

## Death Forest - Where Not Even Death Treads

### 1. Introduction

East of the towering Churning Mountains, there once stood an ancient forest, where its canopy once provided shade, shelter, and food for travelers and animals alike, and the Slimy River, once a pure, crystal-clear stream, meandered through hills and valleys, bringing sustenance to villages and creatures alike. But all that died the day the sky turned gray, the ground rotted, and the once-vibrant forest fell silent.

Now the trunks stand like blackened corpses, their twisted branches reaching skyward like frozen arms in a final spasm of agony. No birds sing. Only the hollow sound of silence itself, deep and crushing. It is said that if one stops and listens, one can hear faint whispers in the gusts of wind—not natural breezes, but echoes of something that was once alive.

### 2. Geography of Death Forest - A Corpse That Insists on Breathing

The dry, cracked and irregular terrain extends into dry hills and desolate valleys, where the native vegetation has been taken over by a thick layer of ash and hardened lava. Charred trees stand like skeletons, their roots exposed and broken by the violence of the underground fire. Twisted and dried-out bushes rest on the barren soil, unable to resist the weight of destruction.

The rivers and streams, once winding and clear, are now snakes of mud and poison, dragging debris and fragments of a forest that no longer exists. Their darkened waters reflect the cloudy and suffocating sky, where the smoke from occasional eruptions sometimes obscures any trace of light. From the Churning Mountains and their snow-capped peaks, now come the winds that carry with them the volcanic dust that ravages every space. The sky is covered by heavy clouds and ash storms cloud the landscape. In every corner, nature seems to be in a slow confrontation between decay and resurrection, a silent battle where the earth itself hesitates about its fate.

### 3. Daily life in the region:

In this isolated region, the sparse survivors continue their daily struggle for survival. Agriculture, which once sustained families, has been reduced to small fields where the soil, affected by volcanic ash, can barely produce anything other than stunted fruits. The fishermen, who depended on the abundant waters of the Slimy River, now face rough seas, whose nets often return empty or loaded with deformed creatures, a reflection of the changes that have affected the region. Even in the face of adversity, stubbornness and resilience remain, and life goes on, slowly, one day at a time.

At dawn, the men and women begin their tasks, aware of the hardship of the journey, but with a sense of quiet determination. Farmers, with their hoes and calloused hands, try to cultivate what they can on patches of infertile land, searching for roots and hardy herbs for food. Fishermen, staring at the horizon, wait for the tides that could perhaps bring some hope. There are few words exchanged between them; the collective suffering makes them more focused on their daily activities. Traditionally, the simplicity of the

tasks transforms into a ritual of connection with the land and with what remains of life around them.

At night, people gather in small wooden huts, where the heat of the wood fire provides some comfort. There are no heroes or great stories in this region, but rather the experiences of ordinary men and women, who resist each dawn. Before going to sleep, there is a custom that persists: each person writes, with charcoal, a wish or prayer on the wall of the hut.

They believe that the land, in some way, hears their words, and that the ancestors who inhabited these lands still watch over their descendants. In the midst of destruction, the community finds strength in memories and in the need to move forward.

#### 4. Places of interest

For fearless souls seeking to explore the limits of the unknown, there are places where mystery and danger intersect, challenging the human spirit. Risk is a constant, but so is the fascination of discovery. For those brave enough, these points of interest are more than destinations:

##### 4.1 The Stone Forest

In the northwest, near the Churning Mountains, the forest takes on a different form: a graveyard of petrified trees. The trunks that were burned there by the infernal heat of the eruption did not crumble into ashes, but were sealed in time, like twisted stone pillars. Gray, immobile and hardened, they look like prisoners condemned to an eternity of vigil.

Absolute silence reigns in this place. There is no wind, there is no life, there is not even the sound of one's own footsteps. Travelers speak of a suffocating emptiness, as if something were stalking them, hidden in the stillness. Some swear that, at nightfall, they hear originless murmurs, ancient whispers that slide between the stone trunks like invisible serpents.

##### 4.2 The Hell's Baths

Hidden among volcanic debris and poisoned mudflats lie the Hot Springs, nicknamed the Hell's Baths by the few survivors of the region. There is no welcoming steam here, only an unbearable stench of sulfur and rotting flesh. The pools bubble with a yellowish-black viscosity, and anything that touches their waters dissolves into fetid goo.

