessor.
- Records of the royal observatory.
- Prince Luise Jeffrerer, visiting for the executions.
- Gauntlet of the Abdicating Dictator.
- Heir-Apparent's special wild cardoon diet.
- Flooded Moonwell, still holding the latest victim of monarchic caresses.

CONDITIONS — II OF III

OR

- Your skin is itchy. You are sprouting pristine feathers or a luxurious fur pelt.
- You are unable to keep secrets.
- Everything is a conspiracy against you. You must find out who is behind your terrible fortune.
- You are convinced you have been invited to an extravagant ball, and must make yourself ready for it.
- You feel the urge to collect shiny gossip.
- You take on a regal affectation and suffer from delusions of grandeur.

A thousand condescending stares.	A family portrait, ripped to shreds.	Rotten flesh mixed with saffron and roses—disturbingly sweet.

The princess shows the path to the Hall of Patriarchs.

5

TERRORS

The Hall of Patriarchs is filled with portraits and icons of previous monarchs, all facing the throne with stark admiration. The air reeks of perfume and rotting flesh, and the soft scratch of crass fur against silk fills the hall. Behind the throne, you can see the half-open doors of the treasury—its bounty of silver and gold awaiting liberation.

As one treasure-hunter approaches the throne, they see a stone figure awkwardly propped against it. Proximity delivers clarity—the **statue** is of a decapitated triton with serpent-headed legs. Ground rotten meat, wrapped in radiant purple robes, drips from its torso and oozes all over the throne. Resting upon the statue's neck is the severed head of some great beast of the Kalduhr. It bleeds from its glass eyes, and an iron crown hangs from its horn.

- *What remains of the last victims of the Royal Patriarch?*

TEMPTATIONS

The Royal Patriarch speaks, promising you **anything you desire**. Wealth beyond measure. Lands and a title to match. A position in court. The heads of your enemies. The illusion of freedom. All you need to do is kneel and kiss its serpentine feet.

- *Will you betray your companions for a life of comfort?*
- *Or will you lose your life for the sake of your cause?*

ROYAL SECRETS — IV OF IV

The magpies hold the nobility's secrets. Roll a dark and light die to hear what they whisper to you.

- Fae princess, sealed away in a cameo; revenge for her wife's fate denied.
- Kingsguard-appointed, good old uncle Klaus, forgotten behind a wall.
- A secret hour, habitable only by those of royal blood.
- Toy meteoric-iron sword.
- Disturbing, lifelike statue of the last monarch of the previous dynasty.
- True name of the king and instructions on how to banish them.

