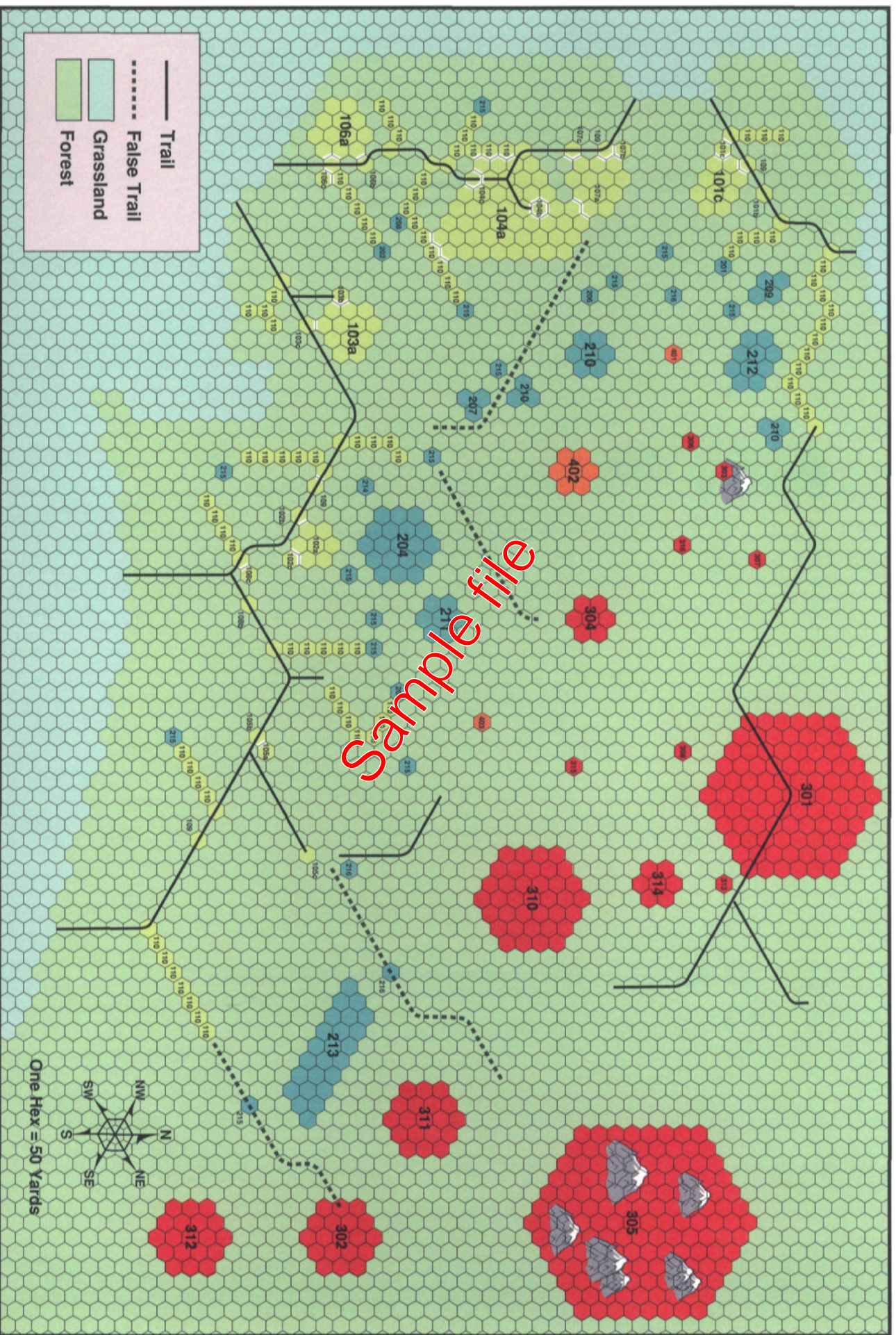


Whispering Widow Woods (DM's map)





Tales of Enchantment

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Tales of Enchantment is designed for three to six characters, levels 5 to 8. Almost any mix of classes can succeed, but players will find it very helpful to have at least one character who can *detect invisibility*. They may also find the need for a cleric who can remove a curse. For guidance in dealing with a party without some of these basic tools, see the *Troubleshooting* section at the end of Chapter One.

