

DGS14 Natural Balance

By Dan Hass



One person's dedicated defense of an ideal is another person's terrorism. What happens when progress endangers the natural order – or even nature itself? Can the PCs resolve the differences between the naturalists and the crafters? A D&D 5th edition adventure for 1-8 1st level characters.

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Cover Art	Fernando Olmedo (his work)
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DGS14 Natural Balance

By Dan Hass

Adventure Summary

DGS14 Natural Balance is a Dungeons and Dragons 5th Edition adventure designed for 1-8 7th level characters. It requires a *Player's Handbook (PHB)*, a *Monster Manual (MM)*, and a *Dungeon Master's Guide (DMG)*.

While the encounters include scaling for 1-8 characters, parties of 1 or 2 PCs and 7 or 8 PCs are fringe circumstances that may play oddly. Specifically, parties of 1-2 are highly susceptible to a single bad die roll, and 7-8 can slow play dramatically. Ideally a party will be 3-6 PCs.

It is set in the *Dimgaard Campaign Setting* (the *Dimgaard Campaign Guide* is a free pdf available at drivethrurpg.com), but could be set in other campaigns where there is a village with an agricultural based economy transitioning to a manufacturing economy. The Digital copies of the encounter maps are available [here](#).

Preparing the Adventure

It is always a good idea for the DM to read through an adventure before running it. *Natural Balance* is no different. There are some rather complex encounters that will benefit if the DM spends a few minutes deciding how she will play them. *Natural Balance* can be run with a lot of interaction between the PCs and NPCs depending on the inclinations of the PCs and DM. The module deliberately gives **just enough** information about NPCs to move the plot along, leaving a lot of room for a DM to individualize these to her campaign. It makes things smoother if the DM spends a few minutes deciding how she will deliver the NPCs' interactions. Some DMs revel in the opportunity to assume the personas of multiple NPCs over the course of a session, others prefer a summary approach. The decision is a matter of style and showmanship. Similarly, many players look forward to opportunities to interact "in character" while others prefer to summarize. Neither approach is "correct"; both are valid ways to collaboratively build a story, but the DM should try to anticipate her players'

preferences (decide her own) and prepare accordingly.

A battlemat or dungeon tiles may be helpful, but not necessary.

Running the Adventure

The encounters in *Natural Balance* attempt to challenge PCs in different ways besides only combat. The combat encounters are expected to be **hard** (*DMG* p.81), but additionally there are encounters to test the PCs ability to deal with diplomatic situations and pose difficult questions about their character's morals.

Modification "Exploits"

Technically each encounter uses a **medium** XP budget per the encounter building guidelines. For many parties a **medium** encounter may turn out to meet the definition of hard as PCs may be built for roleplaying and the party may not have optimized their tactics.

Modifications have been made to the creatures which do not increase the calculated CR of the creature but do increase the challenge of the creature. These are denoted with a ¹. The DM should gauge the effectiveness of the party and decide which of these to use (keeping in mind the definition of **hard** encounters).

Adventure Background

Talgia has been an agricultural community since its founding. Its serfs work the fields, pick the orchards, and hunt in the small forest near it (named the Elt Grove).

Several years ago, Nerisha, a nature cultist, took an affinity to Elt Grove. She has lived there for over a decade and discovered that one particular oak tree (Eltroot) has special qualities that make it a "nature node". Eltroot is able to channel and spread fey magic throughout the Elt Grove nourishing and protecting the forest to make it idyllic. Nerisha also protects the forest and makes sure the Talgians don't overhunt the animal populations and maintains the general health of the Elt Grove.

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Freseri, one of the Talgia serfs, discovered Nerisha when Freseri was but a small child playing in the Elt Grove. Nerisha never had children, and took an immediate fondness to Freseri. She instilled in Freseri a reverence for nature, and the Elt Grove, in particular. Freseri took her passion to the population of Talgia, and built a following preaching the importance of nature.