CONDITIONS — III OF III

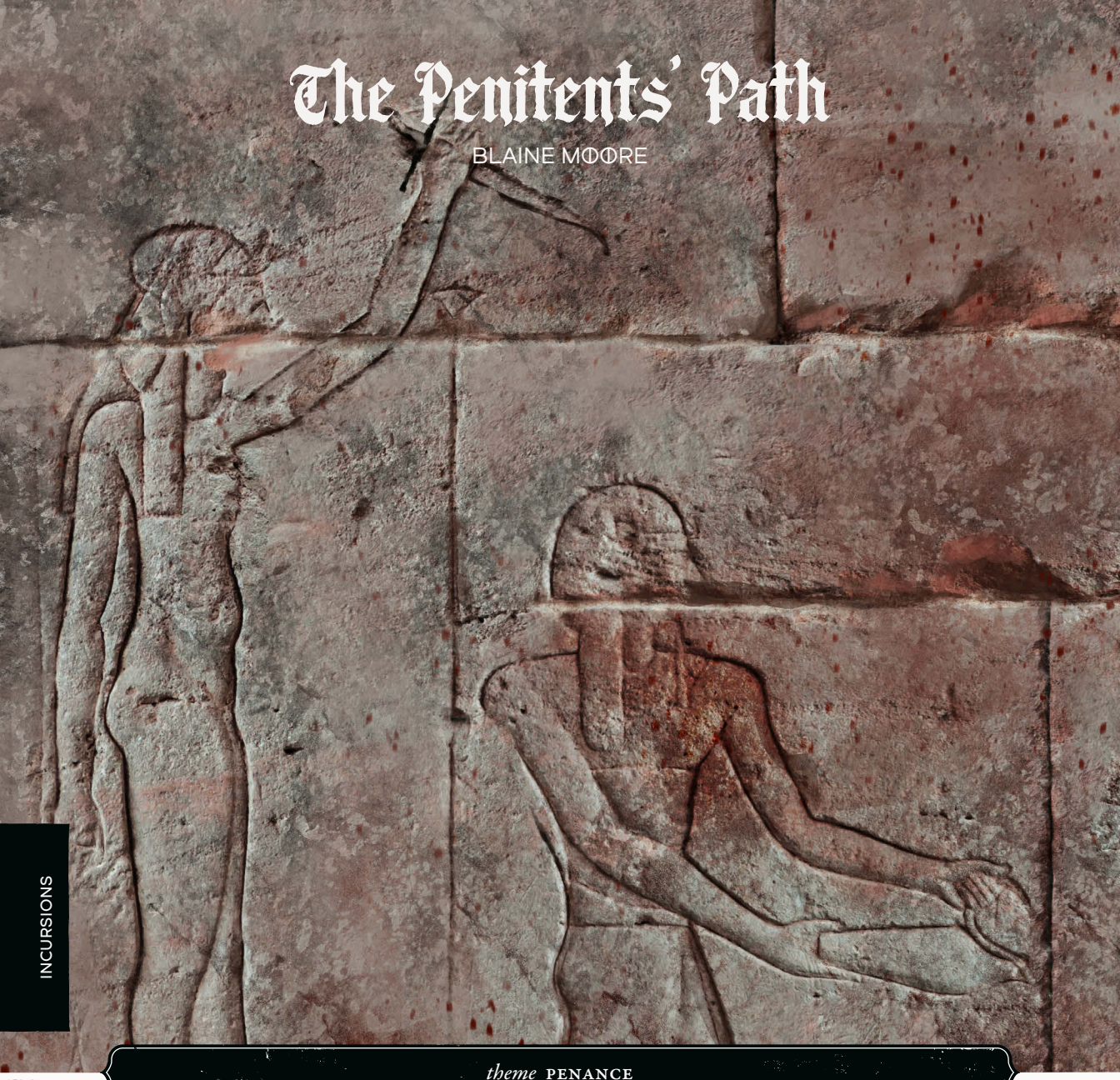
OR

- You grow a twisted tongue, with venom to match.
- Your pockets overflow with useless baubles. Where will they appear when you run out of pockets?
- You are convinced you are the lost scion here to claim your birthright.
- You lash out at anyone who makes eye contact with you, or who positions themselves above or in front of you.
- You keep making uncontrollable curtsies and bows.
- An impulse to collect trophies and medals overwhelms you.

Grunts and grinding as the hall grows impatient with your insubordination.	Purple drapery, hanging from rods and rails carved of galvanized bone.	Bloodstains marking where you are expected to kneel.

The Penitents' Path

BLAINE MOORE



theme PENANCE

WARNINGS: *Body Horror, Graphic Violence, Heights, Human Sacrifice, Religion*

You stand at the maw of the shadowed path to the bloody altar, your intended victims in tow. They are not so much hapless as they are unfortunate—unfortunate to know you, and to have known you so that their death will have meaning in your path to salvation. Their shackles are wrought with cold iron, but colder still is the terror that grips their hearts when they realize what you've become.

You are not treasure-hunters in this incursion, for you are penitents seeking expiation. Penitents, what are your shackles made of? Are you fettered by the weight of your sins? Are you lashed to the overwhelming weight of tragedy? Or is it your boundless greed that binds you to your path? It matters not. Wet the altar with the blood of the innocent, and all shall be forgiven. Wet the altar with the blood of the ignorant, and all shall be forgotten. Wet the altar with the blood of the content, and all shall be satisfied. Follow the crimson path through the autumn forest. Anoint the stepping stones with sanguine gifts. Spill the lifeblood of your sacrifice upon the altar, and claim your absolution.

The start of the path is unassuming—a single square stone placed in the middle of an avenue of trees. It is not quite red, appearing as the color of rust.

1

TERRORS

Another stone soon reveals itself—round and cracked down the middle. Autumnal leaves set alight by the sinking sun blaze the path forward, shifting in the winds above the penitents' heads, gathering in piles below their feet.

❓ *Penitents, who have you brought as sacrifice, and by what means?*

A figure stands upon the third stone they come to, unnervingly tall despite the crook in their back. The top of their head passes just beneath the lowest boughs of the canopy. They are clad in burgundy vestments of rough cloth under a black shawl with a deep cowl that droops in many folds upon their shoulders. A black half-mask hides their face, save for their lips and chin. Their lips are a bright crimson, and their smile is full of pointed teeth—is the red stain by artifice or more sinister means? They extend a hand from their vestments and beckon the penitents forward—their skin is the color of porcelain, and their long fingers are tipped with black nails. **The Priest of the Path** leads them from stone to stone, each a different shape and a different shade of rust, until they arrive at a set of stone pews before a small platform. The priest ascends the platform and gestures to the pews. Simple instructions are engraved in the flagstone below: *Confess thy sins.* The penitents may choose to confess their sins honestly, or they may make a Ruin Roll to lie or to endure the priest's scorn for failing to confess.

After each penitent has made their choice, the priest decants blood from a large vase into a bowl and bids they wash their hands in the liquid. After the penitents have done so, they are gestured to proceed. The priest does not lead and they do not follow. If instead the priest is attacked, they will dissolve into a pile of crumbling dead leaves accompanied by haunting laughter.

TEMPTATIONS

The sacrificial victims, though bound and cowed, are compelled to **confess** as well. Their confessions are meek compared to those of the penitent, given out of love or fear of reprisal, yet their words stir the penitents' passions.

❓ *Who among the penitent finds their Drive hinted at or kindled by someone's confession? Is it by their victims? Or by their fellow penitent?*

The trees surrounding the clearing are carved with the iconography of Sister Anamartia, Patron Saint of the Lost, also known as the mother of sinners. Scenes from scripture filtered through the lens of a sadist also adorn the trees—admonishing figures become wrathful, wrathful becomes cruel, and even the benign becomes chiding and condescending.

❓ *What scene do the penitents see that gives them hope?*

A fellow penitent kneels beside the path clothed in nought but rags. They stare forlornly at a shackled corpse and weep.

A would-be sacrifice runs through the forest unaccompanied. Their sing-song voice calls out for the grace of the saints.

The forest opens up as the trees become scattered and sparse.

