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INTRODUCTIONS ARE IN ORDER !

The *Forest Hymn & Picnic* is a tabletop adventure game. Like its cousins it's played with books and pencils and papers, usually at a table crowded with people all talking over one another and spilling their drinks. It's a game that uses a book and dice to play make-believe. There are rules to this particular kind of make-believe though—rules that help mitigate the details of whatever mischief you bring upon yourselves. This book contains those rules and procedures you'll need for playing pretend in a world of ghosts, animals that talk and wear hats, lost people, witches, tea parties, and trees with scary faces.

In this game, there are two types of players. There is the **narrator**, whose task is to create plot for the others to upend, introduce a cast of characters to meet, and to preside happily over the rules. Everyone else will pick one of the three types of Forest Dwellers and act as **adventurers** who'll be exploring the woods, diving into small town politics, uncovering dastardly plots, and exploring old haunted ruins. There may be a bit of theft of services here and traveling theatrics there, or even a fall festival bake off too! Above all else, TFFH&P is a game of passing times and changing seasons. Each adventure may not be related to the one before it or after it, but they are all quick glimpses stolen from the window as the adventurer's lives move on.

The witching hour in The Forest Hymn is twilight; just before supper, before a stomach can be too full to get anything productive done.

Festivals, celebrations, holidays, and fairs are all storied affairs. If they could, Forest Dwellers would set the gears of their pocket watches by whenever the next shindig is scheduled.

Manners and customs are likewise important in The Forest Hymn. To be caught wearing an unfashionable cap or to be overheard singing the wrong words at choir practice is to be the subject of much gossip.

If one were to walk into the village public house to find a brawl has broken out over which meal of the day is best, it would be business as usual. Usually these quiet down until an argument begins over whether bourbon or wine pairs better with breakfast.

Forest Dwellers are deeply superstitious and prone to being easily scared. Most never venture very far from their homes and only the bravest will step off the road in search of adventure.

Food is venerated among all who live in the woods. Family recipes are invaluable treasures, a garden of heirloom vegetables is consecrated ground, and every meal is a feast. A plate is offered to even the worst of enemies.

The forest is far too thick and woody for traveling any way other than on foot, but the highways are often navigated by bicycle or cart. As well, flat bottomed boats driven by pole and the occasional great big paddle-wheel boat can be spotted on the rivers.

Outside a town's wooden post and rail fence, nothing is ever as it seems—lies, cheats, illusions, mischief, magic, and thievery run amok through the woods. In some towns, the situation barely fares better.

Answer results of 10 to 15 are normal successes, or **favours**. Nothing bad happens, nothing stupendous happens. A locked door is opened and the adventure can continue.

Answer results of 16 to 20 are resounding successes, or **fortunes**. Not only is the challenge overcome, but some additionally great thing might happen. A locked door is unlocked, and whoever locked it is out for the night. And they've left the lights on for you! Fortunes generally lead to removing further challenges.

THROWING DICE !

These Question & Answer rolls use a combination of the twenty-sided die (**d20**), characteristic modifiers (**MOD**), and additional six-sided dice (**d6**) in the form of **gifts** or **gags**. Gifts *add* to your rolls while gags *subtract* from them; but you only ever use the highest result of your gifts or gags with your answer total. For example, if you are adding two gifts to your Q&A roll then you would roll 1d20 plus the highest result of 2d6—if the d20 lands on 11 and your d6s come up 3 and 5, then your total answer is 16. 5 is the higher of the two gifts, and is added to the 11.

In the case of two gags it would be subtracted; you would roll 1d20 minus the highest result of 2d6. If your results are again 11 on the d20 along with 3 and 5 on the d6s then your total answer is 6. Again, 5 is the highest of the two gags and is subtracted from 11. Gifts and gags cancel one another out on a one-to-one ratio: if your Q&A roll has 2 gifts and 1 gag, you would only need to roll a single gift because the gag took away one of the gifts.

