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.

Revision #9
Created 19 January 2025 21:51:46 by Marius
Updated 3 February 2025 18:32:16 by Marius