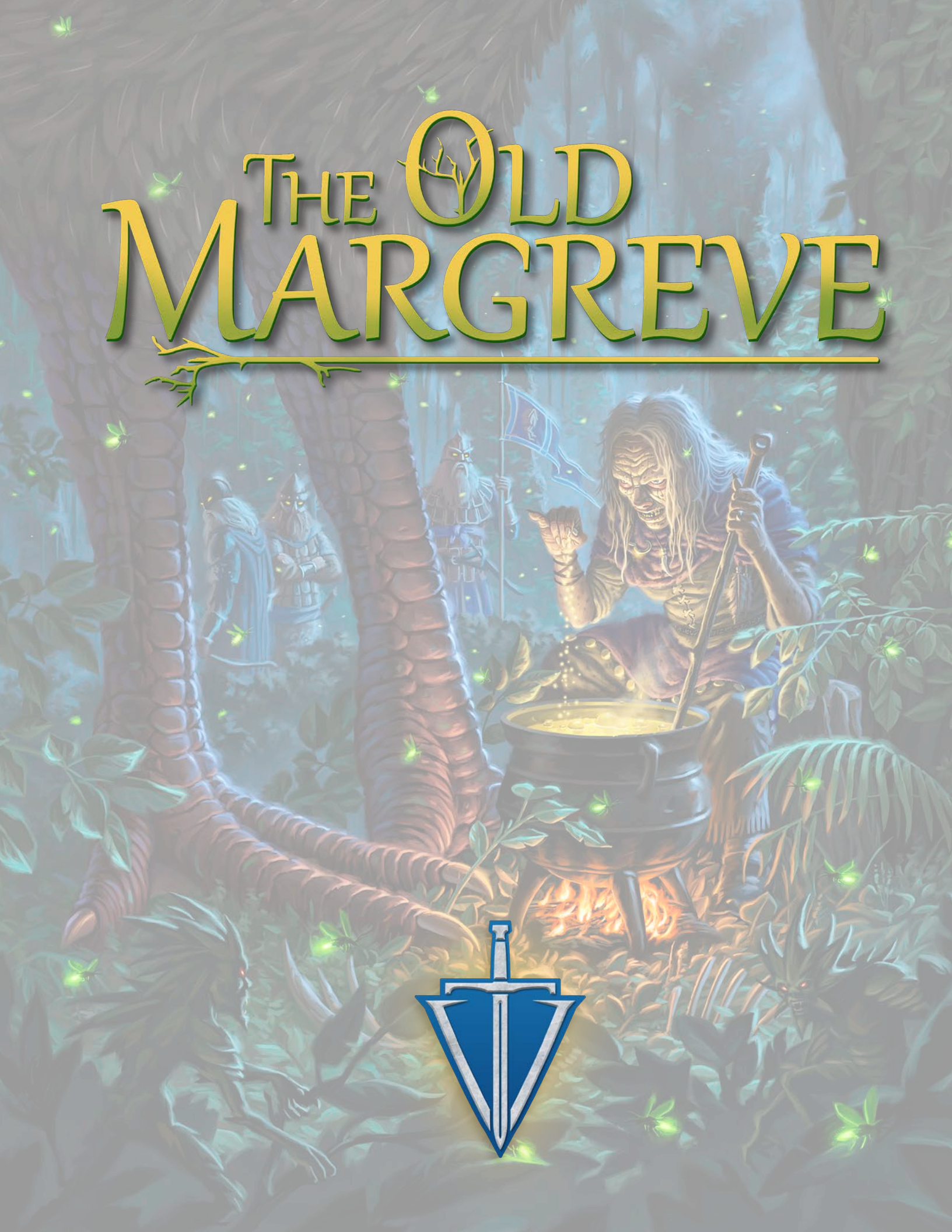


THE OLD MARGREVE



MIDGARD™

THE OLD MARGREVE



Credits

Lead Designer: Matthew Corley

Designers: Lou Anders, Wolfgang Baur, Dan Dillon, James Introcaso, Ben McFarland, Jon Sawatsky, Dennis Sustare, Mike Welham