Blue Eyed Rudyard was a high ranking member of the Mooresgate thieves' guild. After some infighting, he and some close associates were forced out with only a small fund to help them get set up in a different territory. While exploring for a new location, Rudyard made an acquaintance with Kapral. Kapral has experience as a tanner, and he explained to Rudyard that the obstacles to running a profitable tannery are access to favorable markets, a stable supply of hides, and dealing with the pollution from the tanning process which involves many harsh chemicals that must be disposed of. Kapral ensured Rudyard that if those challenges can be overcome, then a tannery is a very lucrative investment.

With that in mind, Rudyard went searching and came upon Talgia. It has good access to the town markets of Schmitford and Leischport as well as the smaller communities. The hunters in Talgia as well as the surrounding communities can provide a good supply of hides. And in addition to providing transportation to the markets, the Alshon River can also be used to dispose of waste. It is a perfect location.

Rudyard successfully negotiated an agreement with Sir Macon to build a tannery, and it has grown into a huge financial success through the first eight months of operation. Hides are gathered from all around the Alshon Region, and tanned there. With a process that is much more effective than the traditional hand-tanning, Rudyard's tannery just increased production to produce enough leather to dominate the markets in the region. It doesn't produce refined goods (boots, belts, pouches, etc.) but it does supply the raw leather that crafters use to produce those goods.

A clan of rock gnomes have lived in the small range of hills just a few miles from Talgia. Their leader, Zanpip "Limper" Lanybar, made forays into the human settlements disguised as the halfling "Bruno Grubb". The Lanybars produce alchemical products (alchemist fire, oil, antitoxin, etc.) to augment their mushroom farming and fishing. However, the alchemical enterprise faces the same challenges as the tanning industry. Seeing the success of the tannery, Bruno Grubb also negotiated with Sir Macon to set up an alchemy factory on the river. The alchemical factory began production several weeks ago and is now adding its own pollution to the river along with the increasing amount pollution from the tannery.

At first, the naturalists of Talgia didn't understand the damage the tannery and alchemy factory were doing to the environment. But they have noticed that the animal population suffers waves of deaths and that foliage will wither downstream from the tannery and factory. And Nerisha is putting the pieces together.

The pollution is damaging Eltroot, which to protect itself has begun spawning **blights**. Nerisha knows the blights are evil, but she still has a fondness of them and views them as misunderstood spirits of the forest that can be reformed and controlled.

Adventure Outline

The PCs are presented with the village of Talgia with various proposed reasons the PCs may have decided to travel to Talgia.

While presented as an idyllic hamlet, this changes when gatherers return from the Elt Grove with news that they have been attacked by blights and it is blamed on Nerisha. But Freseri offers an inspired defense of Nerisha and suspicion instead on the tannery and factory.

Shortly afterward, Freseri mysteriously disappears. Rudyard and Limper have conspired to remove her from the scene.

The DM is presented with several placed encounters to use as the plot unfolds: Elt Root, Limper's cave where Freseri is being held, and an ambush by Rudyard's lackeys.

Starting the Adventure

The PCs may have recently finished another adventure and have some downtime to use.

PCs' Resources

Managing the PCs' access to extraordinary equipment is another tool to modulate the difficulty of encounters. If PCs are underpowered, the villages can contribute potions and scrolls to increase their effectiveness. Stronger parties may not need this type of support.

Talgia

Talgia has a population of about 100 and is ruled by Sir Macon. He is a fairly typical feudal lord. He inherited his fief from his father, and is the fourth lord of the fief since it was founded. He is a vassal of Schmitford.

Sir Macon keeps a small retinue of men-at-arms (5 **guards**). There is a small temple to the One True Faith with a single attendant (**acolyte**).

The rest of the population are **commoners** who work the fields and gather the bounty of the Elt Grove by hunting and gathering edible plant products (nuts, fruits, wild greens, etc.). Some serfs now work at the tannery, which has been a boon to Talgia.

When downtime is resolved, the DM and players should develop a reason why the PCs are in Talgia. Some possible reason are:

The PCs are asked to investigate the decrease in the river's fish stocks:

Selius, the de facto mayor of Leischport (and rumored head of the thieves' guild) is concerned about the fishing commerce in Leischport. Fishermen on the Alshon River report that there is a noticeable drop in the yield from the river, and there are days when virtually no fish are caught. If this continues, it can undermine Leischport's ability to feed its citizens.

