

DRYAD BIOLOGY

Description

Across the New World there have been a handful of instances of trees spontaneously developing sentience. These creatures, called dryads, are able to move and many have approximately bipedal forms, most of their foliage and mass is shed when they develop sentience and the majority of dryads are not much larger than a mokosh or a human. There are, however, unconfirmed reports of huge dryads, as large as fully grown oak trees.

No one knows what is causing the trees to turn into dryads. If there is some hidden agent at work then it has not yet revealed itself or its purpose. The dryads themselves are born conscious and sentient, fully awake with comprehension and understanding. A newly awakened dryad cannot speak and has no skills or memories but they learn to speak at an exceptional rate, as if remembering something forgotten rather than learning something new.

All dryads possess a mystical connection to the forests and jungles that are found scattered across the New World. The nature of, or reason for, this link is unclear but the ongoing effects of magic appear to have awakened some rudimentary sentience in every standing tree. It is possible that dryads are simply the trees with the most pronounced reaction to magic, alternatively they may in some way all be agents of a single intelligence.

The body of a dryad remains entirely wooden in composition, but they are vulnerable to weapons and can be harmed like any mortal creature. They do not appear to be particularly vulnerable to fire, for instance, most can tolerate hot fires substantially better than a wemic or an avian might.

Dryads have no obvious reproductive systems. A few dryads produce blossom or fruit, but none produce any seeds that germinate. Dryad bodies are wooden in nature, their flesh is hard and they are not physically compatible with other races without exceptional difficulties. They do not appear to experience a strong reproductive urge, although some have a philosophical interest in such matters.

Dryads can call on the power of this rudimentary sentience to use it to heal mortal wounds that they have suffered and they may learn new ways to use the power. Each time that a dryad calls upon the power of the forest for any reason, the remaining magical strength of the forest is temporarily diminished. The magical potential takes a season to recover after being used.

The total magical strength of the forest, in the area the Maelstrom campaign is set in, is determined by the size, number and health of the local forests throughout the game area. As these forests increase in size and number, the magical strength available to all dryads at each event increases. If the number of forests are reduced then the power available to them will diminish.

The link is not all one way, however, and dryads can use their own abilities to affect the forests, causing trees to sprout overnight over vast areas. Growing new forests in this way causes the strength of the forest to increase slowly.

Racial rules

- You should not pass these rules on to other players

Please note that the following rules have not been released to the general player base and are only given to those players playing, or intending to play, dryad characters. The Maelstrom campaign is enhanced if players are able to discover information about the game through purely IC sources so we ask players not to pass these sheets to other players. We believe that some of the advantages available to you will be lost if these rules become widely known.

Wooden body

- You begin with four body hits rather than three
- Your maximum death count is one hour
- You cannot have your wounds staunched or treated
- You cannot acquire the fortitude skill

Dryads have wooden bodies, which are exceptionally hard and strong. You begin with four body hits instead of three. You may increase your body hits by acquiring the endurance skill as normal.

You receive all the normal effects of mortal wounds but take one hour to die, instead of 300 seconds. You cannot benefit from the staunch wounds or treat wounds skill. If you are unresisting, you can be executed normally.

If you have purchased the fortitude or great fortitude skills, you will receive additional body hits instead. You cannot learn the fortitude skill in play.

No digestion

- You should ignore any rip-open lammy that does not have an 'A' or 'B' substance code written it
- You cannot acquire the constitution skill

Dryads can eat although they have no need to do so and they have no perceptible digestion. A standard poison or drug will not affect you. Substances are coded on their lammy interior with a letter/number combination. Only substances beginning with either an 'A' code or a 'B' code can potentially affect you; all other substances will have no effect, and you should ignore any instructions on these lammies.

While dryads are technically unaffected by alcohol, caffeine, and so on, we recognize that this may be difficult to phys-rep and suggest that you may roleplay these as having a psychosomatic effect.

If you have purchased the constitution or great constitution skills, you will receive additional body hits instead. You cannot learn the constitution skill in play.

Force of nature

- You can use a pool of magical power, called the forest pool, to heal a mortal wound or a body hit
- The pool diminishes by one point each time you use it
- All dryads call on the same pool

All dryad characters can call upon the magical potential of the forests and jungles that are found in this region of the New World to heal a point of body hit damage or a mortal wound that they have suffered. This source of power is called the forest pool, the same pool covers the entire area that the Maelstrom campaign is set in and is used by all dryads. The forest pool diminishes by a single point each time you call on the power to heal a mortal wound or to regain a point of body hit.

To use this power, role-play a period of calm, while you concentrate for five minutes. You must begin again if you lose concentration as described in chapter five of the Event Rules. After five minutes you must consult a referee who will inform you if the attempt is successful and what the remaining size of the forest pool is after you have used a point to heal yourself. This ability will fail if the forest pool has reached zero when you try to use it.

If you are successful in healing a mortal wound then you are no longer mortally wounded and all effects of the mortal wound are gone. You are no longer dying and can act normally.

If you are successful in healing a body hit's worth of damage then you regain one body hit. This ability can be used more than once to regain more than one body hit.

One with nature

- You can sense how many points are left in the forest pool
- You can sense the last dryad who used the forest pool

You are able to contact the primitive intelligence that is the combined sentience of the forests of the New World. A few minutes of calm and concentration are needed to contact the trees in this way. Trees do not have normal senses and the only information that a starting character can gain from the trees is the amount of magical strength remaining and a mental image of any dryad who has drawn on the forest pool in the last few hours.

To use this power, role-play a period of calm, while you concentrate for five minutes. You must begin again if you lose concentration as described in chapter five of the Event Rules. After five minutes you should find a referee who will inform you what the remaining size of the forest pool is and show you a picture of the last dryad to draw strength from the forest pool.

Lord of nature

- You can cause trees to grow in an area during downtime
- You can only do this in an area near existing forests

All dryad characters are capable of drawing on the magical strength of the forests to expand their dominion. You can spend downtime spreading seeds over a wide area and causing them to grow at an astonishing rate. This power can only be used in an area that is adjacent to an existing area of substantial forest.

The more time devoted to this activity, the more trees grow in the area. After three months, you can cause an area of land ten miles on a side to become overgrown with trees and dense foliage appropriate to the climate. These trees grow at such a phenomenal rate that no mundane intervention is sufficient to prevent the change. All buildings are heavily damaged, although natural resources such as ritual sites and mana sites are unaffected.

As the forest expands, the size of the forest pool available to all dryads will slowly increase.

Master of nature

- You can learn additional ways to use the forest pool

All dryad characters can learn additional ways to use the power of the forest by studying their own mystical nature during downtime.