This adventure is organized into chapters based on when, if ever, the PCs are likely to encounter each creature. Chapter One contains common creatures found near the edge of the forest and the illusions of them created by pixies. Players should begin unraveling the mystery during these encounters. Chapter Two contains creatures found deeper in the woods but they are generally irrelevant to the main plot. The PCs can pick up information here that can set them back on track, or make erroneous assumptions based on these diversions and go further astray. Chapter Three chronicles the perils of the inner forest. If the party is alert and misses no key clues, it should never encounter these creatures. Chapter Four describes the pixie colony and the main characters in this adventure.

Tales of Enchantment has no mechanism built-in to keep the players on track. That is part of the problem for them to solve. They can go as far afield as their bad judgment takes them, but the farther afield they go, the more trouble they will find. The only way the party should face much combat is if the players blunder about. Therefore, reduce standard combat experience awards by 50% so as not to reward the players for making bad choices. The end of the adventure calls for more advanced role-playing and some really clever problem-solving. The *Resolution* section of Chapter Four includes special awards for the end of the adventure.

Plot Synopsis

The mysteries and legends surrounding Whispering Widow Woods have always been enough to scare off the timid. The dense canopy shrouds the forest floor in darkness even at midday, and the tangled underbrush inhibits travel and can disorient even seasoned woodsmen.

Most folk who live nearby, however, feel safe enough if they keep near the trails through the outer reaches of the woods. They believe the stories about a dragon and other horrors, but they have no intention of going into the deepest and darkest parts of the forest. The locals use special care to steer clear of an unusual rock formation that gives the woods its name. Visible from some farms near the forest is a towering limestone outcropping that some say looks like a face. Above and on both sides of the pale limestone is a thin vein of dark stone much like a shroud. Trees cover the eerie hill's gentle eastern slope. When the wind is right and especially at night, neighboring farmers can hear what sounds like a widow's muted wails of grief.

The folklore, eerie rock formations, and thick underbrush are plenty to keep locals on the trails near the edge of the forest where they can find sufficient firewood, mushrooms, and herbs and where the forest creatures never bother them—until recently.

It started as a frightening curiosity. Terrorized residents described attacks by normally docile creatures, such as black bears. Then it grew more bizarre. Respected citizens told wild tales of unprovoked attacks by treants, sprites, and brownies. The last two curious souls to venture into Whispering Widow Woods have not returned.

Other travelers have disappeared for days, eventually arriving at their destinations with no memory of what had delayed them. In fact, one stranger wandered out of the woods with no memory whatsoever; local authorities are still trying to learn his identity.

In addition, reports of strange occurrences near the forest, a list of oddities dating back for

years, suddenly grew more numerous and stranger.

A shepherd named Patos complains that his flock increases by two or three when he's not looking and then returns to its normal size when he turns away again. He cannot tell the additional sheep from the regular ones, and he is afraid to take his eyes off his flock for fear of what will happen.

A farmer named Jerube maintains that it has been raining on his fields for 22 days straight. No one believed him at first because the area has seen little rain in the last three weeks, but anyone traveling to his fields can see the steady downpour and the great pools of standing water. His crops have rotted.

Patos, Jerube, and others have noted voices coming from Whispering Widow Woods. In every instance, they recognized the voice as that of a friend or family member. Those who followed the voice into the forest found nothing, and several times the person hearing the voice knew the friend or family member to be elsewhere, not in the forest.

Jareb Klause, a wealthy landowner, has decided to hire the PCs to investigate these strange happenings. Jareb is particularly worried about his adolescent son, Barens. Barens has been showing youthful rebellion against his father by taking long trips away from the manor, sometimes disappearing for days. Some of these times, Barens has been seen entering Whispering Widow Woods, and his father is worried because Barens has been missing for two weeks. The PCs' mission is to learn the cause of the attacks, to find Barens, and to make the woods safe again.

In fact, Barens is a central piece to this puzzle. On one of his brooding hikes, Barens unknowingly passed near a colony of pixies. These pixies had long succeeded in avoiding contact with humans and demihumans. However, Gwellen, a particularly curious and bold princess of the pixies, actually introduced herself to Barens

when he next passed that way. The two became close friends, developing quite a bond before the pixie king found out.

The king, Ebron, reacted by creating illusions to frighten "large folk" from the forest. Gwellen told Barens about the illusions, protecting him but getting herself in trouble by leaving the pixie colony against Ebron's orders. She found it ever more difficult to get away to meet with Barens, and his trips into the forest became longer and longer. He even built himself a cabin to use as a base for his long walks in search of Gwellen.

