

Bark at the Moon - 06/05/09

This Week's Recap

Sent by Voice of Many, the pack's elder; Ming, Tse, and Abasi found themselves somewhere in the Middle Marches, searching for Moonsilver. Voice of Many had dealings with Hierophant Artemesia Sapphire of the Haltan Guild, who claimed to have seen Moonsilver forming while trading with a Fae lord named Utresha.

Once there, they routed an ambushing force of hobgoblins and uprooted a huge tree whose sap had turned to Moonsilver. Ming, in his gigantic river dragon form, dragged the tree back towards Black Branches, the home of their tribe.

On the way back they were stopped and challenged by Lord Utresha, who fancies himself a knight in shining armor. The valorous Ming accepted, and though the Fair folk could fly and shape the wild around him, he grabbed the Raksha in his mouth and crushed the life out of it.

The remainder of the trip went uneventfully, and they were then asked by Voice of Many to take the payment to the Hierophant, as it is a very large sum and could use a strong guard. On their return, Tse and Ming could undergo their initiation into the Swords of Luna.

In Chanta, the capital of the Kingdom of Halta, they met Hierophant Artemesia and delivered the precious woods. They also accepted a job offer to find a captured girl named Free Spirited Arvia. The girl is very important to Chanta, but exactly how was neither asked nor explained.

The trail led to the Night Axe district, where guild owned moon flowers are

harvested nightly. The journey took them deep into a shaft inside one of Chanta's 100 yd. diameter redwoods, and though someone or something dropped a load of poisonous vines on them, they made it into Old Hollow, a city inside the trees and earth of the ancient forest.

They fought their way past some of the city's still-active automaton guardians and chased a few hobgoblins away from Arvia, then turned to take her to the city proper. But their battle with the guardians had damaged the supports of that chamber, and a cave-in left them searching for another way out.

The plotted their course and made it back to the upper branches, but came out in the section of the city known only as The Wyld, named that way because it was given to the Fair Folk in a treaty and has been warped by their presence. They found themselves trapped in a mutating maze, and met a Fae named Lily, who tried to talk them into handing Arvia over.

With little social skills on the Lunar side, and no persuasive magics on the Fair Folk side, the debate soon died behind a strong-willed wall of duty and loyalty.

As they finally broke free of the maze, friendly-faced soldiers were waiting for them.

Black Branches

Nestled in the ancient redwoods north of Chanta, Black Branches stands between civilization and the Wyld. A combined human, ata-beast, and Lunar settlement; Black Branches is named for the upper levels of the trees there, many of whom lost branches to a giant conflagration some time in the forgotten past. But the redwoods are incredibly resilient, and the hollow trunks still stand and make excellent homes.

The cleared branches make it impossible for aerial foes to sneak up through cover, and so serve the Swords of Luna well. They also let sunlight through to the ground, making this the only place in Creation within 100 miles where trees shorter than 500' tall can grow.

NPCs of Note

Voice of Many:

Ming and Tse's mentor Voice of Many is currently the elder of the pack, as he is their strongest warrior and their current mission is one of War: defend the borders of Creation from the Fair Folk and keep the populace of Chanta secure. Capable of taking forms from a small bird to a tyrant lizard, and even human or elemental, Voice of Many revels in battle, but takes his role as counselor and guide seriously. He has trained his charge in both small unit and mass combat tactics, as well as how to best adapt his changing lunar form to battle.

For now Voice of Many is content to stay as he is. But there are many who believe he would trade his name away and once again be known as Towering Might of Oak if the chance arose. He wears the mantle of leadership well, but the fight is what drives him.

Despite Tse Ikth-ya's strong reputation, or perhaps because of it, Voice of Many favors Ming in training. He points to the latter's mastery of Luna's gifts as a strength, and the former's reliance on weaponry as a possible hole that enemies can exploit. Though he has no doubts of Tse's ability to fight off anything the Wyld can throw at him while armed with his mighty Tetsubo, he often points out that a Lunar's warfare is constant flux, and weaponry is not always available.

Night's Silent Mask:

Short even in his human form, Night's Silent Mask usually prefers to stay in his raccoon spirit form, lurking in the trees and watching both the forests and the non-Lunar members of the settlement. Though they are mighty, he knows that the nine Lunars present could be brought down by treachery and knives in the night.

Mask's free time is spent working with one of the newest recruits, Abasi. His teachings are geared towards how best to deceive one's foes, and has promised to teach a maneuver which can even cause a foe to strike himself.

Darik, Beast Tongue:

Walker in the Woods and Diplomat to Beasts, Darik is the pack's tie to the intelligent animals of Black Branches known as ata-beasts (ata-owls, ata-deer, and ata-bears being the most common). A No Moon sorcerer of some strength, he can also speak with almost anything in Creation, and has at times learned of Wyld encroachment even before the skilled Changing Moon, Mask. He has expressed respect for Tse's dual-mastery of warfare and knowledge, and has hinted that the respected newcomer might be able to talk his way into stretching his knowledge of Lore into Occult and sorcery, if he desires, but has not made a formal offer.

