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Anti-Magic

Storybook

General

- **Name:** The Republic of the Undergrowth
- **Identity:** A secluded, collectivist forest society deeply distrustful of modern magic, seeking to protect its traditions and sovereignty
- **Governance:** Ruled by an eleven-member council (with one vacant seat), transitioning from monarchy under the Valanidiá royal family
- **Purpose:** Eradicate all “new” forms of magic, uncover the truth behind their queen’s murder, and restore legitimacy to their government by locating the lost prince
- **Culture:** Close-knit communities favoring communal living in shaded areas near cliffs and trees, wearing light, earth-toned clothing; some individuals flee to solitude due to the lack of privacy
- **Beliefs:** External magic —as opposed to healing, which is considered internal magic— is seen as dangerous, particularly due to its past use in war and crime; deep-seated prejudice against mages and the Magic Faction

Culture

The Republic of the Undergrowth is a collectivist society built on resilience, tradition, and an unwavering opposition to the modern external magic. Their way of life emphasizes agility, self-sufficiency, and adaptation to their dense forest home. Their communities are tight-knit, favoring communal structures and practical living, though some individuals seek solitude due to the lack of privacy. Clothing is designed for mobility and comfort, with dark greens and brownish-reds reflecting the land’s fertile soil. Exposure of the arms and midsection is common, while legs remain covered as a cultural norm.

Animals

Each species within the Republic carries symbolic significance, reinforcing the faction’s values of stealth, resilience, and adaptability.

- **Common:** Eastern red-backed salamanders, Eastern cottontails – representing survival, speed, and adaptability
- **Uncommon:** Northern cardinals – symbolizing vigilance and communication
- **Rare:** White-tailed deer – embodying grace and wisdom

- **Very Rare (Almost Exclusively Royal Family):** Eastern fence lizards – representing lineage, cunning, and exclusivity

Classes

The Republic's warriors are trained to counter magic users with lethal efficiency, prioritizing speed and ambush tactics over direct confrontation. Magic is strictly forbidden, except for healers, who serve as the faction's only mystical exception.

- **Common Roles:** Rangers – stealth-based warriors who blend seamlessly into the environment
- **Uncommon Roles:** Fighters – close-combat specialists, agile yet lightly armored
- **Slightly Uncommon Roles:** Healers – support-focused, clad in light green and veiled for anonymity
- **Nonexistent:** Mages – all forms of external magic (as opposed to internal magic like healing) are outlawed

Combat Philosophy

- **Primary Focus:** Anti-magic warfare; swift, decisive strikes before mages can cast
- **Weakness:** Less prepared for direct engagements against heavily armored foes
- **Tactical Edge:** Mobility and assassination techniques over brute force

Architecture

The Republic's architecture embraces the forest, integrating structures into the environment rather than altering it. They build **wide, not tall**, favoring hidden settlements nestled beneath towering trees or along cliffsides. Older buildings once bore intricate designs, but practicality has since taken precedence, leading to a shift toward **utilitarian construction**. Structures remain camouflaged beneath dense foliage, blending seamlessly with the terrain.

- **Materials:** Dark wood as the primary resource, supplemented by stone when available
- **Aesthetic:** Minimal decoration, with dark green and brownish-red hues mirroring their clothing
- **Environmental Integration:** Buildings obscured by natural barriers such as bushes and moss

Biome

The Republic thrives within a dense, mist-laden woodland dominated by **colossal trees, thorny undergrowth, and creeping vines**. Fog often shrouds the landscape, adding to its mystique. Moss blankets the ground and climbs along bark and stone, softening the presence of both nature and civilization.

- **Flora:** Thick, towering trees, overgrown vines, and thorned bushes
- **Atmosphere:** Often foggy, damp, and filled with the scent of earth and moss

Naming Conventions

The Republic of the Undergrowth refers to its people as **the Shaded People**, a reflection of their hidden and collective nature. Their settlements and landmarks often reference **shadows, secrecy, or the forest’s deep undergrowth**, reinforcing their connection to the land.

History

Discovery of "new" Magic

The Shaded People, under the protection of the Valanidiá Royal Family, initially tried to embrace the discovery of external magic, seeing it as a tool for protection of the weak and alternative for those weak of body to defend themselves. However, while many saw it as a boon, others, particularly those encouraged by a secretive magic faction, used magic as a means to gain power. Although initially met with skepticism, Queen Melia Valanidiá encouraged her people to accept magic, even appointing a Court Magician and granting mages prestigious roles. As mages became integrated into society, the Kingdom appeared to flourish, but the peace was shattered when magical pillagers began attacking villages, and the Kingdom's defenses, unprepared for magical combat, were overwhelmed.

The Queen's Murder

In response, Queen Melia took steps to train her soldiers in anti-magic tactics, but before they could fully prepare, a group of mages attacked the palace, killing the queen. This tragic event plunged the Kingdom into chaos, with the royal family lacking a direct heir. As the remaining mages were exiled, the Kingdom struggled to regain order. Ultimately, the survivors decided that external magic posed a threat to their society, and they decided to outlaw all magic except for healing, which they considered entirely separate from all "new" magic.

