

Game Master's Background

The Cold Prince

The fairy lord who ruled all Dolmenwood, before the arrival of mortals.

- **Eternal winter:** Under his rule, the forest lay under an eternal cloak of frost and snow.
- **Frost elves:** The people of the Cold Prince, immortal fairies as fair as snow and as cruel as ice.
- **The war:** Nine centuries ago, mortals waged war against the fey armies of the Cold Prince vying for control of Dolmenwood.

The Love of Mortal and Fairy

In the midst of the war, a mortal knight and a fairy princess met and fell in love.

- **Princess Snowfall-at-Dusk:** The seventeenth daughter of the Cold Prince.
- **Sir Chyde:** A near-mythical hero who fought in the war against the Cold Prince.
- **First meeting:** They met in the deeps of Dolmenwood, in a clearing beside a circle of stones known as the Whything Stones.
- **Trysts:** For months, the pair trysted in secret glades, knowing that their love was forbidden.
- **The portrait:** Sir Chyde commissioned a portrait of his love, entitled "The Lady of the Wood".
- **Sir Chyde's binding ring:** The princess pledged her heart to the knight, bestowing on him a magical ring that had the power to bind their souls together for eternity (see *Sir Chyde's Binding Ring*, p35).

Forbidden Love Discovered

Before long, the Cold Prince discovered his daughter's betrayal.

- **The princess imprisoned:** His spies captured her and brought her before him. He decreed that she be imprisoned in a forlorn tower, there to stay until she renounced her foolish love.
- **Secret communion:** Unbeknown to her father, the princess was able to secretly speak with Sir Chyde, even from her prison, via the power of *Sir Chyde's binding ring*. The two schemed her rescue.

The Cold Prince Defeated

The mortal armies were victorious, and the Cold Prince was exiled into his dominion in Fairy.

- **Ever-looming threat:** The Cold Prince has never troubled Dolmenwood since, but the threat of his return to the mortal world ever dominates the fears of common folk.



The Death of Sir Chyde

The knight was slain in the final battle of mortal and fairy on the hills of the High Wold, not long after his love was imprisoned.

- ▶ **Dying wish:** Sir Chyde insisted on being interred in a tomb in the glade beside the Whything Stones.
- ▶ **Grave goods:** He wished to be buried with the portrait and ring, and to have a subsection of his tomb dedicated to his betrothed.
- ▶ **Chapel of St Sedge:** A chapel dedicated to his patron saint, Sedge, was also integrated into the tomb. (Sedge is the patron saint of crusaders and knife-makers.)
- ▶ **A holy site:** As was the way in those days, the tomb of the great hero was maintained as a site of pilgrimage.
- ▶ **Attendant:** A priest lived in the tomb, beside the chapel.



The Effects of the Ring

The power of *Sir Chyde's binding ring* was not thwarted by death.

- ▶ **Beyond death:** Sir Chyde's spirit was called back from the beyond, to linger in his tomb as a phantom.
- ▶ **Drawing together:** The prison of the princess, in Fairy, and the tomb of the knight, in the mortal world, were slowly drawn together, bringing the two worlds almost close enough to touch.
- ▶ **Communion:** Even in death, the power of the ring allowed the princess and the knight to communicate verbally. They dreamed of their reunion and marriage.

The Sealing of the Tomb

- ▶ **Fey influence:** An unsettling, fey influence began to creep into the tomb.
- ▶ **The priest's dreams:** The priest who maintained the tomb experienced disturbing dreams and visitations, and recommended that the tomb be abandoned.
- ▶ **Closure:** Guardians and wards were placed, and the tomb sealed.

Centuries Passed

- ▶ **The tomb:** Has rested quietly.
- ▶ **The princess:** Remains imprisoned, forgotten by her father, waiting with fairy patience to find a way to be reunited with Sir Chyde.
- ▶ **The wedding:** Undeterred by death and many centuries, the princess stubbornly insists on holding a perpetual wedding feast, awaiting the arrival of Sir Chyde. Some few, brave friends and allies have journeyed in secret to her isolated tower to join the long-delayed festivities.
- ▶ **The Whything stones:** Are now frequented by the Drune—the cult of sorcerers who covet the standing stones and ley lines of Dolmenwood.

Hooks

Dreams of the Lady

What the PCs Experience

- ▶ A valiant or courageous PC is visited in a recurring dream by a beautiful elf lady, clad in white.
- ▶ In the dreams, the PC falls in love with the Lady, and awakes with a deep yearning to be with her.
- ▶ After some weeks of experiencing this dream, the PC has a second dream: venturing into a burial mound, opening a coffer, taking a ring from the finger of a skeleton, and bringing the ring to the Lady.
- ▶ At the end of this dream, the Lady tells the PC that the tomb is a real place, and that a magical door to her realm is located there, in the lower level. She (falsely) promises her heart to the PC, if they can retrieve this ring that was stolen from her in ancient times and bring it to her.
- ▶ She reveals the location of the tomb and says that one who bears the ring can enter the magical door in the lower level that leads to her realm in Fairy.