Rocks covered in reddish moss and the carcasses of deformed animals surround this boiling swamp. Some say that the place is inhabited by something that crawls among the rocks and mud of the region, waiting. No man who has entered the pools has ever emerged whole.

##### 4.3 The Slimy River - The Great Vein Exposed

Once clear and vibrant, it now cuts through the forest like an infected wound. Its banks are a poisonous bog, where rare mosses crawl like necrotic skin over dead flesh, covered in swarms of fat, shiny flies.

The river itself runs thick as old oil and gives off a sickening odor—a

smell of sulfur, iron, and something sweet and putrid, like a decaying corpse. No fish swim in its waters. No roots dare touch them. The few who have tried to drink from the river have died in agony, their bodies contorted, their eyes leaking black fluid before their skins melt like wax under fire.

#### 4.4 The Veltmar Hills - The Flash of Life

In the heart of the destruction, one place still stands: the Veltmar Hills. Here, the forest refuses to die.

There is a legend of the Healing Tree, which lives and endures near the source of the small river, a tributary of the Slimy. Its leaves are a ghostly golden green, and are said to have magical properties, capable of curing any illness. But its presence defies logic, and those who have tried to take it say that something protects it. Some speak of roots that move like serpents. Others have voices that warn intruders in forgotten languages.

Between the hills and the great tree, hidden in a gorge, lies the Cave of Onnith, a dark tunnel whose entrance opens like a hungry mouth. It is said that it is here that lies the last remnant of something that the eruption should have destroyed but that survived—or worse, something that was born from the ashes.

#### 4.5 The Forgotten Villages of the Coast

To the east, towards the sea, small villages endure like ghosts of what they once were. Once prosperous, the villages that once cultivated the fertile fields now struggle to survive. The land has been poisoned by volcanic ash, and nothing grows in the dry, toxic soils.

The villagers live off the sea, but even the waters seem to have been affected. The fish they catch have strange flesh, a rusty taste, and something acidic that irritates the tongue. The elders whisper that the dead forest corrupts even the tides, and that one day the ocean will turn against them. Though humble and with scarce supplies, these small settlements are indispensable for resupplying those who venture into the wilderness.

### 5. The Dangers of Death Forest

Enter Death Forest at your own risk! Maddening mists, poisoned soil, and lightning strikes await you in this dead land! Nameless creatures lurk in the fossilized shadows, and ancient whispers seek to invade your mind. Here, even death itself fears to linger.

#### 5.1 The Lurkers - The Hungry Shadows of the Slimy River

On the filthy, rotting banks of the Slimy River, the Lurkers appear, grotesque specters, the very children of corruption and oblivion. Their tall, skeletal figures, shrouded in shadow, ooze from the darkness as if they were part of it. Those few who dare to cross this land in search of more than survival speak of them with the dread of those who have encountered something that cannot be described. Are they beasts degenerated by the disgrace of the land, specters chained between worlds, or beings

whose purpose surpasses mortal comprehension?

In the damp mud holes along the riverbed, the Lurkers hide. They do not walk, they crawl, they slither through the darkness of the night. Their bodies are stretched skeletons, like rotting flesh, with sagging gray skin stretched tight over broken bones. The black veins in their limbs seem to throb as if something alive, something grotesque, were moving beneath, a force that reaches down from the abyss and permeates everything it touches. Their eyes, if they have such eyes, do not reflect light—they are opaque holes that swallow hope. Most terrifying, however, is the silence. There is no sound—not even the rustle of a leaf in the wind or the snap of a broken twig. Only an immense void, an absolute emptiness that precedes the attack.

The elders say that the Lurkers were born of the eruption. Others say they are a fusion of men and beasts, corrupted by the madness of drinking the poisonous waters of the Slimy, deformed by the destruction. And there are those who point to the obelisk upstream – an ancient structure, its main lair. Few have dared to approach it, but those who have returned speak of a presence there, a palpable force that insinuates itself into the minds, calling the Lurkers, like a beacon of their own decay, to the darkness of its lair.

If there is a reason for the Lurkers' hunts, no one knows. But the missing, those who are swallowed up in the night without a single scream, become just another nameless echo in the endless darkness of the forest, a shadow forgotten in the abyss, lost forever in the teeth of the shadows.