The Establishment of the Council

In the wake of this upheaval, the Kingdom established a new system of governance—a ruling council composed of high-ranking court members and key citizens who had helped restore peace. They also left a spot for the queen’s brother, who had been absent during the crisis, should he return. The council's goal was to ensure stability and avoid the uncertainty of a single ruler, and with it, they hoped to build a brighter future for their people.

Artifact

The Discovery of the Artifact

Over a century ago, during the reign of the last queen’s great-grandfather, a violent earthquake exposed a hidden marvel—an ancient, man-made cavern carved deep into the heart of a cliff. At its center lay a mysterious artifact - later known as **The Artifact of the Unyielding Echo** -, appearing as nothing more than a perfectly smooth metallic stone. Though its unassuming nature belied its importance, the elaborate stonework surrounding it hinted at a grander purpose. Initially regarded as an archaeological curiosity, the artifact’s true significance became evident when it resisted all attempts to be moved, broken, or altered. Scholars, artisans, and explorers flocked to study it, gradually establishing a small settlement that, in time, flourished into a thriving city.

Revolution in Metallurgy

The artifact’s presence inadvertently spurred a revolution in metallurgy, as blacksmiths sought stronger materials to crack its secrets. The pursuit of more durable alloys led to rapid advancements in forging techniques, attracting even more settlers and cementing the city as an industrial hub. Yet, despite generations of study, the artifact remained an enigma, its purpose and origin shrouded in mystery—until the day it awoke.

The Awakening of the Artifact

One fateful afternoon, children playing near the artifact’s resting place noticed a soft glow emanating from its surface. Their excited chatter reached the ears of nearby guards, who, though skeptical, followed them into the depths of the cavern. When hours passed with no sign of their return, the city grew uneasy. Then, a lone survivor—a child, bloodied and shaken—staggered from the darkness. Between gasping sobs, they spoke of nightmarish constructs, faceless beings of solid light that had emerged without warning, overwhelming the guards and sealing all paths of escape. The only reason the child survived was sheer luck and a desperate dash through the maze-like corridors.

The Aftermath

From that moment, the cavern was declared off-limits, placed under constant watch by elite guards. Though the constructs never ventured beyond the cave’s entrance, their presence ensured that none dared to challenge the depths again. Adventurers and soldiers occasionally test themselves against the outer tunnels, but the artifact itself remains untouched, its glow a silent reminder of the tragedy that claimed those who ventured too close. To this day, no one knows what triggers the manifestation of the constructs, nor whether the artifact can ever be deactivated—if such a thing is even possible.

Quests

The Artifact of the Unyielding Echo (Main Quest Connection)

Discovering the Artifact

- The city is renowned for its **exceptional blacksmiths**, but few know of the ancient force buried beneath it.
- As players approach, **better-equipped enemies** and **merchants selling higher-quality weapons and armor** hint at the city's wealth.
- Rumors circulate of a **sealed cavern near the outskirts**, closely guarded and spoken of in hushed tones.
- Only those with **keen curiosity or luck** might uncover the Artifact before their run ends.

NPCs and Rumors

- **Weary Blacksmith:** *"Steel from that city? Toughest you'll ever find. But there's talk that their skill isn't just from hard work—something down there keeps pushing them forward, whether they like it or not."*
- **Wandering Scholar:** *"There's a ruin near the city. No one's allowed near it. But every so often, figures flicker inside—shadows moving like men. They say it's just tricks of the light. I don't believe that."*
- **Battle-Scarred Mercenary:** *"I knew a man who tried to sneak inside. Next day, someone—something—showed up, fighting just like him. It wasn't him, though. Not anymore."*

The Artifact's Nature

- The Artifact itself **resides within a vast underground maze**, but its domain includes **everything within the cavern**.
- **It creates artificial constructs** that mimic anyone or anything that has **set foot within the cave in the past century**—most commonly warriors from the **Anti-Magic Faction**.
- **The echoes are bound to the cave**. They can fight, adapt, and learn—but **never leave** .

Entering the City

Positive Standing with the Faction:

- Players are **welcomed** into the city, free to shop and interact with **special NPCs**.
- The guards **warn** them of the cave's dangers but do not interfere if they attempt entry.
- **Potential Perk:** They may receive **a powerful weapon or armor** as a parting gift.
- Conversation with the **Captain of the Guard** at the Gate of the cave: *"You've got steel in your eyes, outsider. I won't stop you if you wish to test your mettle. But listen well—what*

lurks in that cave remembers every face it sees. If you fall, you'll fight yourself the next time someone enters. Take this—it may just keep you from becoming a ghost of your own making."

