

Story: In ancient times there was a pacifist, peaceful people to the south east of the plain (fremde), lead by nine magi, who were spiritual gurus but had no political power. The pre-Ascomanni enslaved them with absolute brutality and used them to create great barrows and monuments. They slaughtered them en masse, raped them and through the free labor, slowly warred amongst each other to consolidate into a single kingdom. While for the hundreds of years the slaughter and enslavement escalated, none of the Ascomanni warlords threatened to violate the most sacred Fremde aspect: the living form of the Fremde fertility goddess, whose avatar, a little girl, wanders the jungles of the Fremde homeland. The first consolidated king Yfeldan, in an attempt to break the Fremde spirit, captured this avatar, raped, killed and cannibalized her. The rage of the magi was such that they forsook their pacifist creeds and began to raise those who had been slain by the Ascomanni, attacking them with terrible fury. While the magi once used their magic to heal and to grow, they were twisted into terrible forms and taught their people murder. The Ascomanni kingdom was instantly set into a retreat, unable to defend against the magi's magic.

[ late november, rivers freezing, will be frozen within 2 weeks ]

[ make plan/prep ]

[ describe fields outside of alesia, frozen ground, silence except winds from the north, snow fall ]

[ Bestla you feel a sickness coming over you, a drop of blood drops from your eye and stains the white snow red ]

[describe first few weeks of journey]

## Passing by Bestla's tree

[ Over the weeks you proceed south through frozen [forests/fields describe] ]

[ Bestla you realize that you are nearing the glade of Angantyr. It is a few hours to the west, in a secluded glade. You hid the great tree by animating the others and walling him into a place where decades before a brush fire had passed through and formed a clearing. The thought of his closeness warms your heart. ]

[ Suddenly, trembling waves of pain pass through your body, your eyes begin to leak blood and the skin takes on a blackish, sickly shade. The leaves and saplings growing from your body wilt and begin to fall off and you fall to the snow, which takes on a black puddle of decaying matter. ]

[ It is then that you realize that your treehusband is under attack ]

[ she is able to move, although weak, must save tree or gg]

## Into the Forest

[ Beyond the first layer of trees something is clearly amiss: The trees here are dead, their hulking forms are stripped of bark, and black lichens cover their trunks, eating away. The snow here is thinned and mixed with a sludge of rotting leaves, creating a putrid stench. Coming from deep within the forest is an echoing howl of pain which rattles the brittle trees ]

[As you proceed deeper toward the glade, you see things moving in the corner of your eye. Dark things. Shadows. An arm. Feet. Whispers fill the forest. Scratching across wood. Far across the way, shrouded by dozens of dead trees, the mahir which you encountered in Alesia stands in an opening ]

[ You hear a shout of a man from the rear of the line. [one party member ] sees a man be pulled back by an invisible force at incredible speed, falling into the sludge on his stomach and grasping for help, a few of Aethelwulf's men run after him ]

