

Bits of the Wilderness™:

Into the Swamp

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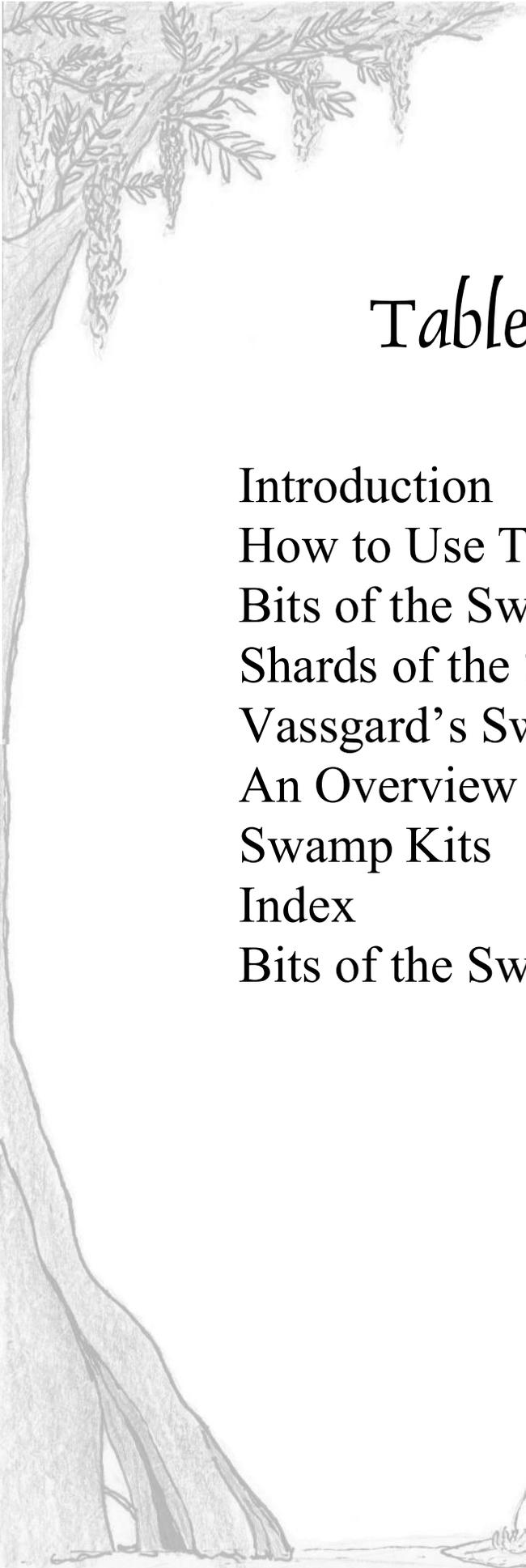
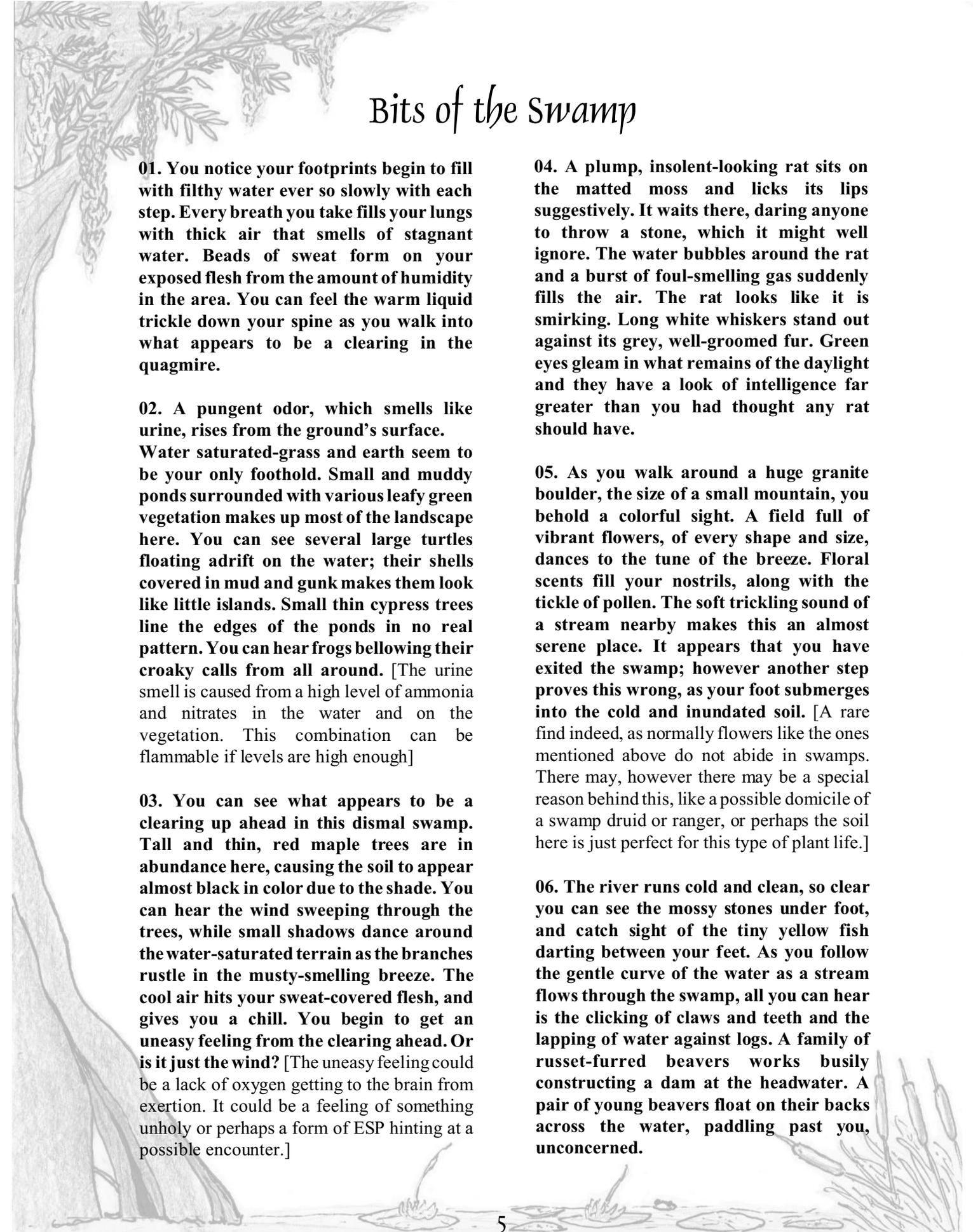


