

Lost in the Silent Forest

Cast:

Ruther – Level 5 Wolf Barbarian. Superstitious about the supernatural and magic as whole. Hates all magic that doesn't come from his allies.

Calvin – Level 5 Bat Ranger. Cocky when it comes to plant and wildlife. As far as the party knows, he can back up said snark too.

Fonne – Level 5 Fennec Fox Alchemist. A well-rounded and good-natured experimenter. Tries to have a potion flask for nearly every obstacle.

Pierce – Level 5 Deer Druid. A wise forest dweller who can make many wild plants or animals love him. Absentmindedly, says certain things in Druidic, confusing his party members.

Saffron – Level 5 Rabbit Bard. Has the most wits and a highly effective silver tongue. He strives to live a glorious life and write epic poems for himself and all of his fellow party members.

Chapter 2

Suspicious Trail

Bolstered and encouraged by Karby's information, the party would finally reach the rough location the rat merchant mentioned. They all dismounted off their mounts and sat down to make a gameplan.

"So, you're sure it's this spot exactly Pierce?" Fonne surveyed over the land again. It was nothing but rolling hills with a few groups of trees dotting the area.

The white deer walked up to survey the land too. "Yep! This is the place where things feel the most [Druidic]... Err, off."

Saffron would walk over to the two and survey with them. "Well... Two things are true. This is a big inconspicuous trail and Pierce's instincts are rarely wrong."

Saffron's Perception Check: Successful

Saffron closed his eyes and breathed in deeply... Yeah, there was definitely something wrong with this part of the trail. "Yeah, Pierce is right..." He turned back to everyone and spoke, "... Alrighty. There's something off about this space. I say we all check for arcana, the forest may be invisible."

"Wow! I could not have guessed! The magic forest is magically hidden by magic. Who could have guessed?"

Saffron shot daggers at Calvin. The silver bat had a smug face the entire ride here and it irked Saffron to the highest degree. He got a lucky break with an ominous rat merchant and now thought he was *better* than everyone.

Saffron walked up and confronted the ranger. "Okay Mr. Know-It-All Ranger. Why don't you use that "superior" intellect of yours to find the entrance? Since you're **the best** adventurer on the planet, it should be a cinch for you to do."

Calvin kept his smile. "Of course, dear team leader. I shall do all of your hard work for you. I won't even need you to cast Bardic Inspiration~"

Ruther split the two apart. "Come on you two. Now's not the time to be doing this. We're burning daylight."

Pierce quickly turned to the wolf. “Aha! Ruther is right! The Druid saying is “[Druidic]” or “Never walk an unfriendly forest at night.” We should hurry and find the magic entrance.”

Saffron leaned off Ruther. “Yeah... You guys are right. Let’s just do the search.”

Calvin would also lean off Ruther. He kept his smug aura and wordlessly walked to another part of the trail nearby. Saffron merely rolled his eyes at the action and broke off to search himself.

Ruther’s Arcana Check: Fail

Calvin’s Arcana Check: Fail

Fonne’s Arcana Check: Fail

Pierce’s Arcana Check: Fail

Saffron’s Arcana Check: Success

After a few minutes scouting, the party met back up on the trail again. Ruther and Pierce looked downtrodden, Fonne also looked a bit sad, and Calvin came back with a scowl and an annoyed look.

Fonne would break the air of disappointment surrounding the group. “Soo... I guess we all didn’t find a magical entrance?”

Ruther merely shrugged in response. “Me and Pierce searched all around our area and found nothing.”

Calvin rolled his eyes. “Of course, none of you would be able to find it. It’s a magical hidden forest for a reason. I’m pretty sure if the entrance was that easy to find, other people besides Karby would have found it by now.”

Pierce piped up with an idea. “Maybe I could use my magic to look! It is still a forest after all!”

“I’m against that idea Pierce.”

“Why’s that?” The deer gave the bat a confused look.

Fonne spoke up before Calvin could. “Well, if what Karby’s said about the difficulty of the Silent Forest was true, then saving our spells for the real conflict would be very necessary.”

“PRECISELY! Thank you for understanding Fonne.” Calvin gave the fennec a smile, one he gladly returned back...

Calvin's Will Check: Fail

For a brief moment, time seemed to slow down for Calvin again. Karby... That trustworthy rat... An unknowable mystery hidden under that face of his... There's no way his master could be wrong...

Fonne snapped the ranger out of his trance with his fingers. “Calvin? Calvin? You good bro?”

Calvin shook his head at the sound. It was loud and annoying but sounded too important to ignore. “...Hmh~ Hah?”

“I asked if you're okay. You just, kind of, tapped out there. It was kind of weird.”

Calvin looked at fennec quizzically. He didn't tap out! It was just him pondering about the rat that helped them! That wasn't bad nor weird! “It's not weird to be thinking about the helpful rat that got us here.”

“Karby?”

“Y-Yeah... Kar~”

Calvin's Will Check: Successful

Calvin began to feel time slow down again... The incoming silence and visions of Karby crept in his mind again... Alas! Now was not the time to be thinking about him. “You know what? Probably best if we don't say his name anymore. We got what we needed from him...”

Pierce would try to speak up about it, “Well, that's not very- ”

“MOVING ON! Now then, where's the damn rabbit? He should also be back from his search. There's nothing else near here.”

“You're right, I am done with my search...”

The group turned to see Saffron return to the clearing. Calvin's face immediately spawned a frown at the bard's smile. “... And I have learned something very nice.”

Saffron walked to the middle of where the party met up. “Turns out, this whole section IS the entrance! We’ve been standing on top of it the whole time!”

There was a brief silence before everyone reacted, “HUH!?”