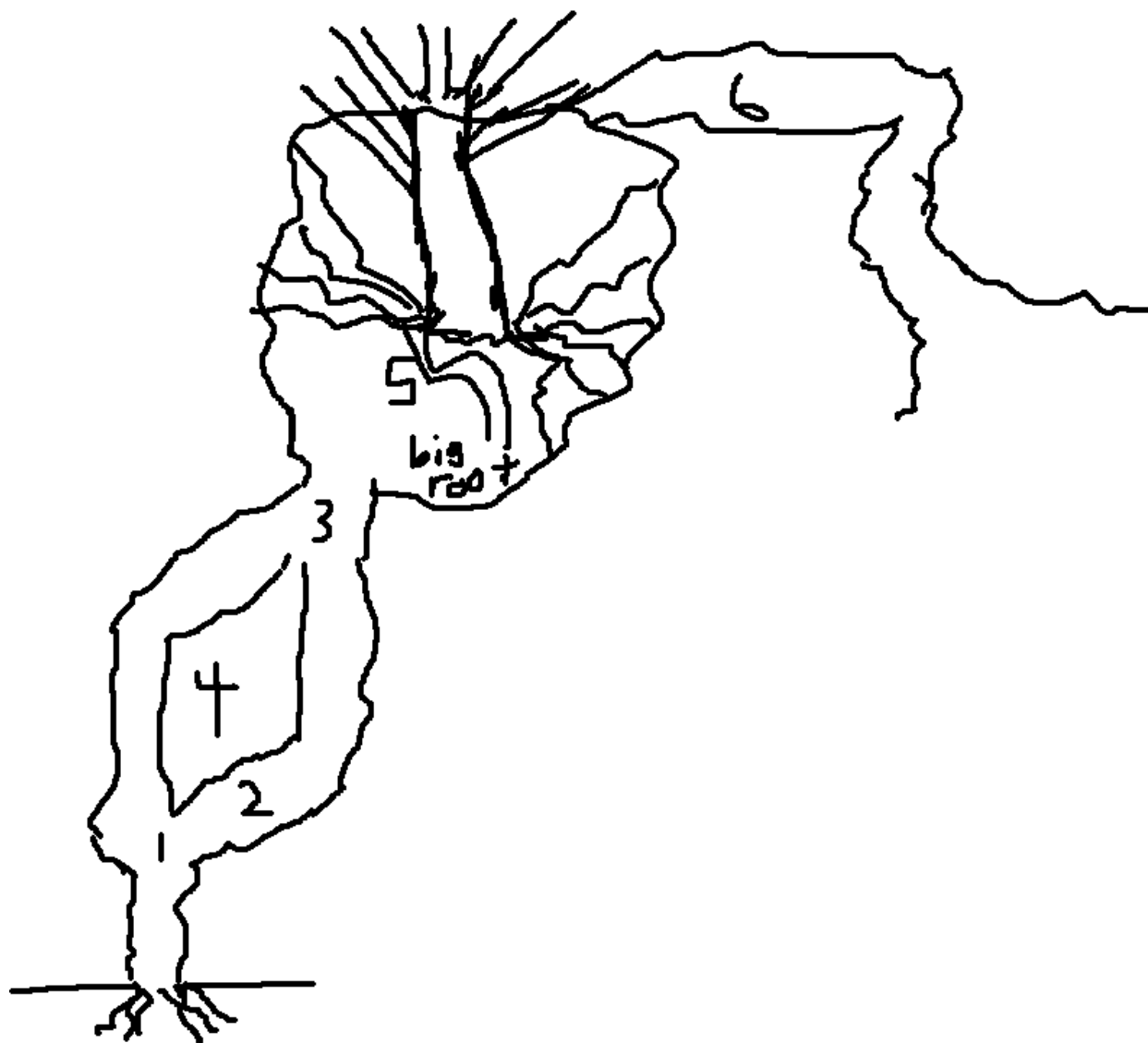
[ More screams ]

## Wall of Trees

[ The wall of trees surrounding the glade comes into view. The whispers and scratching intensifies. One of the trees in the wall has been split in half by roots which protrude and spill outward onto the forest floor like squid tentacle, creating an opening into the glade ]

[ Opening? Looking into the breach, you can see a frozen dirt walkway entering a lattice corridor of twisted, gnarled roots. The roots have twisted and mashed together to create a tunnel into the glade, and some of them ooze blood. Moonlight is slipping through gaps between the roots, dimly lighting the forest floor. The vines are too close together to make out what exactly lies beyond the path, but you can see there is an endless ocean of roots beyond. Bestla recognizes those roots as Angantyr's.

There is a trail of blood leading in and a shining metallic object in the middle of the path.



1:

Brooch: [Aethelwulf: Thorgeisl's cloak brooch, I know it because it because it is unique. The silver owl.]

As you enter the path you notice two figures low to the ground about twenty or thirty feet away. The blood trail leads directly to them. You hear a voice cry out for aid. "Thorgeisl, I'm coming!" screams Aethelwulf and he runs forward

As you advance you realize that at the end of the path is the houseman Thorgeisl, sitting up against the wall of roots, and bloodied in the nose. He does not say anything, but appears to be looking at something behind you ]

[ If party advances he screams "no!" and his throat is slit and his head decapitated, he rolls toward the party. A gast becomes visible and runs down a pathway leading east. There is also a path west. ]

2: You follow the path and suddenly hear a faint thumping coming from ahead. It sounds like a heartbeat. It grows louder the further you walk. There is a bend in the path up ahead, you cannot see around it.

