

Player Card

Name: Booker Hopkins

Physique: A tall halfling measuring 5'4/162cm with a stout build. He is deceptively strong for his size and build thanks to his broad shoulders, well-built biceps, and 100% pure genuine 6-pack (it's definitely there just under a kegger brought on by years of 'taste-testing' the finest dwarven stout)

Attire: He wears a green overcoat that's one size too large with a wrinkled white button-up underneath that has visibly been worn more than once this week. His cream-colored trousers are unremarkable and come to an end with plain black dress shoes and crew-cut socks. Yes, in his world the hobbits put them grippers away.

Homeworld: The kind you read about in fantasy novels in more homely and plain worlds. Kingdoms are fought over for any number of reasons by nearly countless races but in his well-to-do slice of the global pie, the halflings opt for diplomacy over swords.

More Info: Always keeps his pipe and tobacco handy in his jacket pocket near and dear to his breast. It gives him a default perfume that is sickly sweet mixed with the scent of ash. Evidence of his habits plays plainly on his features including sunken eyes, nicotine stains, and of course his beautiful 6-pack kegger.

Character & Universe

Rough Background: Booker Hopkins spent most of his life coasting by and feeling unremarkable for the most part. He eventually finds himself at university and befriends a gnome named Bippy while he's there. One day near graduation Bippy takes him out into the forest to study a unique tree. Bippy tragically dies but this is where Booker meets an orc wizard who would go on to be his mentor and master. Over the years they take over the halfling government and strike trade deals with humans. Booker lives a relatively happy life when he isn't disposing of bodies until one day his master gives him a mission to venture deep into the forest to investigate something otherworldly.

Important Moments:

- First time dumping a body in the river
- Bippy's death
- Snuff's Assassination
- Marriage and his first child
- Any and every time his master asks something of him
- Losing the championship game to Shaqwise

Character Relationships:

- His master Malvictus Trimenius Abrakadius IX
- His wife Autumn
- His kids (but only the first and third one he can't even recall the middle child's name)

Motives:

- To aid his master in his search of the arcane, otherworldly, and otherwise strange.
- To kill something other than a halfling or an elf in the name of his master

Homeworld: On his homeworld humans are generally distrusted for their overzealous nature and fiery motivation to change the world given their small lifespans. The two factions that happen to have the most affinity for magic, humans, and elves, are the two that have been at odds for hundreds of years. The edge of the forest where halflings build their hollowed-out homes from the trunks of the great trees is at the center of some conflict. The humans seek the forest for its lumber but the forests are sacred to the elves. This has led to the elven occupation of halfling villages which is not popular with the public. Currently, the halflings are at odds to throw their support behind humans for profit or to throw support behind elves for protection.

Backstory

For most of his life, Booker Hopkins had been an unremarkable halfling who simply got by on his natural affinity for conversation. He was bookish but not gifted, athletic but not strong, and intelligent but not wise. For every moderate boon, there was an equally moderate bane making his overall profile just that – unremarkable. The only trait of his that ever seemed to be of note to anyone was his freakish height. He stood well above most of his peers to the point many travelers mistook him for a short human. If not for living his entire life meandering the comfortable halfling villages along the forest edge his peers would surely think the same. He spent his formative years playing hoppleball and while he wasn't the best on his team his height afforded him a distinct advantage against most of the rival teams in the forest. Despite this, he was still painfully average at the game and had no real drive to play it. He even gave up on the sport altogether after losing the championship game to Shaqwise who was a whole foot taller than Booker on account of his father shagging up a giant. The sting of defeat

reminded him that even his most unique quality wasn't much in the grand scheme of things and at the end of the day he was just a taller-than-average plain little halfling.

