

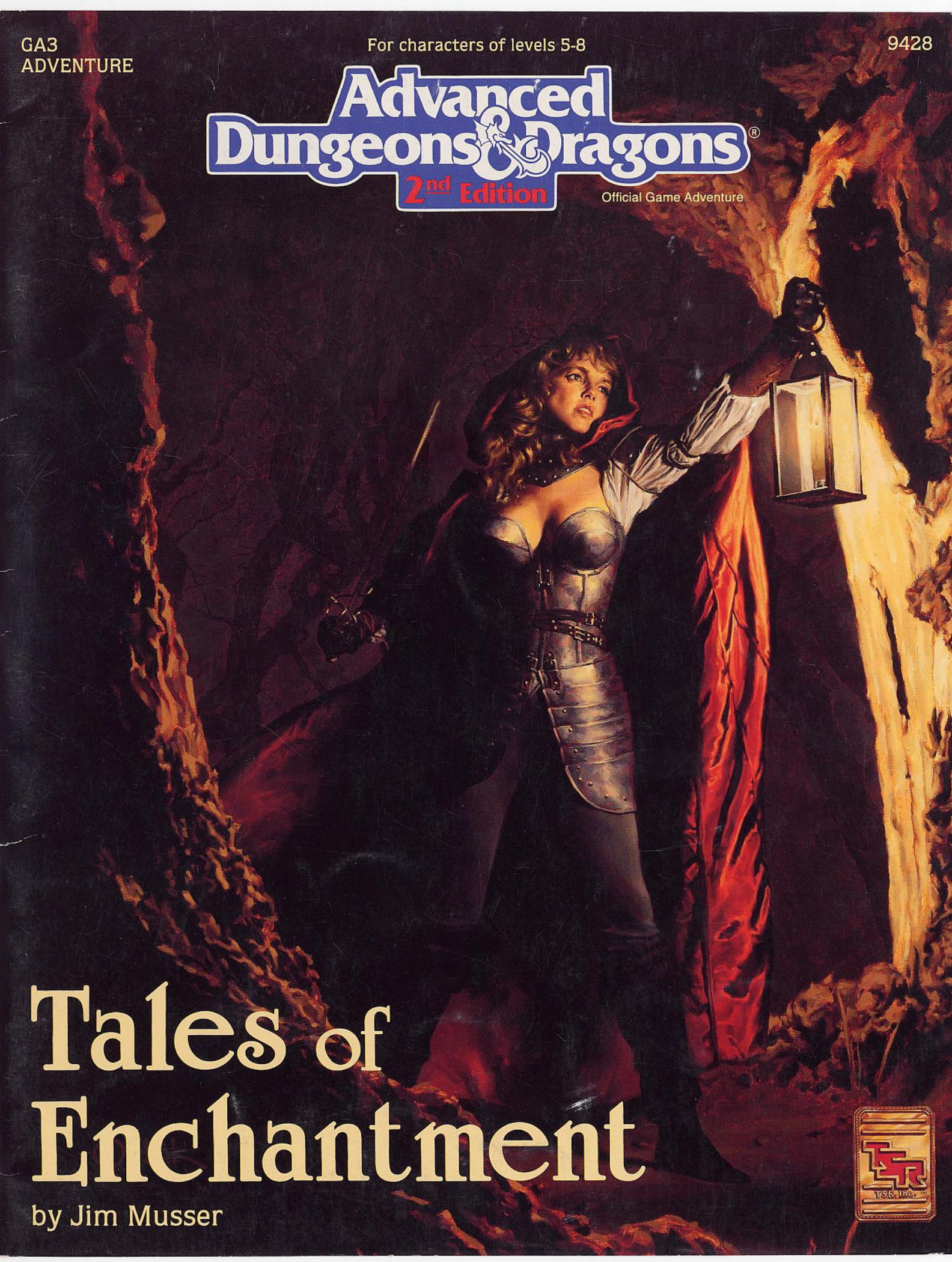
GA3
ADVENTURE

For characters of levels 5-8

9428

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons[®] 2nd Edition

Official Game Adventure

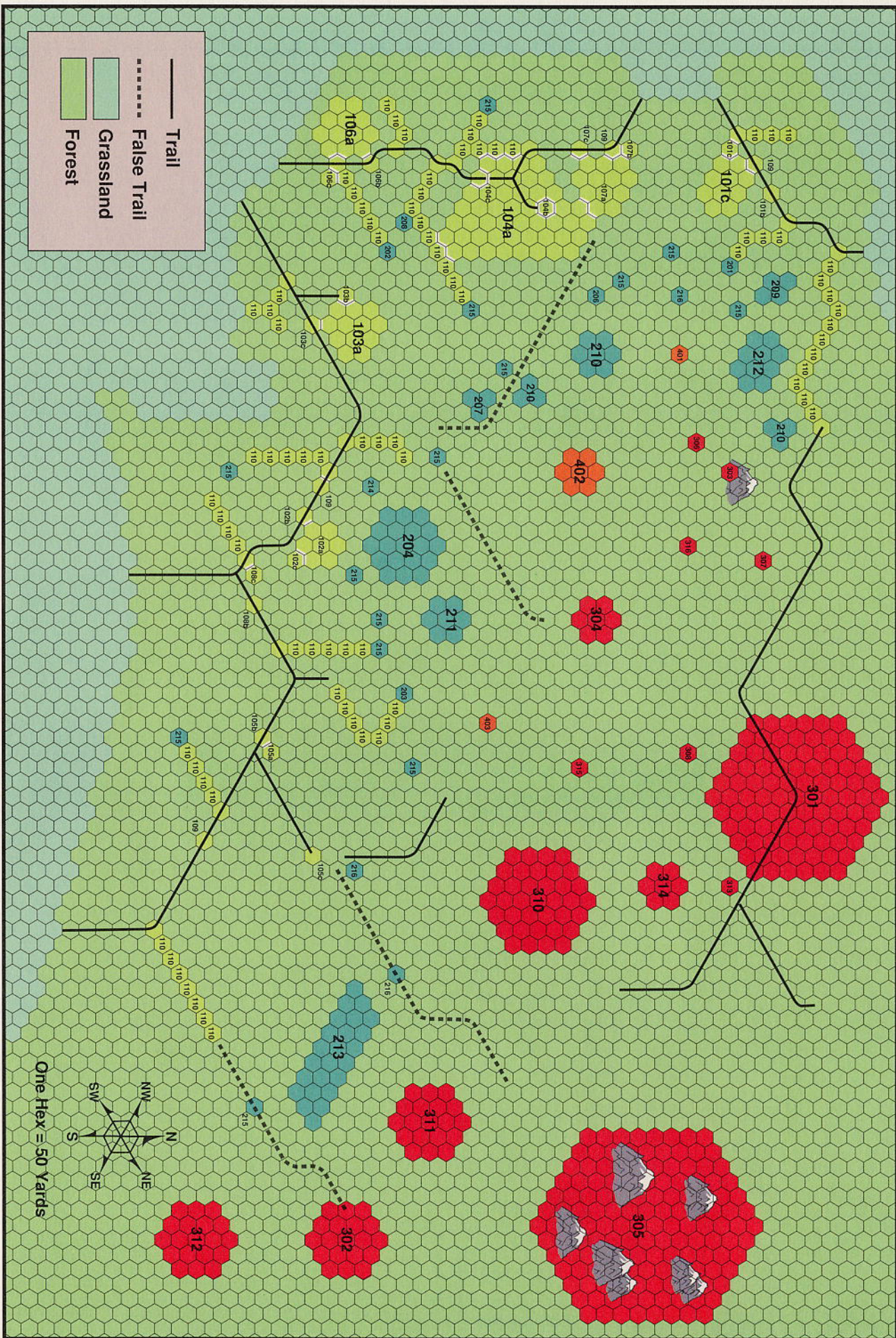


Tales of Enchantment

by Jim Musser



Whispering Widow Woods (DM's map)





Tales of Enchantment

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Tales of Enchantment is designed for three to six characters, levels 5 to 8. Almost any mix of classes can succeed, but players will find it very helpful to have at least one character who can *detect invisibility*. They may also find the need for a cleric who can remove a curse. For guidance in dealing with a party without some of these basic tools, see the *Troubleshooting* section at the end of Chapter One.

This adventure is organized into chapters based on when, if ever, the PCs are likely to encounter each creature. Chapter One contains common creatures found near the edge of the forest and the illusions of them created by pixies. Players should begin unraveling the mystery during these encounters. Chapter Two contains creatures found deeper in the woods but they are generally irrelevant to the main plot. The PCs can pick up information here that can set them back on track, or make erroneous assumptions based on these diversions and go further astray. Chapter Three chronicles the perils of the inner forest. If the party is alert and misses no key clues, it should never encounter these creatures. Chapter Four describes the pixie colony and the main characters in this adventure.

Tales of Enchantment has no mechanism built-in to keep the players on track. That is part of the problem for them to solve. They can go as far afield as their bad judgment takes them, but the farther afield they go, the more trouble they will find. The only way the party should face much combat is if the players blunder about. Therefore, reduce standard combat experience awards by 50% so as not to reward the players for making bad choices. The end of the adventure calls for more advanced role-playing and some really clever problem-solving. The *Resolution* section of Chapter Four includes special awards for the end of the adventure.

Plot Synopsis

The mysteries and legends surrounding Whispering Widow Woods have always been enough to scare off the timid. The dense canopy shrouds the forest floor in darkness even at mid-day, and the tangled underbrush inhibits travel and can disorient even seasoned woodsmen.

Most folk who live nearby, however, feel safe enough if they keep near the trails through the outer reaches of the woods. They believe the stories about a dragon and other horrors, but they have no intention of going into the deepest and darkest parts of the forest. The locals use special care to steer clear of an unusual rock formation that gives the woods its name. Visible from some farms near the forest is a towering limestone outcropping that some say looks like a face. Above and on both sides of the pale limestone is a thin vein of dark stone much like a shroud. Trees cover the eerie hill's gentle eastern slope. When the wind is right and especially at night, neighboring farmers can hear what sounds like a widow's muted wails of grief.

The folklore, eerie rock formations, and thick underbrush are plenty to keep locals on the trails near the edge of the forest where they can find sufficient firewood, mushrooms, and herbs and where the forest creatures never bother them—until recently.

It started as a frightening curiosity. Terrorized residents described attacks by normally docile creatures, such as black bears. Then it grew more bizarre. Respected citizens told wild tales of unprovoked attacks by treants, sprites, and brownies. The last two curious souls to venture into Whispering Widow Woods have not returned.

Other travelers have disappeared for days, eventually arriving at their destinations with no memory of what had delayed them. In fact, one stranger wandered out of the woods with no memory whatsoever; local authorities are still trying to learn his identity.

In addition, reports of strange occurrences near the forest, a list of oddities dating back for

years, suddenly grew more numerous and stranger.

A shepherd named Patos complains that his flock increases by two or three when he's not looking and then returns to its normal size when he turns away again. He cannot tell the additional sheep from the regular ones, and he is afraid to take his eyes off his flock for fear of what will happen.

A farmer named Jerube maintains that it has been raining on his fields for 22 days straight. No one believed him at first because the area has seen little rain in the last three weeks, but anyone traveling to his fields can see the steady downpour and the great pools of standing water. His crops have rotted.

Patos, Jerube, and others have noted voices coming from Whispering Widow Woods. In every instance, they recognized the voice as that of a friend or family member. Those who followed the voice into the forest found nothing, and several times the person hearing the voice knew the friend or family member to be elsewhere, not in the forest.

