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Advanced Dungeons & Dragons™



STORYBOOK

The Forest of Enchantment



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The Forest of Enchantment

An ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS™

Story by Bob Stine

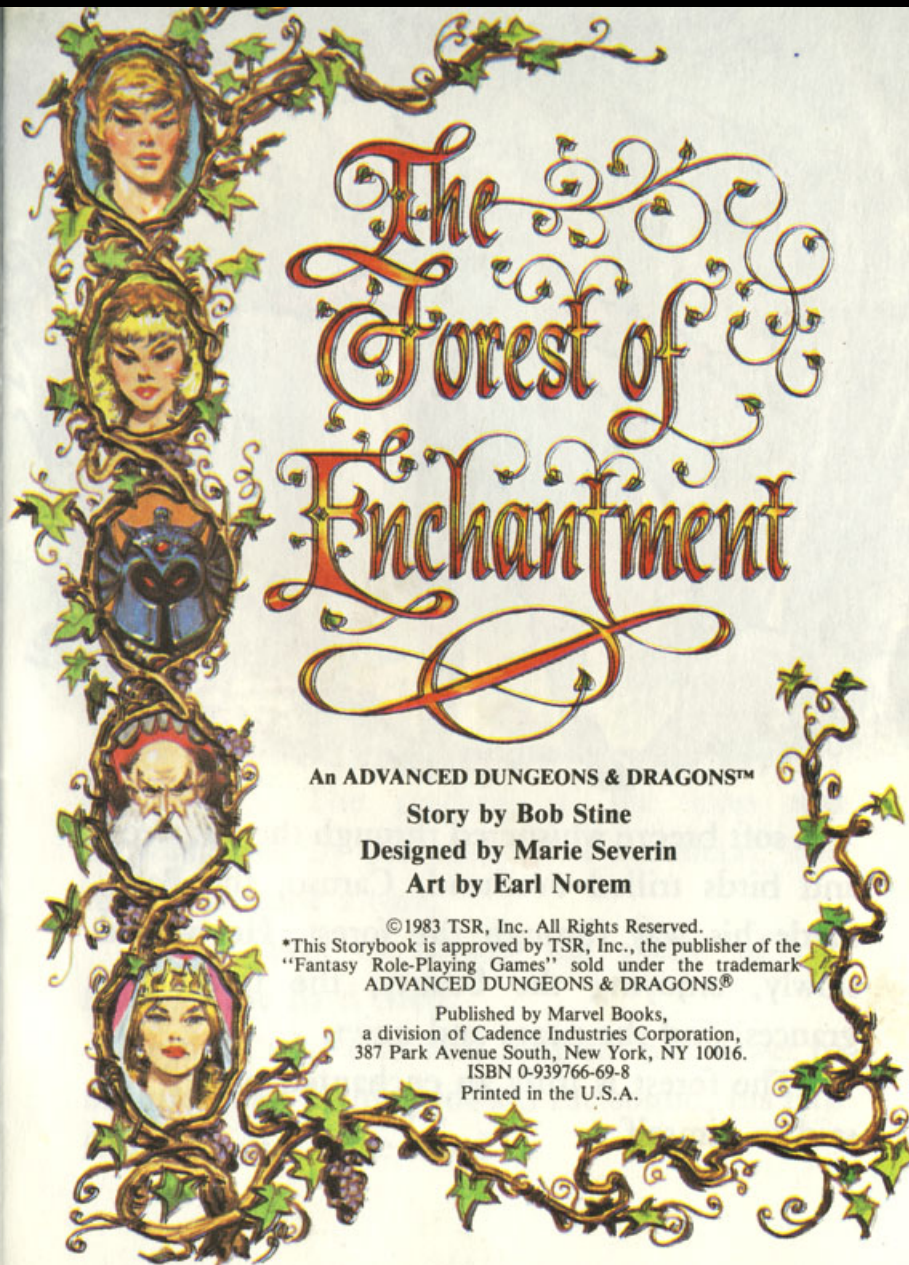
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A soft breeze whispered through the tall trees, and birds trilled overhead. Caruso, the Bard, made his way through the forest. He walked slowly, enjoying the beauty, the forest fragrances, and the peace and quiet.

“The forest is truly an enchanted place,” he said to himself.



But Caruso's pleasant thoughts were suddenly interrupted. The rustling of the trees was drowned out by the rumble of footsteps. The rumble became a roar.

“Who dares to invade the peace of the forest?” the Bard cried.

