

Dryads

A seemingly young but growing population within Terna, what the Dryads lack in numbers they have certainly made up by appearing in every land simultaneously. Contingents of the tree-folk have been found in every ecosystem across Terna, some even roaming the Barrens as though they were the lushest garden.

The forces of Terna who have called back the Dryads en masse are unknown but Dryads have always been advocates of the Earth. Elders of every race have stories of scions of the forest who have appeared when the Earth was in dire need or as isolated treants residing in ancient groves who sparingly dispense knowledge and advice. The recent arrival of younger Dryads is seen by some scholars as the Earth taking a more active role in her defense. Other historians believe it is nothing more than the standard cycle of Fortannis, and that Dryads have appeared and disappeared since time immemorial in order to play out their own part in history. Most Dryads either won't or can't comment on either case. They seem blithely unaware of the uproar their arrival has caused and seem content to live out their personal lives. Of course, one concept agreed upon by all Dryads is their unremitting search for First Forest. What First Forest is or where it might be located is unknown, even to the Dryads, but Terna is abuzz with conjecture. Ask any given Dryad about First Forest and she will most likely say it is the land beneath her feet and she is staying there to protect it. Of course, First Forest can also be found 200 leagues yonder where another Dryad has dropped roots and declared that location to be First Forest. As of yet, there is no infighting between the different groups about the "true" location of First Forest, but many are uneasy by these ongoing declarations.

Ternian scholars have not created a complete catalogue of Dryads found on the continent but they seem to fall into four general categories: flowerbearers, treelimbbed, waterplants, and fungals; or the more affectionate Thorns, Barkskins, Reeds, and Spores. What all scholars seem to agree upon is that Dryads can be found in every major ecosystem and are as diverse as the flora of their birth. A few groups have coalesced but they're known more by speculation and rumour than actual fact.

Of Metal

Much like other Children of Autumn, the Dryads of Terna reject all items of worked metal. It is neither an allergy or a fear that drives them; it is a physical aversion to the twisted nature of the substance. Natural metallic ore causes no problems for a Child of Autumn, but the acts of refining, melting, and shaping the metal all serve to warp its natural essence. Furthermore, many feel the use of metal as tools, weapons, and armor is akin to forcing Fortannis to serve them - due to their natural connection to the world, this is reprehensible to them. Smaller pieces of metal may or may not affect a Dryad based on their personal bond with nature, but most reject even small pieces of gold jewelry on ethical grounds.

People of other races often wonder why Dryads, with their close connection to the trees of the Forest, use wooden weapons and tools, which require the death of a tree to procure. However, although they of course abhor the purposeless destruction of plants, Dryads accept the

necessity of the cycle of growth and death to the continued existence of the forest and its inhabitants. While the most aged of trees are to be revered for their long life, all Dryads understand that one day the largest trees must fall in order to make room for seedlings and new growth, which would be hindered by the old trees shielding them from the sun.

Of Unicorns

There are many ancient creatures that dwell or have dwelled upon Terna, but some of the most powerful are a trio of Unicorns who watch over the forest and maintain balance within the world: Skarn represents destruction, entropy, and death; Lumiere represents creation, change, and rebirth; while Hermes represents productivity, order and hard work. Dryads have a unique understanding of and relationship to the unicorns. During the Great Sleep, each of the Dryads of Terna is cared for by one and only one of the three, for the balance of the world must be maintained.

Once awakened a Dryad will have a deep respect for this unicorn and may find themselves drawn to the aspects of that unicorn. This is not to say a Dryad watched over by Skarn would be evil or bloodthirsty, nor even that they would have any affinity for death. They will understand, though, that all things must end, and sometimes should end, better than most. They would be quick to cull the sick and finish their enemies. A Dryad under Lumiere, however, may balance this by healing the wounded, encouraging natural growth, and otherwise bringing new life to the world.

Two Associations

There is a militant group forming in the Eternal Leaf Crown. These “Iron Woods” blame the elves for the destruction of the forests wrought by the recently defeated Corrupt. They claim the Elves have no right to rule and that the unicorns will smite them for this. They are currently replanting one of the worst areas of corruption and encouraging healthy growth. They can often be heard commenting that they cannot wait for Skarn to purge the elven taint from the land. This group is mostly Barkskins and Thorns. They are lead by a committee of like-minded individuals.

There is also the “Jetsam and Flotsam” group. This is a group of Dryads huddled on two boats named Jetsam and Flotsam who travel around the coast of the Continent searching for First Forest. This group is mostly Reeds and Spores. They are lead by a charismatic spore Dryad named Aman Gilly.

Author: Rob D