Jareb Klause, a wealthy landowner, has decided to hire the PCs to investigate these strange happenings. Jareb is particularly worried about his adolescent son, Barens. Barens has been showing youthful rebellion against his father by taking long trips away from the manor, sometimes disappearing for days. Some of these times, Barens has been seen entering Whispering Widow Woods, and his father is worried because Barens has been missing for two weeks. The PCs' mission is to learn the cause of the attacks, to find Barens, and to make the woods safe again.

In fact, Barens is a central piece to this puzzle. On one of his brooding hikes, Barens unknowingly passed near a colony of pixies. These pixies had long succeeded in avoiding contact with humans and demihumans. However, Gwellen, a particularly curious and bold princess of the pixies, actually introduced herself to Barens

when he next passed that way. The two became close friends, developing quite a bond before the pixie king found out.

The king, Ebron, reacted by creating illusions to frighten "large folk" from the forest. Gwollen told Barens about the illusions, protecting him but getting herself in trouble by leaving the pixie colony against Ebron's orders. She found it ever more difficult to get away to meet with Barens, and his trips into the forest became longer and longer. He even built himself a cabin to use as a base for his long walks in search of Gwollen.

When Ebron learned that he had not succeeded in halting Gwollen's contacts with Barens, he grew angry and began a campaign of harassment against humans living near the forest and especially against Barens. Suddenly Barens found himself subjected to all manner of trickery, such as being *polymorphed*, put to *sleep*, and led into *confusion*. Once, when lost, Barens happened upon a tribe of sylvan elves. After Barens explained his plight, the elves took pity on him. Though they did not want to confront the pixies directly, the elves gave Barens a charm that protects him from pixie magic. Barens, not wanting to tip off the pixies about his new defense, uses his cabin as a base in his searches for Gwollen, all the while pretending to fall victim to the pixies when they harass him.

The PCs enter Whispering Widow Woods with no idea of the pixies' existence. All they have is a simple map drawn by Barens' father. He has not gone deep into the woods for a very long time and can only give the PCs an idea of what lies in the outer reaches of the forest. At the edges of the forest, they will meet normally benevolent creatures. One-third of the time they will encounter the actual creatures, and the rest of the time they will encounter the pixies' hostile illusions of those creatures. When the PCs encounter the illusions, at least one pixie will be present creating the illusion. This gives the PCs a chance to discover the pixies and the source of

the illusions. The PCs will also hear a voice calling for Gwollen, a name that means nothing to them at first, deepening the mystery and providing a clue at the same time. These incidents are caused by pixies trying to lead the PCs astray in the belief that the party is trying to help Barens find Gwollen. The fact is, the PCs are much less informed than the pixies assume.

Deeper into the woods, the PCs might encounter several kinds of diversions, including forest creatures unrelated to the main plot, false trails created by the pixies, and even false images of Barens, who will gladly agree to leave the forest with the PCs. The PCs will probably recognize this as a ruse only when they take "Barens" back to his father. The PCs might also encounter the real Barens or the sylvan elves, either of whom will aid them in solving the mystery.

If the PCs stumble onto Barens' cabin, he will tell them exactly what is going on. As the PCs are trying to unravel the mystery, Gwollen is trying to convince her brother that her friendship with Barens is good, that the "large folk" won't harm the pixies.

Gwollen's mother, Lizbet, also has sympathy for her daughter but dares not openly defy her husband. Thus the PCs will have some passive allies when they try to find a resolution that is acceptable to all. Their ultimate success would be to find a way to unite Barens and Gwollen in some way acceptable to both Ebron and Jareb.

Chapter One: Outer Forest

Jareb, Barens's father, gives the PCs a map he has drawn of the area (Player's Map). His knowledge of the area is limited because no one enters the deepest parts of the forest anymore. Also, unless the PCs remind Jareb, he forgets to give them a description of Barens (see encounter 215 for a complete description). If Jareb is asked for a description of his son, he says Barens has long brown hair and usually wears a cap. Beyond that, he cannot remember what Barens was wearing when he last disappeared into the woods.

Each hex on the map equals 50 yards, meaning that careful listening might reveal sounds in a neighboring hex, but the thick undergrowth blocks sight for more than about 10 yards.

From outside the forest, only a few features are visible. The most noteworthy is the "Whispering Widow," an unusual, rocky hill that consists of a limestone cliff resembling a face, shrouded with a thin layer of dark rock (303). The eerie wail that comes from this area of the forest reputedly comes from the face. Also visible from outside the forest are a series of low hills often covered with a curious green mist (305). The hills are rumored to be home to a dragon, but no one has claimed to have seen this creature for generations.

Most of the outer forest consists of common animals and creatures that are not normally threatening to humans and demihumans. In each instance, however, the pixies have, under their king's orders, created illusions of these creatures that behave very aggressively toward any travelers. It is possible, and even likely, that the PCs will encounter both the real creatures and their illusions.

The pixies have created the illusions to frighten off mortals, not to kill them, which may start a war in which many more mortals are tramping about the forest. To the PCs, the illusions are little more than a bother, since they should not be rewarded for killing such creatures, but the illusions are the first major

clue for the PCs to begin solving the puzzle. There are one or more invisible pixies hiding near the scene of each illusion. When the PCs discover this, they will at least know what they're up against even if they still don't know why.

In addition to the encounters in all the chapters, there is a special encounter that can occur anywhere in the forest if one or two PCs get separated from the rest of the group. This also occurs if the party goes to sleep and leaves only one or two characters awake on guard. When either of these situations arises, a pixie will approach the PC more directly. The pixie approaches invisibly and, if undetected, touches the character to *cause confusion*. In addition, pixies harass isolated PCs by making them *sleep*, by *polymorphing* them into outlandish creatures, and by stealing their memories.

If the PCs seem overmatched or somehow at a severe disadvantage during this part of the adventure, see the *Troubleshooting* section at the end of this chapter.

101. Black Bears

Bears, black (2): AC 7; MV 12; HD 3+3; hp 16; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-6; SA hug 2-8; AL N; ML 10; XP 85

101a. These two black bears have long lived in this part of the forest. They learned to ignore travelers except to scavenge for food at campsites after the travelers have gone. When the PCs encounter them anywhere within this area, these bears will first note the party curiously and then lumber off into the woods. If the PCs attack, the bears try to avoid combat, fighting only if cornered. If the PCs encounter these bears after meeting the aggressive illusory bears of 101b or 101c, award them a bonus 50 XP if they do not attack the bears at first sight.

101b, 101c. Created by pixies, these illusions are perfect copies of the black bears in 101a. The

big difference is in their reaction to the PCs. When the PCs approach, the bears attack ferociously, biting and clawing at the closest characters. Remember that the pixies' purpose is to frighten the PCs, not to kill them. If the PCs figure out that they are facing an illusion, they may look around for the source of it. Well-hidden, and also invisible, are two pixies. If any member of the party spots the pixies (10% chance each) and tries to approach them, they waste no time fleeing back toward their home (402).

102. Giant Porcupine

Porcupine, giant: AC 5; MV 6; HD 6; hp 32; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8; SA shoot quills; AL N; ML 16; XP 325

102a. This large creature is doing what it does best—minding its own business. When the PCs encounter the creature anywhere within its area, the porcupine notes their presence with apparent disinterest. If the PCs don't approach, the porcupine eventually waddles off into the woods. If the PCs do approach, the porcupine lets loose a few quills to discourage them from coming nearer. If the PCs encounter this prickly fellow after facing the images in 102b or 102c, award them 50 bonus XP if they do not attack this creature.

102b, 102c. In each of these areas is a replica of the giant porcupine, but these images are created by pixies to frighten off innocent travelers and meddlers like this party of adventurers. At first sight, the sluggish porcupine image meanders closer to the PCs. After closing range a bit, it lowers its head and charges, firing quills on the run. The porcupine isn't trying to kill the party, he just wants to scare them enough to drive them out of the forest. If the PCs figure out that this is an illusion and seek its source, they may find a well-hidden and invisible pixie near the scene. If spotted (10% chance), the pixie flees toward his home (402).

103. Werebear

Werebear: AC 2; MV 9; HD 7+3; hp 32; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/2-8; SA hug 2-16; AL CG; ML 13; XP 700

103a. This creature has nothing against humankind, but hasn't much use for it, either. When the PCs encounter it anywhere within the marked area, this lycanthrope assumes a defensive posture but does not attack. It maintains this posture until the PCs leave. If the PCs stay too long, the werebear eventually leaves the area itself. Award the PCs 50 extra XP for staying out of combat, or 100 extra if they've already had to fight an illusory werebear.

Treasure: 8 gp, 25 pp, two blue quartz gems worth 10 gp each, gold tiara inlaid with platinum worth 2,200 gp, scroll of *protection from lycanthropes*, scroll of *protection from fire*, scroll of *protection from poison*, unlabeled *potion of delusion*.

103b, 103c. These pixie-built horrors are exact copies of the original. Their sole purpose is to chase away the PCs. The pixie controlling this illusion will do his best to injure the party members, but he is careful not to kill anyone. If the PCs figure out this illusion and search for its source, they may be able to find the invisible pixie (10% chance), who is well-hidden but close enough to monitor all the action. If discovered, the pixie flees to his home (402).

104. Unicorns

Unicorns (4): AC 2; MV 24; HD 4+4; hp 24; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1-6/1-6/1-12; SA charge; AL CG; ML 14; XP 325

104a. These four unicorns are named Draylee, Naylor, Frankon, and Naymidmerelda. They have come to dominate this area of the forest (as shown on the map). At one time, folk from outside the woods often trampled the nearby region of forest that is rich in herbs. A few pointed lessons by the unicorns persuaded the intruders

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to pay closer attention to the ecosystem, and everything has been fine ever since. When the PCs encounter them, the unicorns will be friendly but firm in their message that the party should stay off the unicorns' turf. If the PCs disregard these warnings, the unicorns will fight.

Treasure: *potion of flying, potion of green dragon control.*

104b, 104c. There can be few things that cause more panic than seeing one rogue unicorn bearing down on you at full gallop, much less four of them. With a troublesome pixie holding the imaginary reins, these mighty steeds can throw a fright into any band of adventurers, or so the pixies hope. The most difficult task may be keeping the illusion convincing without killing any of the PCs. If the players figure out that they are facing an illusion, they may be able to spot the pixie causing it, though she is hidden and

invisible. If seen (10% chance), she will flee to her home (402).

105. Treants

Treants (8): AC 0; MV 12; HD 11; hp 64; THAC0 9; #AT 2; Dmg 4-24/4-24; SA control 1 or 2 trees; AL CG; ML 16; XP 6,500

105a. These eight treants have led a peaceful existence, rarely bothered by any other creature and never threatened. If the PCs pass by this way, the treants will make their presence known and then douse any torches the party may be carrying. Otherwise, the treants place themselves in a defensive formation and herd the PCs away from their lair. As long as the PCs remain friendly, the treants will be helpful, though not eager for the party to hang around.



Treasure: Two black onyx gems worth 100 gp each, four amethysts worth 500 gp each, *potion of fire resistance* (x2).

105b, 105c. As the PCs walk along a trail, they are suddenly ambushed from both sides. These illusionary treants will do their best to subdue the party, but the pixie controlling them will avoid mortal combat. His ultimate aim is to see the PCs drag themselves away from this scene and out of Whispering Widow Woods. If the PCs see through the illusion, they might be able to find the pixie (10% chance), once again hidden and invisible. If he's seen, he'll make a break for home (402).

106. Brownies

Brownies (12): AC 3; MV 12; HD ½; hp 3; THAC0: 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-3 or by weapon; SA spells; AL LG; ML 11; XP 85

106a. This band of brownies has been known to help many a traveler who found more trouble than he could handle in Whispering Widow Woods. They are not only friendly with "large folk" from outside the forest but with most all the forest creatures as well. When the PCs encounter the brownies anywhere within the marked area, the creatures will be friendly as usual. They know that the pixies are trying to scare away "large folk" and they disapprove, though they would never actually fight with the pixies.