□□ Neutral Standing with the Faction:

- The city is open for trade, but access to the cave is **denied unless the guards are convinced or bribed**.
- **Combat only begins inside the cave** after the Artifact's influence takes hold.
- Conversation with a **suspicious Guard** at the Gate of the cave**:** *"You think you can just stroll into the depths? No chance. That place is sealed for a reason. Unless you've got something to offer—or a damn good reason—you're not getting past me."*

□□ Negative Standing with the Faction:

- The city gates are **closed** to the player.
- **The guards will attack on sight** if an attempt is made to enter the cave.
- **Combat begins outside the cave**, forcing players to **fight their way in**.
- Conversation with the **Commander of the City Watch** before entering the city**:** *"We don't let your kind through these gates. And if you think you'll set foot near that cave, you'll be dead before you take three steps. Turn around, or die where you stand."*

Exploring the Cave

Outskirts of the Cave (Artifact is Passive)

- **Enemies wander randomly**, and only attack within range.
- **Enemies spawn slowly** and only after another unit has been defeated.
- **There is no time limit**, allowing careful exploration.
- Guards may **follow the player**—offering assistance or hostility depending on past interactions.

Deeper Within (Artifact is Active)

- **Enemies rush towards the player,** relentlessly attacking the player's units.
- **Enemies spawn rapidly (every 1-3 turns)**, up to a theoretical maximum.
- A **timer starts**, and the player's goal is to survive until the timer runs out.
- Guards, if present, **will retreat the moment the countdown begins**.
- **(Potential Mechanic: The Artifact can be attacked to lower the timer—but doing so is extremely difficult.)**

Lost Brother of the Queen (Main Faction Quest)

Trigger

- The quest is triggered randomly near Anti-Magic territory, with higher chances if the player has a positive reputation with the faction.
- The Brother of the Queen (BotQ) is a powerful Druid, often found in combat, but strong enough to handle the situation alone unless it's a late-game encounter.

Encounters

First Encounter

- Upon the player’s first meeting with the BotQ, he might be fighting, but doesn't need assistance. He briefly acknowledges the player:
  “Appreciate the help, even if it wasn’t necessary against small-fry like this. I’d love to chat, but there are a few old fools I’d rather avoid. See you later~”
- After he leaves, a group of Royal Knights will appear and ask for directions.
  - If the player tells the truth, a bonus encounter with the Knights will trigger.
  - If the player lies, the next encounter will be with the BotQ.

Bonus Encounter (Lore-Heavy)

- If the player helped the Knights, they'll learn more about the Tragedy of the Queen’s Death and the chaos that followed, causing the country to descend into anarchy.
- The Knights also explain their search and their purpose.

Subsequent Encounters

- Future encounters will bring the player closer to the center of Anti-Magic territory. The second or third meeting may still be outside it, depending on the player’s path.

Influence on the Faction

- After the second encounter, faction members appear more frequently outside their territory but avoid conflict with mages, and in extreme cases, might cooperate with them.
- Upon quest completion:
  - The faction’s council gains a new member (affecting lore).
  - The Royal Knights come out of retirement, adding high-level units to the faction.
  - The faction's stance towards mages becomes more neutral, removing "Drive Out Mages" quests in favor of "Take Care of Mage-Bandits."
  - Mages can occasionally be hired as mercenaries to support the faction.

Gameplay Effects

- After the second encounter, the player’s reputation with the faction will increase gradually.
- Upon completion of the quest:
  - The Druid Class is unlocked.
  - The Gremory Class (Mage + Healer) is unlocked once the Magic Faction's main quest is completed.

Magic

Storybook

General

- **Name:** *The Order of the Hearttree*
- **Identity:** A mystic assembly of herbivorous creatures, bound by an ancient oath to safeguard the forest's magic and forgotten secrets
- **Governance:** governed by the enigmatic *Circle of Mystics*, a council of seven visionaries split into three ideological sects, led by the *Chronicler of the Veil*
- **Purpose:** Rediscover and preserve the mysteries of a lost civilization, restore the forest's magical balance, and protect sacred sites
- **Culture:** A rich, peaceful and enigmatic society inspired by West Asia, where rituals under starry skies, intricate mosaics, and draped garments symbolize a deep connection to chakra and ancestral wisdom
- **Members:** deers, tortoises, foxes, lynx, owls, ibexes, and peafowls

History

The whisper of the past

The origins of the Order of the Hearttree are shrouded in legend, their truth obscured by the passage of time and the fading echoes of a forgotten era. It is said that their ancestors were not a single people but a collection of tribes, bound together by their shared reverence for the forest and mastery of magic. These tribes thrived in harmony with the forest, weaving spells that shaped its growth and preserved its balance. Among the many tales of this ancient time, three figures emerge as keystones in their mythology, revered and feared in equal measure. *Shivani the Rootbinder*, a lynx who could channel the forest’s very lifeblood, creating groves of unparalleled beauty and strength. She believed magic was a sacred trust, meant to nurture and protect the natural order. Her followers saw her as the soul of their civilization. *Xezal the Shaper*, a daring deer whose magic defied the forest’s constraints. She sculpted impossible landscapes, built structures that floated on the winds, and bent the elements to her will. Yet her ambition clashed with others, sowing the seeds of division. *Danyal the Veilkeeper*, a mysterious peafowl who stood apart from the others. Keeper of their deepest secrets, Danyal warned of a darkness that would rise from their unchecked experiments. Their cryptic prophecies are said to linger in the air like an unbroken melody.