He didn't have to wait long for an answer to his question. Turning toward the sound, his face froze in terror as he faced . . .



LIZARD MEN!

An army of lizard men!

“What evil magic is this?” Caruso cried. He turned to run, but the hideous soldiers had surrounded him. They quickly moved in for the kill.

Caruso carried no weapons this day, but he had his lute. Caruso’s music has magic in it. When he plays, everything—even the enemy—stops to listen. Caruso raised the instrument to his shoulder and played. The music floated into the air...



...And the lizard men stopped to listen, entranced by Caruso’s music!

“The charm worked!” Caruso thought. “But now I must flee the forest quickly. The spell will last for only a minute, and this evil army will spring back to life and attack again.”

Caruso kept playing his lute as he quickly made his way through the forest and away from the lizard men. He listened for footsteps, but the lizard men did not follow.



At the edge of the forest, Caruso found the beautiful Druid, Filaree. “Caruso, you look as if you have seen a ghost!” Filaree said.

“Worse!” Caruso cried, catching his breath. He told her of the army of lizard men and their attack. “Who has summoned this monstrous army?” he asked her. “And what evil plans have they brought to the forest?”



“I do not know,” Filaree told him. “But there is one who knows all that happens in this kingdom—both good and evil. I will go to him for the answers to our questions.”

“Hide yourself, Caruso!” she said. “I shall return again by nightfall.”

Filaree used her magic, and turned herself into an eagle, and flew off into the sun.





Her destination was the Thieves' Guild Hall, where she knew she could find the good thief, Figgen! Filaree flew in through the window and circled the great hall until she spotted Figgen.

"I believe I have seen this beautiful eagle before," Figgen said, a wide grin creasing his wily face. "Change form, Madam, that we may converse."

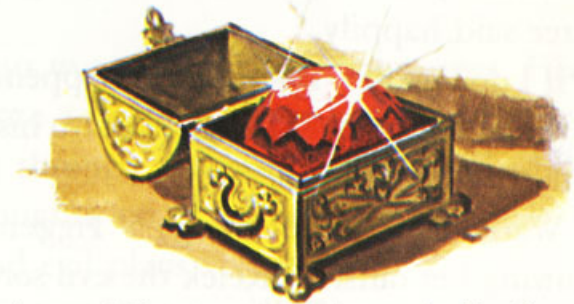
Filaree quickly returned to human form and sat close to Figgen. "I have come because I know you have information I seek," she said.



"Figgen, can you tell me why an army of lizard men has invaded the forest?"

"I can even tell you why a caterpillar chooses one leaf and not another," the thief replied. "For I know all that happens in the forest and outside it. The lizard men are in the hire of none other than Warduke."

"Warduke!" cried Filaree. "And what evil plan has brought him to the woods? He's only interested in conquest and treasure!"



"The Princess Mirra crosses through the forest tomorrow morning," Figgen said. He whispered so that other thieves would not hear. "She carries the Ruby of the Seven Suns. Warduke plans to kidnap the princess—and take the ruby for himself."



“I *knew* you could answer my questions,” Filaree said happily.

“If I don’t know it—it hasn’t happened,” the old thief boasted, and turned back to his friends.

Filaree walked to the door.

“Wait—one more thing,” Figgen called, following her outside. “Kelek the evil sorcerer has brought *his* dark magic to the forest. He, too, is in the employ of Warduke.”

“Warduke, with his army and Kelek with his magic! That makes for powerful foes,” Filaree exclaimed, the worry showing on her beautiful face.



The sun was setting behind the trees. Filaree turned into a deer and leapt out into the forest. Running through the woods, her mind whirred with thoughts of Warduke, Kelek, their evil army, and evil plans.

“They must be stopped! They must!” she told herself. “With a ruby of that value, Warduke could buy an army that no one could stop! He would soon rule the kingdom! The Princess Mirra—and her precious ruby—must pass through the forest safely. Caruso and I will see to that!”



Filaree had no way of knowing that Caruso had his *own* problems at that moment.

Hearing the rustle of dried leaves on the forest floor, Caruso stepped out from behind the thick shrub where he had been hiding. “Filaree?” he cried.

He stared into the evil faces of Warduke and Kelek!



“Ha ha! So this is the worm that has been crawling around the forest!” Warduke cried, his face twisted into an evil sneer. “I am sorry, Bard, but we have no choice but to stamp you out.”

Caruso raised his lute to his shoulder and began to play the notes that would stop his foes...