A few days of investigation has revealed that the village of Talgia is the point where fish stocks begin to be disrupted on the river.

Limper is an ally:

A friend, Zanpip "Limper" Lanybar, has learned of your special skills. He needs your help with matters in Talgia. Limper has to be careful, since he is a gnome (subject to persecution) masquerading as a halfling (named Bruno Grubb). He has urged you to gather allies and promised he will compensate you for your efforts.

Nature oriented PCs:

The Elt Grove is an idyllic stand of hardwoods south of Talgia. News has reached you that there are disturbing changes occurring there. Talgia has a small population of serfs who rely on harvesting the bounty of the Elt Grove to sustain themselves, and this has spawned a movement in Talgia that reveres the Elt Grove as something of a sacred site.

Other quick hooks:

The PCs are travelling to a different location, but spend the night in Talgia. Particularly good for some backgrounds: Acolyte (using the temple as a hostel), Entertainer (taking her show to Talgia), Folk Hero (the serfs take in the PC), Noble (visiting Sir Macon).

The first encounter. When the PCs have established the reason for their presence in Talgia, the DM should present Encounter 1.

Rests.

D&D 5th edition presumes the PCs will have several encounters before a long rest. Once the action starts, there is no opportunity for the PCs to take a long rest and successfully influence the results.

Even short rests should be rationed. At higher levels, powerful class traits recharge on a short rest, and rationing resources is a large part of an adventure's challenge.

However, 1st level PCs may not have the resources to draw upon to overcome the challenges without short rests.

The DM should keep in mind that the encounters are expected to be **hard**, and one tool to achieve this target is regulating PCs' rests.

Encounter 1: Gatherers Attacked

Map. None necessary.

Encounter background. A group of serfs tasked with searching the Elt Grove for berries, nuts, fruits, etc., was attacked by living plants and driven out of the Elt Grove. The news has spread quickly through Talgia and nearly the entire population has gathered at Sir Macon's keep.

The hamlet of Talgia sets on the east bank of the Alshon River. It looks to be the home of about a hundred serfs who occupy small cottages, and the keep of their lord, Sir Macon. Farmland and orchards surround the hamlet.

Across the river rests a sizable tannery, and a few hundred feet to the south an industrial building that show signs that it hasn't finished construction – the brick veneer on some walls is incomplete, some outbuildings are only partially built, and building supplies are stacked at various places around the site, etc.

As rural folk are prone to do, the serfs arose well before dawn to tend to their daily tasks. But shortly after sunrise – when those of the higher caste are typically having breakfast – there is noticeable activity as the serfs assemble at the entrance to the keep. The assemblage becomes louder and a young woman is clearly agitating the crowd. She is shouting phrases like, "What has changed that would make the Elt Grove dangerous? The tannery and factory! That is who is to blame, not Nerisha. Nerisha has lived peacefully in the Elt Grove since we were children. And what about the fish and squirrels? That has only been happening since the tannery opened. If anything, I expect that Nerisha is trying to preserve the natural order while the tannery and factory are dumping pollution into the environment."

Despite the fact that a noticeable percentage of the serfs seem to agree with the young girl, Sir Macon calms the crowd by promising to investigate what is going on.

Running the encounter. The girl is Freseri. She is a dedicated follower of

Nerisha and nature worshiper in her own right. She is highly regarded among the serfs and very influential.

Sir Macon has realized a great economic boon since the tannery opened and views Rudyard quite favorable. He hopes that Bruno's factory will be a similar boon. The value of the tannery and factory greatly outweigh the value of the Elt Grove to him. Sir Macon is comfortable with the idea of just abandoning the Elt Grove and having the serfs designated to work in the tannery instead. (To preserve secret processes Limper won't allow anyone except the Lanybar clan to work in the alchemy factory.) Further Sir Macon doesn't really have the type of personnel to do an investigation of the Elt Grove; he would likely have to ask Schmitford for help, which would show weakness. However if an opportunity to investigate the situation arises, he would be willing to pay a modest reward to clear things up.