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Bits of the Swamp

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02. A pungent odor, which smells like urine, rises from the ground's surface. Water saturated-grass and earth seem to be your only foothold. Small and muddy ponds surrounded with various leafy green vegetation makes up most of the landscape here. You can see several large turtles floating adrift on the water; their shells covered in mud and gunk makes them look like little islands. Small thin cypress trees line the edges of the ponds in no real pattern. You can hear frogs bellowing their croaky calls from all around. [The urine smell is caused from a high level of ammonia and nitrates in the water and on the vegetation. This combination can be flammable if levels are high enough]

03. You can see what appears to be a clearing up ahead in this dismal swamp. Tall and thin, red maple trees are in abundance here, causing the soil to appear almost black in color due to the shade. You can hear the wind sweeping through the trees, while small shadows dance around the water-saturated terrain as the branches rustle in the musty-smelling breeze. The cool air hits your sweat-covered flesh, and gives you a chill. You begin to get an uneasy feeling from the clearing ahead. Or is it just the wind? [The uneasy feeling could be a lack of oxygen getting to the brain from exertion. It could be a feeling of something unholy or perhaps a form of ESP hinting at a possible encounter.]

04. A plump, insolent-looking rat sits on the matted moss and licks its lips suggestively. It waits there, daring anyone to throw a stone, which it might well ignore. The water bubbles around the rat and a burst of foul-smelling gas suddenly fills the air. The rat looks like it is smirking. Long white whiskers stand out against its grey, well-groomed fur. Green eyes gleam in what remains of the daylight and they have a look of intelligence far greater than you had thought any rat should have.

05. As you walk around a huge granite boulder, the size of a small mountain, you behold a colorful sight. A field full of vibrant flowers, of every shape and size, dances to the tune of the breeze. Floral scents fill your nostrils, along with the tickle of pollen. The soft trickling sound of a stream nearby makes this an almost serene place. It appears that you have exited the swamp; however another step proves this wrong, as your foot submerges into the cold and inundated soil. [A rare find indeed, as normally flowers like the ones mentioned above do not abide in swamps. There may, however there may be a special reason behind this, like a possible domicile of a swamp druid or ranger, or perhaps the soil here is just perfect for this type of plant life.]

