

As mentioned in the Arduin module, the White Roc Inn, we agreed to post a more detailed look into the Whisper Trees. We hope you will enjoy this more detailed snapshot into the Whisper Trees and its environs.

As always, we invite you to check the empcho.com and worldofkhaas.com web site for updates and news.

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The World of Khaas

Introduction

The Whisper Trees was introduced as the setting wrapped around the White Roc Inn module developed by Emperors Choice based on David Hargrave's original idea. While large portions of the region were addressed in the module, many areas in the region were not as fleshed out as they deserved. What follows is a deeper introduction to the region, some of its inhabitants, snapshots of major areas and more rumors and bits of legend. We hope you will enjoy this expansion of the glorious depths of Arduin.

Whisper Trees

[Arduin Map Location: B8] The forest lives up to the tales told about it, thick with dark conifers, oaks, and elms and choked with thickets of vegetation. The whole is dark, brooding and ugly, the oppressive weight of the wood broken only by weak streamers of light during the day. The wind blows softly, almost cyclic through the trees, as if the forest is breathing like some great animal. A pause comes and the beasts and insects fall quiet, and off in the distance you can hear the screams of the damned through the trees. A pattern that repeats itself over and over again; unsettling every time. The entire forest seems steeped in an era long gone. The forest is a thick antediluvian wood, rife with danger and dark cults. It has a forbidding reputation, but travel and trade are regular occurrences for the wood. As a short cut to southwest towns, it is still the best pathway for trade and business. To those experienced with the wood, they know that to travel off the Old Road, is to find danger. New traders, adventurous merchants and travelers never seem to listen, however, and it is not uncommon for Arduin patrols to find the decaying remains of the foolish in the foliage under the murmuring trees. More often than not, people, in groups or singular just disappear, never seen again. The tales of what occurred to them are the grist for a thousand campsite tales.

People of Import

Governor Ntarlus is the crown governor of the area. The recent upheaval of events has forced him to move from his governor's mansion in Arkham to the main military camp farther outside of town. A powerful and charismatic man, he is genuinely interested in bettering the area and (currently) has the confidence of the crown. Whether he keeps it or not depends on his ability to control the mishmash of the situation on Misty Mountain. Not formerly affiliated with any noble house, he still has both the unofficial support of the Naskillions and the secret dislike of the Black Hydra.

Tsepesh is covered very well by the White Roc Inn module. His politics, power and spheres of influence are addressed there. He is a powerful mover and shaker in the Whisper Trees area.

Tomas is also covered in the White Roc Inn module. The module covered his motivations in a limited scope but he has other driving impulses as well. The bones of his twin Elven daughters rot in the fermenting stew of the swampy interior of the Sodden Boughs. The cult that tore free their still beating hearts to the dark gods has paid the

highest price he could exact in blood and death. His angst, however, has not dimmed over the years and it drives him to seek out any who follow the dark path. He raids Arkham in the darkest night, pitting his angst and power against the hell he knows dwells there.

Talbot True Heart is the mayor of Arkham, his post there was a political appointment after his predecessor died (eaten alive by something unseen before the eyes of a crowd of 50). A successful witch hunter in the employ of the crown for 30 years, he is a craggy, hard bitten man, long on patience, short in pride and a slow building temper that is volcanic once unleashed. He has survived many attempts on his life and rumor says he is near immune to magik based on the deluge of dark power he has outlived.

D'ral Rightreach, is the principle representative for crown forces in the area. His focus is primarily on the political and military face of things. His authority to investigate and deal with possible infractions of law arises directly from the crown governor and the king. He is concerned about the murders on Misty Mountain and the power levels of the myriad forces in the Whisper Trees. He has at his disposal the forces of the crown, the Ghost Tigers (5th Army Regiment out of Nythaarna), the small numbers of the crown foresters, the witch hunter units and a few other handpicked souls. His main forces are stationed in roving pickets in the Whisper Trees, with home bases in Southhold, Arkham, and The Guardians Mountains.

Jean Coulle is a driven man, one who had dedicated his entire life to one single quest: finding the Dog of Wind. So driven, he formed an organization called the Legend Hounds to seek out every scrap of legends, recited tale, book or document that even mentions the ship, its contents or anyone who sailed on it. His Legend Hounds are everywhere, poking into caves, tracking down rumors and reporting back to him at their headquarters in Southhold. As a whole, the organization acts discreetly but a few have dabbled in political and economic events of the region. This has earned them a rather lukewarm reputation with the crown governor. They number around 400 or so and approximately 50 to 70 are in resident at Southhold at any given time.