Rudyard and Limper observe the incident. They are familiar with the politics of Talgia, know Freseri's influence, and they are concerned.

Concluding the encounter. Limper is worried about the fate of his factory – not just for his sake, but because of the importance to the entire Lanybar clan. He decides that Freseri needs to be removed from the scene until the situation settles down. Some Lanybars kidnap her and hold her in a cave about a mile east of Talgia. In about an hour, the other serfs notice that she has disappeared, sparking great concern. Rumors start flying. Many blame the "witch" Nerisha, and others blame Runyard, but no one has actual evidence.

While the following encounters are presented with a number, they may not follow sequentially, because the path the PCs take is very much up to them. The DM should present the encounters based on the PCs actions.

The PCs may return to Talgia over the course of the adventure.

Encounter 2: Eltroot, the Nature Node

Map. Eltroot (Appendix 1).

Encounter background. The Eltroot is the oldest tree in the forest. It is AC13 with 59 hit points and immunity to bludgeoning, piercing, and psychic damage. Eltroot is being poisoned by the pollution from the tannery and factory, and it is reflected in the Elt Grove environment. The pollution from the tannery and alchemical factory have combined with the magic of Eltroot to produce some twig blights from his damaged limbs.

A majestic, 60 ft. tall oak with thick, sturdy branches stands in a small clearing surrounded by other trees. While the tree is impressive, there are numerous wilted leaves visible among its branches.

Ability Checks

The PCs may have many questions about Eltroot, and want to attempt various tactics as they approach. For example, from a distance a PC may use Intelligence (Nature) to discern that Eltroot is not healthy or even that it succumbing to pollution. The DM decides what information is discernable and what tactics are possible, and then sets the appropriate DC (*PHB* p.174).

Running the encounter. Twig blights are protecting Eltroot. Eltroot is not fully *awakened*, but he does have a level of awareness. He and the twig blights share a bond and protect each other. If Eltroot or the twig blights are threatened, Eltroot can release poison which affects every non-plant within 60 feet of Eltroot.

Poison gas trap.

Nature trap

Plants around Eltroot have adapted to protect it by releasing a cloud of poisonous gas. Any creature with a passive Nature of 12+ recognizes the danger of the plants and has advantage on a saving throw against it. Each creature within a 60 ft. radius of Eltroot must succeed on a DC12 Constitution saving throw or suffer 3 (1d6) poison damage and be poisoned for 1 minute.

The twig blights are evil and like to kill. They have a particular animosity for humanoids as they are vaguely aware that humanoid activity is the cause of the pollution of the Elt Grove. They start in the terrain around Eltroot, and won't move unless it is necessary to protect themselves or Eltroot.

Once provoked, the twig blights attack until destroyed.

Scaling the encounter. There is one **twig blight** for each PC with one additional **twig blight** if there are 6+ PCs. (25 XP per PC with an additional 25 split among the PCs for parties of 6+.)

¹These twig blights have access to moisture from the Alshon River and don't suffer from fire vulnerability.

Twig Blight. *MM* p.25

¹**Saving Throws** Dex +3, Wis +1

¹**Dextrous.** The blight has advantage on Dexterity checks (including Initiative).

¹**Eye Gouge.** As a bonus action, a creature within 5 ft. of the blight must succeed on a DC12 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or be blinded. A blinded creature can end the condition by succeeding on a DC12 Constitution saving throw at the end of its turn.

Concluding the encounter. Nerisha stays close to Eltroot and is protective of it. She is always nearby. She is also (surprisingly) protective of the twig blights. If the blights are destroyed, she rushes to respond. The DM should present Encounter 3.

If the PCs fall to the twig blights, Nerisha will rescue them. She will stabilize any unconscious PCs and transport them to the edge of the Elt Grove where they will awaken in 1d4 hours (*PHB* p.197).

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Encounter 3: Nerisha, the Nature Cultist

Map. Eltroot (Appendix 1).