Editors: Meagan Maricle, Kim Mohan, Thomas M. Reid

Playtest Coordinator: Ben McFarland

Cover Artist: Eric Belisle

Regional Map Cartographer: Dean Spencer

Interior Artists: Michele Giorgi, Miguel Regodón Harkness, Julia Metzger, Dio Mahesa, William O'Brien, Beatrice Pelagatti, Roberto Pitturru, Addison Rankin, Florian Stitz, Bryan Syme, Egil Thompson, Quico Vicens, Michael Witmann, Alena Zhukova

Cartographers: Jon Pintar, Dean Spencer

Graphic Designers: Marc Radle

KOBOLD WARRENS

Chief Executive Officer: Wolfgang Baur

Chief Operations Officer: T. Alexander Stangroom

Director of Digital Growth: Blaine McNutt

Art Director: Marc Radle

Art Department: Amber Seger, Kennedy Williams

Editorial Director: Thomas M. Reid

Design & Editorial Department: Celeste Conowitch, Scott Gable, Meagan Maricle, Jeff Quick, Brian Suskind

TALES OF THE VALIANT VERSION

Designers and Converters: Daniel Kahn, Meagan Maricle, Evan Noone, Mike Welham

Developer and Editor: Meagan Maricle

Proofreader: Jeff Quick

Cover Artist: Craig Spearing

Interior Artists: Federico Arguissein, Viktoria Kanellopoulou, Brendan Lancaster, Erika Lundrigan, Kiki Moch Rizki, Florian Stitz, Bryan Syme, Egil Thompson,

Cartographer: Jon Pintar

Graphic Designers: Marc Radle, Kennedy Williams

Marketing Director: Chelsea "Dot" Steverson

Marketing Department: Zachery Newbill, Kendrick Smith

Project Manager: Amber Seger

Sales Manager: Kym Weiler

Customer Communications Specialist: Chris Wright

A special thanks to the designers and contributors to earlier Margreve Tales: Tim Connors, Eileen Connors, Michael Furlanetto, Scott Gable, Jonathan McAnulty, Ben McFarland, Richard Pett, Steven Robert, and Dan Voyce.

System Reference Document 5.1: This work includes material taken from the System Reference Document 5.1 ("SRD 5.1") by Wizards of the Coast LLC and available at <https://dnd.wizards.com/resources/systems-reference-document>.

The SRD 5.1 is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>.

Content in this work is compatible with the fifth edition of Dungeons & Dragons.

Kobold Press, the Kobold Press logo, and Tales of the Valiant are registered trademarks, and the Midgard logo is a trademark of Open Design LLC.

©2025 Open Design LLC. All rights reserved.

www.koboldpress.com | PO Box 2811 | Kirkland, WA 98083

Printed in China

ISBN: 978-1-964506-07-4

2 4 6 8 10 9 7 5 3 1

**KOBOLD
Press**

MIDGARD



Table of Contents

Chapter 1: The Ancient Forest	5
Life in the Forest.....	5
Recent History.....	6
Climate and Ecology	6
Economy and Trade.....	6
Leaders and Government	7
Geography	7
Inhabitants	7
Sites of Interest.....	9
Dancing Stones.....	9
Western Margreve.....	11
Central Margreve.....	13
Eastern Margreve.....	17
Hearts of the Forest.....	19
Major Locations	19
Running the Old Margreve	29
Mood and Mystery.....	29
Powers and Hearts of the Old Margreve.....	30
Magic in the Margreve Forest	33
Character Status with the Margreve.....	35
Customizing the Margreve Experience.....	38
Chapter 2: Heroes of the Margreve	39
Lineages	39
Alseid.....	40
Bearfolk.....	41
Erina.....	41
Piney.....	42
Heritages.....	44
Margrevian Names	44
Delver Heritage.....	45
Forest Bastion Heritage.....	45
Hiveheim Heritage.....	46
Moonlit Heritage	47
Old Ways Heritage	47
Subclasses	48
Barbarian.....	48
Hive Tender	48
Shadow Chewer	49
Bard.....	51
Wildlife	51
Cleric.....	52
Hunt	52
Druid.....	53
Bees	53
Owls	55
Roses	56
Verdant	58

Ranger	59
Griffon Scout	59
Grove Warden	60
Spear of the Weald	62
Rogue	63
Underfoot	63
Sorcerer	65
Flora	65
Warlock	67
Eldritch Invocations	67
Elder Wood	68
Hunter in Darkness	69
Wizard	71
Courser Mage	71
Background and Talents.....	72
Forest Dweller	72
Talents.....	72
Spells.....	74
Spell Lists	74
Spell Descriptions	76
Magic Items	87



On The Cover

The great witch of the Margreve Forest, Baba Yaga, sits by a cauldron at the chicken feet of her walking house while her horsemen keep watch in the distance in this art by Craig Spearing.