“Yep! And it’s all thanks these orbs Calvin’s “generous friend” gave us.” Saffron gave the bat a side eye and a smug smile, drawing ire from him. However, the anger seemed a bit more venomous than normal.

Calvin felt livid. Not from the rabbit bard one-upping him but from his tone involving Karby. That rat was more than just a generous friend of his but also helped the party make it this far. Saffron needed to be more grateful to others like he was!

The silver bat opened his mouth to retort but was interrupted by Saffron pulling out his orb and pointing it towards the afternoon sun. The orb began glowing brighter to match the sun’s colors. A hum would begin pulsing from it. The entire scene grew mesmerizing. For a brief time, it seemed all sound had vanished. Only the pulse of orb breaking it...

Saffron would continue the show for a few more seconds before pulling the orb away from the light. Immediately, it dimmed to a softer color and brightness. The ambient sound of the clearing also seemed to return as well. “By having these orbs absorb the sun’s light and then look through it, you can start to see the forest being overlayed with this clearing.”

Saffron handed his orb to the other party members to see. Everyone was able to see the subtle changes in the environment and the large volume of trees hidden away.

Fonne would gasp in awe at the revelation. “Wow! Imagine the tier of magic it took to hide all of this!”

Ruther grumbled. “I personally don’t want to...” He gazed intently at Saffron. “Alrighty, all we have to do is point our orbs towards the sun and then shatter them right?”

Saffron nodded. “We know that Karby was telling the half truth at least. I still don’t trust that rat merchant, but his words are more than likely right. Everyone! Prepare your orbs!”

The group nodded in unison and brought out their orbs to point at the light...

Calvin’s Will Check: Fail

Soon, every one of the party's orbs were glowing the same hue. They all positioned themselves in a tight circle, holding the orbs in front of them. The air was thick with anticipation...

Saffron's Passive Perception Check: Success

Saffron breathed in deeply and looked at his teammates. All of them wore a look of determination and satisfaction. Their goals were in reach and upon this quest's completion they would be heralded as heroes and a 1st-Rate adventuring team! Everyone looked pumped and ready! Well... Everyone except Calvin... Saffron couldn't put his finger on it, but something seemed really wrong with the bat.

Calvin found it hard to focus on anything... He was surprised he even managed to charge his orb... Every thought he was having was always leading back to that precious, trustworthy, and sexy as fuck rat merchant... Never before had anything looked more appealing to him than that rat... Karby was so amazing~! His voice was so soothing~! He could hear it echo over everything! Well... Everything except for that annoying bard. He honestly wasn't caring what Saffron was saying at all. Nothing mattered anymore... Calvin just wanted to get this job done so he could go back to Karby... Go back to his master~

Calvin didn't even realize he had nodded to his teammate's questions. He didn't even feel his mouth move to speak. Whatever he said made them stop worrying too much about him. And that was all he could ever want...

"Okay everyone. We only get one shot at this..." Saffron breathed deeply again. Everyone else besides Calvin would as well. "On the count of 3."

"1... 2... 3!"

Ruther's Reflex Check: Success

Calvin's Reflex Check (Disadvantage + High DC): Critical Fail

Fonne's Reflex Check: Success

Pierce's Reflex Check: Success

Saffron's Reflex Check: Critical Success

A soft, blue magical circle began to surround the party. Sensing the cracking of the transportation orbs, the magic began to spiral and drift through the air. The humming of the orbs once had sung louder and more beautifully.

The party watched in awe as the environment began to shift from rolling hills to a more flat and forest-like biome. Ambient noises who were once hidden began to sing into everyone's ears. It was quite possibly the first time the group had witnessed any sort of magic being so beautiful. Saffron would have loved to memorize every detail of the change but he was too busy giving Calvin the angriest look he could ever have...

“CALVIN! YOU IDIOT! YOU STILL HAVEN'T CRUSHED YOUR ORB!”

The shouting pulled the bat out of his lust-filled daze. His eyes glanced down at the still uncracked orb in his hands. His eyes widened as he felt the entire moment hit him. He began panicking and instinctively crushed the orb.

Immediately, the delayed magic seeped into the magical swell. However, instead of adding to its harmonious song, it began to twist and warp it. The pleasant hum the sound once had turned into a harrowing scream.

It was only when the circle turned red as well that the other party members began yelling at the bat too. Well... They tried anyways. Saffron was the only one close enough for Calvin to hear.

The last thing Calvin guilt-filled face would witness was a terrified fennec fox staring directly at him and yelling, “CALVIN! WHAT DID YOU DO!?!?”

All of the party members would begin yelling as they disappeared. To the outside world, it would sound like a group of animals yelling their lungs out until it all slowly faded away...

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Kalbaz began bawling with laughter. The whole entire scene was incredibly hilarious to watch! The party could have seen the signs if they were more perceptive, but only Saffron thought to think. Even then, the powerful hypnosis he placed on Calvin couldn't be stopped. His precious bat just led his friends to their ends and he was going to love watching their every second~

“Uhh... Hey Kalbaz, I take it that's our que?”

The rat witch looked up from his holographic visage. There stood a dark blue furred imp-like creature with brown eyes. He seemed to have a bored expression and held himself informally.

Kalbaz gave a devilish look at his familiar. “Indeed, it is Aberus. Do you all remember what you need to say?”

“Of course not! It’s not like you remind us of it every time we finish practicing or anything...”

Kalbaz chuckled. “Hehehe. I love you too, Aberus. Now go fetch me my pet~”

Aberus gave his master a slight nod. “Sure, thing Master!”

The imp would walk out of the grove and tread deeper into the foliage. As he did, it would seem as if his single figure became 3...