Encounter background. Nerisha was abused as a child and when she was old enough to flee (about 10) she ran away from a distant village. She doesn't even remember the location of the village now. She found the Eltroot, and it touched a natural gift within her. She became a dedicated follower of the Eltroot and has worked to sustain it.

She avoided other humans all her life – preferring the company of plants (and some animals). However, she noted a similar sentiment in Freseri and has developed a close relationship with her.

She knows the Eltroot is in trouble and that unless something is done about the pollution, the Eltroot will die.

About 60 ft. from the large oak, an aged woman steps from the underbrush. She carries a scimitar and wears leather armor. She appears ready for action and challenges you.

Roleplaying

This doesn't have to be a roleplaying encounter. Rather than rush into combat, the PCs may be able to sway Nerisha into being an ally.

Running the encounter. How Nerisha approaches the PCs depends on the PCs actions towards Eltroot. If Nerisha believes the PCs are a danger to Eltroot, she will be hostile. However, she is desperate to save Eltroot and knows that she can't do it with only her resources, so if the PCs appear willing to help, she may have a very different presentation.

Nerisha knows most residents of Talgia view her as a witch, and that is okay. It keeps them from intruding on her solitude. However, she has been the target of previous "adventurers" and will be wary of a well-armed party looking to kill her and take her belongings.

Scaling the encounter. As a solo encounter, Nerisha relies on her legendary actions to even out the challenge. She gets one legendary action for each PC beyond

the first (for example, if there are five PCs, Nerisha gets four legendary actions per round).

Modifications

To reiterate, the traits marked ¹ should be included or excluded to create a **hard** encounter, and may be further adjusted. For example, for a party of just 3 PCs, the DM may decide to give Nerisha only 13 (3d8) hit points.

Nerisha (Cultist). MM p.345 (25 XP)

¹**Hit Points** up to 27 (6d8)

¹**Speed** 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

¹**Saving Throws** Dex +3, Wis +2

¹**Damage Immunities** poison

¹**Condition Immunities** frightened, poisoned, surprised

¹**Innate Spellcasting.** Nerisha can cast the following spells requiring no spell components (Wisdom is her spellcasting ability: DC10, +2 to hit).

At will: *sacred flame, speak with plants*

3/day: *entangle, longstrider, pass without trace*

¹**Portent.** Per PHB p.116

Actions

¹**Scimitar.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 4 (1d6+1) slashing damage and the target must succeed on a DC13 Dexterity (Acrobatics) or drop an item or weapon it is holding of the cultist's choice.

Legendary Actions (only available while in the Elt Grove)

Bath in Nature (6/day). Nerisha heals 1d8 damage.

Entangling. The plants in a 10 ft. by 10 ft. area within 60 ft. grasp at any creature within the area. Each creature in the area or any creature entering the area must succeed on a DC13 Dexterity saving throw or be restrained. A restrained creature can free itself by succeeding on DC13 Strength (Athletics) check. This effect lasts for one minute or until Nerisha uses this ability again.

Poison Flowers. A creature within 60 ft. of Nerisha must succeed on a DC13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for one minute.

Throw Dirt. A creature within 30 ft. of Nerisha must succeed on a DC13 Dexterity saving throw or be blinded until it takes an action to remove the dirt from its eyes.

Concluding the encounter. Nerisha can provide information about the pollution from the tannery and factory and its effect on the environment. Further action will be up to the PCs. Nerisha doesn't know where Freseri has gone, and she will be upset to learn she is missing. Nerisha won't leave the Elt Grove.

If Nerisha overcomes the PCs, she will stabilize any unconscious PCs and then deposit them on the edge of the Elt Grove.

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Encounter 4: Rescuing Freseri

Map. Rescuing Freseri (Appendix 1)

Encounter background. Limper has secured Freseri with a Lanybar cousin. Limper intended to keep her until the controversy settled, but he knows how badly it would influence things if she returns too soon. Freseri is held in the cave that used to be the Lanybar's alchemical lab (before they moved into their new factory).

