



ELVEN WARDANCERS

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This article introduces two new careers into your campaign. It includes a scenario in which the players meet the mysterious Wardancers for the first time, and gives Elvish characters an opportunity to pursue these new careers. Full details of the Wardancers' advance schemes, their new talents and the god they worship are given at the end of the chapter.

This encounter can take place in any large forested areas, a good way away from habitation. An ideal start is for the Characters to be lost in the woods, running out of food and starting to wonder where they are going to end up.

Some way from the forest settlement of her Wardancer troupe, Yavathol was enjoying the hunt. She slipped through the forest with the lithe grace of a big cat, her eyes flicking to each shadowy movement. Occasionally she paused to listen, crouching silently, ready to spring. Dappled sunlight glinted from the great sword that hung from her waist, and the light breeze ruffled her mane of dawn-red hair.

But this was no normal hunt, for the prey she sought was inedible and more dangerous than any deer or forest cat. Today she hunted Beastmen. Several of the Chaos-twisted creatures were nearby and the harsh sounds of their Dark Tongue drifted on the breeze towards her.

A fleeting thought slipped through her mind as she crept nearer: "Perhaps I should have brought young Brightbranch along. He has been accepted into the troupe, and is keen to be tested. This would have been a fair chance to prove him-self a true Wardancer."

She let the thought drift away-now was the time for concentrated action and the beauty of combat, not the worries of leadership. She valued these solo hunts for their feeling of solitary challenge - Brightbranch's time would come.

Just ahead of the Wardancer a group of five Beastmen were squabbling over the mangled remains of some hapless forest creature. They were hideous, covered in rank fur and flaking scales, their limbs marked with oozing sores, their fanged jaws dripping with blood. One had the bloated head of a huge toad, another steel-sharp talons and a long barbed tail. Yavathol found them abhorrent beyond words - even the most savage creatures of the

forest had their natural place, their own raw beauty, but these were abominations to be destroyed without mercy.

Yavathol's amber eyes shone as she casually stepped out of her cover into full view of the creatures, her blade held loosely in her hand. A startled grunt came from the Beastmen as they dropped their meal and spun around to face the Wardancer. A dry chuckle oozed from the lips

of Toad-head and a tentacle pushed from the mouth of one of its companions, at the tip of the tentacle was a single blinking eye, watching the Wardancer as Toad-head spoke.

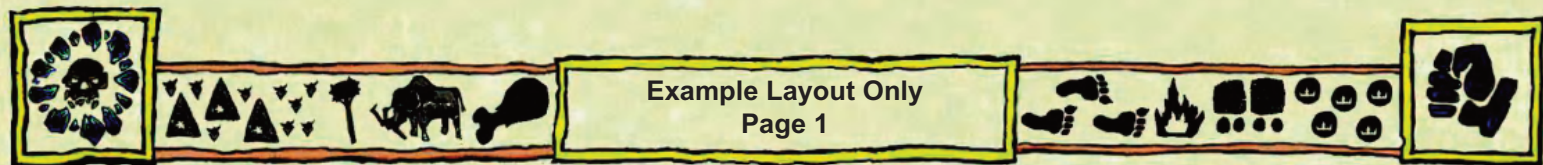
"Ssssss only, ksssst, only one Elfss?"

The Beastman's lips pulled from its teeth, like raw liver sliding across a butcher's marble slab. Its gaze flickered with concern as Yavathol stared fearlessly, her eyes holding only death. Shrieking dark gibberish, the Beastmen rushed forward, certain that victory would be theirs.

As they neared her, Yavathol tensed and sprang, timing the moment with exquisite judgement. Her body left the ground effortlessly as she flipped over the Beastmen in a graceful arc, landing behind them even as her sword whirled in a blur of silver. The toad-like beast fell and mouthed a final

gurgling curse into the dust as the Beastman's headless body stumbled forward, pumping crimson as it collapsed. The remaining Beastmen whirled to face her. Yavathol lashed out with her feet, a series of whirling high-kicks that left another Beastman twitching on the forest floor, its face a bloody ruin.

Yavathol began to keen, her voice rising and falling with strange harmonies as her body wove a hypnotic pattern through the web of sound. The Beastmen shook their





heads, confused by the strange song and the shifting shape. Another fell, cleanly sliced by Yavathol's ever-moving ever-whirling blade, an expression of pained surprise briefly crossing its face.

The last two broke and ran, terrified by the speed and ferocity of their foe. As they fled, Yavathol's arm moved in a blur and her band-axe tumbled through the air, sunlight glinting from the blade over the trees in a thousand broken patterns. A fourth Beastman crashed to the ground, its skull shattered into a mess of bone and torn flesh.

Yavathol let the last Beastman run - he would have some grim tales to tell his kin about this area of the forest. Cleaning and polishing her sword on a soft bright cloth, she returned to the troupe, well pleased with the hunt.

As she entered the clearing a young Elf rushed towards her. It was Brightbranch, his eyes alight with excitement.

"Yavathol, leader, the scouts report trespassers in the forest. Orcs have been sighted near the Brook of Many Colours, trailing another group from beyond the trees."

The young aspirant looked up at his leader, hope on his face. Yavathol smiled as she spoke.

"Come then. Fetch Morfoin. Now will be the time of your testing."

IN THE FOREST

You should start the ball rolling by filling the Characters with a sense of foreboding as they move through the thick woods. Having set the scene for your players, with faint daylight filtering down from above, damp mosses, scurrying noises from the undergrowth, and no signs of habitation for miles, read or paraphrase the following piece of text to them:

As you move on in the hope of finding a dry place to sleep you bear the chatter of harsh voices, coming from just up ahead. They are moving in your direction! Your steel is bright in your hands as more creatures than you can count sweep though the scrub toward you - big green and screaming - ORCS!

This encounter should be shamelessly staged to give the player characters the feeling that they are in deep trouble. Put them up against as many Orcs as are needed to give a fight that starts matched, but rapidly gets worse as more of the Orcs pile into the fray. Profiles for Orcs of various power levels are given below, and you should use as many of each type as you think are needed, but remember that the bulk of the Orc force should be made up of normal Orc Raiders. Make it obvious that the Orcs are offering no quarter, and that the only option for the Characters is to fight on, selling their lives dearly. If you are feeling particularly sadistic, you

could have them defeat one group of Orcs after a hard fight, and just as they start to congratulate themselves, hit 'em with two loads more of the nasty green things. Enjoy yourself!

ORC RAIDER

Orc communities typically base their settlements in the most inhospitable areas, favouring mountainous terrain. A culture ill suited to agriculture or other farming, these settlements most often send out raiders to surrounding areas to pillage and gather resources such as wood, food and slaves.

