

Into the Forest

A Tabletop Game for 1-3 Players



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This version of Into the Forest is designed to be printed single-sided and uses fonts which are friendly to dyslexic readers. Also available is a booklet-style version for printing double-sided.

All photographs are originally from the Pexels image database by artists: Francesco Ungaro, Tom Swinnen, Tobias Bjorkli, and Jens Mahnke.

Into the Forest was inspired in part by the solo tabletop games “Wretched Wasteland” and “The Artifact”, both available on itch.io

Like all people, you live in a village on the coast, on the strip of land that runs between the ocean and the edge of the forest. The villages are peaceful and safe. The people farm, herd animals, fish, and forage in the edge of the forest for food. The work is hard, but there isn't much of it, and most people are free to socialize, play, relax, sing, dance, or do whatever else they like for most of each day.

As one goes further out into the ocean from shore, the water gets deeper, darker, and more dangerous. All manner of mysterious creatures are said to live out there in the depths, but humans have no way of going down there to find out for sure.

As one goes further into the forest, the trees get taller, and it gets darker as their leaves block out more and more of the sun. There, too, it gets stranger and more dangerous. There are stories of what lies in the darkness of the deep forest: ancient ruins, crumbling and overgrown; terrible beasts unlike anything humanity has ever seen; villages of strange people who have never seen daylight; artifacts, lost relics, and more. There are those who grow tired of the peaceful tranquility of village life and attempt to explore the depths of the forest to see what is really there. Very few of them ever return.



Setup

Into the Forest is a tabletop game for 1-3 players. It can also be used as a creative writing tool, giving you the framework to write a completed story of heroic triumph – or tragedy, as chance wills it.

There are multiple scenarios and flexible rules. Feel free to experiment with different options until you find one that provides you a satisfying game experience.

To play Into the Forest, you will need:

- At least one 6-sided die or digital die-roller.
- A standard deck of 52 playing cards without jokers, shuffled.
- A map (either a printed copy of the template on page 9 or one you've made yourself on any piece of paper).
- A log sheet (either a printed copy of the template on page 10 or one you've made yourself on any piece of paper) for each player and something to write with.
- A small token for each player to track their progress on the map.
- The Table of Possibilities from this guide (pages 5-8).
- Your choice of musical accompaniment (the author recommends the Caves of Qud soundtrack by Craigory Ham, available at: <https://soundcloud.com/craigoryham/sets/caves-of-qud-sessions>).

Each player should begin by writing their name, goal (see Scenarios on page 4), resources (8), and health (8) on their log sheet. It's best to use pencil for these numbers, which will change. Place the token for each character on the spot of your choice in stratum I. If you're traveling together, make sure the tokens are on adjacent spots.

Taking a Turn

1. Each player makes a movement (see details on page 9).
2. Players draw a card from the deck and look up their event in the Table of Possibilities (pages 5-8). Players traveling together share a result, while those separated must each draw their own cards.
3. Make any choices the event offers you, follow any directions, then note the event result in the appropriate parts of the log sheet, including changes to Health, Supplies, and anything else you'd like to record for posterity. Record any Discoveries in the appropriate box with as much detail as you care to improvise.
4. Players using the game as a creative writing tool may wish to write out a full description of events after each turn, complete with improvised details.
5. Players subtract one from their Supplies. If they have no Supplies, they subtract one from their Health instead. If their Health hits zero, the player is dead. Rest in peace.
6. Once all players have completed their actions and notes, proceed to the next turn.



The Map and Movement

At the outskirts, players are in familiar territory, so any player who is in stratum I at the start of a turn may decide where to move (either one space deeper in, one space along the same stratum, or back to the village, ending the game). There is nothing new to discover so close to the village, so players in stratum I do not draw a card, though they do still consume a point of Supplies at the end of the turn.

In stratum 6, there is an impenetrable stone wall to one side which you can use to navigate. You may choose where to move in any direction at the start of your turn.