Advance: You hear a wooden creaking and the corridor shrinks, the roots are constricting upon you from all sides! The heartbeat echoing through the glade becomes louder, frantic and inconsistent, deafening you.

3: The path continues north and widens into a huge clearing in the forest floor. The roots shoot up dozens of feet here, forming a dome which juts toward the sky. In the center of the clearing is the lower trunk of the great oak Angantyr. The entire tree cannot be seen, as the vines wrap around it in the center to form a ceiling. Roots shoot from the soil at the base of the trunk, coming out in all directions like a spider web, a few inches off the ground, leading to the lattice walls. A vibrant, green root, two feet wide, shoots up in front of the tree in the shape of a handlebar. Standing atop it is the mahir, with a great axe in his hands. A few housemen are huddled under this root, as if tied together, still alive.

“Ash man...Crown...If not... the tree spirit...this old one... your men.... snuffed”

## Attack/Bestla Dead

[ As you do so the mahir emotionlessly swings his axe down and splits the root in half, which spits blood everywhere like a fountain]

[ Bestla disintegrates, leaving behind a pile of twigs, leaves, soiled wood fragments and a dark green acorn. ]

[ The housemen who were captured under the root are instantly beheaded, and materializing from the air near them are 4 of the horrid creatures you saw before, their mouths and claws drenched in blood]

[ fight, when mahir wounded, fly away, a note falls from his silks, he burns it then continues to fly away ]

[ If they somehow restore it, it's a note written in an invisible magical Sanskrit-esque script, by sighere, telling mr. mahir where the tree was ]

## Sweartlogian

[ describe forest leading into hills ]

[ clearing, stone door with runes in it fixed into a hill, snow obscures it]

[ the door runes on the door glow faintly as the spell is cast, and becomes increasingly transparent, as ripples flow through it like a wave across water. Soon, the doorway is clear, you best walk in quickly before it becomes solid again ]

[ A corridor made of the same dark, smooth stone as the door lies before you, pitch black. Terrifying figures emerge and scream in raspy, shrill voices, in a strange, melodic tongue you have never heard before, thrusting sharp points in your faces. They look like men, except their skin is pitch black, with no shades of lighter pigment, their heads are smooth bald, their ears are twisted and pointed and their eyes glow with green lanterns. They are short, no more than 5 feet, and are of a slender composition. They wear black chain mail, prominent skin gloves, and carry long spears, scimitars and stone clubs. ]

[ its pitch black inside, they hate light, they will make it so you can see etc ]

[ You are brought into the city of Sweartlogian by your dark elf guides who walk with a strange, quick gait. After passing for about twenty or thirty feet through the corridor you enter into a massive limestone cavern which contains the city. Sweartlogian looks surprisingly like the Ascomanni hamlets on the surface, comprised of long houses detailed with knotwork, runes and gilding. They are nearly identical except in one regard: the lodges of the dark elves are constructed of a black stone, and the houses of the surface are wood. The city is comprised of a random ordering of such lodges, not unlike hakonsfjord, and the pathways, a bare rock, are meticulously clean. The cavern is warmer than the freezing surface, but not by much, and no hearths are visible. ]

[ The elves walk toward a prominent house on the other side of the settlement, a great hall similar to the one at Hedgewick. Two stone doors tens of feet high swing open and you are lead to the throne room of Queen Maija. The room is barren and austere, not unlike the outside city, empty except for the royal guards who stand stoically aside the simple throne. ]

Only andvari:

“Welcome back Andvari, it has been some time. Why do you endanger my people by bringing ash men here? The last time we made oaths with their troublesome kind, my love was lost. They might very well bring the easterners here as they continue to run from their past”

“I will bring back the one you love if you bring back mine. His body has lied in state all these centuries, for this opportunity. I sense a power on your person that might restore his breath”