06. The river runs cold and clean, so clear you can see the mossy stones under foot, and catch sight of the tiny yellow fish darting between your feet. As you follow the gentle curve of the water as a stream flows through the swamp, all you can hear is the clicking of claws and teeth and the lapping of water against logs. A family of russet-furred beavers works busily constructing a dam at the headwater. A pair of young beavers float on their backs across the water, paddling past you, unconcerned.

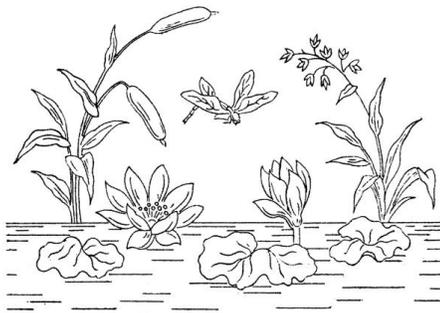
Shards of the Swamp

Common Features

1. Flooded Forest

You stand at the edge of a thickly forested territory; with spring in full sway your senses are overflowing. As you marvel at the new plant life all around, you feel water begin to creep into your boots. You look down and notice that the forest floor ahead seems to be flooded.

The swamp ahead of you is alive with new growth. [Read the following if the party has any knowledge of trees and plants:] You spot yellow birch trees with new catkins [flowers] hanging from the branches, and the dark green scale-like leaves of white cedar trees. But you also notice the intense smells all around you. Some enticing aromas come from new flowers blooming above the water, but others are not so appealing, like the smell of fetid leaves still decaying from last year's fall season. You are unable to see very far ahead into the swamp due to the overgrowth of the trees.



2. Enter the Quagmire

The sun is warm and pleasant as you make your way down the dirt road. You can see that the path ahead ventures into a thick, green forest. [As the party approaches the forest area:] The road becomes muddy as you near the entrance to the woods, and as you come even closer you can see that the way ahead appears to be flooded with water. You look around and see that the path leads right into a quagmire. The trees

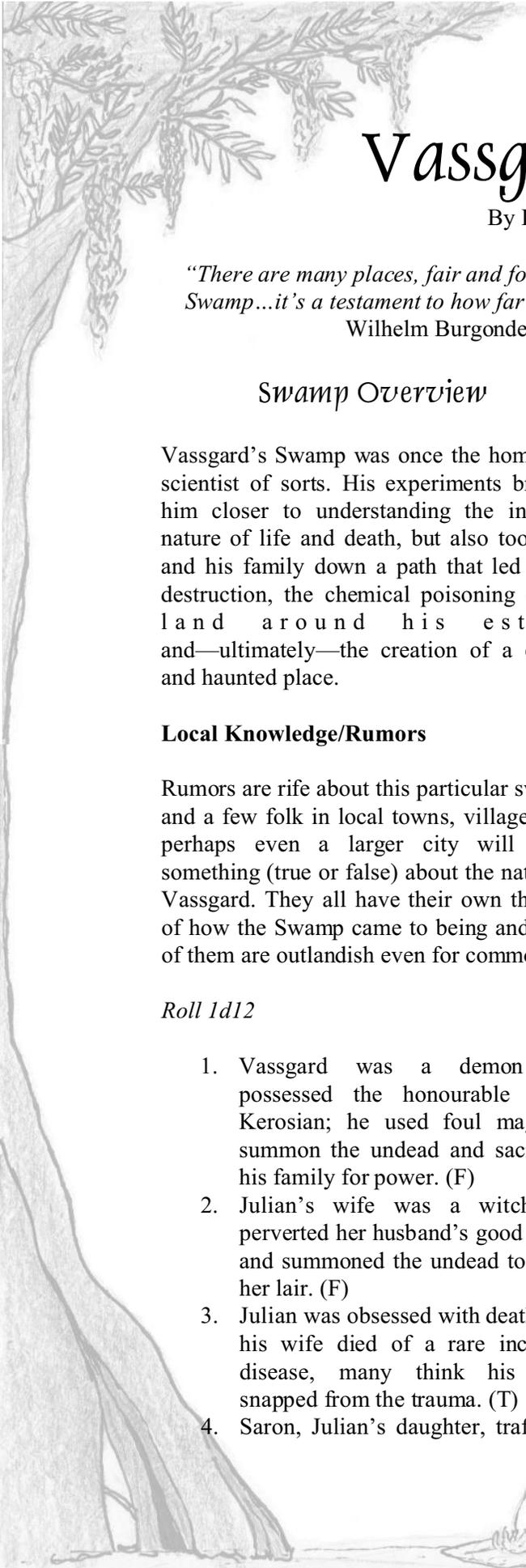
seem to grow together over the road so that little sunlight can make its way through. [If the group continues on the flooded, swampy road:] Your feet sink slightly with every step and you can feel the temperature drop as you make your way forward. You hear the sound of frogs a bit off in the distance. It sounds like thousands of them singing out of sync, and their din makes it hard to listen for any other sounds in this swampy, forested land.