A lightless, 5 ft. wide tunnel stretches at a slight downward angle into the side of a hill.

Running the encounter. Felhik "Lucky" Lanybar is dedicated to the clan, and follows Limper without question. He would never willingly betray his cousin. However, he isn't suicidal either.

One of the reasons Limper chose Lucky was because he is good with traps, but not particularly wise. Lucky has used his innate spellcasting to place *alarm* in the entrance. He has also constructed an arrow trap.

Alarm

Magical trap

The area at the entrance is under the effect of an *alarm* spell. If triggered, it mentally pings Lucky with no audible cue to the intruders.

Arrow Trap

Mechanical trap

When a trip wire at the entrance to the chamber is pulled, the creature occupying the entrance, and any creature occupying a space 15 feet behind the entrance is attacked by arrows. A DC13 passive Perception notices the trip wire (fast moving creatures suffer a -5 to their passive Perception). Otherwise, make a ranged weapon attack against each creature in the affected space: +3 to hit for 3 (1d6) piercing damage.

Freseri is a **commoner** (MM p.345). Lucky isn't evil, but he will use Freseri as a hostage if he believes it is the only way he can escape alive.

Scaling the encounter. Use the following added traits to scale Lucky so that he is a significant obstacle for the PCs.

Lucky (Guard). MM p.349 (25 XP)

¹Hit Points up to 33 (6d8+6)

Speed 25 feet.

¹Saving Throws Str +3, Con +3

¹Condition Immunities grappled, restrained

¹Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

¹Innate Spellcasting. Lucky can cast *minor illusion* at will and *alarm* 3/day requiring no material components.

¹Lucky. Per PHB p.167 (he may not have all 3 luck points).

¹Practiced Maneuver. Lucky can use a potion as a bonus action.

¹Gear. 4 *potion of healing*, 4 spears

Actions

¹Spear. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6+1) piercing damage plus, if a melee attack, the target loses the use of one arm until it receives healing.

Reactions

¹Shift. When Lucky is targeted by an attack, he moves up to half his speed.

Concluding the encounter. Between Nerisha and Freseri's information, the PCs should have a complete picture of what is going on. However, Rudyard has sent his primary lackey, Cayden the Squint, to tie up the loose ends. Cayden arrives shortly after the PCs free Freseri.

If Lucky overcomes the PCs, Rudyard's lackey arrives shortly and kills everyone except Lucky.



Encounter 5: Rudyard Doesn't Like Loose Ends

Map. Rescuing Freseri (Appendix 1)

Encounter background. Cayden the Squint is Rudyard's most trusted acquaintance. When Limper told Rudyard about his plan to hold Freseri until things simmer down, Rudyard knew that Limper was naïve. Rudyard believes (correctly) that if the residents of Talgia discover the industrialists kidnapped Freseri the residents will be so hostile that it will be impossible to operate their facilities normally. Rudyard has sent his top lieutenant to kill Freseri and anyone else who might be a troublesome witness.

As things wind down, a canister with mist seeping from it lands in your midsts.

Running the encounter. Cayden has his orders, and he is ruthless. He takes his *potion of invisibility* and sneaks up using his stealth and attacks without warning. It will take an extraordinary strategy to avoid combat.

Cayden's passive Perception is sufficient to avoid the arrow trap should it still be armed.

Cayden will start by tossing a poison grenade into the midst of the PCs.

Poison Grenade

Poison trap

A canister explodes filling a 30 ft. radius sphere with poisonous gas that dissipates in a round. Each creature in the sphere must succeed on a DC13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute. Note that this is not an Attack by Cayden; it is Using An Item.

Scaling the encounter. Use the following added traits to scale Cayden so that he is a significant obstacle for the PCs.

Cayden (Bandit). *MM* p.343 (25 XP)

¹Hit Points up to 27 (5d8+5)

Saving Throws Wis +2, Cha +2

Skills Perception +4

Condition Immunities surprised

Senses passive Perception 14

¹Innate Spellcasting. Cayden can cast *armor of Agathys* 2/day requiring no components.

¹Practiced Spellcaster. Cayden can cast *minor illusion* as a bonus action.

