

Hacksaw Dell Quickstart

ROOT

~ The Roleplaying Game ~



ROOT

The Roleplaying Game



About This Booklet

This booklet is a preview of **ROOT: THE ROLEPLAYING GAME**, including six playbooks; all the basic moves; rules for depletion, wear, exhaustion, and injury; equipment mechanics; and a whole premade clearing to get you playing right away. Here, you'll find everything you need to get started playing and run through a dangerous, complicated situation in Hacksaw Dell—one that could easily take a couple of sessions of play to sort out.

These rules might make more sense to those familiar with the Powered by the Apocalypse framework and games like **Dungeon World**, **Masks**, or **The Sprawl**, but they are designed to be usable by anyone. If you have any questions, or want to give feedback, you can head on over to our Magpie Games Discord (<https://magpiegames.com/magpie-games-official-discord/>).

Credits

DESIGN: Brendan Conway & Mark Diaz Truman

WRITING: Chazz Kellner

EDITING: Brendan Conway, Danielle Lauzon, and Mark Diaz Truman

LAYOUT: Miguel Ángel Espinoza

ART: Kyle Ferrin

ART DIRECTION: Marissa Kelly

PROOFREADING: Katherine Fackrell

ROOT BOARD GAME DESIGN: Cole Wehrle

ROOT BOARD GAME GRAPHIC DESIGN AND LAYOUT: Cole Wehrle, Kyle Ferrin, Nick Brachmann, and Jaime Willems

ROOT BOARD GAME CONCEPT: Patrick Leder

Contents

About This Booklet	I
Root: An Overview	2
Choosing Characters	4
Playing Root: The RPG	6
Basic Moves	6
Weapon Moves	9
Reputation Moves	11
Harm Tracks	12
Equipment and Treasure	13
Changing PCs	14
GM Reference	14
NPCs and Harm	15
Hacksaw Dell	16
How To Use This Clearing	16
Conflicts	17
Important Residents	20
Important Places	23
Where to Begin	23
Playbooks	24
Laeliana the Arbiter	25
Jexri the Champion	26
Yates the Envoy	27
Mint the Prince	28
Rackham the Thief	29
Knohadd the Vagrant	30
Advancements	31

LEDERGAMES



Root: The Roleplaying Game text and design © 2019 Magpie Games. All Rights Reserved.
 Root: A Game of Woodland Might and Right © 2017 Leder Games. All Rights Reserved.
 Leder Games logo and Root art TM & © 2017-2020 Leder Games. All Rights Reserved.

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.

Hacksaw Dell, the premade clearing in this booklet, predominantly involves squabbles between and among the Woodland Alliance and the Lizard Cult, with a third faction—the Eyrie Dynasties—waiting in the wings. In the Woodland at large, the Eyrie and the Marquisate are at war with each other for control over the Woodland, but the conflict in Hacksaw Dell might show a new path for the Woodland to follow.

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 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.



The Lizard Cult

The Lizard Cult originated in a distant land, and its missionaries, priests, and soldiers spread out across the world, sometimes acting as with kindness and succor, sometimes acting as invaders and conquerors, but always spreading the message of the Great Dragon. The Cult’s core hierarchy and structure is far, far away from the Woodland, and those missionaries who have made it to the Woodland have adopted all those different tactics and more to share their ideology with the denizens. They even go so far as to alter elements of Cult orthodoxy to match the Woodlanders’ belief and better bring them in to the Cult.

Despite its name, the Lizard Cult isn’t actually composed only of lizards. Especially in its Woodland incarnation, the Cult has found supporters across all the different Woodland species as it caters to the downtrodden of the clearings. But the Cult, like nearly any faction, is not one simple thing, and for all that there are plenty who have been helped and uplifted by the Cult’s kindness, there are some who fear or even hate the Cult as a result of crimes perpetrated by those claiming to act in the Cult’s name.



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.

Choosing Characters

The full game of **ROOT: THE RPG** will include all the rules you need to create your characters from scratch. For this booklet, though, the characters are mostly pregenerated so you can jump into play faster! Here's what you need to know:

Playbooks

Each pregenerated character is tied to a playbook, an archetype that comes with a set of abilities, skills, questions, and dramatic issues. For this booklet, there are six characters and playbooks available:

- **Laeliana the Arbiter:** Laeliana has been a mercenary for years, but she decided that life was wrong for her. Now she is a vagabond trying to choose the right battles to fight.
- **Jexri the Champion:** Jexri is a devout follower of the Great Wyrms, but not the Lizard Cult. They do their duty to the Wyrms by defending those who need it wherever they go.
- **Yates the Envoy:** Yates came to love life on the road, and in particular enjoyed voicing the words that others couldn't quite find for themselves, making him a diplomat for hire.
- **Mint the Prince:** Mint's mother, Monca Leafclaw, was renowned all across the Woodland for her incredible deeds. Now, Mint is trying to live up to her mother's example.
- **Rackham the Thief:** Rackham comes from Hacksaw Dell, and they had to escape that boring life! Now, Rackham comes home to show off their expertise as a burglar.
- **Knohadd the Vagrant:** Knohadd was meant to be a Riverfolk Company captain, but he quit that life. Since then, he's made friends, enemies, and plenty of trouble.