Any player between strata 2 and 5 at the start of a turn is lost and must roll a die to determine where they move:

1-2: move one stratum back towards the village

3-4: move one space in the same stratum (up or down)

5-6: move one stratum deeper into the forest

Diagonal movement is allowed.

If there is more than one player, each player must occupy a different space. If players are in adjacent spaces in the same stratum, they may move together, making a single die roll to determine the movement, and draw one event card which affects them together. If they are separated by one or more spaces or in different strata, they have lost each other, and must make their movements individually (and draw separate events). They may find each other again if they begin their turns in adjacent spaces in the same stratum. Players may decide to separate voluntarily at any point or be forcibly separated by events.

The Log Sheet

You know going into the forest that there is a strong probability you won't make it back out. It is therefore essential that you keep a record of everything that happens to you, everything you discover, everything you experience, and everything you wish to warn others about, in case you perish. Then there will be a chance, at least, of someone else finding your remains and your experiences not being entirely lost. The log sheet also serves as a record of your game and the outline of a story, should you wish to use it as a creative writing tool.

Supplies and Health

Each player begins the game with 8 Supplies and 8 Health. The Supplies represent food, water, tools, medical supplies, and anything else you might need to survive in the depths of the forest. You will use these every turn. More can be found in the forest, if you are lucky.

Health is an abstract representation of your physical and mental well-being. There are many ways to lose Health, but very few to gain it back. You will also lose a point of Health on any turn you end with no Supplies. If you run out of this, you have died and the game is over. Your Health can never go over 8.

Discoveries

The Forest has claimed countless human lives in the past, and indeed is said to have swallowed up whole civilizations. Deep inside under the tallest of trees you may find any number of incredible relics, undiscovered medicinal plants, written records, and more. It's up to you to decide the details of each Discovery based on the event description. Make note of what you find in the appropriate section of your log sheet.

Scenarios

Your goal in entering the forest can be whatever you desire. Here are a few possible scenarios for you to choose from, if you don't wish to make up your own.

The Bold Adventurer

Single-Player or Multiplayer

This is the most basic way to play Into the Forest. You seek glory, fame, adventure, recognition, or just relief from the tedium of daily life. You enter the forest to find whatever Discoveries you can and get back home alive. You may choose a minimum number of Discoveries for success (1 = easy, 3 = medium, 5 = hard).

Hero of the Village

Single-Player or Multiplayer

Your village is being ravaged by a terrible plague. There is no known cure, but perhaps you can find one somewhere in the forest. Explore until you find something that might allow you to cure the illness (medicinal plants, ancient medicine, forgotten wisdom, etc.), then try to escape alive to deliver it to your people.

The Greatest Explorer

Multiplayer

This scenario is intended for multiple players competing against each other to become the most renowned explorer. Players travel separately and do not share events. The winner is the player who makes either the most Discoveries, or the most significant Discoveries, before escaping the forest alive. Of course, if only one of you makes it out, then they win by default.

The winner is determined either by mutual agreement or by a person who did not play the game with you.

Optional Rules

Are you finding the game too easy? Too difficult? Or do you just want to mix it up a bit? Try these optional rules, or come up with your own house rules.

Well-Prepared: You set out well-stocked with provisions. Start with 12 Supplies instead of 8.

Paranoia (Multiplayer): You suffer severe anxiety when alone in the deep woods. Lose one Health at the start of each turn you do not have another player adjacent to you in the same stratum.

PVP (Multiplayer): Travel separately from other players. Any time two players start a turn in adjacent spaces in the same stratum, they fight. Each player rolls a die. The higher roll is the winner. In the event of a draw, players roll again until a winner is found. The winner may choose to either steal one Resource (adding it to their own total) or remove one Health from their opponent.

First Aid: On any turn you may spend one Supplies to regain one Health.

Scouting Gear: At the start of any turn, instead of rolling for movement, you may spend one Supplies to choose where to move.

Useful Discoveries: The things you find in the forest can help you navigate. At the start of any turn, instead of rolling for movement, you may spend one Discovery (removing it from your log sheet) in order to choose where to move.