Modifiers come from your primary characteristics, and contribute only small numbers to your Q&A rolls. For example, you may have an *agility* MOD of +2 that would add 2 to your answer total, or subtract 2 from the answer total if your *agility* MOD is -2. Gifts and gags come from your subject grades. If you have a grade of +1 in a subject, then you would add a 1d6 gift to your Q&A, or if the grade is -2 then you would add 2d6 gags to the roll. Characteristics, MODs, subjects, and grades are all outlined in the character creation section of this guide.

Q&A ROLLS WILL ONLY USE ONE MOD AND
NO MORE THAN THREE EXTRA D6 PER ROLL

THE CŌNVERSATION !

Surmounting challenges with Q&A rolls requires a quick back and forth conversation between the narrator and the adventurers. Adventurers must tell the narrator how they want to overcome the challenge or what they want to do. Narrators would then tell adventurers what trouble might come with that plan, or at least give them time to discuss the various pitfalls therein. It is during this conversation when both the adventurers and narrator would decide which subjects and characteristics would apply to a Q&A roll.



CHARACTER CREATION !

Now that you know the basics of how The Forest Hymn & Picnic is played, you can make your forest adventurer. You should have the following: a character sheet, dice, your coin, a pencil, and an eraser. Think of character creation as playing along; as you read through the following pages each of the spaces and words on the character sheet will be explained as you fill them in. Be sure to use a pencil while writing on the character sheet, as your adventurer will begin to change and become more unique throughout the process and you may need to erase!

FAIR TOKEN !

Character creation begins by determining your **fair token**. Forest Dwellers are a superstitious lot and you'll find very few who don't believe in luck. Most adventurers will use their token to test their luck during Q&A roles, and certain types of fortune tellers or witches can change luck through signatures and magic tricks! To determine your fair token, flip a coin into the air and write down whether it lands on *heads* or *tails* in the fair token line on your character sheet.

CHOOSE A FOREST DWELLER !

After you've marked down your fair token you will need to pick a type of **Forest Dweller**: Animal Folk, People, or Ghost. In the following pages you will find brief descriptions of each option. Once you've made your decision, write it down in the character sheet section labeled *description*. Be sure to leave room to add to this spot as you go.

Picking a type of Forest Dweller is only the very beginning —adventuring characters for this game start with generic details and quickly taper to become very unique. For example, if you pick an Animal Folk in this step, you will determine exactly what kind of Animal they are in just a few pages. Likewise, if you choose to play a Ghost now, you will pick an outlandish costume for them soon enough!

GHOSTS !

Of all the strangeness and unease that slinks among the trees of The Forest Hymn, Ghosts are probably the least worrisome and far more agreeable than those damned Monsters stalking about the Spookwood. Ghosts live among the People and Animal Folk of the woods; they're a mostly polite lot who prefer to keep to themselves or a small coterie of company. Despite that they are essentially the living dead, Forest Dwellers are delighted to call a Ghost their neighbor.

A Ghost is a shapeless mist, a gust of life that can be blown away in a light wind to never be heard from again and so they dress accordingly. The clothes they wear are filled to the brim with odds and ends to keep them stapled to the forest floor, and then tightly sewn or tied shut—holding them in and giving them all the faculties of People and Animal folk alike. Of the few Forest Dwellers who view the world with a scholarly lens, most agree that the costumes a Ghost wears has some connection to their former life.

There is no doubt that The Forest Hymn is blanketed by an eerie fog of the supernatural; it makes the hairs on the necks of people stand straight and it's what convinces old missus Pig to button the shutters tight when the sun goes down. Ghosts pay it no mind, however, as they seem to have a natural attunement for what many would call the occult.

GHOST FACTS !

Most Ghosts are quite reclusive—tending their gardens and reading their books in peace are their hobbies of choice. Occasionally, however, you'll find them as bakers, farmers, constables, or even keeping shop the same as anyone else might.

Ghosts are as quick as People and Animal Folk to fall in love with the smell of freshly baked breads or a good roast warming in the hearth. Despite being able to smell, they cannot eat. To keep proper company they will simply pretend to eat or politely decline, feigning having a late meal just prior. Again and despite this, Ghost make excellent cooks!