2

TERRORS

Other paths are visible in the distance, carrying other penitents that in turn carry their own sins upon their drooping shoulders and hanging heads. As the hour grows late, shouts and screams ring out from behind, and the heavy woodsmoke of a forest set ablaze rolls in, suffused with a red sunset. One of the penitents' captives slips their bonds and takes the opportunity to disappear into the smoke. The penitents clearly hear a shout of, "It's the inquisitors!" Any of the penitents who follow the escapee find themselves on an adjacent path leading deeper into the woods. All of the paths bring the penitents to a **deep gouge** in the earth with sides that are steep and treacherous, but not un-scalable. The other side of the canyon as well as its floor are obscured from view by the thick, red haze of the sinking sun as it filters through smoke, ash, and embers. The paths ahead are only visible as faint silhouettes. Rickety rope bridges span the canyon, anchored to trees on the near side. With a resounding snap, the nearest bridge breaks, sending two human shapes plummeting into the void. Their screams are briefly cut short, only to be replaced by groans of agony and intermittent sobs. "More than one at a time is unwise," the Priest of the Path says from behind the Penitents. "But mind your charges. Wouldn't want them to get away."

TEMPTATIONS

On the far side of the canyon, the penitents encounter a **group heading back** the way they came. They are smiling and peaceful as they congratulate the penitents on their journey to the righteous path. No mention of conflagration or of inquisitors will perturb them. There is a tightness to their eyes that muddles their reverie with fear.

- *One among them is known to the penitents by the evils they've wrought. Who are they and what sins are they known for?*
- *One among them is known by their good name and supposed piety—a notion belied by their presence on this path. Who are they? Do the penitents name them as a hypocrite?*

INCURSIONS

CONDITIONS — I OF III

OR

- Your wrists chafe as if bound in iron.
- Blood leaks from your tear ducts, streaming down your face. A red hue overtakes your vision.
- You cannot help but mutter a litany to yourself. Between sentences. Between words. Between breaths.
- Your confession is an effusive stream of thought. You confess your every treachery, even as you commit it.
- The skin of your forehead splits and bleeds as crooked horns of gleaming bone sprout from your skull.
- A favorite vice now causes you intense anguish, and yet you cannot resist it.

Several monks huddle in prayer around a small shrine. At the penitents' approach, they reveal indistinguishable faces with crimson smiles offering simple greetings and well wishes.

Chanting voices drift through the trees, the notes high and clear in a haunting melody that foretells an unnamed, imminent disaster.

The penitents enter the forest.



TERRORS

The forest would be pitch-black save for the clusters of candles that mark the path. The candles are of varying sizes, and have melted into each other over time. They dot the paths within the forest, appearing as twinkling stars at a distance. Suddenly, the Priest of the Path is upon the penitents with an **unearthly wrath**, and in moments they are variously pinned, incapacitated, or held aloft by one of the priest's bony arms. "Which of you was it," they snarl. "I can smell the treachery on you. Which of you led the inquisitors to this sacred path?" One by one, the priest interrogates the penitents, but before long the shout of an approaching inquisitor rings out. As suddenly as the priest arrived, they now vanish into the dark space between the paths. Any of the penitents may claim the role of traitor. If no one steps up to the role, perhaps one of the sacrifices is entwined with the inquisitors in some manner.

TEMPTATIONS

The **would-be sacrifices** get more desperate as they are dragged further along the path. They begin pleading with any of the penitents who will listen, begging mercy, promising to help them pursue their Drives, spitting vile insults and cursing their name, saying anything they can think of that has the faintest hope of eliciting a response.

CONDITIONS — II OF III

OR

- You feel the pain of the wounds you have inflicted, past and present.
- Your eyes are filled with ethereal visions of places you know, wreathed in flame and awash with blood.
- Screams and cries of anguish ring in your ears, pleading with you to turn back from the path.
- Your nails become black and hard. Your sacrifice becomes lethargic and slow.
- Your teeth sharpen themselves to points, and an unnatural thirst stirs within you.
- You are wracked with occasional bouts of bone shattering pain, each one leaving your body taller and longer.

A hart watches the penitents through the trees. Velvet yet hangs from fresh-grown antlers, the peeling skin staining the sharp points red with blood.

Whispers hang in the wind, speaking vague promises of succor to any who will listen.

Slowly, the slope steepens and the path becomes an arduous climb.



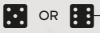
TERRORS

Deciduous trees are replaced with groves of ancient pines. As the light wanes, the path becomes treacherous and funnels the penitents into a narrow crag of earth threading its way between two mountains. Away and below, the forest is clearly lit by the blaze consuming it. The air is thick with smoke and drifting embers. Silhouetted against the backdrop of the burning trees is a group of **inquisitors** charging up the slope. Their movements are hastened in the ceaseless grip of panic—a trio of black-masked priests advance on them, moving calmly yet with great speed. The priests' long fingers drip with blood, and their lips dribble a fresh crimson. The Priest of the Path waits ahead of the penitents. "Steady now. You're almost there. Do help my kindred with the dogs of the inquisition, though, won't you? Or else you can force your way past." They taunt, blocking the path. Their smile is wide and hungry.

TEMPTATIONS

Firelight flashes off of gnashing teeth, and in an instant an inquisitor's arm is swallowed up by one of the priests. His scream rings out, and for a moment it seems he is doomed. However, a flash of metal counters, and the priest screeches as they reel back. The **drawn blade** radiates a malicious aura with every bit the evil to match the sinners of the path. The other inquisitors steel their faces and stand their ground, drawing weapons like and unalike. Some emit a calming light, while others are cast in shadow—some are still dripping with strange ooze that sizzles and pops in the air.

