



WEIRDWOOD

A DARK FANTASY STORYTELLING GAME

**A ROLEPLAYING GAME OF
DREAMS, NIGHTMARES, AND THE
DARKNESS IN BETWEEN**

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PLAYTEST VERSION 2

**LAST REDOUBT GAMES
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This demo rulebook is a work-in-progress. It provides everything you need to play a game of WEIRDWOOD, but the mechanics and systems may need additional refinement.

If you would like to provide feedback about your experiences with the game, we would love to hear from you.

Send any comments, suggestions, or thoughts to:

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STEP INTO THE DARK...

WEIRDWOOD is a different kind of roleplaying game.

The following pages contain everything you need to play, but it's up to you to provide much of the details. WEIRDWOOD provides only the basic outlines of a setting. By asking questions and brainstorming together, you and the other players will give the world its color and texture. Your WEIRDWOOD will be unique to your group, generated by the collaborative creative efforts of your group.

This game leaves gamemasters and players alike a lot of open space to define. It provides a resolution mechanic and a few narrative tools, but it does not give the same level of structure you may be familiar with from other games. This is by design. It's your game, so take ownership of it. Do what makes sense. Once you set down the parameters of your game, be consistent. If there are disagreements over how to resolve a situation, take a quick vote or roll a die to resolve it and move on. WEIRDWOOD is a narrative game. Players should spend their time thinking about how their characters interact with the world they've helped to create rather than how to get the most plusses in a combat encounter.

There is only one right way to play WEIRDWOOD:

Your way.

The Weirdwood

The Weirdwood is a mystical forest that exists beyond the veil of the material world. It is a manifestation of primordial creation, a collective imagined memory of human existence. The Verho, or the barrier between worlds, is thick enough to be impenetrable in most of the world, but in some places the barrier is thin enough for humans (and things on the opposite side) to cross over. Although the Weirdwood usually takes the form of a forest, it always conforms to the local environment, so it may be very lightly wooded or not wooded at all (the deserts of the American west and North Africa, for instance).

No one knows the true history of the Weirdwood, but it is an untamed place of wild imagination and deeply buried secrets. People often cross the Verho in the hopes of discovering some truth about their life or human existence. Some claim that the dead walk among the trees alongside dreams made flesh and dark reflections of living souls. It is a realm where anything may be possible, and its inherent power makes it a dangerous place. Unwary visitors can inadvertently make it possible for monstrous things to cross the Verho, and many who enter the dark forest become lost forever.

A secretive and ancient order known as the Vartijat stands guard over the Weirdwood. Whether by birth or happenstance, they have a connection to the wood that allows them to peer through the Verho and cross the barrier between worlds. They know the ways of the wild and work to both keep its influence in check and protecting those foolish enough to cross over. Conventional weapons tend to be of little use against the Weirdwood's denizens, so most Vartijat carry weapons adorned with magical engravings or runes that enable them inflict damage.

The Weirdwood is always trying to encroach upon the material realm. Ironically, it is strongest in large population centers, where the imaginations, dreams, and memories of so many souls feed its power. Most humans cannot see this influence, which is strongest during the night when most of the city slumbers. The Vartijat work to keep the wood “cut back” and track down entities that breach the Verho during the night so they can be destroyed or banished back to the darkness. Throughout most cities, the Verho tends to be weakest in areas with trees or other vegetation.

There are many who seek to harness the Weirdwood’s power, bending it to their will before it can possess or twist them to its own purposes. A great many cults carry out rituals in the wood’s name, some benign and well-intended, others foul and obscene. The entities that dwell within the Weirdwood defy all science and reason; any attempt to catalog them or explain their power is doomed to frustration and failure. It does seem that every soul from the material world has an opposite somewhere in the Weirdwood. A person could go their entire lives without ever encountering this doppelgänger shadow, but they might also meet it upon their first visit. These shades are often an inversion of the material soul, and tend to be driven to escape the wood and replace their counterparts in the material world. They retain all the memories and knowledge of their material twins, though they always possess a distinctive mark of some kind to betray their unnatural origin.

The Weirdwood takes on different characteristics in every city where the Verho is thin enough to reach it. Entities found in the Weirdwood in one city may bear no resemblance to those in another in either appearance or behavior. Similarly, the Vartijat are organized differently and follow different practices wherever they are found. The chaotic energies of the Weirdwood that bleed over the Verho make magic possible, but the form and function of sorcery in any city is as unique as the local wood itself. Theoretically, the Weirdwood is interconnected, so that someone could travel from one city to another through the wood if they could find their way.

Resolution Mechanic

WEIRDWOOD uses a dice pool mechanic that requires players to build a collection of dice when making a test. Players can use any kind of dice they prefer. There are three types of dice pools:

- **Player Pool:** Each player has their own dice pool. They begin play with 10 dice.
- **Table Pool:** These dice are available to all players and the GM. The supply is unlimited.
- **Action Pool:** This pool is created when players take an action or the GM calls for a test.

