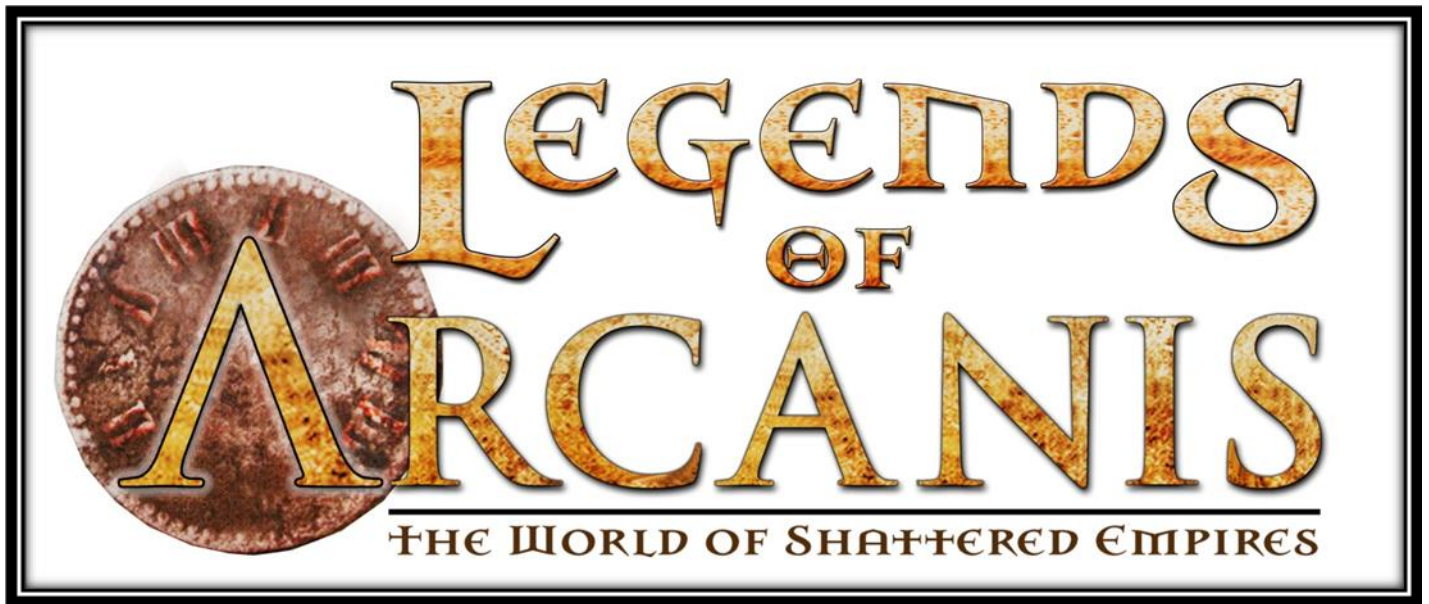


# Paradigm Concepts

Presents



## Into the Verdant Heart

**A 4-Hour SHATTERED EMPIRES Adventure  
Soft-Point Adventure 2, Crusades Year 2  
Vires, 1070 I.C.**

**by Anthony Nijssen**

*“What beauty there in Nature lies/ Illumed ‘neath Illir’s shining gaze/  
And given life by Saluwé’s ss/ For all Their wonders to amaze.”  
-Fiametta val’Sheem, Cafelan Poet*

Something stirs in the heart of the Pricklespur Forest; rumours abound of demons, corrupt once-men, and beasts of legend. Even those who stand stalwart in the face of the Infernal threat quail at the thought of what might lurk in the dark foliage. Only the very brave or very foolish dare enter. What secrets lie hidden beneath the ancient roots?

**A LEGENDS OF ARCANIS INTRODUCTORY adventure is designed for Tier 1.**

## Credits

**Author:** Anthony Nijssen

**Editor:** Sarah Brown

**Cartographer:** Pedro Barrenechea

**Version:** 1.3

## **Campaign-Related Information**

### Temples and Shrines

Mil Takara – Temple to Hurrian, housing the Templars of Hurrian. Within are small shrines to Illiir and Larissa.

Pricklespur Forest – Primitive Shrine of Saluwé. This is NOT an Elemental Shrine despite appearances, and the Spirit guarding the Shrine is a Priestess in service to Saluwé.

### Organizations

None pertinent.

### Portals of Anshar

No known Portals are available in this mod.

### GM Game Notes

Before the start of the game, make a quick check to determine any Flaws the characters may have. *Bloodthirsty* in particular will have an affect in this mod. All Heroes with the *Bloodthirsty* Flaw -1 to your Discipline defense and all Resolve action rolls until further notice.

## **Adventure Background**

Bound deep in the Pricklespur Forest, something stirs..

Two week ago, a group of treasure seekers looking for the Lost Temple of the Hidden Star came across a primitive Shrine to Saluwe and set up camp for the night. A band of Green Lurkers appeared, and fell upon them.

The ensuing combat destroyed the fragile Shrine, arousing the ire of a powerful spirit, a high priestess of Saluwe, who possessed a large group of nearby Grunwilde to defend the Shrine, sending them to the edge of the forest to track down a stolen Holy Symbol. The influence of the Spirit only extends so far, and so they wait at the forests edge, incapable of doing more than lashing out at bands that may have the Symbol. The Pengik, of course, are still allowed passage, but no others. The scout simply got too close to the forest's edge.

If the Heroes pay homage to Saluwe and repair the Shrine, the Priestess will be appeased. Even if they don't repair the Shrine, the Spirit doesn't have the power to send the Lurkers beyond the forest's edge, and can only control a small number of them at a time. There is no second front, no planned assault by strange green creatures.

## Introduction

**Key Concepts:** The Heroes are shopping in the tent bazaar of Mil Takara. They have the opportunity to buy a few special items, including one in particular which will be helpful in the mission they are about to be sent on.

*The bustle of Mil Takara's bazaar has picked up in recent months, though it pales in comparison to Censure's marketplace. Still, there are enough Yhing Hir vendors to provide some interesting items, and merchants from farther afield have begun to trickle in. The wares are mostly aimed at the soldiers, but a little bit of everything for intrepid adventurers is available if you take the time to look (and are willing to pay the extra price). Even the dwarves of the Legendary Blades have made the long trek; though they sold out in under a day, they have promised to return with more weapons as soon as possible.*

*There is much to spend your hard-earned coin on, but best to keep the Coryani axiom in mind: caveat emptor, buyer beware.*

At this point, let the Heroes roleplay their time in the marketplace. There are merchants for almost anything they could desire, though some items will obviously be more valuable than others.

*Of particular note:*

Chamb-Mori - Horse trader, dealing in fine Yhing Hir stallions bred for combat. Prices will start at 200% standard for a horse, and he can be haggled down to 150% with a roll, 100% with good RP, no less. They truly are fine horses. Treat all his riding horses as Quality Light War Horses.

Keywords when haggling: Lineage, speed, flanks, mane, teeth.

Derrick Holryn-Misveldt – Polearm and thrown weapon merchant, well-to-do and married to a sweet val'Holryn lady who helps mind his shop. Sells any kind of polearm and thrown weapon of up to *Fine* quality. Prices start at 150% and can be haggled down to 100% (with a roll), or as low as 75% with good RP.

Legendary Blades – Two Solani dwarves, Ferrous and Ilar, can be found packing up their stall and prepping to leave. They've sold all but one piece, and no one in Mil Takara could afford it; it is a piece of art, a blade of Tempered Sarishan Steel and Ebon stone, blacker than night and sharper than a slighted val'Sheem's tongue. They call the sword Cadic's Sweet Kiss, and won't part with the blade for less than 500 Gold Crowns. Heroes interested in examining it may do so from at least 5 feet away, with Ferrous standing between them and the blade with Ilar holding it up for display. The blade is a *Legendary* quality gladius encrusted with Lesser Shadow and Standard Sanctified runes. Though the Heroes will not get a chance to interact with it this mod, they might in a future mod. For now, it's leaving with the Solani.

R'leth of House Dragosi – A merchant dealing in the obscure and questionably legal. Heroes can find R'leth with a ***Routine (TN: 15) Streetwise (Black Market)(Lo) Action Skill Roll***. This is the **only** way to purchase these items in Mil Takara at the moment. He is able to sell minor alchemical items like Acid Spheres and Refreshing Brews (See pg. 30 in *Forged in Magic*) Prices start at 150%, and can be haggled down to 100% (with a roll) or 75% with good RP. You may use *Streetwise (Ch)* instead of *Appraise: (Barter) (Ch)* to haggle with R'leth if using a roll.

When the Heroes are done, continue with the following:

*As you meander your way among the stalls, you are accosted by what at first appears to be a shambling pile of rags. "Saluwé's blessings on you, adventurers, and won't you buy a poor man's trinket?"*

*What turns out to be a ragged man brandishing a strange piece of wood and vines stands before you. "This amulet will protect you from the beasts of forest and field! Blessed by Saluwé Herself! I dun need it seeing as I'm stuck here, but it could be of great value to travelers like yerselves. I need coin more'n I need this. What'dya say, 2 silver?"*

A *Knowledge: (Religion)* check (TN: 20) will reveal that this is, in fact, a primitive and ancient symbol of Saluwé. Priests and Holy Champions of Saluwé get +10 to this check. (Success is not automatic since the symbol hasn't been used in a couple hundred years.)

Any attempts to discern magic will be negative; the Holy Symbol is completely mundane.

A *Perception* check (TN: 15) will note a faint splash of red over the vines. Closer inspection will reveal it to be suspiciously like dried blood. If commented on, Mandek will offer to lower the price to 1 silver.

What's your name? Who are you?