The civilization’s fall, according to legend, was not a single tragedy but a cascade of calamities. Shivani’s followers, fearing Xezal’s hubris, sought to dismantle her creations, fracturing the unity of the tribes. In her pursuit of power, Xezal unleashed a force she could not control, shattering a great prism said to contain the essence of magic itself. As its fragments scattered across the forest, the

tribes lost their ability to channel magic with the same clarity they once possessed. It is whispered that Danyal, foreseeing the devastation, made the ultimate sacrifice by splintering the prism and binding its shards to the land itself. They vanished into the forest, leaving only scattered sanctuaries and cryptic warnings behind. Today, the Order of the Hearttree holds these tales close to their hearts, treating them as truths. Whether these whispers are history, myth, or a cautionary tale told by the elders, none can say for certain. What remains undeniable is the forest's enigmatic power, and the Order's unyielding determination to protect and unravel its secrets.

Formation of the order

Decades ago, the animals who would become the Order of the Hearttree lived scattered throughout the forest, bound only by myths of an ancient connection to magic. These whispers were dismissed as mere stories, until a discovery transformed their world. A group of wandering scholars, led by a visionary deer named *Levent*, uncovered a crystalline shard hidden deep within the heart of the forest. Radiating faint energy, the shard resonated deeply with those who approached it, awakening a dormant connection to the mystical energy they would come to call *chakra*. Levent was the first to sense the shard's power truly. Under his leadership, the animals began to harness the shard's energy, piecing together fragments of ancient knowledge. They built their sanctuary around the shard, naming it the *Hearttree Sanctuary*, and forged a community dedicated to rediscovering the magic of their ancestors. Thus, the Order of the Hearttree was born. In the decades since its founding, the Hearttree Sanctuary became a flourishing city, a centre of learning and devotion. Governance rests with the *Circle of Mystics*, a council of seven representatives who guide their people. The Circle itself is divided into three ideological sects:

- *Elderguardians*: two preservers who honour the shard as a sacred relic and believe it must remain untouched
- *Pathfinders*: two seekers who view the shard as a key to unlocking new magical potential and advocate for experimentation
- *Veilweavers*: two representatives of the general population, particularly non-magic users, ensuring the needs of all citizens are considered
- *Chronicler of the Veil:* a unifying and impartial figure who mediates between the factions and ensures balance in their governance - currently *Ghazal*

Chaos or order?

Tensions both within and beyond the Order threaten its stability. The Preservers caution against tampering with the shard, fearing it could destabilize the delicate harmony of the forest. At the same time, the Seekers argue that leaving its potential untapped risks stagnation and missed opportunities. The Veilweavers, caught in the middle, often find themselves mediating disputes, as they must balance the desires of the mystical elite with the practical concerns of the general populace. This constant push and pull threatens to fracture the Order, with each faction vying to shape the future of the Hearttree Sanctuary and its precious shard. Externally, the Order's secrecy has drawn suspicion and hostility from other forest animals, particularly those aligned with the kingdom. Their refusal to openly share their discoveries has led to accusations of arrogance and exclusivity. However, the Order justifies its actions as a necessary precaution to prevent the misuse of ancient magic. They view their role as protectors of a fragile and sacred history, fearing

that those outside their community may exploit magic for power without honouring its legacy.

Culture (pictures will be added soon)

The Order’s daily life is infused with rituals and traditions designed to maintain balance within the forest and among themselves. Their ceremonies, often tied to celestial events such as star alignments or eclipses, feature music, dance, and chants to align their chakra energy with the natural world. These gatherings are sacred yet celebratory, uniting the community in purpose and spiritual focus. Knowledge and artistry are the lifeblood of the Order’s society. Libraries and markets serve as vibrant hubs for learning, trade, and storytelling, while gatherings celebrate creativity and intellectual exchange. Diplomacy and trust are essential in their interactions with outsiders, and entry into their society requires proof of intent and respect for their traditions. The Order values humility, extending cautious hospitality to those who demonstrate an appreciation for their ways.

