

Woods Witch: A Ranged Support Build



The Woods Witch is one of the six starting classes in Frosthaven, available to players right out of the box. It's been much maligned since release as being overly finicky, with players struggling to arrange their party in the configurations needed to set off a Ritual and ending up making basic attacks on half their turns. To which I say: *you're playing it wrong*.

It's true that the most powerful Rituals all require exacting positioning, with allies on opposite sides of a monster or worse. So don't use those ones. There are a plethora of options where the requirements are simply "stand next to your buddy". Better still, several of those options, while they look like melee attacks, are secretly ranged attacks. It's very viable to play the Woods Witch as a ranged support character striking from the backlines, providing healing and buffs to the smelly frontliners as they bash people with their pointy sticks.

That's what I'll be looking at today.

Level 1:

Let's start with the most important card, because otherwise while we talk about Rituals there's going to be a little voice saying "But how are you going to set that up if you're Billy-no-mates and nobody will help you?"

Well, the answer is this:



On first glance it's maybe not that impressive. A late-but-not-that-late initiative, a heal that hurts you, and a summon that can't even attack. And yet, it's perhaps the most important card available to the Woods Witch—one that you'll stick with for a long, long time. There's a reason it's the only card that's called out by name on the character mat, after all. Both sides of it are worth using, but at different player counts.

If you're a two-player party, you probably ignore the top; you'd be giving up an attack for a two-point health swing. Unless they're Doomed, that's less value than using it as a basic attack. Used appropriately in a four player party, though, it's a health swing of 7+. Often more if one of your Eidolons or the Ooze Herder's squidgy minions need topping up. It's not a huge heal to any one individual, but by raw numbers it's very worthwhile and as a bonus it clears conditions. It even clears poison for free! And as you're on the backline in this build most of the time, any damage it does do is to a health pool that can take it without issue.

The bottom half of the card is inverted in value; it's great at two players and only middling at four. Don't get me wrong, it's still pretty decent at four - it's functionally a bottom Disarm as the enemy swings at a 1HP disposable minion, which is nothing to sneeze at. But its real value is at lower player counts. Not only does the value of a disarm go way up when you're facing half as many enemies as a four-player party, but when you've only got one player ally, the Familiar is your best friend when it comes to setting up your Rituals. Need him to your left? He's on your left. Behind? He's got your back. He moves before you every turn and goes wherever you want him. And as it's a bottom summon at relatively high initiative, you can put him out, immediately put him to work with a Ritual, and go early the following turn to let him scuttle back to safety. When you're coming up on a rest, he'll gladly eat a hit for you.

As a kicker: this card is the one of only **two** non-loss non-Ritual non-element XP sources that you ever get. And with this build using fewer Rituals than average, you really, really need that XP.

Enhancements: You don't. +1HP is utterly pointless. Maybe it saves your Familiar from dying to a non-attack AoE wound/true damage once in a campaign. Even if it does, who cares? Your Familiar is built for dying. The move upgrade is marginally more worthwhile but only marginally. In the end, this is a summon you dismiss every rest and then re-up. He's never gonna fall that far behind.

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Here's the first Ritual, and it's a doozy. Attack 3 Disarm is well above rate in Frosthaven. It'd be a centerpiece for a Ritual-based build, though the positioning is one of those slightly awkward ones I warned you about at the start. A good thing, then, that we're not going to be using it at all, ever. This is a ranged support build, and the Eidolon lets both your ranged attacks and those of your allies hit harder. It goes out turn 1 and helps sweep up the early rush, accounting for 2-4 damage every turn til the first rest. If you can arrange for it to move through to room 2, great. But most classes including this one can budget for a loss every rest cycle, and getting this out turn 1 gives it enough value that you'll ot be overly sad at leaving it behind.

A 'setup turn' is pretty common across Frosthaven characters. The Inox Contraptionist needs to set up their Loss tracks, the Ooze Herder puts out a barrier of goopy little dudes, etc. This is a comfortably late initiative, so you can put it down in front or to the side after a long turn of your allies twiddling their thumbs while getting slapped by the First Room Rush, and there'll be nothing going late enough to hit it til next turn.