- Orc Raider Profile -

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fcl
35%	35%	35%	45%	25%	25%	30%	20%
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
1	12	3	4	4	0	0	0

Skills: Intimidate, Outdoor Survival, Perception, Ride or Swim, Scale Sheer Surface, Speak Language (Goblin Tongue), Torture

Talents: Menacing, Street Fighting, Strike Might Blow

Traits: Animosity, Choppas, Night Vision

COMBAT:

Armour (Light): Leather Jack

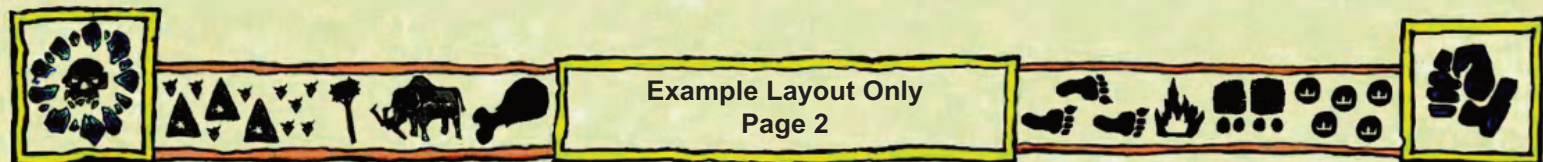
Armour Points: Head 0, Arms 1, Body 1, Legs 0

Weapons: Choppa (1d10+4, Special), Dagger (1d10+1), 50% chance of a Shield

Trappings: Various things best not thought about. (Indeed anyone looting an Orc catches the Kruts)

ORC TRAIT - ANIMOSITY

Orcs hate everything, even other Orcs and Goblins. Given half a chance, given even the merest shadow of an excuse, Orcs will fight amongst themselves – battling a rival Orc tribe if they are present, or battering other members of their own tribe in unseemly squabbles if that is all that is available. An Orc offered any kind of excuse must make a Willpower Test or immediately attack the other greenskins, be they Goblins, Hobgoblins or other Orcs.





ORC RAIDER SNEAK

Although Orcs have respect for savage warriors, they also hold the using of cunning in almost equal estimation. Some Orc Raiders go to great lengths to learn how to operate fully in the forests and make dangerous and unpredictable foes.

- Orc Raider Sneak Profile -

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fcl
45%	45%	35%	45%	35%	25%	30%	20%
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
1	12	3	4	4	0	0	0

Skills: Command, Follow Trail, Intimidate, Outdoor Survival, Perception, Ride or Swim, Scale Sheer Surface, Speak Language (Goblin Tongue), Torture

Talents: Menacing, Street Fighting, Strike Might Blow

Traits: Animosity, Choppas, Night Vision

COMBAT:

Armour (Light): Leather Jack and Leather Skull Cap

Armour Points: Head 1, Arms 1, Body 1, Legs 0

Weapons: Choppa (1d10+4, Special), Dagger (1d10+1), Shield

Trappings: Various things best not thought about. (Indeed anyone looting an Orc catches the Kruts)

ORC TRAIT - CHOPPA

Whatever an Orc's other equipment he will always have a Choppa. An Orc Choppa is a huge heavy blade, which in the hands of an Orc can cut through armour with ease. When wielded by an Orc a Choppa inflicts SB+1 damage on the first round of melee and SB damage thereafter. If wielded by a creature other than an Orc, a Choppa is treated as a Hand Weapon but with the Slow quality.

ORC RAIDER BRUTE

Orc raiding parties are led by the biggest, toughest and meanest of their number, battle scarred veterans who have bullied there way to the top. These individuals have forces there mates to hand them the best weapons and armour the raiding party has acquired, and constitute its most formidable members.

- Orc Raider Profile -

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fcl
55%	45%	45%	55%	40%	25%	40%	20%
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
2	16	4	5	4	0	0	0

Skills: Consume Alcohol, Command, Intimidate, Outdoor Survival, Perception, Ride or Swim, Scale Sheer Surface, Speak Language (Goblin Tongue), Torture

Talents: Menacing, Specialist Weapon Group (Two-Handed), Street Fighting, Strike Might Blow

Traits: Animosity, Choppas, Night Vision

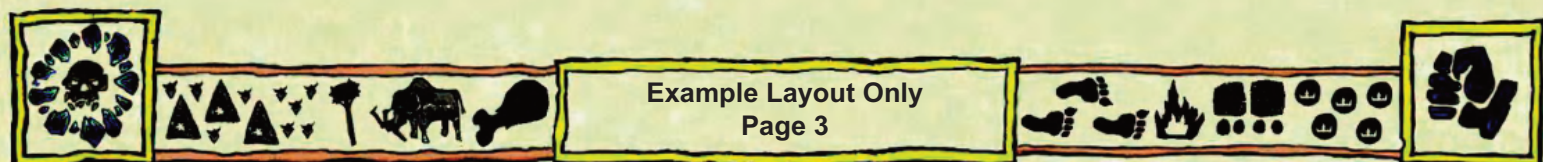
COMBAT:

Armour (Medium): Mail Shirt over Leather Jack and Leather Skull Cap

Armour Points: Head 1, Arms 1, Body 3, Legs 0

Weapons: Great Weapon (1d10+5, Impact, Slow), Choppa (1d10+5, Special), Dagger (1d10+2)

Trappings: Various things best not thought about. (Indeed anyone looting an Orc catches the Kruts)





HELP ARRIVES

Just as things are getting really desperate, help arrives in the form of the Wardancers Yavathol and Morfoin, accompanied by Brightbranch (profiles below), and things look up for the Characters. As this whole encounter is staged, it is a little unfair to let your players spend fate points here - a good time to bring on the Wardancers is as a player is about to spend a fate point. Instead of expending a fate point, the Character should be rescued by one of the Wardancers cart-wheeling into the attack. You should make their entrance as dramatic as possible; let out a loud battle-yell and read the following...

A cry that splits the air freezes the Orcs for a moment, as two lithe Elven figures with splendid manes of red hair rush into the fray, surrounded by a blur of whirling steel. Closely following them is a younger Elf who sports a more traditional haircut and also attacks the Orcs, all the while screaming an ululating battle-cry. The Orcs' confusion lasts for but a moment and they quickly move to defend themselves. Heartened by this changing of the tide, you also begin to fight with renewed vigour-the odds are still bad, but at least you have a chance.