It is easy to convince a Ghost to take up picnicking in the woods; simply dangle the promise of strange books to read and new flowers to smell. Or just ask them politely if they have a spot of free time to accompany you on some mischief.

BACKGROUND PARCELS !

Every adventuring Forest Dweller begins with a series of vagaries, anecdotes, histories, and little facts that you can use to develop a unique personality and character to play. Some of these even include benefits or detriments to your adventurer's various characteristics and subjects. As this is a cursory guide, instead of including the myriad options and tables you would normally use to develop these details, four parcels for each Forest Dweller have been provided for you to choose from. Find the group of background parcels that match your Forest Dweller type, and choose one parcel you like most. Paraphrase your choice into the description section of the character sheet, and be sure to make any adjustments to your adventurer as instructed by **bolded terms**.

If you are playing an Animal Folk, you may replace the animal in your background parcel with any of the following: Badger, Bear, Crow, Crane, Deer, Fox, Grackle, Goat, Hedgehog, Hare, Hound Dog, Hen, House Cat, Mouse, Opossum, Otter, Pig, Rat, Toad, Skunk, Weasel, Wolf.

➤ ANIMAL FOLK ⚡

1. You are a Pig who has recently traded in the short pants of your youth for the blouses of adulthood. You've stolen every piece of clothing you've ever owned, you are prone to dancing, and you require fine cutlery at every meal. As a young child you were lost in the woods for several weeks. **Add 1 to your Resolve.**

2. You are a Crow who has reached your later years, hoping to find a place to settle soon. Your clothes are very fine and formal and you have many powdered wigs, you sing when it would be impolite, and have poor manners. Your family made a fortune selling chairs with three legs for the price of a four-legged chair. **Add 1 to Wealth.**

3. You are a Hare in your teenaged years. Your clothes are all secondhand, you are small and often unnoticed, and you are quite uncomfortable in the rain. You lose your shoes and hat often; daily sometimes. **Add 1 to Resolve but subtract 1 from Luck.**

4. You are a Toad of middling age. Your clothes are loud and brightly colored, you often correct the perfectly good posture of others, and you are scared of the dark. When you were a young Animal you ate a prize-winning vegetable and blamed it on someone else. **Add 1 to Health.**

LIST OF SUBJECTS !

BOUQUET: Knowledge of flowers, grasses, trees, vegetables, and most natural plants in the forest.

BREWER: Knowledge and ability in the cooking of soups, spirits, tinctures, or poisons.

CHICANERY: Skill in petty confidence games, burglary, thievery, general criminality, and bullying.

COLONEL: Ability to lead and direct, especially under stress.

COXSWAIN: Understanding of boats, carriages, bicycles, pedal balloons, or any other kind of moving craft.

DAGGERS: Skill and ability with weapons held in your hands.

DECORUM: Public manner and etiquette, knowledge of custom, procedure, and pomp.

ENTERTAINER: Skill in performing drama and music; acting, busking, or puppetry.

GAMBLE: Playing the odds and counting the cards; earning pennies from chance.

JOCKEY: Ability to care for and pilot animals, both domesticated and wild.

LEDGER: Studied knowledge of commerce and all that is pecuniary.

PISTOLS: Skill with weapons that shoot some sort of ammunition or are thrown.

RECONNOITER: Ability to gather information and spot what is intended to be hidden.

SLINK: Ability to move or hide silently, often in daylight or plain sight.

SORTILEGE: An ability to tap into the world of the supernatural and skill with magic tricks.

SURGERY: Knowledge of medical procedures, ailments, and cures.

TRADE: Skill in the making of goods or providing a service; smithing, painting, cobbling, tending bar, and more.

ON THE POND !

Sometimes the adventurers will need to pass a few blocks of the schedule, and some of those times they may pass it next to a river or pond or lake. Perhaps they would enjoy a bit of fishing? **ON THE POND** is an extracurricular activity of patience and leisure. It requires the adventurers have fishing poles and bait for each person fishing. As well, each participant will need 5 six-sided dice, called 5d6—be prepared to share dice if needed.