The PCs can find a great deal of help here. The brownies willingly tell them what the pixies have been doing, though the brownies don't know why. The brownies can also act as guides, taking the PCs directly to the pixies' home or to most other lairs, avoiding the illusions and the false trails. The brownies know nothing of Baren's or Gwellen. If confronted by pixies on this journey, the brownie guides will quickly disappear into the forest, leaving the PCs on their own again. The leader of this band of brownies is named Graham.

Treasure: 24 cp, 80 sp, 5 pp, black sapphire worth 5,000 gp.

106b, 106c. Attacked by a pack of rabid brownies? Who's going to believe that? Even though the PCs may have heard stories about attacks by brownies, the PCs will probably be friendly when they encounter these. With a mischief-loving pixie orchestrating the brownies' moves, the PCs won't be friendly for long. Such an attack is bound to cause as much psychological damage as physical damage, for the PCs must stop and wonder what sort of topsy-turvy forest this must be. Just such disbelief may be what allows the party to see through the illusion, in which case one of the party members may spot the invisible pixie (10% chance) cavorting among his imaginary big brothers. The pixie will not stay around long, however, heading for home (402) as soon as the illusion is broken.

107. Sprites

Sprites (28): AC 6; MV 9/18; HD 1; hp 4; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; SA sleep arrows; AL NG; ML 11; XP 210

107a. This band of 28 sprites once lived in peace and happiness. "Large folk" from outside the forest occasionally passed by, and the sprites sometimes met other forest creatures, but their existence was one of harmony with the world. The recent upheaval by the pixies has caused the sprites to be even more shy and withdrawn than usual. They understand that the pixies are the cause of the trouble, making even the nearby unicorns grumpy and bringing armed bands like this party of adventurers into the forest. The sprites are very wary of the PCs, but if the party can gain their confidence, they will place all the blame on the pixies. They can give the PCs the general location of the pixie colony, but they know nothing more and are too withdrawn to be of any more help. The leader of the band is Mayella, but none of the other sprites are willing to give their names.

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Treasure: 4,000 sp, *staff of the woodlands*, *gem of insight*.

107b, 107c. If the PCs have the bad luck of happening onto one of the illusionary bands of sprites, the pixie creating the image will execute an ambush. The helpless party will find itself the target of a myriad of tiny arrows flying from underbrush teeming with sprites. The illusionary sprites transport the PCs back outside the forest to wake and wonder at how they arrived. If the PCs manage to avoid this barrage and break the illusion, they have a chance to find the pixie (10% chance), who once again is both hidden and invisible. If spotted, she quickly flees for home (402).

108. Pegasus

Pegasus: AC 6; MV 24/48; HD 4; hp 31; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1-8/1-8/1-3; SA dive, rear kick; AL CG; ML 11; XP 85

108a. This beautiful beast is somewhat curious about the PCs and will study them from a distance. If the PCs approach, the pegasus will be skittish, flying off a bit to maintain its distance. If attacked by neutral or good characters, the pegasus will flee. If attacked by evil characters, the pegasus will fight.

108b, 108c. These illusions of pegasi act very aggressively as the pixies creating the illusions attempt to frighten the party out of the woods. If the PCs recognize this as strange behavior and break the illusion, they may be able to spot the three hidden and invisible pixies (10% chance each), who retreat home (402) as soon as they are spotted.

109. Traveler

Human (F0): AC 9; MV 12; hp 4; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; Str 11, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 8, Wis, 9, Cha 11; AL NG; THAC0 20

This human is a short man with crudely cut blond hair. His clothes are old and rumbled and

he wears no shoes. He carries a few silver pieces in his pocket. The human's name and other characteristics are unknown because of memory loss.

At several places in Whispering Widow Woods, the PCs may encounter a traveler who has fallen victim to the pixies. The pixies have used three of their favorite tricks, namely *sleep*, *confusion*, and *memory loss*. The poor traveler sits on a rock rubbing his sleepy eyes and scratching his confused head. The appearance of the PCs offers some hope, and he greets them enthusiastically. Of course, he cannot remember how he got this way or where he is from.

The only thing the PCs can do to help this poor fellow is to use a *remove curse* spell to end his *confusion* or a *heal* or *limited wish* to bring back his memory. He is still pretty vague about what happened to him. He did not see the invisible pixie. About all he can do is tell the PCs where he is from (somewhere distant, because he was not reported missing locally) and where he was going. It matters little whether he sets out alone again or asks to join the party, as he is of little use for providing information or for other purposes.

This encounter can provide the PCs with further hints about what they are up against and, more importantly, to warn them about what they might expect to happen if they venture off alone.

110. Voices

Hexes containing the number 110, either individually or arranged in rows, indicate places, usually along a trail, where a pixie calls out from a distance, trying to beckon the PCs in an adjacent hex to follow or, even better, to beckon only one or two of the PCs to follow.

In all such locations, the pixie speaks in Baren's voice and calls out the name Gwellen, for the pixies certainly know of this longing and suspect that somebody may be searching for

Barens since he has been gone so long. The players may not know the significance of the name Gwellen, and their characters probably will not recognize Barens' voice since they've never met him. An unknown name, heard from afar, adds to the romance of the mystery, and the players should eventually figure out the connection.

If the PCs follow in a group, the pixie just keeps leading them farther away, to the end of the string of 110s. If only one or two PCs follow, the pixie will look for an opportunity to circle back and cause mischief, primarily with his *cause confusion* touch.

Troubleshooting

The main things that can go wrong in the outer forest is that the PCs might do too well or too poorly.

It is highly probable that the PCs will learn that some of their encounters are illusions. They should also deduce that a single force is causing the illusions to scare people out of the forest. This is essential. If the PCs push ahead without breaking an illusion and without learning about the pixies through the other clues, they are doomed to blunder about for some time. In this case, it is probably best to reposition encounter 215 (Fake Barens) in their path. This should make them pause and think about what's going on.

Another problem that could arise is if the party has no way to *detect invisibility*. If the characters have the capability and simply don't use it, that's fine because there's plenty of time to find out about the pixies. If the PCs can never see the pixies, however, they're going to have a difficult time negotiating with them. Be aware of the problem and be ready to drop the proper item into a treasure hoard or give a *ring of see invisible* to a wandering goblin or other likely victim.

More problematic is what happens if the PCs not only spot a pixie creating an illusion but

actually capture him or, worse, kill him. If the PCs kill a pixie, they must make several quick decisions correctly while they probably still don't know what's going on. First of all, they must conceal this act. They must dispose of the body and proceed with the adventure and act as if nothing happened. This is unreasonable to expect. Once Ebron learns of the death, the best the PCs can hope for is to rescue Barens from certain death and declare the forest off limits for the next decade or so. They would deserve some credit for rescuing Barens, but any other XP awards should certainly be lost because of the problems they created.

Capturing a pixie is not quite as irredeemable as killing one. The pixie will not cooperate with the PCs, of course. Holding it captive may seem to have no purpose, and it is always a danger because of its powers. Releasing the pixie, however, presents an even bigger problem. It will return to Ebron long before the PCs ever get there, and when Ebron learns of the PCs' actions, he will figure out their motives and concentrate all harassment powers directly against them wherever they go. No longer content to create illusions in the hopes of frightening mortal travelers, Ebron will order his band to take more direct action against the PCs, using all their powers, such as *polymorph*, *sleep*, and *cause confusion*. He will also make it impossible for Gwellen or her allies to ever contact the PCs. If the PCs persevere in spite of all this, Ebron will still consider them adversaries during the final negotiations. It would have been much better to have kept the pixie captive, no matter how cruel that may seem.

Chapter Two: Diversions

The encounters in the first chapter gave the party clues to the nature of the adventure and perhaps what to do next, but most of the encounters in this chapter are purely diversions. Most are simply irrelevant to the plot, but some could help clear things up for a confused party and others could provide false leads to test a party further.

The Dungeon Master should feel free to change these locations during the adventure as necessary to either increase the challenge for a party that has been having too much good luck or to provide clues or other help to a party that seems hopelessly on the wrong track. This is especially the case with encounters 215 and 216 (meeting either the real Barens or the false one).

201. Giant Weasels

Weasels, giant (8): AC 6; MV 15; HD 3+3; hp 17; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2-12; SA blood drain; AL N; ML 10; XP 85

This family of giant weasels usually sustains itself by scouring the forest for small creatures. But when food gets low, these weasels sometimes prey on human travelers passing through Whispering Widow Woods. Knowing this, the pixies set a trap by creating voices to lure travelers off the trail and into the weasels' lair. Usually the travelers are able to escape with their lives and tell others about the voice. Sometimes the weasels catch the humans unaware and have a feast for a week.

When the PCs encounter the weasels, the creatures automatically have a hostile reaction and receive a -1 modifier to their Surprise roll. They can hear the party coming and they stalk their prey.

Since the voice that led the PCs here was the creation of a pixie, the party will not be able to find its source. The pixie is curious, however, and waits around briefly to see the result of the encounter with the weasels. If a PC can *detect invisible* and specifically looks for someone or

something immediately after the weasel encounter ends, he might (10% chance) catch a glimpse of the pixie before it slips off to its home (402).

202. Giant Spider

Spider, giant: AC 4; MV 3 (Web 12); HD 4+4; hp 26; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8; SA poison; AL CE; ML 13; XP 325

This abomination has spun a beautiful web between trees at ground level, and it sits high in a tree ready to drop onto its prey. The spider prefers to have its victim temporarily immobilized by the web, but it will also attack humans and others who are smart enough to stay out of the web.

Perhaps as a tactic but more likely by accident, the spider has left its treasure pile only partially concealed. The greedy traveler who acts on impulse will find the spider's sticky webbing clinging to everything in the pile.

This spider is not too intelligent, and it will attack even an obviously superior force.

Treasure: 2,000 sp, set of six gold-leaf goblets worth 100 gp each.

203. Giant Ticks

Ticks, giant (9): AC 3; MV 3; HD 3; hp 10; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; SA blood drain; AL N; ML 9; XP 60

Waiting in low-hanging branches for any warm-blooded creature to pass by are a cluster of nine giant ticks. After dropping on its prey and achieving its first hit, each tick drains 1-6 points of blood until it reaches 10 (its own hit points), which is its satiation point, and it drops off.

To detach a tick before it reaches its satiation point, one must immerse it in water, burn it, or kill it. Once a tick has begun to drain blood, its victim has a 50% chance of contracting a fatal disease. The disease is fatal within 2-8 days unless a *cure disease* spell is used.

Knowing the mindless ticks will drop onto any passerby, the pixies use false voices to lure "large folk" to this menace and, they hope, to prove the forest is too dangerous and frighten them into leaving.

204. Sylvan Elves

Elves, wood (29): AC 5; MV 12; HD 1+1; hp 5; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; SA +1 to hit; AL CG; ML 13; XP 210

Tretorn, a 4th level fighter (Str 16, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 15, Wis 8, Cha 15), heads this band of 28 sylvan elves. He stands just over 5 feet tall, which makes him unusually tall for an elf. He has long brown hair which he neatly pulls back and ties with colored string. His clothing is always spotless and matched carefully. His fussiness about his appearance is a source of humor for his band of elves, though none would dare mock him to his face.

Though Tretorn may initially seem pompous and aloof, he is a trustworthy and loyal elf. If the PCs converse with him long enough, they will discover that Tretorn's manner is to compensate for his insecurities.