CONDITIONS — III OF III



- You are compelled to create a rosary of finger bones, tiny animal skulls, and gut string.
- You cut out your wicked tongue in full view of the other penitents; they must make Ruin Rolls.
- You no longer feel worthy to stand; you and your sacrifice must crawl the rest of the way.
- Parts of you occasionally sew shut—eyelids, mouth, fingers.
- Your feet burn with a nimbus of white-hot fire.
- You must swallow increasingly large stones, starting from a pebble, up to a rock that tears your esophagus.

The Priest of the Path enjoys a simple lunch of skewered rabbit at a campfire. Odd, by your count, they traveled far behind you and your fellow penitents. Yet, they seem to have been waiting for you to join them for some time.

The Priest of the Path holds a man's head over the opening of a large vase. The priest drags their black fingernail across the man's neck in a slow motion, spilling his blood into the waiting vessel.

As morning approaches, the penitents exit the pass and come to a sheer mountain face featuring a dark cave.



TERRORS

The stones marking the path stop just short of the cave, in front of a **stone altar** roughly hewn from the same rust-colored stone. A ceremonial dagger lies upon the altar. The cave itself is the gaping maw of the earth, its edges carved with the scenes depicting the journey along the path. The tale culminates in the image of a figure on the altar, and another figure beside with a dagger raised high. The sun crests the mountains and the light of dawn touches upon the altar, casting the cave deeper into shadow. The ground shakes, and a deep voice rumbles through the penitents' bones. "You have done well, penitents. Come. Complete your penance with sacrifice, and be reborn." If a penitent sacrifices their victim, they will feel the weight of their sins and corruption flowing through the dagger into their victim. From the cave, they will feel a calm power flow into them, filling the void left by that which recently left them.

TEMPTATIONS

If any penitents are left after the first sacrifice, they find themselves unable to speak of the **power** that now fills them. It grips their heart like a vice and threatens to burst it if they try. Instead, they can only speak of how relieved they feel, how they know they are redeemed, and how the remaining penitents should complete the ritual so they can be redeemed as well.

A simple cart trundles down the path, pulled by a donkey that seems to know the way. The cart carries many vessels that slosh with liquid. Drops spill over onto the floor of the cart, further staining its slick, bloodied boards.

An elderly man wrapped in white robes smiles wide and then hurls himself to his doom.

Prelude to Blackberry Jam

A NOTE ON RUNNING BLACKBERRY JAM

Blackberry Jam was written with the assumption that adult players would portray juvenile characters—called "berry-pickers" rather than "treasure-hunters" in this incursion. The inclusion of child characters offers unique challenges in *Trophy Dark*. The first problem is fundamental to the GM's approach to running a *Trophy Dark* incursion, and the second is concerned with safety and thematic effectiveness.

Trophy Dark's default structure assumes that the treasure hunters' flaws propel them deeper into the forest where they meet their eventual doom. This approach doesn't work well when the protagonists are children—where stories typically involve friendship, personal struggles or trauma, and growth. See, there's no winning or hopeful closure in *Trophy Dark*. The gang isn't going to destroy the Demogorgon and get Will back.

However, merging *Trophy Dark's* bleakness and the tropes of the heroic child produces a harrowing and compelling middle ground. *Trophy Dark* typically plays out the treasure-hunters' eventual doom, where *Blackberry Jam* takes this assumption and twists it. The berry-pickers' positive traits drive them forward—their courage, curiosity, inventiveness, and bonds of friendship. While the children may survive, their traits almost certainly will not. This change is meant to explore narratives of childhood innocence transforming into something more adult, more cynical.

So, how do we go about destroying characters who are children in a way that is safe for everyone at the table? First and foremost, make sure the players know this game will:

Likely explore trauma or traumatic events in play.

Contain some level of cruelty or violence towards children.

Not yield a happy end. Everyone may survive, but there is no winning or defeating the bramble to return home content and safe.

If your players are comfortable with the premise, calibrate the severity of harm together when you sit down to play: First, ask everyone what level of awful fate they are willing to accept for their berry-pickers. The following scale can help your decision:

Children run home. Children sustain no significant physical harm. However, their presence in the scene will amplify the horror around them. The GM can play up feelings of isolation, the consequences of the children's actions, and the visceral terror that will eventually break the spirit. Ruin is a great way to remind characters of their faltering will, and Conditions can be disturbing without needing to be overly graphic.

Children can be lost to the forest. *Blackberry Jam* was written with this level in mind. Children that fall in the bramble become lost to it, destined to forever be a servant of the forest. The lost child of the forest is a pitiable spirit, and Kevir is a dark but not malevolent

town. GMs can play up the bewitching, insular nature of the forest that could very well appeal to berry-pickers that feel socially isolated or neglected. Some physical harm can come to the berry-pickers, keeping the threat level severe and sparing. However, characters won't face death, but something much stranger and more foreboding.

Children can die. Violence should still be handled with special care or it will have rapidly diminishing returns. How does the forest respond differently to the blood of the innocent? Consider the violence in *Pan's Labyrinth* & *It*, both showing magical worlds where violence was a reflection of the hellish real world the children came from. A world where children die in the bramble reflects a darker town of Kevir that continues to expose their young ones to the evil inside the bramble. Keep that violence severe and sparing so that it continues to test the berry-pickers in the story and not the players at the table.