Begin by setting the scene and deciding how much of the schedule the adventurers plan on fishing. It takes at least 1 block of the schedule to have a go at catching fish. Adventurers with time to spare and patience to suit can choose to spend more of the schedule on the pond.

When an adventurer is ready to fish, they cast their line and roll 5d6, hoping to get consecutive results with at least three of the dice. For example, three of the dice results can be 2, 3, and 4 or 4, 5, and 6, etc. This is a **snag**, and if an adventurer **snags** a fish they roll 2d6 and consult the table on the next page to see what they **catch**.

However, adventurers can choose to exercise a bit of patience and **toss** the catch back to spend another block of the schedule fishing. If they make another snag, they can add or subtract 1 to their catch roll by tossing it back. Adventurers may toss and snag up to 5 schedule blocks, potentially turning their bad catch roll into a more pleasant one! At the end of their time on the pond, adventurers will roll 2d6 and add or subtract the number of snags they hooked to see what their final catch is. Additional snags can be added to, or subtracted from, the catch roll in any combination.

Additionally, adventurers can **test their luck** when they roll for their catch. If they are lucky and the coin lands facing their *fair token*, they can roll 1d6 on the **treasure** table.



THE FOREST HYMN & PICNIC

WAY IN THE WOOD

CHARACTERISTICS

CURRENT

1

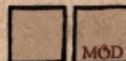


4

LEVEL

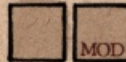
7

STRENGTH



MOD

AGILITY



MOD

RESOLVE



MOD

LUCK



WEALTH



HEALTH



WOUNDS



FAIR TOKEN

SUBJECTS!

- ☐ BOUQUET
- ☐ BREWER
- ☐ CHICANERY
- ☐ COLONEL
- ☐ COXSWAIN
- ☐ DAGGERS
- ☐ DECORUM
- ☐ ENTERTAINER
- ☐ FUNAMBULIST
- ☐ GAMBLE
- ☐ JOCKEY
- ☐ LEDGER
- ☐ PISTOLS
- ☐ RECONNOITER
- ☐ SLINK
- ☐ SORTILEGE
- ☐ SURGERY
- ☐ TRADE

INVENTORY

SIZE

SIGNATURES, MAGIC TRICKS, & NOTES

FILLED



CAPACITY



BAG

ANSWER RESULTS

1-4

5-9

FLOP

FLUKE

10-15

16+

FAVOR

FORTUNE



THE
FOREST HYMN
& PICNIC

THE SCHEDULE

SUNRISE

TWILIGHT

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

ADVENTURE TITLE

SEASON



BANQUET
YEAR

THE PLOT !

THE TOWN OF:

#

IN TOWN

PLOT TWIST

THEATERS
& STAGES

SIDE PLOTS, CHALLENGES, & GOALS

CHARACTERS

REWARDS

NOTES

POLLY JEAN'S UP TO NO GOOD !

Polly Jean is aloof, quiet, and stern; she is truly only passing through but can't help pilfering a little here or there while she waits for the road to clear. She has a vested interest in keeping anyone from discovering what happened to Bushinbeel and the Town Hall. She'll be sure to tail anyone looking for answers. Polly is a piller—a petty thief—and once per schedule block, after twilight and before sunrise, she may attempt to pick the pockets of one of the adventurers using the *Pick A Pocket* *Perfectly* signature.

POLLY JEAN

LEVEL 1 PILLER

STR 9; AGI 12; RES 11; HEL 4

CHICANERY +2

FUNAMBULIST +1, SLINK +1

tiny pistol (1), lock picks (1), magnifying glass (1), journal of crimes (2)

PICK A POCKET PERFECTLY

LEVEL 1 PILLER SIGNATURE

Choose a mark and make a Q&A roll (**slink**, **chicanery**) against their agility score with 1 extra gift. If your answer result is the same as their score or higher you gain one item from their inventory and they're none the wiser. *If the mark is an adventurer, the adventurer chooses the item, otherwise the narrator chooses. If there are no items, gain their hat or coat.*