3. Entrance - Fall Journey

The cold chill of fall bites at your back as you come to the edge of what appears to be a swampland. The trees here have lost all their leaves and stand stark and barren, making this marshland seem a bit foreboding. Knowing that your path must endure this swamp, you ready your gear and prepare for the march. You are amazed at how quickly the ground can change from solid, to soft and wet as you begin your trek through this mire. With the foliage already thin and lifeless you can take solace in the thought that at least visibility will be good as you travel.

4. Drowned Path

The path you are following descends into the dark waters of the swamp. You see grasses growing up in the shallows where the path should be, so you can tell that the road has been underwater for a while. The murky waters swirl sluggishly before you and ripples indicate something large swimming across the road just below the surface. Ahead you see that the path rises out of the water and continues on. [If the adventurers follow the path they will find that the water covering it is waist deep. Anyone who misses a dexterity check could slip and fall. The GM should decide if there is a risk of an encounter. Also, if the adventurers move to the right or left of the road the water quickly rises to neck deep.]



Vassgard's Swamp

By Darren 'the Wolf' Pearce

"There are many places, fair and foul, in this old world, but none more foul than Vassgard's Swamp...it's a testament to how far the mighty can fall and who they can take with them!" ~ Wilhelm Burgonden (Taverner, the Trusty Thirsty Tavern)

Swamp Overview

Vassgard's Swamp was once the home to a scientist of sorts. His experiments brought him closer to understanding the intrinsic nature of life and death, but also took him and his family down a path that led to his destruction, the chemical poisoning of the land around his estate, and—ultimately—the creation of a cursed and haunted place.

Local Knowledge/Rumors

Rumors are rife about this particular swamp, and a few folk in local towns, villages, and perhaps even a larger city will know something (true or false) about the nature of Vassgard. They all have their own theories of how the Swamp came to being and some of them are outlandish even for commoners.

Roll 1d12

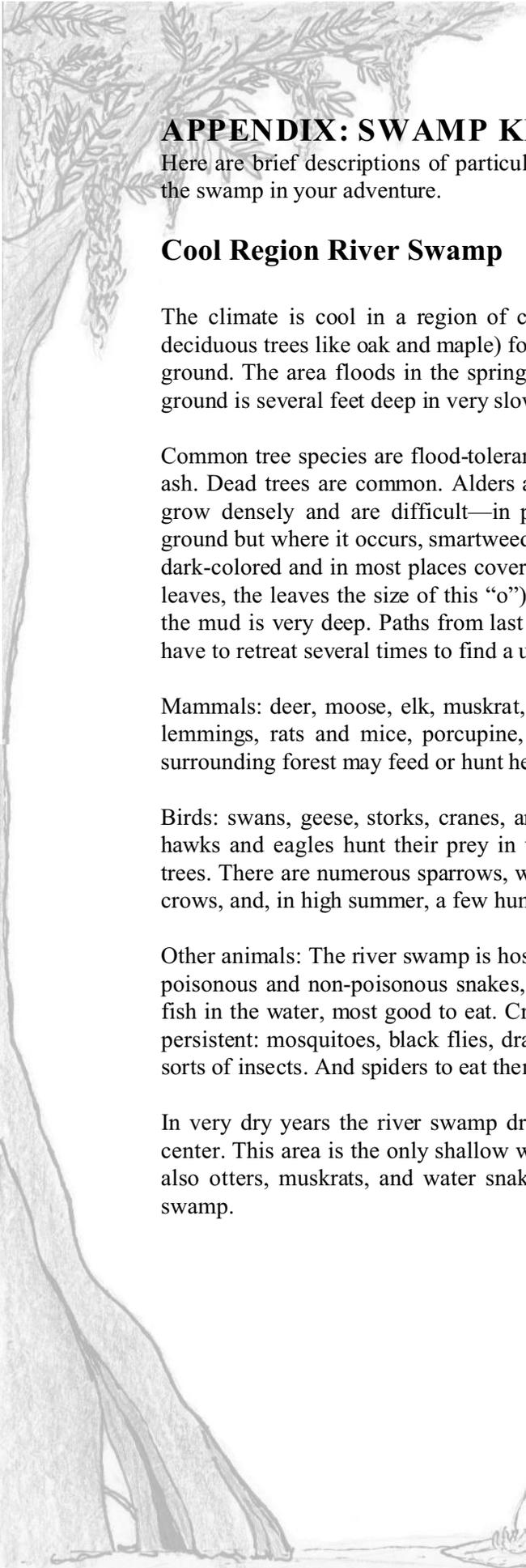
1. Vassgard was a demon that possessed the honourable Julian Kerosian; he used foul magic to summon the undead and sacrificed his family for power. (F)
2. Julian's wife was a witch that perverted her husband's good works and summoned the undead to guard her lair. (F)
3. Julian was obsessed with death after his wife died of a rare incurable disease, many think his mind snapped from the trauma. (T)
4. Saron, Julian's daughter, trafficked