**"I'm Mandek, from Almeric. Came up here to join the Crusade, but I'm no hand with a sword and not much use at anything else. Now I'm just trying to scrounge enough money to get home, selling such trinkets and baubles as come my way."**

Where did you get that item?

**"A man gave it to me a couple days ago. Said it would protect me from animals on my trip home, but I need money more than I need this trinket."**

It is entirely up to the Heroes whether they want to purchase the Holy Symbol or not. Adherents of Saluwé should want the item for historical value if nothing else, and it proves that the shrine it was taken from is, in fact, a Shrine to Saluwé and not simply a heathen Elemental Shrine. Anyone else... well, it'd make a positive ending to the mod much easier, but don't push it on them. They'll have an opportunity to return and buy it later before they leave Mil Takara and after getting their assignment.

After they've settled what they're going to do, continue with the following:

*Satisfied with your purchases, you retire for the afternoon, preparing for the next day's scouting patrol. Halfway through your meal, a message boy may be heard asking around for any Irregulars or adventurers interested in a special mission to report to Count Felix val'Ossan by the stables. The matter is, of course, time sensitive.*

**Development:** At this point, the Heroes may or may not have the Holy Symbol, and may or may not decide to show up.

If they don't, thank them for their time, and thus ends the mod. Go to **Conclusion F**.

If they do, continue to **Scene 1**.

## Scene 1

**Key Concepts:** The Heroes are sent on a scouting mission to the edge of the Pricklespur Forest, where strange green men have been spotted and have most recently assaulted a scout. The Heroes, as a more heavily armed force, are being sent in to investigate whether this is a new Infernal threat on another front. They will also get information about an expedition that recently entered the forest, and about the only individual who came back.

*Count Felix stands at ease beside his horse, Swiftstride, as you approach. His eyes are sharp, and his normally smiling countenance is graced with a rare frown. Beside him is a heavily bandaged and hooded figure, standing upright only by bracing against the fencepost. Bright golden eyes peer out at you from beneath the hood.*

Any players who have met Felix before will be greeted by name. Any who haven't may introduce themselves quickly before Felix continues.

*"About time someone got here," grumbles Felix. "This is what happens when Hansdel keeps using my men as scouts instead of the special forces they're supposed to be. I don't have people to work with, and the people I send out get hurt. Well, no time to lose and I've always said the best people for the job are the people who show up. Illyia, as soon as you tell these people what you told me, you can return to your brother's side."*

Some players may have met Illyia before; she is a dark-kin Cadican, and one of Felix's active Irregulars. Anyone sensitive to Infernal taint will have trouble detecting her as such. For example, *Sense Infernal Taint* requires an *Amazing* (TN: 30) instead of *Challenging* (TN: 20) action skill roll to actively sense her taint.

*Her voice tight with pain, Illyia relates her tale. Her eyes beneath her hood belie her Infernal heritage, but Swiftstride doesn't seem bothered by her at all. Her words are sharp, eloquent, and very worrying.*

*"My brother and I were sent to scout along the edge of the Pricklespur Forest. There have been reports of strange green-skinned creatures watching from the forest's edge, and the Knight-Commander desired to know if they posed a threat to the Crusade.*

*Our orders were to not breach the tree line, so we kept a fair distance away. It wasn't enough. When we were spotted, a chorus of guttural growls was raised and over a dozen of the beasts surged out towards us. An inhumanly fast few even caught up to us. We barely escaped with our lives. My brother lies gravely wounded in the infirmary even now."*

*"Thank you, Illyia. Please, bring my best wishes to your brother, and ensure that the healers know they are to give him the best care they can or they will answer to me," says Felix. Turning to you, he continues. "We've heard rumors of these beings for decades now, but they've never shown this type of behavior. I wouldn't have thought them a threat to us, but now I'm not so sure. We need more information. Guess what you lucky people get to do for me? This isn't the sort of mission we can assign to grunts. I don't need a string of corpses; I need to find out why these savages are suddenly working in concert. Enter the Pricklespur for me and find out.*

*Oh, and one other thing. A mercenary bodyguard recently returned from a failed expedition into the forest. He might have some insight for you if you want to talk to him. He'll probably be found at one of the taverns round here. He seemed pretty shaken up when he came in last week."*

The Heroes know everything Felix does. He can't answer any further questions; he's already detailed the mission, and no, they will not get paid extra. They're soldiers, after all.

**Development:** If the Heroes, for any reason, decide not to accept the mission, go to **Conclusion F**.

If the Heroes decide to go speak to the mercenary, continue to **Scene 2**.

If the Heroes decide to just head out, continue to **Scene 3**.

## Scene 2

**Key Concepts:** The Heroes have the opportunity to talk to Lucas, the only known survivor of the recent expedition into the Pricklespur Forest. They will find out about the Holy Symbol he found, the Shrine, and what rumors he knows of what the expedition was looking for. (He was just hired muscle.) They will also have the opportunity to find the man from Almeric and purchase the Holy Symbol (for much more, now that he knows it's valuable) if they so desire.

Allow the players to do a *Routine* (TN: 15) *Streetwise: (Gather Information) Action Skill Roll*. If any of the Heroes have Mil Takara as their chosen city, the TN is reduced to 10. Success allows the players to track down the mercenary. If they fail, they can try again by spreading some silver around. (One or two silver coins will suffice.)

*You find the mercenary Count Felix mentioned deep in his cups in the packed Rat's Inn. His head is slumped against the oaken bar, his hand extended holding out a mug that the bartender is dutifully refilling. As Lucas is pointed out to you, you see him take a large draught before his head hits the bar once more.*

*The big man is drunk, but clearly not dangerously so as people mill around him without regard for the large axe that hangs by his side.*

Have the players make an *Empathy* check (TN: 18). On a successful check, let them know that Lucas seems really upset about something, but that he's currently Indifferent to anyone who'll approach him. If they offer to buy him more drinks or pay his current tab (3sc), he'll become Responsive, while any attempt to intimidate him will automatically bump them to Dislike.

Who are you?/Are you Lucas?/Hey Lucas!  
"Ya, I'm Lucas. Whaddya want?"

We heard you've recently been into the Pricklespur!/Can you tell us anything about your recent expedition?

Lucas quaffs the rest of his drink and slams it down on the bar. "That damned forest... Nothing worth finding in there, if y'ask me. That stupid Archaeologist and his stupid map... The pay wasn't even that good, but I fig'ed, it's away from the front, no Infernals, easy money. Bah! Gimme th'Infernals any day over that damned forest and its thrice-cursed Green Men. Never had to deal with anything that scary in my life, and I once went toe to toe with a Vardogr!"

If the Heroes want to check, they will automatically know he's bluffing to make himself feel better.

You saw the Green Men/Lurkers?

"They attacked us when we settled down for the night. Creepiest thing I've ever seen. They look like you 'r me, but they're painted all green and naked. Attacked us with clubs, slings, tree branches. Simple stuff, but they're strong and crazed. Saw most of the rest of the expedition wiped out before I could react. All but Fritz,

**strangely... What could I do but run? Strangest thing was, they didn't even chase me. When I got back to Mil Takara, first thing I did was get rid of that cursed thing I picked up. Must've been what brought them down on us, because they didn't attack until I had picked it up.**

Allow the players to make a Logic (TN: 10) check. Anyone who succeeds will realize that the beings Fritz describes are quite different than those Illyia described earlier.

Cursed thing?

**Some old Holy Symbol or something. I figure we must've ticked off one of their heathen Elemental gods or spirits by resting at that shrine, and it sent the Green Men after us. I gave it to a guy from Almeric, for all the good it'll do him. Last I heard he was trying to sell it in the market to help pay for his trip home.**

Archaeologist/map? Where were you headed? Who were you working for?

**The leader of the group was a val'Abebi named Rahidi. He supposedly had a map with him to some heretical temple. Something to do with a star.**

Any Member of the **Emerald Society** will immediately recognize Rahidi's name. He is a well-known scholar and expert on the Pengik peninsula.

Any Hero with an *Easy* (TN: 10) *Knowledge: (Myths and Legends) Action Skill Roll* to know that he is talking about the Temple of the Hidden Star, a long rumored but never found temple somewhere on the peninsula. Heroes with a *Routine* (TN: 15) *Knowledge: (History)* or *Knowledge: (Religion) Action Skill Roll*. Refer to the *Codex Arcanis* (pg.111) for more details. For every +5 above the TN, give them an additional piece of information.

- **TN +5:** To tell the tale of this temple is against the law in Milandir, as the Temple itself is rumored to contain dark and terribly heretical secrets.
- **TN +10:** The Temple is supposedly guarded by a being known only as the Black Unicorn. It's true nature, appearance, and abilities are shrouded in mystery and change with every account.
- **TN +15:** The ancient secret in the Temple has something to do with a different version of the War of the Gods, but no one who has

ever seriously sought the Temple has returned.

Who is Fritz? What happened to him?

**Fritz was another mercenary who got hired on before me, real brute of a man: vicious, crude, bad tempered, but supposedly great in a fight. Rahidi said he'd employed him before and we'd need the muscle. When the camp got swarmed... he went starkers. Started howling and cleaving about him at the Green Men. Strangest thing was, just as I managed to leave the clearing, I saw him fighting side by side with these strange green creatures. Don't know what to make of it, and I sure as hell didn't look back.**

**Development:** At this point, the Heroes have a couple options.

If they want to head straight out on this mission, continue to **Scene 3**.

If they want to head back and acquire the Holy Symbol from Mandek, they can find him in the Market, but add a few silver pieces to the price if the Heroes indicate it's worth something; see **Introduction**.