What's Really Happening

- ▶ Princess Snowfall-at-Dusk has discovered a means of contacting the mortal world via dream.
- ▶ Her professed love is a trick: she merely wishes the besotted PC to retrieve the ring of Sir Chyde for her.

Inheritance

- ▶ An elderly, long-lost relative of a PC dies, bequeathing some minor wealth to the PC (whatever the GM wishes).
- ▶ Among the papers and oddments the PC receives is an old charter, accompanied with family tree proving the PC to be a distant descendent of one Brigford the Wise, brother of Sir Chyde. (The GM may decide how accurate this genealogical information is.)
- ▶ The charter shows the location of the tomb where Brigford is interred alongside his brother, noting that the fabled sword and ring of Sir Chyde are (legally speaking) the property of the inheriting PC.
- ▶ The documents claim that the ring has the power to open a doorway to Fairy.

Comb Robbers

- ▶ A wizard hires the PCs to journey into Dolmenwood to an old burial mound, giving them a map of its location.
- ▶ Their mission is to enter the tomb and retrieve the ring from the hand of the skeleton that lies buried: a bronze band set with a moonstone, with fittings in the form of woven branches.
- ▶ Upon returning this ring to the wizard, the party is to be rewarded with a sum of 5,000gp (or whatever the GM wishes).

The Complication

- ▶ The ring to be retrieved carries a fairy enchantment: the ghost of Sir Chyde is bound to it and will haunt any who steal it (see *Epilogue*, p34).

Players' Background

Common Folklore

Not all that transpired in the past remains common knowledge. The following tale is known among the common folk of Dolmenwood, and may be heard by PCs.

The Cold Prince

The fairy lord who ruled all Dolmenwood, before the arrival of mortals.

- **Eternal winter:** Under his rule, the forest lay under an eternal cloak of frost and snow.
- **The war:** Nine centuries ago, mortals waged war against the fey armies of the Cold Prince vying for control of Dolmenwood.

Sir Chyde

In the midst of the war, the fabled hero fell in love with a woman called the Lady of the Wood.

- **The Lady of the Wood:** A sorcerous maiden of mysterious origin.
- **First meeting:** They met in the deeps of Dolmenwood.
- **The betrothal:** The two pledged their hearts to one another, exchanging rings of engagement.

The Cold Prince Defeated

The mortal armies were victorious, and the Cold Prince was exiled into his dominion in Fairy.

- **Ever-looming threat:** Every year, in winter, the magic that banishes the Cold Prince weakens and frigid winds whisper of his desire to reclaim his kingdom in the mortal world.

The Death of Sir Chyde

The knight was slain in the final battle of mortal and fairy on the hills of the High Wold.

- **Dying wish:** Sir Chyde insisted on being interred in a tomb deep in the forest.
- **The fate of the Lady:** She was never seen again. Some say she died in the depths of the forest, in the glade where she and her love first met.

Deeper Investigation

If PCs spend time and money to employ sages, seek out obscure tomes, or consult with oracles, they may be able to divulge some of the true story of the knight and the princess. Each of the following facts requires a significant research effort.

- **The identity of the Lady of the Wood:** Sir Chyde's betrothed was in fact a fairy princess. Theirs was a forbidden love.
- **The ring:** The ring which Sir Chyde wore was a magic item from Fairy. It bound his soul to that of the Lady.
- **Grave goods:** Sir Chyde was buried with the following items of note: the sword with which he slew the fairy giant Butter-for-Bones, his moonstone engagement ring, the portrait of the Lady that he had commissioned.
- **The sealing of the tomb:** Sir Chyde's tomb was a site of pilgrimage for many years, until a series of hauntings caused the Church to place magical wards and seal it off.

Dolmenwood Core

The Two Realms

The forest of Dolmenwood lies in a region of the mortal world where the immortal realm of Fairy—homes of elves, sprites, pooks, goblins, and all manner of sinister and mirthful creatures—is close at hand.

This parallel world, sometimes known as Elfland (though that is something of a misnomer—elves are not the sole denizens of Fairy), is endless and timeless, beyond the comprehension of mortals. It lies adjacent to the mortal world, so close that the laughter of its denizens may be heard drifting through the glades of Dolmenwood, but at once so far removed as to be intangible to those of mortal birth.