Booker reckoned that if life was mostly down to luck he'd let fate decide his path going forward seeing as he was lacking direction in his life. He threw an encyclopedia into the air and blindly pointed to a place on a page it opened to. He opened his eyes to find his finger resting on the subject of botany. Wasting no time he busied himself enrolling in university and pouring over every book on plants he could find from dusk till dawn. By the time he found himself in a dormitory, he was well-educated in the field and found himself drawn to the subject of poisonous flora. There he met his roommate – a plump gnome named Bippy. The two got along wonderfully as they were both quiet, homely types. As days pressed on to months into years eventually their senior year rolled around. The two had been thick as thieves from first year onward and were now happily pissing away their final days of university excited to see where post-grad would take them. One afternoon in late spring Bippy came frantically banging on Booker's door. He excitedly droned on and on about a tree he'd found deep in the forest that looked like a willow tree with leaves black as night. Booker begrudgingly got his things and departed with his little friend on what he assumed would be another boring jaunt in the forest to find a tree that was nothing as remarkable as Bippy had made it sound. The two walked for hours crossing many streams and open fields passing by all manner of flora and fauna that seemed far more interesting to Booker at the time. That was until they came upon it – a lone willow tree with inky black leaves standing alone in a field surrounded by arid dirt.

What was more remarkable to Booker was that there was a break in the forest canopy just above the willow revealing the starry night sky that bled its light down onto them. Something about that fact unsettled him but before he could give it much thought his gnomish friend was already excitedly hopping over and putting his hands all over the strange tree. The two spent half the night by candlelight taking notes and making observations as they thoroughly studied the lone willow. It appeared to secrete a type of sap that leaked onto its leaves giving them a visibly oily texture. This caused them to sparkle as they refracted the light from the stars above. Each gust that blew through the night air caused them to shimmer as they swayed in the warm breeze. The two were so enraptured in their study the unnatural strength of the wind didn't play on their minds until it made it sufficiently hard to keep their notebooks open. Suddenly, the surrounding trees began to creak and groan, their leaves shaking violently as the howling wind seemed to come from all directions and blow upward toward the opening in the canopy. Booker and Bippy looked at each other for one last moment before the wind blew out their lamps and the darkness of night enveloped them. Booker looked around frantically but the stars that once illuminated this one spot were nowhere to be seen. The inky black leaves that once shimmered beautifully were slapping him from every direction covering him in sticky sap. He called out for his friend but the wind was now deafening. He reasoned the only thing left to do was to hunker down and wait for whatever storm had blown in to pass.

Drip. Drip. Drip. The patter of several slow drips like rain snapped Booker out of his huddled state. He realized the wind had stopped and the only break from the silence was the sap that slowly trickled down onto his head. Collecting himself he felt around for his pack. Eventually finding his bag he fished through it for matches but it seemed the storm had blown his belongings everywhere. Then the strike of the match was heard and in front of his eyes, a lone flame stood mere inches from his face. His eyes quickly adjusted to find that on the other side of this single, small flame was a weathered green face with sunken eyes. The figure was unnaturally still staring his cloudy blue eyes directly into the halflings. His gray beard shifted unnaturally as a centipede crawled out from it. The light illuminated the constant movement of

a colony of lice as they marched along his spindly gray strands. From behind his ear crawled a massive black spider that skittered across his unflinching face before disappearing behind his other pointed ear. Booker could not look away, he could not scream, he simply trembled at the figure before him. The figure stood up slowly, his knees creaking. He was tall, lanky, but horrifically imposing. Despite his emaciated form, Booker could glean he was an orc – or at the very least had predominantly orcish features. The orc extended a long bony arm toward Booker and stopped at the willow leaves that hung all around him – his bony fingers delicately handling the halfway burnt match. His hand rose slowly illuminating the oily leaves all around Booker until they came to a stop beneath the very branch they stemmed from. There was Bippy, impaled through his sternum by a thick branch. His blood mixed with sap had now covered nearly every inch of Booker's hair, face, and jacket. As Booker looked into the vacant eyes of his beloved friend the flame of the match extinguished at the bony orc's fingertips and the two were once more encased in darkness.