During play, have safety tools available to manage uncomfortable content. In addition to Script Change rules found on page 20, consider safety tools like *Lines and Veils* by Ron Edwards and the *X-Card* by John Stavropoulos. Whichever tools you prefer, make sure you have them on hand whenever you play.

CHARACTER OPTIONS

The characters in *Blackberry Jam* are not the traditional treasure-hunters of *Trophy Dark*. Instead, they are children known as "berry-pickers." Instead of Backgrounds and Occupations, berry-pickers have Personalities and Upbringings. They also have unique Rituals and Drives. When playing *Blackberry Jam*, use the following tables in place of the standard *Trophy Dark* character creation tables.

BLACKBERRY JAM CHARACTER OPTIONS

	PERSONALITY — *Skill*	UPBRINGING — *Skills*	DRIVES
⚀	**Clown** — *morale*	**Child of the Forest** — *omens, spirits, weather*	Defy authority
⚁	**Energetic** — *persistence*	**Estate** — *command, culture, weapons*	Find a home
⚂	**Inquisitive** — *crafting*	**Farming** — *animals, first aid, plants*	Find your lost sibling
⚃	**Leader** — *bullying*	**Merchant Family** — *haggling, insight, misdirection*	Heal your sick mother
⚄	**Strange** — *empathy*	**Nomadic Caravan** — *foraging, lore, repair*	Run away forever and ever
⚅	**Quiet** — *knowledge*	**Orphanage** — *brawling, listening, sneaking*	Solve the mystery

BLACKBERRY JAM CHARACTER OPTIONS

	RITUAL — *Effect*
⚀	**Impertinent Phrase** — *speak truth into being*
⚁	**Mind Your Manners** — *disappear from everyone's notice*
⚂	**No Matter the Size** — *perform an incredible feat of strength*
⚃	**The Devilish Thing** — *take an entity's memory*
⚄	**The Importance of Sharing** — *mark one Ruin to remove one Ruin from someone else*
⚅	**Whisper of the Forgotten** — *communicate with a spirit*

Blackberry Jam

IRA GRACE



theme MEMORY

WARNINGS: *Body Horror, Graphic Violence, Harm to Children, Manipulation, Snakes*

The blackberries sing their soft songs to you as they gleam in the morning sun. Their song derides you for when you wronged another. Who did you wrong, and what did you do?

1

Lonely in the north of Kalduhr, nestled between rocky hills and scraggly crags, sits the village of Kevir. Between its squat, brown buildings and sour-faced folk, Kevir would be a rare choice for travelers were it not for its unique harvest. Once a year, the blackberry brambles that stretch out over the rocky hills spring to life, and the village is transformed by laughter if only for a day—we remember all the harvests that came before this one. Each is a bright spot in the drab lives led by those that call Kevir their home. A joyous fiddle breaks the morning air, and a bard's song weaves amongst the good cheer of excited children.

Yet one strange feature is missing from this celebration of harvest. The children and adults do not carry a pail for berry picking into the bramble. They only take back to the village what they can carry in their hands— for pity on those fools who fill their pockets or smuggle their bounty home in a sack.

But the temptation to traverse the brambles always seems worth the risk. They say that deep within, there is a berry with juice so dark and sweet that a single drop is more delicious than the whole bramble put together. Though it is forbidden, a few children and adults try now and again to reach the bramble's heart.

As the berry-pickers enter the fields, they encounter the village children playing among the brambles. The children call them over to play hide and seek and are very welcoming—until they realize the berry-pickers' intent. Every few years, a group of kids attempts to find the bramble's heart. They always come back in failure. The berry-pickers also notice a group of adults from Kevir making their way into the bramble, no whimsy in their task.

TERRORS

The thorny blackberry vines part easily, allowing entrance into the **deep bramble**. Emma, a young girl with a strange demeanor, whispers that once she went far enough into the bramble to hear its soft song. Another child, Mehera, darts off to tattle on the party.

TEMPTATIONS

Eventually, the berry-pickers come across a group of children gathered around a **corpse**, where they use its stained fingers to swat at each other. Next to the figure is a bag containing a few berries of the deepest black that sparkle in the morning sun. A child identifies the corpse as a runner who spent the night in the deep bramble and tried to run the most precious berries back to town before it came alive. Thorny vines are wrapped deep into the flesh of his neck, wrists, and calves. Behind him, the berry-pickers spy a trampled path leading into the deep bramble. The trail is ringed with swallowtail butterflies sipping from blackberry flowers.

A spiderweb up ahead is so full of prey that it sags. As you get a little closer, you realize it is not filled with insects, but with plump blackberries. The spiders suck at the rich nectar in a frenzy.

2

Beyond the paths of the close brambles, all children know of the deep bramble. It is an echoing cacophony within. Birds chirp, beetles click, and the restless vines move in a constant rustle. The path left by the dead man is a hacked gash through the bramble, canes and vines oozing into the earth. You hear the nearby thud of a machete against the scrub. The adult hunters approach your direction, fighting the bramble at every step. Angry voices—a subordinate protesting the tough path to their superior. They are from Kevir, usually occupying the inn's corner booth as they mutter about the day when they'll take back all the town has lost to the bramble. Most of Kevir can't understand their point of view, for the bramble is a gift to be celebrated, not a curse to be endured.