### Scene 3

**Key Concepts:** The Heroes reach the Pricklespur Forest and are assaulted by Grunwilde right on the edge. Anyone carrying the Holy Symbol will **not** be attacked unless they act aggressively towards the Grunwilde, and even then the Grunwilde will hold back. If the Heroes are about to be defeated, they will be rescued by a band of Pengik.

*Around mid-day in your trek, the edge of the Pricklespur comes into view as you crest a hill. The rolling plains come to an abrupt halt at the tree line, the foliage so thick that the entire forest seems dark and eerily foreboding. One particular part appears disturbed, as though someone had recently hacked their way in... or out.*

*If any Hero has the Bloodthirsty flaw, give them Player Handout 1. The text of the handout is as follows:*

*Deep within your heart you feel the stirrings of something ancient, something powerful, compelling you to give in to your base nature. The forest seems to call to you, promising blood and death.*

**During this, and any further adventures in the Pricklespur Forest until further notice, you suffer -1 to your Discipline defense and all Resolve action rolls, as the pull of the forest appeals to your primal desires.**

Allow the Heroes to investigate. They will see and sense nothing special until they approach within 15 feet of the tree line, regardless of whether it's near the disturbed section or not.

When they get close enough, read the following:

*As you approach the forest, a shadow passes over the sun, sending a chill down your spine. You get the feeling of being watched moments before they come boiling out of the forest. With a terrifying howl, a dozen beasts glide from the forest canopy, brandishing large branches and old bones as clubs.*

If any Hero asks for a description: **Up close, the creatures are humanoid, but certainly not human. They have a long membrane that stretches from their wrists to their ankles, allowing them to catch the wind and glide down from tall branches. They are green, but not the green of dye; rather, they seem to be the same shade as the trees naturally.**

This does count as an ambush. Any Heroes with ranks in the *Battle* skill may attempt a **Routine (TN: 15) Action Skill Roll**, may make a check to not be surprised. All other Heroes may attempt a **Challenging (TN: 20) Perception Action Skill Roll** instead.

### Scene 3 Encounter Map

**Enemies:** 2 sets of 6 Grunwilde (minions), 1 Grunwilde Champion

**Combat:** See Appendix 1



#### Notes on the fight:

Anyone taking the fight into the forest will suffer penalties associated with *Shadowy illumination*, *Standard Cover*, and *Standard Concealment* from the dense foliage.

If the Heroes are having a difficult time of it or look like they will all be Vanquished, have a patrol of Pengik appear to help them fight off the attackers. The exception to this is if one person is carrying the Holy Symbol.

Anyone carrying the Holy Symbol will not be targeted by the Grunwilde, regardless of their actions. If someone has the Holy Symbol and is the only one left standing, the Green Lurkers will flee back into the forest. Try not to make this obvious, and do not point it out to the Heroes. Let them figure it out on their own.

If the Pengik were needed to help in the fight:

*As the ruckus of battle dies down, your newfound allies raise a cheer, clapping each other on the back and counting kills. One of them turns to you and addresses you in heavily accented Yhing Hir.*

If the Pengik were not needed:

*As the ruckus of battle dies down, you see a small patrol of Pengik approaching. They stop at a respectful distance and call out to you in heavily accented Yhing hir.*

**Development:** The Heroes have dealt with the ambush and initially seen the Pengik, who will hopefully guide them on the next step of their journey.

If any of the Heroes speak Yhing Hir, continue to **Scene 4a**.

If none of the Heroes speak Yhing Hir, continue to **Scene 4b**.

### Scene 4a

**Key Concepts:** The Heroes converse with the Pengik, who do NOT speak anything but Yhing Hir.

This version of the Scene presumes that at least one of the Heroes speak Yhing Hir. If they do not, go to **Scene 4b**.

*“Hail scouts of the great army, the Infernal bane. What brings you to our humble part of the world?”*

Allow the Heroes to answer. If they mention anything about the Green Lurkers at any point, read the following. If they lie, or say anything other, the Pengik will have nothing to share with them and simply bid them good day.

*The Pengik spokesman looks sadly down at the bodies on the ground. “These are not those you mistakenly call the Green Lurkers. The Green Lurkers stir in the forest, but this is something different.*

*These creatures are the Grunwilde. They are normally shy beings, who would flee before any conflict.*

*The Green Men you ask about were once men like you or I. They are those who entered the forest and succumbed to their primal urges, banding together in the verdant heart to shed the trappings of civilization to which they once ascribed. Some say they are possessed by little demons that drive them.”*

How recently? When did this begin?

"We first observed this behavior a week ago. Smaller groups of Green Men became larger ones, all watching from the Pricklespur's edge."

Little Demons? Do you mean Infernals?

"Perhaps. Perhaps not. Certainly they are possessed by spirits who drive them into their madness. They feast on the flesh of other men, and their elders are said to gain great powers by consuming the hearts of the unwary."

What could have done this to the Grunwilde?

"There are many spirits in the Pricklespur. Some are benign; others are cruel. Whatever has done this, we cannot know unless we were to find it and soothe it or slay it, and that is not our place. If you want to brave the forest, you do so alone."

If the Heroes show the Holy Symbol to the Pengik:

"You bear a sacred trust with you, a symbol of the Earth Mother. There are many such symbols at altars throughout the forest. I have never before seen one such outside of it; your people usually seem to prefer more ornate pieces of your gods' symbols."

After the players are done with questions, continue with the following:

*"You have been warned. The forest is not a safe place. If you insist on entering to brace the spirits, on your own head be it." With these words, the Pengik mount up and ride off to the east.*

**Development:** If the Heroes decide they know all they need, are afraid, or turn back for any other reason, continue to **Conclusion E**.

If the Heroes decide to enter the forest, continue to **Scene 5**.

### **Scene 4b**

**Key Idea:** The Heroes attempt to converse with the Pengik, who do NOT speak anything but Yhing Hir.

*The Yhing Hir spoken by the Pengik tribesman is unintelligible to your ears. Seeing your lack of comprehension, the leader of the band frowns, and turns to his companions. After a brief conversation, one of the other Pengik is pushed forward by his fellows.*

*He gestures to himself, saying "A-day", before gesturing to you.*

If the Heroes get the hint, they will identify themselves. The Pengik is Adé, and he has dealt with foreigners before.

*The Pengik smiles as you introduce yourselves. He points to the creatures, then the forest, and shakes his head. Then he points north towards Mil Takara and nods emphatically. Finally, he will point at the bodies again, then mime walking with his fingers, before pointing north once more and shaking his head.*

Essentially, the Pengik is trying to convey that going into the forest is a bad idea. Further, that the Green Lurkers will not leave the forest towards Mil Takara. Allow the Heroes to RP as much as they like here; make it like a game of Charades where neither side can understand the spoken words of the other and all you can rely on is physical gestures.

*After these gestures, the Pengik points at you, shrugs, then turns his horse around to rejoin his companions. As you watch, they all ride off to the east.*

**Development:** If the Heroes decide they know all they need, are afraid, or turn back for any other reason, continue to **Conclusion E**.

If the Heroes decide to enter the forest, continue to **Scene 5**.

### **Scene 5**

**Key Concepts:** The Heroes are introduced to the wonders and mystery of the Pricklespur Forest. This is an RP/exploration opportunity. There is no path, so if they want to make their way through, they'll have to hack their own. The Holy Symbol will give them a direction to go. If they don't have the Symbol, they'll have to choose randomly.

*Upon entering the forest, everything goes dim. The canopy above and the dense foliage cut off so much of the light that it is difficult to even see two steps in front of your face. Leaving the safety of the open plains behind you, you begin to make your way into the depths of the Pricklespur Forest.*

Allow the Heroes a *Perception* check. Anyone who makes TN: 10 will have the distinct feeling of being watched. Anyone who makes TN: 20 will be aware that the feeling is coming from all sides.

Allow the Hero carrying the Holy Symbol, if there is one, to make a separate *Perception* check (TN: 5). If

successful, the PC will feel a subtle hint in his mind about where the Holy Symbol ought to be returned. The Elemental is calling out for it.

If the Heroes don't have the Holy Symbol, have them suffer **Scene 6b** even if they do decide to stir up the Igiho in **Scene 6a**, immediately following.

*The sounds of the forest are muted, their direction and distance often undeterminable. A chorus of birds counterpoints the rustle of leaves by breezes caught beneath the crown, only to be cut off by raucous squawking and a deep throated growl as the predators and prey of the dark jungle go about their lives.*

*The plant life around you is brilliantly colored and heavily perfumed. Every time you turn around, there is a new and different flower or tree to see. There are even cacti that grow here, seeming truly out of place in this lush environment, and all in bloom.*

Allow the Heroes to RP a bit here. If any Hero should decide they want to take a souvenir from the forest, such as picking a particular flower, have them make a Quickness check (TN: Unimportant), and read the following:

*Reaching out to pluck a flower from the vine, you snatch your fingers back just in time as the flower lunges at you, baring sharp little teeth. Stopping just short of your finger, you feel the teeth graze your skin before withdrawing to await another intrusion. The verdant heart, it seems, is not without its defenses.*

Continue with the following:

*As you hack your way through the underbrush, you see a strange creature before you on a cactus branch immediately before you. The cactus itself is immense, and going around it would take a fair amount of time. The creature appears to be a small rodent, with very big eyes, staring at you without blinking.*

Allow the Heroes a *Beast Lore: (Exotic Animals)* check. This may be done untrained at a -10 penalty.

- **TN 10:** The creature is an Igiho, a marsupial unique to the Pricklespur.

- **TN 15:** Igiho live in warrens, tucked in the hollow of cacti. They are also noted for their ability to blink short distances, teleporting themselves with ease, making it very difficult to catch one for study
- **TN 20:** Igiho are very territorial. If their warrens are disturbed, they will attack the intruders in a swarm. They also share a seemingly telepathic link with other Igiho in the area; if one warren gets riled up, any others in the vicinity will too.