¹Reactive. Cayden can take a reaction each turn (instead of each round).

Gear *potion of invisibility*

Reactions

¹Hellish Rebuke (3/day). Cayden casts *hellish rebuke*.

Concluding the encounter. Cayden doesn't know why Rudyard wants everyone killed, but he doesn't question much – especially when the program calls for him to spread mayhem. But the very fact that he is a known, close associate of Rudyard is evidence that Rudyard is not a nice guy.

If Cayden overcomes the PCs, he kills everyone (except Lucky). However, he isn't far-thinking enough to dispose of the bodies so that they cannot be recovered, so there may be the possibility for the PCs to be raised (if the DM is inclined).



Concluding the Adventure

If the PCs present their evidence to Sir Macon, his view of the operators of the tannery and alchemist lab becomes more pliable. He really likes the steady tax revenue from the enterprises that can transform Talgia from a sleepy plantation to a wealthy manufacturing hub. So he isn't likely to shut them down, but he may be convinced to replace Rudyard and Bruno (Limper) as the owners/operators. Another possibility is that he could force them to change their processes to reduce pollution to a point where they don't threaten the environment (and thus save Eltroot).

If the PCs do not successfully intervene, within a few days Eltroot is poisoned to the point that it cannot be saved. With Eltroot's death, the conduit for fey magic is gone and the Elt Grove quickly loses its idyllic nature and becomes just another small stand of trees. The forest retreats from the pollution near the river and is reduced to about half its current size.

XP

In 5th edition PCs are expected to receive XP from the creatures they defeat. For other challenges, XP award is a matter of DM discretion. Inspiration is a viable alternative to XP for non-combat challenges. The primary consideration is how rapidly the DM wants the PCs to advance.

A DM can also abandon tracking XP and simply decide to advance the PCs to the next level at particularly convenient time – after a certain number of sessions, or when it seems like the current level is fully explored.

However, some players (and DMs) like to track XP and find that having a particular XP goal focuses their play.

Treasure

Specific treasure amount – even rewards offered for completing tasks – are deliberately left out and are matters of DM discretion. Treasure level is a defining trait in a DM's campaign (“High Wealth”/“Low Wealth”). Some DMs like the nature of a campaign where the PCs

are tossing around gems and living a lavish lifestyle, while others prefer a campaign where the PCs are struggling to get by in a tough world. So the DM should align the rewards paid and loot acquired from downed foes with her vision of the campaign she wants to run.