Enhancements: The extra hex turns the Ritual from good to an all-star card, and we don't care. +1HP on the Eidolon is fine but not urgent. It's something you should do at some point, though.



You'll be playing this Turn 1 on basically every scenario in the early levels, usually paired with Eidolon of the Earth to turn this into Attack 4 Range 3. That's a solid, solid statline for level 1 ranged attack, and it comes with a very relevant element to boost a follow-up. As your go-to ranged attack, avoid losing it to damage or rests for as long as humanly possible.

The bottom...is there. Mostly it's for if your allies kill the monster you were planning to use a Ritual on, so you pull in a replacement. That's not relevant for this build, so—short of convenient traps or hazardous terrain—you'll not be using it much.

Enhancements: Putting a condition on the top should be your number one priority for cash spends. You're throwing this out early and often, so an enhancement on it will see use three or more times in a scenario. Personally I favoured poison, as it's already a solid enough hit for small-health enemies and poison makes it valuable against HP sponges too. Wound, Muddle, and Curse are all viable too. A bare +1 is a missed opportunity, though.

Enhancing the bottom? An extra element for a friend would normally be a niche but valuable option. The build depends on the top being used at every opportunity, though, so no.



A middling card. But middling's not bad, and at level 1 you take every card that's not bad. For the top, it's the easiest possible Ritual to set up. Stand next to a buddy, smash the bad guy. Simple, effective. Attack 3 Wound is not the greatest of hits, but it's a fine rate for level 1. It is, however, a melee attack, which to this build is quite icky.

Good, then, that its bottom half does something you need. Your Eidolons aren't going to move themselves but, with this, they will. Or, they'll shuffle along a bit anyway. Enough to move one planted at the far end of one room into the entrance of the next. Like I said, not an outstanding card but a middling one.

Enhancements: If you've somehow got cash to burn, boosting the ally movement turns this from a shuffle to a respectable stroll forward. It is, however, a multi-target action so its cost is doubled from the baseline. Once you've paid for that, the price of upping your own movement (or adding an element) gets quite silly.



Initiative 6 Move 4. That's the card.

The top is blank; low-hp enemies are usually ranged attackers and aren't going to conveniently run to you in the backline.

But, to repeat: Initiative 6 Move 4.



This gets used late in the rest cycle while the last few enemies are getting mopped up. Both halves are useful in that situation. The top's regeneration will stick or a turn or two with most monsters dead, turning a low heal into something respectable. The bottom, paired with the bottom of A Crow on Both Shoulders, is at level 1 your only hope of getting your +1 Damage Eidolon from the starting line into position for room two.

As said on that card's evaluation, though, it *should* have generated enough value that double-dipping isn't needed for it to have been worthwhile. Still, there'll be times where you can pull it off and then why not?

Enhancement: Both slots are valuable. Strengthen turns the top from a mop-up slot to something you want to put out earlier in the cycle. Ward doubles down on its late-cycle value, setting you up for the next room. The bottom movement enhancement turns it into rocket fuel, catapulting two allies straight across a room.



This isn't a multi-target melee attack; it's a single-target ranged attack. Attack 3 Pierce 3 Range 2 slices and dices through enemies relying on their shields to stay alive. You need a backstop behind you to pull it off, but that's perfect for your Eidolons and Familiar, who you want to be behind you anyway.

Move 4 is Move 4. Your second one at level 1, and key for keeping up if you've been giving your allies a boost ahead. This is also a nice late initiative for weaving. You'll be keeping this card for quite a while, and using both halves at different points.

Enhancements: The bottom first, as it's easy. You add jump. You've got no other source of it except Winged Shoes, and Jump 4 gets you where you need to go every time.

The top +hex enhancement is fine, and you'll have some opportunities to turn this into a double (or triple) smash, but more often this is *actually* just +1 Range on a single-target attack at an extravagant cost. You'll usually have better places to put your cash.



The top is your second-best ranged attack at level 1. Between advantage and the Underworld Eidolon, this reliably hits for 3-4 damage from across the room. Great at sniping Snow Faeries to stop them from brittling. The 18 initiative is icing on the cake.