Allow the Heroes to decide whether they are simply going straight forward or around the cactus. The pull of the Holy Symbol will be straight through, and going around the cactus will take time.

**Development:** If the Heroes decide to go straight through, continue to **Scene 6A**.

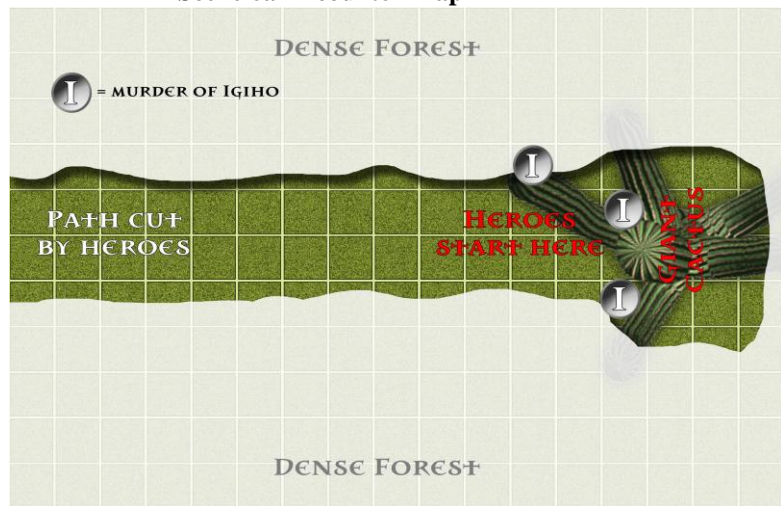
If the Heroes decide to go around the cactus, continue to **Scene 6B**.

## Scene 6a

**Key Idea:** The Heroes have decided to blunder their way straight through an Igiho warren, and most suffer the consequences thereof.

*Shooing the Igiho to one side, you slash through one of the branches of the cactus, cutting a path. Without warning, a ball of grey fur and teeth boils out of a hollow in the cactus and vanishes. An instant later, you feel something shifting inside your armor, and a sharp pain as tiny sharp teeth pierce your flesh.*

### Scene 6a Encounter Map



**Enemies:** 3 Murders of Igiho (no Horror check)

## Combat: See Appendix 2

**Tactics:** The Igiho are defending their territory, which is anywhere within 25 feet of the cactus. They will teleport from victim to victim, swarming, biting, and moving on until every person is outside of the 25 foot range.

**Set up:** The cactus is a large 15x15 plant immediately in front of the Heroes. The path they have been carving is 10' wide, so there is enough space for Heroes to stand two side by side. Moving into the forest will require a *Demanding Skill Action* (Speed: 7) to cut enough space out to move 5'. Cutting through the cactus requires the same. A player may move into the 5' space as part of this action, but may not do anything else. One player may assist another in cutting through, changing each *Demanding Skill Action* (Speed: 7) to a *Complex Speed Action* (Speed: 4).

### Notes on the fight:

Anyone taking the fight into the forest will suffer penalties associated with *Shadowy illumination*, *Standard Cover*, and *Standard Concealment* from the dense foliage.

The Igiho will teleport in, bite, and teleport out on their turn, so the swarms as a whole may be struck at without necessarily damaging another Hero. Attacking any area with both a swarm and Hero in it will cause a 50/50 chance of the Hero being struck instead of the swarm.

**Development:** Once the Heroes have either gone through or around and gotten far enough away from the big Igiho warren, continue to **Scene 7**.

If the Heroes do not have the Holy Symbol from earlier in the mod, go instead to **Scene 6b** as they fumble their way around the forest without something to guide them.

## Scene 6b

**Key Idea:** The Heroes have decided to make their way around the Igiho warren and instead spotted something even weirder, OR the Heroes don't have the Holy Symbol, and after making their way past the Igiho warren have to fumble around the forest to find what they're looking for.

*The forest before you opens up a little, giving you some room to move and breathe. In the middle of the small space are three tall plants, overflowing with blossoms. Long vines hang down their stems, and their roots can be seen shallowly spreading throughout the clearing.*

Have the Heroes make a *Perception* check. The highest roll will determine that the normal forest sounds are much quieter here; no birds nor animals disturb the stillness of this place.

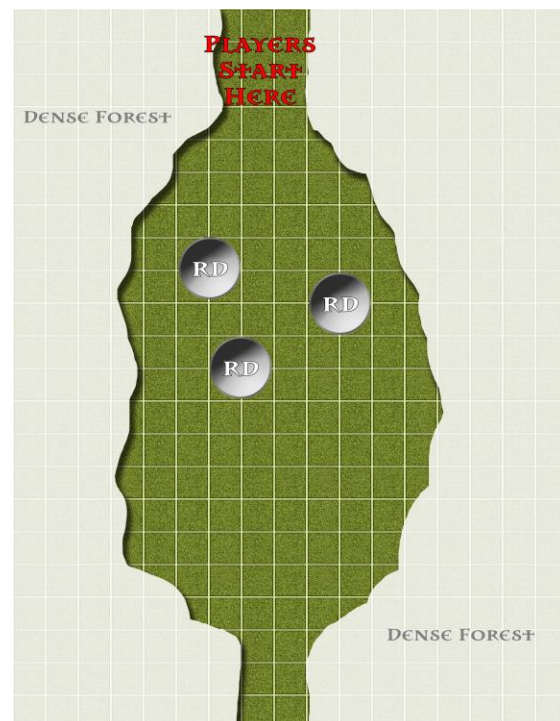
Also allow the Heroes a *Wilderness Lore* check. This skill may be performed untrained at a -10 penalty.

- **TN 20:** The plants in the grove are Rooted Devourers, extremely dangerous carnivorous plants.
- **TN 25:** The Devourers use their root system to grapple and hold victims for consumption.
- **TN 30:** Devourers, like most plants, are not terribly partial to fire.

Allow the Heroes to examine the area. If they choose to go around the grove by cutting through the forest, let them, and move on to the **Scene 7**.

If they explore the area, approach the plants to within 10', or attempt to get past them in the clearing (which will bring them to within 20'), the plants will attack.

### Scene 6b Encounter Map



**Enemies:** 3 Rooted Devourers (Plants, 10'x10' each), Parties of three face 2 Rooted Devourers instead.

### **Combat: See Appendix 3**

**Tactics:** The Devourers have made the clearing by spreading their roots through the area and choking off other more normal plants. They are carnivorous in nature, and consume any animal that wanders into the area. In between meals, they become quiescent, but when the Heroes arrive they are hungry again.

The Devourers use their roots to grab and immobilize opponents for consumption. Their roots can reach out to 20' away from the main plant. Once a Target is grappled, the plant seeks to break its neck so that it may consume the victim at its leisure.

The Devourers will wait until their Target has gotten close before acting, usually within 10'.

**Set up:** The clearing is 60' wide and 80' long. Thick foliage is on either side. Same rules apply from the Igiho Scene regarding cutting through, and the Devourers cannot reach more than 20' from the clearing's edge; too many other plant roots and their size thwart their movement.

#### **Notes on the fight:**

The clearing extends upwards through the canopy, so there is enough light that the conditions are Bright/Normal. No penalties for lighting or concealment.

**Development:** When the Heroes have killed or escaped the Devourers, continue to **Scene 7**.

## **Scene 7**

**Key Concepts:** The Heroes reach the Shrine and may either repair it or leave it, dealing with the Elemental one way or another (whether through combat or repairing the shrine). Either way, the Elemental is not concerned about the bodies of the last group of adventurers, who may be looted of anything the Green Lurkers didn't take.

If the Heroes have the Holy Symbol, read the following:

*The strange sensation that has been guiding you finally brings you to a massive tree in the middle of the forest. Strewn about are the remains of an adventuring party; tents, rations, and bodies*

*are centered around a very primitive Shrine at the base of the tree.*

If the Heroes do not have the Holy Symbol, read instead:

*After fumbling your way through the forest and braving its many dangers, you begin to find traces of the recent expedition. Drawing near to a massive tree, the final camp of the doomed expedition lies before you, centered on a very primitive Shrine at the tree's base.*

Either way, continue:

*The feeling of being watched that has followed you throughout the forest intensifies as you draw near the ancient tree. The Shrine there is in obvious disarray; the damage is extensive. The wooden altar is upside down, and the various offerings are scattered about and crushed. As you examine the site, you lift your gaze and find yourself staring directly into a pair of sharply blue eyes peering down at you from the tree.*

*As you watch, a Grunwilde drops from the tree to the ground to stand before you. He moves awkwardly, as though something else is controlling his actions, and gestures at the Shrine.*

If any Heroes can sense Spirits with the *Between Worlds* Talent, they will automatically know that they are dealing with a possession.

Any Beltinian or Saluwean Hero will also be able to sense the Spirit immediately. Its years in the Pricklespur have made it very strong and very close to the physical world.

Worshippers of Saluwe will also feel an immediate kinship with the Spirit, as two beings in the service of the Earth Mother.

*Behind you, a dozen green beings appear in the forest's branches and from behind tree trunks. They all appear to be waiting for something. One in particular is notable: a brutish Milandisian man, brandishing a massive two-handed sword.*

Allow the Heroes a *Routine (TN: 15) Empathy Action Skill Roll* the Green Men are blanks, but the leader before you seethes with controlled anger. A success also gives the Heroes the sense that the anger isn't directed at them.