Players lose dice from their Player Pool when they succeed on a test. They can regain dice in one of three ways:

- When they add dice to the DM's Action Pool during another player's action (1D regained per die added).
- When they act out on a flaw, help an NPC ally in some meaningful way, confront their Shadow, protect a secret, do something to further a personal goal, refresh the Player Pool completely (up to 10D regained).
- When they spend a Fate Point to refresh their pool (up to 10D regained).

When a player takes an action:

1. The acting player declares their action and defines what success will look like.
2. The player to their left defines the consequences of failure (other players may overrule consequences if they are deemed irrelevant, too minor, or too serious).
3. The acting player creates their Action Pool by adding 1D from the Table Pool.
 - a. Add 1D from their Player Pool for every trait, ability, power, or equipment the character possesses that could be relevant to the test.
 - b. Add 1D from the Table Pool for every existing circumstance that could provide the character with an advantage.
4. The GM creates their Action Pool by starting with 1D from the Table Pool.
 - a. Add 1D from the Table Pool for every player Condition that may apply to the test.
 - b. For a Conflict, add 1D from the Table Pool for every trait or ability an Adversary possesses that could be relevant to the test.
 - c. The player to the acting player's left may add 1D from the Table Pool for every existing circumstance that could work against the character.
5. The acting player and the GM roll their Action Pools and compare results.
 - a. Every even number counts as a success.
 - b. If the player has more successes than the GM, their action succeeds and they describe the outcome.
 - c. For every extra success, the player may add one additional detail to their success.
 - d. If the GM has more successes than the GM, the action fails and the player to the acting player's left describes the outcome.
 - i. For every extra success, the GM may add one additional detail to the failure.
6. Return dice to dice pools.
 - a. If the player succeeded, all of the dice from their Action Pool are placed in the Table Pool.
 - b. If the player failed, all of the dice spent from their Player Pool are returned to their Player Pool.
 - c. If the player to the acting player's left added any dice to the GM's Action Pool, those dice are placed in their Player Pool (regardless of whether the test succeeded or failed).

Conflict

Conflict is a special form of test involving an Adversary that functions slightly differently.

If a character attempts to cause harm and succeeds, the acting player may add a Condition to the Adversary. For every extra success, they may add another Condition.

If a character attempts to cause or avoid harm and fails, the GM applies one of the Adversary's Abilities to the character. A Standard Ability costs 1 success. A Special Ability costs 3 successes. Adversary Actions typically cause Conditions, but some are more severe than others. A player may spend a Fate or Weirding Token to avoid taking a Condition, but they must narrate how they do so.

A typical character has 5 Condition slots. When they cannot suffer additional Conditions, they are Defeated. The GM defines what Defeat looks like unless the player spends a Fate Token. Another player can also spend a Shadow Token to define an outcome involving the character's Shadow.

Conditions can be eliminated by seeking treatment within game or by using a Fate Token. When using a Fate Token, they must narrate how the Condition was eliminated.

Adversaries

Any person or creature that comes into conflict with the characters is called an Adversary. When a GM makes an Adversary, they are classified as Minor, Major, and Named. A Minor Adversary has 1 Standard Ability and 1 Condition slot. A Major Adversary has 2 Standard Abilities, 1 Special Ability, and 3 Condition slots. A Named Adversary is a noteworthy character in their own right and may have any number of Abilities and Condition slots. They may have characteristics that are not explicitly covered by these rules. Depending upon the nature of the setting created by the group, it's entirely possible for a Named Adversary to be *far* more powerful than the players. A GM should use discretion when creating Named Adversaries to ensure they are memorable and formidable without overwhelming the players in ways that don't conform to the setting they've created.

Tokens

Players begin play with 3 Fate Tokens and 1 Shadow Token.

Fate Token: Players can spend a Fate Token to take the following actions:

- Reroll any number of dice on any test (from either Action Pool).
- Refresh their Player Pool back to 10 dice.
- Avoid or Remove a Condition.
- Narrate the outcome of Defeat.

After using a Fate Token, the player must hand it over to the GM, who may use it in the following ways:

- Add dice to their Action Pool until it equals the player's Action Pool.
- Activate an Adversary's Special Ability, regardless of successes achieved.
- Narrate the consequences of failure when a player fails a test.

When the GM uses a Fate Token, they then hand it over to the player it was used against. Only a single Fate Token can be played at one time. If the player and the GM both have a Fate Token to use in a situation, whoever declares that they're using it first gets to apply the effects.

Shadow Token: When in contact with the Weirdwood, players can spend a Shadow Token to bring another player's Shadow into play. After spending the token, they gain a Weirding Token (best to use a coin and simply flip it over).

Weirding Token: When in contact with the Weirdwood, players can spend a Weirding Token to invoke the power of the wood and affect some aspect of the current narrative or conflict.

A single player may not use a Shadow Token and a Weirding Token in the same scene.

Character Creation

First, the player chooses a name for their character.

The GM then asks the player ten questions about their character. The GM may ask follow up questions for clarification or suggest alternatives, but may not overrule the player's wishes (although a majority of players can). Other players may offer suggestions or vote down answers that don't feel appropriate for the game.