Only at a few special places or times do the two realms overlap, allowing transit back and forth. (One such location may be encountered in this adventure.)

Fairies

Those races whose members originate in the undying realm of Fairy, are collectively known as *fairies*. The vast majority of fairies never cross the subtle threshold that separates their realm from the mortal world (and indeed would never dream of doing so). However, some individuals do enter the mortal world, upon occasion, and some even gain a taste for the place and tarry for extended periods. The fairies who may be encountered in Dolmenwood are typically those of unusual bent (romantics, obsessives, or megalomaniacs) or those who have been outcast from their native realm.

Languages

The following languages are used in Dolmenwood:

- **Woldish:** The equivalent of the common tongue in Dolmenwood.
- **Old Woldish:** An ancient dialect of Woldish that is largely incomprehensible to speakers of Woldish.
- **Drunic:** The secret language of the mysterious Drune.
- **Liturgic:** The sacred language of the Church of the One True God.
- **Sylvan:** The common language of fairies and fairy-kin in Dolmenwood. Mortals speaking it invariably sound like fools.
- **High Elfish:** The language of fairy nobility. Utterly unfathomable to mortals.
- **The Immortal Tongue of Fairy:** The ancient and reality-bending language known only to the most ancient and dreadful of fairies.

Outside the Mound

Random Events *(1-in-6 chance every five minutes)*

1. A PC suddenly spots a ghostly, violet-eyed owl gazing upon him or her from a high branch. The PC must succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw or fall unconscious for 1d6 rounds.
2. 1d4 tipsy goblin merchants with lanterns climb cautiously out of a trapdoor in the forest floor. They have stepped into Dolmenwood from Fairy, seeking rare night-fruits. (See *Dolmenwood Goblin*, p26.)
3. A gust of wind whips the branches of the trees into a frenzy. PCs within 10 feet of the trees must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or be struck for 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage, or half as much on a successful saving throw. Flames sputter and may go out: torches 4-in-6 chance, lanterns 2-in-6.
4. A huge, warty toad creeps over, eyes the PCs quizzically, and utters a single, croaking word: "Betrayal".

1. Approaching the Burial Mound

Tangled Forest

Brambles (half burying the paths).

Twisted trees (seem to close in around as PCs pass by, blocking their way out).

Burial Mound Looms Ahead

Flat-topped hillock (evidently man-made).

Atmospherics

Nearby mumbling (incomprehensible voices, from area 2).



2. Sacrifice at the Whything Stones

Stone Circle

Rune-etched (eldritch markings which reflect moonlight). **Mossy** (clad with dangling beards).

2 Hooded Men

Mumbling incantations (in an odd tongue). **Knife held aloft** (silver, curved). **Black cloaks** (and hoods). **Golden torcs** (in the form of owls).

- ▶ **Initial behaviour:** Regard the arrival of (peaceful) strangers as auspicious: may offer PCs a role aiding the sacrifice.
- ▶ **Names:** Dolmbrace, Haithion.
- ▶ **Know:** That the burial mound is that of Sir Chyde, hero of the ancient war against the Cold Prince. (The Drune sect which the hooded men belong to also assisted in the war, so they respect the sanctity of the tomb.)
- ▶ **Possessions:** Golden torc (100gp each). Gnarled staves. 2d20sp each. Skins full of spiced wine. Haithion has a curved, silver knife and a copper urn.

1 Young Woman

Bound (to the central stone). **Wild-eyed** (ecstatic, possibly under the influence of a drug or potion). **Face daubed** (with glowing blue paint). **Clad in black** (lacy gown). **Red hair** (braided).

- ▶ **Initial behaviour:** Does not wish to be “rescued”—she is a willing sacrifice to the Big Chook. (Big Chook is a monster that is said to lurk in the murky depths of the great Lake Longmere.)
- ▶ **Name:** Briar-Anne.
- ▶ **Combat stats:** Treat as normal **commoner**; speaks Woldish.

The Ritual

- ▶ **Duration:** If left to run its course, the ritual takes a further hour.
- ▶ **Culmination:** The woman's throat is slit with a curved, silver knife. The hooded men collect her blood in a copper urn and depart.
- ▶ **Aftermath:** The woman's body is left to be devoured by forest beasts.

GM's Note

Particularly if you or your players are new to the old-school style of gaming, it should be noted that not all encounters are made to be “won.” Attacking the drune ritualists has a very high chance of annihilating a low-level party! It is recommended that the GM let the players know that these are powerful adversaries. Their characters have heard rumour of this cult: that they are one of the most powerful factions in Dolmenwood, greatly feared for their occult powers, and are not to be meddled with.

