

Mystic Wood Elf



At the edge of the pristine pool the young ones gathered around, as Troubadour tuned his lute and began to play. The song was rollicking, snaring their attention. Many of the children began to dance and sing words of their own making. With utmost concentration the tune abruptly ended and became bittersweet, a melody punctuated by the thumping Troubadour made on the side of his instrument like the beating of a horse's hooves. The children assembled looked at him with distress, as if candy had been taken from them, and when the song ended they sat and stared.

"Such is our lives, my children. So often the music changes. So often it is not what we want to hear. It is not the time for music, for play, or for love. This is a time for listening and questioning, a time for music of a different beat."

They whispered among themselves as the elder continued.

"We are Troubadour. While I be one of you I am but one of many of my profession. We all take the name Troubadour, we all serve as chroniclers. I am keeper of our lore. I am the flat teacher of our wood, and I am the teller of stories both heroic and tragic. And perhaps someday you will meet another of my profession with different stories to tell. Listen to them as if they were my own - for they may possess some insight that my travels have not unlocked.

"That is our way to learn about the world, and to master what it gives us. We tell our stories to each other, and we who are troubadour chronicle and carry the history of our people within us."

Clearly, the children preferred to be any place rather than with Troubadour. If he didn't want to play music for them, there was no fun and frolic. As the silence hung in the air like an oppressively hot day, one child looked inquisitively at Troubadour, and soon the questions began to pour out.

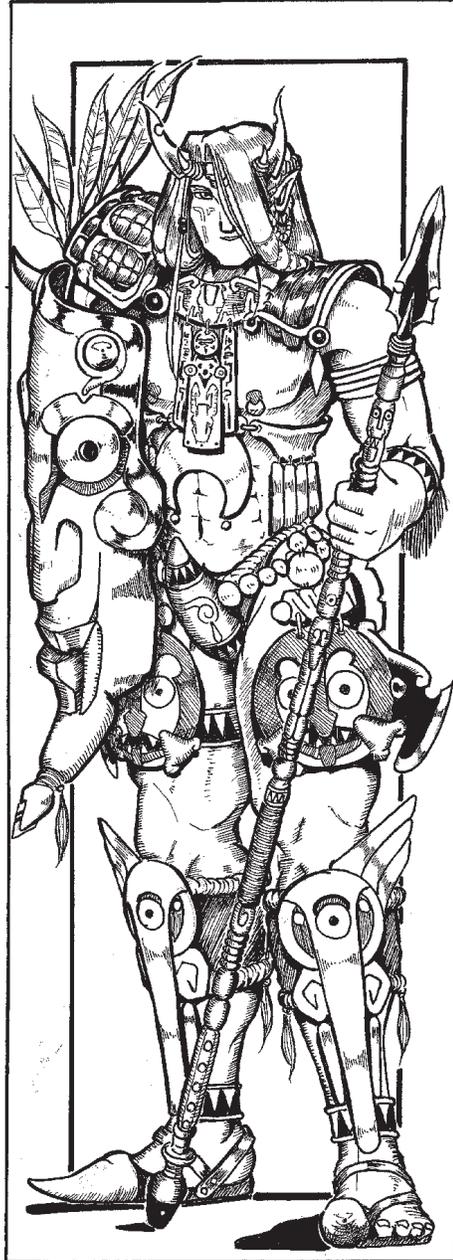
"Tell me of the Satyrs!" The child cried out before she could stop herself. Troubadour smiled. He hoped there would be more than one questioner in this group. Looking at their young, innocent and unrecognized faces, he sighed and briefly wondered if perhaps he had been gone too long from the Wood. Such a large question to begin with!

But he answered.

"They are our cousins, they are our neighbors, they are our friends, they are our enemies, and they are our downfall." Troubadour laughed to himself as the children looked at each other and tried to make something of the enigmatic answer. With a chuckle he explained, "There is clearly a bond between us and our Satyr cousins, but different Satyrs have different feelings about us. Some see us as children to be led, some see us as enemies to fight, some see us as family to share good times with, and some

want us purged from the land! I have had many good and bad experiences with their kind and I invite you to find out for yourselves someday by traveling outside the vale. I will tell you my stories soon enough, but with the first question, more will come. So ask so I may tell you what I can."

