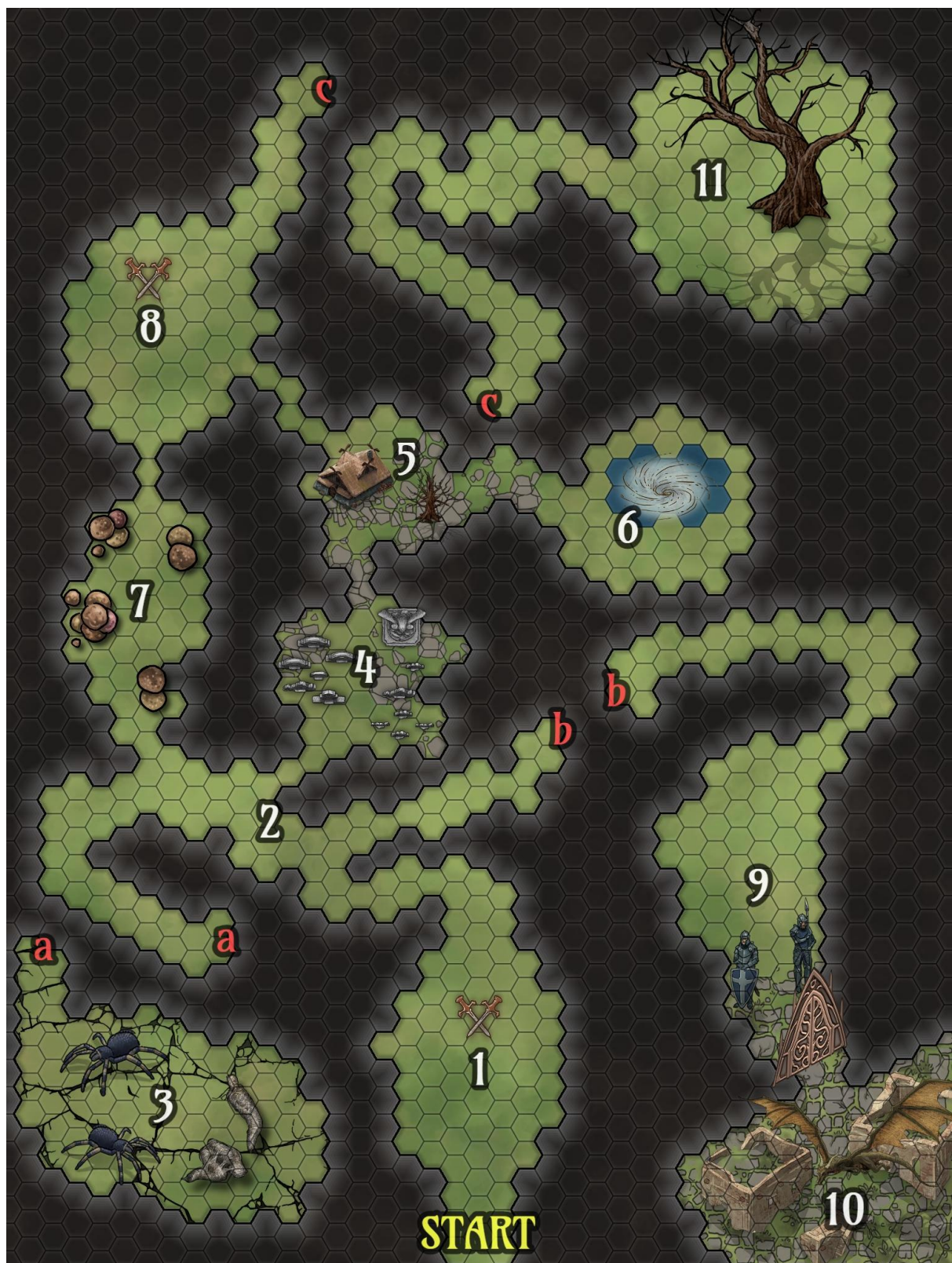


Chapter 11: Born of Roses, Crowned with Thorns

The Dark Forest



Map of the Dark Forest

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Introduction

The Group knows there is a very dark forest on the island to the northwest of Roseshire. Somehow it seems to be linked to Tekna as they need her blood to enter the forest. They believe it is linked to Tekna's birth mother who they learned has been cursed.