Chapter 3: Adventures in the Old Margreve	93
Using These Adventures	93
Adventure Summaries	93
Daesanderena's Mission.....	94
Hollow (1st Level)	98
Levoča: A Troubled Village	99
Before Today	102
Day 1: The Wolves.....	103
Day 2: The Hollow Man Comes Knocking	103
Day 3: The Crone Arrives	105
Day 4 and Beyond	106
The Singing Tree	106
Wrath of the Bramble King (2nd Level)	108
The Mad Plants of Cambervale	109
Finding the Bramble King	111
The Overgrown Tower	112
Concluding the Adventure	115
The Honey Queen (2nd Level)	116
Part 1: In the Forest	117
Part 2: Among the Effildawnan	119
Part 3: In the Honey Cave	120
Concluding the Adventure.....	125
The Vengeful Heart (3rd Level)	126
The Village of Incot.....	127
Into the Margreve	127
The Village of Wheedon	131
Finding the Plant.....	132
Concluding the Adventure.....	132
Challenge of the Fang (4th Level)	133
Part 1: Once upon a Time in the Fog.....	134
Part 2: The Paths of Gamayun.....	137
Part 3: The Belly of the Beast	139
The Big Bad Wolf.....	140
Concluding the Adventure.....	141
The Griffon Hatchling Heist (5th Level)	142
Introduction	143
Part 1: To the Tower.....	144
Part 2: The Still Tower	145
Part 3: Hatchlings!.....	153
Part 4: Escape from the Still Tower	154
Concluding the Adventure.....	154
Pride of the Mushroom Queen (6th Level)	155
A Rotten State of Affairs	156
A Simple Request	156
The Fungal Citadel	156
Concluding the Adventure	163
Gall of the Spider Crone (6th Level)	164
Part 1: The Pregnant Woman Upstairs.....	165
Part 2: Into the Woods.....	167
Part 3: Mavra's House.....	171
Part 4: Back at the Inn	173
Concluding the Adventure.....	175

Blood and Thorns (7th Level)	176
Introduction	177
Part 1: The Handfasting	177
Part 2: A Thorny Problem	178
Part 3: Kingdom of the Briar	181
Concluding the Adventure.....	185
Grandmother's Fire (8th Level)	186
Part 1: Proper Hunted	187
Part 2: Into the Bush	190
Part 3: The Heart of the Matter	193
Concluding the Adventure.....	194
Shadow's Envy (10th Level)	196
The Encroaching Shadow.....	197
The Blot	197
Concluding the Adventure.....	211
Appendices	212
Monsters and NPCs	212
Encounter Tables	246





The Ancient Forest


The Margreve Forest, often called the Old Margreve by those who live or travel within it, is an ancient place, already old when most of the gods were young. In time immemorial, it cradled the great spirits of nature, and its loam felt the footfalls of the old ones. As millennia passed, its roots swallowed rivers, its canopy stole the sun from vast tracts of land, and its groves crested mountains that have since weathered to hills.

In all that time, the Margreve Forest has changed little. Time seems to flow around it, lapping at its edges like the sea around an island. As kingdoms rise and fall beyond its borders, the Old Margreve remains a world apart—a place where memories and old magic linger in the rings of trees and where new ideas never quite take root.

LIFE IN THE FOREST

Although traveling the roads and trails that run through the Margreve Forest can be risky business, only fools and heroes branch off into the wilderness. Beyond the unnatural creatures that lurk in the underbrush, natural hazards and tough terrain abound. Crevices and bogs cradle skeletons of the hapless. Razor thorns slice skin and leather. Rocky outcroppings hide dire bear and dire boar dens. Carnivorous plants lie in wait, and poisonous pollens send their mist into the wild.