## 5.2 Bone Worms

Emerging from the cracks of the parched soil, the Bone Worms are hideous creatures that crawl like serpents. Their scales are white as marble and they have disproportionate jaws with long, blade-like teeth. These predators devour everything that crosses their path, without mercy. Their bodies have a rigid outer shell and a gelatinous interior; they are agile enough to move at great speed underground, leaving only a trail of destruction.

They feed on everything that still lives, be it humans, animals or even other creatures from the abyss. Nothing escapes their voracity, and nothing remains after their passage. Where these worms walk, life is a distant memory, swallowed by the earth and silence.

## 5.3 Ash Golem

After the eruptions that devastated the earth, a wizard named Arelith, in desperation, tried to create an immortal defense force. Using forbidden magic, he fused human beings and volcanic minerals with the power of magma, creating the Ash Golems.

Their massive, twisted forms are composed of fragmented rock and ash, with veins of visible lava flowing from their joints. Their bodies are disproportionate, with large, clumsy limbs and imposing heads, but with empty eyes, like slits of darkness. Their feet and hands are like great obsidian boulders, capable of crushing everything beneath their weight. Arelith believed them to be her immortal servants, but the corruption of magic took hold of the golems, turning them into insatiable creatures. They rebelled against their creator and crushed him like a dry twig. Now, they

roam consuming what remains of the devastated land, guided only by eternal destruction.

#### 5.4 Eurynomes

These vengeful spirits are said to have been awakened by the eruptions and are known as Eurynomes. Their bodies are now made of fire and ash, with burning skin and flames flowing through their entire bodies. Their eyes glow with immortal fury, and their flaming claws tear the air. They are the very wrath of the earth, manifested by primal fire.

Wandering the devastated ruins, they hunt those who transgress natural or divine laws, punishing them with eternal fire. Their every step sets the earth ablaze, and anyone who comes near feels the unbearable heat. Their presence is a harbinger of doom.

#### 5.5 Specters of Wrath

During the eruptions that devastated this area, hundreds of people were tragically consumed by flames and lava. Those who died in anger could find no rest but their souls trapped between the world of the living and the afterlife. They emerged as Wrath Wraiths, beings whose screams echo through the charred ruins, fueled by the rage and suffering of their violent deaths.

With bodies translucent but still shaped like humans, they float through the ashes, their eyes burning with a savage glow of pain and resentment. Their wails echo through the dark nights, a harbinger of imminent death for those who dare trespass on their cursed lands. When their prey is found, their screams of pain and vengeance are so intense that they can tear through body and soul, dragging the living to an unbearable fate.

#### 5.6 The Guardian

They say that, deep in the dry forest, a sleeping giant awaits awakening. Somewhere in the distance stands a great statue, but its outlines are not carved stone—they are petrified flesh. Ancient storytellers tell of a giant warrior who, in ancient times, challenged a primeval entity that inhabited the forest. This creature, made of the very essence of the earth, did not kill the giant, but turned him to stone, imprisoning him in an eternal form, as a reminder of his fury.

Some say that, on moonless nights, one can hear the faint sound of stones moving, as if the giant were trying to free himself. The elders claim that the giant is not only a guardian of the forest, but its very soul. And when he awakens, the earth will rise again, and the forest will once again be unbeatable, burying those who dare disturb it.

### 5. Npcs

#### 5.1 Oswin, the Last Dwarf

Oswin is the last surviving dwarf of Toren, a dwarven settlement near the mountains that was swallowed by death. He works to create contraptions that can survive in the toxic environment of the forest and has a deep desire to

rebuild what is left of his community.

#### 5.2 Draza, the Desperate Healer

Draza was the chief healer of a village on the edge of the forest. After the eruption, she lost everything, including her divine gift, but she continues to seek remedies for the forest's curses, drawn by the hope of a tree that can heal.

#### 5.3 Gar, the Merchant of Relics

The half-orc Hrothgar roams the edges of the Death Forest, offering rare artifacts and ancient riddles. He sells items and precious information, but most of his wares are priced far higher than anyone would expect to pay.

#### 5.4 Zyra the Seer

She was born into a simple family on the banks of the Slimy River. As a child, she suffered an accident that marked her with the corruption of the river, gaining psychic and spiritual abilities. Growing up in contact with the spirits of the drowned, she seeks to understand the source of this corruption and restore the lost spiritual balance. Her mission is also to free the spirits trapped in the waters and discover what really happened to them.