Goals

- They must make their way through the dark forest to find the source of the Evil.
- They need to reach Edna the witch of thorns, Tekna's mother and cure her curse.
- They don't know yet, but they will find place where the Hand of Vecna is sealed, and will need to deal with it accordingly

Before they enter

- A Cloaked figure will appear behind them when they seek to enter the forest of thorns once more. He appeared as a 6 foot tall humanoid, wearing a sky-blue cloak pinned together with a brooch representing a Silver Star, a large amulet displaying a crescent moon within a circle, and a pair of dazzling gauntlets.
 - You should turn back and leave this place alone. You are not welcomed here. Tauremorna is a sacred place, and your kind is not welcomed.
 - Turn back, or you will face the consequences.
 - I am Counsellor to the elven court, Caeldrick. I make sure things go smoothly in our realm. So our Great king does not sully his hands with the likes of you.

1. The Entrance

- a. They will enter a forest covered by a magical wall of thorns, just as before, they will need the blood of Tekna to open the way inside.
- b. Once inside, the ambient mist will get thicker and they will feel the oppressive nature of the forest weighing heavily on their shoulders.
- c. When the Group makes its way inside the Forest of thorns, they will walk very few steps before they are attacked by **Assassin vines** and **Blights** and **Father Oak**.
- d. Somehow the Blight (plants) do not target Tekna. They might have figured this out before if they went to Benuir and found themselves fighting the tree there.
- e. As they move through the forest they will feel watched and they feel that if they linger too long in one place, they might get attacked.

2. The Crossing

- a. The group will progress inside the forest and be faced with multiple paths to choose from.
- b. They will realize the plants and vines move around Tekna's feet to let her pass.

Chapter 11: Born of Roses, Crowned with Thorns

The Dark Forest

3. The Spider Nest

- a. As they make their way forward, they will see spiderwebs getting thicker and thicker. The spiders on them will also seem only to grow in size as they advance.
- b. Once they reach the opening, they will see it covered with very thick, sticky and oozy spider webs. They see before them a big tree stump and several cocoons that seem to be containing creatures like beasts and humanoids.
- c. They will need to succeed on a 20 DC perception check or be ambushed by **giant spiders** and need to defend themselves.
- d. They can find some loot inside some of the cocoons containing of humanoid corpses.
 - i. **! LOOT LIST !**
 - 1. **Treebane**
 - 2. **Gloves of thievery**
 - 3. **Necklace of Fireball**

4. The Cemetery

- a. They will find a calm area filled with what seems to be old elven gravestones.
- b. There is also some stone benches and what seems to be the remain of a statue
 - i. Someone who speaks and reads elvish might try to investigate the statue to find the name "Naralis" inscribed upon the stone.
 - ii. If one knows elven religion they can try and make a 17 DC Intelligence ()Religion) check to know it is the elven god of death.
- c. They can understand that this region was once a sacred elven burial ground, however it is now heavily corrupted.

5. The Hovel

- a. Once they arrive they will see an old decrepit hovel.
- b. Outside a great white tree stand, sickly and decayed (**Undead Tree**).
 - i. A Dryad Spirit is linked to the undead tree and only wishes to be freed of the tree's rotting influence. To cleanse the tree one must procure clear and pure water.
 - ii. Once the group cleanse the tree the Dryad spirit will be able to appear to the player. it will let them know of her fate, and that it can
- c. Inside the Hovel lies a cauldron with some bottles and books on the shelves.
 - i. **! LOOT LIST !**
 - 1. **Potion of Superior Healing x2**
 - 2. **Antitoxin x3**
 - 3. **Scroll of protection from plants**
 - 4. **Book of Rituals, Water Cleansing**
 - a. (if they miss it, the book will be pushed off the shelf by the Dryad Spirit).
- d. It seems rather abandoned, rotting and musty, however, there is a place to make a fire and rest if one desires so.