Table of Possibilities

After moving each turn, draw a card from the deck. The suit and number of your card will determine the event for this turn. Players are encouraged to improvise the details.

	♥ Hearts
A ♥	You are examining a pile of strangely-shaped stones when a small creature leaps out at you. You worry it might be aggressive, but quickly realize it is merely curious. As you continue on your way, it follows you at a safe distance and brings you bits of food. You seem to have adopted a traveling companion. Choose a number 1-6; whenever you roll that number on a movement die, add +1 Supplies AND The next time you would lose a Health point, lose the companion instead as it sacrifices itself for you
2 ♥	You discover a ripe patch of sweet berries and pick as many as you can. +2 Supplies
3 ♥	You disturb a large wild cat, which lashes out with its claws, hisses, then bounds deeper into the forest. -1 Health
4 ♥	While you are exploring a rusted-out metal shell, a part of the roof collapses, pinning your leg. You can try to rig a way to lever it off, or just pull until your leg comes out. Choose: -2 Supplies OR -1 Health
5 ♥	You walk into a patch of softly-glowing flowers. They emit a faint hum when you put them close to your ears. You gather a few. +1 Discovery
6 ♥	While dozing by a stinking creek you have a nightmare so terrifying and lifelike you know you'll never be able to forget it. -1 Health
7 ♥	The trunk of a tree ahead of you sprouts two large, yellow eyes. They stare at you, blink twice, then close. When you inspect the trunk, you can find no trace of them.

8 ♥	In an ancient, ruined building, mostly rotted away, you discover a pile of books against one of the few standing walls. Most of them are beyond repair, but one of them is legible, and seems to be full of ancient wisdom. +1 Discovery
9 ♥	Your eyes begin to play tricks on you in the darkness. You keep seeing the faces of your loved ones back in the village, dancing orbs of light, monstrous mouths which scream and then vanish, and other things which can't be real... Can they? -1 Health
10 ♥	You come upon a village of small, thin humans with large eyes and pale skin. They do not speak, yet somehow you understand each other. They are willing to help you on your journey. Choose: +4 Supplies OR +3 Discoveries OR Choose which direction to move in next turn
J ♥	You come upon a small, thin human with large eyes and pale skin. They reach out a hand and touch your forehead. Their skin feels cold and clammy. After a moment, they pull away and stare at you solemnly. You blink, and they are gone.
Q ♥	You spy a small group of figures dancing awkwardly around a pit of green flames. The light glints off their bodies, which are full of sharp angles. One of them falls with a metallic clash and the flame goes out. When you approach, the figures are gone, but the ash still glows faintly green. You scoop some up to take with you. +1 Discovery
K ♥	You see a light ahead and follow it into a beautiful grove of phosphorescent plants and fungi. You feel your spirits lift and your wounds mend. After resting a while, you take some cuttings from some of the plants, hoping you might be able to cultivate them away from the grove. +2 Health AND +1 Discovery

	♠ Spades
A ♠	A small, thin human with huge eyes and incredibly pale skin starts to follow you through the forest. They flee anytime you try to approach them. As you explore, they run out and steal anything useful you find, then dart back into the darkness before you can stop them. From now on, whenever you would gain Supplies, your stalker steals them. The next time you would lose Health, the stalker foolishly runs into harm's way first and is killed instead, after which point you can gain Supplies again.
2 ♠	You hop playfully across a stream, jumping from stone to stone. Overconfident, you slip, twist your ankle, and fall in the water, soaking yourself. -1 Health
3 ♠	You take a rest by a pool of still water. Under the surface, something moves in the darkness. You keep a respectful distance and don't touch the water, and it does not bother you.
4 ♠	You walk out into the center of a circle of abandoned huts. They appear to have been inhabited recently, but there is no trace of whoever constructed them. Inside one, you find a stash of dried food. +2 Supplies
5 ♠	You are investigating the thick metal walls of a still-standing ruin when a terrible sound hits your ears like a knife. A red light is flashing, blinding you, and you flee for your life. -1 Health AND Multiple players traveling together must roll movement separately next turn.
6 ♠	Tucked away inside the hollow of a gnarled tree you find a scroll containing forgotten wisdom. +1 Discovery
7 ♠	You find a grove of strange sweet-smelling fruit trees. Uncertain if they are safe, you wait a while nearby and watch until you see a band of small, pale six-legged creatures eat some. Satisfied that the fruit is not poisonous, you take some for your journey. +2 Supplies

