



HALF-DRYAD

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FOR AS LONG AS ILLANARA COULD REMEMBER, HER parents had been in love: her mother, cloaked in leaves, a fey child of the forest, and her father, a huntsman from a distant land, far beyond the confines of their home. An unlikely pair, they'd met under the summer moon over two decades ago. She'd found him stuck in the iron jaws of one of his own traps, half dead, and nursed him back to health. He's had a limp ever since, but it's been worse lately. Much worse. Illanara had taken over the hunting duties weeks ago. Her father could hardly rise to drink water, let alone search for game.

"Is this a sickness?" She'd asked him.

"No," her father muttered. "Just old age."

And her mother was spending more and more time hidden in the veil of the trees.

"Are you no longer in love? You've been going away so long lately." Illanara asked her.

Her mother smiled, but it seemed somehow sad to Illanara, in a way she couldn't understand. When she spoke, her voice was like music. "That's just it, Illanara, I'm still very much in love. I cannot bear to see him pass beyond my sight."

Illanara thought for a moment. Then she said, "Couldn't we bind him to the trees, like you?"

Her mother shook her head. "No, my child, that is not what he wants. He wishes to remain human, and to be buried in human lands."

"But you can't—" Illanara fell silent, realization washing over her. She had to be the one to carry him back home. "I can't leave you here alone." She said, finally.

Again that sad smile. "I won't be alone." Her mother said. "You and he will always be with me. My duty is to this place, and my true love found me—but your love lies elsewhere. It is now your duty to go and find it."

Before Illanara could respond, her mother stepped into the veil, but her voice still carried on the wind. "Bear your father's body to his homeland. Show the world what love has accomplished here. Be its ambassador, its example, and its protector."

Half-dryads, also called sproutlings, are the offspring of dryad fey and their humanoid lovers, typically acetic druids who forswore the cold comforts of civilization for the dizzying freedom of the wilds. As such, the sproutling's home is made wherever their mother's bonded tree resides—within the forests, glades, and jungles of the world. Half-dryads, being the result of intense love affairs, are exceedingly rare; no two are alike, though many have an innate tendency toward romance, having witnessed firsthand their parents' love for one another. It could be said that such sproutlings love love in all its forms, and are constantly searching for (and spreading) the kindness and sublime feeling of it.

## CHILDREN OF SPRING

Because dryads are protectors of the forest and bound to the livelihood of a single tree, they seldom come into contact with humanoid creatures—and when they do, it often ends in conflict over the forest's safety. To dryads, most humanoids are little better than locusts, consuming everything along their "path of progress"; and to humanoids, dryads are beguiling, vengeful creatures that are best avoided at all costs.

How, then, is love possible?

As with all great love stories, it begins with a chance encounter: a huntsman, believing his bow is aimed at a monster, lowers his weapon when he hears a melodic voice kiss his ears. A dryad discovers a wandering druid in her grove, and follows them out of curiosity, having never seen such a creature. Though the details vary, the theme remains the same: where the weed of fear is torn, radical love emerges. Sproutlings are the manifestation of that love. They are the bridge between two worlds, living symbols that prove the age old adage, "love conquers all."

## HONOR THE FOREST

Sproutlings are born with a strong connection to their mother's forest, though they are not bound by magic to dwell there forever. To honor their birthplace, sproutlings often weave native flora into their own hair (either manually or with a touch of fey-born magic). Some sproutlings even form a bond with a particular bird or small mammal and allow them to nest in their hair!

## THE DARK SIDE OF THE HEART

Though a half-dryad is most often born of love, there is a darker alternative: the dryad mother, if cursed by an archfey, may pass on a part of the curse to her child. In such cases, the child's health is tied to that of the mother's tree; should the tree ever be destroyed, both mother and child would suffer. Sproutlings born of the archfey's curse tend to stay closer to home than others, forgoing their humanoid freedom to aid their mother in the forest's protection. Quests of vengeance, too, are not uncommon: a dryad may have a child not out of love, but out of a vicarious desire for freedom and revenge, and groom them into a fierce warrior for that expressed purpose. Such warrior offspring are often tasked with or assume the mantle of seeking out and ending their mother's curse (and therefore their own), as well as slaying the archfey responsible for it.

## OUT OF THE FOREST, INTO THE WORLD

The half-dryads that leave the protection of their mother's forest usually do so to seek out the love of their life, whether it be a person, a place, or greater calling. Across their travels, they spread their natural light to even the dimmest corners of the world. Though confronted with the cynicism of civilization on a daily basis, sproutlings are implacable optimists—even the ones born of the archfey's curse possess an innate, and often charming, naivety.

## HALF-DRYAD NAMES

Half-dryads typically have a Sylvan name as well as either a Common or Elvish one. Sylvan names are universally given by their dryad parent, but is often left as a private name for use within the family. Such names are often evocative of beautiful moments in nature, like a flower in a dappled sunbeam, and tend to share meaning between the half-dryad's parents. Their Common or Elvish public names are more run of the mill, and are dependent on whatever local culture they were raised in outside of the home.

**Sylvan Names:** Asmaiiel, Celya, Ehtra, Hérien, Merilien, Náríma, Sirathil, Siyonryn, Talaimor, Yste

### CREATING YOUR HALF-DRYAD

When creating your half-dryad, use these traits as a guide, rather than a rule. A half-dryad's fey lineage is reflected in its Natural Magic and Tree Step traits, while the individualistic nature of their upbringing—be it from a place of love or vengeance—is reflected in the flexibility of their Alignment trait. In the instance of the sproutling being groomed for battle, increase your Strength score by 2 instead of Wisdom, and replace the druidcraft cantrip with *true strike*. Finally, a sproutling's language may change depending on the humanoid parent: you may replace the Elvish language with another language of your choice.

Lastly, when you select this race, you can choose to be Small, instead of Medium.

## HALF-DRYAD TRAITS

Your half-dryad character has a number of traits common with all other sproutlings.

**Ability Score Increase.** Your Wisdom score increases by 2, and one other ability score of your choice increases by 1.

**Age.** Half-dryads mature at the same rate humans do and reach adulthood around the age of 20. They live about half again as long as humans, however, often reaching over 120 years old.

**Alignment.** Like most humanoids, half-dryads are as likely to be good as they are to be evil. Half-dryads raised by dryad mothers may trend towards chaotic, whereas those raised by their other parents, especially those of neighboring druidic circles, may have more lawful leanings.

**Size.** Half-dryads typically have fair and slender human builds. Your size is Medium.

**Speed.** Your base walking speed is 30 feet.

**Darkvision.** Thanks to your sylvan lineage, you have superior vision in dark and dim conditions. You can see in dim light within 60 feet of you as if it were bright light, and in darkness as if it were dim light. You can't discern color in darkness, only shades of gray.

**Fey Ancestry.** You have advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put you to sleep.

**Forest Speech.** You have the ability to communicate with beasts and plants to a limited extent. They can understand the literal meaning of your words, although you have no special ability to understand them in return.

**Natural Magic.** You know the *druidcraft* cantrip. Wisdom is your spellcasting ability for it.

**Tree Step.** You can use 5 feet of movement on your turn to magically step into one living tree within your reach. You instantly know the location of all other living trees within 60 feet of you, before emerging from one of them of your choice. You appear in an unoccupied space within 5 feet of the new tree. Both trees must be Large or bigger. Once you've used this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.

**Languages.** You can speak, read, and write Common, Elvish, and Sylvan.