TERRORS

The creeping plants protest against the machetes as these **adult interlopers** stir up the bramble all around them. Vines and tendrils writhe closer until the hunters' steel machetes put them to rest. The bramble agitates against the berry-pickers and adults alike as the hunters become more and more enraged by their slow progress.

TEMPTATIONS

The leader of the hunting party, a mystical fellow named Damek, roars a defiant curse into the bramble, "I have seen the heart of you. Though my memory dims with age, I will see it again, damn you!" As the bramble writhes in anger, a **clear path** is revealed for a moment. At its end sits a splendid gate of thorns and enticing berries.



Warbling vireos fill a large berrybush. They peck not berries, but at the eyes of an unfortunate member of their flock.



After fighting their way past the deep brambles, the dense foliage thins out. A path, faint and natural, twists towards the heart of the patch. The sweet scent of crushed blackberries gives way to the sickly scent of rot. Tiny adders slither about the berry-pickers' feet, climbing the bushes and vines all around them. Twisted and entwined about the portal is an ancient and decrepit viper—the bramble's Gatekeeper. Its milky eyes shine in the shadowed bramble, but for all its squirming, it is trapped. Time has embedded vines and thorns in its flesh. Every ripple of muscle underneath its hide echoes with a spasm of pain and a dribble of blood.

TERRORS

The ancient **adder** speaks to the berry-pickers, "Please, bring me something to eat, clever young masters. I am hungry, and the little animals don't come to me anymore to help me in my plight. I am thirsty, but not a bug nor a rat will share their blood with me. Help me, and I will open the gate." If the berry-pickers try to force the gate open, the adder thrashes around in its prison, sending heavy thorns through the air. If someone gets close enough to put some food in its mouth, it tries to eat them before opening the gate—it cannot help itself.

TEMPTATIONS

Beyond the serpent's portal, the blackberries gain a fluorescent quality and illuminate the tunnel that plunges into the bramble's heart. Motes of friendly light bounce within, beckoning to the berry-pickers. They can hear the **soft song** of the brambles, maddeningly indecipherable.

A melancholy wind whips across the bramble,
sending a shower of thorns across the berry-pickers.



The fluorescent passage, lit by luminescent berries, moves the berry-pickers into a twisted cavern. The walls and ceiling are all made of bramble, where thin blue light captures the forms of playing children. The town forgot these children. Yet they go about their games, smashing blackberries and scooping up the black goo to deposit it in a slow-moving stream that drains into the center of the clearing. The Lady of the Bramble speaks to the berry-pickers, enticing them to stay and play with the other children. She is an imposing figure, made of twisting vines and white petals. Where her waist meets the wall of bramble, her form melts into the foliage—it squirms and shifts, carrying her around the edge of the thorny, twisted cavern.

TERRORS

The **Lady of the Bramble** reaches out to the berry-pickers, enticing them in a soothing whisper with all the comforts they could ever want—all they need to do is stay here with her. If the party resists her solicitations, her children become agitated and demand that the berry-pickers do as she says to keep her happy.

There is a commotion from behind the opening to the glade—the sound of ripping vegetation and the Gatekeeper's wails of pain. A familiar form bursts through the tunnel. At its center is Damek, pierced through with thorns and vines. The bramble has augmented his limbs into monstrous extensions, and his face contorts into a cruel grimace with every step. He roars through the pain, pointing one thorned hand towards the central pit, "I will have its heart!"

TEMPTATIONS

A hole opens in the sucking pit where the blackberry goo drains, revealing a drenched and barren field beneath. A bramble topiary of a boy sits in the center of this field, beneath the **pulsing heart** of the blackberry bramble.

CONDITIONS

- ⚀ Your mouth fills with the bitter taste of black mold that corrupts the late crop harvest. The sweetness of fresh berries can cut through it, but only for a second.
- ⚁ A viscous syrup replaces the sweat on your forehead. It drips into your eyes and threatens to cement them shut.
- ⚂ You are plagued with persistent, peaceful memories that are not your own, confusing and disorienting you.
- ⚃ Groping tendrils sprout from your hands. They cling to anything they come close to, attempting to pull you into the bramble.
- ⚄ A fading spirit clings to you for shelter. When you shift your limbs, its ghostly form echoes your movement. Behind your eyes, another set glints.
- ⚅ You spy a button pressed into the earth in your path and experience a nagging feeling of déjà vu.You realize it's an exact match for the ones on your jacket. How did it get here?

A ball of snakes, writhing in ecstasy, blocks the path in front of you.
Seemingly unconcerned by your presence, they continue with their rituals.



As the berry-pickers are sucked down into the viscous sap, it fills their mouth, eyes, and ears, making their lungs burn for air. They finally pass through a gelatinous portal and fall heavily onto saturated, sticky ground at the bramble's heart. Above them, the quivering membrane drips the sweet blackberry juice. Across the clearing, they see a small, round basin atop a pedestal. Next to it a woman sits, tired hands scrubbing away the drops that fall incessantly upon her. She is clad in grimy robes with an odd iron sword stuck in the earth next to her. Like everything here, it is covered in the sap that trickles from the heart above. She dips a dirty rag into the basin of water. It emerges clean, and the water remains crystal clear. Within seconds, the rag is smeared again with juice. Next to the woman grows a blackberry topiary, twisted into the form of a young boy crying out in anguish. His eyes look up, as his foot is anchored to the ground by a blackberry cane. Succulent blackberries hang off him like bleeding sores. A single, unripe carnelian berry grows in his outstretched hand.