The bottom Eidolon is conditionally useful (pun not intended), but it's *very* useful in those conditions. If you have enemies spitting out wounds, poisons, brittles - this gets rid of them every turn. The actual HP bump is okay, but not remarkable. I mean, yeah, 4+HP per turn in a full party, but spread so wide it's marginal.

90% of the time, you're using this to blast space lasers at people, even if you have no use for the Sun element you make as a byproduct.

Enhancements: With the Eidolon being more marginal than the +1 Damage one, enhancing it is correspondingly more marginal. For the top, +1 Damage works fine enough. I mean, if you've flush with cash then yay conditions, but straight damage leaves more money to spend elsewhere.



This is a deceptively bad card. Boosted properly, it is at least a source of ranged damage. The problem is that enemies in Frosthaven come in three flavours: Shielded, HP Sponges, and Retaliators. The enemies you want to be wounding most are those with high shield, but shooting them with this doesn't wound them. You can wound the HP sponges, but draining 1HP/turn from a 20HP mob is so much less meaningful than draining 1HP/turn from a 4HP one. That leaves either retaliators, so at least this does have a target class, hoping for magical christmas land and hitting any unshielded target in the middle of a group of shielded ones, or stacking boosts on this to turn Attack 1 into something that a -1 modifier doesn't squiff.

The bottom summon is fine, but unremarkable. A 5HP sponge that hands out wounds will generally be an okay amount of value. If this card somehow lasts through to the final room, it's a good opening loss there. And 2XP towards the end of the scenario is 2XP.

The card is, though, still a ranged attack and at level 1 we'll take what we can get.

Enhancements: This is getting dropped as soon as something better comes along, and there's a lot of "something better" around. +1 damage does help break through for wounds, though.



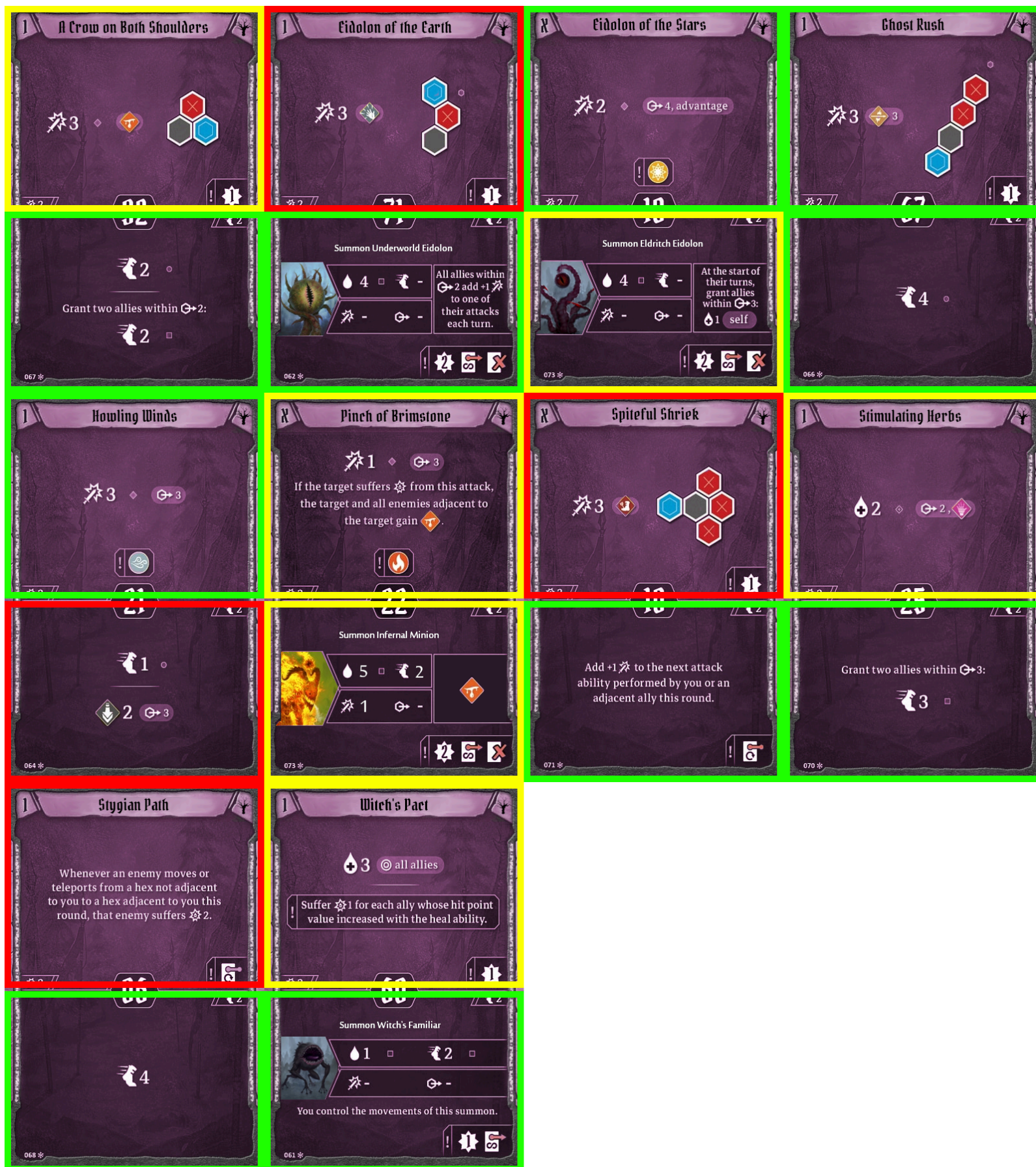
The top is another melee Ritual. If you happen to be in the perfect position for it then go ahead, but it's not something this build will be aiming to do. Particularly when the bottom is basically always useful. Pairing this with Pinch of Brimstone is the only way to make the latter card reliably break through to wound something.