Poor weather and limited visibility exacerbate the treacherousness. Rain triggers suffocating mudslides. Snow buries landmarks. Lightning storms strike armor-clad travelers, and blizzards block passes, cripple sight, and freeze limbs.



Those who survive the Margreve Forest's dangers return with incredible tales and bragging rights. They speak of mountain trees that grow upon each other, merging acre-wide groves into a single tree of mythic proportions and unbelievable height. They speak of titanic caverns where creatures have built cities between colossal roots that dangle from the ceiling. And they speak of old places, alive with ancient memories that whisper and plead.

RECENT HISTORY

The Margreve Forest endures while the city-states, duchies, kingdoms and empires of Midgard that surround it change. The rumblings and machinations of recent events have had little effect on the forest. It is a primal wilderness outside the influence of mortals. As such, it could be seen as the board upon which the greatest powers of Midgard play their games. The foolish do not realize that the board too is a player, one with infinite patience and nearly omniscient knowledge of the pieces in play.

The Scathsidhe (shadow fey) have been thwarted in their attempts to take the Free City of Zobeck back, but they retain a strong presence there. The shadow fey look to rekindle alliances, restore lost strongholds, and reestablish their claim to the Margreve Forest.

In the Blood Kingdom, King Lucan and Emperor Nicoforus have solidified their alliance and directed their forces to conquer Krakova. The Red Goddess of Marena sent disturbing visions to her priestesses, spurring even more bloodshed in her name. They see the Margreve Forest as the final obstacle in their expansion into Zobeck and Magdar. The internal machinations of the undead continue to develop, as many hope to capitalize on recent developments.

Nikolai Savitch's rise to leadership in the Black Cauldron of Chernobog has been felt as far south as the Margreve Forest. The forest is at the center of the complex and contradictory relationship between his lord and Baba Yaga.

CLIMATE AND ECOLOGY

The Margreve Forest is temperate and distinctly seasonal, with warm, humid summers and bitter winters. Summer temperatures average 80 degrees Fahrenheit during the daytime and 60 degrees Fahrenheit at night. Winter temperatures range from 40 degrees in daytime to 20 degrees at night; snow is common each winter. Parts of the forest, especially those closer to the mountains, can experience harsher winters, and an early spring frost often brings a last blast of winter before spring fully sets in. Rain typically falls regularly in late spring with sporadic thunderstorms throughout the summer, and heavy rain in mid or late autumn gives way to light to moderate snows in early winter.

The Margreve Forest contains both conifers and broadleaf trees, such as pine, beech, oak, birch, fir, ash, spruce, elm, and maple—much of this wood is ancient and useful for crafting enchanted items such as wands, staves, and spears. Its wildlife includes deer, elk, wolves, bears, ankhegs, boars, aurochs, lynxes, bats, foxes, badgers, owlbears, giant beetles, giant spiders, ettercaps, hippogriffs, songbirds, woodpeckers, owls, small hawks, griffons, weasels, snakes, and a plethora of rodents and insects. Its lakes and streams are home to pike, bream, bass, trout, and various frogs and toads. Many animals awakened by the Old Margreve lead and protect groups of unawakened brethren in hunting and foraging, ensuring the growth of the forest and the longevity of its denizens. Occasionally, the awakened animals work with the forest's fey and sentient plants to enact the Old Margreve's will on a grander scale.

ECONOMY AND TRADE

The more civilized or law-abiding people live in the outskirts of the Margreve Forest or along the Great Northern Road, harvesting and crafting goods from the forest and trading those for metals and similar goods the forest can't or won't provide. Loggers on the edges of the forest regularly clash with the dryads, satyrs, plant creatures, and sentient animals that protect it. Several small villages within the forest thrive by growing, tending, and selling mandrake, moonberry, and medicinal herbs prized by alchemists and physicians from Zobeck and the Magdar Kingdom, who then sell them as poultices or in restorative potions.

The Fey of the Margreve Forest prefer to trade in favors and promises, and they often accept payment for goods or services in the form of memories, returned favors, or even mortal flesh. Depending on where the Fey are encountered, many are just as likely to kill mortal merchants trespassing in their domain as they are to trade, and experienced merchants keep to well-traveled routes and pay large or at least sharp-eyed contingents of guards.

