

THE ALDERKING

*"My father, my father, and dost thou not hear
The words that the Alderking breathes in my ear?
Be calm, dearest child, 'tis thy fancy deceives;
'Tis the sad wind that sighs through the withering
leaves."*

— ADAPTED FROM "THE ERL-KING"

The untouched stretches of forest and woodlands are commonly thought to be outside the reign of anyone, a free and lawless wilderness beyond the trappings of civilization. But while no mortal rules this land, it is not free of rule.

The Alderking is the lord of the Unseelie Court, the ruler of fairies, and the sovereign of the woodland realms. While this enigmatic figure looks like an elf, he has an air of magic and whimsy about him. The civilized kin know little to nothing about him.

THE KING'S DESIRE

The goals and aims of the Alderking are strange and hard to fathom. At times, he reveals himself to folk simply to talk and be entertained by their stories. At other times, he appears vile and rages at any trespassers.

FOREST MINIONS

Some of the beings of the forest are loyal subjects who follow the Alderking's rule and protect his realm.

- ◆ **Fairies:** The Alderking reigns over all fairies of the realm. They are his eyes and ears throughout the forest, and he treasures them above almost everything else. Should anyone harm or kill his fairies, he will hold a grudge and seek to make their life full of trouble and regret.
- ◆ **Tree Kin:** These sentient tree beings are the oldest denizens of the woodland realm. While the Alderking has only come into his power very recently, from their perspective, they loyally defend what is both their home and his realm.

HEART OF THE FOREST

A mystical knot nestled deep in the root of an ancient alder tree. It is the source of the Alderking's power.

- ◆ **Well Guarded:** The Alderking has built his court of root and bough around the ancient tree. Many of his minions guard the heart of his power.
- ◆ **Vulnerable:** The heart itself is a tangle of pulsating, knotted wood. Despite its power, it can be easily hacked to pieces and is vulnerable to fire.

RANDOM ENCOUNTER

While journeying through the forest, the player characters have found a secluded spot to make camp and rest for the night. When all but one of the characters are fast asleep, the one on watch feels a strange pull to get up and walk into the forest. They must make a WIL roll.

If it succeeds, they snap out of it and manage to catch a glimpse of a shadow slipping into the underbrush.

If it fails, they wake up the next morning with dim memories of strange dreams about a celebration of fairies and fauns in the Alderking's halls beneath a great canopy – and a strong headache (the SICKLY condition).

ADVENTURE HOOK

Over the last few months, people who entered the forest, or worked in lumber camps on the forest edge, have gone missing. Willem, a well-dressed older man, and owner of a local lumber mill, is looking for a group of sturdy mercenaries to investigate the matter – and should it be necessary, deal with anyone behind the disappearances.

When the adventurers investigate the location where the most recent victims were last seen, they find tracks of people simply walking deep into the forest.

What they can discover later on, is that the Alderking, angry with people trespassing in his domain and cutting down trees, has lured, captured and imprisoned the missing people. They now sit in a damp cave underneath the Alderking's halls, only brought up to serve as enchanted entertainers at the king's court.

PLAYING THE ALDERKING

The Alderking is not meant to be defeated when encountered, and he does not seek to kill the player characters outright. Instead, the idea is to have brief encounters with him in which he taunts them, displays his power and generally makes their lives difficult.

"THOU, THEE, THINE" The Alderking addresses everyone with the informal "thou", and expects to be addressed with the formal "you". Not doing so angers him greatly.

*"Oh, come, thou dear infant! oh come thou with me!
For many a game, I will play there with thee;
On my strand, lovely flowers their blossoms unfold,
My mother shall grace thee with garments of gold."*

— ADAPTED FROM "THE ERL-KING"



THE ALDERKING

MOV: 20 **DAMAGE BONUS AGL:** +D6 **HP:** 28

ARMOR: Magic (4)

WP: 36

SKILLS: Fairy Magic 18, Animism 16, Evade 15

ABILITIES: Master Spellcaster, Fast Footwork, Focused ×10, Robust ×6

SPiELS: (see the adjacent sidebar)

GEAR: Forest's Wreath, Autumn's Cloak, obsidian dagger (mastercrafted, skill 12, damage D8), longbow (skill 14, damage D12)

FOREST'S WREATH: The Alderking wears a crown of roots, imbued with MAGIC SEAL and PERMANENCE holding the spells PROTECTOR (power level 2), and STONE SKIN (power level 1). Both can be activated (an action) while wearing it.

TIED TO THE LAND: When his HP or WP reach 0, the Alderking turns into leaves in the wind and reforms in his halls D4 shifts later. He can only be killed by destroying the Heart of the Forest.

FAIRY MAGIC

The Alderking is a powerful wielder of fairy magic. During combat, the GM can pick any of the following spells or roll on the table below. In addition, the Alderking typically activates the spells in his crown before entering into a fight – unless, of course, he is taken by surprise.

D8 SPELL

- 1 **BECKON:** The Alderking calls an opponent within 10 meters to come closer. The victim must succeed with a WIL roll (not an action) or must immediately use their movement and action to do what the Alderking commands. They also lose their next turn in this or the next round.
- 2 **BE GONE!** The Alderking points his hand at an opponent within 10 meters. The victim is pushed back 2D8 meters, takes the same amount of bludgeoning damage, and lands prone.
- 3 **MY DAUGHTERS!** The Alderking summons a swarm of fairies that fly around, taunting their opponents.
Does not repeat if fairies are already present.
- 4 **SWEET DREAMS!** The Alderking appears behind an opponent and stabs them with the poisonous dagger of an enchanted rose. The victim is injected with a sleeping poison (potency 12).
- 5 **ENCHANT:** The Alderking promises a victim their heart's desires. The victim must succeed with an WIL roll (not an action) or gain a bane on all rolls against the king. Can be repeated at the start of each following turn.
- 6 **ELF-SHOT!** A Alderking fires an enchanted arrow at an enemy within 10 meters. The victim suffers D10 piercing damage and is injected with a paralyzing poison (potency 12). Can be parried as a ranged attack.
- 7 **AUTUMN'S CLOAK!** The Alderking becomes invisible except for his shadow. It takes an AWARENESS roll (with a bane) to spot him. If he performs an action that affects another creature, he turns visible again.
- 8 **MASTER SPELLCASTER:** The Alderking casts two spells at once. Roll twice on this table, re-roll any 8s.