The initiative is fantastic. Actually, most initiatives for the level 1 Woods Witch are fantastic. Everything's hovering either at 20 and below, or 60 and higher.



Defensive actions, clunky melee formations, or both. None of these are what we want to be doing with this build, so we're not taking them.

That leaves our level 1 lineup as follows:



Tops: 3 Great, 4 Okay or situational

Bottoms: 7 Great, 2 Okay or situational.

The reds are either bad, or at least not really what we want to be doing.

There's also a good mix of high and low initiatives, so I'm not worried at the moment about skewing it too much one way or the other with new cards.

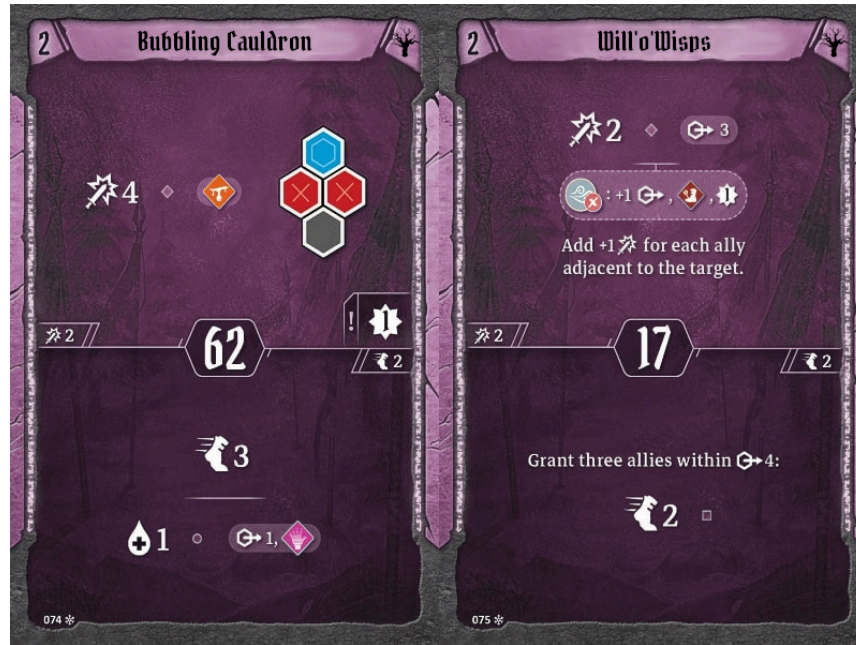
We're short on great top actions. With a 10 card hand we want at least 5 so we're happy with what we're doing on every turn in the first rest cycle. Subbing out our most marginal bottom action that isn't attached to a usable top action (Spiteful Shriek) is going to be the first thing we look at doing as we level up.