SERIES OF EVENTS: The adventure opens at sunrise three days before End Year, with the understanding that the entire day of End Year is supposed to be a celebration. They have until sunrise on the third day to solve these troubles. Most likely the adventurers will begin to question the townsfolk about the mayor and look for clues, and eventually rescue him along with the hall. For the celebration to be had, the town hall—or at least all of the tables and chairs—must be returned

IFS AND THENS: If the adventurers are from out of town, Lucillie won't trust them at first. A convincing sort of dweller could try to win over her trust through conversation and a Q&A roll with *resolve*. If she trusts the adventurers, she will mention that Polly has been keeping late hours.

If the adventurers are locals and question their neighbors, they will—with chagrin, likely—discover that everyone is quick to point fingers at everyone else.

If the adventurers follow Polly on day 1, before twilight, she will spend a lot of time where the town hall is supposed to be, looking east. If she is followed at night she will double back and attempt her crime.

If anyone seeks out clues at the scene of the crime, a Q&A roll using *reconnoiter*

will show that a lot of the bare trees to the east of town do not have snow on them like the others, and many appear to be broken. This is the flight path of the Town Hall.

If the library is visited, a series of Q&A rolls while questioning the librarian and searching the stacks will turn up the magic trick AMBLING ABODE (*Cursory*, p. 44) and potentially other tricks.

If they Mayor is not found by the end of twilight on day 1, he shows up to the Very Tall Hat during the last schedule block, gives directions to where the Town Hall landed, and collapse with a fever. If he is found in the woods, he'll be in better health. Regardless of how he is found, he did not get a good look at Polly.

If the adventurers brawl with Polly, she will fight back but make an escape when she has 3 wounds or will leave town if she defeats her attackers.

If the woods are searched in any direction other than east, the Town Hall won't be found. If the eastern stretch of woods are searched, it will take two schedule blocks with successful Q&A rolls navigating the woods to track the Town Hall; one to find signs it passed through and another to track it without getting lost.

➤ AVAILABLE GOODS ➤

IN ADDITION TO KNICKS, KNACKS, AND GENERAL GOODS FOUND IN THE CURSORY GUIDEBOOK

TOBOGGAN, 4¢

A sled with a curved front that's as fun to ride as it is long. Seats 3. **Reduces travel times by 1 schedule block if it is going down hill.**

TEAM & SLEIGH, 3¢ PER DAY

The team is a mix of dogs, reindeer, a cat, and some foxes. Be good to them. Rental fee includes feed. Sleigh Seats 5. **Reduces travel times by 2 blocks.**

2 HAM SAMMIES (1) 1¢

1 BED FOR A NIGHT 3¢

2 TORCHES (2) 2¢

HOT CIDER CARAFE (1) 3¢

ICE PICK (2) 3¢

SNOW SHOES 2¢

WARM WINTER CLOTHES (DEFENSE +1) 4¢

HEAVY DUFFLE PACK, (9 SLOTS) 6¢

OSTENTATIOUS WHITE CLOAK, (SLINK +1), 8¢

If the adventurers get lost in the woods, they can root around and continue to make Q&A rolls to find their way. On a flop each adventurer gets a wound from being cold and lost. On a fluke each everyone gets a wound but the destination is reached, on a favor the destination is reached, and on a fortune all destinations have been found.

If the adventurers were given the mayor's directions, it still takes 2 schedule blocks to arrive at the Town Hall but doesn't require any rolls.

If the Town Hall is found, it can be moved within 2 schedule blocks by AMBLING ABODE, the tables and chairs can be moved in 6 schedule blocks with the help of ten townsfolk, or the entire hall can be moved back to town by four sleigh teams in roughly 8 schedule blocks.

If the mayor is found and the Town Hall restored by sunrise on day 3 of the adventure then Bushinbeel will reward the adventurers with fat sacks of pennies worth +1 wealth each and a key to the city, which is accidentally a key to his house.

If Haveringston does not celebrate End Year, one week later a large, particularly nasty patch of Spookwood will sprout to the east of town.