When Ebron learned that he had not succeeded in halting Gwellen's contacts with Barens, he grew angry and began a campaign of harassment against humans living near the forest and especially against Barens. Suddenly Barens found himself subjected to all manner of trickery, such as being *polymorphed*, put to *sleep*, and led into *confusion*. Once, when lost, Barens happened upon a tribe of sylvan elves. After Barens explained his plight, the elves took pity on him. Though they did not want to confront the pixies directly, the elves gave Barens a charm that protects him from pixie magic. Barens, not wanting to tip off the pixies about his new defense, uses his cabin as a base in his searches for Gwellen, all the while pretending to fall victim to the pixies when they harass him.

The PCs enter Whispering Widow Woods with no idea of the pixies' existence. All they have is a simple map drawn by Barens' father. He has not gone deep into the woods for a very long time and can only give the PCs an idea of what lies in the outer reaches of the forest. At the edges of the forest, they will meet normally benevolent creatures. One-third of the time they will encounter the actual creatures, and the rest of the time they will encounter the pixies' hostile illusions of those creatures. When the PCs encounter the illusions, at least one pixie will be present creating the illusion. This gives the PCs a chance to discover the pixies and the source of

the illusions. The PCs will also hear a voice calling for Gwellen, a name that means nothing to them at first, deepening the mystery and providing a clue at the same time. These incidents are caused by pixies trying to lead the PCs astray in the belief that the party is trying to help Barens find Gwellen. The fact is, the PCs are much less informed than the pixies assume.

Deeper into the woods, the PCs might encounter several kinds of diversions, including forest creatures unrelated to the main plot, false trails created by the pixies, and even false images of Barens, who will gladly agree to leave the forest with the PCs. The PCs will probably recognize this as a ruse only when they take "Barens" back to his father. The PCs might also encounter the real Barens or the sylvan elves, either of whom will aid them in solving the mystery.

If the PCs stumble onto Barens' cabin, he will tell them exactly what is going on. As the PCs are trying to unravel the mystery, Gwellen is trying to convince her brother that her friendship with Barens is good, that the "large folk" won't harm the pixies.

Gwellen's mother, Lizbet, also has sympathy for her daughter but dares not openly defy her husband. Thus the PCs will have some passive allies when they try to find a resolution that is acceptable to all. Their ultimate success would be to find a way to unite Barens and Gwellen in some way acceptable to both Ebron and Jareb.

Chapter One: Outer Forest

Jareb, Baren's father, gives the PCs a map he has drawn of the area (Player's Map). His knowledge of the area is limited because no one enters the deepest parts of the forest anymore. Also, unless the PCs remind Jareb, he forgets to give them a description of Baren's (see encounter 215 for a complete description). If Jareb is asked for a description of his son, he says Baren's has long brown hair and usually wears a cap. Beyond that, he cannot remember what Baren's was wearing when he last disappeared into the woods.

Each hex on the map equals 50 yards, meaning that careful listening might reveal sounds in a neighboring hex, but the thick undergrowth blocks sight for more than about 10 yards.

From outside the forest, only a few features are visible. The most noteworthy is the "Whispering Widow," an unusual, rocky hill that consists of a limestone cliff resembling a face, shrouded with a thin layer of dark rock (303). The eerie wail that comes from this area, and the forest reputedly comes from the face. Also visible from outside the forest are a series of low hills often covered with a curious green mist (305). The hills are rumored to be home to a dragon, but no one has claimed to have seen this creature for generations.

Most of the outer forest consists of common animals and creatures that are not normally threatening to humans and demihumans. In each instance, however, the pixies have, under their king's orders, created illusions of these creatures that behave very aggressively toward any travelers. It is possible, and even likely, that the PCs will encounter both the real creatures and their illusions.

The pixies have created the illusions to frighten off mortals, not to kill them, which may start a war in which many more mortals are tramping about the forest. To the PCs, the illusions are little more than a bother, since they should not be rewarded for killing such creatures, but the illusions are the first major

clue for the PCs to begin solving the puzzle. There are one or more invisible pixies hiding near the scene of each illusion. When the PCs discover this, they will at least know what they're up against even if they still don't know why.