1. What is something you do well?
2. What is your most distinctive personality trait?
3. What is your most identifiable feature?
4. How did you learn of the Weirdwood and come to join the Vartijat?
5. What power have you gained from your contact with the Weirdwood?
6. Who are the two people you are close to?
7. Who is the one person who wishes you harm?
8. What is your greatest accomplishment?
9. What is something you don't want anyone else to know?
10. What is your goal in life?
11. What are two flaws that you struggle with?

How these features, characteristics, backgrounds, and abilities play out in the game should be determined through a conversation with the GM and other players. There are no hard and fast rules. Do what makes sense in the moment and run with it.

World Creation

First, identify the city where the campaign will take place.

Next, the GM asks the group ten questions about the world. The GM may ask follow up questions for clarification or suggest alternatives, but may not overrule a majority of the players.

1. What does the Weirdwood look like in your city?
2. How do people pierce the Verho and enter the Weirdwood?
3. How is the Vartijat organized in this city?
4. What other factions are present?
5. Who knows about the Weirdwood's existence?
6. How does Weirdwood magic work in this city?
7. Can ordinary people interact with the Weirdwood?
8. Do the dead walk the Weirdwood in this city?
9. What threats does the Weirdwood pose to the city?
10. How do the dreams of the city's residents affect the Weirdwood?

Creatures of the Weirdwood

The GM selects five of the following questions and may ask as many follow up questions for clarification as necessary.

- What are Shades?
- What are Stalkers?
- What are Raveners?
- What are Sirens?
- What are Wisps?
- What are Shriekers?
- What are Golems?
- What are Slinkers?
- What are Trolls?
- What are Glooms?

Weirdwood Locations

When the situation calls for it, roll 1d20 on each chart to generate unique locations within the Weirdwood. Some of them may be described by the players, but the GM may elect to reveal some of them later.

1d20

- 1: Black
- 2: Blood
- 3: Stone
- 4: Silver
- 5: Shadow
- 6: Ghoul
- 7: Twilight
- 8: Grim
- 9: Dry
- 10: Dead
- 11: Storm
- 12: Shifting
- 13: Twisted
- 14: Iron
- 15: Bleak
- 16: Writhing
- 17: Blasted
- 18: Dreaming
- 19: Broken
- 20: Riven

1d20

- 1: Glade
- 2: Gulch
- 3: Garden
- 4: Vale
- 5: Field
- 6: Tree
- 7: Thicket
- 8: Vine
- 9: Swamp
- 10: Bog
- 11: Marsh
- 12: Grave
- 13: Sands
- 14: Rock
- 15: Lake
- 16: Stream
- 17: Gloom
- 18: Heath
- 19: Mists
- 20: Glade

Weirdwood NPCs

Select five names from the following list.

Jorily
Harm
Lenn
Weldum
Qarthen
Zorel
Olgash
Paravio
Sezav
Bekar

Fenna
Thryn
Brask
Gale
Maral
Tanner
Izara
Graven
Dorn
Renish

Ulgar
Dace
Mausch
Beign
Ryell
Denek
Elishai
Yegaul
Carvur
Nurga

Next, ask the following questions:

- What is (character name)'s relationship to the Weirdwood?
- Is the character an ally of the Vartijat or an enemy?

Initial Story

Although GMs are encouraged to come up with their own adventure starting points, you may also want to select one of the following adventure prompts.

- Someone must venture into the Weirdwood to locate a thing or place.
- The Vartijat must protect refugees from within the Weirdwood.
- A group of children have gone missing in the Weirdwood.
- The Weirdwood is expanding, pushing through the Verho to affect the material world.
- A blight is poisoning the Weirdwood and causing nightmares throughout the city.
- A cult has pulled some terrible entity through the Verho.
- A prominent public figure has been replaced by their Weirdwood shadow.
- Someone who ventured into the Weirdwood has returned twisted and corrupted.
- A sorcerer is channeling power from the Weirdwood.
- A group of smugglers is selling dangerous items retrieved from the Weirdwood.

Character: _____ Player: _____	
Appearance: _____	
<div>Features and Traits</div> <div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div>Flaws and Secrets</div> <div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
<div>Abilities and Talents</div> <div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div>Powers</div> <div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
<div>Allies</div> <div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div>Enemies</div> <div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
<div>Conditions</div> <div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div>Equipment</div> <div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
<div>Goals</div> <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	
<div>Other Info</div> <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	

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Local Weirdwood Characteristics	
<div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div>	
Ways to Enter the Weirdwood	Local Magic System
<div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div>	<div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div>
Local Vartijat Organization	Other Local Factions
	Notable Locations
Local People	Local Creatures
	Other Information
Threats and Dangers	

Minor Adversary		
Features and Traits	Abilities and Talents	Powers
Condition	Standard Ability	

Major Adversary		
Features and Traits	Abilities and Talents	Powers
Condition	Standard Ability	Special Ability

[illegible]

WHEN NIGHT FALLS,

DREAMS TAKE ROOT..



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