*Impatiently, the Grunwilde gestures once more to the Shrine, glaring directly at <Hero with the*

**Holy Symbol**>. (If no Hero has the Symbol, choose one at random). *His mouth contorts, and brief words emerge, as though speaking were foreign to him. “Set... right... and leave.”*

If the Hero with the Holy Symbol approaches the Shrine, they will be filled with a sense of rightness, as if the Symbol itself wants to be reunited with the Shrine.

If the Heroes take the hint and repair the Shrine, by flipping over the shrine and placing the holy symbol upon it, the Grunwilde will vanish back into the forest, and the Spirit will float out of the Grunwilde it inhabits to hover contentedly over the repaired Shrine.

In either of the above two cases, initiate combat (**Scene 7a**), then return to the following box text.

If the Heroes do not get the hint, but choose to leave immediately without being aggressive, the Spirit will let them go.

The Heroes may also try and converse with the Spirit. This option is only available if they have the Holy Symbol with them. If they try to speak to it, read the following:

*As you watch, the ghost of a woman rises out of the body of the creature and approaches you. Nearing <Hero’s Name> she stops briefly and tilts her head, then floats straight into you.*

The selected individual ought to be the holder of the Holy Symbol, whether they still possess it or have already repaired the Shrine.

*Your possessed friend begins to speak, the voice issuing from his/her lips soft and distinctly more feminine than usual. “Please, forgive the intrusion. I promise I won’t stay. Controlling the Grunwilde takes much of my energy, but speaking through a civilized person is much easier. I am Talina, a humble Priestess of Saluwe. Thank you for returning my Symbol to me. Who are you? And why have you come?”*

Allow the Heroes a **Routine (TN: 15) Empathy Action Skill Roll** will reveal that the Spirit is feeling relief, while **Challenging (TN: 20)** will reveal that the feeling relates specifically to the Holy Symbol.

You’re a ghost?

**I was slain here by the Green Lurkers years ago, but I remain to protect this altar. There must always be a guardian at each Shrine, and the Symbol must be kept safe.**

Why did the Grunwilde attack us on the forest’s edge?

**I couldn’t be sure if you had the Holy Symbol. In an effort to draw attention to my plight, I resorted to the only means at my disposal. Crude, but obviously effective. I promise, they will be no threat to you.**

What’s so important about the Symbol?

**This Symbol is the only thing that guards this Shrine against the darkness that dwells in the depths of this forest. It is growing stronger, and soon I fear even the Earth Mother may not be able to keep it contained. If any of the three Shrines were to fall, it could be disastrous.**

Darkness? What dwells in the forest?

**What it is, I don’t know. That which inhabits the Pricklespur stirs, but is yet held back, thanks to you. The Green Lurkers, the bestial men, worship it and act as its agents while it sleeps.**

Why did you attack this group?

**In fact, I did not. The Green Lurkers attacked of their own accord. During the fighting, the Shrine was damaged and the Symbol taken. I sought only to use the Grunwilde thereafter, to guard the Shrine until the Symbol could be returned, but my control over them is only enough to guide or restrain their primal natures, nothing more. Once the Symbol has been replaced I’ll have no need to control them again.**

To any Worshippers of Saluwe:

**My sister/brother, bear word of this to the church for me. That which we ward against stirs in its slumber. Soon something will need to be done; stronger measures will have to be taken. I only pray that the years have not caused this secret to be erased from all memory, since I was not told what is bound here.**

When the players are done asking questions, read the following:

**“My thanks once more for returning the Symbol to me. It is good to know there are still heroes in the world after all these years. You may well be needed in the near future. Keep a wary eye on the forest. If our defenses fall, who knows what may emerge to threaten Onara.”**

**Roleplaying Talina:** The spirit is that of a middle-aged, devout Priestess of Saluwe. She knows only what she was told when she was assigned here: that the shrine must be maintained, and that the Holy Symbol was one of the wards. When she was slain, she remained as a Spirit, driven by her duty. She is patient and intelligent, but is unconcerned with anything except her responsibility. She will ease their concerns about the Grunwilde, but caution them about the Green Lurkers.

If at any point the Heroes act hostile towards the Grunwilde or the Spirit, initiate combat (**Scene 7b**).

If the Heroes entered combat and emerged victorious, or if they repaired the Shrine, they may now examine the camp unmolested.

Aside from the usual gear, they will find a map on the body of the Altherian who must have been Rahidi. The map is old and ragged, and purports to lead to the Temple of the Hidden Star, though whether it does or not is anyone's guess. Rahidi clearly thought it did, although the map itself suggests the Temple was north of the Pricklespur's boundaries at the time the map was drawn. What Rahidi was actually doing there is anyone's guess.

There is nothing else of particular interest, though the weapons and armor may be scavenged from the expedition.

If the Heroes spoke with the Spirit and were attacked by Lurkers in Scene 7a, read the following:

*Fighting alongside you, Fritz and the Grunwilde cleaved through the Lurkers with savage howls to match their foes. With the threat gone, they now seem quiescent, still in thrall to the Priestess. As the Spirit leaves to reside once more in the Shrine, the normally shy Grunwilde disappear quickly into the forest, leaving a very confused and slightly enraged Fritz.*

*“Where’m I? What in the Hells just happened? Who are you people? Wish I’d never taken this damn job; this forest scares me more than those miserable Malfelan.”*

Allow the Heroes to explain. RP Fritz as crass, crude, and violent, a typical mercenary. He’ll agree to come back with the party to Mil Takara.

If the Heroes instead fought the Spirit, read the following if Fritz is still alive and just unconscious:

*The strange creatures and the Spirit defeated, you have time to explore the area unhindered. After a short while, you hear a gruff voice.*

*“Where’m I? What in the Hells just happened? Who are you people? Wish I’d never taken this damn job, this forest scares me more than those miserable Malfelan.”*

*Fritz, it would seem, is awake and no longer under the control of the Spirit.*

Allow the Heroes to explain. RP Fritz as crass, crude, and violent, a typical mercenary. He’ll agree to come back with the party to Mil Takara.

**Development:** If the Heroes repaired the Shrine AND spoke to the Spirit, continue to **Conclusion A**.

If the Heroes repaired the Shrine, but either kept the Holy Symbol or never had it, or didn’t speak to the Spirit, continue to **Conclusion B**.

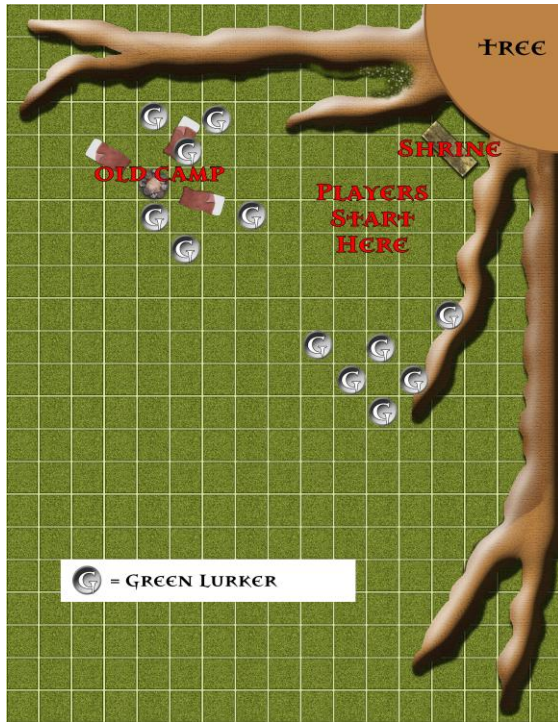
If the Heroes fought the Spirit and defeated it, regardless of repairing the Shrine, continue to **Conclusion C**.

If the Heroes were Vanquished by the Spirit, continue to **Conclusion D**.

## Scene 7a

As you place the Holy Symbol back on the shrine, a chorus of guttural howls rises up from the forest. A dozen men, naked and painted green with leaves in their hair and blood on their teeth, burst forth and fall upon you.

### Scene 7a Encounter Map



**Enemies:** 2 Mobs of Green Lurkers and then an unceasing flow of Green Lurkers.

### Combat: See Appendix 4

**Tactics:** Savage and brutal, the Green Lurkers want nothing more than to destroy the Shrine and the Holy Symbol, but if anyone stands in their way, they will fight tooth and nail until the person has fallen. The Lurkers will charge in, heedless of their Avoidance, and more will always follow.

These Green Lurkers enter the area in 2 Mobs of 6, and for the next 24 ticks, as soon as the Heroes reduce any Mob to 3 or less a new Mob enters the fray (leaping over the branches, coming down from above, and generally appearing within one move from the Heroes). There will always be more

Lurkers, until the Spirit has a chance to reassert the binding ritual.

**Set up:** The massive tree takes up a 40x40 area, with its roots extending out 40' in all directions. Terrain is difficult, but passable. The campsite itself is in a cone shaped area between two large roots, 40' long on a right angle from the shrine.

### Notes on the fight:

No penalties for lighting or concealment. The tree blocks out a lot of light, but not enough to make it difficult to see.

The Grunwilde and Fritz will fight beside the Heroes, but describe this cinematically as fighting in the forest around them. They will be dealing with enough Lurkers of their own so they can't actually assist the Heroes.

REMEMBER the fight should only last 24 ticks.