Chapter 11: Born of Roses, Crowned with Thorns

The Dark Forest

- e. There is a very big Dandelion in a pot, it seems to have seen better days. In the pot a beautiful, yet small silvery rapier is planted in). On the Pot one can read in elvish the name : Beau. Maybe some water would do it some good?
 - i. If they give it water purified from the Elemental pond it will be brought back to life and
- f. If the group rest there, they will get attacked by the spirit of the Dryad who once resided in the tree outside of the Hovel, if they didn't cleanse the tree. At night she loses control and turns hostile.
- g. If one observes outside, they will see an obvious path, leading to the pond. But there is a hidden path beyond the hut that leads to the clearing (8), to find it one must succeed on a 18 DC investigation check.

6. The Forest Pond

- a. A huge pool of stagnant water fills this pond. Glowing algae drift on the surface while tiny, white bioluminescent fish flit around in the water.
- b. Drinking the water or bathing in it causes no ill effects. A character who succeeds on a DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check finds the image of an Elven Crest etched on one of the walls.
- c. At the bottom of the pond there seems to be something shiny.
 - i. **! LOOT LIST !**
 - 1. A Small locked chest
 - a. Dispelling Stone
 - b. Gem of Brightness
 - c. Spell Gem, Star Ruby
 - d. Luckstone (cursed)
- d. Inside the ponds lies treasure. At first the pond seems harmless, but actually hosts a terrifying **corrupted water elemental**.
- e. The group can either fight the elemental, or try to produce a ritual to cleanse the pond of its corrupted influence.
 - i. Once they Start the ritual, they will need to keep the flames of the 4 ritual bowls alight or the ritual cannot be completed.
 - ii. The Water Elemental will attack the player and might extinguish the braziers if it enters in contact with it.
 - iii. They need to keep the ritual going for 10 rounds for it to be completed.
 - iv. Every turn the ritual continues, the Corrupted Elemental will gain maluses to all of its rolls equal to -1
 - v. If the Elemental is vanquished and falls to 0 hit point it will die unless the ritual is completed.
- f. If they cleanse the Pond, the elemental will be friendly and will give them the small locked chest and will allow them to take water from the pond.
 - i. If they drink from it, they will gain resistance to poison and advantage to saving throws against being poisoned for 24 hours.
- g. They can also converse with the elemental if they know the aquan of primordial language. It might reveal some information about the forest and hint them on the location of certain things.

Chapter 11: Born of Roses, Crowned with Thorns

The Dark Forest

7. Path to the Clearing

- a. The path leading to the clearing has **Shriekers mushrooms**. If the group don't realize fast enough the mushrooms will shriek, letting the **Evil Druid** in the Clearing knowing they're going there.
- b. They will then find themselves in a bad position, the Druid will move towards them and attack them on the spot.

8. The Clearing

- a. They will fight **the druid**, But they might get the jump on him if they take the **Hut shortcut hidden passage**.

i. **! LOOT LIST !**

1. The druid hold

- a. Staff of withering
- b. Whiterbloom primer
- c. A big contraption made of carved white marble with designs of gold and silver plants adorned with small gems where flowers lie.