Tretorn always carries *Virtue*, an intelligent sword +3. *Virtue's* characteristics and abilities are Int 17, AL CG, primary abilities to *detect evil* or *detect good* in a 10' radius, to locate object in a 120' radius, and *detect invisible objects* in a 10' radius, extraordinary power to cast one unique spell (of the sword's choice and design) per week, the special purpose of helping the underdog, the ability to communicate telepathically with its owner, the ability to speak lammasu, and the ability to read magic. *Virtue's* ego of 18 makes a close contest in the case of a personality conflict between the sword and Tretorn, but this has not produced a problem between them for many years.

Because Tretorn and *Virtue* have the same alignment, they have never had widely divergent viewpoints or plans of action. Tretorn was

occasionally bothered, however, when *Virtue* seemed to seek glory for itself and belittle Tretorn, especially in front of his elven band. *Virtue* resents personality conflicts when its special purpose, helping the underdog, is at stake. And so the two have come to an understanding that when there is an issue of helping an underdog at hand, Tretorn will become passive and let *Virtue* hold sway without a contest. In return, *Virtue* will help Tretorn stand tall before his subjects, taking full credit for powers and achievements he could not have aspired to without *Virtue's* help. No one else knows about this, of course, especially Tretorn's band.

The rest of the band consists of 1st level elves. Three elves carry swords, one carries a sword and spear, seven carry spears, one carries a sword and a bow, and the other 15 carry bows. In addition to the 28 adults, there are three elf children, all younger than age 10.

The elves have befriended a pride of giant lynxes (212) and a flock of giant owls (215). If the elves ever feel threatened, they can summon these allies on short notice. By the same token, any party that has visited either the lynxes or owls could never surprise the elves as those animals act as an early warning for Tretorn's band. Any party that has fought with the owls or lynxes can expect an automatic hostile reception upon encountering the elves.

During his wanderings and search for Gwellen, Barends encountered these elves several times. As kindred spirits of the forest, Barends and Tretorn became good friends. The elves admired Barends for his stubborn refusal to give up his love in the face of the pixie harassment campaign. As a matter of fact, *Virtue* readily recognized Barends as the underdog when the pixies unleashed all their tricks against him, and the sword created one of its unique spells to help him. With Tretorn smiling his approval, *Virtue* touched Barends on each shoulder and conferred upon him absolute immunity to pixie magic and mischief. To help maintain the effectiveness of

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the spell, Tretorn gave Barens a small charm in the exact shape of *Virtue*. As long as Barens has the charm and it remains intact, he will be protected. He cannot transfer the effects of the charm to anyone else because *Virtue* gave only him the immunity. If he lets anyone know he has the charm, its effectiveness immediately disappears. Barens has used this gift wisely (see Barens's Cabin, 401, for details).

Unless the PCs have earned a more hostile reaction, the elves will be friendly but cautious toward them. Knowing of all the pixies' shenanigans, the elves suspect the PCs may be some kind of pixie trick. There are a few ways the PCs might try to gain the elves' friendship. They could try to persuade the elves that they have Barens' best interests at heart, though the elves will still suspect a pixie trick. The PCs could overcome this with details about Jareb or details

about Barens' past, offering information that the pixies wouldn't have. The PCs might also describe an encounter with the pixies, though they would have to be very persuasive (or produce a captive pixie, for instance) to shake the elves' suspicion. Probably the best thing the PCs could do would be to disclose their mission but profess ignorance of all the events of the forest (the ignorance could be real, of course), such as the pixies' scare campaign. In this case, the elves would quickly recognize the PCs as underdogs and try to help them.

Though the elves sympathize with Barens and dislike what the pixies are doing, they would not dare to oppose the pixies directly. If the PCs can win the elves' confidence, Tretorn will tell them what he knows of the situation, such as Barens's and Gwellen's love, the pixies' harassment of Barens and their forbidding Gwellen to

see him, and their campaign to scare other "large folk" out of the forest. Tretorn will direct the PCs to Barens's cabin, but he will not guide them there and he will not mention *Virtue's* special gift to Barens.

Treasure: 10,000 gp, four ebony statuettes of lammasu each worth 2,000 gp, *potion of plant control*, *potion of speed*, *potion of levitation*, *potion of extra-healing*, *potion of animal control* (2), *scroll of protection from elementals*, *scroll of protection from dragon breath*.

205. Satyrs

Satyrs (5): AC 5; MV 18; HD 5; hp 18; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8 or by weapon; SA pipes; AL N; ML 13; XP 475

This colony of five satyrs gets along with most all other residents of Whispering Widow Woods. Their fun-loving lifestyle is infectious, and other creatures consider the satyrs either as friends or as harmless ne'er-do-wells. The satyrs have no natural enemies.

This group knows what's going on in the forest, in a general way at least. They don't know the particulars of the romance between Barens and Gwellen, but they know something has the pixies mighty upset. For their part, the satyrs could not care less. They care only if they hear of a threat to their friends the centaurs (213) or their mates, the dryads (207).

The satyrs' response to any approach by the PCs will be for the leader to play his pipes. If there is an attractive female (Cha 15+) in the party, he will play to *charm* her. Otherwise, his action depends on the PCs' approach. If the satyr thinks they're friendly, he'll try to put them to *sleep*, then steal all their valuables. If the satyr thinks the PCs are hostile, he'll try to make his pipes *cause fear* and drive them away.

In any case, the PCs will find the satyrs to be of little help, and if the PCs start trouble, they could find themselves in trouble with most of the other forest creatures as well. If the PCs

encounter the satyrs and avoid having combat with them, award the party a bonus of 200 XP.

Treasure: Six tiger eye agates worth 10 gp each, three topaz gems worth 500 gp each, *pipes of sounding*, *philter of love* (10).

206. Leprechaun

Leprechaun: AC 8; MV 15; HD 1; hp 3; THAC0 20; #AT 0; Dmg Nil; SA spells; AL N; ML 11; XP 135

This forest is full of enough mischief, but this little guy is in the midst of it and doesn't seem to care. This leprechaun, Rollin Dougherty, cares nothing about Barens, Gwellen, and the pixies' campaign to scare off the "large folk." All this means to Rollin is fewer victims to rob.

The PCs will find Rollin perched up on a tree limb, fast asleep and snoring. He is an old leprechaun. His hair underneath a round brown hat is tinged with white. His raggedy brown clothes are clean, however. A shiny gold belt circles his waist and is only barely visible behind the bag he clutches. He wears dirty black shoes. Even in his sleep he appears to be tightly clutching a knotted bag made of twine. Through the holes in the bag the PCs can see glittering bits of shiny gold. Rollin is not actually sleeping, but is trying to lure the PCs into a trap.

If the PCs call out to the leprechaun to try to wake him, Rollin opens one eye and peers at them cautiously. At first he pretends to be a pixie and offers his services in countering the pixies. Rollin slowly works his way into the party's confidence.

When he sees a good opportunity, Rollin lures the party over to the tree where his trap has been laid. Then he springs his rope trap and the party is scooped up in a huge net. Rollin snatches whatever he can of value, turns invisible, and scampers off into the woods.

If the PCs try to sneak up on Rollin as he supposedly naps, they will be caught in the rope trap immediately and robbed. They cannot sur-

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prise him in any way. If the PCs have no appropriate magical items, escape from the rope trap takes at least three rounds.

Rollin is no help to the party. He only causes grief. He will do anything to prevent the PCs from finding his lair if they somehow manage to follow him.

Treasure: 5,000 gp, gold belt worth 500 gp.

207. Dryads

Dryads (3): AC 9; MV 12; HD 2; hp 9; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; SA charm; AL N; ML 12; XP 475

These three maids live near each other and may be sisters. They are usually most secretive and would never be seen by a party of travelers. Lately, however, one of the three, named Vitae, has come into the open and greeted several humans and demihumans passing nearby. She tells them she knows all about what the pixies are doing and she wants to help the travelers.

Vitae is clothed in a simple, fine white dress that glimmers with a pearly sheen. Her long, white hair cascades down her back and reaches the hem of her dress which extends just below her knees. She is quite beautiful and will respond in a very friendly manner to anyone with high Charisma (15+).

As the other two dryads try to keep Vitae from becoming involved, she ignores their pleas and offers aid to the party. All is not as it seems, though. Vitae, like Gwellen, was quite smitten by Barens as he passed one day. Barens, however, was already in love with Gwellen, and he resisted Vitae's charms effortlessly. Incensed, she enlisted the aid of all the trees in the forest to find out why and how Barens eluded her.

Now Vitae comes forward to offer her aid to passers-by in the hope that she can trick them into helping her. She willingly tells everything she knows about the romance between Barens

and Gwellen, but her solution to the problem is much different from Ebron's. Vitae is plotting to get rid of Gwellen or to destroy Barens's love for her; either will do. She gives the party a complete description of Gwellen so they can kill her or force her to give up Barens. Vitae stresses that none of this is Barens's fault, so simply tying him up and removing him from the forest is not a good solution—at least not for Vitae.

Vitae describes Gwellen as being about 2 feet tall. She usually wears a pale blue or pale green dress that seems to be made of an almost weightless material. Her long red hair is always braided behind her and is tied with flower stems. Around her neck she wears a fine gold chain from which hangs a tiny heart charm. Barens had given her the charm at their second meeting and she has not taken it off since. However, since her father discovered her involvement with Barens, the charm has somehow cracked. Vitae has seen the charm, but does not know its significance.

Although Gwellen is beautiful, Vitae naturally describes her as being quite plain. She complains about the horrid color of Gwellen's hair and criticizes the way she "ties it up so funny with flowers and whatever else she finds in the forest."

Treasure: 300 gp, 20 garnets worth 300 gp each.

208. Ankheg

Ankheg: AC 2 (underside 4); MV 12; HD 1d6+2; hp 16; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 3-18 (crush) + 1-4 (acid); SA squirt acid; AL N; ML 9; XP 300

This horrid bug is simply lying in wait for its next meal. Buried with only its antennae sticking above the earth, the ankheg is very difficult to detect. As the innocent traveler passes over, the ankheg bursts from its underground hiding place to crush its victim in its powerful pincers.

Treasure: 3,000 sp.

209. Giant Ants

Ants, giant (146): AC 3; MV 18; HD 2 (worker), 3 (warrior), 10 (queen); hp 8 (worker), 14 (warrior), 47 (queen); THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1-6 (worker), 2-8 (warrior), 0 (queen); SA poison sting (warrior); AL N; ML 9; XP 15 (worker), 85 (warrior), 0 (queen)

As the party approaches this area, the PCs notice unusual movement amid the underbrush. Upon closer examination, they will find 20 worker ants going about their business of gathering food. There are four anthills in the immediate area. There are 100 more workers, 25 warriors, and the queen in the ants' tunnels below the anthills.

If the party is reasonably careful, the PCs can continue on their way without disturbing the ants. The ants will fight, however, if combat-minded PCs are determined to get their weapons bloody.

If the PCs manage to kill the queen, the other ants become confused for six rounds and then leave the nest.

Treasure: Six jasper gems worth 50 gp each, potion labeled *polymorph self* (actually poison), *potion of diminution*, *potion of gaseous form*.

210. Bombardier Beetles

Beetles, bombardier (6): AC 4; MV 9; HD 2+2; hp 10; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 2-12; SA acid cloud; AL N; ML 13; XP 60

The party can smell these beetles before it sees them. Six of these huge insects have chosen the same parcel of forest to build their nests. Each has accumulated a prodigious pile of waste in which to lay its eggs. All seem intent on tasks comprehensible only to other insects and seem oblivious to the party of PCs marching forward with noses held. The PCs can easily skirt the beetles' stomping ground and continue onward, but they suffer a -2 penalty to their surprise rolls for the next two hours because of the stench.

211. Giant Lynxes

Lynxes, giant (4): AC 6; MV 12; HD 2+2; hp 14; THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1-2/1-2/1-4; SA rear claws 1-3 each; AL N; ML 9; XP 135

These four giant lynxes pose no threat to man, unless that man appears to be a threat to their friends, the sylvan elves (204). These intelligent cats prey on small mammals in the area as they act as the eyes and ears of the elves.