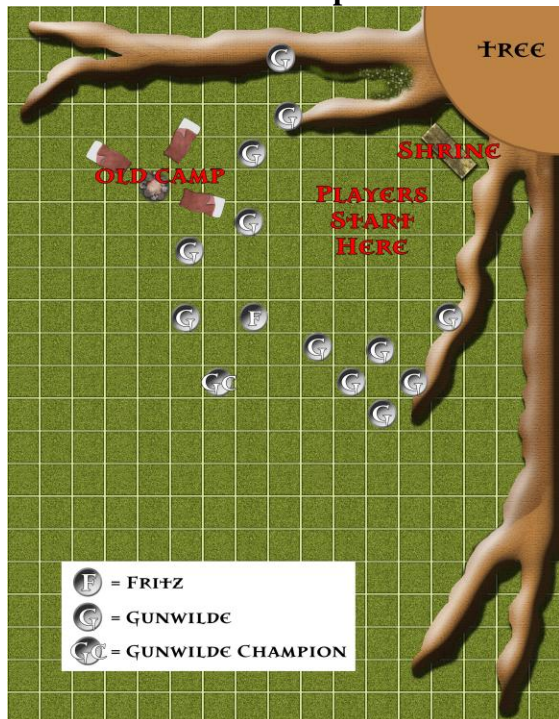
*Your defense of the shrine has held. A low hum emanates from the Holy Symbol. As you watch, all the remaining Green Lurkers cover their ears as if in pain and flee.*

Return to **Scene 7**.

If the Heroes are all Vanquished, go to **Conclusion D**, as the Lurkers defeated the Spirit, destroyed the Shrine, and only the Spirit's swift action saved them from death.

## Scene 7b

### Scene 7b Encounter Map



**Enemies:** 2 sets of 6 Grunwilde (minions), 1 special (Fritz, Elite Tier 1) 1 Leader (Grunwilde possessed by Elemental Spirit, Adversary threat).

#### Combat: See Appendix 5

**Tactics:** The Grunwilde will strike hard and fast, seeking to overwhelm the Heroes with their numbers. The difficult terrain does not affect the Grunwilde.

The Spirit will also cast Thrall on any character with the *Bloodthirsty* flaw (The Spirit's spell casting ability is at +10). If the Spirit successfully bypasses the Hero's Discipline, they will attack their party. If the party consists of more than one Hero with the *Bloodthirsty* flaw, the Spirit only affects one of them (chosen randomly).

**Set up:** The massive tree takes up a 40'x40' area, with its roots extending out 40' in all directions. Terrain is difficult, but passable. The campsite itself is in a cone shaped area between two large roots, 40' long on a right angle from the shrine.

#### Notes on the fight:

No penalties for lighting or concealment. The tree blocks out a lot of light, but not enough to make it difficult to see.

If the Heroes defeat the Spirit, return to **Scene 7**.

If the Heroes are defeated by the Spirit, continue to **Conclusion D**. In this instance, they will also lose the Holy Symbol.

## Conclusions & Endings

### Conclusion A

*Your trip out of the Pricklespur is much safer. The dangers you sensed on the way in are still there, but you've learned much on the trek and avoid them with greater ease. You also get the sense that the Shrine's guardian is watching over you.*

*The feeling of peace and tranquility you enjoy in the forest fades as you cross the tree line. Deep in your heart, you know the Pricklespur Forest will always welcome you back.*

*Count Felix listens impassively to your report upon your return. "There are things I will never understand, the ways of Spirits and Gods are among them. We'll make sure to send more scouts back to the forest now and again, but it sounds like you've made right what was wrong. Creatures working together under the control of a Spirit devoted to Saluwe... I've heard stranger things, but not many. Still, good work. Dismissed."*

The Heroes all gain the Blessing of the Pricklespur.

Any Worshipper of Saluwe will also receive a special gift from the Spirit, a small branch of the great tree shrine that may be used as a focus for casting Divine spells.

### Conclusion B

*Your trip out of the Pricklespur is much safer. The dangers you sensed on the way in are still there, but you've learned much on the trek and avoid them with greater ease. Despite this, the forest radiates a sense of foreboding, warning you against attempting to enter it again.*

*Count Felix listens impassively to your report upon your return. "There are things I will never understand, the ways of Spirits and Gods are among them. We'll make sure to send more scouts back to the forest now and again, but it sounds like you've made right what was wrong. Creatures working together under the control of a Spirit devoted to Saluwe... I've heard stranger things, but not many. Still, good work. Dismissed."*

## **Conclusion C**

*Your trip out of the Pricklespur is much safer. The dangers you sensed on the way in are still there, but you've learned much on the trek and avoid them with greater ease. Despite this, the forest radiates a sense of foreboding, warning you against attempting to enter it again.*

*Upon your return to Mil Takara, Count Felix listens impassively to your report upon your return. "So, the Spirit was controlling the creatures, and is now gone? Well done. Whatever threat it posed has now been neutralized, and we can go back to focusing on more pressing matters to the north."*

The Heroes all gain the Curse of the Pricklespur.

## **Conclusion D**

*Heavily wounded, you wake up on the edges of the Pricklespur Forest. Something has brought you there and stripped you of your weapons; they are nowhere to be found. The forest radiates a sense of foreboding, warning you against attempting to enter it again.*

*Upon your return to Mil Takara, Count Felix listens impassively to your report. "So, the Spirit was controlling the creatures?" He frowns. "We'll have to spend resources maintaining that border as well now. Who knows if it will lash out at us again? Dismissed."*

The Heroes all gain the Curse of the Pricklespur, and lose all their weapons. Yes, this includes Heirloom weapons, and the consequences thereof.

## **Conclusion E**

*Upon your return to Mil Takara, Count Felix listens with growing anger to your report. "You took the word of the Pengik that these creatures were simply holding the borders, and didn't investigate further? Soldiers in my employ ought damn well be better trained than that. Now I have to send another group to do what you should have done. Get back to the barracks and consider yourselves on serious probation."*

The Heroes all gain the Disfavor of Count Felix.

## **Conclusion F**

*Having decided that the mission wasn't to your taste, whether it was too dangerous, too aimless, or you simply preferred to be on the front lines fighting Infernals, you wander back to your tent to wait for a mission better suited to your lack of courage and sense of adventure.*

## **Ending**

*A few days after your journey, sitting in the bar for a drink with Lucas, you hear a whisper of strange things going on in the Pricklespur. It seems that some men of the Crusade are disappearing in the night and seen headed for the forest, alone. Some of the most violent and brutal men in the camp have gone, and as Lucas tells it, Fritz was seen heading that way last night.*

*You feel a shiver run up your spine at Lucas' words. Deep in the verdant heart, you know that something is stirring.*

## **The End**

## Experience Point Summary

Awarding experience points is easy. Sum up the experience listed on the table below for each objective that the heroes accomplished. Additionally, you can grant the Role-Playing Bonus, or any fraction therein, individually to each hero. In fact, we urge you to carefully consider this bonus; granting values in the middle of the range, with higher amounts for players who acted in character, even in challenging situations. Similarly, players who consistently act out of character should receive values at the low end of the range, even 0 if that would be appropriate.

Objective	XP value
Acquiring the Holy Symbol of Saluwé	20
Defeating the Grunwilde ambush <i>without</i> needing to be rescued.	30
OR	
Defeating the Grunwilde ambush with the help of the Pengik	15
Communicating with the Pengik (Yhing Hir)	20
Surviving the Igiho Swarm OR going around the warren	30
Defeating the Rooted Devourers OR skipping the Scene by possessing the Holy Symbol	15
Repairing the Shrine	100
OR	
Destroying the Spirit of the High Priestess	25
<b>Role-Playing Award</b>	0-10
<b>Total Experience Possible</b>	<b>225</b>
<b>Special Fate Awards</b>	
Worshippers of Saluwé: Discovering the Shrine and repairing it, keeping the Spirit alive	+1 Fate

## Treasure Summary

Any item listed in the summary below is available for a character to keep; alternatively, the party may elect to sell the item for one tenth its value. Items of unusual Quality or that possess magical properties will have an entry listed on the *Chronicle Page* associated with this adventure (under Items Found); if the party did not find that item, strike that from the list. Any entry on the *Chronicle Page* is available to all characters who completed the adventure, unless it specifically states otherwise on the *Chronicle Page* or in the Treasure Summary.

On rare occasions, an item may have a certificate issued for it. In such situations, the item may only be kept by whichever character receives the certificate.

Living creatures, be they animals, dominated monsters, minions and so forth, may not be kept from a scenario unless specifically allowed for on the *Chronicle Page* or a stand-alone certificate.

It is okay for the Heroes to form relationships with NPCs, but these cannot bring material benefit to the character. Contacts and influence must also be specifically listed as Story Achievements on a *Chronicle Page*.

Theft is against the law, but may be practiced by some Heroes. A Hero may steal, and keep the proceeds, up to 5% of the listed obtainable Sc from the adventure. If the Hero attempts to steal an item that is worth more than 1 Gc that is of personal significance to the owner (including family heirlooms), or is a magical item, the character will be caught. Being caught stealing in this fashion, imposes a fine equal to five times the value of the item that was stolen; if the Hero does not have sufficient coin, then items will be taken from the Hero to cover the remainder that is owned.

The campaign staff reserves the right to take away any item or silver acquired for things it later finds unreasonable but that were allowed at the time; although, the circumstances under which such an action will be taken are unusual at best.

The Heroes should generally be awarded all items for encounters they defeat unless stated otherwise in the adventure. This includes guards giving the Heroes items if they subdue or keep alive minions with those items.

The listed value beside items in the treasure summary is the sale price and represents 1/10th of the item's normal market value in Sc.

## Found Items

### Scene Seven

Equipment from the previous expedition

- Scimitar - 3 Sc
- Boiled Leather Armor - 5 Sc
- Altherian Spyglass - 50 Sc
- Explorers Kit – 50 Cc
- Magnifying Glass - 10 Sc
- Collapsible Grappling Hook - 50 Cc
- Shovel - 20 Cc
- Pickaxe - 50 Cc

### Conclusion

Map to the Lost Temple of the Hidden Star – Value: Priceless...Whether the map is real or fake... no one knows, yet.