The Wardancers commence their attack using the Storm of Blades special action (see below). Thereafter, they will fight with great ferocity, using whatever abilities you think appropriate. You should try and balance the fight so that

after a rousing combat it ends with the Characters and Wardancers victorious. It would be easy to overdo the Wardancers, letting them destroy the Orcs while the Characters stand and watch. Try to avoid this, making it clear that in order to be victorious, the Characters are going to have to fight.

Feel perfectly free to roll a handful of dice for the Wardancers and their opponents, and then ignore the numbers, simply describing the course of their side of the battle as you want it to go, keeping it exciting and a close-run contest-you don't want the players to sit around getting bored watching you roll for every Wardancer attack and Orc counter-attack. The Characters' own attacks should be rolled as usual.

AFTER THE FIGHT

When the fight is over, Yavathol will embrace Brightbranch, welcoming him to the brethren of her troupe. The young Elf will be proud and a touch embarrassed.

Even though the fight has ended, the Character's troubles are by no means over - the Wood Elves also regard the Characters as trespassers in their forest, and the Characters will have to do some fast talking to escape conflict with the Wardancers. Before attempting to run this pivotal role-playing encounter, you should carefully read all the information at the end of this chapter which details the Wardancers and their god, their positions in Elven society and their attitudes to the various races that may be present in the party. This will give you all the background you need.





YAVATHOL

Bladesinger (Ex Entertainer – Ex Wardancer)

Yavathol is the leader of the Wardancer troupe that lives with the Wood Elves in this forest. She is a mighty warrior, used to the respect that her abilities and position command. Her manner is abrasive, and the Wardancer trait of condescending arrogance reaches a peak with this individual!

Appearance: Yavathol's appearance is striking-lithe and graceful, clad in well-cut leather, jewels sparkling at her throat with a cascading mane of dawn-red hair that sets off the strange amber of her piercing eyes. The mighty sword that she swings with such ease has the marks of many battles upon it, and shows the sheen that comes with great age and good care.

Reactions: Arrogant and self-assured, she demands to know what the Characters are doing in the forest. She is not impressed if the characters are over-apologetic, but nor does she react well to brash impoliteness. If the party contains any Elves, she mainly addresses them, all but ignoring the other Characters.

Yavathol is merely disdainful of Humans and Halflings, but she tolerates them. The main thing that impresses the Wardancer is prowess in combat, and if the party has killed many Orcs, and demonstrated courage and fortitude, Yavathol is more inclined to take the Characters seriously.

If there are any Dwarfs in the party, Yavathol's reactions vary according to the Dwarf's performance in the combat with the Orcs. She has an active dislike of Dwarfs, and even if a Dwarf character showed prowess in combat, the best reaction from Yavathol is along the lines of a pat on the head and a condescending remark ("doughty little fighter, isn't he?").

If the Dwarf seemed to do little in the fight, Yavathol may well insult him, casting aspersions about "timid burrow dwellers" and the like. If the Dwarf Character (or his companions) cannot keep his responses under control, Yavathol offers to destroy the troublesome vermin, and if further provoked does not hesitate to attack the offending character. If it becomes clear that the Dwarf is treated as an equal member of the party, she becomes very suspicious of the Characters' motives for being in the forest. If the players are not careful, they will have another fight on their hands-one which they are unlikely to win.

The only thing that causes the Wardancer to grudgingly accept a Dwarf is if the Dwarf rescues or helps one of the Wardancers during the fight. You could arrange for a Dwarf Character to be in a position to assist an outnumbered Brightbranch during the fight - but remember that if the Character doesn't go to the Elf's aid, Yavathol's reaction will be one of anger. This is a sticky

situation for the player of a Dwarf and you must strike a balance between giving the player a hard time and being unfair. Whatever you do, don't compromise Yavathol - she is not intimidated by the party and won't stand for threats or insults.

If the party manage to converse with Yavathol without annoying her to the point of attack (which would be rather bad news for the party!), she offers to escort them to the Elven settlement before night finally falls. Before she does this, however, any Dwarfs will have to be at least disarmed, and at worst bound and gagged!

- Yavathol -

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fcl
73%	57%	51%	53%	67%	41%	53%	37%
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
3	16	5	5 (7)	6	0	0	0

Skills: Academic Knowledge (Religion+10%), Charm, Command, Common Knowledge (Elves+10%, the Empire), Dodge Blow+10%, Evaluate, Perception+10%, Performer (Acrobatics+20%, Dancer+20%, Singer), Ride, Speak Language (Eltharin, Reikspiel), Swim

Talents: Aethyric Attunement, Ambidextrous, Excellent Vision, Fleet Footed, Lightning Parry, Lightning Reflexes, Night Vision, Quick Draw, Savvy, Shadow Dance (Storm of Blades, The Shadows Coil, Whirling Death, Woven Mist)*, Specialist Weapon (Throwing, Two-Handed), Stout-Hearted, Strike Mighty Blow, Strike to Injure, Swashbuckler

* The Shadow Dance talent is described further on in this chapter.

COMBAT:

Armour (Light): Tight Fitting Leather Jerkin

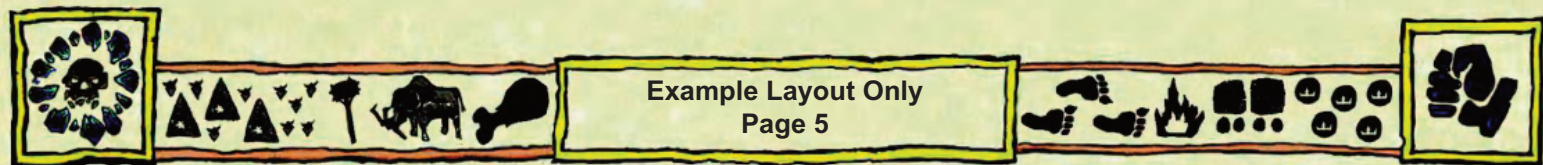
Armour Points: Head 0, Arms 0, Body 1, Legs 0

Weapons: Best Quality Double Handed Sword (Great Weapon, 1d10+5, Impact, Slow), Best Quality Sword and Axe (Hand Weapons, 1d10+5), Dagger (1d10+2)

Trappings: Talismanic Tattoos, Silver Tiger's Eye Gemstone Choker (Worth 100 gc)

TALISMANIC TATTOOS

As with many Bladesingers, Yavathol has been inscribed with Wood Elf runic tattoos that trap and contain the winds of magic. While Yavathol wears no metal armour, she not only gains a +2 bonus to her TB but also gains a +10% bonus to any willpower tests to resist magic.