9. The Castle Gate

- a. A giant door stands massive in front of them.
- b. The door seems to be covered in thick white vines with bright red puss like orbs, some of them oozing out.
- c. As they move closer, they will get attacked by **the white vines** and the **guardians** who keep the gates.
- d. Once the guardians are defeated, they will see they can't seem to open the door because it needs a certain **key?** (marble and precious metals contraption that was held on by the **Evil Druid**)

10. The Castle

a. Entrance (Grounds)

- i. A great **Blighted Drake** Sleeps on the steps leading to the tower. Keeping them from proceeding inside.
- ii. There is also a **parasite infested Behir** guarding the way further in, it is hidden on the wall under the overgrowth.
- iii. They can see a gigantic flower bud emerging from a thick grove of plants atop the lonely standing tower.
- iv. As they are on the castle ground they will reach the only part of the structure left standing The tower.
- v. Once they get observing, they might see a clustered path leading to a big fortified door.
- vi. If they decide to remove the rubble it will lead to the Armory

b. Armory

- i. If they open the door they will find **Brown mold** on the other side.
 1. The brown mold is immune to fire, it absorbs the ambient heat.

Chapter 11: Born of Roses, Crowned with Thorns

The Dark Forest

2. Players who stay too close to the mold will receive 4d6 cold damage every turn.
3. If someone makes fire the mold will swiftly expand towards the player.
4. They need to use cold damage on it to instantly destroy it.
5. A DC 18 nature check would reveal this information.
- ii. Once they've dealt with the mold, they can observe the armory and find a few well preserved objects.
 1. ! LOOT LIST !
 - a. Watchful Helm
 - b. Elven Chain
 - c. +1 long Bow
 - d. Dragon Slayer Longsword
- c. Nursery
 - i. When the group enters this room, they will see a crib slowly moving on its own, basking in the light.
 - ii. When they approach, they will see a small doll resembling a little girl, who somehow looks a bit like Tekna.
 - iii. If Tekna gets close, the Doll will try to attack her and switch their souls.
 - iv. Encounter with a **Carrionette** and a **Ghost**
 - v. After defeating the Carrionette, the group can see that this room is free of spores and plants and that the door seems to be very sturdy and can be locked.
 1. ! LOOT LIST !
 - a. Radiance (Mirror)
- d. Court of Thorns
 - i. As they reach the top of the tower, the group feels like more and more plants cover the area, they must be approaching inside the great flowerbud they saw from outside the castle.
 - ii. They will once reach a big throne room covered with flowers everywhere. Behind her throne lies a giant Rose, she seems to be connected to the rose.
 - iii. *"Ah... Why would you come here and disturb my peace.... When I saw you little ants prancing around in my garden, I expected you'd be done for, or that you would leave.... Yet here you stand between me and my eternal sanctuary. I just want peace and quiet. Is that too much to ask for!"*
 - iv. As they fight against the Alrune, they will see the big rose slowly losing its petals. Slowly revealing a silhouette of a woman trapped within seems to be asleep.
 - v. Once Alrune dies, the crystalline pod holding Edna will crack and break, revealing the true appearance of the one they wanted to save, Edna the lich.
 - vi. Once Edna drops to 30 HP or less, she will bend the knee and fall to the ground in pain.

Chapter 11: Born of Roses, Crowned with Thorns

The Dark Forest

1. That's when Tekna will be able to use the flame to remove the curse on Her and her mother.
2. When she does so, The Flame will take the form of a wilted Golden Flamed rose.
3. The Flame will spread on her mother's Lich body, peeling away as a storm of rose petals turning into dust, destroying the hideous form to reveal her true humanoid body. The golden flame will extend to Tekna's body as she will feel the warm embrace of the Golden flame. Her mother will raise her head and look into Tekna's eyes. She looks confused at first. She will then cry and say : "Tekna? Is that you?" "Oh my beautiful daughter, look at how you have grown?"
4. At some point Tekna will feel the flame start to slowly hurt her body. Edna will then get up on her feet with Tekna. And tell her the truth of her past and of the Curse that was placed upon them. "I am so happy to finally meet you again my dear girl. However, I'm afraid I cannot stay..." You see, the curse affected me when I was carrying you within my womb. I prayed to Sune for deliverance and unfortunately it was not enough to free me from the curse that was placed upon us." She takes a moment taking Tekna's hand within her own. "I suppose that you've read many fairy tales while you grew up in Roseshire. Am I right?" "Well in some way they all have something right, True love can really remove a curse, However in our case, My love for you my child took away the curse from your body, but I had to take it upon myself alone." "Our connection still remains to this day" Once I gave you away on the stairs of Sune's temple. I went and isolated myself from the world here in the Dark Forest" and the curse that was placed upon me eventually took the form of the thorns and brambles that shut me away from the rest of the world. I eventually succumbed to the evil trapped along with me, the curse eroding away at my memories and the evil slowly corrupting my nature leaving me a husk of what I used to be"
5. "However what I didn't know is that what I had become was an undead eldritch creature known as a Lich. And you my Phylactery. You must have felt it as you stepped in the forest and as you got closer to me. A fragment of my soul resided within you, the last glimmer of love and hope that I had I left with you, hoping it would guide you to become a good person, and I'm happy to see it did."
6. "Now... I'm sorry Tekna, but I don't want you to suffer the same fate I am about to and so I will take back what little of my soul you have." A small flame leaves Tekna's mouth with a breath and gets back to Edna. At the same time the Golden Flames on Tekna's body extinguished themselves. And those upon

