

THE DARK WOODS

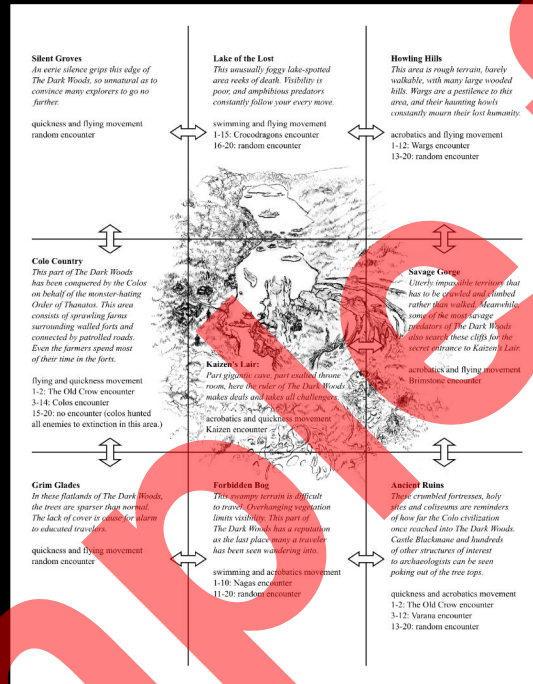
ROLE-PLAYING GAME



Benjamin Galbraith

The Dark Woods RPG is a fantasy horror role-playing game for 4 to 8 players. Players control sorcerers in a crossroad world of endless twilight, who feed on the essence of their victims. The power of that essence twists these sorcerers into monstrous forms.

Sorcerers fight monsters for control of The Dark Woods. Two teams of players take turns playing their own characters and playing the monsters battling against the other team. A chaotic world for an RPG with no game master.



The Dark Woods RPG uses simple and easy-to-use rules. A world map helps players keep track of their character's location and how the plot of the game is unfolding. Dozens of illustrations help readers visualize this unique setting. Experienced tabletop gamers will be able to play this game within minutes of opening The Dark Woods RPG book, and this is an ideal role-playing game for new players as well.

Stay in touch with The Dark Woods RPG community, get the latest free content and use our free online character generator at www.GameArtsGuild.com

Game Arts Guild

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ROLE-PLAYING GAME

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We have been working on The Dark Woods since 1994 and related projects going back to the 1980's. Working on The Dark Woods inspired other Game Arts Guild projects, like the *Squawk Role-Playing Game*. We would like to thank everyone who participated in our games even if we don't remember all of your names.

The short story "Fall of the Blackmanes" had massive editorial input from the Creative Writing classes of Olympic College of 2001-2002. Dozens of fellow students gave valuable feedback on the story over multiple quarters and Professor Art Wicks deserves special thanks for his tolerance and encouragement of the development of that short story.

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Introduction

The Dark Woods is a foreboding place crawling with monsters and violence. The Dark Woods is a nexus that connects many worlds together. It appears to be an endless forest in a permanent state of twilight and has many mysterious ruins.

The Dark Woods is rife with mystical power called **essence**. Creatures higher up on the food chain accumulate more essence. Intelligent creatures who use essence to become more powerful are called **sorcerers** or more specifically cannibal sorcerers. Essence changes sorcerers, sometimes warping them into monstrous forms.

The Dark Woods is usually ruled by a powerful sorcerer. Most sorcerers either support the ruler of The Dark Woods or are involved in plots to overthrow that ruler. The Dark Woods is currently ruled by the six-legged dragon sorcerer Kaizen.

Getting Started

In The Dark Woods Role-Playing Game, each player controls a player character (PC) who is a monstrous sorcerer. There is no "game master." The PCs are divided into two teams who take turns exploring The Dark Woods. The PCs gain power by defeating enemies played by the other team and feeding on their essence. The game ends when one of the teams finally overthrows the ruler of the Dark Woods.

- Each player makes a character (p. 14)
- Divide the players into two teams (p. 18)
- Each team chooses an association (p. 18)
- Roll to see which team goes first (p. 19)
- Roll to see where that team starts (p. 19)
- Start the first team's turn. (p. 19)

Denizens of The Dark Woods

Boggarts are malevolent faerie folk with a taste for theft and trickery. They appear as small fanged humanoids, covered in fur.



Colos are beaked humanoids from a world like Earth's Triassic period. There they thrived as their homeworld's foremost predator, having a strong pack hunting instinct. Colos reproduce quickly, each female laying up to five leathery eggs throughout the year, but they have a short lifespan of less than 50 years. Colo cultures tend to be focused on heroic accomplishments, like collecting impressive hunting trophies.



Colos indoctrinated and trained by the monster hating Order of Thanatos were introduced to The Dark Woods to end the practice of sorcery. Colo society in The Dark Woods is focused on a crusade to hunt and destroy every sorcerer they can find. These colos live in forts occupied by many large families. The social structure is militaristic, with each fort led by a "captain" and his many officers.



"The Order of Thanatos has long recognized The Dark Woods to be a center of great evil amongst the many worlds that this place creeps into. The Order of Thanatos brought us colos here generations ago, because of our explosive population growth and pack hunting instincts. The part of The Dark Woods conquered by the decedents of those colos is now called Colo Country by those of us who dwell here. Know two things for certain. First, venturing beyond the borders of Colo Country is a journey into the land of nightmares, and it should only be done with careful military planning. Second, if you meet sorcerers, destroying those blights-on-reality is your duty, cause and reason for existence; we are the angels sent to destroy these demons in their own hell!" - *Ruben the Crusader Monk* (from an academy lecture a few weeks before his disappearance.)

Dragons of the The Dark Woods come in many shapes and sizes. Some are sorcerers who have twisted their bodies into powerful draconic forms.

Dryads are walking, talking plant-humanoid hybrids covered in protective bark. They are fast healers. Dryads are guardians of The Dark Woods and have no taboos against sorcery. Dryad sorcerers have been known to take the form of hulking trolls or tentacled trees.



Some dryads in The Dark Woods practice Tanglevine, a martial art related to Tai Chi. Tanglevine emphasizes health exercises, balance, passive redirection, weapon strategy and breaking off limbs.

Ghouls are undead who develop grotesque mutations. They can absorb the abilities and features of creatures they eat, including creatures that have no magical essence. Ghouls are from the outbreak that destroyed the home world of the Order of Thanatos, and the order believes the ghouls are related to the essence of The Dark Woods. Creatures killed by ghouls often rise as ghouls themselves if their corpses are intact.