FANTASY ROLEPLAY

MORFOIN

Wardancer (Ex Kithband Warrior)

A valued member of the troupe, Morfoin is the chief musician and plays the drums and pipes with great virtuosity. Less arrogant than his leader, Morfoin will move to assist any wounded characters using his Heal skill. Morfoin sports a very flamboyant hairstyle, with much lime and tree resin supporting his magnificent sweeping locks. Morfoin will follow Yavathol's lead when it comes to dealing with the Characters, but he will point out that the



Characters "...have no more love for Orcs than we do."

- Morfoin -

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fcl
59%	53%	41%	40%	59%	43%	45%	36%
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
2	12	4	4	6	0	0	0

Skills: Academic Knowledge (Religion), Common Knowledge (Elves), Concealment, Dodge Blow+10%, Follow Trail, Heal, Outdoor Survival, Perception, Performer (Acrobat, Dancer, Musician, Singer), Scale Sheer Surface, Silent Move, Speak Language (Eltharin, Reikspiel)

Talents: Ambidextrous, Coolheaded, Excellent Vision, Fleet Footed, Marksman, Night Vision, Shadow Dance (Storm of Blades, Woven Mist)*, Specialist Weapon (Longbow, Throwing, Two-Handed), Stout-Hearted, Swashbuckler, Warrior Born

* The Shadow Dance talent is described further on in this chapter.

COMBAT:

Armour (Light): Leather Jack

Armour Points: Head 0, Arms 1, Body 1, Legs 0

Weapons: Pair of matched Short Swords (Hand Weapons, 1d10+4), Two Throwing Axes (1d10+2)

Trappings: Drum, Pipes, War Paint

BRIGHTBRANCH

Scout (Ex Vagabond)

Brightbranch is a young Elf, aspiring to become a Wardancer. He has been through all the rituals for acceptance into the troupe (explained below), bar one-his test. This battle with the Orcs is being used as Brightbranch's test. If he acquits himself well in the fight he is to become a Wardancer, and his special training will begin. He therefore fights with courage and determination, making a special effort to be seen performing some heroic action in sight of Yavathol.

The youngster is totally in awe of his Wardancer companions, and acts in the same way that they do - remember; he is anxious to belong and may, in a rather irritating fashion, repeat the things they say.

- Brightbranch -

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fcl
51%	63%	43%	37%	61%	57%	52%	39%
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
2	15	4	3	6	0	0	0

Skills: Animal Care, Common Knowledge (Bretonnia, Elves, the Empire), Concealment, Dodge Blow, Follow Trail, Navigation, Outdoor Survival, Perception, Performer (Dancer), Ride, Secret Language (Ranger Tongue), Secret Signs (Scout), Silent Move, Speak Language (Eltharin, Reikspiel), Swim

Talents: Charm Animal, Excellent Vision, Fleet Footed, Night Vision, Orientation, Rapid Reload, Savvy, Seasoned Traveller, Specialist Weapon (Longbow), Sure Shot

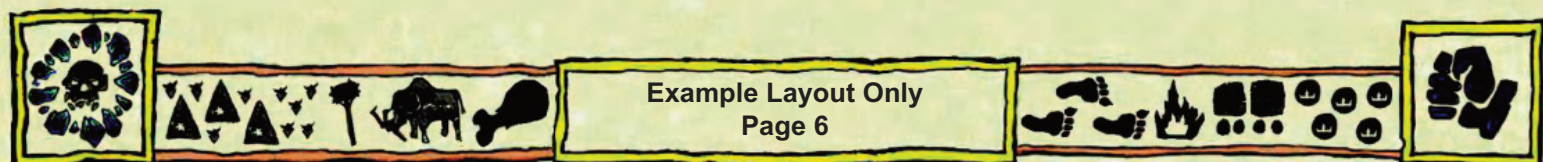
COMBAT:

Armour (Light): Leather Jerkin

Armour Points: Head 0, Arms 0, Body 1, Legs 0

Weapons: Pair of matched Axes (Hand Weapons, 1d10+4), Two-Handed Sword (Great Weapon, 1d10+4, Impact, Slow)

Trappings: War Paint





THE SETTLEMENT

Assuming the Elves are well disposed to the party (if they aren't then the Characters will be abandoned in the forest or killed, depending on the extent of any problems that arise), they lead them through the woods to the clearing that holds the Elven settlement. Read (or paraphrase) the following passage to your players:

The Elves motion for you to follow them, and move off at a rapid pace through the thick undergrowth, Before long you come to a cunningly concealed path, which you follow for about half an hour as the last light departs, leaving you in darkness.

The Elves have Night Vision and are not hampered by the darkness. All the characters without this advantage will have problems-keep having them stumble; possibly losing things on the forest floor. The Elves object if anyone lights a lamp, stating that the light will attract predators. If asked, they will slow down and help the characters, but will make tactless comments on the inferiority of Human eyes. After another hour the party finally reach the settlement.

At last you seem to have arrived-the path opens out into a large clearing, dimly lit by a communal fire that burns in the centre of the camp. A mighty oak tree dominates the clearing, and Yavathol moves toward it, telling you to wait. The other two Elves wait with you and are joined by several others who move over from the fire. They watch you in silence, obviously waiting for something. After a few minutes the Wardancer returns, accompanied by a noble-looking Elf of great stature.

"Welcome," the Elf says. "Yavathol has told me of the events in the forest, and you who kill Orcs are given the right of guests here I, Highborn Erdil, decree it."

Yavathol snorts, and leaves the group, followed closely by her two companions.

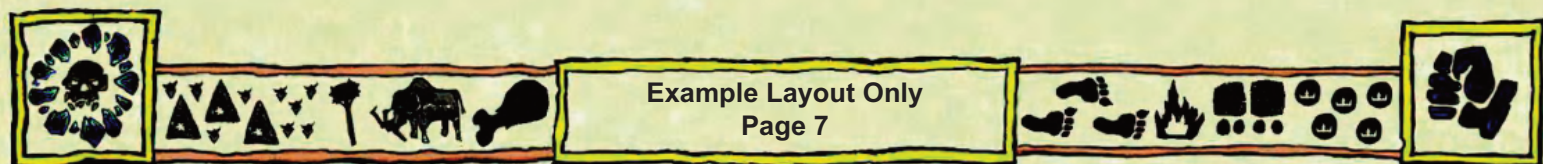
"You must forgive Yavathol, she has many things to concern her - Brightbranch has today proved himself worthy of the name Wardancer. Come warm yourselves by the fire, and avail yourselves of what food and drink we have to offer."

