



THE FOREST HYMN & PICNIC

*PREVIEW & PLAYTEST PACKET 02
IT CAME FROM THE SPOOKWOOD!*

INTRODUCTIONS !

Dear Reader,

What you have this time around is a playtest packet for making Monsters that appear from time to time in *The Forest Hymn & Picnic*. It is a work in progress document and there is likely a headache inducing amount of grammatical blunders and punctuation hiccups. Keep in mind that these packets are considered for funsies, beta material until the Kickstarter has ended and the material starts to make its way across the desk of the editor. As always, let me know what you think!

This packet might cause some confusion about what is happening during a typical play, but as you read it keep in mind that the appearance of Spookwood and Monsters is rare in *The Forest Hymn*. While they can be used to create spooky situations and a haunted atmosphere, they are not the core center of tension, story, or drama in the game but are one of many. This is just an excerpt from the total manuscript I wanted to show off.

Love,
Cecil

P.S. To make your monster you will need at least one each of a d6, a d12, and a d20 and possibly some scraps of paper.

THE SPOOKWOOD !

On a dry, well-lit day The Forest Hymn is a quiet and safe place. If you look past the banditry and the incessant Wisps, try not to trip on any bothersome roots, and stay on the road then it's a downright pleasant place. But the Spookwood is not that, the Spookwood is decidedly unpleasant. The trees have no leaves despite the season; their branches are curled and unfurled and curled again, they creak without provocation and moan in pain through each breeze of the wind. If you could see through the mangled wooden, woven canopy you'd see a rust-tinted night sky with clouds the color of ash.

The forest floor is dead, few grasses grow that are not grey and parched. Long dead tree roots reach up to grab clumsy feet and drag them into the shadows between trees. What little light that comes through is washed in deep reds in the day and it is pitch black at night. If you asked one forest dweller what it sounds like they'd report a place full of screaming crows and coughing, sickly wild animals. Another might tell you the silence is maddening. It's a nasty, terrible place to picnic—travelers should heed the warnings of their mothers and stay far from it.

But for some, the Spookwood finds them no matter how they avoid it. It almost has legs of its own, it moves, it appears in many places at once. Its size changes as well, ranging from many hundreds of miserable miles big down to a scant few instead. It hides in the hollows between hills and lurches out to grab folks, dragging them in. What's more, the way one enters Spookwood is almost never the exit. Very few forest dwellers can spot a patch of Spookwood before they've wandered into it and from the outside looking in it looks almost normal. Just slightly darker. And scarier.

Worse than the dangerous scenery, however, is lurking around the Spookwood or even sneaking out and into The Forest Hymn. Sure enough, there are the typical wild animals you'd find in the forest but their coats are duller and the spark to their eyes is gone. There are only crows and ravens and vultures. Even more eerie than the sullen animals are the Skeletons and the Monsters.

INTERLUDE !

Author's note: for the purpose of this preview package I have removed skeletons to get straight to monster makin'. Suffice it to say, skeletons are not evil or malicious, they're just another type of forest dweller that just happen to live in the Spookwood. They're fond of dancing, music, and being walking bones. They get their own dedicated section that usually goes right here.

Love, Cecil.

MONSTERS !

Whatever you call them—boogiemens, night frights, beast, or bigguns—Monsters are those supernatural baddies that come from the Spookwood and in the depth of their cold hearts they're up to nothing good. They are not Wisps, definitely not Skeletons, and they are not Ghosts. Monsters are their own, frightening selves and they are a source of consternation in The Forest Hymn.

If much had ever been known about Monsters, it's forgotten now. All that can be remembered is that dwellers travelling or camping near or in the Spookwood mysteriously draw the Monsters out. A young Bear passing by who would haphazardly share a story of finding honey in the dark to her companions, might later come across a Monster made of pitch black bees that vaguely resembles a person. A coterie of ne'er-do-wells traipsing about might share a memory of some well-played heist only to find the Monstrous version of their mark stalking the next corner turned. When Monsters appear, they are a twisted and distorted reimagining of whatever a dweller has thought or said. Rumors tell that the Skeletons know more than they let on to know, but they are rumors yet.

No two Monsters are the same, each a unique presence with their own foul aims and methods. One Monster might appearing to be an empty, open cloak with large, spinning peppermints for eyes and another might emerge as something that looks vaguely like a person made from wooden boxes and held together with snakes. A Monster's aims goals and ideals are as unique as their appearance: some seem to be inclined to cause as much destruction as possible while others might foment some plot to wipe whole towns from the map. Some have vendettas with a particular forest dweller, and others are seeking strange magics.

Thankfully Monsters are rare enough that a forest dweller might forget they even exist, and those that stay within the comforting four walls of their homes could pass their entire lives out of the sigh of these nasties.

CAMPFIRE TALES !

Monsters make great villains for adventures and fortuitous encounters in *The Forest Hymn*, but they should be used sparingly and with great affect. There are three methods for materializing Monsters, the first of which is by creative design. As the narrator, you custom create a Monster for the adventurers to deal with that has roots in the adventure at hand. You give the Monster a tailor-made appearance and goal, and prop the adventurers up to eventually tussle with it. This method is the simplest for narrators quick of wit or with a peculiar plot in mind for the adventurers. Narrators that use this method should look at the Monster Creation table as a guide to what is needed at the bare minimum for an interesting fright.

