

While moseying through some deep, dark woods, the heroes get one heck of a burr in their collective backside. Use the Deadlands characters found on our Savage Website at www.peginc.com or make your own.

TIMBER!

About six months ago, a team of lumberjacks arrived on the scene—on orders from the Grace-Kitchener Timber Co., a local concern—and quickly erected a log cabin for their shelter. The team consisted of a foreman, a cook, and six seasoned treemen all thirsting for a big payday.

They weren't the only thirsty things in the vicinity. When the cook accidentally sliced his hand open unloading a crate of supplies, he thought nothing of bleeding onto the ground until bandages could be applied. But a strange seed had been carried by the wind and fallen on that spot. It drank deeply of the cook's blood... and sprouted at terrifying speed.

Soon a grove of dreaded blood oaks shot up all around the cabin, with the lumbermen none the wiser. About a week ago, the oaks killed everyone in a bloody massacre, excepting the cook and a single treecutter, who holed up in the cabin. The awful oaks, meanwhile, are parched for any blood they can find.

A POSSE RIDES IN...

Since this bloody little interlude fits anywhere you'd like to put it, Marshal, the motives of posses coming upon the scene vary quite a bit. If the heroes are hunting someone (or something), here's an opportunity to throw them a dripping red herring. With just a few tweaks, you can make it seem like the blood oaks' awful handiwork was committed by whomever (or whatever) the posse is really after.

On the other hand, a traveler might just happen upon the cabin with no preconceived notions besides the hunt for shelter. In that case, a successful Survival roll to find shelter leads a woodsman to the cabin's front door.

No matter the circumstances, try to keep the blood oaks' true nature hidden for as long as it's feasible. The trees are possessed of a devious, diabolical intelligence, and they're not interested in getting chopped down or blown up. They'd like their new prey to get nice and comfortable before the big feast.

CABIN FEVER

The log cabin is barely visible from the trail the posse's traveling. It's a small dwelling, about 15 by 15 feet with a sod roof, a front and back door, a small root cellar under the back corner of the cabin, and an outhouse about 25 paces from the cabin's back door. The cabin has no windows.

Knocking on either door—both of which are barred from within—or shouting yields no reply. What seems sturdy from outside, though, is actually pretty flimsy; both doors have Toughness 5 for purposes of breaking them down with a successful Strength roll or by some other method.

A hero who scrutinizes the immediate area around the cabin and succeeds on a Notice roll becomes aware that the towering oaks all around the cabin sport wicked thorns. Common Knowledge rolls by those with the proper backgrounds fail to identify the trees' species, though they are mixed with other, mundane specimens. The blood oaks take no action (yet) unless their lives are in immediate danger.

GONE LOCO

Inside the cabin crouch the last two survivors of the blood oak massacre: Abner Harkness (the cook) and a lumberjack known as Osvaldo. If the posse manages the break into the cabin and find these two, they throw their axes to the floor and beg for mercy.

Unfortunately, Abner is completely insane and delusional. He witnessed the whole massacre, and it drove him right over the brink. He agrees to any suggestion the heroes make about what caused the mayhem. Other than that, he spouts nonsense and wild ravings having nothing to do with the trees.

Osvaldo was hiding in the root cellar during the attack, and saw nothing. He speaks Spanish and very little English. Both men are considered Walking Wounded due to extreme hunger.

Abner, the Cook: Extra. Use Townsfolk stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*. Abner has the Delusional (Major) Hindrance.

Osvaldo: Extra. Use Townsfolk stats in the *Deadlands Marshal's Handbook*, but add Str d8.



GROVE O' DEATH

Eventually, curious heroes start poking around a little more closely to figure out just what happened. A Notice roll (-2) among the odd, thorny trees reveals dry, crumbling corpses and bones in the underbrush. As soon as their true nature is discovered (or strongly suspected), the oaks attack. Luckily, the blood oaks can't move, because they're one Hell of a dangerous abomination.

Mature Blood Oak (1): See below.

Adolescent Blood Oaks (2): See below.

Blood Oak Saplings (1 per hero): See below.

BLOOD OAK, MATURE

This abomination is a dense, hardwood tree that was once found solely in the forests of Wisconsin, Michigan, and Minnesota. Its seeds have spread, though, so it's now found all across the Union and Canada.

The tree shares characteristics of oaks, maples... and vampires. Its bark and leaves resemble those of an oak, but it spreads seeds with whirligigs, not unlike a maple. Those seeds can only take root in a dead (or dying) human being, making blood oaks most common around graveyards and battlefields. They grow about five times as quickly as a mundane oak.

The blood oak's sap is a thick, viscous red fluid—okay, it's really blood—apparently pumped from the corpse from which its roots feed. Though they remain rooted to one spot, blood oaks are capable of moving their limbs startlingly fast to snare prey.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12+4, Vigor d12+2

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6

Pace: 0; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 21 (4)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +4:** The blood oak's hard bark and wood make it difficult to harm.
- **Branch Swat:** Str+d10, Reach 2. The blood oak's bark and limbs are covered with huge, sword-like thorns. On a raise, the victim is impaled on a thorn, suffers an extra 1d6 damage, and is grappled.
- **Fear (-2):** Once its true nature is recognized, the blood oak provokes a Guts check (-2) from everyone who sees it.
- **Huge:** Attack rolls to hit a mature blood oak are made at +4.
- **Seed Spawn:** As an action, the blood oak may sow its seeds upon an Incapacitated or dead character within a Large Burst Template of its trunk. Incapacitated victims must succeed on a Vigor roll (with appropriate wound penalties) each round or be killed by the swift-rooting seeds.
- **Size +8:** A mature blood oak grows as massive as its mundane cousins.

BACK WITH A VENGEANCE!



OUT NOW!

BLOOD OAK, ADOLESCENT

Adolescent blood oaks grow in groves close by their larger relatives.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d12+2, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6

Pace: 0; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 17 (3)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +3:** The blood oak's hard bark and wood make it difficult to harm.
- **Branch Swat:** Str+d8, Reach 1. On a raise, the victim is impaled on a thorn, suffers an extra 1d6 damage, and is grappled.
- **Fear (-2):** Once its true nature is recognized, the blood oak provokes a Guts check (-2) from everyone who sees it.
- **Large:** Attack rolls to hit a mature blood oak are made at +2.
- **Seed Spawn:** As an action, the blood oak may sow its seeds upon an Incapacitated or dead character within a Large Burst Template of its trunk. Incapacitated victims must succeed on a Vigor roll (with appropriate wound penalties) each round or be killed by the swift-rooting seeds.
- **Size +6:** Adolescent blood oaks aren't quite as massive as their mature relatives.

BLOOD OAK, SAPLING

Blood oak saplings still grow quite tall, towering over the heads of most people. They tend to attack in concert, multiplying the danger they present.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d4, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6

Pace: 0; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 11 (2)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** The blood oak's hard bark and wood make it difficult to harm.
- **Branch Swat:** Str+d6. On a raise, the victim is impaled on a thorn, suffers an extra 1d6 damage, and is grappled.
- **Fear (-2):** Once its true nature is recognized, the blood oak provokes a Guts check (-2) from everyone who sees it.
- **Seed Spawn:** As an action, the blood oak may sow its seeds upon an Incapacitated or dead character within a Large Burst Template of its trunk. Incapacitated victims must succeed on a Vigor roll (with appropriate wound penalties) each round or be killed by the swift-rooting seeds.
- **Size +3:** A blood oak sapling, though smaller than its fellows, still towers over a human being.

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