The Characters are wined and dined, and offered a hut for their night's rest. Any troublesome Dwarfs are confined to a hut with some meagre food and water. Those who succeeded in impressing the Wardancers are treated in the same way as the rest of the party, although

they are not allowed to carry weapons within the settlement.

Many of the Wood Elves are curious about the ways of Men, and quiz the characters for some time. Few of the Elves have ever visited a town or city, and they are especially interested in descriptions of these, shaking their heads, not understanding how any sane creature could live under such conditions. With their stress on living in harmony with nature, the Elves start a lively debate on the merits of the different lifestyles. Some of them may even express an interest in trying out the alternative lifestyle (much to the baffled amusement of their companions). Wood Elves attach great importance to the skills of impassioned debate and they freely dispense fruit wines to lubricate the discussion.

This encounter is rich in role-playing potential, giving the players the chance to recount past exploits in a stimulating environment. For their part, the Elves are glad to pass on general information about Wardancers, giving the Characters a different perspective on this strange caste of warriors. As it gets late, the Elves play some music, inviting the Characters to do the same before gradually moving off, leaving the Characters to get some sleep.





Brightbranch stood in the centre of the large hut, a lone still figure amid a blurring tumult of whirling, sweat-sheened bodies. He felt excited, proud and nervous all at the same time, for this was a great day. Today-if all went well-he would at last become a Wardancer.

It felt like a lifetime since he had taken his first steps into this strange and sacred caste. He could barely remember the time when, like the rest of his Elven kin, he used to think of Wardancers as alien beings-almost a separate race. His body had been trained to a degree of strength, speed and agility which his younger self would not have thought possible. His mind and spirit had been trained too-the wild music of the sacred drums and flutes thrilled through his body, calling to something deep, deep inside him. The effort to remain still was almost beyond him. And finally, the previous day, he had proved himself in battle. Now only the last rituals remained.

The five dancers leapt, spun and somersaulted around him in a mesmerising pattern as the voices of the bone flutes soared higher and higher. Then, almost without seeing the movement, he felt a touch on his shoulder. It was time for him to join the dance.

He leaped upwards like a salmon, somersaulting to kick the high ridge-pole of the hut and shake down a few fronds of the bracken roof. His landing was perfect-scant inches away from one of the ring of Wardancers, who twisted away like a willow-branch in the wind. But Brightbranch was faster, and landed a light tap on his shoulder-the mere token of a killing blow. The Wardancer left the ring; now there were four.

Brightbranch launched himself into a high back flip, and three Wardancers lunged into the empty space where he had been. He landed, and swift taps on two shoulders left only the last pair of dancers in the ring.

The two Wardancers leaped towards him simultaneously

as he cart wheeled to his left. At the last minute, one of his attackers - a tall Elf-maiden with luminous amber eyes and resin-stiffened hair the colour of the dawn - twisted towards him following his evasion. As his feet hit the earth floor, he bounced into a cartwheel back to his right.

The second Wardancer was surprised for a fraction of a heartbeat, long enough for Brightbranch to land his fourth blow.

The others formed a loose circle around Brightbranch and his last opponent. They circled each other warily; Yavathol was the leader of the troupe, and Brightbranch more than half-suspected that she had been sparing him so far, so that she could test him to the limits in single combat. Her cat-like eyes glowed in the half-light of the hut, and her smile still disturbed him.

Brightbranch stayed still, evenly balanced on the balls of his feet. He knew that she was his most dangerous opponent, and decided to let her come to him: Then, at least, he would have the advantage of balance.

After what seemed like an hour, Yavathol moved. She flowed towards him like the wind rippling long grass. Brightbranch launched himself into a high leap but somehow she was there with him when he should have left her flat-footed on the ground. He twisted away from her reaching hand and hit the ground rolling. He was still inside the ring, but only just:

Yavathol landed on both feet, and bounced like a ball into a back somersault that took her clear across the hut. Brightbranch hurled himself into the air, and the two landed simultaneously. Two hands flashed out like striking snakes to two shoulders. Brightbranch stood uncertainly, not knowing whose blow had landed first.

"Well done, Brightbranch," Yavathol chuckled like a purring wildcat. "The fight is yours."





THE NEXT DAY

If the party includes no Elves then they are woken just after dawn and escorted to the edge of the woods. They are warned about venturing unbidden so deep into the forests of the World, and then their escort departs, leaving the characters to go about their business as though nothing had happened.

If the party contains one or more Elves they are invited to stay to watch Brightbranch's final acceptance into the Wardancer troupe. Read the following text to the players, or use it as a basis for your own description:

After a satisfying breakfast of nut porridge with berries and fruit juices, Highborn Erdil enters your hut.

"Good morning. I trust you slept well and that the breakfast has filled you. Before you leave us, I thought you might wish to witness Brightbranch's final acceptance into Yavathol's troupe. It will be a display of a most worthwhile nature. Outsiders are not normally invited to such an event, but since your fates crossed the path of Brightbranch's test, Yavathol has agreed to let you watch."

The wry grin on the Elf's face shows that this agreement was not easily won.

"You may wonder why I make you this offer-the reason is simple. It can only strengthen our position for the world outside to have some knowledge of the power of our warriors. So come, keep silent and watch."

Highborn Erdil leads you across the clearing to a large hut, set away from the rest of the settlement. Many other Elves are already standing in a wide circle inside the hut, and your host gestures for you to take a place in the ring. As you do so, a compelling drum-beat begins and Morfoin appears at the hut entrance, beating a large drum that seems to be made from the skin of an Orc. Several other Wardancers appear, their bodies smeared with rainbow hues that match the bright colours of their hair. They all move to the beat of the drum, which speeds up as the dancing becomes more frenetic. A young Elf who you recognize as Brightbranch despite his newly spiked, dyed hair and body paint, moves into the

hut, His eyes are glazed and he carries a sword.

"He has been up all night" Highborn Erdil whispers. "Practising."

As the youngster moves into a whirling sword dance with the other Wardancers, you can well believe it. The display is incredible - the elves seem to overcome gravity as they cavort and leap, turning somersaults in mid-air, back flipping around the but, while all the time keeping their blades under masterly control. The beat reaches a crescendo, and even as you are sure they must all collapse with exhaustion, the dance comes to an end with a mighty gasp. Silence falls and Yavathol, seemingly unaffected by the rigorous display, steps forward to speak.

"This dance serves two purposes. Firstly to remind us all of the power we have, here in the heart of our forest, and secondly to welcome Brightbranch to our troupe. He is now a Wardancer, elite among Elves, a warrior apart. Give him the respect he deserves."

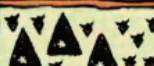
A feral grin spreads across Yavathol's face as she turns to address you.