The second method is by rolling on the prefabricated Monster Creation table at the end of this section. Using a method similar to character creation you can quickly roll up a monster that will fit into most situations, have a unique appearance and an interesting behavior. This method is best suited as a foil to adventurers who are out exploring *The Forest Hymn*, seeing the sights and looking to cause mischief.

Third on this list of fine Monster design is the campfire method —where you, the narrator, take cues and hints from the adventurers as they move in or near Spookwood to fill out your own, custom Monster Creation tables on a spare sheet of paper. The campfire method is an impeccable way to ensure that the actions of the adventurers have an impact on the types of Monsters they might cross the paths of. For example, if the adventurers meet a traveler who speaks at length of their many children then you might fill in a few appearance and behavior entries with things that are childlike. If they cross paths with interesting characters you might add details to the tables that emphasize what made that encounter interesting like their animal type if they're Animal Folk or even a mannerism. Filling in creation table blanks over the course of an entire, or even several adventures can create quite the surprise when adventurers put the pieces together of how they've created a Monster.

CAMPFIRE TALES !

The campfire method can also be used explicitly. It's not uncommon for adventurers on the road to make camp for the night and share stories over sandwiches and tea. By encouraging the players to improvise spooky and thrilling tales their adventurers might remember you can quickly fill a spare Monster Creation table up to pocket for later use. You might even have the characters meet a non playing character who asks them what kind of Monsters they think are roaming about, giving quick results for the tables while giving players even more opportunity to build Monsters.

A good Monster Creation table will have the provided sizes, six custom behaviors or a mix of custom ones and provided ones, and at least six entries in each category of head, head situation, appearance, and tools.

MONSTER CREATION !

SIZE

Every Monster has a size, behavior, and appearance. The *SIZE* of a Monster determines its *Health* score, which operates the same way as an adventurer's might. When a Monster has as many *Wounds* as its *Health* score, it is destroyed. If a Monster can only take one or two more *Wounds* it will almost always attempt to flee and hide to rest and recover. Sizes come in small, medium, large, very large, and incorporeal and the equivalent *Health* score is equal to the dice roll. For example, a small monster has a *Health* score of 1. Incorporeal monsters cannot be dealt with as easy—they must be trapped or thwarted by some magical means and do not have a *Health* score. Compared to people, small Monsters are roughly the size of an adolescent, medium are the size of an adult, large monsters are roughly a head taller than an adult, and very large monsters are stand three to four feet taller than an average adult.

APPEARANCE

Unlike the Ghost forest dwellers, Monsters are not costumed to hold themselves together. They might appear as a normal as anyone else might save for a tell that gives away their Monsterness, or they might appear as something completely unknown and otherworldly. A Monster has a head and a body.

TOOLS

Monsters are more naturally prone to flight rather than fight, but each has its own way to deal with threats. The tools it uses might be a spell or some form of attack, attempting to parley with their enemy. Monsters are prone to making deals and making attempts at swaying forest dwellers to join them in whatever their aim might be. If a Monster's tool is an attack, it will list what *Characteristic* of its enemy the Monster must roll against with any potential effects, bonuses, or consequences.

MONSTER CREATION !

BAD BEHAVIOR

The Monster's *BEHAVIOR* is the pilot of its actions and it comes in six flavors: CONSPIRACY, KIDNAPPERY, HAVOCRY, ROBBERY, GOURMANDERY, and ACQUIERY. The object of their badness is up to you to decide, be it something you improvise on the spot or tie into whatever adventure is at hand.

A Monster involved in CONSPIRACY is fomenting a nefarious plot. It might be that it wants to disappear a nearby town, change a season, trample a meticulously curated garden, or even something far wider reaching as trying to stop The Stork from bringing more People into the woods. The motives of these Monsters are complex; it is assumed that a conspiring Monster is an amalgamation of all possible Monster behaviors. Wisps, Skeletons, adventurers, and other non-playing characters might become caught up in their dastardly plots, and as well these Monsters are the most likely to be dabbling in long forgotten magic tricks.

A Monster up to KIDNAPPERY is trying to steal away with a forest dweller. This could be the mayor of a town, someone famous and notable, or even one of the adventurers! These Monsters will kidnap their mark and attempt to drag them back into the Spookwood to never be seen or heard from again.

A Monster engaged in HAVOCRY is trying to cause the destruction of property, upend a gathering, smash things, bash things, and cause general trouble. Monsters that are found to be bashing and smashing will often enlist the help of Wisps to achieve this goal.

Monsters caught up in ROBBERY set their aims to a single item to steal. They will stop at nearly nothing to illicitly obtain that thing before slinking away to whatever patch of Spookwood they came.

MONSTER CREATION !

A Monster who's aim is GOURMANDERY wants nothing more than to eat everything in sight. Each day it eats without being stopped it grows in both size and *Health*. These Monsters might even grow to be larger than the trees themselves.