The animals and sentient plants of the Margreve Forest see little need for coin, memories, or future promises. Though they rarely speak with Humanoids, they tend to barter in more immediate needs, exchanging information or temporary aid for a meal or in gratitude when saved from danger. Though an individual animal's memory might be short, the forest remembers aid rendered to its denizens, and saving a deer from a hunter's trap could mean greater aid in the future from the forest. See **Character Status with the Margreve** in this chapter for details on how helping the forest's lowest citizens can pay great dividends.



LEADERS AND GOVERNMENT

The Margreve Forest has no formal government and little in the way of accepted leadership outside of village elders, pack leaders, and innkeepers of the Great Northern Road. The Spider Crones and Baba Yaga are the two great exceptions to this, commanding respect, fear, and awe even in their isolated huts, and outright terror on the rare occasions when they address the forest's inhabitants. Aside from these exceptions, the people of the forest typically follow an ancient set of codes and laws known simply as the Old Ways (see **Inhabitants** later in this chapter), acknowledging the forest as the true ruling power.

Baba Yaga. A hag in the loosest definition of the term, Baba Yaga is an ancient, enigmatic entity also known as Grandmother. She lives in the Central Margreve in a mobile hut, but she often visits other worlds, other planes, and, some say, other times. However, even Baba Yaga acknowledges the Margreve Forest is more ancient than she is. She and the Old Margreve have a complicated relationship, each working for and against the other in subtle ways over millennia. All sentient beings in the forest treat her with the respect and awe most people reserve only for gods, and each village has at least a dozen children's stories and rhymes about the dangers of upsetting Grandmother.

Spider Crones. The Spider Crones are hags with varying levels of affinity for spiders, and some have taken on the physical aspects of spiders. A loose coven of "sisters," the Spider Crones have prescient powers and a magical connection to the Margreve Forest. The people of the Margreve Forest sometimes seek out the crones for wisdom, and the crones usually give it, provided the petitioner brings a suitable gift. No one knows how many Spider Crones live in the Margreve Forest, but every village elder knows the name and lair of the Spider Crone closest to their village.

The Old Margreve. Looming over, under, and behind all others in the forest is the ancient intelligence of the forest itself, called the Old Margreve by locals. Visitors to the forest often see nothing more than trees and animals, but the forest dwellers know it is infinitely more. Each village, gathering of dryads, and circle of druids in the forest records and performs ancient rituals in deference to the forest, from simple sayings to burning certain herbs on the solstice to complex birth and death ceremonies. Many of these are specific to the communities that perform them, but many more are shared by all in the Margreve Forest and are collectively known as the Old Ways (see **Inhabitants** later in this chapter). For more information about the forest as an entity and how these rituals affect the forest, see **Running the Old Margreve** in this chapter.

GEOGRAPHY

The Margreve Forest is a sprawling, trackless forest of 32,000 square miles. Mountains, hills, rivers, and swamps contain and snake through a vast wilderness of old growth and dense underbrush. The River Argent forms the forest's winding southern border, which separates the forest from the Free City of Zobeck and the Ironcrag Cantons to Zobeck's west. The Dwarven Cantons and the Grisol Marches lie to the west. In the north, low mountains separate the Margreve Forest from the undead kingdoms of Morgau and Doresh. In ancient times, the Cloudwall Mountains formed the forest's eastern border, but the trees have since crested the mountains' spine and the southern Black Hills extension. A full third of the forest (over 10,000 square miles) now lies east of the Cloudwalls, flowing down toward the open steppe of centaur territory.

West of the Cloudwalls, the Great Northern Road divides the other two thirds of the Margreve Forest fairly evenly. This wagon-wide road, running north from Zobeck to Castle Valach, is the only trail known to proceed from one side of the forest to the other.


INHABITANTS

The intolerable taint of neighboring lands hems in the Margreve Forest on all sides, occasionally bleeding into the forest in the form of woodcutters, interlopers, and villagers. The forest slowly and silently swallows many of these visitors. Lumberjacks and traveling companions seem to wander off and disappear. Ghost towns of palsied cottages lie abandoned and overgrown in the forest fringes. Few survive to testify to the Margreve Forest's methods. Most interlopers simply get lost and never return to civilization. Others become servants of the wood, new creatures with the faces of loved ones standing at their relatives' windows.