As the PCs approach, the lynxes watch cautiously and curiously, but from a distance. The lynxes will not interfere with the PCs in any way. Only if the PCs appear to be headed for the elves will the cats race to warn their friends and masters.

Only a truly determined party could force combat with these cats, and only a very talented party could befriend them to a point where they would be of some use. If the PCs do manage to find a way to fight with the lynxes, it severely damages their chances to deal with the elves.

212. Centaurs

Centaurs (6): AC 5; MV 18; HD 4; hp 18; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1-6/1-6/by weapon; SA Nil; AL CG; ML 13; XP 100

Six sylvan centaurs live in this part of Whispering Widow Woods. They are on especially good terms with the satyrs (205) and the wood elves (204). Four of them carry bows and two carry lances.

When the PCs encounter them, the centaurs are extremely cautious and not particularly friendly. The centaurs inform the party that humans aren't welcome in this part of the woods. Though firm in their resolve to get rid of the PCs, the centaurs will be civil, and they willingly give out bits of information if that means the PCs will leave.

The PCs must be very polite and self-effacing here if they expect to gain anything from this encounter. If the PCs are the least bit aggressive

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or disagreeable, the centaurs won't hesitate to give them a fight.

Treasure: 6 gp, three topaz gems worth 500 gp each.

213. Giant Hornet

Hornet, giant: AC 2; MV 6/24; HD 5; hp 30; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; SA poison and paralysis; AL N; ML 10; XP 325

This nasty insect buzzes through the forest looking for its next victim. A careful party should be able to hear its buzzing from 50 yards (1 hex) away and steer clear of it. If the PCs are foolish enough to investigate the buzzing, however, they are likely to have a fight on their hands because the hornet can fly much faster than they can run away.

214. Giant Owls

Owls, giant (2): AC 6; MV 3/18; HD 4; hp 17; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 2-8/2-8/2-5; SA surprise; AL N; ML 12; XP 135

This mated pair of owls acts as a warning system for their friends, the elves (204). The owls are adept at getting out of trouble, but the elves would surely come to their aid if needed.

The owls will be friendly and curious, but cautious toward the PCs. If the PCs are aggressive, the owls will simply fly away unless the PCs threaten their nest, in which case they will fight furiously. If the PCs win the owls' confidence, the owls will lead them to the elven band at encounter 204.

Treasure: Three eggs, three egg-shaped rhodochrosite gems worth 10 gp each, five egg-shaped pieces of dark green jade worth 100 gp each, *potion of ventriloquism*, unlabeled *potion of water breathing*.

215. Fake Barens

Barens (F0): AC 8; MV 12; HD 1; hp 4; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8 (double-bladed axe); SA Nil; AL NG; ML 10; XP 15

At several locations in the forest, Ebroch, Gwellen's brother, has *polymorphed* himself to look exactly like Barens and imitate Barens's voice perfectly. He can imitate Barens's mannerisms to some extent but totally lacks knowledge of Barens's background and personality. Thus, he looks, sounds, and even acts like Barens, but would have no idea what Barens's father's name is, for example. Ebroch hasn't told Gwellen of his efforts to get rid of the PCs so she can honestly tell her father she knows nothing about it.

Barens is a handsome young man about 20 years old. He has shoulder-length brown hair which he keeps out of his eyes by tucking it in a cloth cap or headband that he ties around his forehead. He wears a white shirt and brown leather trousers. He has crude brown, leather shoes that are scuffed. He carries an axe with him not only to use in the forest, but to defend himself against dangerous creatures.

When encountered by the PCs, the ersatz Barens acts out his part to the best of Ebroch's ability. He willingly tells the PCs his name is Barens, but he acts cautiously toward them at first. This is a ruse, of course, because Ebroch is trying his best to gain the PCs' confidence.

This false Barens openly discusses his love for Gwellen, admitting that she is the reason he has been staying in the forest. He puts a false twist on events, however, professing to be depressed about the difficulties he and Gwellen face, such as different cultures, different sizes, obstacles placed by the rest of the pixies, and so forth. What Ebroch is trying to do is get the PCs to coax Barens out of the forest. As a result, the search party would leave the forest thinking they have succeeded in their mission because they have Barens by their side.



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If this all happens according to the pixie's plan, this false Barens will accompany the PCs all the way back to Jareb's manor. The only reason that this can work is because the PCs don't know Barens personally. Ebroch knows he won't be able to fool Barens's family for long, so after initial greetings, Barens pleads fatigue and excuses himself to take a nap before dinner. Not even knowing the way to Barens's bedroom, the pixie acts as soon as he is out of sight of the others. He quickly drops the Barens guise, changes back to a pixie, becomes invisible, and heads back for the forest. Ebroch hopes that Barens's family won't go searching for him again, at least not right away.

If the PCs have somehow already encountered Gwellen, she will have told them about the heart charm that Barens gave her. If she is with them when they encounter the false Barens, she will insist that he is an impostor. She has no proof he is a fake, except that she insists that her cracked heart charm would heal itself if she found him again. Ebroch has not told Gwellen of his plan to protect the real Barens and to help her, and he will not admit that he is an impostor, even to his sister.

The PCs may realize that Gwellen could help them by testing Barens's knowledge of his romance with the pixie. If they suspect that something is odd about this Barens, Gwellen will cooperate by asking him intimate details of their relationship that only those two could know.

216. Barens

Barens (F0): AC 8; MV 12; HD 1; hp 4; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8 (double-bladed axe); SA Nil; AL NG; ML 10; XP 15

Barens spends most of his time searching for Gwellen. Since Ebron has forbidden Gwellen from seeing Barens, this means Barens spends more and more time wandering through the forest. When the PCs encounter the young man,

Barens will be friendly but cautious. See encounter 215 for a description of Barens.

Barens is wary of yet another pixie trick against him. He also has no intention of leaving the forest without Gwellen, no matter whom his father sends after him. With the *charm of immunity to pixie magic* given to him by the elves (204), Barens isn't too worried even if the PCs are just another pixie trick. Since he can't let the pixies know he has this charm, he pretends to succumb to every bit of pixie harassment.

If the PCs have already encountered Gwellen, but she is not with them, telling Barens that they know about the heart charm will certainly get his attention. He will know when it was given to Gwellen and what it looks like, obviously, and the false Barens (Ebroch) will not.

If the PCs manage to convince Barens that they are on his side, not just fulfilling a contract for his father and certainly not pixie skills, he will try to enlist their aid. But not here. "The trees have eyes and ears," Barens warns the PCs, putting a single finger to his lips and quickly leading them away from this place.

Barens will take the PCs to his cabin (401), where they can talk more openly and where they can plan strategy. Barens knows the way to get them there without incident.

Chapter Three: Inner Perils

Deep in the forest reside dark horrors that the forest folk and others have avoided for decades. More than mere diversions on the way to solving the real plot, these creatures are here to punish anyone with more muscles than brains.

301. Kobolds

Kobolds (250): AC 7; MV 6; HD ½; hp 2; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; SA Nil; AL LE; ML 8; XP 3

This tribe of 250 kobolds has lived in relative peace in this part of the forest since driving most other creatures away. They know this area of the woods very well and patrol it frequently.

If the PCs arrive here along one of the trails, kobold scouts certainly would have spotted them long enough ahead of time for the main body of kobolds to have prepared an excellent ambush. If the PCs arrive here without using the trails, the kobolds would still have spotted them ahead of time and would be gathering more kobolds as the PCs neared the kobold camp. By the time the PCs reach here, kobolds will have surrounded them but can no longer catch the PCs by surprise.

Regardless of how the party arrives, the kobolds wait for the best opportunity and then attack, using sniping tactics with arrows and slings in an attempt to damage the party. They use their hiding places and superior numbers to keep the PCs constantly surrounded. The kobolds automatically attack when they think they have an advantage. They will negotiate with the party only if beaten badly or threatened with death.

Leading the kobolds is a chief and his kobold honor guard consisting of four kobolds (AC 5, HD 1+1, hp 7, Dmg 1-8) as well as 12 captains (AC 6, HD 1-1, hp 4, Dmg 1-6).

Treasure: 40 cp, 10 sp, three bloodstone gems worth 50 gp each.

302. Owlbears

Owlbears (5): AC 5; MV 12; HD 5+2; hp 29; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1-6/1-6/2-12; SA hug; AL N; ML 12 + special; XP 210

These five owlbears, two adults and three babies, had grown used to being left alone in their part of the forest. That was before the pixies started their scare campaign. Knowing about the owlbears' foul disposition, the pixies created one of their false trails leading directly to the owlbears' lair. Since this happened, innocent travelers and even other forest creatures have been unlucky enough to find themselves facing the owlbears. The owlbears have dealt with the intruders effectively, but their disposition has grown even worse with the bother.

The two adult owlbears will treat the PCs just like any other intruder and will attack on sight. Regardless of the owlbears' neutral alignment, the PCs can do nothing to pacify the beasts, and their only course of action is to try to retreat with as little damage as possible. The PCs have no reason to battle these creatures, so award the party a bonus of 50 XP if they encounter the owlbears but manage to leave without a fight.

303. Whispering Widow (Groaning Spirit)

Groaning Spirit: AC 0; MV 15; HD 7; hp 30; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; SA death wail; AL CE; ML 13; XP 2,000

This is the location of the towering limestone cliff with a shroud of black stone that is commonly known as the Whispering Widow. It is visible from outside the forest and is a landmark from those occasional places where the canopy opens wide enough to let some daylight reach the forest floor. While the rock face itself accounts for the "Widow" in the name, a horrible occupant of the hill's forested eastern slope is responsible for the "Whispering."

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The rumors and legends common in the land betray little about this groaning spirit. No one outside the forest claims to have actually seen a real Whispering Widow, other than the face on the hill. Most of the rumors correctly identify the Widow as an elf, but the rest of the rumors are more fantasy than fact. The other accurate parts of the rumors are that the Widow's "whispering," actually thought to be cries of grief, have lured many to their doom.

Even the pixies want nothing to do with this creature, and they also have not been so sadistic as to create a false trail leading to the spirit's lair.

If the PCs are unfortunate enough to venture within 100 yards (2 hexes) of the groaning spirit, they will be able to hear its wail regardless of wind direction. They can recognize the tone of anguish and can distinguish it from the voices in encounter 110. If the party has been unlucky enough to have blundered onto the groaning spirit's lair, they should be happy to escape with their lives.

If they manage to fight and kill the spirit, the PCs still get only half the XP because they shouldn't have been here in the first place. However, killing the Whispering Widow will certainly make them local heroes. It will also give them instant credibility with the wood elves, pixies, Gwellen, Barens, or most other occupants of the forest.

304. Will o'Wisp

Will o'Wisp: AC -8; MV 18; HD 9; hp 44; THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg 2-16; SA electrical damage; AL CE; ML 17; XP 1,500

A will o'wisp has taken up residence in this area of forest because of the suitably large expanse of quicksand, 30 feet by 50 feet. Hanging from the canopy of limbs above the quicksand are the bags of treasure the will o'wisp has recovered from its victims. The will o'wisp has no use for this treasure except as bait for other adventurers.

The pixies have created a false trail leading to a spot not too distant from the will o'wisp's haunt. The pixies didn't want to get any closer because the will o'wisp is so devious and blood-thirsty.

When the PCs reach this area of forest, the will o'wisp hovers just out of their reach, luring them forward. The will o'wisp continues to lead its victims toward the quicksand, fighting only as necessary.