"I see that some of you are curious about just how good we Wardancers are. If your courage matches your curiosity, you are welcome to pit your skills against mine."

A murmur runs through the assembled Elves as Highborn Erdil blinks, obviously startled at this development. His gaze locks with that of the mighty Wardancer before he speaks.

"If any among you wish to test yourselves against Yavathol, Then that is your right. But I have bestowed the guest right upon you, and your lives are now sacred. I suggest that those of you who wish to fight, fight together against Yavathol. As soon as you are wounded, you must drop out of the fight. Yavathol you must yield before you die, for I do not wish to lose you. If Yavathol yields before all who oppose her are wounded, she will be judged the loser."

If any of the Characters wish to take up the challenge,





the assembled Elves form a large circle, in which the fight takes place. Highborn Erdil points out that no dishonour will come from declining the challenge, but the sneer on Yavathol's face is at odds with his words.

Yavathol fights to the best of her ability, holding nothing back. She only yields when brought down to 1 or less Wounds. If any Characters try to fight on when wounded, they are dragged out of the ring by a group of Elves and berated for their lack of control. If Yavathol is defeated, she congratulates the Characters' fighting ability, even praising any Dwarfs who fought. If she wins, she condescendingly praises the Characters' courage in facing up to her. The other Elves treat any who fought the Wardancer with new respect, regardless of how well they did. After the fight refreshments will be served, and Morfoin treats any wounds using his Heal skill.

If any of the Elves in the party express an interest in learning the way of the Wardancer you should move onto the next section, detailing Training and the Wardancer career. If no such interest is expressed (and Highborn Erdil will certainly not suggest it) the party are provided with some provisions and escorted to the edge of the forest, effectively ending this adventure.

TRAINING

Having witnessed the awesome abilities of the Wardancers, it is quite possible that your players may express an interest in taking up the career for themselves. If this does happen, Highborn Erdil first explains that such training could only be considered for an Elf, and that the candidate would have to go through all the rituals and testing that a member of the Elven community is expected to complete before becoming a Wardancer. If any players concerned are still interested, the Elf Highborn suggests that they go and speak with Yavathol, for it is she that makes all decisions concerning the settlement's troupe of Wardancers.

The candidates are received by Yavathol in the troupe's hut. At first she is very sceptical of the newcomers' commitment and must be convinced that these characters are serious in intent. Much depends on the candidates' performance when Yavathol challenged the Characters at Brightbranch's final acceptance. If they fought with Yavathol, she is well disposed towards them. If they declined the challenge with a suitable excuse, perhaps praising the dancer, Yavathol is prepared to listen. But if the candidates seemed to just back out of the challenge, no amount of talking will convince Yavathol that they are worthy to become Wardancers.

Provided the characters can convince her of their commitment (role-play Yavathol's rather abrasive character to the full!), Yavathol is happy to accept the characters for testing. The first stage in the process of

becoming a Wardancer is the candidates' ritual acceptance into the caste. This must be done before the testing, as it is considered important that Loec, the Wardancer's god, should be alerted to the candidates' attempts, so he may aid worthy ones and hinder those he considers unsuitable. In reality such attention from Loec is rare, but the rituals must be adhered to.

The ritual is simple, and takes place in front of the whole settlement. Candidates must bathe three times, symbolically washing away their former lives in preparation for their new one. The aspirants are then dressed in simple white robes and must kneel before the assembled troupe. The troupe musicians play a free-wheeling chant, calling Loec to accept the aspirants. Yavathol asks the candidates if they are serious in their aspirations, reminding them that it is not a decision to be taken lightly. This statement of commitment from the candidates ends the ritual. The rest of the day is spent coaching the aspirants in the dance forms that later become the basis for the Wardancer's abilities. The candidates must now take up residence in the Wardancers hut.

On the following day the characters' testing takes place, this begins with another ritual dance, at the end of which the characters are given the arms they will use as Wardancers. The test proper then begins.

The test may take one of several forms (see below). You should choose the one that most appeals to you. Whatever you choose, make the test a real one for the Character. It would be easy to let it become a mere formality, with the Character assured of making Wardancer status. You should avoid this, and try to make it clear to the player that this is for real-no free rides. This will make the test exciting for the players, and will enhance their feelings of having achieved something special if they succeed.

Three different types of test are detailed below:

The test may take the form of fighting with some convenient enemy (such as the Orcs that Brightbranch was tested against). If you choose this option, the aspirants are kept on alert until Yavathol's scouts bring word of a suitable enemy: Goblinoids or Beastmen are the most likely opponents, but you could use almost any monster. The important thing is to balance the encounter to give your characters a tough challenge. They are to be accompanied by Yavathol but she may well stand at the sidelines, appraising the Characters' performance. She moves to rescue the Characters if needed, but only when they are in deep trouble - taking critical hits or spending fate points! Any Character who shouts for help will get it, but is deemed to have failed the test.

The candidate may be tested by engaging the leader of the troupe in single combat. Yavathol favours this test for any Character who has not already fought with her. In





order to pass the test the aspirant must successfully strike the troupe-leader at least once during the fight and most importantly, the candidate must not back out of the fight even if they fear for their life - the leader will stop the fight when he or she is satisfied with the aspirant's performance, often inflicting terrible wounds to test the courage of the candidate.

The final form of test could involve the rest of the party. Each aspirant must land a blow on six non-Wardancers, fought one after the other. These opponents are usually Elves, but honoured guests (i.e. the party!) are also acceptable. As soon as the aspirant lands a blow (i.e. causes a Wound) he moves on to the next opponent. The opponents are expected to fight back to the best of their abilities, and Yavathol is on the look-out for any cheating. The aspirants may yield at any time, failing the test.

After this test the aspirants must perform a ritual dance to Yavathol's satisfaction. The best way to run this is to get your players to jig around the room! If your players are too inhibited to allow you to get away with this, make each character take a Toughness test, reflecting the exhaustion of fighting six opponents and a Dexterity test to show the elegance of his movements. A failure in either means that the aspirant makes a botch of the dance and fails the test to become a Wardancer.

GAMESMASTER HINTS

When you run this part of the adventure, you should try to capture the feelings of ritual and ceremony-this is an important step for the characters, and you should make it a moment to remember. Assuming the characters pass their test, they spend the night practising some basic acrobatics in preparation for the next day's public acceptance into the troupe. The characters also have their hair dyed and set, and their bodies are painted with bright patterns that must be left to wear off with time.

After all this the characters' real training begins, during which they learn all the Wardancers' special skills, the code of the Wardancer and their place in Elven society. The new Wardancers are also instructed in the worship of Loec, the Lord of the Dance. You can tackle this training in one of two ways-both options are given below, and you should choose the one that most suits your campaign's flavour.