Animals

- *Common:* Deer, tortoises, and ibexes - embodying grace, wisdom, and agility
- *Rare:* Foxes, lynx, and owls - symbolizing cunning, vigilance, and spiritual guidance
- *Extremely Rare:* Peafowls - celebrated for their artistry and mysticism

Classes

The order welcomes all roles as long as they align with their peaceful values and cultural identity

- *Common Roles:* Mages (scholars of magic), healers (focused on restoration and support), and rangers (protectors of the forest)
- *Rare Roles:* Fighters are rare within the Order, as their culture emphasizes peace over conflict. Fighters are respected for their dedication but sometimes viewed with scepticism due to the Order's commitment to diplomacy

Clothing and symbolism

The Order’s aesthetic reflects its profound connection to nature and magic. Flowing garments, resembling robes or sarees, drape gracefully over their bodies, often embroidered with intricate symbols of vines, flowers, constellations, and cycles of nature. Jewellery and adornments, crafted from forest crystals, metals, and gemstones, further emphasize their bond with the forest’s energy. Their clothing is vibrant with blues and greens representing harmony and life, yellows and golds signifying enlightenment and vitality, and purples, reds, and pinks evoking mysticism, magic, and passion. Everything they create, from their attire to their architecture, incorporates nature-inspired patterns and geometric designs, expressing their belief in the interconnectedness of all things.

Architecture

The Order’s architectural style is as serene and intricate as their culture. Palaces, sanctuaries, and step-wells feature ornate domes, arches, and carvings, seamlessly blending with their environment. Mosaics adorn their spaces, depicting the sun, moon, stars, and flowing water through geometric patterns. Their buildings are often integrated into nature itself, built into ancient trees, nestled along cliffsides, or harmonized with waterfalls, reflecting their commitment to preserving the forest’s natural beauty.

Biome

Their homeland is a Mediterranean-like environment, with pine forests, rugged mountains, and dry yet fertile land. Heavy rains during the winter nourish the region, while hot, dry summers shape its character. Lingering magical energy influences the flora and fauna, resulting in glowing plants, enhanced wildlife, and an aura of mysticism that pervades the land. Around the sanctuary, the trees curve in unusual ways, some forming shapes resembling hearts, as if the land itself is enchanted by the shard’s presence.

Naming conventions

- Order of the Hearttree: inspired by their sanctuary and its environment (near the artefact, around the sanctuary, the trees are weirdly curved, some look like hearts)
- Shivani: Sanskrit origin meaning the kind one
- Xezal: Arabic origin meaning the deer
- Danyal: ancient Aramaic origin meaning the peacemaker
- Levent: Turkish origin meaning the clever and strong man
- Ghazal: Persian origin meaning the deer
- Akil: Arabic origin meaning the intelligent one

Artefact

The fragment the Magic Faction possesses is a **Shard of Resonance**, a crystalline piece of the shattered central prism that amplifies and harmonizes magic within a certain range. The shard radiates an ambient energy that aligns with the forest’s life force, creating an aura of vitality and heightened magical potential. The Magic Faction uses the shard primarily as a spiritual and magical focus. They believe it is a relic of their ancestors, meant to guide them toward reclaiming the lost harmony of their civilization. Rituals performed near the shard are said to amplify their effectiveness, allowing for faster healing, the growth of protective flora, and heightened awareness of the forest’s spiritual currents. Legends say that after the prism was shattered, fragments were scattered across the land, and the shard that would later become the Hearttree Sanctuary was swept away in a magical surge that deposited it in a remote glade. Over time, the shard’s energy influenced the surrounding environment, causing rapid growth and creating the unique flora and fauna now present in the region. Legends within the faction suggest that the forest itself “chose” to protect the shard, guiding its placement to ensure it would remain hidden until it was needed again. The shard was discovered by the faction during its earliest exploration before the order was

established under Levent’s leadership. While charting unexplored regions of the forest in their search for ancestral ruins, they stumbled upon the glade where the shard had lain dormant for centuries. Levent was the first to sense the shard’s power, describing it as a "song" resonating through the forest. Upon closer examination, they found the shard partially embedded in the ground, its crystalline structure glimmering faintly. The Magic Faction knows the shard is a relic of their ancestors and a source of immense magical energy, but their understanding of its origins and potential remains incomplete. They revere the artefact as a divine gift, interpreting its effects as the will of the forest or guidance from the ancestors.

Quests

Main Quest connection

Discovering the fragment:

- The players learn about the magic factions fragment through their recurring visions
- see glimpses of the fragment’s effects: lush, enchanted landscapes of the Hearttree Sanctuary
- A forester NPC will tell the player about some weird sightings he overheared: dense overgrowth cutting off roads leading into the Magic Faction’s territory: “You’ll want to turn back if you’re heading [random direction]. The roads are gone, swallowed by roots. I've never seen trees grow so fast - so uncanny looking. There’s magic at work, I’d bet my axe on it.”
- A traveller claims to have seen "creatures glowing like stars" attacking anyone near some ruin: “I saw them, I swear! Deer with eyes of fire, vines that moved like snakes. Thorns everywhere! Never liked the Hearttree people anyway, but something weird is going on over there, I´m telling you...”
- A traveller speaks of having weird visions/nightmares: "You dreamt of the glowing trees, didn’t you? I’ve heard others speak of that forest - alive with light, but cursed with chaos. They say it’s the Magic Faction’s doing. Something they guard deep in their sanctuary. You don´t know the way? Here, follow this path and soon you will see the trees and thorns of the Hearttree Sanctuary."