Treasure: 200 cp, 200 sp, 300 gp, 100 pp, five jet gems worth 100 gp each, *gem of seeing*, *mirror of mental prowess*, *shield* +3.

305. Green Dragon

Dragon, green (very old): AC -5; MV 9/30; HD 18; hp 96; THAC0 2; #AT 3; Dmg 1-8/1-8/2-20; SA breath, spells; AL LE; ML 16; XP 6,500

Living in a cluster of hills cloaked in an eerie green mist, this very old green dragon goes wherever it wants, whenever it wants. It usually stays close to home, however, to protect its treasure hoard. That is totally unnecessary, as every forest creature knows about the dragon and none would be foolish enough to try to pilfer its hoard.

The dragon long ago cleared out its immediate area of any other creatures. As part of their scare campaign, the pixies created a false trail leading to the dragon's lair, but they stopped well short because they didn't want to deal with this foul-tempered and powerful beast.

In addition to its dangerous chlorine breath weapon, which causes 18d6+9 points of damage, the dragon radiates *fear* within 35 yards and can cast a number of spells. Once each day the dragon can use *charm person*, *detect good*, *entangle*, *ESP*, *gust of wind*, *hold person*, *plant growth*, *slow*, *suggestion*, *warp wood*, and *water breathing*.

As the PCs encounter the green dragon, they notice that its curiosity exceeds its hunger as it

quickly begins to converse in common. An open exchange of information seems fair to the dragon, especially since it has no secrets and sees no harm in giving information to creatures whom it expects to be its next meal.

The dragon knows about all long-term residents of this forest, and it does not hesitate to tell the PCs the general location of any lair, including the pixies'. The dragon knows nothing of Barens or his cabin, since they are recent arrivals, and is unaware of the pixies' harassment campaign. The dragon will not divulge any information about itself, its habits, or its hoard.

The dragon wants to question the PCs because it is thirsty for information about the outside world. The dragon first asks the PCs what they are doing in the forest. It cares little about their mission but is most interested in the fact that they are mercenaries, attempting a task for hire. This interests the dragon because it reasons that their employer must be wealthy to be able to hire them. The dragon asks repeated and pointed questions about the PCs' employer, his residence, and his riches. The dragon also asks leading questions like, "Your employer must be the richest man in the region, yes?" The dragon is obviously trying to learn if there is an even better target outside the forest.

The dragon will continue this conversation until he thinks he has gleaned all the information he can from the PCs and has given them a fair amount in return. Then it attacks without warning.

Treasure: 20,000 sp, 10,000 pp, silver dinner place settings for 64 people, including plates, goblets, eating utensils, and all serving accessories—more than 500 pieces in all with a total silver content exceeding 4,000 sp.

306. Choke Creeper

Plant, Carnivorous: AC 6 (vine), 5 (stalk); MV—; HD 25; hp 150; THAC0 7; #AT 8 or more; Dmg 1-4; SA strangulation; AL N; ML 14; XP 9,000

This vine is 120 feet long, twisting back on itself again and again. PCs unlucky enough to wander within its grasp are in for the fight of their lives. Its many branches each have 12 hp in addition to the damage the main vine can sustain. The vine can make four attacks on each target within its reach.

307. Ettercap

Ettercap: AC 6; MV 12; HD 5; hp 20; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-8; SA poison; AL NE; ML 13; XP 475

Expecting to claim its victims one at a time, this ettercap has set many snare-type traps in a small area, and he sits up in the branches waiting for someone or something to set one off. The creature is quite taken aback to see a whole party of PCs heading his way.

Regardless of whether a PC sets off a trap or one of them detects a trap without setting it off, the ettercap is not so foolish as to attack the PCs as long as they have numerous friends nearby, and so the creature cowers behind whatever foliage it can find.

If the PCs corner the ettercap, it will defend itself. If the PCs decide not to bother, the ettercap wheezes a sigh of relief and goes back to its watching post to wait for better odds.

308. Oblivix

Oblivix: AC 10; MV Nil; HD ¼; hp 2; THAC0 20; #AT 0; Dmg Nil; SA spells; AL NE; ML 9; XP 15

If the PCs managed to protect their memories from the scheming pixies, they now have another problem to deal with. When the party comes within 60 feet, the oblivix starts trying to pluck people's memories. It goes after the spellcasters first so it can use those spells to defend itself.

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309. Giant Sundew

Plant, carnivorous: AC 7; MV 1; HD 8; hp 30; THAC0 12; #AT 6 per target; Dmg 1-3; SA suffocating; AL N; ML 11; XP 1,000

The sticky, sweet sundew lashes out with its tendrils at anyone within its reach. Though this plant should not pose a serious threat for the PCs, it is sure to be a bother. And if the PCs decide that the sundew is protecting something, they will find it a major bother to kill, all for nothing.

310. Stirges

Stirges (24): AC 8; MV 3/18; HD 1+1; hp 5; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-3; SA blood drain; AL N; ML 8; XP 85

This cluster of stirges has cleared almost all the small mammals out of this area of forest. The thirsty stirges will not hesitate to attack the party. As the stirges can smell the PCs some distance off, the encounter does not occur exactly at the stirges' lair. If the PCs defeat the stirges and go looking for treasure, they must spend considerable extra time to have any chance of finding the lair (10% chance per hour).

Treasure: 2,000 gp, *potion of flying*, *wand of paralyzation* with 54 charges, book with nothing written on the cover (*tome of clear thought*).

311. Worgs

Worgs (8): AC 6; MV 18; HD 3+3; hp 16; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8; SA Nil; AL NE; ML 11; XP 60

These worgs are relative newcomers to this part of Whispering Widow Woods. They had lived nearer the kobolds (301) but grew weary of that sniveling band's attempts to befriend and train the worgs, presumably to use as mounts. These particular worgs are too independent and proud to serve as mounts for anybody, much less for kobolds. Tired of the

hassle, the worgs moved.

The worgs are intelligent enough not to attack the PCs blindly. The worgs know they probably could not win that battle, and so the worgs shadow the party warily, attacking only if they see a sign of weakness.

The worgs' speed and knowledge of the area make it almost impossible for the PCs to corner them or force them into a fight.

312. Firbolgs

Firbolgs (3): AC 2; MV 15; HD 13+7; hp 71; THAC0 9; #AT 1; Dmg 1-10+7; SA spells; AL N; ML 16; XP 4,000

Other forest creatures leave these three firbolgs alone, and for good reason. The giant-kin don't like strangers, and they are one of the most formidable foes to be found.

If the PCs go far enough afield to reach this part of the forest, they may be in for some serious trouble. The firbolgs don't attack immediately, but they do try to get the PCs to leave. Any PCs who are this far off track may also decide to stay and talk to the firbolgs a bit longer. They'll see the firbolgs' attitude change from friendly to firm to fatal.

Treasure: 2,000 gp, sapphire worth 1,000 gp.

313. Hangman Tree

Plant, carnivorous: AC 3/5 (appendages); MV 0; HD 6+1 hp/year; hp 142; THAC0 7; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3; SA swallow; AL N; ML 15; XP 700

If the PCs wander into this area, the best they can hope for is to escape with little loss. The hangman tree would like nothing better than a few PCs as a change in diet from its usual kobold fare. If the PCs do venture too close, the tree attacks three of them simultaneously.

314. Werewolf

Werewolf: AC 3; MV 15; HD 5+1; hp 22; THAC0 15; #AT 2; Dmg 2-12/1-8 (double-bladed axe); SA singing brings on lethargy; AL CE; ML 14; XP 1,000

After all this way, finally the PCs have found Barends, or so they think. Unfortunately for the hapless party that has gotten this far, this isn't Barends, or even a pixie *polymorphed* to look like Barends. This werewolf is much more sinister. Seeing the party of humans and demihumans approaching, the werewolf assumes the form of an attractive example of their kind, namely that handsome young woodsman the werewolf has seen wandering about.

The werewolf in this guise cannot fool the party for long, but he doesn't need to. Upon seeing the PCs and heading toward them, 'Barends' breaks into song. This song is far from harmless, however, as it causes lethargy (5-8 rounds) among the PCs who fail their saving throws vs. spells.

Just as the werewolf reaches the PCs it changes into a half-human, half-wolf form and attacks with its mighty jaws as well as with the axe it is carrying. The PCs have little choice but to fight back.

Treasure: 5,000 cp, five amber gems worth 100 gp each, *oil of disenchantment*, *potion of levitation*, *potion of speed*, scroll of *protection from electricity*.

315. Yellow Musk Creeper

Yellow Musk Creeper: AC 7; MV 0; HD 3; hp 14; THAC0 17; #AT 8; Dmg special; SA gas; AL N; ML 20; XP 325

The beautiful flowers on this plant may seem out of place in the darkest reaches of the forest, but not as out of place as any creature that ventures too close to them. Even in such a hostile environment as much of Whispering Widow Woods is, there are few things as mindlessly destructive as the yellow musk creeper.

Any PCs who become yellow musk zombies are out of commission for the rest of the adventure, even if their comrades rescue them from the creeper's fatal attack.

Treasure: 5,000 cp, four moonstones worth 50 gp each, four amethysts worth 100 gp each.

316. Wizard

Wizard (M11): AC 10; MV 12; hp 30; Str 9; Dex 14; Con 10; Int 15; Wis 13; Cha 12; THAC0 20; #AT by spell; Dmg by spell; SA spells; AL CG; ML 12

Spells: *shield*, *ride the wind*, *past life*, *hold person*, and *locate creature*

Fiona is a squat wizard with very large hands, the only other body parts showing besides her face. Her hair is the color of a crow's feathers and hangs in straggly ringlets to her shoulders. Her face is pleasant if expressionless, but when she frowns or becomes angry, her face becomes frightening and distorted.

She wears a flowing robe which changes color as the sky changes color. Her feet are wrapped in leather strips, but are seldom visible beneath the long robe.

When the PCs encounter Fiona, she is outside of what appears to be a small hut hidden by lots of bushes and vegetation. Beside her crude wooden door is a slice of tree trunk that appears to be used as a stool. Scattered about the dirt are several large bones.

Fiona is on her knees searching the ground for something. Even if the PCs attempt to sneak up on her, she will not be surprised. She claims her hearing is far too good for anything to sneak up on her. If the PCs approach her in a friendly manner, she will chat amiably with them, all the while searching through the bushes and on the ground. She knows nothing of Barends or Gwellen or even that the pixies are causing trouble for humans. However, she seems to be interested and concerned that humans may be chased away from the area. Fiona occasionally uses

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humans in her experiments and a shortage of them would hinder her research.

If the PCs ask what she is searching for, Fiona tells them her spell book has fallen apart and the pages have scattered in the wind. So far she has only managed to find the pages containing just four spells. She has lost 14 other spells and is a bit distracted by her problem. One spell in particular has her worried. She will explain if the PCs ask. Something went terribly wrong with the spell as she was casting it and now she must figure out how to reverse it.

If the PCs approach her in a hostile manner or try to attack, she casts a simple *hold person* so she can convince them to help her. Of course, the PCs really have no choice. If they refuse to help her, she will not let them leave alive. The PCs should receive no XP if they attack Fiona, for doing so would be extremely foolish.

If the PCs have been friendly so far, Fiona will invite them into her hut, opening the door for them. The door and all windows are wizard locked, so the PCs may have a hard time leaving. Once inside, Fiona becomes a bit hostile. She demands that the PCs help her before they may leave. Inside the dark, smoky hut, Fiona leads the PCs to a stack of small cages covered by a faded purple cloth. There inside the three cages are two small men and a small woman, no more than 2 feet tall. They are all wrapped in small cloths since their clothing no longer fits them. In their tiny voices, they plead for help from the PCs. Behind the cages are three piles of human bones, each pile resting in a shallow basket.