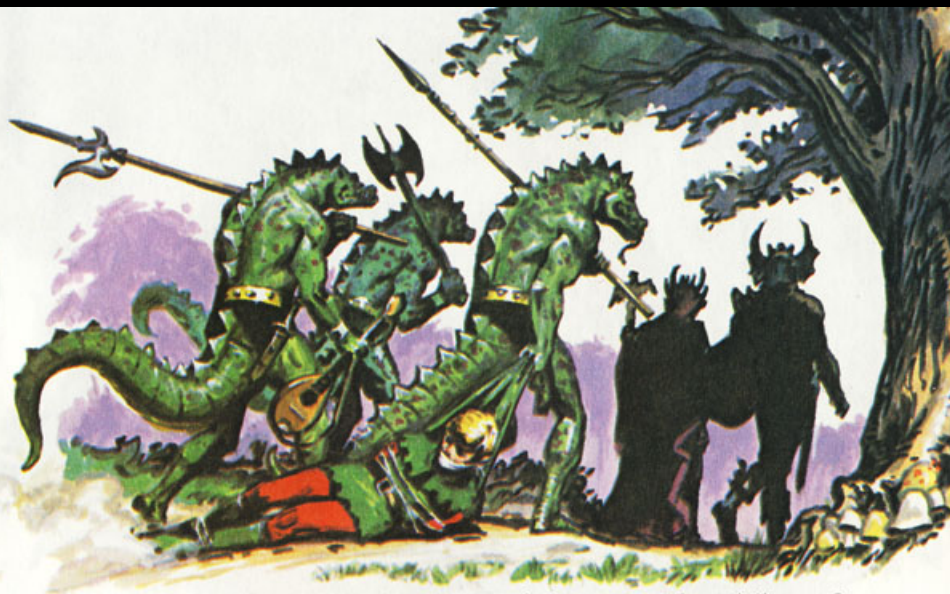


...But the notes never came.

The evil sorcerer Kelek was too quick for Caruso. He cast a spell that froze Caruso to the spot.

Caruso couldn't move. He couldn't play his lute. He could not sing.

"He is helpless. Take him prisoner!" Warduke commanded.



"Why not kill him?" Kelek argued. "The effects of the spell will soon wear off. We have no time for prisoners. The princess comes through the forest at sunup."

"Did you hear him call out 'Filaree'?" Warduke asked. "He expects the Druid. We will keep him alive to draw her to us. When she appears, we will kill them both!"

Caruso was gagged, and his arms and legs were bound. He was dragged to Warduke's camp. There, Foxfingers, the evil thief, was ordered to guard him.



Later, the spell began to wear off.

“Where is Filaree?” Caruso thought. He struggled to work the gag down off his mouth so that he could sing out a spell. He kept his head down low so that Foxfingers couldn’t see his efforts.

“Will they capture Filaree too?” Caruso wondered. “Why doesn’t she return?”

He didn’t notice the deer standing by a nearby tree, a deer that was staring at him intently.



“I can’t help Caruso now,” Filaree told herself. “If I show myself, I’ll be captured too.”

She decided to wait until sunup. So Filaree cast a magical spell and turned herself into a tree. There, unnoticed she watched over Caruso and his captors through the long night.





Foxfingers proved a better thief than a guard. He fell asleep while the moon was still high in the sky.

This gave Caruso the chance to work on the gag that covered his mouth. He struggled for hours, rubbing his head against the ground, until at last his mouth was freed.

Caruso knew well the song a Bard can sing to charm an enemy into feeling friendly. Just as the morning sun began to peek through the forest trees, Foxfingers awoke. . .



. . .And he was greeted by Caruso's magical melody.

The song made Foxfingers feel warmth and friendship toward Caruso.

"Let me go—quickly," Caruso ordered.

The thief obliged. Caruso jumped to his feet. He looked around the camp for a place to hide. But there was no need to hide. Warduke and his henchmen had other matters on their minds.



A horseman came riding up to the camp.

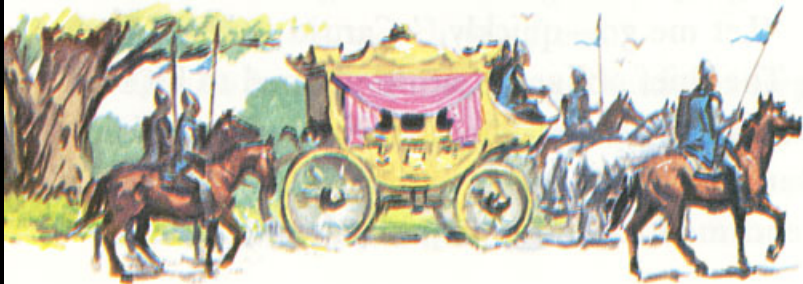
“The princess and her party have entered the forest!” he cried.