Odd and Strange Happenings

The Gibbering

The Gibbering is an odd nexus manifestation that primarily seems to occur in the western portion of the Whisper Trees, though it has been said to have happened elsewhere as well. It transitions into an area with no visible warning but starts as the low pitched humming sound and slight vibration. The sound grows to tremendous proportions very quickly (usually less than a minute) and sounds akin the gibbering of a thousand demon locusts. The entire process takes less than a minute on average and ends abruptly.

Anything caught within the Gibbering is sucked into the nexus as it resonates in tune with any living creature larger than a rat. No one knows where this odd nexus takes its victims and none have ever returned. This nexus effect is old and references to it extend back as far in history as the Kthoi.

Areas of Note

Arkham

It lies in the rolling shoulders of the ground, within the dark deep of the Whisper Trees. There in that unhallowed place, they say the tall white washed buildings and ebon stones that protrude from the ground around the town lanes are silent witnesses to dire and dark deeds. Arkham has been razed many times and then built again; sometimes rising on the smoking bones of its previous foundations before they had cooled. Seven times this happened during the Nexus Wars and each time the families who dwelled there slunk out of the shadowy recesses of the forest to build again. Every century since the refounding of Arduin the crown has purged the town, nearly leveling it twice during the reign of King Starhammer. Rumors, whispers and gossip far and across Arduin tell tales of Arkham. Secrets kept, traffic in the horrible worship to foul beings, sacrifices and more; ceremonies so terrible that the soul shrinks to imagine it. But as devilish as the town's reputation the people are as equally peculiar. Most account them odd and quirky prone to strange fits and bizarre behavior not to mention the occasional hideous character. Courteous, remote and glacially cool when met, a hellish flame lurks under a skirt of darkness that is easily unleashed when angered. Few who trek to Arkham remember fondly that place. The traders who travel with their wares there and beyond do so with great caution, knowing the town lanes are dangerous but the alleys and byways are death or worse.

Clue Hill

Perhaps once the name of this sodden wreck of earth and stones held some significance to those who dwelled here, but now it is little more than a mystery. Always drenched in rain, the hill is somewhat of an anomaly since its atmosphere is usually wretchedly opposite the land around it.

Crystal Peacock River

Sourced in the Silver Shield Mountains, this river is the mainstay for those who dwell in the south west of Arduin. While not as fierce or powerful as its brothers and sisters that cut the lands of Arduin, the Crystal Peacock River is cold, refreshing, and vibrant. It forms most of the western edge of the Whisper Trees. For those who live in the western stretches of the forest, it is the source of food, trade, travel and motive power for mills, smithies and other businesses.

Dantho Mountain

The west slope of the mountain lies wreathed in fog and the mist is so thick the carpet is impenetrable to the naked eye. The fog creeps up the slope and rings around it like a nimbus. A few have even called the perpetual ring of fog on the mountain the Ghost Crown, since it rises above the trees stark against the deep green of the tree tops. Who or what Dantho was is lost as deeply to the mists of time as the peak is to fog on the mountain.

Dark Rune Ridge

This part of the Whisper Trees is dark and shadowed, and the creeping uneasiness that pervades the forest, deeper and more hissing here. The towering, crawling trees are ebon hued and arranged in unnatural angular paths. From a clearing in the forest or the sky, a design becomes apparent. The arrangement of black arbors forms a rune that gives the ridge its name.

Devil's Ribs

Lying east of the Whisper Trees and north of the Rot Bog is the Devil's Ribs. A series of mountain ridges that sprawl in all directions. Its northern ridges create a deep, incised vale, the infamous and ill-rumored Valley of the Dead. Here, some say, lies the ruins of Teliboé the Forgotten, only visible at certain times and places in the valley, which otherwise is thick with the unsent and unforgiving dead.

Earth Mother Mountain

A mountain on the eastern edge of the Whisper Trees, one accounted so old that the earth and rock that makes it crumbles at the touch. Its innards are filled with twisting, twining caverns they say are older than Arduin's first founding. Some say these caverns have roots so deep into the earth that they lead to the Bosom of the Earth Mother or the Great Wurm Road.

The Foot

A great mountain that towers like a dark titan; a stone pile with immense dominating power that shadows the area. For those few travelers with the deep pockets to pay for hippogriff or griffin flights across Arduin they say the mountain is like the great stony foot of some titanic beast, left petrified in mid step. The songs, "The Glorious Beast Hath Misstep" and "Who has Walked in Arduin of Path Ages?" both feature the mountain in its lyrics.