Despite the intolerance of the Old Margreve, a few scattered permanent settlements do exist. The people of these backwater villages have a complex symbiotic relationship with the forest. They respect the forest's power, honor the covenants of their forebears, and observe, what people now call the Old Ways. Few outsiders have ever seen these inhabitants, for they rarely leave the woods. But some travelers and rangers carry intriguing stories back to campfires and public houses.

MARGREVIANS

In over 30,000 square miles of forest, only a handful of human villages are known to exist. Most of their insular inhabitants, known collectively as Margrevians, live out their lives without ever venturing beyond the shade of the forest's clinging boughs. To outsiders, a Margrevian's life is a mysterious one, filled with strange sayings, regimented rituals, and daily traditions that seem superstitious and backward.



One or two elected individuals, commonly defilers of the Old Ways, conduct the village's infrequent business with outsiders. These villagers emerge from the woods at coaching inns to trade for salt and other rare commodities. Except for these excursions, few outsiders ever see most Margrevians in person, for the forest folk come and go as quickly as possible, often in the middle of the night when fewer civilized folk are about. Some coaching inn owners describe the Margrevians from the deepest parts of the forest as "disturbing to view" with their oversized eyes and ears. They say that the deep-forest folk stare at your heart and never blink. They say that the Margrevian's large eyes and awkward mannerisms stem from living deep within the dark forest for generations, or possibly from interbreeding with fey or darker powers. Kariv retell stories of the discovery of deep-forest Margrevian skeletons with strangely twisted limbs that no human should have. Perhaps they are just poor, inbred souls slowly degenerating in form and function. Or perhaps something sinister does transpire in those hidden villages.