[ she wants raise dead scroll, party can try to explain that he cant be raised etc or give scroll away foolishly and she will cast tree on bestla ]

#### **Other Stuff:**

[ Tunnels leading to other parts of the underworld ]

[ Snorro, a dverge magic merchant, Vnarin, a dverge scroll merchant, both with carts filled with magic shit ]

The dverge is the closest in appearance to the dwarf described in the Monstrous Compendium, except for their crow's feet. They are usually short and skinny, often grotesque in appearance. A few can pass for normal, though stunted, men. Some sport wild beards. See Vikings handbook]

## Sweartlogian

### Dock-Alfar

The dock-alfar, or dark elves, are similar to drow in abilities and appearance. They live beneath the earth and shun the light. Unlike drow, the dock-alfar are not quite as malicious or evil. They are neutral to evil in behavior, in general preferring to remain out of human affairs. They do not use javelins or crossbows of any type, carry adamantine maces, use poison, or have any of the cultural particulars of drow. The dock-alfar live in underground communities organized much like normal human communities. Like the dverge, dock-alfar tend to only be encountered in the loneliest of mountain regions. So infrequently are they seen that humans consider them more legend than fact.

Sweartlogian “the dark lodge” is an underground dark elf city located in the south eastern arm of the forests south of Alesia, right before the Centaur lands. There are some hills there, covered by forest, set into which is a magically runed door made of black stone. At 3 AM the door may be opened by a knock spell, but the entrance is heavily guarded, and intruders are killed on sight. You traveled there a few hundred years ago to collect supplies for your barrow, as the dark elves trade with the dverge, dwarf-like creatures, who are known for their magical crafts. You will be welcomed into the city (the huldufolk can speak their language) but you will have to explain why the humans are present or they will be killed.

The elves of Sweartlogian were used as mercenaries by the Imperials during the Wind Age in an attempt to counter the Ascomani magics. In this campaign their king Valdemaran was slain and the elves have since remained underground, although the vast quantities of wealth they won during the war have made them a powerful polity in the underworld. Valdemaran’s wife Maija is now queen, and is known as a powerful druidess.

## On the Rebirth and Death of Forest Spirits

When dryads and other forest spirits are slain their souls do not immediately leave the middle realm, but instead drift into a seed or acorn left behind in the dead body. Once this acorn settles in new soil, it will grow into a tree and the consciousness of the previous spirit is lost. Alternatively, if the acorn cannot find soil to inhabit, it will rot within 3 weeks and the spirit will be lost forever.

If the priest spell *Tree* is cast upon the acorn/seed, the spirit may:

- a. Decide to release itself and die
- b. Transform into a tree automatically without having to grow naturally.
- c. Decide to return with its consciousness in a random natural form (reincarnation)
- d. It may be raised from the dead, in which case if it was severed from its husbandtree, it will die again.



## Fording River

[ This section of river has only nominally thawed, will not be able to walk across. ]

[Will need to make rafts or something to ford]

[ While deploying across river, centaur rides up demanding all valuables, if no, attack from all angles ]

Centaur patrol:

### 10 lancers

HP 25, THAC0 16, 2d6 x2 damage (charge), 1d6, 1d6 (hooves). AC 5. 420 xp

Circular, spiked helmets, lamellated leather armor woven with vines, rusted, long iron lances, javelins, long, tangled hair, olive skin, beady black eyes

### 10 archers

Great, broad elm bows, bare, scarred chests, clubs

HP 25, THAC0 16, 1d8+4 (arrow), 1d6, 1d6 (hooves). AC 7. 420 xp

### 2 priests

Charm Person or Mammal, Summon Insects (2/4 damage, -2 attack, +2 AC, 5 rounds), Spike Growth (50 sq feet, 2d4 damage), Hold Person (10 rounds)

HP 25, THAC0 16, 1d8 (club), 1d6, 1d6 (hooves). AC 7. 900 xp

### 1 leader - Branalf

HP 40, THAC0 13, 2d6+4 x 2 (charge), 1d6, 1d6 (hooves). AC 5. 2000 xp