

Forest Shrine

An Introduction

You find the monk's body sat cross legged, hunched over a prayer wheel. Your cleric confirms he died of old age in the past few hours. Other than this one deceased old man the shrine seems deserted, the only sounds are the natural noises of the forest, the odd tinkle of bells in the breeze and the burbling of running water further into the trees. Inside the small wooden structure are multiple prayer wheels and places to leave offerings to whatever god or spirit this shrine is dedicated too. The cleric picks up a long scroll from the shrine's simple wooden altar and starts to read. Knowing your friend this will take some time. You start unpacking, preparing to rest up for the night.

The Cleric is still reading when you finish and so you walk back to the entrance and look down the long flight of steps leading up to the shrine. Ancient wooden prayer gates loom over the steps, casting long shadows in the evening light. Down at the base of the stone stairs you think you see a glimmer of light, or maybe a wisp of mist. Squinting, you can see mist forming, glowing in the fading light. As you watch with building trepidation the patch of mist begins to flow upwards, step by step, its movement unnatural and unsettling. As it slowly makes its way up towards you it begins to coalesce into shapes, spectral figures of mist and light. You realise the warm summer evening has become chilly, the air dank with moisture and the earthy decay of the forest that now crowds you from all sides. You hear a gasp from behind, your Cleric friend rushes up to your side. "We need to leave, this place is not safe, angry and restless spirits reside here, the monk's prayers were the only thing keeping them...". A wail from below cuts your friends explanations short. "Oh…" he says simply, "That's not good at all".

Notes and Tips

- **30x35** grid map
- The steps are a great place to fight and defend from invading forces.
- The prayer gates can be used as elevation.
- The many little shrines below the main building can contain spirits. Maybe one is the key to helping with the encounter.
- This could be a famous stopping off point for travellers, somewhere to offer prayers to the spirits of the region, what happens if the party isn't respectful enough? That's up to you!
- This location works well for ghost-like entities. Shadows, Specters, Poltergeists and wraiths. Will-o'-wisps would be fun too.
- The monk that lives here could be some kind of evil spirit, during the day he is a simple old hermit tending the shrine, at night he becomes an evil spirit that kills travellers while they sleep. Seed some story points before this encounter with folktales and rumours of disappearances.
- The monks here are keeping something at bay by continuously praying, turning the prayer wheels and getting travelers to present offerings. If this is interrupted for even a day things will go very badly.
- This was the sight of an ancient atrocity. Best if the party finds it deserted and learns about its history through the shrine's text and even some helpful but creepy spirits. Maybe one greater spirit is keeping the others here against their will and the party must banish the spirit to release them.

Variants

Sign up to my Patreon to get access: patreon.com/afternoonmaps