Chapter 11: Born of Roses, Crowned with Thorns

The Dark Forest

Edna rise more ardently. I thank you for going out of your way to remove the curse from me. I love you my dear and will always be at your side.

7. She kisses Tekna on her forehead and takes her hand where she has Edna's Rose Ring. And a fragment of her soul seems to go into the ring as her body disperse into the light.
8. Tekna now has **Edna's Love**. And lots of **Emotional Damage**.
9. As the flames disperse they are all treated to some visions.
 - a. They see fragments of her past flashes quickly along with Thekaris and up to the moment of Tekna's birth.
 - b. "Tekna, do not lame your Father. He is not responsible for our curse, but simply a victim like both of us. Seek the truth and seek him. This is my final wish, for you to be able to meet your father. For he too needs saving. I know it might be selfish, but please if you ever can. I love you and will always do so. Until we meet again in the gardens of the Afterlife my love".

11. The Sealing Tree

- a. When they make their way to the tree, they will find a similar vision than the one they saw in Benuir
 - i. (If they did not go to Benhuir, explain the rotting stench and menacing aura surrounding the tree).
- b. The tree seems to be massive and extend far above the majority of the other trees. It seems to be surrounded by ropes and other stuff, a small but destroyed shrine of elven origin lies there. One can understand it's a sealing tree.
- c. They can see a severed hand on the floor, one that seems to be made of bones and rotten flesh.
- d. When they look closer they see what seems to be a man in armor halfway absorbed by the tree. They can recognise the armor of the one who kidnapped Tekna.
- e. When they think they have the upper hand, several chains of shadows sprout from him and seem to catch on trees, rocks and the ground. Pulling him out of the tree.
- f. "TEKNA" he screams as he gets out of the tree. "My dear, I've found a symbol of my love to you, a new hand to replace the one you've lost. One who will make you feel closer to one of patron, so we may bask in his shadows together. This hand is a symbol of my devotion to you. If you would take this hand, it would make me the happiest man on earth. Please say yes, my beautiful bride to be....".
- g. "Wait... Your hand it's back! How dare you spit on the gift I gave you, you ungrateful wench! I will keep the hand to myself then! I will never understand you Woman, you first flirt with me, and then reject me completely".

Chapter 11: Born of Roses, Crowned with Thorns

The Dark Forest

- h. "I tried to bring you back and your wannabe friends here took me from you! You should really get away from them Tekna, they're a bad influence on you my love".
- i. The group fights **Stoneheart the Death knight, 4 shadows** and a **nightmare**.
- j. When Stoneheart falls he will say this: "I will own you, like my patron owns your goddess!!! We are to be a reflection of their love!!! He promised meeeee"
- k. He will then change form and lose all remaining sanity : "BE MINE!!!!!! YOU WILL BE MINE I SAY!!!!"
- l. Once the group defeat it, it will disappear into the void along with the **Hand of Vecna**