Forest of Damned Souls

Background:

The party has stumbled upon a cursed forest that makes even the strongest barbarian's skin crawl. Many souls are trapped within the forest's tall trees. People that have traveled here before mention the screams that fill their ears as they embark through this haunted ground. The origins of this place has been unknown for hundreds of years, but many have their theories and myths. An evil sorcerer could have cursed the land, Vecna himself could have played a part in its creation, or it's just the universe's own creation to torment those who live in it. Whatever the truth really is one thing is for certain; this place is not kind to those who are alive.

The party must tread lightly in these woods as it is not just the lost souls that roam it. Monstrous entities roam the forest waiting for the next group unlucky souls to be claimed. When in this forest it seems as if daylight is never in reach as horrific sounds wave through the leaves. Parties must be wary when entering this place. If a party happens to lose their way, their souls will come into play.

First Location: Broken home, Broken soul

The group stumbles upon a withered home in the middle of this forest. It is two stories with it's windows broken and the wooden walls rotting away. Flowers withered just as much as the home surround the house in a circle as if to show this place used to be a sign of beauty. Perhaps this forest of never-ending souls wasn't always drowned in darkness and despair. The party was about to move on but then a voice from the beckons them to come over.

Social Encounter:

A ghostly woman surrounded by a blue haze takes a step out from the front door. Her eyes are grey with no pupils to be seen. She seems to be in her 40s with her hair waving despite the area having no wind. She is wearing a blue dress with flowers as the main design. "Please stay for a minute, I need your assistance." As she talks in a quiet voice, it seems to have an echo effect as if her voice is somewhat distorted. A DC 10 Investigation check helps the party figure out that she is in fact trapped in between realms. The living world and the afterlife. The woman seems slightly panicked but also tired. "Have you seen my daughter? Before everything went dark, we had an argument, and she ran away from home. Please help return her to me I beg of you!" The party first can ask her name. "My name is Clara, and my husband is named Namor. He's been gone for a long time... My daughter's name is Lara if that helps you find her." If the party asks how she died she responds with "What do you mean? I'm standing here breathing and talking to you, aren't I? This is no game please stop saying such ludicrous things and find my daughter!" It seems the woman doesn't fully understand that she is dead and only

wants to find her daughter. Perhaps reuniting them may help them understand or at least be at peace.

If the party searches around the house and ask the woman permission to scavenge the house (DC 10 Persuasion check) they can find resources. In the house the party can find armor that belonged to Clara's husband. There are also 3 healing and 2 mana potions along with the armor. "You may use his equipment; I have no need for them. Nothing has attacked my home in ages. Guess that's one thing the darkness is good for." The party gains these resources and heads back outside of the house. Around the house the party can find an axe, sword, and a dagger lying around. The sword does 5 damage, the axe does 3 damage, and the dagger does 2 damage. When the party does a DC 10 Investigation, they can notice a tree with a piece of bark seeming like it can be removed. Removing the bark reveals a small room with a blanket and dolls made of yarn. A girl with two pigtails wearing a similar outfit like her mother is holding a doll that looks like a bear inside the tree. She proceeds to look up at the party. "Go away this is my hiding spot! Leave me alone!" With DC 10 persuasion the party can tell Lara that her mother sent them in order to bring her home. "I haven't been home in so long... I wouldn't mind going back even if my mom is still mad at me."

The girl trots along behind the party as they reach the house again. "LARA!" Clara hugs Lara in a tight embrace with tears flowing down her eyes like waterfalls. Her voice is less distorted now, sounding clearer. The blue haze is brighter around the mother and daughter as well. "I'm sorry for running away mom. All I wanted to do was hide in my tree after our fight. I couldn't remember how to get out." Clara looks at her daughter in the eyes with tears still streaming down her face. "All that matters now is that we are together again!" She holds her tighter not wanting to let go. Then she remembers the party is still here. "Thank you all for everything. Now we can get on with our lives" It sadly seems that she still hasn't realize or accepted they are dead. "Oh, wait follow me inside I have a gift for you all." She leads the party to a drawer and the party can open it. Inside there is an amulet. "I don't know why my husband had this but please take this as a reward." For finding her daughter the party receives an Amulet as a reward which will help them progress the land further. As the party walks away the mother and daughter fade away into the night.