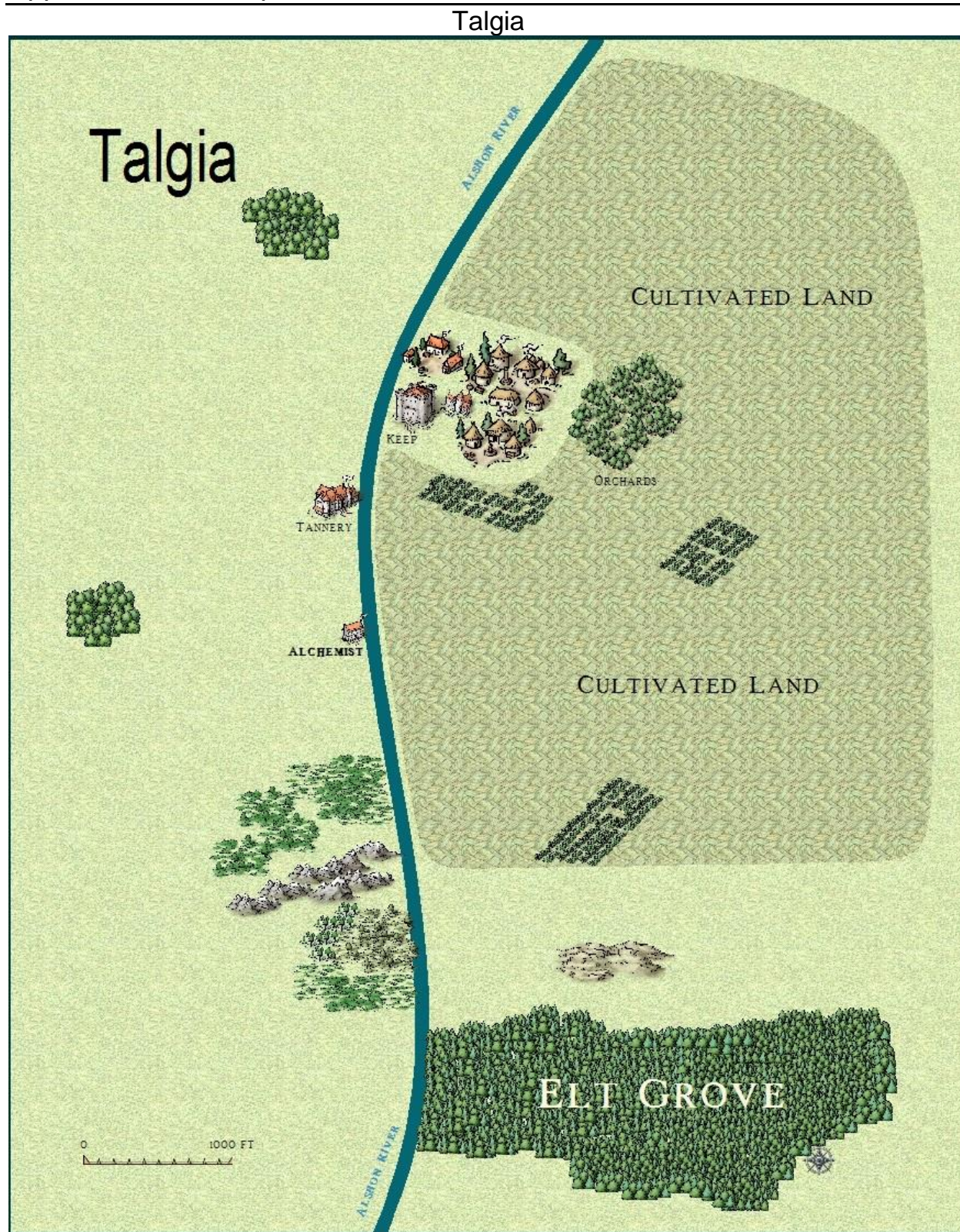
Magic Items in Dimgaard

One of the defining characteristics of the Dimgaard campaign is how magic items are treated. While relatively mundane magic items like common and uncommon potions, *+1 weapons*, *low level spell scrolls*, and *pearl of power* are crafted according to the *DMG's* guidelines, every magic item of greater significance requires the sacrifice of a sentient creature with a relevant trait to complete the crafting. A creature sacrificed in this way has its life force transferred into the item, and it cannot be returned to life as long as the magic item exists. Further, when the life force imbues the magic item, the item is magically infused with the story of the creature's life. The item will take on the name of the sacrificed creature, and a synopsis of the creature's life will either be magically inscribed, or will be emitted as a soft whisper when held near the ear. This explains why dragonborn and other exotic creatures are rare in Dimgaard.

Crafting is sometimes used as a method of execution for the most vile of criminals, but almost always after an agreement between a civil authority and the One True Faith that the criminal warrants such a drastic fate. There are some crafters who operate outside the authority structure who would be willing to complete crafting without the expected sanctioning.

The process for getting authorization regarding a captured creature and finding the necessary crafter is left to DM discretion. This can be a matter of simple dice rolling, a roleplaying opportunity, or a side adventure.

Appendix 1: DM Maps



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Eltfoot



1. Eltfoot. Eltfoot area is **difficult terrain** for any nonplant. It is **lightly obscured** through 10 ft., and beyond 10 ft. is **highly obscured**. Any creature in Eltfoot terrain also has $\frac{3}{4}$ cover.
2. Tree with undergrowth. Similar to Eltfoot area, but is not difficult terrain. It is **lightly obscured** through 20 ft., and beyond 20 ft. is **highly obscured**. Any creature in this terrain also has half cover.

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Rescuing Freseri