8 ♠	A ten-legged creature descends in front of you on a shiny, sticky string. It resembles a spider, but too large, too soft, and with too many legs. It sings to you in the voice of your mother, then bites you before climbing back up into the branches above. -1 Health
9 ♠	The trees here have roots so thick that they have dislodged the earth around them, forming cave systems beneath them. You see a faint glow coming from one of the caves and follow it down to a room filled with a web of multicolored metallic strands and blinking lights. When you touch one of them, it attacks you with a tiny bolt of lightning, and you retreat. -1 Health
10 ♠	In a shelter made from crumbling ruins covered with leaves, you find a half-starved human with large eyes and skin so pale it's almost translucent. They are crouching over a tiny campfire, rocking back and forth, and they refuse to look at you. When you try to get their attention, they shiver and hide their face until you go.
J ♠	You are drawn to a greenish glow between two trees. Too late, you realize the glowing orb is attached to a monstrous creature whose jaws lie open, waiting for you to stumble inside. You try to jump out of the way before they snap shut on you. Roll one die. On a 1 or 2: -1 Health
Q ♠	Embedded in a partially-fallen wall made of porous stone, you find a perfectly smooth black rectangle. When you run your finger along it, it leaves a glowing blue trail which slowly fades. You trace a random pattern and feel as though your mind has been turned inside-out. Somehow you have been transported somewhere else. Roll a die and move your token to a random space on that stratum of the forest. Multiple players traveling together roll separately.
K ♠	A small, five-legged creature with long, black fur and white eyes climbs down a tree and lands on your shoulder. It leans forward to smile at you, then gently reaches into your pack. You hear your own voice say, "It's okay. Everything is fine." The creature is gone, but it has left something in your pack, and you feel refreshed. +1 Discovery AND +3 Supplies AND +1 Health