As a "white room" first rest cycle where nothing goes wrong, we'd be doing something like:

1. Howling Winds top / Eidolon of the Earth bottom (init 71). Earliest possible setup of our damage booster, with a solid starting attack
2. Pinch of Brimstone top / Spiteful Shriek bottom (init 10). Boost the Brimstone to Attack 3, get those wounds spread at low initiative so they can start ticking.
3. Eidolon of the Stars top / Witch's Familiar bottom (init 60). Next turn's likely to be a Ritual, so we want the Familiar available. Stars can reach most places in the room if the initial melee wave has thinned too much at this point. If you can see that it still won't reach, A Crow on Both Shoulders bottom instead will shuffle you and your Eidolon into range.
4. Aim for either A Crow on Both Shoulders or Ghost Rush top / Stygian Path bottom (init 10). Alternatively if most things are dead, A Crow on Both Shoulders bottom to move the gang up and Ghost Rush/Stimulating Herbs top to laser something or start on recovery.
5. Whatever's left over.

On a long rest, probably drop Spiteful Shriek, but it depends on the scenario and situation. At this point you'll have earned 5XP, and done something like "Attack 4, Attack 3 multi-wound, Attack 3 Adv, Attack 4, Heal 2 Regen", and moved into position for the next room, all while passively boosting your friends and hopefully without exposing yourself or your minions to much damage.

Level 2:

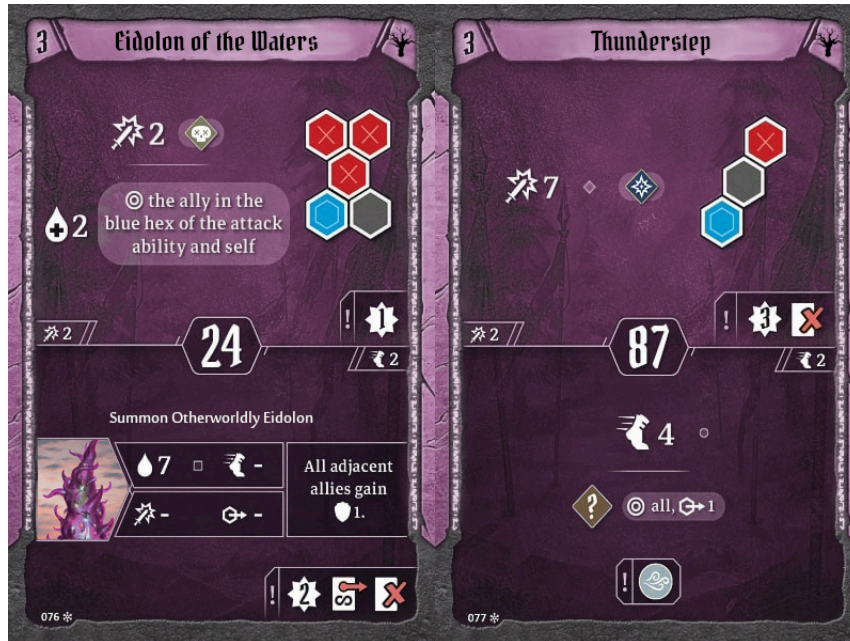


The bottom halves of both cards are nice, but we're not really lacking for good bottoms. So the choice is between a Ritual designed for you to be alone on the other side of the battle-line in melee, or a solid low-initiative ranged attack able to immobilise enemies from range. Toughie.

Will'o'Wisps replaces Spiteful Shriek. The initiative change is only a slight downgrade, and it offers more options for dragging your Eidolons with you as you go. At higher player counts, the attack goes from workmanlike to excellent, being an attack 4-5 immobilize. Without Spiteful Shriek's boost, however, Pinch of Brimstone is getting increasingly disappointing.