Second Location: Ritual site

The party makes it to a ritual site. Six outline circles surround a pillar in the middle. Pass the pillar is a large gate. From history books this site was used by sorcerers to try and combat the darkness, but the attempts would always fail. Eventually people that worshipped the darkness long ago took over the site and used it to complete trials the darkness had for them. As the party gets closer to the center of the site a ancient pillar with purple markings has a hole where an item

can be placed. The hole matches the shape of the amulet that Clara gave the party. The party places the amulet on the pillar.

Puzzle Encounter:

6 symbols begin to appear in each circle around the pillar and begin to illuminate. A DC 10 Perception check allows the party to read words that have appeared on the pillar. "In order to open the gate to see our all-mighty king, put our holy symbols in order to hear the darkness sing." The party must step onto the symbols in the correct order. Upon closer inspection the symbols are a wolf, star, dragon, knight, steed, and a raven. Stepping out of order will make the ritual site shake. Failing 5 times, the party will have no choice but to leave the forest before it consumes them collecting their souls. Around the ritual site the party can find more mana and health potions as resources to collect. There is a heavy boulder next to the wolf symbol. A DC 12 strength check allows the party to lift the boulder and find a magic bow and quiver that can use elements of Ice. When fired it can summon Ice storms that surround any adversary.

With a DC 15 Investigation check a member of the party can notice some etches on the amulet. The member can translate these etches which reads this "Dragon, star, steed, knight, wolf, raven. The darkness has weakened over time. I have foreseen this cult disbanding in the next few hundred years. Whoever finds this, use this code to break into the heart of the darkness and free the souls here. Save my family." It seems to possibly be written by Clara's husband Namor. Though it isn't clear what happened to him, you can only assume he died trying to find a way to put his family and the whole forest at ease. The party members once stepping on the right symbols will hear blaring horns sing loudly into the night sky. The glow from the pillar and symbols travel into the gate making it glow a dark purple. The award for solving this puzzle is entry into the heart of the forest and being able to face the final encounter within with the hope of saving the souls that reside in this region.

Third Location: The Coliseum

The party walks through the gate to see a massive coliseum that has seen better days. Many of the décor has fallen apart with the stone structures being cracked and aged. The stands once filled with excited audience is now completely empty. This Colosseum was where the cult that worshipped the darkness would hold fights as entertainment and to worship the darkness that clouded over the region. According to some myths and legends it was a sorcerer who called himself the raven king who brought the darkness with him as a "gift" to this forest. His seat would be at the top of the coliseum where he can get the best view. That seat is empty with the floor collapsed into the rest of the stands. As the party moves further into the place, in the center sits a knight with dark purple fog emitting from his armor.

Combat Encounter:

The knight speaks with two separate voices. A dark and sinister voice says, "LEAVE NOW OR BE DESTROYED BY MY GIFT!" The other voice sounding more pleading and sadder. "Free my home please and free me I beg you." This corrupted knight has 35 Hp and has 3 attacks. Aetherium razor is a slash attack with his sword that can do 6 damage to a member. Darkness falls is an attack where the corrupted knight can cover the arena in a purple fog that can stun the party for one turn allowing him to perform another attack. His last attack, Raven's Might, allows him to slam his sword into the ground and cause purple fireballs to emit from the ground and target the party members. Being hit by one of these can cause 8 damage. If the party did not find any weapons or potions before the encounter, they can do a DC 12 investigation to look around the coliseum as there are plenty of bodies. Members can grab health potions and mana potions from corpses as well as swords. Some of these resources are near the knight and are a bit riskier to grab as his Aetherium razor is close range.

Once the final blow is dealt the sinister voices cries out in pain "NO MY GIFT SHOULD HAVE SAVED ME THIS ISN'T FAIR I SACFRICED SO MUCH TO GET WHAT I WANT!!" The voice fades with the second voice sounding more at peace and calm now. "Thank you, I tried to fight him myself and almost won but he merged with my body allowing himself to live on. Thanks to you my family can finally be free. Oh, and by the way, my name is Namor, and it was and honor to meet friendly faces such as yourselves thank you." It is revealed that Namor was the corrupted knight, and he left home to deal with this darkness once and for all. It seems some of the myths about the evil sorcerer was true. The party is rewarded with Namor's golden sword that does 8 attack damage and the sight of daylight finally reaching the forest.