with dark magic and it was her that created the Swamp when her mother died. (F)

5. Julian was a Vampire and he killed his family, drinking their blood and turning them all into Vampires. (F)
6. Julian had a hidden lab in an old crumbling riverboat along the edge of a marsh where his mansion was. (T)
7. Julian's daughter was murdered by adventurers when they stormed his mansion over fifty years ago. (F)
8. Julian was burned to death and his daughter decapitated, the fire ignited some of his volatile chemicals he stored and blew his mansion to splinters. (T)
9. There's a huge dog monster that guards the Swamp, it comes out of a big broken tree and kills anyone that passes. (F)
10. The Swamp water is dangerous and kills anyone that even touches it. (F)
11. There are many types of Undead within Vassgard's Swamp now. (T)
12. Vassgard was the spirit of a Lich slain over five hundred years ago that took control of Julian and forced him to learn darker secrets and submit to its terrible power. (T)

The Truth

Five hundred years ago there was a terrible monster that terrorised the surrounding areas and anyone who stumbled into this creature's lair never returned. Eventually the people of the land sent forth messengers to



APPENDIX: SWAMP KITS—

Here are brief descriptions of particular swamps that you can use to easily provide detail about the swamp in your adventure.

Cool Region River Swamp

The climate is cool in a region of coniferous (pines, spruces, firs) or mixed (conifers and deciduous trees like oak and maple) forest. The swamp is formed where the river flows over level ground. The area floods in the spring and often stays inundated until late summer. Usually, the ground is several feet deep in very slowly moving water.

Common tree species are flood-tolerant conifers and hardwoods: tamarack, hemlock, maple, and ash. Dead trees are common. Alders and small willows grow underneath. The trees and shrubs grow densely and are difficult—in places impossible—to walk through. There is little open ground but where it occurs, smartweeds, sedges, and coarse grasses grow knee-high. The water is dark-colored and in most places covered by a layer of duckweed (tiny plants each with only two leaves, the leaves the size of this “o”), turning it pea-green. The soil is saturated with water and the mud is very deep. Paths from last year were wiped out in this spring’s floods; the party may have to retreat several times to find a useable path.

Mammals: deer, moose, elk, muskrat, beaver, squirrels, foxes, otter, raccoons, opossum, skunk, lemmings, rats and mice, porcupine, mink, wolves, bears, and panthers. Any animals of the surrounding forest may feed or hunt here at times.

Birds: swans, geese, storks, cranes, and ducks breed here. Herons, kingfishers, swallows, owls, hawks and eagles hunt their prey in the swamp. Woodpeckers can be heard knocking on dead trees. There are numerous sparrows, wrens, nuthatches, jays, grackles and blackbirds, ravens and crows, and, in high summer, a few hummingbirds.

Other animals: The river swamp is host to frogs, small turtles, snapping turtles in deep water, and poisonous and non-poisonous snakes, all of which swim well. There are many small and large fish in the water, most good to eat. Crayfish are present but secretive. The insects are dense and persistent: mosquitoes, black flies, dragon- and damselflies, butterflies, house flies, midges...all sorts of insects. And spiders to eat them.

In very dry years the river swamp dries up dramatically, with only a small shallow lake at its center. This area is the only shallow water for miles, attracting hundreds of ducks and geese, but also otters, muskrats, and water snakes. The river continues to move very slowly through the swamp.

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Natural Features:

- Clearing* – Bits 1, 3, 40, 81; Shard 40
- Cypress Trees* – Bit 42
 - Shards 18, 33, 34, 49
- Dead Animal* – Bits 16, 24, 89, 99
 - Shards 45, 46, 51
- Fallen Trees* – Bits 28, 29, 30, 51, 66, 72, 76; Shards 46, 53
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 - Shards 75, 78-86
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