The robed woman scours her worn hands with the rag. As she does, she grumbles about how the berry-pickers are filthy and need to clean themselves in the fountain. Inside their own heads, they hear a soft plea for freedom. A wind stirs within the glade and rustles the leaves of the Boy in the Bush. "This bramble is cursed, don't listen to the Old Woman."

TERRORS

Within the basin, they can see images of their family, eating happily around a table without them. No place was set for them, as they are forgotten. The **Old Woman** hisses through her teeth, "It's not a decision for children. Clean yourself and go back to your family, lest you dwell in the bramble forever." If they get too close to the Old Woman, she attempts to grab them and drag them into the fountain. If she is successful, the fountain washes them of their memories of the bramble and sends them back to town as a hollow reflection of themselves.

TEMPTATIONS

The topiary is precariously balanced on a narrow strip of stem. Shoved into the earth next to the Old Woman is her **ancient sword**. The Boy in the Bush reminds them that they suffered the bramble to eat of the fruit he holds, strange and succulent. Attacking the Boy in the Bush or the heart of the bramble causes the fountain water to boil, agitating the Old Woman. If either are successfully destroyed, the bramble implodes into a tornado of thorns so violent it destroys Kevir in the process. Eating the proffered berry transfers the boy's suffering to the one who eats it. As the eater's flesh opens in sores, they eventually become plant and thorn, binding the berry-picker to the bramble. The Old Woman mutters, "One must suffer, always suffer," as the other berry-pickers watch their companion finish their transformation into the new Child in the Bush.

A beetle the size of your head beckons to you
and whispers that it is good to see you again.

Random Tables & Generators

You sometimes need a random bit of inspiration when running a game. The following pages include tables and generators for unique monsters, unexpected treasures, and more. Simply pick the options you like, or roll one dark die and one light die and consult the relevant row.

MONSTER GENERATOR — *Roll once for each trait*

APPEARANCE		FORM	
dripping	segmented	stag	centipede
heavy	armored	beetle	corpse *(roll again)*
towering	spiked or horned	otter	squat humanoid
light-swallowing	delicate	bat	flowers or vines
frost-rimed	agile	crab	smoke or mist
jagged	blinding	horse	hybrid *(roll twice)*
immaterial	mimic	gangly humanoid	swarm
radiant	translucent	floating sac	net or rope
putrescent	numberless	feline	lizard
aflame	familiar	orb	serpent
diseased	shattered	bear	worm
mesmerizing	stumbling	flying insect	mundane object
ridged	dreamlike	fish	bird
fur-covered	scaled	eel	cursed spirit
many-eyed	barbed	goat	fae guardian
massive	serpentine	mud or ooze	spider
swarming	majestic	electricity	soldier bee
agile	iridescent	wolf	treasure-hunter

BEHAVIOR		
Picking apart something dead	Pinned under a heavy object	Forming, as if summoned
Hiding something valuable	Calling out	Sprouting strange new shapes
Strange, repeating gestures	Fleeing in a panic	Clashing with rivals
Call-and-response noises	Locating rare foodstuffs	Taunting captured prey
Birthing young	Caring for wounds	Sharpening a claw or weapon
Destroying a barrier	Absorbing unnatural powers	Piling tinder for a fire
Setting an ambush	Hunting, with signs of success	Still, attention fixed above
Using a tool to procure food	Marking territory	Expulsion, fluids spewing out
Attacking an inanimate object	Applying a pigment	Arranging items around itself
Patrolling along a route	Lazy and content after a meal	Backing up defensively
Engaging in play	Communing with spirits	Vanishing before your eyes
Suffering another's attention	Flickering in and out of sight	Unresponsive... asleep?

MAPS & ROUTES

Every journey begins somewhere. Roll a dark and light die to determine how the party knows about this place.

- A squat man with spider's legs speaks the route to you while you sleep.
- A witch screamed of a hidden passage as she burned on the pyre.
- You received a freshly drawn map as your only inheritance.
- You paid attention to the details in an amputee's drunken brags.
- You stalked a treasure-hunter, killing them once you knew their secrets.
- You were hired by a masked noble to investigate a rumor.
- Many years ago you were led here as a sacrifice but you escaped.
- A miscast ritual revealed the location to you as a vision in a flickering flame.
- You bribed a desperate ranger in the kingsguard.
- This location was mentioned in ancient records you've studied.
- You deciphered a code hidden in a children's song.
- You noticed part of a crude map scrawled on the ground near a goblin hovel.
- A wandering fortune-teller traced it on your palm.
- It was a residual memory after being temporarily possessed by a forest spirit.
- Your sister was the lone survivor of a previous expedition.
- You've observed where the local wildlife refuse to go.
- A dying man shared it with you in exchange for the care you gave him.
- You sold your farm to a retiring treasure-hunter for her guidance.
- You hired a scout to survey the forest's depths, who returned speaking in riddles.
- It was mentioned in a book held in your temple's forbidden library.
- You bound a forest spirit to a glowing orb which leads the way.
- The constant buzzing in your head only quiets as you get closer.
- You woke up after a rough evening with a map tattooed on your forearm.
- You pieced together stories overheard while serving as valet to an antiquarian.
- The path was woven into a tapestry your family has had for generations.
- Sister Orfilios, the patron saint of prosperity, blessed you with a vision for your devotion.
- You were illegally hunting in the forest and tracked your quarry here.
- Your uncle's mad ramblings alluded to landmarks, and you recognized the first two.
- You read private letters you were meant to deliver to the governor.
- You won directions from a reckless and luckless gambler in a high-stakes dice game.
- The stars write their demands on the canvas of a heaven only you can see.
- You were the torchbearer for a previous expedition which passed over this site.
- A strange pattern on your goat's fleece bears a striking resemblance to local terrain.
- The steel-gray fox which you found and have taken as a pet pulls in one direction.
- You were meant to accompany your love here, but he took your gear and left in the night.
- You are the reincarnation of Queen Sehtet ils Noh and you know the way home.