Option 1: Training takes a few weeks and is paid for with experience points, just as with other career changes. This is the best option if you want to keep the character in the campaign for the next adventure.

Option 2: The complexity of the skills that must be learnt means that the training takes a couple of years. This amount of time would mean little to an Elf, but a lot to a character's player. What is he going to play with while all this training is going on? This need not be a problem -

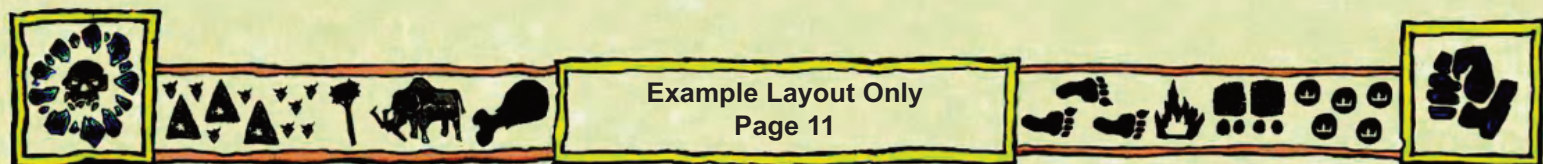
there happens to be a Wardancer in the troupe who wishes to adventure in the outside world. If the player agrees, you can generate such a character and have the player concerned adopt the role of this Wardancer. This gives the player a spare character in case of future need and the Wardancer in training can be brought back into play at a suitable point later in the campaign.

WARDANCERS IN ELF SOCIETY

Being a Wardancer is more than just a matter of acquiring a few new skills. The Wardancer usually adopts the worship of a new god, and takes up a life that often involves living communally with the rest of a Wardancer troupe. Being accepted into the caste marks the start of a new life for the Elf - Wardancers see themselves as an elite group of warriors, and their dedication often borders on the fanatical. This elitist and often supercilious attitude is the reason for their separation from the mainstream of Wood Elf society and their habit of living in communities at the edge of a normal Elven settlement.

Although most troupes are still closely attached to a nearby Wood Elf settlement and generally accept the instructions (or suggestions, as they see them) of the settlement's leader, the troupe's activities are largely determined by their chief Wardancer, a respected warrior treated as a near equal by the local Wood Elf leader. Wardancers are greatly admired by other Elves, for no one disputes the Wardancers' contribution to the safety of the Elven settlements. But underlying this admiration is a certain amount of fear and suspicion for those who choose to live apart - the strange behaviour of these warriors is often disconcerting.

You should try to make sure that any characters who become Wardancers take on board all these social changes, and don't just treat their new career as a few nifty techniques for becoming two-dimensional killing machines. Use the approbation of the Elven community and even an occasional blessing from Loec to reinforce the character's behaviour as a Wardancer. If the character continually acts in a graceless or cowardly manner, feel free to show Loec's displeasure by suspending one or more of the character's special skills (the character is wracked by strange muscular pains, preventing the use of the skill) until he has proved himself by undertaking a suitable trial.





FANTASY ROLEPLAY

~WARDANCER~

Among the Wood Elves of the Old World, some of the most feared and respected warriors are the Kindred of Caidath, or as they are more commonly known, the Wardancers. They live for the glory of battle, and dedicate themselves to reaching the peak of fighting prowess. They are also masters of courtesy and dance, performing their intricate manoeuvres with consummate ease and grace.

Wardancers are to be found in many of the larger Elven settlements in the forests of the Old World. They prefer the company of their own kind, but often live a little way apart from the main settlement, practising their war chants and feats of arms while waiting for action.

Wardancers may become adventurers for a number of reasons. An adventurer's life offers plenty of action, and almost unlimited opportunities to hone their skills against a variety of opponents. They are wilder than the majority of Elves, and some find life in the forests tame and dull. Wardancers may even take to adventuring among other races as a result of an unspoken disgrace or indiscretion, much (although it's unwise to make the comparison) as a Dwarf may become a Troll Slayer.

Wardancers are distinguished by their graceful pride, their love of fighting and their fondness for spectacularly dyed hair, stiffened with lime and tree resin.

Non-Elves may not enter this career

- Wardancer Advance Scheme -

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fcl
+20%	+10%	+5%	+5%	+15%	-	+10%	+5%
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
+1	+4	-	-	-	-	-	-

Skills: Academic Knowledge (Religion), Dodge Blow, Gossip or Performer (Singer), Perception or Performer (Musician), Performer (Acrobat), Performer (Dancer)

Talents: Ambidextrous, Fleet Footed, Shadow Dance (Any 2)*, Specialist Weapon Group (Throwing), Specialist Weapon Group (Two-Handed), Stout-Hearted, Swashbuckler

Trappings: Pair of Hand Weapons, Great Weapon (Sword or Axe), Talismanic Tattoos or War Paint

Career Entries: Bounty Hunter, Entertainer, Kithband Warrior, Pit Fighter, Scout

Career Exits: Bladesinger, Judicial Champion, Minstrel, Veteran, Vampire Hunter

~BLADESINGER~

The most accomplished of the Kindred of Caidath are the Heralds of the Elven trickster god, Loec. Who are often more commonly known as Bladesingers, Feastmasters or Deathdancers.

It is these wild and unpredictable dancers who lead the wood elves in there music and rejoicing, as well as performing the key parts in the intricate dance rituals that the Wardancers perform to re-enact Wood Elf history.

Non-Elves may not enter this career

- Bladesinger Advance Scheme -

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fcl
+40%	+20%	+15%	+15%	+25%	-	+20%	+10%
A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
+2	+6	-	-	-	-	-	-

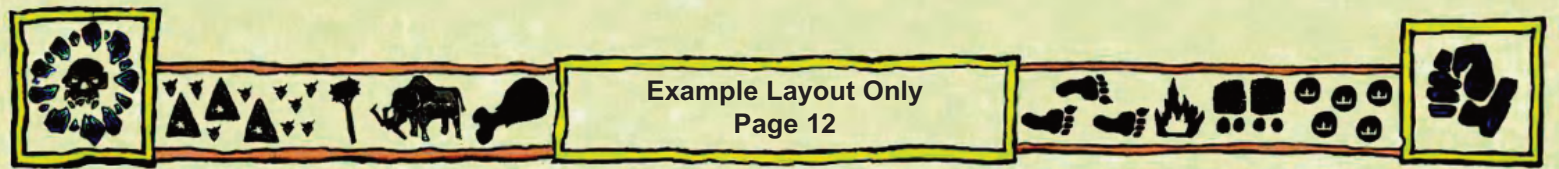
Skills: Academic Knowledge (Religion), Command, Common Knowledge (Elves), Dodge Blow, Intimidate or Performer (Any), Performer (Acrobat), Performer (Dancer)