Arvid and Flickerfist:

This mated pair of Luna's Swords resents the assignment of three novice Lunars to the pack. Though they respect Tse's reputation and cannot doubt his prowess (as proven by his initiation), they would rather not have to "babysit younglings" and fear that the other two new members make for a horrible hole in their defenses. They spend much of their time patrolling The Wyld, and so the friction has yet been able to grow into true heat.

Sly Whisperer:

Changing Moon diplomat, Sly Whisperer is only known to the newcomers by discussion, as he spends most of his time roaming the lands of Halta to gather resources and support for the Lunars. It is said he can see your heart's desire and give it to you, or at least make you believe that he can. And all with a glance. Sometimes looked upon with distrust because of his dance with Chimerism, Sly Whisperer hides hooved feet inside specially made boots unless he expects a fight, in which case he removes the boots and hammers in his Moonsilver horseshoes.

Halta

The human kingdom of Halta has lived for centuries without the Dragon-blooded influence that most nations require for longevity. Their ability to forge peace with Fair Folk and war with Beastmen has kept them around, though it has often required covert or overt Lunar assistance.

Halta has been at war with the Linowan nation longer than any of its citizens has been alive. The inability to field large forces in the forests of the East leads to guerrilla warfare and small raids. But if either side could strike the decisive blow they certainly would. The years of war have bred hatred into almost every heart, so that while Beastman raids are repelled and not chased, Linowan war parties are crushed and routed, tracked to their homes, and those homes counterattacked with ferocity.

Living amongst the 1.8 million humans in Halta are thousands of ata-beasts, each of which is recognized as a full citizen. These talking and intelligent animals work side-by-side with men and even beastment.

The Wyld

Geography:

In the nearby Bordermarches, minor changes abound. Though never completely *right*, the changes are sometimes so minor that a traveler may not even realize he has entered the Wyld until a fair folk maiden is commenting on how beautiful his new scales are. Deeper in, the Middlemarches can never be mistaken for Creation. Wholesale change reigns, though there are always some aspects that remain the same. Even then, while an area may be completely alien looking, changes to it come slowly and gradually. In the Deep Wyld and beyond, chaos abounds and change can happen every instant. What once looked like a forest made of fields of trees, can quickly melt into an ocean of lava.

Whatever its look, the areas of the Border- and Middlemarches are all defined by a common theme. All creatures are catlike, gravity is bent, or an aspect of geometry (like straight lines) is completely missing. This is also true of the Deep Wyld, but the themes that far out can change as quickly as the scenery.

At the farthest edge of Creation's influence lay the elemental poles, with that of Wood being the nearest. Here the elemental dragons live at the heart of an element's expression. The pole of wood is the wellspring of life.

Travel:

Travel through the Wyld is done by intention. One decides where one wishes to be, and starts to walk. Eventually one gets there. However, unspoken desire can also guide your travel. A group seeking to meet an ally near a river of fire known to them both might arrive in the middle of a battle if one of its members is harboring feelings of anger or a desire for conflict.

A full route into the Wyld usually passes through multiple waypoints to its destination, and in the Bordermarches those waypoints are often stable, though they can be moved unexpectedly by a Fair Folk needing rapid travel. Beyond the borders though, paths change with varying frequency, and a path that once led through the Castle of Arenia the Fair and Just may now lead on straight to the Freehold of That Which Breathes.

Denizens:

Most common are the hobgoblins, creatures who take forms based on the elemental expression of the nearest pole. In the East, they frequently wear the bodies of wooden, spear-wielding pygmies. Vicious and craven, hobgoblins can swarm over human settlements and leave behind nothing but fear and pain, but require a firm guiding hand to stand in the face of stronger resistance.

By passing through the Shinma Nirakara at the Gateway of Sundraprisha, the Unshaped assume bodies that can survive in Creation and become the creatures known to man as Fair Folk or Fae. Embodiments of the chaotic Wyld, these beings' desires are as incomprehensible as their homeland. Though most want to destroy or feed upon Creation, there are a few who have even made treaties with humanity and taken homes in their city. Whether these beings are truly outcasts in search of allies or spies sent to destroy from within is unknown. With the Fair Folk, they might even be both.

The Wyld offers infinite creative force with no true underlying creativity. Everything found there is mimicry and combination of truer life in Creation. Even the lost Lunars, now Chimera, are but husks of their former selves. But one thing is true: the Wyld is a dangerous place for any to be, even the tattoo-protected Lunars.

Rules of the Game (house rules introduced, rules questions raised and answered, etc.)

Regaining Willpower:

Exalts roll their highest virtue every day in order to regain Willpower, instead of always rolling Conviction.