Fiona explains that she was practicing a new spell when things went terribly wrong. She ended up with a pile of bones and three very shapeless, small humans when she was finished. As a stopgap measure, she "borrowed" three pixie skeletons from the pixies' graveyard and "installed" them in the humans until she could straighten out the problem. Fiona would like to return the borrowed pixie skeletons

"before the little gnats find them gone. Then I'll never get rid of the little pests." She wants to restore the humans to their normal size, but has lost the papers her spell was written on. She will let the PCs leave only if they can figure out how to help.

The PCs can help in two ways which are very simple if they take the time to figure it out. They can go search for the missing pages in the bushes and try to help Fiona figure out where she went wrong. A PC with high Intelligence (at least 15) should be able to help.

Observant PCs may notice a deep shelf in the hut. The shelf is straining under the weight of many large jars. Fiona explains the potions that each jar contains (*potion of flying*, *potion of dragon control*, *potion of growth*, *potion of animal control*), but the one that would be the most useful is the large jar containing many *potions of growth*. The second option for the PCs might be to painstakingly fit the bones together for each small human and apply a *potion of growth* to the humans. Then Fiona could switch the bones and return the pixie skeletons before the pixies discovered they were missing.

Either option should prove successful for the PCs. True to her word, Fiona lets the PCs leave untouched. The humans, back to their usual form, will not be strong enough yet to accompany the PCs, even though they are desperate to leave.

The PCs could earn a few potions from Fiona if they also agree to return the pixie skeletons to the graveyard. They just have to make sure they don't get caught with the bones by the pixies, or they will be brought before the pixie council and severely punished.

Chapter Four: Pixie Trouble

It is here that the PCs will be challenged the most, and it is here where they will earn the XP awards that will make their adventure a success or failure.

401. Barens's Cabin

Barens (F0): AC 8; MV 12; HD 1; hp 4; Str 15; Dex 13; Con 12; Int 8; Wis 7; Cha 17; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8 (double-bladed axe); SA Nil; AL NG; ML 10; XP 15

From the outside, this cabin appears to be well made. The logs have been carefully matched and the gaps between them are packed with mud. Flowering forest plants grow all around the cabin except where a cobblestone path leads to the door. The front of the cabin has a slightly open door and two windows on each side of the door.

If Barens has led the PCs here, he has them follow him inside the cabin. He will leave the door open and takes a seat facing the open door.

If the PCs have not already encountered Barens, they will find him here at the cabin. See encounters 215 and 216 for a description of Barens. The Barens they encounter here will be genuine, not a pixie trick. As soon as the PCs are within 20 feet of the cabin, Barens appears at the door.

Barens will greet them warily and does not let the PCs enter the cabin until they have gained his confidence and convinced him that they are looking for the best solution for all involved. If the PCs try to forcibly capture Barens, he will fight to the best of his ability against such odds. But it is not in the party's best interest to produce a dead Barens, so they should avoid harming him.

If Gwellen is with the party and she indicates that the PCs are trustworthy, Barens will openly discuss his plight with them. But the PCs must keep close watch on Gwellen and Barens. If the party is threatening in any way or attempts to separate the two, Gwellen will become invisible

and try to *cause confusion* in the party. Any member of the party who fails a saving throw vs. magic will be permanently *confused* (a *remove curse* will remove the *confusion*). If some of the party avoids the *cause confusion* spell, Gwellen will summon a giant hornet to the area (use encounter 213). If the PCs attack the hornet, they will be kept busy for several rounds. Barens and Gwellen will then flee into the forest and cannot be found. Neither will return to the cabin.

If the PCs have gained Barens's trust, Barens will explain his side of the story. He will motion to everyone to follow him inside the cabin.

The inside of the cabin is as carefully detailed as the outside. Barens has built a beautiful table with two long benches which he offers to the PCs to sit on. In addition to the chair that Barens sits on is a carved wooden bed on the other side of the cabin. It has a straw-filled mattress covered by a big brown blanket. Barens built a small fireplace along the back wall. From a crude metal hook hangs a small cooking pot. There is a small fire in the fireplace that produces little smoke. The windows are uncovered, but have shutters that Barens can close from the inside.

He started coming to Whispering Widow Woods when he got frustrated with his father. He would simply take long walks in the woods to think and relax. On one of these walks he met Gwellen, and they had a wonderful time talking about their dictatorial fathers and generally sharing each other's company. Neither realized just how well they had hit it off until later.

Both unconsciously started returning to their original meeting place. It was inevitable that they would find each other again. When they met for the second time, both knew it was no accident. They found even more joy in each other this time than the first. To show how he cared for Gwellen, Barens gave her a small gold heart on a fine chain for her to wear around her neck.

After that, they began to schedule meetings, each of them eagerly anticipating the next ren-

dezvous to take them away from the frustrations of home life. As the meetings became more frequent, both fathers began to take notice.

Barens's father, Jareb, found more tasks to keep the lad busy, too busy for what Jareb took for juvenile daydreaming. Though he respected his father, Barens was not about to stop seeing Gwellen, and he continued to find ways to go to the forest, becoming ever more defiant of his father. Gwellen's father, Ebron, had an extensive spy network and was much better informed about what was going on. He wasn't about to let his daughter become enthralled with a "stupid human." He flatly forbade his daughter from meeting with Barens.

Barens was heartbroken when Gwellen first missed a scheduled rendezvous. He was angry with her at first, but then he realized what must have happened. Despite the considerable dangers of Whispering Widow Woods, Barens wandered the forest for days, calling out Gwellen's name.

If Gwellen is with the party, she can explain what happened to her father. A few of Ebron's subjects had openly sympathized with the romance of Gwellen's feelings. Many others felt the same way but were afraid to speak out for fear of angering Ebron. Included in this group were Gwellen's mother, Lizbet, and Gwellen's brother, Ebroch. Word of Barens's persistence and willingness to brave the dangers of the forest became known among Lizbet, Ebroch, and other sympathizers. They conspired to help Gwellen meet with Barens.

This situation continued for some weeks, with Ebron thinking he had put a stop to the problem. But Gwellen and Barens did manage a few clandestine moments together now and then. It was during this time that Barens, spending several days at a time away from home in the hopes of meeting Gwellen, built this cabin in the woods. Using his wood-cutting and building skills helped diffuse the frustration he was feeling at not being able to meet with Gwellen.

Meanwhile, Ebron discovered that Gwellen had been sneaking out and meeting with Barens. He posted guards to watch her every minute of every day to prevent another meeting from taking place. He also began a harassment campaign against Barens. It was also during this time that Barens met up with the sylvan elves.

The elves took pity on Barens but dared not oppose the pixies directly. As a gift, the elf leader Tretorn had his powerful sword *Virtue* bestow upon Barens the ability to resist all pixie magic and mischief. He was also given a charm in the shape of *Virtue* to help strengthen this resistance. The only condition was that Barens keep the charm a secret and never involve the elves directly in the dispute. Barens readily agreed. Since then, Barens has deceived the pixies by pretending to fall victim to their magic even though he is immune.

Finally, in the last few days, Lizbet and her allies have managed to slip Gwellen past Ebron's guards a few times in an effort to talk to Barens. Ebron and his loyalists have been so busy casting illusions and tracking intruders that they let Gwellen slip away.

It doesn't matter if the PCs find their way to Barens's cabin or if he leads them there. Once the PCs have gained his confidence the results will be the same. Barens will probably refuse to leave the forest without Gwellen. Barens is happy to have the assistance of the PCs as long as they are working for what he wants and that is for he and Gwellen to be together. Barens will talk freely with the PCs, keeping secret only the charm he received from the elves.

402. Pixies

Pixies (49): AC 5; MV 6/12; HD ¼; hp 2; THAC0 20 (16 with bows); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; SA spells; AL N; ML 11; XP 135

This has always been a thriving colony of pixies. The rumors and true horrors of Whispering Widow Woods kept the curious away,

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but the pixies were close enough to human civilization to be able to practice their mischief. This colony numbers 40 pixies, headed by a king, Ebron, and a high council of eight other pixies. The high council is mostly advisory, but since Ebron rules by consent, he would undermine his own authority if he chose a course opposed by the council.

Most of the pixies support Ebron's campaign to keep Gwellen and Barens apart, either because they agree that this is a mismatch or because they simply defer to Ebron's authority. There is a growing group of pixies who oppose this campaign, either actively or secretly. The two most important figures in this group are Lizbet, Ebron's wife, and Ebroch, Ebron's son and Gwellen's brother. Lizbet and Ebroch have not dared to oppose Ebron openly, but they have taken risks to help Gwellen escape her house arrest and try to meet Barens.

Ebron's efforts to harass the "large folk" have taken more and more pixies away from the colony. This in turn has made it easier for Gwellen to slip away and try to find Barens.

If and when the PCs arrive at the pixie colony, they will be taken before Ebron and the high council. To have reached here, the PCs have earned some respect in the eyes of the pixies. If the PCs don't know the story of Gwellen and Barens or keep what they know to themselves, the pixies will merely point out that the party is in the wrong place, has no business here, and should leave. As long as the PCs don't become belligerent, the pixies will not attack them, but the pixies will be unyielding and completely unwilling to negotiate.

If the PCs know anything about the relationship between Gwellen and Barens, the pixie leaders will be more inclined to talk, though the PCs will still find them to be tough negotiators. For this final parley between the pixies and the PCs, go to the *Resolution* section at the end of this chapter.

If the PCs know anything about Fiona

(encounter 316) and can tell the pixies about the pixie skeletons, the pixie leaders will also be much more inclined to talk.

403. Gwellen

Pixie: AC 5; MV 6/12; HD ½; hp 2; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-4; SA spells; AL N; ML 11; XP -2,000

See encounter 207 for a description of Gwellen.

If the PCs were to kill Gwellen, they probably deserve worse than the -2,000 XP penalty indicated. This is probably the worst possible outcome of the adventure.

As the PCs are wandering through the woods looking for Barens, they just might meet Gwellen, who is also wandering about looking for Barens. Meeting Gwellen could be a big break for the PCs, so place a few more 403 hexes on the map as other possible meeting sites, or even one directly in the PCs' path, if the party remains clueless about the point of this adventure.

The nature of the PCs' encounter with Gwellen depends largely on how much the PCs have learned to this point. If the PCs don't know about the relationship between Gwellen and Barens, they will probably be quite suspicious at meeting a "friendly" pixie. If the PCs have unraveled some or all of the story, they will recognize how important Gwellen is and will treat her accordingly.

Gwellen knows the location of Barens's cabin, but she dares not go there alone because she thinks her father has posted guards nearby who would intercept her.

Gwellen is desperate and will seek help from anybody. She will approach the PCs openly and try to enlist their support. She will tell them the whole story. The only part she doesn't know is about the pixie-immunity charm Barens received from the elves.

What Gwellen wants most is to be able to be

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with Barens whenever she desires. Her grandest wish, which she has barely allowed herself to dream, is to become human-size and marry Barens. She knows that even if he were shrunk down to her size, he would never be accepted into the pixie colony. She also knows that her father will probably never agree to any of these things.

If the PCs talk with Gwellen and they then go their separate ways, continue with the adventure as appropriate. If the PCs agree to help Gwellen and she begins to travel with them, decide if the time is right to refer to the *Resolution* section.

Resolution

There are many ways the PCs can resolve this adventure. Many of them are at least partially unsatisfactory.

Abduct Barens

The easiest way to resolve the adventure is for the PCs to seize Barens, tie him up, and return him to his father. This is, after all, what the PCs are paid to do. They could adopt this plan whether they know anything of the romance or not. If the PCs know too much about the situation, however, some of the characters' personalities or alignments would make them balk at this solution to the problem.