“And how big is her protective force?” Warduke asked, strapping on his broadsword.

“Only six men!” the horseman informed him.

“An army of six to protect the Ruby of the Seven Suns?” Warduke cried in astonishment.

“Ha ha! We have won before we even begin!”



Meanwhile, unaware of the dangers that awaited her, the Princess Mirra teased her handmaiden Bess inside the carriage that carried them deeper into the forest.

The Princess held the Ruby of the Seven Suns in her small hand. “Go ahead, Bess,” she urged. “Hold it.”

The young serving girl was too nervous to hold the priceless gem. She dropped it onto the floor of the carriage. The two young women scrambled around on the floor for it.



“What’s wrong with you, Bess? Don’t be so uneasy,” Princess Mirra scolded.

“But, Princess—I beg of you,” Bess protested. “Return the jewel to its case. It is not a plaything. Brave warriors have killed to keep possession of the ruby. They did not fight so you could use it as a toy!”

“Bess, it is *not* your place to scold me,” the princess protested. “It is *my* jewel, after all. And what could possibly happen out here in the wilderness?”



Not far away, Warduke’s campground emptied as his men prepared to attack. “The princess will be here in moments!” Kelek cried.

“And just as quickly, the jewel will be mine,” Warduke said gleefully. “Prepare to attack! The one to bring me the ruby will receive a special reward!” Warduke called to his soldiers.

But Warduke’s plans were interrupted. . .



... For the tree that stood a few yards from Warduke began to change shape—until it became the shape of Filaree.

“Filaree! There you are!” cried Caruso, running out to greet her.

“Yes, I am here,” Filaree said, tossing back her head defiantly. “I am here to stop you, Warduke!”



Warduke got over his surprise quickly. “You will not interfere with my plans!” he cried angrily. “You and your Bard companion will watch my triumph! It will be the last thing you will ever see!”

The evil warrior called to Kelek. “Quick—a spell! Do not let this foolish Druid act!”

Caruso and Filaree took a step back as Kelek came forward...



But Filaree acted first. "Stand back!" she cried to Caruso.

Kelek raised his arms to begin a spell. But he was too late.

Filaree cast a Plant Growth spell.

Weeds sprouted from the ground. Bushes flowered and bulged. Trees began to grow...

... And grow and grow!

As she and Caruso watched, the forest grew before their eyes. Thicker and taller the forest became, until it trapped and tangled Warduke and all of his men. All were imprisoned by the trees. All were trapped by the weeds and tall shrubs, which continued to grow until the evil-doers nearly disappeared from view.



“We must get out!” Warduke cried, hacking away at the trees that imprisoned him, his sword not making a dent as he swung again and again.

All around him, his soldiers struggled to free themselves from the twisted, tangled forest prison that had grown in seconds. The terrified cries of the soldiers drowned out Warduke’s calls to action.

Filaree’s forest held them all as tightly as a cage.



“What is that up ahead?” Princess Mirra called, looking out her carriage window.

She called to her driver to stop. “The forest seems impassable in that spot, your Highness,” the driver called down.

“Well, go around it then,” the princess ordered. “I’ve never seen a forest grow so thick and dark!”



The carriage turned and headed off to the west. Soon it would find the path again. Soon it would carry the Princess—and her prized jewel—to their destination.

“Quite an exciting trip, Bess?” Mirra asked with a yawn.



She received no reply. Bess had fallen asleep.

“Ha ha! It will take them days to hack their way out!” Caruso laughed.

“Kelek will soon get over his shock and realize that he can dispel the magic even though he is trapped in the trees,” Filaree warned. “So we cannot spend any more time enjoying our victory. We must flee!”

With the angry, frightened cries of Warduke and his men in their ears, Filaree bade Caruso farewell and walked up to an oak tree and stepped inside.



Caruso took Filaree's advice and ran quickly to the other side of the forest, many miles away. There all was quiet. A soft breeze rustled the leaves overhead, and a chickadee chirped its sweet song.

Caruso walked deeper into the trees, enjoying the warm air and soft fragrances. "The forest is truly an enchanted place," he told himself. And he disappeared between two ancient, knotted oak trees.



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