## Story Achievements and Special Items

**Blessing of the Pricklespur:** +1 Divine bonus to Beast Lore, Wilderness Lore, and Tracking checks within the Pricklespur Forest. +1 Divine bonus to Fortitude and AR against Plant threats.

**Curse of the Pricklespur:** -1 Divine penalty to Beast Lore, Wilderness Lore, and Tracking checks within the Pricklespur Forest. Also, any Heroes with this curse will be targeted preferentially by any Plant threats they come across.

**Disfavor of Count Felix:** Any Heroes with 2 Disfavors of Count Felix will not be employed by Count Felix in any missions. A Hero can cancel a Disfavor of Count Felix with a Favor of Count Felix instead of using any options listed under the Favor.

**Branch of the Aes Colfen:** This small part of a Shield Tree is blessed by Saluwe and her Priestesses. It may only be used as a as an exceptional quality wand when casting Divine spells but only by Adherents of Saluwe.

**Effect:** Once per scene (Speed: +1, Strain +1), you may reduce the CTN of any Divine spell they cast by 1+ one half your Hero's Tier.

**Slot:** Weapon                      **Tier:** 1

**Weight (Enc):** 1 lb. (1)

## Appendix 2

## Appendix 1

**Enemies:** 2 packs of 6 Grunwilde (minions), 1 Leader (Martial), whereas tables of three only face 1 Mob of Grunwilde and their leader.

**Tactics:** The minions are all savage and enraged. They will swarm nearby players in groups of 3, using Wolf Pack Tactics and flanking Tactical Edges but no other real tactical finesse. The Priestess is directly controlling the leader of the band. If more than half the force are dropped, he will use Rallying Cry (See Leadership, Tier 1) to bring them back before disappearing into the forest. He will not engage in combat directly and if attacked will just flee.

<b>Grunwilde Minions (Tier 1.0)</b>		<b>Pack of 6 d8, Med, Humanoid (Grunwilde)</b>	
Avoidance	Fortitude	Discipline	
18	16		
<b>St (Wo)</b>	1 (1)	<b>Pace</b>	40' (Glide 50')
<b>AR</b>	-	<b>Initiative</b>	3d10
<b>Attacks</b>	<i>Claws</i> : +4 (a)		d6 (d8)
	Speed: 4, Range: Melee		
	<i>Bite</i> : +4 (a)		d8 (d8) +5
	Speed: 6, Range: Melee		
<b>Talents</b>	Ravenous, Quick,		
<b>Traits:</b>	Powerful Attack: Bite		
<b>Flaws:</b>	Weak Attribute (Mental)		
<b>Skills</b>	(+3, 18, 15)		
	Athletics, Acrobatics, Melee (Unarmed), Perception, Wilderness Lore		
<b>Gear</b>	None		
<b>Scene Tier Value: 1.0</b>			

<b>Grunwilde Warrior Elite (Tier 1.0)</b>		<b>D10, Med, Humanoid (Grunwilde)</b>	
Avoidance	Fortitude	Discipline	
18	20		
<b>St (Wo)</b>	35 (1)	<b>Pace</b>	40' (Glide 50')
<b>AR</b>	-	<b>Initiative</b>	4d10
<b>Attacks</b>	<i>Claws</i> : +4 (a)		d6 (d8)
	Speed: 4, Range: Melee		
	<i>Bite</i> : +4 (a)		d8 (d8) +5
	Speed: 6, Range: Melee		
<b>Talents</b>	Ravenous, Quick, Leadership (T1)		
<b>Traits:</b>	Powerful Attack: Bite		
<b>Flaws:</b>	Weak Attribute (Mental)		
<b>Skills</b>	(+3, 19, 16)		
	Athletics, Acrobatics, Melee (Unarmed), Perception, Wilderness Lore		
<b>Scene Tier Value: 2.0</b>			

**Enemies:** 3 Murders of Igiho, tables of three only face 2 Murders.

**Tactics:** The Igiho are defending their territory, anywhere within 25 feet of the cactus. They will teleport from victim to victim, swarming, biting, and moving on until every person is outside of the 25 feet range.

**Set up:** The cactus is a large 15x15 plant immediately in front of the players. The path they have been carving is 10' wide, so there is enough space for players to stand two side by side. Moving into the forest will require a *Demanding Skill Action* (Speed: 7) to cut enough space out to move 5'. Cutting through the cactus requires the same. A player may move into the 5' space as part of this action, but may not do anything else. One player may assist another in cutting through, changing each *Demanding Skill Action* (Speed: 7) to a *Complex Speed Action* (Speed: 4).

### **Notes on the fight:**

Anyone taking the fight into the forest will suffer penalties associated with Shadowy illumination (pg. 337), Standard Cover (pg. 305) and Standard Concealment (pg. 306) from the dense foliage.

The Igiho possesses an interesting form of attack, utilizing their ability to teleport short distances, they teleport *into* a chosen target bite and teleport away. This attack is not only incredibly effective, but blindingly painful to the recipient. Thus Igiho ALWAYS use their ability to teleport into a chosen target and then teleport away utilizing *Passing Strike* martial technique except that no attack roll is required.

<b>Igiho Murder (Tier 1.0)</b>		<b>D8, Med, Beast (Magical)</b>	
<b>Avoidance</b>	18	<b>Fortitude</b>	15
		<b>Discipline</b>	17
<b>St (Wo)</b>	25 (-)	<b>Pace</b>	20' (40' Teleport)
<b>AR</b>	-	<b>Initiative</b>	4d10
<b>Attacks</b>	<i>Bite</i> Damage bypasses all AR		d8+1
<b>Maneuvers</b>	Passing Strike*		
<b>Talents</b>	Special Ability: Limited Teleport		
<b>Traits:</b>	Swarm Traits		
<b>Flaws:</b>	Bestial Intellect		
<b>Skills</b>	(+3, 19, 16) Athletics, Battle, Melee (Unbalanced, Unarmed), Perception, Wilderness Lore		
<b>Scene Tier Value: 3.0</b>			

**Igiho Special Ability:** Igiho may, at will, teleport up to 40' away. A natural ability which the Igiho has honed into a particularly interesting attack, utilizing their ability to teleport short distances, they teleport into a chosen target bite and teleport away. This attack is not only incredibly effective, but blindingly painful to the recipient.

Thus Igiho ALWAYS use their ability to teleport into a chosen target and then teleport away utilizing Passing Strike martial technique except that no attack roll is required.

### Swarm Traits

Although Murders are swarms of hundreds or even thousands of tiny creatures they are treated as a single threat. Murders have the following Special characteristics:

**Attacking:** It is assumed that due to their sheer numbers, Murders do enough individual attacks to cumulatively deal the listed damage. Thus Murders do not perform attack rolls or attack actions (unless an attack roll is required by a Quality). They simply deal damage each time the Murder moves into an occupied area, as well as each time a character enters the Murder's occupied area.

**Damage:** Murders deal their base die plus their Tier in damage (ex. A d10, Tier 4 murder would deal d10+4). Only Natural AR provides protection against this damage.

**Size and Spacing:** Murders may only be of Medium size or larger. Unlike the standard size rules, murders can occupy areas of various shapes. Large Murders take up 2 5x5 areas, Huge take up 3, and Gargantuan

4. These squares must always be adjacent to each other but are otherwise free to move around, and though each square may move independently they always act on the same tick. Regardless of size, all Murders ignore restrictions due to squeezing. Due to the small size of the component creatures, they may pass through any opening an individual creature can squeeze through, transferring a 5' x 5' square every 4 ticks.

**Physiology:** Murders possess no Wounds – may not be Vanquished by Wounds, and are immune to Critical Success and any effect that automatically Vanquishes a creature (such as Murderous Precision). They are immune to all movement, movement restricting, & Push effects unless otherwise noted under the Murder's statistics or the effect's description. They cannot use any weapons, armor, or equipment. Murders cannot typically be healed.

**Resistances:** Although they may not possess natural armor they do possess AR: 10 against all Slashing and Piercing attacks. Due to their nature, they are immune to any damaging spell that does not affect an Area.

**Horrific:** Anyone caught within a Murder must attempt a Horror check against the Murder's trained skill value. Individuals are only subject to this Horror effect once per Scene.

**Swarming:** The size and density of a Murder is directly related to the number of component creatures. The more Stamina a Murder possesses, the larger the Murder. When sufficient damage has been done to a Murder, they will either disperse or coalesce to remain effective. Each square of a Murder has a proportional amount of Stamina. Once enough Stamina has been inflicted upon the Murder, it will reduce in size.

**Example:** if a Huge Murder (3 – 5'x5' squares) has 60 Stamina, each square of the Murder has 20 Stamina. The Stamina is tracked as a whole, each 20 Stamina dealt to the Threat will reduce the Murder by 1 square. At 20 Stamina suffered it coalesces into two 5'x5' squares, at 40 Stamina suffered it shrinks to a single square.

## Appendix 3

**Enemies:** 3 Rooted Devourers (Plants, 10'x10' each), tables of three only face 1 Rooted Devourer

**Tactics:** The Devourers have made the clearing by spreading their roots through the area and choking off

other more normal plants. They are carnivorous in nature, and consume any animal that wanders into the area. In between meals, they become quiescent, but when the players arrive they are hungry again.

The Devourers use their roots to grab and immobilize opponents for consumption. Their roots can reach out to 20' away from the main plant. Once a target is grappled, the plant seeks to break its neck so that it may consume the victim at its leisure.

The Devourers will wait until their target has gotten close before acting, usually within 10'.

**Set up:** The clearing is 60' wide and 80' long. Thick foliage on either side. Same rules apply from the igiho Scene regarding cutting through, and the Devourers cannot reach more than 20' from the clearing's edge; too many other plant roots and their size thwart their movement.

