

THE WILDER PARTS OF THE FOREST

BY **OLI JEFFERY**

"Indeed for a long time there would be news of evil things in the wilder parts of the forest - a haunting here and a killing there, a glimpse of a werewolf one month and a rumour of a hag the next."

C S Lewis. The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe.

WITNESS

Mr. Armitage, one of the Wardens of the *Wilder Parts of the Forest*. Mr. Armitage is a faun, having the body of a man, but the legs and tale of a goat and two horns on his forehead, one of which is snapped off two inches before the tip. Armitage served the Usurper as a spy and kidnapper during the occupation, which still haunts him to this day. His source of strength comes from his *need to assuage his guilt*; his experiences during the occupation have left him a *morose but dutiful alcoholic*. Armitage has been tasked with solving the disappearance of Edwin and Ruan Goodis, a badger prospector and his young son, missing from their home for over a week.

OTHER CHARACTERS

- ⊙ *Mrs Goodis*, a badger, seems strangely unmoved at the disappearance of her husband and son, and didn't even report them missing until pressed by neighbours. Her charitable neighbours say she's in shock. The less charitable have begun to gossip that she killed them both over Edwin's notable affairs and that their remains will soon be found in a shallow grave.
- ⊙ "*Red*" *Wheatley*, a dwarf. Actually a Stone Dwarf, a species who largely served the Usurper during the occupation gleefully and maliciously, "*Red*" Wheatley got his nickname as a double agent during the war; whether because that made him an honorary member of the loyalist Red Dwarves, or because of the amount of Occupier blood he spilled is a matter of debate. Once a spy, always a spy, Red is the go-to source for rumours in this part of the forest.

- ⊙ *Katrina*, a centaur, runs an inn on the edge of the forest. A veteran of the war, she lost one of her front legs during the last battle, and walks with the aid of a large crutch. She provides warnings to any about to enter the wild parts of the forest, and medical aid to those who run from it screaming.
- ⊙ *Morgenstern*, a raven and emissary of the High King. Well spoken and faintly sinister, not least because he has the habit of casually eating the eyes of murder victims, Morgenstern is a liaison between the Wardens and the Kings and Queens of the Land. He is keen to impress that this particular case should be tied up quickly and neatly.

LOCATION AND ERA

The Land: A magical world filled with creatures both wondrous and terrifying, which has recently gone through a period of occupation. The malevolent witch-queen known as The Usurper held the Land in an eternal winter, maintaining a vicious dictatorship through fear of her sorcery and her army of djinns, werewolves, ghosts, hags and creatures beyond rational thought. The land was freed in a bloody civil war, and the remnants of the Usurper's army fled into hiding where they continue a guerilla campaign of terror against the Land's peaceful inhabitants. It's the job of Wardens like Armitage to investigate reports of such activity, and to execute the perpetrators.

There are only four humans in the Land, child Kings and Queens who rule from a far off castle. Given that they're all brothers and sisters, it looks like there won't be any more humans here, either - but they're royalty, so who knows? Everyone else here is a creature from myth, or a talking animal. The era is a time out of mind; the technology level is roughly the same as medieval Europe.

OTHER LOCATIONS

- ⊙ *The wilder parts of the forest*. Vast swathes of the Land are covered in forest dotted with hamlets and villages; the majority of them are pleasant places, though still bearing visible scars from the recently ended civil war. Some parts of the forest

just have something... wrong with them, though. Even when there's no other creature around, you get a distinct feeling that something just doesn't want you there. Rumours abound that they're filled with treasures and knowledge beyond memory, so even these parts of the forest are sparsely populated with grim frontier types looking for a literal or figurative pot of gold.

- ⊙ *The Devil's Warren* is a winding network of caves and tunnels that was used as a resistance base during the occupation. It has hidden entrances all over the forest leading from coast to coast. They've been abandoned since the occupation ended and the remnants of rebel camps are mouldering inside. Nobody knows what created the oddly smooth tunnels in the first place, and everyone tries very hard not to think about it.
- ⊙ *The Last Chance* is an inn located just inside the border of what's considered the wild part of the forest. Run as a combination of pub and often field hospital for the animals that collapse in a bloody mess having dragged themselves away from some unnamed horror.
- ⊙ *A ruined fort* lies half buried in the heart of the forest. Its location only known to a few, there are rumours of a great treasure hall deep below the ground. Edwin and Ruan were searching for the fort when they disappeared.

CARDS

- ⊙ Sorcery
- ⊙ Victims
- ⊙ Reprisals
- ⊙ Defeat the Evil

THE WILDER PARTS OF THE FOREST: SAMPLE CLUES

- ⊙ A clearing filled with eerily lifelike statues, all looking skyward in terrified ecstasy
- ⊙ A stone table covered in old blood stains, cracked in half.
- ⊙ A ruined abandoned camp occupied by the festering corpses of resistance soldiers who officially died during the Last Battle against the Usurper.
- ⊙ A half burned book that blasphemously suggests in its remaining pages that the Usurper is the rightful heir to the Land.
- ⊙ A perfectly circular clearing in the middle of the forest, trees roots and branches turning away from something.
- ⊙ A hunter's cabin in the woods, its door smashed in and its contents strewn everywhere.
- ⊙ A shallow grave containing the shattered skull of a big cat.
- ⊙ Strange symbols precisely burnt into trees that cause your vision to blur if you look at them for longer than a few seconds.
- ⊙ A spring gushing viscous green and brown liquid rather than water.
- ⊙ The bodies of poisoned and deformed animals at a nearby river.
- ⊙ Electrical items and toys of a technology not known in The Land.
- ⊙ The corpses of four human children, two boys and two girls, hidden inside a cave.