Now the children understood - it was storytime. The gathered around and took seats around the fellow with the light in his eyes.



The young girl, emboldened by her first successful question, stood as she held her arms akimbo. With a twist of her head, her face held an expression two parts angst and two parts frustration, "Why can't we come to this place?"

Quickly Troubadour answered; he was prepared for this question. "This is the heart of our wood, of our vale. This is the vale, and all life springs from here. The elders keep you from this place until you are old enough to understand the responsibility associated with it, hence your being called here today. Watch and see what mysteries are revealed!"

After a brief moment of hesitation, Troubadour placed his lute against his leg and gently cupped his hand to touch the water of the pool. Before his hand touched a drop, another hand rose from the water to gently grasp his own. His eyes asparkle, the bard leaned down and placed a gentle caressing kiss across the delicate hand. The hand rose from the water to touch his face and brush tender fingertips against his lips, and then withdrew gently into the silvery deeps.

The children stood with wide open eyes and then skittered to the edge of the pool and stared down into the placid waters ... Not even a ripple disturbed the pool.

One young boy reached down to touch the water and the hand from the pool shot from the depths and slapped the back of the lad's hand. With a yelp, he jumped back, and Troubadour roared with laughter.

"You cannot enter the vale, young one, until you are of age and given that honor!"

Some of the children giggled and the boy looked sheepish as Troubadour gestured them to sit once again.

"This lady has chosen to make her home with us and grant us her protection. You will not be formally introduced to her until the time is right. Remember this though: her friendship is the most treasured possession of our people."

Suitably chastised, the children sat quietly, absorbing this new information, until another brave child asked where she was from and what her name was.

"Many ask this question. The name of the Guardian of our vale is Elenee and her nature - be it spirit, fey, or simply magic - does not matter. She is bound to us because that is what she chooses. She extends her protection to our wood, and for this I play for her when I can."

For a time Troubadour played his lute quietly as the children melted away from his consciousness. They glanced at each

other, and then, bored, went on to other tasks and amusements.

Troubadour's mind wandered to old stories and songs he had written, and occasionally it took a particularly loved song to get him even to finish a verse or a chorus in any one tune.

The music became as discordant as his thoughts. He threw away his instrument in disgust and for a long while he simply listened quietly to the wind. His thoughts calmed as he listened to the sounds of music and dancing far out into the woods closer to the village.

There was no sound of from the water when Elenee rose from the pond and curled her knees under her and sat down beside him. She was garbed in a shift of multihued color that glistened iridescently in the pallid light of the stars. It was a rare occurrence for her to show herself to even the most eldest of his village. Her lips moved nearly silently as she spoke to him with a voice akin to the sound of chimes in a light spring rain.

"You dream yet you do not sleep. What troubles you, wandering one? You have not been home near a moon so your wanderlust cannot have taken you yet."

Troubadour wondered to himself what troubled him. It seemed to him that when he wandered, he yearned for home and when he was home, he yearned to wander. Grasping at an explanation, he finally snatched it from his mind like catching an annoying bug.

"I have yet to find more of our kind. Dozens of other races I have

encountered but never yet have I found another vale. Are we alone?"

With a faint smile, Elenee's eyes twinkled, and she leaned down to whisper into his ear. "I protect this vale so none can find it. I obscure it from those who would harm myself and you. Perhaps it is, Wandering One, that the guardians of other vales do not know you or you have not earned her trust. Where do you look?"

Troubadour pondered this and answered, "I search the forests, of course."