Entering the Hearttree Sanctuary:

- The faction’s territory is a mix of serene clearings and treacherous magical zones
- Approaching the fragment’s location involves overcoming guardians and environmental hazards
- player can choose to negotiate access by allying with the faction or gain the faction's trust
- Upon reaching the sanctuary, players encounter *Ghazal*, the current *Chronicler of the Veil* and some guards. The tone of these interactions depends on the player’s past actions and current approach
- Ghazal (if you're neutral/unknown): "You come to the Hearttree, yet your soul carries no song of alignment with the forest. Speak, wanderers. Why should we trust you?" - "A relic? Show us that you´re worthy first, then you can visit our sacred sites."

- Ghazal (if you're allied): “The Hearttree senses your alignment, and so do I. You’ve shown respect for the forest’s will. Tell me, what purpose brings you here?” - "A relic? Do you mean the *Shard of Resonance*? Why yes of course you can see it. Guards! Please show them the way."
- Other NPCs: “You tread on sacred ground. Turn back, outsider, unless you come bearing gifts or purpose worthy of our trust.” - “Few outsiders earn the right to tread these grounds. If your intent is true, the Hearttree’s light may guide you and bring you peace as it has given us. Otherwise, it will repel you, as it has all who seek to harm it.”
- diplomatic route: completing quests (see quest "*Echoes of the Ancient*") for the faction to prove the player’s worthiness/interest in their overall goals
- The player can also choose to be hostile against them

Internal Conflict

Their deeply rooted ideology shapes the response to the main quest. Although they promote a strong sense of community and tradition, they have deep-rooted conflicts about the artefacts.

- *Preservers:* Argue the fragment should remain untouched, as they believe it embodies their ancestors’ wisdom and provides spiritual guidance. They fear any interference could anger the forest’s spirits. When talking to an elder, they say: “The shard is a sacred song of our ancestors, its resonance harmonizing with the forest’s breath. To disturb it is to disturb the balance. Do not mistake its power for yours to control. Leave it be, or you will face the wrath of the land itself!”
- *Seekers:* Advocate for actively studying and harnessing the fragment’s power to advance their understanding of magic. They see it as their duty to unlock its full potential, even if it involves risk. When talking to younger NPCs, they say: “We’ve spent too long fearing what we don’t understand. Blind faith will bury us in ignorance. The shard holds answers to questions we’ve been too timid to ask. We should unlock its full potential, for the forest and ourselves.”

The player can exploit these divisions by supporting one faction over the other, swaying the outcome of the fragment’s use:

- Supporting *Preservers* might delay the player’s access but preserve the fragment’s stability, ensuring it remains intact for future runs
- Aligning with *Seekers* may give the player access to advanced magical resources or insights but could destabilize the region further

Effects

Fragment Amplification: If the fragment is absorbed into the central artefact, it intensifies the visions for the player, offering greater power at the cost of increased difficulty

Shifts in dynamics:

- Strong magic faction: If their fragment is stabilized or enhanced, their influence grows, potentially leading to greater magical control over the forest

- Weak magic faction: losing the fragment could diminish their power, allowing rival factions like the Coven or Anti-Magic Faction to encroach on their territory

Final confrontation with the Covens:

- if allied, they might provide resources or additional characters to aid the player in the showdown
- if opposed, they could join forces with the Coven or launch independent attacks to reclaim what was lost. Ghazal will say: "You tore apart what was sacred. Do you hear it now? The shard's cry will outlast us all..."

Echoes of the Ancients

Trigger

- The player's party enters a clearing with ancient ruins
- Upon searching, they discover a partially buried stone tablet, weathered but glowing faintly with magical energy, covered with torned vines
- "The stone tablet is cracked, with swirling rune-like symbols carved into its surface. Faint pulses of energy emanate from the carvings, causing the surrounding air to shimmer. The script is unlike anything the party has seen, and the meaning of the text is entirely obscured."

Problem

- The inscription is written in an unknown language but hums faintly with resonance when approached, suggesting magical importance
- Players can investigate the tablet and surrounding ruins to gather hints like what some sybols mean
- Skill Check: Certain characters (mages) might sense lingering magical energy in the inscription, unlocking flavour text
- The party encounters *Akil*, an eccentric historian, scavenging the ruins for artefacts
- Akil´s Role: He recognizes the tablet's significance and offers to help decipher it but warns that doing so requires a r*esonance crystal* - an rare item that can channel the shard's power to "translate" ancient magic
- Akil: "Ah, the tablet hums with history. It holds the whispers of a bygone age, one of magic's rise and fall. But these whispers are locked to your ears. Only the crystal can unshackle their meaning, but the forest does not give such treasures freely." - "There is a risk, of course. To awaken knowledge is to awaken danger." - "Bring me a resonance crystal that was taken from me, it shall help me desipher the contents of the tablet. Come back here once you find it."
- Akil sends the party to a nearby grove where the resonance crystal was stolen by hostile wildlife. "The forest protects what is sacred. Tread lightly, or you may find yourself among its roots."
- If the player decides against it, they will also meet a merchant nearby, however the cost of this crystal is high