**Notes on the fight:**

The clearing extends upwards through the canopy, so there is enough light that the conditions are Bright/normal. No penalties for lighting or concealment.

<b>Rooted Devourers</b>		<b>d8, Large, Plant</b>	
<b>Common (Tier 1.0)</b>			
Avoidance	Fortitude	Discipline	
15	18	17	
<b>St (Wo)</b>	30 (-)	<b>Pace</b>	5'
<b>AR</b>	-	<b>Initiative</b>	4d10
<b>Attacks</b>	Roots: +3 (a) Speed: 7, Range: Melee 20'		d10 (d10)
<b>Traits:</b>	Extended Reach, Mindless, Powerful Attribute (Mi), Crush, Life Sight		
<b>Flaws:</b>	Bestial Intellect		
<b>Skills</b>	(+3, 19, 16) Melee: (Unarmed), Perception		
<b>Scene Tier Value: 1.0</b>			

**Traits**

**Mindless**

**Requirements:** Plant, Construct, Undead

**Benefit:** Due to its obvious nature this creature Immune to control, Illusion spells and all horror effects. But this creature is also *not* capable of utilizing tactics and acts purely on instinct or in the case of some undead and constructs there last command.

**Life Sight**

**Requirements:** Any

**Benefit:** This creature possess an unnatural ability to sense the living with one of its senses. Some creatures may be able to “taste” the flavor of life upon the air, while others might be able to smell it out, and yet others might be able to visualize it as a particular aura.

Regardless of the specifics the effects are the same, the creature can “see” and target any living creatures within 30' regardless of light conditions or other forms of concealment without penalty.

## Appendix 4

**Enemies:** An unceasing flow of Green Lurkers (minions).

**Tactics:** Savage and brutal, the Green Lurkers want nothing more than to destroy the shrine and the Holy Symbol, but if anyone stands in their way, they will fight tooth and nail until the person has fallen. The Lurkers will charge in, heedless of their Avoidance, and more will always follow.

These green lurkers enter the area in 2 Mobs of 6, and for the next 24 ticks, as soon as the heroes reduce any mob to 3 or less a new mob enters the fray (they will leap over the branches, come down from above, and generally appear within one move from the heroes). There will always be more Lurkers, until the Spirit has a chance reassert the binding ritual.

**Set up:** The massive tree takes up a 40x40 area, with its roots extending out 40' in all directions. Terrain is difficult, but passable. The campsite itself is in a cone shaped area between two large roots, 40' long on a right angle from the shrine.

<b>Green Lurkers</b>		<b>Pack of 6</b>	
<b>Minions (Tier 1.0)</b>		<b>d8, Med,</b>	
		<b>Humanoid (Human)</b>	
<b>Avoidance</b>	17	<b>Fortitude</b>	17
		<b>Discipline</b>	16
<b>St (Wo)</b>	1 (1)	<b>Pace</b>	30'
<b>AR</b>	-	<b>Initiative</b>	3d10
<b>Attacks</b>	Stone Spear : +3 (a) Speed: 5, Range: Melee		d8 (d10)
<b>Talents</b>	Furious Rage, Wolf Pack Tactics		
<b>Traits:</b>	Powerful Attribute (Mi)		
<b>Flaws:</b>	Bloodthirsty, Weak Attribute (Mental)		
<b>Skills</b>	(+3, 18, 15) Athletics, Melee (Unbalanced, Unarmed), Perception, Wilderness Lore		
<b>Gear</b>	Stone Tipped Spear (Treat as a Light Spear)		
<b>Scene Tier Value: 1.0</b>			

### Notes on the fight:

No penalties for lighting or concealment. The tree blocks out a lot of light but not enough to make it difficult to see.

*The Grunwilde and Fritz will fight beside the Heroes, but describe this cinematically as fighting in the forest around them. They will be dealing with enough Lurkers of their own so they can't actually assist the players.*

REMEMBER the fight should only last 24 ticks.

## Appendix 5

**Enemies:** 2 packs of 6 Grunwilde (minions), Fritz (Elite, Tier 1.5 Martial, possessed) 1 Leader (Grunwilde possessed by Elemental Spirit, Adversary threat).

**Tactics:** The Grunwilde will strike hard and fast, seeking to overwhelm the Heroes with their numbers. The difficult terrain does not affect the Grunwilde.

The Spirit will also cast *Thrall* on any character with the Bloodthirsty Flaw (The Spirit's spell casting ability is at +10). If the spirit successfully bypasses the heroes Discipline, they will attack their party. If the party consists of more than one Hero with the Bloodthirsty flaw, the spirit only affects one of them (chosen randomly)

<b>Grunwilde</b>		<b>Pack of 6</b>	
<b>Minions (Tier 1.0)</b>		<b>d8, Med,</b>	
		<b>Humanoid (Grunwilde)</b>	
<b>Avoidance</b>	18	<b>Fortitude</b>	16
		<b>Discipline</b>	16
<b>St (Wo)</b>	1 (1)	<b>Pace</b>	40'
<b>AR</b>	-	<b>Initiative</b>	3d10
<b>Attacks</b>	Claws : +3 (a) Speed: 4, Range: Melee Bite : +4 (a) Speed: 6, Range: Melee		d6 (d8)  d8 (d8) +5
<b>Talents</b>	Ravenous, Quick,		
<b>Traits:</b>	X		
<b>Flaws:</b>	Weak Attribute (Mental)		
<b>Skills</b>	(+3, 18, 15) Athletics, Melee (Unbalanced, Unarmed), Perception, Wilderness Lore		
<b>Gear</b>	Stone Tipped Spear (Treat as a Light Spear)		
<b>Scene Tier Value: 1.0</b>			

<b>Fritz</b>		<b>D10, Med,</b>	
<b>Elite (Tier 1.0)</b>		<b>Humanoid (Human)</b>	
<b>Avoidance</b>	17	<b>Fortitude</b>	20
		<b>Discipline</b>	17
<b>St (Wo)</b>	35 (1)	<b>Pace</b>	20'
<b>AR</b>	3	<b>Initiative</b>	4d10
<b>Attacks</b>	Great Sword: +4 (a) Speed: 6, Range: Melee		d10 (d10)
<b>Maneuvers</b>	Mighty Swing (Bastard Sword), Sweeping Strike		
<b>Talents</b>	Furious Rage, Forward Stance, Weapon Mastery (Great Sword): T1		
<b>Flaws:</b>	Bloodthirsty		
<b>Skills</b>	(+3, 19, 16) Athletics, Battle, Melee (Unbalanced, Unarmed), Perception, Wilderness Lore		
<b>Gear</b>	Great sword, Ring Mail		
<b>Scene Tier Value: 2.0</b>			

# Spells

Green Lurker Champion Adversary (Tier 1.0)		D10, Med, Humanoid (Human)	
Avoidance	Fortitude	Discipline	
19	17	20	
<b>St (Wo)</b>	60 (2)	<b>Pace</b>	40'
<b>AR</b>	-	<b>Initiative</b>	4d10
<b>Attacks</b>	<i>Claws</i> : +4 (a) Speed: 4, Range: Melee <i>Bite</i> : +4 (a) Speed: 6, Range: Melee		d6 (d10) d8 (d10) +5
<b>Spells</b>	Cast at +10 (d12 die*) Thrall, Diminish Fatigue, Enemy of my Enemy		
<b>Talents</b>	Furious Rage, Wolf Pack Tactics, Leadership (T: I)		
<b>Traits:</b>	Powerful Attribute (Mi)		
<b>Flaws:</b>	Weak Attribute (Mental)*		
<b>Skills</b>	(+3, 19, 16) Athletics, Arcanum (Cants)*, Battle, Melee (Unbalanced, Unarmed), Perception, Wilderness Lore		
<b>Gear</b>	None		
<b>Scene Tier Value: 3.0</b>			

\*This body is currently possessed by the spirit of Talina and thus uses her mental stats d12, use such for spell casting and all mental based Action Skill Rolls, all Arcanum Action Skill rolls are performed at +10 with a passive skill value of 26

**Set up:** The massive tree takes up a 40x40 area, with its roots extending out 40' in all directions. Terrain is difficult, but passable. The campsite itself is in a cone shaped area between two large roots, 40' long on a right angle from the shrine.

### Notes on the fight:

No penalties for lighting or concealment. The tree blocks out a lot of light but not enough to make it difficult to see.

## Thrall

**Tradition:** Control [Tier IV]

**Components:** Enemy of my Enemy (pg. 386) and Puppet Master (Control) (pg. 413)

**Category:** Advanced

**CTN:** 25

**Speed (Strain):** 7 (+10)

**Range:** 20' (1 Target)

**Duration:** Scene (D)

**Defense:** Discipline

*You reach into a Target's mind, snapping his willpower, bending him completely to your will.*

**Effect:** For the remainder of the Scene your Target is completely under your control. You may issue mental commands to your Target (as a Simple skill action) that your Target must perform to the best of his ability.

You may only have a single Thrall at a time. If you attempt to cast this spell while another Target is under the effects of this spell, the first Target is instantly released.

**Special (Breaking the Hold):** Once per Scene, if the Target is forced to perform an act against its nature, it may instantly attempt a Mettle: Perseverance (Ch) Action Skill Roll against the caster's Passive Arcanum Value to break free of the spell.

**Special:** Once a Target is free of this spell's influence, he gains a +3 to Discipline for the remainder of the Scene against this particular spell and its components.

**Restrictions:** This spell only works against living creatures; as such Spirits, Undead, and Constructs are immune to this spell.

**Adaptation:** Increase the CTN by 6 to decrease Speed by 2.