The strike of a second match could be heard to his right. Booker was surprised at how swift and silent the orc's movements were. He sat beside a vacant opening in the trunk of the tree and retrieved one of the lamps that had been rolled around violently in the storm. He lit it and set it in front of him, beckoning Booker to take a seat. The orc introduced himself to the still-stunned halfling. His name was Malvictus Trimenius Abrakadius IX. He was a powerful wizard and an exile of many kingdoms that had not stood the test of time. He gestured to a massive scar on his chest and then to a spiraling knot within the heart of the tree. Three hundred and fifty years ago an elf of some renown had sealed him away by impaling him through the heart with her staff made of slumbering oak. As he fell into a deep sleep the staff grew around him, cradling him inside the trunk of a rapidly growing tree. It took to his blackened heart and over many years took the shape of a blackened willow that stood hauntingly by its lonesome. The very existence of the willow and what lay within was enough for the forest to recede creating the very clearing the two stood in at this very moment. A single and solitary break in the forests otherwise hallowed ground a place that could not be consecrated. He expressed his condolences for the loss of Booker's friend but that it was this misfortune that awakened Malvictus from a very long dream. He explained to the halfling that his magic was as extraordinary as it was forgotten and in his time was very forbidden. The calmness that swept over Booker was an enchantment of his creation that weighed on the hearts of weaker beings. Terrifying, invasive, weirdly considerate – Booker didn't know what to make of it at first but the fact mourning Bippy or running away as fast as he could were low on his priority list logically concerned him but the orc's magic was potent. The two conversed until Booker passed out from exhaustion. He awoke in his dorm room all alone with a painful hunger.

From that day on Booker went out into the forest every night and spoke with Malvictus. He was intrigued by the orc's magic and felt compelled to drink in all the learned wizard had to say. For years after graduating he spent his nights with Malvictus and even took to referring to him as his master as he learned rudimentary magic from him. He began applying magic to his work in botany and began splicing together flora to get new species. Publicly, his work got him lauded as a genius and afforded him a position on the council as head of a medical division upon the untimely death of the previous chancellor who peacefully passed in his sleep. Privately, he crossbred special flora to create an assortment of poisons – even the kind that was not yet traceable with symptoms similar to passing away peacefully in one's sleep. Once he had a seat on the council he spent years battling it out with a Snuff Bimbleberry who was the bane of his political career.

One night, under the advice of his master, Booker managed to slip an experimental poison into Snuff's wine during the festival of winter solstice. Wasn't long before he found the

chancellor curled up in the bathroom foaming at the mouth and convulsing violently. He felt a little awkward watching the man slowly die out as he didn't get any kind of enjoyment out of watching someone's light go out but he did appreciate seeing the effectiveness of his poisons at work. Death was just a cycle of rebirth so he was surely doing good old Snuff a favor. Eventually worrying that someone would need to come use the restroom sooner rather than later he leaned down and snapped the halfling's neck like a twig and threw his limp corpse into a sack. He managed to sneak out unseen through a window and make his way to Malvictus who eagerly awaited him under the black willow. Nothing could have prepared him for the sight he was about to behold. The orc's bony finger cut through the skin and bled the dead halfling's corpse. He carefully removed pound after pound of flesh and bone before there was nothing but wet, bloody skin. He then watched in horror as the orc's body contorted, bones cracked in ways so unnatural, his eyes rolled into the back of his head as he crawled inside of Snuff. It made no sense to Booker's eyes and yet by this point he knew better than to question his master's magic. After several grueling minutes of bones crunching, blood splattering, and flesh squelching he was finally looking at a picture-perfect Snuff as if he had never died. The only difference was a light milky cloudiness permeated his once-piercing sage eyes.

For the first time, Booker returned to his little village with his master. Albeit to anyone else it looked as if he had suddenly become friends with his political arch-rival but the saying goes that getting shitfaced on dwarven spirits is how kingdoms get built. Having secured two seats for the council wasn't even half the advantage that having Malvictus whisper in the ears of the other chancellors was. By spring that year they'd effectively had the entire council under their thumb. Booker and his master secured trade agreements for the humans to cut trees along the same river they would use to transport lumber back to their settlements. The elves were so displeased and sure of the fate of halflings upon their permanent departure but were surprised that year after year humans never invaded. Booker was sure they wanted to but the wiser among them knew what he'd done. Their seers could see what the halflings could not and what the elves refused to. Something wicked had claimed the halfling's domain as its home and the risks far outweighed the benefits. Time continued to march on for Booker. He married, had children, and continued his research on the side while being a career politician. One day his master spoke with him in private under the tree of their first meeting. He explained to him that something otherworldly awaits deep within the forest. He could not guarantee his return or even tell him what he'd find but something was calling that he should not ignore. So he set out and ventured deeper into the forest than he'd ever gone before.