

Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

I wrote Gaunt Willow while sitting on a bench, waiting for a ferry to Catalina island. I'd be willing to bet good money that I was the only person in the terminal who packed a D&D PHB and MM for the trip. I really hope I got Gaunt Willow's stat block right. In this week's podcast I'll address some of the design challenges. Do be sure to give the podcast a listen and let me know what you think. You can also send an e-mail to Christian@IridiaZine.net.

Until next time, Christian

Gaunt Willow

world of greyhawk

"Get out of my woods, all of you!"

Gaunt Willow

Tired of the savage warfare that has spoiled his home, Gaunt Willow has claimed a section of the Vesse as his own and allows no one to enter. Those who do intrude are either asked to leave, subdued with magic, or driven into the ground like a stake. Gaunt Willow simply wants to be left alone so that he can tend to the trees and vegetation that have been savaged by years of war.

Gaunt Willow is unique among his kind in that he is able to cast wizard spells. One day while patrolling his grove, Gaunt Willow discovered the body of an elf. He searched the body and soon discovered a spell book. Because of his own magical nature, Gaunt Willow was able to make sense of the arcane writing. He studied the spell book for months and was eventually able to cast a few of the spells. After thoughtful consideration, Gaunt Willow decided to summon a familiar, a large owl that roosts in his branches.

Gaunt Willow's domain is 5 square miles. Any humanoids found within his territory will be destroyed without hesitation. (See the next paragraph for tactics.) If Gaunt Willow encounters humans, he will often cast *Sleep* or misleading illusion spells to peacefully remove them from his woods. (Sleeping victims will awake unharmed a few miles away.) Elves are politely, yet firmly, asked to leave the area. It's not that he dislikes humans and elves, it's just that he refuses to allow any more battles to take place in his home. Gaunt Willow cannot be enlisted to fight against Iuz. If pressed, he will grow irritable. As Gaunt Willow gets more upset, the fireflies that nest within his eyes and mouth will take flight. This spectacle looks for all the world like a shower of sparks and is quite an unsettling sight.

In combat, Gaunt Willow is fond of ambush tactics. After his owl familiar informs Gaunt Willow of where hostile intruders are, the treant will animate two trees. These two trees are then placed in an optimal position for surprise slam attacks. After the animated trees complete their attacks, Gaunt Willow will then pound any survivors.

In a role-playing encounter, a DM could use Gaunt Willow to show how some forest creatures are tired of war and want nothing to do with it any longer. Even though characters might try to persuade Gaunt Willow to leave his grove to fight humanoids, the treant will not leave under any circumstance. Instead, PCs might use Gaunt Willow's xenophobia for their own benefit by leading a group of humanoids into his domain. This cynical manipulation of a treant might bother some, but it could also be a good way to demonstrate the tough choices that must be made in war.

On the next page are stat blocks for Gaunt Willow, his familiar and an animated tree.

Gaunt Willow, treant Wiz3

Huge Plant
HD: 7d8+35 (treant) + 3d4 (wizard)
Hit Points: 72
Initiative: -1
Speed: 30 ft.
AC: 20 (-2 size, -1 Dex, +13 natural), touch 7, flat footed 20
Base Attack/Grapple: +5/+22
Attack: Slam +12 melee (2d6+9)
Full Attack: 2 slams +12 melee (2d6+9)
Space Reach: 15 ft/15 ft
Special Attacks: Animate trees, double damage against objects, spells (see below), trample 2d6+3
Spells (4/3/1; save DC 11 + spell level, 0% arcane spell failure chance): 0-*Dancing Lights* x2, *Ghost Sounds*, *Message*; 1-*Silent Image*, *Sleep* x2; 2-*Summon Swarm*
Special Qualities: Damage Reduction 10/slashing, low-light vision, plant traits, vulnerability to fire
Saves: Fort +11, Ref +2, Will +10
Abilities: Str 29 (+9), Dex 8 (-1), Con 21 (+5), Int 12 (+1), Wis 16 (+3), Cha 12 (+1)
Skills: Concentration +8, Diplomacy +3, Hide -9 (+16 in forest), Intimidate +6, Knowledge (arcane) +4, Knowledge (nature) +6, Listen +8, Sense Motive +8, Spellcraft +4, Spot +8 (+11 in shadows), Survival +8 (+10 aboveground)
Feats: Eschew Materials, Improved Sunder, Iron Will, Power Attack, Scribe Scroll
CR: 11
Alignment: N
ECL: 15

See Monster Manual pages 244-245 for more information on the treant. I suggest that an encounter with Gaunt Willow, two animated trees and his familiar would have an EL of 13.

Animated Tree

Huge Plant
HD: 7d8+35
Hit Points: 66
Initiative: -1
Speed: 10 ft.
AC: 20 (-2 size, -1 Dex, +13 natural), touch 7, flat footed 20
Base Attack/Grapple: +5/+22
Attack: Slam +12 melee (2d6+9)
Full Attack: 2 slams +12 melee (2d6+9)
Space Reach: 15 ft/15 ft
Special Attacks: Double damage against objects, trample 2d6+3
Special Qualities: Damage Reduction 10/slashing, low-light vision, plant traits, vulnerability to fire
Saves: Fort +11, Ref +2, Will +8
Abilities: Str 29 (+9), Dex 8 (-1), Con 21 (+5), Int 12 (+1), Wis 16 (+3), Cha 12 (+1)
Skills: Hide -9 (+16 in forest), Listen +8, Spot +8
Feats: Improved Sunder, Power Attack
CR: 8
Alignment: N

Owl Familiar

Magical Beast
Hit Dice: 1d8
Hit Points: 36
Initiative: +3
Speed: 10 ft., fly 40 ft. (average)
Armor Class: 19 (+2 size, +3 Dex, +4 natural), touch 15, flat-footed 14
Base Attack/Grapple: +0/-11
Attack: Talons +10 melee (1d4-3)
Space/Reach: 2 1/2 ft./0 ft.
Special Qualities: Low-light Vision, Familiar Abilities, Improved Evasion, Share Spells, Empathetic Link, Deliver Touch Spells
Saves: Fort +11, Ref +5, Will +10
Abilities: Str 4 (-3), Dex 17 (+3), Con 10, Int 7 (-2), Wis 14 (+2), Cha 4 (-3)
Skills: Listen +14, Move Silently +17, Spot +6 (+8 in shadow)
Feats: Weapon Finesse
CR: 2
Alignment: N



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