Level 3:



Both of these are nice. The top of Waters can be melee, ranged, or both, and mass poison is always a boon. The Eidolon is both beefy and helps your friends be beefier. It's a solid drop in the second or third room. Thunderstep on the other hand makes Wind on its bottom, which we're increasingly in need of. As Rituals go, Ghost Rush should have shown that "a dude behind you" is pretty easy to set up, and the top is an effective way to neutralise even a large or shielded enemy. A nice late initiative swings it. Thunderstep replaces Ghost Rush on most scenarios; it does the same job but better. In games with a *lot* of shielded enemies, replace Pinch of Brimstone instead and laugh at their attempts to block you.



Level 4:



Raven's Feast is your *other* non-conditional non-Ritual source of repeatable XP, after Witch's Familiar. This choice is a total non-brainer. A powerful piercing ranged attack that makes the only element we care about, as well as a bottom disarm in a pinch? Boldening Blow is a nice Ritual, but it's not even in the same league for what we're after here.

Raven's Feast replaces Pinch of Brimstone. Both halves are so much better than what they're replacing it isn't funny.



Level 5:



Neither level 5 option is worthwhile for a ranged support build, so we're circling back to the cards we left behind earlier. The choice here is some ways comes down to player count. On crowded boards, Ritual circle is a lot more reasonable to set up, and its powerful movement ensures nobody is left behind. At lower player counts, Eidolon's Ritual is both easier and hits farther away, and you may find yourself in need of a beefy defender. Personally, my choice is the Eidolon, replacing A Crow on Both Shoulders.



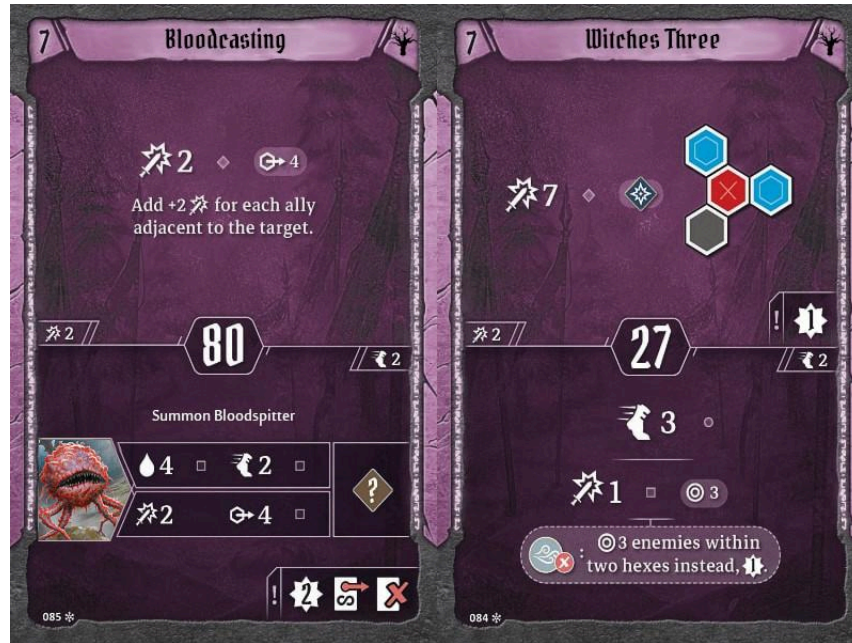
Level 6:



Summersong is a great little support card, while Eidolon of the Blood puts you front and centre for a finicky Ritual. Summersong it is. You should be making enough spare Wind now that it'll be reliably healing and regenning two targets each cycle. Despite being in theory a straight upgrade on Stimulating Herbs, and so replacing that, in practice you'll often want to use the bottom half of Herbs to shuffle your Eidolons along. So while it's often functionally replacing it for healing, the actual slot it takes will be that of Witch's Familiar.