The Guardian

One of two of the smaller mountains almost hills in the Jumbled Mountains area east of the Whisper Trees. They are most often seen from the King's Road, towering over the oppressiveness of the Whisper Trees like the guardians of legend they are named after. Some past legend attributes legendary attributes to both, some form of guardianship against the "Light from Beyond". Few lend credence to such legends.

Last High Hill

A place of little note or reputation, known only as the last high point south of the forest as the land falls into the shadow of the Myrmidon Mountains.

Look Down Mountain

Perched on the edge of the Sunless Lake the mountain is quiet and still, its slopes sharp, crumbling and hard ridged. A single crumbling road spirals up the mountain, ending at a great bluff that looks over the emerald deeps of the lake. A massive split sunders the crown, so deep they say it descends to the bowels of the world.

Misty Mountain

Much could be said of the mountain and the mists that curl and walk on the slopes with a life of their own. But the highlight of the times lies in the clans and the assassinations that have thrown it into recent light. Eight years ago the Dwarf, Gnome and Kobbitt clans of Misty Mountain put aside differences and met under a banner of peace. They aired their different grievances and came to an accord: one where they would end the warring that had nearly destroyed them all and drive the enemies that plagued them all from the mountain. It took two years and a sea of blood but they succeeded. Over the next three years the combined clans rebuilt their holds and dug deep in the folds of the mountain for metal and minerals. Several trading houses out of Melkalund and Stoophouse moved the bulk of the goods for them as well as many independent traders. Seeing the new found wealth as the future for their clans, they redoubled production. It didn't take long for protests to spring up as the Misty Mountain goods commenced to flood the local economy and farther with an outpouring of metal, minerals and cut stone. The crown governor of the area had little choice but to take action, action that resulted has tossed the entire area in a great uproar and brought enmity to all in the Sodden Boughs region of the Whisper Trees.

Mist Water

The great river that roars from the heights of the Dantho and Misty Mountains, forging the mire and swampy morass of the Sodden Boughs and cutting a steaming, misty shielded path to the Whisper Water River. An old hoary tale says that once the river served as a shining border between two worlds that talked in the light and sung with power. A song so strong it drowned the heart of the woods until its protection was severed and drowned in thick tendrils of smog that quieted its voice.

New Whisper Water

The river moves with a vengeance from Twolk Mountain, cutting a swathe across the forest. The face of the New Whisper Water changes dramatically where the Mist Water joins it, churning in a short area with fury and anger, smashing its banks with frothing hammers and upturning rocks from its muddy bed. Out of this confluence of watery anger builds the slower, placid face of the Old Whisper Water River.

Old Road

The Old Road is safer than the shadowy, murmuring trees that threaten to swallow it. Disappearances, ambushes and all out warfare between cults, religions, armed bands and crown troops are all daily fare for the Old Road. While a dangerous place to travel or do business, it is still the quickest and safest route to reach the towns of Arkham and South Hold though the Whisper Trees, not to mention the mineral-rich Dwarf, Gnome, and Kobbitt clans of the Misty Mountain.

Old Whisper Water

The river that runs through Arkham is slow moving and wears a murky face, broken by the occasional unfathomable shape of something better left unseen. Neither deep nor wide, its surface is placid and flat but underneath, it churns and moves with hellish

delight. They say the Old Whisper Water has heard every secret spoken in the Whisper Trees and will recite it back to the person with the power to make it speak.

Sodden Boughs

The normal tangle and snarl of the Whisper Trees thickens, if that is at all possible, and the ground slumps into a swampy morass, sprinkled with islands of hard packed earth. Trees sag and snarl everywhere and the whispering of the forest becomes a sucking howl that rips through the boughs of the moss covered trees like a hate filled demon. This area of the Whisper Trees surrounds the seasonal Great Unspoken River (it's more properly a deep stream but locally called a river). The Sodden Boughs is a fetid morass of sodden ground, nearing a swampy consistency. The area is full of treacherous sinkholes, swampy quicksand and insects of just about every variety. The flora and fauna of the Whisper Trees is at its peak here and great varieties of creatures and wildlife abound.

Sunless Lake

This lake is also called Shadow Lake, counterpart to the town of the same name. Raggedy Ridge rises above the lake in the east and Lookdown and Sunless Mountains and First High and Lost High Hills surround it. Not great as far as lakes go, the lake is still well fished for its denizens even if few enter its waters due to the cold temperatures.