A knee-jerk “stop the evil cultists” reaction by the PCs is to be expected, though. If the PCs charge at the drune, consider having Briar-Anne shout at them and tell them to stop interfering with her moment of glory. If they proceed after that, feel free to unleash the full power of the drune ritualists—some players only learn through pain that the whole world is not just made to be challenge-scaled for their PCs. If you, on the other hand, feel particularly merciful, you may have only one ritualist attack, and have the other retreat, the ceremony now being ruined. Of course, the players will now have made a powerful enemy in the Drune...

Hooded Men (aka Drunes)

The “hooded men” or “watchers of the wood” are a cult of arcanists who jealously guard the stone circles and ley lines of Dolmenwood. Common folk are terrified of their occult machinations, including kidnapping and rumours of human sacrifice. They are not to be meddled with.

Drune Ritualist

Medium humanoid (human), neutral

Armour Class 13 (16 with *mage armour*)

Hit Points 39 (6d8 + 12)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9	16	14	17	12	11
(-1)	(+3)	(+2)	(+3)	(+1)	(+0)

Saving Throws Con +5, Int +6

Skills Arcana +6, History +6

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Drunic, Old Woldish, Sylvan, Woldish

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Drunic Magic. These drune ritualists have their magic energies entangled in the ceremony in progress, meaning they have fewer slots available than usual. The drune ritualists are 6th-level spellcasters (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). The drune ritualists’ spellcasting ability is Intelligence.

- ▶ **Cantrips (at will):** *blade ward, dancing lights, friends.*
- ▶ **1st level (2 slots):** *charm person, magic missile.*
- ▶ **2nd level (2 slots):** *hold person, phantasmal force.*
- ▶ **3rd level (1 slot):** *hypnotic pattern, major image.*

Actions

Green Flame-Wreathed Staff. *Melee*

Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 2 (1d6-1) bludgeoning damage. The target must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or catch fire, being wreathed in green flames. A target aflame takes the drune ritualist’s choice of either 3 (1d6) fire damage, 3 (1d6) acid damage or 3 (1d6) necrotic damage at the start of their next turn; thereafter the flames on the burning target sputter out. Another creature, but not the target aflame, can use their action to quench the magical flames harmlessly before they inflict their damage.

Conjure Dolmen (Recharge 6). The drune ritualist conjures forth a standing stone from the earth, dropping it on a single target within 30 feet. The drune ritualist makes a ranged spell attack, and on a hit, the target must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, or take 17 (4d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage and be trapped below the massive stone, or half as much and not trapped on a successful saving throw. A trapped target is prone and has its speed reduced to 0 as though restrained. The target or another creature can use their action to attempt to free the target from the stone, which takes a DC 17 Dexterity or Strength check. The stone is completely real and makes the square into which it fell difficult terrain.

Full Drune Spell Array

When they do not have their spell slots reduced by the ceremony, the drune ritualists usually have four 1st level slots, and three 2nd and 3rd level slots available. If you want to increase the challenge of the Drune as presented, consider tweaking the recharge of **Conjure Dolmen**.

3. Tomb Entrance

Door

Granite slab (seals the mound).

Overgrown (covered in lichen and sweet-smelling wild roses).

► **Moving the slab:** The slab can be moved by a successful DC 20 Strength check. The check is made at advantage if at least 2 creatures cooperate.

► **Breaking the slab:** The slab has 60 hit points and a damage threshold of 5. If the ritual in area 2 is still underway, the drune are not happy about the noise.

Stairs into the Mound

Descend 20 feet (into the earth). **Dusty** (caked with centuries of undisturbed dust). **Deathly silence** (disturbed by PCs' footsteps). **Dank smell** (moist and mouldy).

► **If examined:** DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) notices scratches. Looks like something heavy was dragged up the stairs (a long time ago).

4. Worm Hole

A Hole in the Earth

2' wide (barely). **At the edge of the mound** (burrows into the earth beneath).

► **Illuminating the hole:** Reveals the hole to descend 15 feet to a chamber (area 10).

► **Making noise:** Attracts the **worm-tongues** that lurk inside (see area 10).

► **Crawling down:** Disturbs the **worm-tongues** that lurk inside (see area 10). The hole emerges after 15 feet in area 10.

Slime Trails

Gooey (like petroleum jelly). **Opalescent** (largely transparent).

► **Tracking:** The trails lead from the hole into the woods and back. A DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check, can clearly discern trails of three slug- or worm-like creatures. On a failure, the check still notices the trail, but can't identify the number of creatures involved.

► **Touching:** A slight acidity can be detected, if the slime is touched with bare flesh. (This is not enough to cause damage.)