- Deciphering the tablet: Returning with the resonance crystal, Akil performs a ritual to activate the tablet. The runes glow brightly, and faint holographic-like images appear, illustrating moments from the ancient past.
- The images and inscription suggest that the downfall of the ancient civilization was caused by their overuse of magic. This unchecked exploitation of magical energy culminated in a cataclysmic event that shattered the artefact and brought devastation to an once-thriving society.

Final Objective

- The tablet's meaning remains open to interpretation, and the party must decide what to do with the knowledge
- Preserve it: The party can allow Akil to take the tablet to the Magic Faction for safekeeping, deepening their relationship with the faction. This unlocks the assumption on what happened to magic (as seen in the history of the magic faction). The faction may use the knowledge to justify their actions, shaping future interactions. Tha player can then read about the full history. Akil: "Wise travellers, you understand that the past is not a warning - it is a guide. The song of magic may have faltered, but with care, we may yet find its harmony again."
- Destroy It: The player can destroy the tablet, fearing the knowledge could trigger a repeat of a catastrophe. Akil condemns this choice, and the tablet's destruction could weaken the party's connection to the Magic Faction. "You would silence the voices of the past? Fools! Knowledge forgotten is a blade turned inward. Without it, we are doomed to stumble blindly into the same abyss!"
- Keep It: The party can take the tablet, hoping to use the knowledge themselves. This can boost the party´s mage skills by 5%.

Merchant

Storybook

History

The leader

Lykard holds the faction and acts as father and friend to everyone. Many have asked themselves why he started this life, but not even the veterans of the faction have any conclusive ideas. He never wants to talk about his private life, which makes him seem the most distant of all the member, but as he always shoulders the responsibility of keeping them in high spirits and helping with all their personal and trading problems, they all decided to not push him. However, some speculations between their ranks come up regularly due to the leader’s mannerisms and way of speech. When he needs to barter with aristocrats, he tends to be too well-spoken for being just a regular merchant, resembling more a count talking to acquaintances. But in complete contrast he always knows his way out of a sticky situation, like he once was on the run. Nevertheless, it is unimously agreed upon, that the leader is the right guy for the important job of giving them the opportunity to a comfortable life.

Culture

Their way of trading

Everyone joining the merchant faction first gets a summary of all the rules by the leader. He will always emphasize on how important it will be for them to never try and get more from their trades as they need, and always be mindful enough, to think about if they would buy their goods for the prices they are marked at and back off otherwise. This became the most successful practice to achieve a comfortable life by means of trading during all his years of experience. "A peaceful life is guaranteed, if you have enough wealth to enjoy good food and drinks and don't need to fear someone else’s power ruling over your path or even ending it." With this the leader will assign someone he deems worthy of conveying practical experience, before being ready to start a merchant’s life.

Animals:

- Hares
- Horses
- Mice

General Style of Clothing:

- Shirts and trousers made of linen
- Colourful
- Well kep, but not fancy

Coloring Scheme:

- Red
- Blue
- Brown
- Green

Preferred Classes:

- Only simple classes:
  - Rogue
  - Ranger
  - Fighter

General Design of Classes:

- Only wear their weapons
- No armour or special equipment

Style for Architecture:

- Simple tents
- Including a larger, walkable, main tent

Biome:

- Common trees reminiscent of european forest
- Including corniferous and broad-leaf trees
- Campsites placed in clearings

Artefact

The merchant faction owns a piece of the Artefact in form of a necklace Lykard wears around his neck concealed under his shirt. It offers the wearer knowledge over other’s intentions and how to properly converse with them. However, as it doesn’t grant any magical abilities, Lykard doesn’t know about these properties and uses this knowledge as if it was his own, helping all in the faction to become respectable merchants. But his necklace also bears a curse, which won’t let his owner stay in one place for too long. If they would, thorns would start to grow until they are entirely encased. Lykard and his faction have never suffered from this, due to their nomadic lifestyle. The necklace was offered to Lykard by a hooded traveller, after being helped, before the time of the merchant faction. During that time, he lived the life of a vagabond, after having fled his old life in

search for a comfortable one.

Quests

- Assisiting merchants with their trade, gaining trust with the faction in the process
- Helping Lykard with defending the base camp from mercenaries

Quest: Helping the leader

“Welcome to our camp.
First, I want to thank you in the name of my friends with helping them with their trades.
They told me you were reliable and even earned them a little bonus.
I would have liked to meet you at a better time, but as things stand, I yet again must ask for your help.
I heard from some of my men, that some mercenaries are on their way here trying to relieve us from our goods.
Therefore, I would ask you, are you willing to help us defend against them?”