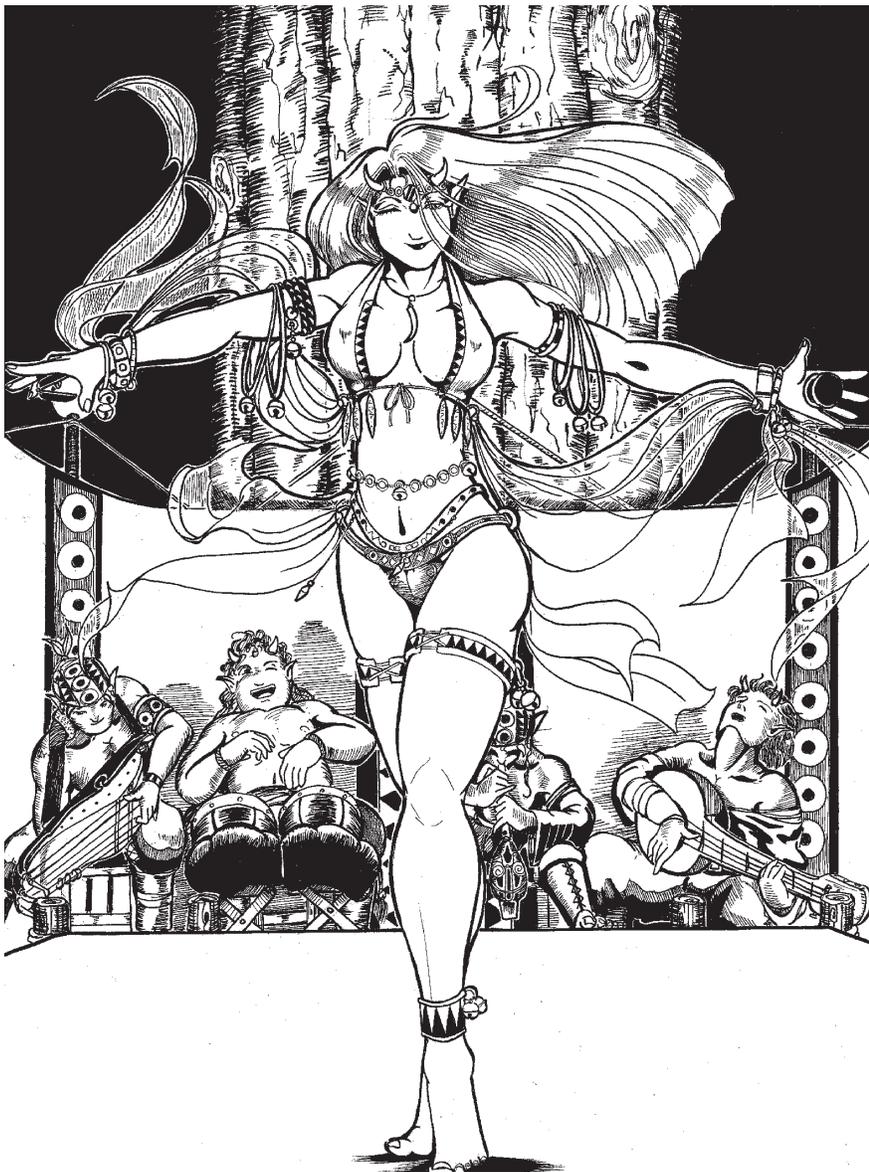
Dawn broke across Elenee's face and she squinted her beautiful features to scold him. "Why do you assume that our people and the vales are only like the Mystic Wood? Clearly our people are best suited here but perhaps a vale exists in a desert oasis or perhaps deep within a mountain valley. In the great stream of time, you are still very young as a race, Troubadour. Even the eldest of your race have not yet died of natural causes or explored their fullest potential. You have much time to search, so be thorough and look in all places of beauty and tranquility. A mystic wood has no location but within the heart. It is a place of wondrous beauty and prosperity and time moves around us."

A song formed in Troubadour's head, but he suppressed it and began to ponder so many of the places he had been before that he might have ignored as unsuitable. He saddened at the thought that he had been curious at times during his wanderings about some place in particular, yet ignored it. Curiosity was something his race was naturally gifted at, but at the time he had ignored this gift.

With this revelation he became elated and euphoric; he could find another vale, and he could find more of his people if he tried. He had the urge to weep a moment, but instead laughed as joy came upon him.

"Guardian, you have once again nourished me in a way I cannot put to music." He reached to kiss her, but she moved swiftly to the water, becoming one with the sparkling surface, turning back only briefly to give him a wistful smile. The wind caught the trees and the water gently lapped at the bank, but no sound disturbed it as Elenee rejoined the silvery waters. Troubadour laughed and picked up his lute and composed a wondrous song to Elenee and played to her for hours. He played until he once again strode back into the depths of the Mystic Wood.