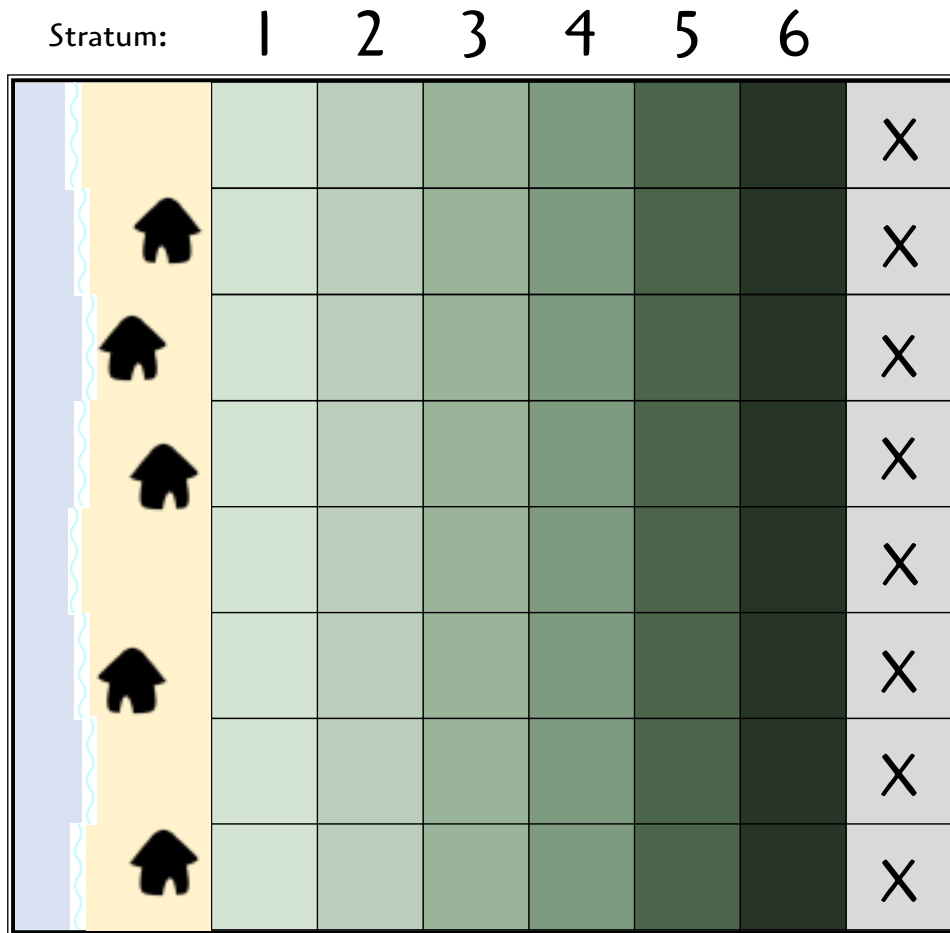
	♦ Diamonds
A ♦	You come upon the corpse of a former traveler and hear a faint hum coming from their hand. You gently open it to reveal a metallic band covered in blinking lights. As you touch it, it wraps itself around your wrist and can't be removed. You feel unstable, and the forest changes around you in a flash. From now on, your movement is random. Roll a die at the start of each turn and move to a random space in that stratum. You can no longer leave the forest from stratum 1. The next time you would lose Health, the band is destroyed instead and you return to normal movement. Multiple players traveling together are teleported together.
2 ♦	You stop at a spring to refill your canteen. Pale butterflies drift gracefully around the area – or are they moths? It's very peaceful. +2 Supplies
3 ♦	Someone has left a small animal roasting over some coals. You grab it and run before you can find out whose it is – and before they can see who stole it. +1 Supplies
4 ♦	At the top of a pole planted in the soft ground you see a small, flashing orange light. It comes easily off of the pole and continues to flash slowly in your hand. You put it in your pack so as to avoid drawing unwanted attention. +1 Discovery
5 ♦	A swarm of softly-glowing orbs surrounds you, singing with angelic voices, and does an intricate dance that leaves you mesmerized. As quickly as they appeared, they are gone. You feel a deep sadness.
6 ♦	You see a tiny, pale human face in the bushes ahead and cautiously move forward to investigate. The creature – a child? – is gone, but it has left you some food for your journey. Is that giggling you hear in the distance? +2 Supplies
7 ♦	You brush against a strange rust-colored plant and it burns your skin. -1 Health

8 ♦	In an ancient brick structure, you find a box which has somehow been preserved. Inside, you find semi-transparent canisters of multicolored stones – some type of ancient medicine. +1 Discovery
9 ♦	You hear an unearthly sound, and a creature made of metal crashes out of the trees in front of you, destroying all that stands in its path. Terrified, you run until you can no longer hear it. Make 3 movement rolls in a row and follow the results as usual. Multiple players traveling together roll separately.
10 ♦	An enormous creature with legs like the trunks of trees comes crashing out of the darkness and tramples you on its way past. -1 Health
J ♦	You smell something delicious and follow your nose to where some roasted meat lies on the ground. Stomach growling, you move in to investigate, and are yanked upwards in a net. This trap will not be easy to escape. On the following turn, do not move. Instead, roll a die to try to escape the net. On a 5 or a 6, you escape and may move on the following turn. Do this every turn until you escape or die.
Q ♦	You step through a crumbling doorway and the frame of a large building appears around you in blue light. A voice speaks to you from all around: THE FOREST CANNOT BE CONQUERED. PRESERVE OUR LEGACY. A small, hard object with metallic lines on it appears in your hand and the frame disappears. +1 Discovery
K ♦	You trip over a hexagonal stone and a semi-transparent glowing human face appears before you. It says something in a language you do not understand, and thin beams of light emerge from cracks in the ground and trace patterns on you. You feel a strange static sensation throughout your entire body, then the lights disappear and do not return. Your Health is restored to maximum.

