

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®



Moonshae

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INTRODUCTION

The goddess has been in the Moonshaes for many centuries—since before the coming of the humans or even the Llewyr. Alone, she nurtured and cared for the isles, seeing them green and verdant through the summers, white and slumbering through the long winters.

She watched her body, the land, change with the passing of years, yet so slowly that it always seemed to remain the same from year to year. She gave birth to lakes and low marshes became grassy fields. Mountains slipped slowly, eroding into the valleys below, while rivers grew in size, becoming more placid with the years. Occasionally a river would change its course, racing eagerly along a new path until the passing of the centuries pacified its turbulent ways.

The goddess could see the isles through the Moonwells, windows she created in the land. Each Moonwell was a clear, placid pool of cool water that lay in a secluded grove or remote mountain glen. Through the Moonwells, the goddess watched her world take shape, and she watched it grow and change.

And finally, she watched the coming of life to her world.

She remembers times, long past, when the only creatures upon the isles were her children. The great leviathan was the first of her offspring to come upon the shores of the Moonshaes, its great, gray back breaking the surface of the Sea of Moonshae like a freshly rising island, as broad and solid as a small land mass. For many years, the spuming cloud of the leviathan's breath was the only sign of animal life along the gravelly shores and deep firths of the islands' rugged shorelines.

Then came the unicorn, Kamerynn, whose snowy mane flashed through the fields and glens of the isles. The mighty creature lived first on Gwyneth, but then on Alaron, Moray, and other islands until finally it had dwelled upon all of the isles. Legends say that the offspring of the unicorn, the horses, roam all of the Moonshaes because of the wanderings of their ancestor.

But the goddess required Balance

above all, and the first two of her children were peaceful, nonthreatening creatures. To balance them, the goddess gave birth to her third child—the youngest and deadliest of her brood. The goddess brought forth onto the Moonshaes the Pack, the congregation of wolves whose hunting song would strike terror into the hearts of lesser creatures, and whose cruel jaws would end the lives of many a helpless doe and unwary rabbit.

For the Balance demanded that life be countered by death. And so the Pack roamed the Moonshaes, wild, singing, and free, as the goddess's agents of death.

As time passed, more and more animals arrived to populate the rugged, yet peaceful isles. The most serious threats to the land were the winter storms that swept from the Trackless Sea, scouring the weak and the frail from the islands, leaving the strong to multiply and prosper. Thus, even the storms played their role in maintaining the Balance.

Then one day the Llewyr arrived. The elves came over the sea, perhaps interrupted in some mysterious journey toward places even farther west. They claimed the Moonshaes as their own. They lost touch with their kin throughout the Realms, and passed peaceful centuries of pastoral solitude.

Later came the dwarves—mysterious folk who seemed to sprout from the ground itself, for the goddess does not recall their arrival. They lived in peace with the Llewyr; for the dwarves shunned most of the surface world. Those places they inhabited were barren and rocky—terrain the Llewyr had no wish to populate.

And then, in the heart of a cruel winter, the Moonshaes felt the first heavy tread of the beast.

The mother knew not whether it emerged from the storm-tossed sea or from the depths of some seething ocean of lava far beneath her skin. She knew only that the monster stalked the land with foul purpose, grievously threatening the Balance.

The children of the goddess, and the animals, and the Llewyr and the dwarves, fought the Beast as best they could, holding its dark force at bay. The Beast could not be defeated, but neither could its might grow such that it would overcome the goddess. Thus, the Balance was maintained.

The Beast called its own followers who rose, dripping, from the sea to crawl forth on land. The firbolgs claimed the Moonshaes as their own, ruthlessly slaying any who stood in their way. The ugly giants gradually took to the land, forgetting their origins in the sea, and spread across the Moonshaes with relentless strength.

The dwarves and the Llewyr marshalled their forces to stand against the threat of the giants and the Beast. For many decades, war wracked the isles, but finally the firbolgs were driven into small corners of the isles, where they were carefully watched by the protectors of the Balance.