A Monster who's goal is ACQUIERY is similar to a Monster who robs, except this Monster wishes to collect a large quantity of their beloved thing and hoard it away somewhere. It's not uncommon for a particular type of thing to go missing in every town for dozens of miles before the trail of these Monsters are found.

MONSTER CREATION !

Begin by rolling 1d6 to determine the Monster's size and health. If your result is six, roll again and becomes an incorporeal Monster the size of the second result.

D6	SIZE
1.	Small
2.	Medium
3.	Large
4.	Large
5.	Very Large
6.	Incorporeal

Next, roll 1d6 to determine the Monster's behavior.

D6	SIZE
1.	Conspiracy
2.	Kidnappery
3.	Havocry
4.	Robbery
5.	Gourmandery
6.	Acquierey

MONSTER CREATION !

After that, roll 1d12 to determine the Monster's head and the another 1d12 for what is interesting about that head. The Monster's head...

DI2

HEAD

- I. Is missing.
2. Is a person's head but with very very long sharp teeth.
3. Is the skull of a deer.
4. Is a snarling, growling wild wolf's head.
5. Is a person's head with milk-white skin and long red hair that curls and floats on its own.
6. Is a person's head that is solid stone and ringed in dead flowers.
7. Is the head of a goat with two very large, jet black discs for eyes.
8. Is rabid wild bear's head.
9. Is hidden by some mysterious shadow other than a long white beard or hair that touches the ground.
10. Is the head of a person who is extremely old of age.
11. Is the skull of a person with two large spinning peppermints for eyes.
12. Is a birdcage with a mysterious, dark shadow inside it.

MONSTER CREATION !

And the head...

DI2

INTERESTING HEAD SITUATION

1. Is backwards.
2. Is glowing with light.
3. Is ringed by a crown made of rotting leaves, mud, thorny sticks, and rocks.
4. Is swarming with bees.
5. Is wearing a tall crown made of bones.
6. Is crying nonstop.
7. Has a pair of very long antlers.
8. Is floating slightly above the neck.
9. Is pitch black.
10. Has rain falling just above the head.
11. Has a pair of very curly, golden goat horns.
12. Is shrouded in black smoke.

MONSTER CREATION !

Then roll 1d20 to determine the monster's body. Unless said otherwise, Monster bodies are similar in shape to a person's. The Monster's body...

D12

BODY

1. Is a floating, open and empty cloak.
2. Is a giant spider's body.
3. Is a person's body but the hands and feet are skeletal.
4. Is made of twigs and branches.
5. Is the body of a very large crow.
6. Is inside a very well tailored military dress outfit with very shiny brass buttons.
7. Is person-like and covered in grass, weeds, thorns, and roses.
8. Is half bear and half person.
9. Is hidden behind a cloak of many colorful patches.
10. Is made of several wooden nesting bodies.
11. Is inside a long white gown with a tail that drags some ten feet behind it.
12. Is a person's body that seems to blink in and out of visibility.
13. Is inside a set of clothes that has obviously spent dozens of years under water.
14. Is a shadow.
15. Is like a wolf's, standing upright and with a long, crimson, tattered cape.
16. Is inside the very ragged clothes of a cake baker.
17. Is inside the dirty clothes of a grave digger and walking atop very long stilts.
18. Is made of sticks and twigs and is inside a mud-stained ballgown.
19. Is Inside children's clothes and floats above a jet black pony.
20. Has milky white skin and is in a fine, tailored suit.

MONSTER CREATION !

Finally, roll 1d6 to determine what tool the Monster uses when threatened.

D6

TOOL

1. It will attack its enemy using its hands and feet with a +2 against their enemy's *Defense* or *Agility*, whichever is highest. The Monster will continue to attack their enemy until they miss, then they will flee. Each hit causes the enemy 1 *Wound*.
2. It confronts its enemies using a cacophony of screams before making its getaway. Anyone within earshot must make a Q&A roll with their *Resolve* modifier and their *Sortilege* grade against 10. All those who fail become *SPOOKED* and cannot attack. The Monster will do this no more than twice before fleeing.
3. It will attack its enemy with a weapon of the Narrator's choosing with no bonus or modifier, against its enemy's *Defense* or *Agility* score, whichever is higher. This monster will not flee until it only has one *Wound* to spare.
4. It has two magic tricks of the narrator's choosing and will use them an attempt to waylay or harm its enemies. If the magic tricks fail it will retreat.
5. It will attempt to convince any enemy at hand to join its cause. After each beg of alliance, each of its enemies must make a Q&A roll with their *Resolve* modifier, as well as any grade they might have in *Sortilege* and *Colonel* against 10. Failure results in being *CHARMED* to do the Monster's bidding until it flees or is defeated.
6. It will become enraged and offended by a single enemy, attacking them with fury. Each attack roll is against its enemy's *Resolve* characteristic and is made with a +2. Successful attacks will knock the Monster's enemy to the ground while also causing 1 *Wound* and the *PLAGUED* condition.