Level 7:



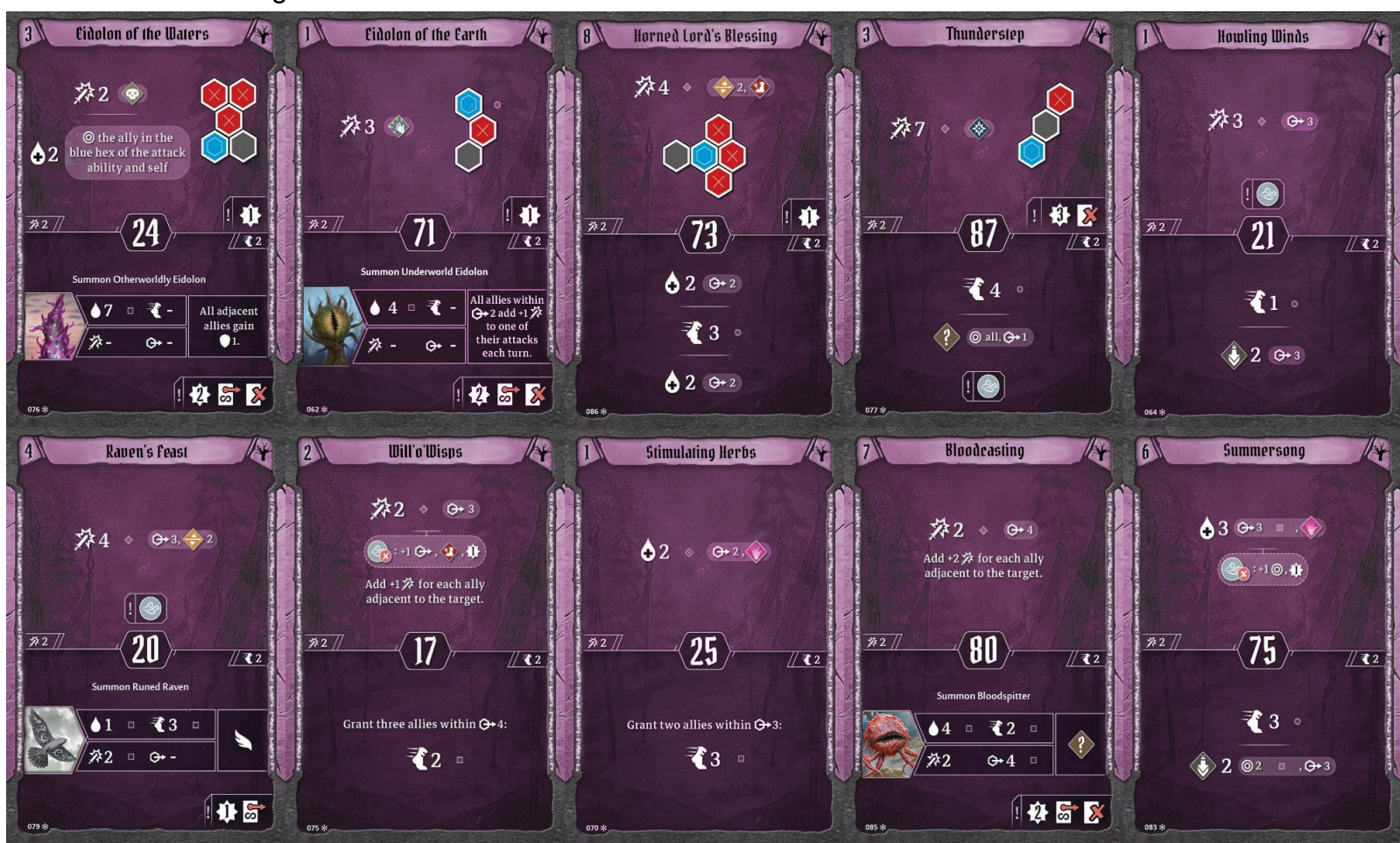
You take Bloodcasting, and don't look back. The summon is very, very powerful. In sparse boards, you want to strongly consider back-to-back opening losses to summon it alongside your Eidolon. It'll hang around with you in the rear and put out consistent ranged damage and damage mitigation through the entire scenario. On crowded boards, the top half pulls its weight instead, being a repeatable attack 6-8. Either way, it's time to finally say goodbye to Stygian Path. As fun as it's been to have two move 4s, you really can get by with one, and Thunderstep does the job better.