Award XP based on what is likely to happen next. If Barens simply runs back to the woods, the PCs get nothing and Jareb demands that they finish the job or he will besmirch their names throughout the land. If Barens needs to be locked up or if the PCs figure out some magical way to keep him out of the forest, they deserve some XP but also may be penalized for acting out of character or violating a character's alignment. This solution does stop the pixies' mischief, however, and deserves some award.

Leave Barens Behind

This may not seem like a possible resolution at all. But it can be. Once the PCs meet Barens and try to help him, they may see the situation as hopeless. Barens, armed with the pixie-immunity charm from the elves, would rather have the situation continue as is than some of the other possible resolutions. From his perspective, things are better now than they were before he got the charm, and he may not be overly trustful of the PCs besides. If Barens can convince the PCs that he really wants to stay and if the PCs see no other solution, they may leave him behind.

This is unacceptable, of course. Jareb will refuse payment and will do his best to dirty the PCs' reputations. Not only that but the pixies' harassment campaign continues. This solution leaves a lot of dissatisfied customers and deserves no award.

Abduct Gwellen

This solution is the same as persuading Gwellen to leave the forest so she can be with Barens. It probably wouldn't take much persuasion to point out that Ebron will never change his mind and Gwellen and Barens will never be able to live together in peace unless they get away from him.

If Gwellen leaves Whispering Widow Woods but doesn't leave the area, Ebron will start a war against the "large folk." He may be able to enlist a number of other forest dwellers on his side, considering the circumstances. This war would be so destructive that it should cancel the PCs' XP award.

If Gwellen and Barens run off together, leaving the area, at least those two will be happy. Ebron will forever hate and distrust the "large folk," and Jareb will have lost his son permanently. The PCs deserve some award, but they will be discredited in this region and must move on to find more work.

Face Ebron Alone

After arriving at the pixies' court, the PCs can attempt to talk sense into Ebron. Ebron's position is firm, however, so the PCs will certainly find a tough time of it. Though the PCs have earned some grudging respect from the pixies for making it this far, Ebron may demand the party fulfill a quest to show their worthiness to even speak to him and the pixie council. Two possible quests would be to kill the groaning spirit (Whispering Widow, encounter 303) or the green dragon (encounter 305). Ebron would give the PCs explicit directions on how to find their prey and perhaps even strategy tips, as the pixies would be happy to rid the forest of either menace. On the other hand, Ebron might come up with a less strenuous quest. News of the PCs' achievements will have arrived at the pixie court before they do, and if the DM decides the PCs have been bold, fought well and virtuously, and improved the environment for the pixies, Ebron can give the PCs a task that would be beneficial to the pixies without being such an arduous quest. These could be easy kills, such as a giant spider (202), giant ticks (203), stirges (310), worgs (311), or yellow musk creeper (315). A bigger challenge would be a choke creeper (306), ettercap (307), obliviax (308), giant sundew (309), hangman tree (313), or wolfwere (314).

If the PCs earn the right to make their plea in the case, Ebron will still be difficult to convince. Any solution that Ebron sees as losing his daughter is unacceptable. This includes acts that he would consider turning her back on her pixie heritage.

Because of the PCs' difficulty in negotiating with Ebron without having Gwellen by their side, the DM can give them a better chance by having Ebron send them on a second mission, that of finding Gwellen (as she has once again slipped away). Because Ebron is more interested in finding his daughter than in testing the PCs

this time around, he pledges the pixies' help in finding her. This could prove invaluable to the PCs because, as soon as they leave the pixie council, Lizbet, Ebroch, or another of Gwellen's allies can approach the PCs and guide them directly to Gwellen. This connection allows Gwellen and her allies to plan strategy with the PCs before returning to Ebron's court.

Anything the PCs can arrange that leaves Gwellen and Barens together deserves some XP award, with the magnitude of the award determined by the other effects of that particular solution. If the PCs find a way to make everybody (Gwellen, Barens, Ebron, and Jareb) happy, they deserve a major reward. This should come in the form of a big XP bonus as well as gifts from the pixies and from Jareb.

Face Ebron With Barens

If Barens accompanies the PCs to the pixies' court, it will destroy any credibility the PCs might have as neutral arbiters. The sight of Barens angers Ebron and makes him even more difficult to deal with.

Ebron might try some magic against Barens. When this doesn't work because of the charm Barens received from the elves, Ebron would likely fly into a rage.

The only way the PCs might salvage this situation is to pretend that Barens is their prisoner and that they are trying to help the pixies in order to end the scare campaign. This would take some pretty fast talking on the part of the PCs, as the pixies are not stupid.

Based on the actions of the PCs, the DM should decide what action Ebron will take to give the PCs a chance to salvage their position. Depending on their attitude, manner, and statements, Ebron will assign a quest as described when the PCs face Ebron alone. The difference is that Ebron may first imprison Barens or may instead assign the quest to Barens rather than the PCs. In either case, it would be up to the PCs

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to gain Ebron's confidence, and his choice of quest should be one of the more difficult ones based on his negative reaction to Barens's presence with the PCs. The DM should decide what quest would be most appropriate based on the players' actions and the circumstances.

Face Ebron With Gwellen

If the PCs approach the pixie king and council in the company of Gwellen, it gives them instant credibility, regardless of whether Barens is also with them or not. The fact that Gwellen would trust these "large folk" and would appear with them in defiance of her parents is a sobering one for Ebron. Though angry, he does not want to drive his daughter away forever. And besides, he thought she was safely tucked away under house arrest. Clearly he didn't have the control of the situation that he thought he had.

The sight of Gwellen with the PCs has another important effect. It emboldens Lizbet, Ebroch, and Gwellen's other sympathizers among the pixies. They are still not ready to lead a palace revolution, but they are much more ready to disagree with Ebron openly, to side with Gwellen in the discussion, and to gently inform Ebron that he can be pretty unreasonable at times.

Now here's some real hope for the PCs. They can actually talk and negotiate on an even footing with Ebron. All this hasn't changed his views, however, and he still will not accept any solution that means losing his daughter. The PCs still have to really use their heads to come up with a solution acceptable to everybody, but at least they've got adversaries who are willing to listen.

Unique Solutions

With such an open-ended adventure and no "right" answer at the end, a particularly creative party might come up with something totally unexpected.

Perhaps the PCs trick Gwellen into drinking a love potion and have a fine-looking pixie lad nearby for her to cast her gaze upon when she wakes up. Or do the opposite with Barens and a human lass. Or both!

Maybe the PCs have found a way for Gwellen and Barens to be together even though they are still different sizes. One PC may get the bright idea to pour a *potion of diminution* on Barens while he's asleep.

Such creativity should be recognized and rewarded, but don't forget to consider the other effects of the solution. And be sure the players are acting in character. Use the following rough guidelines to determine the adventure's XP award in addition to awards that have accumulated from one encounter to the next.

Special Awards

Any solution that leaves Gwellen and Barens together deserves some award.

Any solution that returns Barens to Jareb deserves some award, as that was the PCs' mission.

Any solution that allows the pixies' harassment campaign to continue should receive only half XP awards.

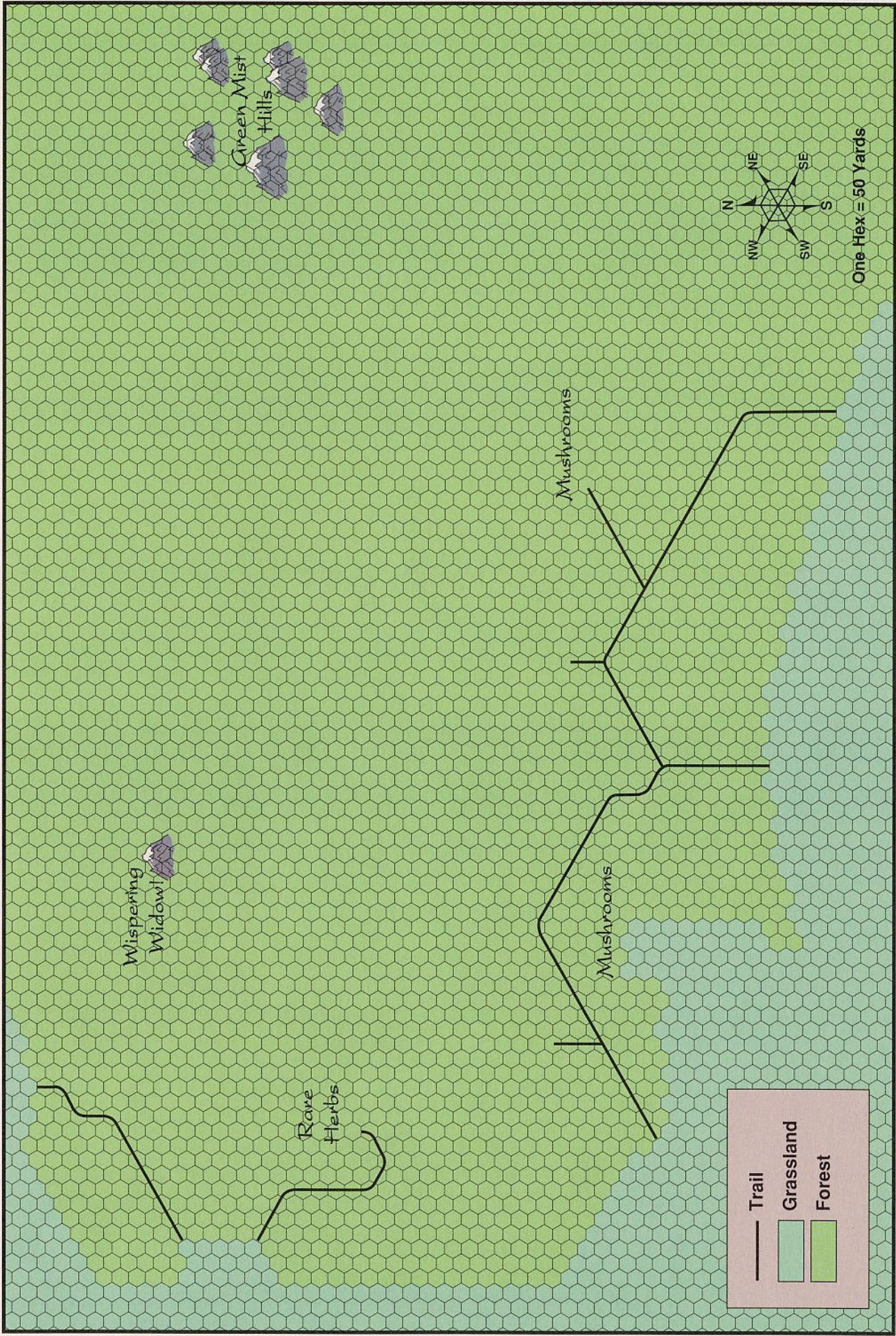
Any solution that doesn't return Barens to Jareb should receive only half XP awards.

Any solution that starts a war between the pixies and the "large folk" deserves no award or a negative award based on the other circumstances.

Any solution that pleases everyone deserves at least 10,000 XP, and even more if the players are particularly creative or role-played particularly well.

Any solution that allows Gwellen and Barens to marry and live together happily as man and wife deserves a bonus award of at least 10,000 XP. Remember, however, that Barens can never be accepted into pixie society.

Whispering Widow Woods (Players' map)



Advanced Dungeons & Dragons[®]

2nd Edition Official Game Adventure

Tales of Enchantment

by Jim Musser



Whispering Widow Woods has always been a frightening place. For generations the rumors, the strange noises, and the gloomy, tangled undergrowth have scared off the faint of heart. Recently, however, Whispering Widow Woods has grown much more sinister. Familiar voices speaking from thin air lure people to their doom; travelers emerge with no memory; the very trees are said to come to life and attack the unwary! Is this any place to go, searching for a lost boy?

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