If the player accepts they will have to fight some mercaneries in the next fight. After winning Lykard holds a big banquet, which leads to him staying longer than usual, activating the curse of his necklace, allowing the player to obtain the required powers, by harvesting some brambles.

Quest: Helping a merchant

“Greetings fellow traveller.”

(Multiple choice) “Good day. I am on my way to [choose place in one of the other factions’ territories].”

“Do you have any business with the [faction]?”

(Multiple choice)
(1)“That’s none of your business. I am just trying to buy some replenishments from you.”
(2)“I need to get there due to a mission given to me.”

(1)“Excuse me. You are welcome to look at my wares.” (quits the quest)
(2)“If you are already on your way there, could you please be so kind as to take these goods with you? They already know me, and I would rather not see them again.”(puts certain item into players inventory)

Coven

Storybook

History

The Coven, known as the Cult of the Ancient, were created 13 years ago, when the ruler and 3 of the generals found and deciphered some ancient ruins. From then on, they started recruiting people from the different fractions, mostly those who were criminals, poor and had different ideologies, promising them power, telling them that they also could become as powerful as the Ruler if they joined them as followers. They quickly grew and appointed a strong warrior, once from the anti-magic, faction as the 4th general.

7 years ago, while learning about ancient magic inside some ruins, they found an artifact. After contacting the Ruler, the followers who found it were rewarded with knowledge of ancient magic, usually reserved for higher ranking members. For 5 years, the ruler would spend most of his time there, studying the artifact. Until he finally figured out what he needed.

The Cult has a strict power structure. At the top is the Ruler, creator of the Coven and revered by many followers as a god, for his immense knowledge and prowess. Directly under him are the 4 Generals, each of them specializing in a certain field. The generals each have a personal assistant, often excelling in the capabilities they lack and assist them in organizing their assigned followers. The followers assigned to each general, are tasked with different missions. Bringing in sacrifices for rituals, conducting rituals and protecting said rituals. Those rituals are used by the generals or assistants to further strengthen themselves and the followers, but need many sacrifices and if interrupted, it will kill the casters.

Now they are trying to become more powerful, to one day be able to take over the forest and its inhabitants, proving that they are the strongest, chosen by magic. To do that, they have to link the artifacts with each other, to recreate its original state and then override its function, massively empowering the Members of the Cult of the Ancient, making it easy for them to take over the forest.

Artefact

After extensive research and experimentation, the Coven found out, that the artifact act as an almost unlimited storage of chakra. Due to the high concentration of chacra inside of it, bramble start to grow out of the artifact, like an overflowing glass. The Coven used the artifact to conduct rituals, to somewhat reduce the risks of using ancient magic and to better use and develop their curses, as they need a lot of chakra. After researching the artifact for 5 years, the Ruler managed to create a much weaker version of the artifact. While it can barely hold enough chakra to cast a spell, using many of these artificial artifacts allows weaker followers to hold rituals and makes them faster. As the artifacts grow bramble around them, the followers must get rid of them, to make it more difficult to find their location when

conducting rituals and experiments.

Quests

- Main Quest: Stop the coven from completing their artifact links
- Side Quests:
  - Coven lairs serve as key locations.
  - Quests include:
  - interrupting rituals.
  - Raiding their hideouts.
  - Defending Villages from Raids
- Encounters:
  - Stop rituals during specific quests.
  - Random encounters after completing objectives.
  - Mini-boss fights with coven generals tied to individual artifacts.

Culture

The Cult of the Ancient has a very strict culture. Upon joining, the new followers must swear upmost secrecy and loyalty to the Cult. The new members have a curse placed upon them, that kills them, by draining all their life, if they spill information about the Cult.

Afterwards they get assigned to a general who they must follow. Each general has various groups of followers, tasked with different roles. Some retrieve people, who are to be used as sacrifices for rituals, some hold the rituals, which strengthen the Coven and/or develop/research ancient magic and curses. And other protect them, while they hold these rituals.

The followers usually wear a large brown robe, somewhat hiding their faces which are often deformed from using and experimenting with ancient magic. Some higher-ranking members have red glyphs/runes, used in ancient magic and red highlights on their robes as a sign of them, being able to use ancient magic. They are made up from species of the other factions, mainly from the Magic Faction, as they are already proficient in magic. Although the groups, tasked with protecting the others, often also have people from the anti-magic fraction. This way, those with magic proficiency can perform rituals, while those who can’t perform them, can still be useful protecting them in the meantime.


(example of a ritual)

The followers are mainly made up from:

- Foxes [Rare]
- Lynx [Common]
- Owls [Uncommon]
- Peafowls [Uncommon]
- Eastern red-backed salamander [Common]
- Northern cardinal (Bird) [Uncommon]

While no one from the merchant faction joined the Coven, there are some who have a close connection with mainly the generals and their assistants, as they need to buy a lot of supplies.

General