Twolk Mountain

Abnormal in several ways, Twolk Mountain is a dead volcano, its crater filled with a plug blacker than the deepest night or the heart of the Whisper Trees. Its abnormality stems from the fact it should not be where it is in the Whisper Trees. Sages have hazarded that the entire mountain was moved during a nexus storm that ripped the area during the Nexus Wars, as little history of the mountain seems to exist beforehand. The mountain's other abnormality comes from the few times it has unleashed its voice and spewed forth the fiery depths of its bowels. When the lava flowed forth it was as black, and hot as liquid tar.

Vark Mountain

The mountain takes its name from the odd, sloth like inhabitants that infest the thickly wooded slopes. About the size of an adult brown bear they are fast moving in the trees, capable of strong attacks with their hooked prime claws and aggressive enough to tangle with beasts three times their size. But more odd than the Varks that live on the slopes is the strange patterns of the wooded landscape. Draped in forest verdure is an odd collection of decaying pathways, roads, small ponds, bridges over solid ground, stone circles and grassy tree topped mounds. Most call them Engal's Path after the sage Engal who spent his 80 odd years of life studying them before he was eaten by a pack of hungry Night Wings.

Whisper Ghost Mountain

The mountain has a substantial underground matrix of caverns. Many of these are abandoned mines or mining attempts, now occupied by creatures using them as lair or haunts. These caves are well known, and a source of conjecture and hundreds of tales both mundane and fantastic. The mountain is also the focus of several interesting myths

and tales. One says a wizard who can walk the nine points of the mountain (as detailed on the 20 ft stone representative map of the mountain on the wall of the College of Magik in Talismondé) can double his or her power. This walk is sometimes referred to as the Ghost Crucible and sarcastically by adepts as the Mad Mages Spectre Caper. Its also the home of the Kajulko, has the cave where the Maakonaan still sings for his hell lost bride and tons of other tales.

Whispers of Rumors and Things True

The Dark Rune Ridge region of the Whisper Trees is spreading, the rune manifesting in the trees color and shape they say is warping to some new design (False).

From Arkham to the White Roc Inn, hundreds of fish, squid, manta ray and other denizens of the deep ocean are raining down on the forest. Most of them are chewed and gnashed as if by the teeth of some great monster (True; though not by some beast but by an underwater explosion and subsequent implosion of a structure in the deep canyon that reaches towards the center of the sea. Which has opened a very unstable nexus that is moving randomly around the confines of the eastern portion of the woods).

The Assassins Guild is dispatching agents to investigate the stories of several unsanctioned ‘hits’ of key leaders of the clans on Misty Mountain (True).

Anerin, an Orc of jocular disposition not to mention large sums of wealth and a proportionally foul odor is looking for guts; guts of all kinds. He is paying handsomely for the innards of a variety of creatures and sends lackeys to pick up the “juicy bits” his coterie of hunters find. He has his own place on the Foot and “squats” on the land (True; and he pays well for loyal followers who might extend their hand with the innards of some very interesting critters or people).

A scarred Hawkman with one eye (the other is a chunk of amethyst cut to look like a spiders ocular) is in the employ of Lords of Hawkhouse and is looking for able men and women of any race to assist in duties surrounding the somewhat newly reestablished house. The hard bitten, tough breed that can cut it in the Whisper Trees are sure candidates for the tough, meanness that is bred in the Bone Wood. (False; but could easily be made true).

Four previously unknown books of the famed engineer Epididymus of Nythaarna have surfaced in the Whisper Trees. They were supposedly offered for sale at the White Roc Inn and validated by as authentic by the merchant selling them, one Utro of Chardos. The price was 18000 GS each (!) for the books and supposedly the samples provided were interesting enough four people died the very same night and the trader disappeared, never to be seen again (True/False; False the books were authentic and true that the forces at the White Roc Inn kidnapped and slew the trader and a few others looking to do the same thing!)

The King's road from north of the Whisper Trees is terrorized by some "cursed winged beast of darkness" which flies over travelers on the road, dropping great mounds of dung from its bowels. Those not killed by the impact often succumb to the gruesome stench (True/False; such a beast does exist and its old lair is atop the Devils Ribs Mountains. However, it has moved on and now lairs on Mist Top Mountain and terrorizes a different area of Arduin).

Kantara Doveclaw, a follower of Odin, has been seen walking the Old Road looking for a few other souls with enough brass to return with her to the ruins of the Extigor estate and lay to rest the bitter souls and fulsome undead that roam there (True).

An itinerant trader along the Old Road is selling poisoned candies and other items that have accounted for over a dozen deaths in the last year. (True; but which one is it?).