	♣ Clubs
A ♣	This section of the forest seems especially empty. You neither see nor hear any movement, not even the sounds of insects and other animals. You begin to hear a voice inside your own mind. THIS IS NOT THE WAY, it says. You don't know where it's coming from, but you trust it. From now on, you may roll twice for movement each turn and choose the roll you prefer. If you roll a 6 on a movement roll, the voice disappears and you lose this bonus.
2 ♣	You discover a clear, fresh stream of water and refill your canteen. +2 Supplies
3 ♣	A medium-sized tree collapses onto your shoulder, bruising you terribly. You swear you can hear giggling coming from the trees, but find no one there. -1 Health
4 ♣	A large bird leads you to a pile of fallen rocks from within which desperate peeping can be heard. You gently free the young bird, and its parent rewards you with a small bundle before they both fly off. The bundle contains several ancient, strangely-shaped pieces of metal whose function you can only guess at and some sweet berries. +1 Discovery AND +1 Supplies
5 ♣	You come upon a patch of familiar-looking herbs. They resemble the ones your aunt uses to treat fevers and rashes, but they have a stronger smell. They could be of use in treating your own wounds. +1 Health
6 ♣	The trunk of a large tree has a face intricately carved into it. Its eyes are large, flat gemstones. You pry them off – they look valuable. You just hope you haven't angered anything by doing so. +1 Discovery
7 ♣	The ground trembles slightly as an enormous ape-like creature approaches you. It gently scoops you up and holds you at its eye level, then sets you back down a little too roughly. Realizing it has hurt you, it drops several large pieces of fruit next to you to apologize, then lumbers off into the forest. -1 Health AND +2 Supplies

8 ♣	You come upon a machine in the approximate shape of a person, lying in the underbrush. As you approach, it attempts to rise, but collapses with a grunt. The lights on its head dim and switch off. Is it dead?
9 ♣	Distant music floats through the humid forest air. It is strange and frightening, yet you feel compelled to move towards it. It grows louder as you approach a small object amongst the undergrowth with a glowing green light on it. As you touch it, the light goes out, the music stops, and you can't find a way to start it again. +1 Discovery
10 ♣	A tall, ancient metal structure towers over you. You're not quite sure how stable it is. You might find something useful inside if you risk exploring it. Optional: Roll one die to explore the structure. 1-2: -1 Health AND -1 Supplies 3-4: -1 Supplies AND +1 Discovery 5-6: +4 Supplies AND +2 Discoveries
J ♣	You discover a small stream of water flowing along the forest floor. It looks clean and smells fresh. You bend down to take a sip, and the water bends away from you. You cannot touch it.
Q ♣	You hum a tune from your childhood to comfort you in the darkness. Gradually you start to hear a harmony, and some of the vines you pass are swaying to the melody. You finish the song together, and feel a warmth in your heart. +1 Health
K ♣	You come upon the corpse of an explorer less lucky than you. Their body must have been destroyed by something powerful, but their pack is still intact, and it's loaded with interesting and useful things. +4 Supplies AND +3 Discoveries

The Map



Standard Movement

In stratum 1, you are in familiar territory and may choose where to move in any direction at the start of your turn, or to leave the forest and go back to the village, ending the game. There is nothing new to discover this close to the village, so players in stratum 1 do not draw an event card that turn, though they do consume a point of Supplies at the end of the turn.

In stratum 6, there is an impenetrable stone wall to one side which you can use to navigate. You may choose where to move in any direction at the start of your turn.

In any other stratum, you are lost and must roll to move:

1-2: Move one space back towards the village.

3-4: Move one space up or down along the same stratum.

5-6: Move one space deeper into the forest.

Diagonal movement is allowed.

When playing with multiple players, players in adjacent spaces in the same stratum may travel together and experience events together if they wish. If separated by at least once space or on different strata, they must move and act separately until they find each other again. They may separate voluntarily at any time, or be forcibly separated by events.