REMNANTS

The party is not the first to venture here. Roll a dark and light die to show traces of those who came before.

- A sagging headstone made of branches and mud.
- A hollowed-out tree trunk full of loose coins and scraps of clothing.
- A trail of arrows leading you out of the forest.
- The flag of an old nation, black star on white, hanging limply off a branch.
- A scattered path of knives, the blades worn down to the hilt.
- The remains of a makeshift barricade, splinters of wood covered thick with blood.
- A small, buried chest of fake jewels, glass glittering in the sun.
- Hooks embedded on a tree, used to climb to relative safety.
- A wet campfire put out by a strange, luminescent liquid.
- Names in another language, desperately carved on the soil itself.
- A lonely skeleton curled up in a cave, fingers clenched around a rotted crossbow.
- A putrefied, gray hand grasping out of the ground, rings of royalty on its fingers.
- Boot prints in the mud, sizzling with smoke.
- Ancient tapestry, riotous in colors and history, converted into makeshift hammocks.
- A huddle of burnt corpses surrounding a funeral pyre, arms around each other.
- Cartographer's satchel, filled with potentially useful tools, covered with dark ichor.
- Bouquet of flowers from every corner of the world, planted in the ground like a sentinel.
- Ratty journal, detailing a youth's hopes and dreams of winning their beloved's hand.
- Collection of small religious icons arranged into a shrine, each icon familiar to the treasure-hunters.
- Lit candles melted into the surface, reduced to nubs.
- Upturned chest of clothes, beautiful finery turned threadbare by the elements.
- A scarecrow of rusted armor, hung on branches and bones.
- A locket abandoned on the soil, containing a picture of someone precious.
- Cooking utensils left behind, used to cook some foul-smelling substance.
- Unrecognizable corpses, chewed upon and stripped to the bone.
- Paintings daubed in blood—warnings to the foolhardy.
- A battered, punctured iron helm thrown haphazardly to the ground.
- Activated steel traps on the ground, barbs glistening with gristle.
- A lonely verse from nowhere, the last breath of a dying fool.
- A map of the area written in another language, annotated with desperate scribblings.
- An empty, makeshift stretcher, stained and worn.
- Upturned bottles of liquor, spilled in a hurry.
- The scent of vomit permeating the ground.
- A sword broken violently in two.
- A satchel full of stale, moldy fruit and bread.
- A weather-beaten lyre used to fill the silence with song.

TREASURES

When a treasure-hunter makes a valuable discovery, roll a dark and light die to determine what they find.

	Tarnished silver crown coated with luminescent moss.
	Iron scepter with golden leaf filigree.
	Various metal coins depicting King Argiol Seo, eyes scratched out.
	Smooth black stone urn, anything placed inside disappears.
	Pendant depicting a serpent swallowing the sun.
	Jade statue of three lovers, warm to the touch.
	Hematite orb in an iron cradle.
	Collection of child's clay dolls, all with left arms missing.
	Ornate glass coffin, interior speckled with blackened handprints.
	Masterwork sword, hilt is also a blade, making it unusable.
	Iron shield with winged lion in relief.
	Gauntlet studded with black opals.
	Petrified wood mask with verdigris-copper antlers.
	Collection of vials filled with viscous, glittering liquids.
	Stone tablet engraved with haunting pictograms.
	Bronze ring with three small sapphires forming a triangle.
	Necklace of eleven bronzed feathers.
	Silver chalice ringed with strange geometric symbols.
	Mummified hand with eight long fingers.
	Milk-white gems, something flitting about inside them.
	Ruby-studded slippers, too small for anyone in the party.
	Chest made of repurposed sword blades, filled with disintegrating scrolls.
	Jade sphere engraved with two symbols: an eye opening and an eye closing.
	Simple metal flask with a clear liquid, mildly hallucinogenic.
	Curved ritual knife with a hollow blade.
	Large clay vase depicting graphic scenes of battle.
	Figurine of nude man with ax, made of silver.
	Palm-sized pouch constructed from hundreds of tiny glass beads.
	Polished gold mirror, only reflects one member of the party.
	Pearl-inlaid jewelry box, locked.
	Small crystal bottle and dropper, a dried purple substance caked to the bottom.
	Key with a handle shaped like a child wreathed with thorns.
	Statuette of an unfamiliar eight-limbed beast of burden with a tentacled face.
	Lap harp painted with ghostly figures, any song played reminds listeners of lost loves.
	Clay nesting dolls, each looks like a member of the party.
	Simple silver ring, makes the wearer incorporeal but draws spirits to them.