Talents: Shadow Dance (Any 4)*, Sharpshooter or Lightning Parry, Strike Mighty Blow or Strike to Injure

Trappings: Best Quality Pair of Hand Weapons, Best Quality Two Handed Weapon (Sword or Axe), Talismanic Tattoos or War Paint

Career Entries: Wardancer

Career Exits: Captain, Champion, Outlaw Chief





NEW RULES FOR WARDANCERS

NEW TALENT

SHADOW DANCE

You have been taught one of the ancient and mystical Shadow dances of Loec, the favoured rituals of the Trickster god. This talent is unique in that it is not one talent but many, and each must be acquired individually. Each Shadow Dance Talent gives you access to a single Wardance that works as a specific Advanced Action. However, due to the strain of performing them, you may never choose to perform any of these new Advanced Actions twice in a row. Additionally, these Advanced Actions may never be performed while wearing any Armour that applies a penalty to Agility or Movement.



NEW ADVANCED ACTIONS - WARDANCES

The following are the four most common Shadow Dances of Loec, although other ancient and secret wardances are said to exist. These have evocative names such as Aerial Fury, Kurnuous' Leap, Silent Ghost and The Dance of Doom; the latter most often performed by the Bladesinger Champion, Wychwethyl the Wild.

STORM OF BLADES (FULL ACTION)

Raising a rousing war chant, the Wardancer dances up to an opponent and rains blow after blow upon them; moving with such speed that the eye cannot follow each distinct cut and thrust. The Wardancers may move up to his Charge move, and then make a number of melee attacks upon the foe equal to his Attacks characteristic. Note that unlike a normal charge there is no minimum distance that must be traversed, and the last 4 foot need not be in a straight line. A Wardancer must have Attacks 2 or better to take advantage of this Wardance.

THE SHADOWS COIL (FULL ACTION)

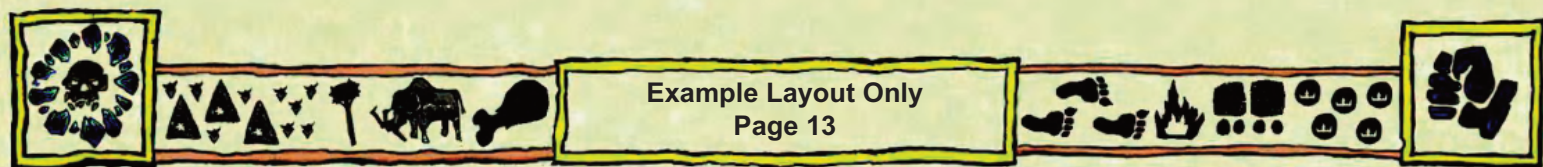
This action allows the Wardancer to hold an opponent off by performing an intricate, almost balletic, sequence of jumps, twists and back flips. The Wardancer strikes no blows this round, instead concentrating upon distracting his foe. Until the characters next turn, all melee attacks made against him suffer a -30% Weapon Skill penalty. In addition the Wardancer may parry one incoming melee attack successfully made against him, exactly as if he had adopted a Parrying Stance. (See page 128 of the Core rule book.)

WHIRLING DEATH (FULL ACTION)

When he throws himself into the state of maniacal fury known as Whirling Death, each strike of a Wardancer's blade is made with uncanny precision, capable of severing a head or piercing a heart with one deceptively elegant stroke. The may make a number of melee attacks upon the foe equal to his Attacks characteristic as if he had made a swift attack, in addition any weapon used to make these attacks counts has having the Impact quality, even if it normally can not due to the Tiring weapon trait. Weapons that already have the Impact quality, may roll a third D10 when determining damage, and select the best result from amongst all three results.

WOVEN MIST (HALF ACTION)

This action allows the Wardancer to transfix an opponent with a mystic dance and song incorporating a rapid succession feints and flurries. The Wardancer may choose a single opponent fighting him, that opponent must make a successful Will Power test, or may not perform any Free Actions during the rest of the Wardancer's turn. This includes any use of Parry, using Dodge Blow skill, or making a free attack due to an opponent's movement.





LOEC

THE DANCER IN SHADOWS

It is said that Loec was born in the mists before the dawn of time, of a union between the forces of Sound and Motion. The Wardancers hold that he is The First Being, whose dance structures the Universe. He is also known as The Shadow Dancer, the Lord of Laughter and "Adamnan-na-Brionha", which translates from Elven as the Lord of the Dance. He dances within the shadows, always ready to leap out and trick both mortals and gods, for good or ill. He appears as a lithely built Elf whose face is always hidden in perpetual shade.

SYMBOL

Loec is symbolized by the Elven rune of Arhain. Wood Elf devotees of the Lord of the Dance usually adopt one of the flamboyant Wardancer hairstyles and in addition, they often wear their god's symbol, either as a pendant or as an earring. Devotes amongst the Shadow Warriors of Nagarthye often engrave the rune of Arhain upon the hilts of their hunting knives.

AREA OF WORSHIP

Loec is acknowledged by Elves across the entire globe, but chiefly worshipped by the Wardancers and many of the wandering Shadow Warriors of Nagarthye. The organized trappings of human religions are alien to the free-living Elves, and formal temples are not used, Loec is to be worshipped in the heart, not tied to any one place. That being said some Elves, especially Entertainers and Minstrels will set up small shrines to Loec within their rooms.

TEMPERAMENT

As befits the Lord of Shadows, Loec guards his purpose and plans behind a veil of secrecy. Although he is the patron of trickery, music, and revelry, he is often also vengeful and malicious. Traditional racial enemies, especially the Goblinoids and Druchii, are regarded with contempt and hatred, as a kind of vermin to be destroyed at every opportunity. The Wardancers believe that it is their fusion of war and dance that provides the earthly interpretation of their deity's cosmic manifestation.

STRICTURES

Elven Gods place no strictures upon their worshipers, however, certain things may particularly please or displease Loec; these are mainly related to attitudes rather than actions. Entering combat with joy and righteous anger and fighting with athletic elegance are considered pleasing to the Lord of the Dance. Killing in a mean-spirited, cowardly or inelegant fashion attracts his displeasure. In addition those chosen as Wardancers must keep themselves fit and supple at all times, and never act in a manner that threatens the good of the Elven race.

CREDITS

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