In addition to the encounters in all the chapters, there is a special encounter that can occur anywhere in the forest if one or two PCs get separated from the rest of the group. This also occurs if the party goes to sleep and leaves only one or two characters awake on guard. When either of these situations arises, a pixie will approach the PC more directly. The pixie approaches invisibly and, if undetected, touches the character to *cause confusion*. In addition, pixies harass isolated PCs by making them *sleep*, by *polymorphing* them into outlandish creatures, and by stealing their memories.

If the PCs seem overmatched or somehow at a severe disadvantage during this part of the adventure, see the *Troubleshooting* section at the end of this chapter.

101. Black Bears

Bears, black (2): AC 7; MV 12; HD 3+3; hp 16; THAC0 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-6; SA hug 2-8; AL N; ML 10; XP 85

101a. These two black bears have long lived in this part of the forest. They learned to ignore travelers except to scavenge for food at campsites after the travelers have gone. When the PCs encounter them anywhere within this area, these bears will first note the party curiously and then lumber off into the woods. If the PCs attack, the bears try to avoid combat, fighting only if cornered. If the PCs encounter these bears after meeting the aggressive illusionary bears of 101b or 101c, award them a bonus 50 XP if they do not attack the bears at first sight.

101b, 101c. Created by pixies, these illusions are perfect copies of the black bears in 101a. The

big difference is in their reaction to the PCs. When the PCs approach, the bears attack ferociously, biting and clawing at the closest characters. Remember that the pixies' purpose is to frighten the PCs, not to kill them. If the PCs figure out that they are facing an illusion, they may look around for the source of it. Well-hidden, and also invisible, are two pixies. If any member of the party spots the pixies (10% chance each) and tries to approach them, they waste no time fleeing back toward their home (402).

102. Giant Porcupine

Porcupine, giant: AC 5; MV 6; HD 6; hp 32; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 2-8; SA shoot quills; AL N; ML 16; XP 325

102a. This large creature is doing what it does best—minding its own business. When the PCs encounter the creature anywhere within its area, the porcupine notes their presence with apparent disinterest. If the PCs don't approach, the porcupine eventually waddles off into the woods. If the PCs do approach, the porcupine lets loose a few quills to discourage them from coming nearer. If the PCs encounter this prickly fellow after facing the images in 102b or 102c, award them 50 bonus XP if they do not attack this creature.

102b, 102c. In each of these areas is a replica of the giant porcupine, but these images are created by pixies to frighten off innocent travelers and meddlers like this party of adventurers. At first sight, the sluggish porcupine image meanders closer to the PCs. After closing range a bit, it lowers its head and charges, firing quills on the run. The porcupine isn't trying to kill the party, he just wants to scare them enough to drive them out of the forest. If the PCs figure out that this is an illusion and seek its source, they may find a well-hidden and invisible pixie near the scene. If spotted (10% chance), the pixie flees toward his home (402).

103. Werebear

Werebear: AC 2; MV 9; HD 7+3; hp 32; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/2-8; SA hug 2-16; AL CG; ML 13; XP 700

103a. This creature has nothing against humankind, but hasn't much use for it, either. When the PCs encounter it anywhere within the marked area, this lycanthrope assumes a defensive posture but does not attack. It maintains this posture until the PCs leave. If the PCs stay too long, the werebear eventually leaves the area itself. Award the PCs 50 extra XP for staying out of combat, or 100 extra if they've already had to fight an illusory werebear.

Treasure: 8 gp, 25 pp, two blue quartz gems worth 10 gp each, gold tiara inlaid with platinum worth 2,200 gp, scroll of *protection from lycanthropes*, scroll of *protection from fire*, scroll of *protection from poison*, unlabeled *potion of delusion*.

103b, 103c. These pixie-built horrors are exact copies of the original. Their sole purpose is to chase away the PCs. The pixie controlling this illusion will do his best to injure the party members, but he is careful not to kill anyone. If the PCs figure out this illusion and search for its source, they may be able to find the invisible pixie (10% chance), who is well-hidden but close enough to monitor all the action. If discovered, the pixie flees to his home (402).

104. Unicorns

Unicorns (4): AC 2; MV 24; HD 4+4; hp 24; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1-6/1-6/1-12; SA charge; AL CG; ML 14; XP 325

104a. These four unicorns are named Draylee, Naylor, Frankon, and Naymidmerelda. They have come to dominate this area of the forest (as shown on the map). At one time, folk from outside the woods often trampled the nearby region of forest that is rich in herbs. A few pointed lessons by the unicorns persuaded the intruders