

The Watcher Beneath the Roots

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A one-shot test encounter for [Eldritch Hack](#) designed for a short session to test SAN mechanics, clue discovery, and a single cinematic combat and can be run with as little as 1 investigator as a way to teach the rules.

Setting

Sweden, 1953. Deep within the moss-choked firs of Mörkveden Forest, near the Norwegian border. Early spring. Snow still lingers on the ground.

The player has been sent by the **Swedish Civil Air Defense** to check on a long-range **radio relay and forest fire watch station**. It hasn't broadcast in 6 days, and it is feared something happened to the caretaker **Gunnar Gunnarsson**.

Optional info: The locals nearby speak of a protective spirit of the forest: [The Skogsrå](#).

Folklore Twist: The False Skogsrå

The player discovers that the *Skogsrå*, a beautiful forest woman with a hollow back and a fox tail, is not a benign guardian.

Something **ancient** and **eldritch** has grown into the shape of the myth. Something that watches, listens, and feeds by dragging victims down to the roots of the trees.

Scene 1: The Watch Station

- A rickety wood-and-metal structure on stilts.
- Outside is an area for chopping wood, an outhouse and the car belonging to Gunnar Gunnarsson,
- On the door a mirror hangs pointing outwards. This was added recently.
- Inside: warm stove, untouched food, empty bed.
- A field journal reads:
 - *"The skogsrå returned last night. Not a dream. She watches the relay dish when the wind dies."*
 - *"It's not the forest that's growing, it's her. Every tree is just another nerve."*
- The radio crackles with reversed **folk song fragments** mixed with languages with no known phonetics (SAN test). Attempts to record it yield patterns that look like **brainwaves**.
- Outside, boot prints lead into the woods... but not out.

Scene 2: The Grove

- A large circular grove with a single old tree in the middle.
- Snow has melted in a perfect circle around a single tree.
- Roots surrounding the grove form an unnatural circular pattern.
- Animal tracks halt at a treeline.
- A **scarf** is knotted around a branch. Smells of aftershave (same as found in the watch station).

A **dark hollow** gape in the bark of the tree. See below:

Encounter: The False Skogsrå

If the player investigates the tree hollow, a woman face appears within (**SAN check 10, d4 SAN loss on failure**): *"I am your guide to the roots"*. Reaches out to grab the investigator.

The Skogsrå appears like a tall woman made of dry wood and bark. But her back is hollow.

- **The Hollow Isn't Empty:** If the player sees the Skogsrå's hollow back, they glimpse: A swirl of stars, spinning impossibly. A gravitational pull, like it leads elsewhere. Reaching in causes a **pulse of déjà vu**, but like a memory from another life.
- If the player lingers or willingly reaches deeper into the hollow, they must pass a **SAN check (TN 12)** or be pulled partially through the void. On a failure, they lose **1d4 SAN** and reappear with a scar shaped like a root across their chest. On a success, they pull back just in time, but something briefly holds their wrist from the other side.
- **TN:** 11
- **HP:** 10
- **Attack:**
 - *Voice of the Forest:* d4 SAN loss (1/encounter)
 - *Claw of Bark and Bone:* d6 damage
- **Defense:** Can vanish into trees once/encounter (auto-evade)
- **Weakness:** Mirror or similar reflective material. Seeing her reflection stuns her for 1 round.
- **SAN Loss:** TN 12, d4 if seen from behind.

Resolution Options

- **Burn the tree hollow:** Screams echo through the wood. She vanishes. In the burnt tree stump is the remains of Gunnar Gunnarsson as well as some other people.
- **Escape:** Fleeing through the forest loops the player back, unless they sever the root circular pattern.