For centuries this remained the way of the Moonshaes. Little changed, for the Llewyr and the firbolgs were not builders, and the work of the dwarves progressed mainly underground. And thus it might have remained for all time, but for the coming of man.

The first humans arrived from the south, sailing slow but seaworthy coracles from an unknown land. These men fled a mighty foe and erected fortresses and palisades to protect themselves. But whatever they feared, it did not pursue them here.

More and more of the men arrived, soon claiming most of the large isle of Alaron as their own. Grudgingly, the Llewyr moved aside, withdrawing to the wilder reaches of the isles. But it seemed that the human arrivals would never stop, as word spread of a place where none need fear the tyrant's boot or the evil sorcerer's spell.

The people who came to the Moonshaes called themselves just that: the People or in the language of the isles, "the Ffolk." The Ffolk prospered, and their cities grew. They spread to Gwyneth, to Moray and Snowdown, and—in



lesser numbers—to the more barren isles of Norheim and Norland.

With the Ffolk came the halflings, for the little people dwell in the Realms wherever they can find human targets for their mercantile dealings. The human and halfling habitations drove the Llewyr far into the wilds of the isles, as the elvenfolk shunned contact with these shorter-lived and aggressive newcomers.

The Ffolk soon claimed all the isles as their own—not as a united people, but as an assortment of small, bickering kingdoms. They waged petty wars, seeking more to annoy than destroy. Slowly, the large islands of Alaron and Gwynneth became focal points of power, though three or four separate kingdoms on each still vied for ultimate authority.

As the dramas of humans, Llewyr, and other lesser creatures unfolded across the stage of the Moonshaes, the Beast slept. The vigilance of the goddess waned, as she relished the flourishing of life upon her body.

And slowly the Beast awakened, surreptitiously sapping power from the goddess through a Moonwell. When it was ready, the Beast took a name, and walked again upon the land.

Its name was Kazgoroth.

Now the Beast walked the land with death as its purpose. It slew relentlessly, indiscriminately. It thrived and grew as it killed. And it drove the Ffolk together to fight against it.

A king arose from the kingdom of the Callidyrr on the isle of Alaron: Cymrych Hugh. With the blessings of the goddess and a sword forged for him by the finest of dwarven craftsmen, Cymrych Hugh faced Kazgoroth. The might of the sword and the king drove the Beast back to the darkened recesses of its home, badly wounded but not killed. There it would remain for many centuries.

Cymrych Hugh united the Ffolk of the Moonshaes into one kingdom for the first time. He erected a mighty citadel at his home—Caer Callidyrr; it became fabled throughout the Forgotten

Realms.

For a time the Moonshaes saw peace and prosperity as the realm of Cymrych Hugh and his descendents held the Ffolk together. Gradually, with the passing of generations, the memory of the first High King dimmed, and the strong bonds uniting the Ffolk began to fray. Soon, the islands were once again a collection of small kingdoms waging petty wars.

These bickering kingdoms were easy prey to the savage onslaught of the northmen, the yellow-bearded warriors who sailed from Waterdeep to seek new lands to the west. The longships landed first along the Norheim Isles, taking tribute from the tiny kingdoms of the Ffolk they found there. Next Norland and then Moray and Moray shuddered under the attacks of the raiders.

But the northmen quickly tired of raiding and chose to settle. They claimed the isles of the north as their own; the divided kingdoms of the Ffolk could not gather to resist. As time passed, the northmen became more powerful and conquered more of the islands. If the tide is not reversed, the years of the Ffolk's reign upon the Moonshaes are drawing to an end.

Clerics have arrived among the Ffolk, preaching of the new gods—the gods worshiped in Waterdeep, Calimshan, and Thay. These clerics have not eliminated the faith of the Ffolk in their goddess, but they have raised doubts.

The goddess can now feel her strength waning, and she knows that her life has become bound into the life of the Ffolk.

And again the Beast has begun to stir.

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