

Root: An Overview

ROOT: THE ROLEPLAYING GAME is based on Leder Games's award-winning **ROOT: A GAME OF WOODLAND MIGHT AND RIGHT** board game about conflict and power, featuring struggles between cats, birds, mice, and more.

In **ROOT: THE RPG**, you all play vagabonds, denizens of the Woodland who have been cast out of “civilized” society, whether by their own volition or by exile. You venture throughout the Woodland fulfilling jobs, having adventures, and tipping the scales in the conflict between the factions.

This game focuses on fun adventurous action and escapades, on the meaningful, lasting backdrop of the Woodland and its war. You'll get into big fights and stage cunning heists, and you'll earn reputation with different Woodland factions, perhaps even helping them to take control over clearings.

The Woodland

The Woodland is defined by the dense forests from which it takes its name. They obstruct travel and construction, and even after years of habitation, the Woodland denizens are largely confined to “clearings”, mostly-treeless areas amid a sea of timber. The denizens cut paths between the clearings, facilitating travel and trade, but those are far from real roads.

Striding out into the forests between paths and clearings is a foolish, dangerous endeavor. The forests play home to bandits and outlaws, to bears and deer, to harsh conditions and dangerous terrain.

There are many species of Woodland denizen, but the dominant species include foxes, mice, rabbits, and birds. Clearings are populated mostly by one of the ground-dwelling species, with the birds spread out in the canopies across the Woodland.

Until relatively recently, the Woodland was held in the talons of the Eyrie Dynasties. Then the Dynasties tore themselves apart in a civil war, ultimately destroying what control they had over the clearings of the Woodland. In the new vacuum of power, many clearings were left in disarray, while others began to govern themselves...

When the Marquise de Cat took notice, she led her soldiers in from a far-off empire, along with their knowledge of industry and engineering. She took control, by force, by enticement, by whatever means necessary. And soon most of the Woodland clearings were under her sway.

Now, the Eyrie Dynasties have finally managed to regroup and muster their forces. They are pushing to take their ancestral domain, while the Marquisate stands strong against them. And all the while, the other denizens of the Woodland are beginning to stir in new, defiant ways, forming a Woodland Alliance to try to rebel against the other powers and take back the Woodland...

The Vagabonds

There have always been vagabonds in the Woodland. Exiles, outcasts, strangers, oddities. Idealists, rebels, criminals, freethinkers. Those who don't fit into the clearings and the paths. Those who would prefer to live in the spaces between.

Most of the time, the life of a vagabond is focused on survival. They take what jobs they can when they visit clearings—often the least desirable or most difficult jobs around—to get enough food and supplies to survive. Some even resort to crime, although any who primarily subsist on stealing from other denizens are more bandits or robbers than vagabonds.

But along with those harsh realities, the vagabond gets something else: freedom. The social structures of clearings rarely have any hold on the vagabonds. The rulers and politicians may threaten the vagabonds into compliance using force of arms, but even then, vagabonds have been hardened and sharpened by their lives. They carry great skill in combat, and some are more than a match for even squads of soldiers or guards.

The Players

In the full game of **ROOT: THE RPG**, each player creates a character, their own vagabond, using a playbook. A playbook is a kind of vagabond archetype, a set of abilities, character traits, and story elements all designed to help you make the coolest character possible. In this booklet, there are six prefilled playbooks to get you playing quickly—just choose the one you like best and start the game!

The Gamemaster

One player in your game of **ROOT: THE RPG** (likely the first one to read this booklet) will take on the role of Gamemaster (GM), with the responsibility to represent the world of the Woodland. The GM will portray all of the other denizens who fill up the story. The GM isn't playing against the other players; their job is to portray the Woodland and make it an interesting, dramatic place of consequence and change.

The Factions

The Woodland plays home to many denizens and powerful groups, all vying for control of its resources. These powerful groups are called “factions”, and they extend over the width and breadth of the Woodland.

Bertram’s Cove, the premade clearing in this booklet, predominantly involves two factions—the Marquisate and the Woodland Alliance—with a third faction, the Eyrie Dynasties, being an outside threat. The Eyrie and the Marquisate are at war with each other for control over the Woodland, while the Woodland Alliance is a new and growing rebel force aiming to revolt against those greater powers.

There is one more “faction” of note within the Woodland—the Woodland denizens themselves. This faction is broken up and disunified—fox-dominant clearings don’t necessarily agree with mouse-dominant clearings. But the opinions of the regular denizens will affect the vagabonds wherever they go.

In all cases, no faction is “good” or “evil”. All factions do right and wrong. All factions help the denizens sometimes, and hurt others. All factions have members who have empathy and honor and care about those around them, and members who are in this fight purely for their own selfish benefit.



The Marquisate

Named for the Marquise de Cat who leads it, the Marquisate is either a faction of foreign invaders and colonizers, or a new force for order and industrialization—it depends upon whom you ask.

The Marquise de Cat comes from a foreign empire, and swept into the Woodland with her army when the Eyrie Dynasties were no longer in power. In general, the Marquise’s goal is still to industrialize the Woodland and fully tap its resources. Perhaps this is about improving her own position in her home empire; perhaps it really is about improving the lot of the denizens of the Woodland. Only time will tell.



The Eyrie Dynasties

The history of the Eyrie Dynasties stretches deep into the Woodland’s past. They claim that they have always ruled the Woodland, and always shall. True, their reign was characterized by infighting, by regime change (often at the edge of a blade), by bird dominance and oppression of the other Woodland denizens...but they also protected the clearings from bandits and the wild. They built and maintained the paths between clearings. They enforced law and order, and they made the Woodland what it is today.

Everything came crashing down in a recent civil war, one of the more vicious conflicts to ever face the Eyrie. The Dynasties nearly tore themselves to pieces back then. Now, a newly resurgent Eyrie is caught in a new war with the Marquisate to retake the Woodland clearings—their rightful domain. And with an enemy outside of itself for once, the Eyrie is ready to wage total war. After all, the denizens of the Woodland need its protection.



The Woodland Alliance

In the midst of the new war for the Woodland, many denizens have reached their boiling point. After years of chaos in which they found themselves free of any reigning wing, paw, or claw, to suddenly have two major empires trying to force a yoke upon them yet again—it’s unacceptable. These denizens built the Woodland Alliance, a network of would-be rebels, and waited for their moment to hit the Eyrie and the Marquisate hard enough to take back their Woodland.

The Woodland Alliance isn’t a straight representative of the denizens, of course—they weren’t elected or chosen by the denizens at large. They arose from the denizens most angry at the current war and the other powers, and they are willing to take extreme measures to defeat those empires. Sometimes, that means freeing clearings from oppressive regimes. Other times, that means creating martyrs and making terrible sacrifices.