As he walked, he thought of the things he would have to learn to better understand life outside a forest, and he looked forward to the challenge of it. His teacher Troubadour had taught that knowledge was the source of wisdom, and knowledge was only discovered with risk and curiosity. It meant leaving the wood of course, but that was the freedom of being Troubadour. Freedom was everything to him and his people, and theirs had been gained only with the concealing power the Guardian of the Vale granted his home. Out there he would have to once again deal with those who would suppress freedom by using foul poisons and dweomers that enslave the mind, or who practiced slavery or other ways of holding people to their will. It was a risk, but as he tuned his lute it occurred to him the risk was one he enjoyed taking.



RACIAL BASICS

Mystic Wood Elves as a race are required to demonstrate and implement a personal hatred of the use of any artificial means to induce restriction of their freedom or the freedom of others. They are strongly opposed to slavery and anything that removes free will. They hate any sort of control magics, including *Charm* spells and *Enslavement* elixirs, and any sort of monster controlling ability such as *Vampire Charm*. They will always attempt to break any such charms they find on others.

They do not believe these things are inherently evil (like most people consider necromancy to be); it is their use against intelligent beings that they object to. In other words, a Mystic Wood elf may have no problem whatsoever casting those particular spells on an unintelligent monster. A Mystic Wood elf may even cast a *Dominare* on another person if it serves the purpose of removing another Command (so long as the Mystic Wood elf immediately gives the order to "return to normal.") It is the ends that are important, not the means.

It is up to each player to make his or her own decision on that, which can cause all sorts of nice role-playing arguments among the race.

Because of their hatred of control, it is inconceivable that any Mystic Wood elf would ever knowingly take advantage of another person, as this would undoubtedly be against that person's will.

Mystic Wood Elves are innately curious beings, and they enjoy learning a great deal. Insofar as they are somewhat preoccupied with learning and trying new things, they enjoy craft making of all sorts. Those who are masters of their craft are highly regarded in Mystic Wood Elf society.

In general, the gaining of knowledge of all types is a habit and preoccupation of all Mystic Wood Elves. Some enjoy specializing and mastering one art first before moving on to the next thing, but dabbling in many different skills is also acceptable generally in their culture.

Mystic Wood Elves generally tend to have a somewhat hedonistic view of life, indulging actively in wine, women (men), and song. They enjoy life to the fullest. Not all Mystic Wood Elves exhibit this hedonistic trait but those who do not are usually the exception to the rule.

Young Mystic Wood Elves tend to be somewhat innocent and naive, and are akin to a deer in headlights when they first leave the woods. However, as they grow more experienced and seasoned, they will exhibit a more realistic view of the world.

Mystic Wood Elves have no official documented life span. For all intents and purposes, they seem to be immortal in regards to life span and don't seem to die of old age, but of accidents, battles and other causes.

Remember when starting a new Mystic Wood Elf character that you should be quite young, for otherwise you would have gained many skills.

Attitudes and personalities vary from one Mystic Wood Elf to another, but overall they tend to be a very outgoing race. They love life and live it to its fullest and may exhibit a tendency to be extreme in any major personality trait they may have. A Mystic Wood Elf may choose to be overly reckless, while another may decide to be overly depressed.

Mystic Wood Elves find their horns to be sensitive and it somewhat stimulating when they are touched.

Mystic Wood elves also tend to have a somewhat hedonistic view of life, indulging actively in wine, women/men, and song. They possess no cultural taboos in regard to sex and gender preference, as long as everything is completely consensual. Individual Mystic Wood elves may vary from prim to promiscuous, based upon their character concept.

COSTUME REQUIREMENTS

Mystic Wood Elves are recognizable immediately, as they have horns on their heads (like the mythical Pan) and pointy Elf ears. The ears should be attached with spirit gum or eyelash adhesive, or there is the chance of losing them while out and about. Horns can be attached by either using spirit gum (if they are the light, hollow rubber ones) or with a string, tying them across the forehead. Special effort should be made to secure the horns because they can be dangerous if lost during a fight.

Also, when someone accidentally places a direct hit on the horns with a padded weapon it can hurt! Padding the back of the horns by some means is recommended, but not required.