Level 8:



There's a case to be made for doubling back for Witches Three. Bottom attacks are usually pretty nice. Ranged ones that come with a move even better. The problem is that at the scenario levels you'll be reaching by now, Attack 1 just doesn't *do* anything. Meanwhile, Horned Lord's Blessing lets you punch through an ally for Attack 4 Pierce 2 Range 2 Immobilize, and the bottom half fills our support duty. It replaces Eidolon of the Stars, which at Attack 3 Adv is starting to fall behind what we need from our attacks now.



Level 9:



The meme level. I've gotta admit, I never really take level 9 picks all that seriously. You're unlikely to ever reach it before retirement. Doubly so with the Woods Witch's fairly anaemic XP gain. Triply so with this build's lack of Rituals. And even if you do, you'll only be using it for a game or two before moving on. That said, Deathpact does what we want. A huge ranged attack that shuffles our Eidolons all the way across the room for us. If you end up leaving your Eidolons behind in the first two rooms, you can use the bottom to dismiss and resummon them in the final one if you like. We swap out Stimulating Herbs, and we're done.



Other considerations:

Items:

Ranged items are fairly thin on the ground in Frosthaven. You probably want to start out with the Weighted Net. Use Howling Winds on the first turn to lock down an approaching melee monster, or whenever it's most appropriate. Otherwise, look into crafting from the Sceptre line of support hand items. They're all useful for saving points of damage here and there.

For headpieces, look for sources of advantage. Spyglasses or Goggles. One of the early unlockable crafting helms also offers a movement option for shuffling your Eidolons up.

If your group has access to the Gloomhaven imports, once they become available I'd strongly urge you to look into picking up one of the summon items. A disarm in a pinch, an instant Ritual enabler, an occasional source of bonus damage. They're all useful in a variety of situations.

Perks:

Human Woods Witch	
Name: _____	
Level : 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	
XP : 0 45 95 150 210 275 345 420 500	
XP :	Gold :
Resources:	
Notes:	
Masteries:	
☐ Attack at least three enemies with each of three different area of effect attack abilities	
☐ Perform an Eidolon summon ability on your first turn, keep the eidolon alive and within 3 of you for the entire scenario	

Perks	
X:	X:
X:	X:
☐ Replace one card with one "1" card	
☐ Replace one card with one "Add +1 for each ally adjacent to the target" card	
☐ Add one card	
☐ Add one 1 card	
☐ Add two cards	
☐ Add two "1, self" cards	
☐ Ignore item effects and remove one card	
☐ At the end of each of your long rests, grant one ally within 3: 2	
☐ Whenever you open a door with a move ability, add +3	
☐ Once each scenario, during your turn, gain 2 for the round	

Most of the Woods Witch perks are built around tankiness (presumably flavoured as wards or magic tattoos, given the lightly dressed model for the character). These are, while not useless, not particularly appealing for this build.

The first perk to take, every time, is the non-AMD “move an ally on a long rest” perk. It’s invaluable for keeping your Damage Eidolon with you for wringing out every speck of value from its early summon.

The -1 removals are not at a great rate relative to other characters able to remove multiples per perk. You’ll still want to take them, but they come behind at the very least the +1 (+1 per adjacent ally) perks that are in practice +3 or more damage. Also possibly the disarm perks, though that’s leaving it a bit late. Whatever order you pick, the +2 pushes come after, followed by the rolling +1s.

The rolling heals and the other non AMD perks are unexciting for you as you’ll be taking a lot less damage than the perk list seems to think you’ll be taking. I’d stop worrying about Battle Goals at that point.

Enhancements:

I talked about enhancements for level 1 cards while discussing them. For the level-up cards:

- Jump on Thunderstep will rarely be an enhancement you regret. Get it as soon as possible.
- +1 move on the bottom of Will’o’Wisps.
- Raven’s Feast getting +1 damage on top makes a top-tier card even better. You’ll be killing with it often enough that conditions aren’t necessary.
- Other than that, consider adding elements here or there if your allies need them. While you yourself need a bit of wind, you’ve usually got enough for your own purposes already.