You're going to be adding more details about the Woodland and the different denizens as you flesh out your characters during play. That's well and good. Use everything in the pregenerated characters as a starting point, but feel free to play in the undefined spaces and edges.

Name, Species & Look

Every vagabond has a name—and often, an epithet, a working name for them to conduct crimes under. If you want an epithet for your vagabond, fill one in!

Then, every denizen has a species—what kind of denizen you are. Are you a fox? A rabbit? A bird?

Species has no mechanical effect—anyone can be a vagabond. But socially, your species will influence how some denizens deal with you. If you're a bird, you may be hated still further by other birds who see you as an outcast...or you might be embraced by the birds of the Eyrie, who try to woo you to their side. If you're a wolf, then you may be looked at with suspicion—most denizens probably haven't seen a wolf before.

Finally, the vagabond's details. Each pregenerated character has a short description at the top right of the playbook and in the character background—feel free to elaborate!

Stats

Each vagabond has five stats: Charm, Cunning, Finesse, Luck, and Might. Throughout the game, you'll be rolling two six-sided dice and adding these stats to determine the results of moves. So, the higher the stat, the more likely things will go in your favor for the associated moves.

Charm measures how socially adept you are, how capable you are of bending other people to your will using words and ideas.

Cunning measures how sharp-minded you are, how capable you are of noticing important details in people and places, and how capable you are of tricking others.

Finesse measures how deft and dexterous you are, how capable you are of performing complicated or intricate tasks with your hands.

Luck measures how...well...lucky you are, how capable you are of putting your fate into the hands of pure chance and coming out on top.

Might measures how strong and tough you are, how capable you are of overpowering opponents or succeeding in tasks that require brute force.

Each playbook comes with a predetermined set of stats. Normally, you get to add +1 to the stat of your choice, so long as you don't raise any stat beyond +2. This +1 has already been added in for all the pregenerated characters.

Over the course of the game, you might unlock advancements that will further improve your stats, but the absolute maximum you may have in one stat is +2 without a special move, and +3 with a special move.

Background, Drives & Nature

Next up, you have your background, drives, and nature.

The background for every pregenerated character has already been filled in, but feel free to elaborate on what is provided or make small alterations that fit your style of play.

The characters' drives have also been chosen. These two drives describe how you can advance—fulfill the condition of the drive and you can advance immediately. But you can only advance once per session per drive! If you want to see what you can do when you advance, check out page 14 for some basics and page 31 for specific options.

Finally, the characters' natures have already been chosen. Your nature refers to your deeper personality type. It's a way that you act to relieve stress. If you fulfill the condition of your nature, you can clear your entire exhaustion track (see more about that on page 12). You can fulfill the condition of your nature any number of times, as long as you take the necessary action.

If you feel strongly about changing any of these options, you can talk about doing it with your GM—but what's already in there is prechosen to fit Hacksaw Dell and its problems.

Moves, Weapon Skills & Roguish Feats

Each playbook has moves of its own. Many moves require you to roll with a particular stat—pay close attention to those stats, and how they connect with your stat line. The playbook moves for the pregenerated characters are already chosen.

Weapon skills each refer to one of the special weapon moves. To use them, you need a weapon tagged with that move, and you need the appropriate weapon skill. For example, to use Cleave, you have to both have the weapon skill and have a weapon tagged with that skill. The pregenerated characters' weapon skills have already been chosen.

Roguish feats are the special feats of roguery and clandestine action that you're skilled in. These are used in conjunction with the **attempt a roguish feat** move. Each playbook has a few preselected, or can choose some number from the list. For this booklet, the pregenerated characters all have their roguish feats selected.

Introductions & Connections

When everyone is done picking and reading over their characters, go around and introduce your characters. Explain who you are, why you're a vagabond, what you do, and what your drives are. Answer any questions the GM or other players ask. After everyone has introduced their characters and you know who the other vagabonds in your band are, you'll choose connections to those other vagabonds. Go around in the same order, each player adding one connection at a time. Each player has two connections on their character sheet and gets to use both, so go around until each player has set up the two connections from their own character sheet.

Each connection also comes with a small rules tweak. Make sure you read it out loud so everyone involved with the connection is aware of it.

Other Elements

You also have harm tracks (injury, exhaustion, and depletion) and equipment. Your harm tracks represent your health, stress, and general equipment, while your equipment is the more specialized and important items you are carrying. For more on your harm tracks, see page 12. For more on equipment, see page 13.