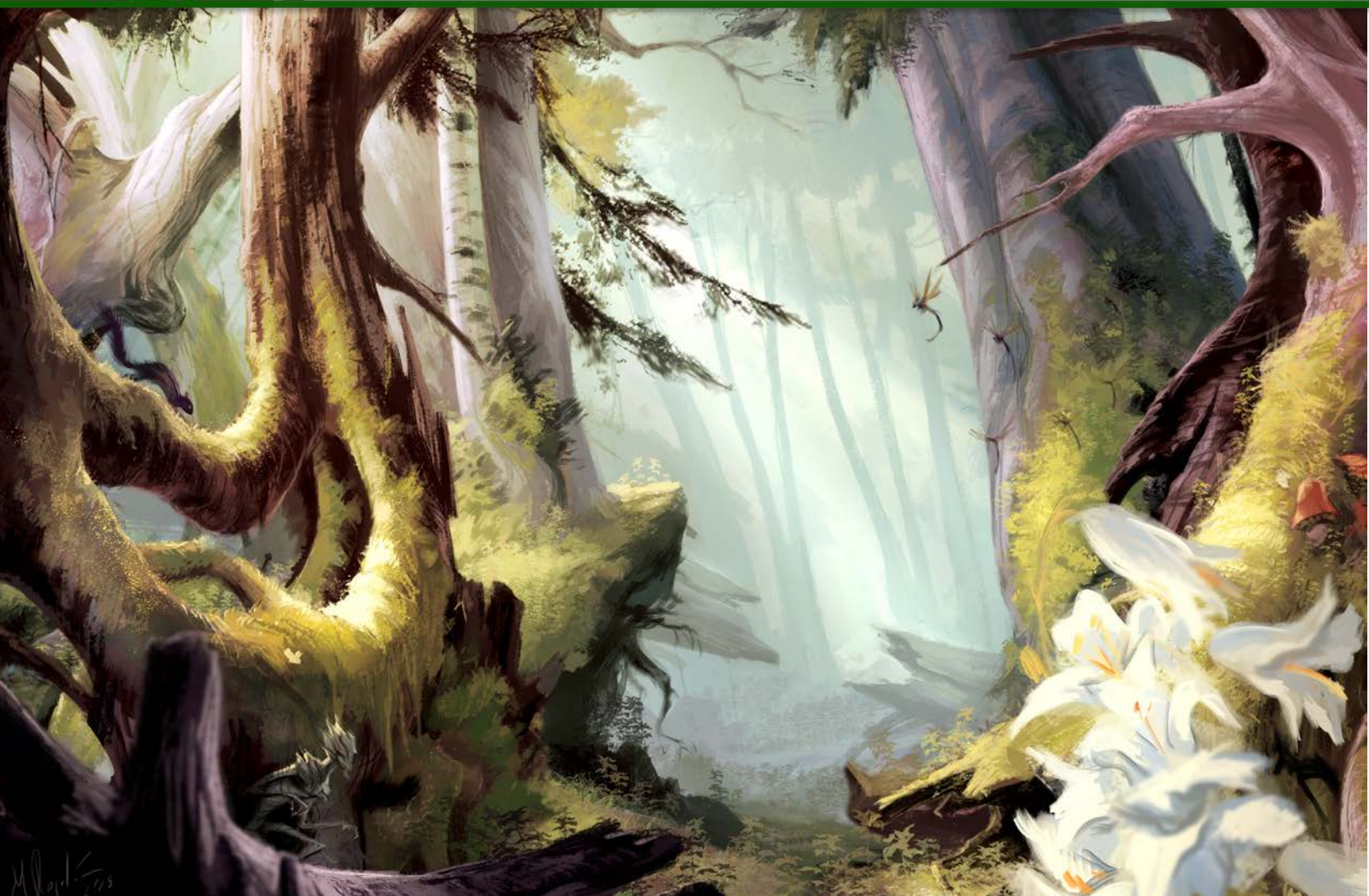
THE OLD WAYS

If people want to live in the Margreve Forest or even wander it safely, they must learn how to feed the forest with rhyme and ritual. Only this is not how the inhabitants think of it.

Their rhymes and rituals are merely "the Old Ways," passed down from generation to generation. To Margrevians, the Old Ways have spiritual connotations, habitually observed and rarely shared with outsiders. PCs who endeavor to learn the Old Ways quickly find themselves participating in the mood and traditions of the forest.

The forest's permanent inhabitants believe in countless superstitions and traditions, all representative of the Old Ways. The details vary wildly from place to place, but a few of the practices have adherents throughout the forest:

- Margrevians open the eyes of their dead, lest the deceased wander lost and angry through the wood, unable to find their way to the afterlife.
- Sinners confess their transgressions by cutting themselves and dripping their blood upon the thirsty forest floor.
- A bloodless person can't pass to the afterlife. Consequently, the dead are never buried, lest the roots exsanguinate them before the souls can reach the afterlife.
- One of the greatest punishments is to be buried—dead or alive. Spirits of the buried haunt the Margreve Forest. Every dawn, they return to their graves and to the root wicker cage that was once their circulatory system.





- Any manufactured structure built without sacrificing blood to the forest shakes itself down upon its owner.
- In a year's time, treants grow from those dead who have commended themselves to the forest with sap, seed, and ritual.
- There are places in the forest that give or take youth, but only the unborn and the dead can find them.
- Margrevians extinguish torches before midnight. This practice is related to a far older tradition: Margrevians don't permit white moths to gather, lest a witch hide among their number.
- If you count butterflies one less than your group's number, one of you will die.
- A common belief is that an evil creature is born every time a "civilized" person enters the woods.
- Beasts must never leave the forest as tamed companions of outsiders, lest they become infatuated with "civilization" and become half-men, the abominations that outsiders call lycanthropes.
- If you nail the skin or hair of a sick person to a tree, the tree will absorb part of the disease and lend its strength to healing the illness.
- Every year, Margrevian kin, friends, and lovers celebrate the upcoming spring by giving each other blood-dyed pieces of thread. Each wears the thread until a tree signifying their relationship blossoms, whereupon the bearer drapes the thread across the blossoming branch. It is an ill omen if the tree never flowers.
- Every plant has a theme, a power, and a purpose. Flowers tend to be beguilers, and that is perhaps why outsiders are so fond of them. True power lies in leaf, stem, and root.
- Salt is incapable of holding magic, and it makes an excellent ward against magical creatures, enchantments, and curses. Margrevians who hear rumors of salt-encrusted springs are like gold diggers hearing of a new vein. Salt is one of the few reasons that Margrevians emerge to encounter merchants along the Great Northern Road.

SITES OF INTEREST

The Margreve Forest is divided into the Western, Central, and Eastern regions, each with its own heart. The Great Northern Road, a trade route between Zobeck and the Blood Kingdom, cuts through the middle of the Western Margreve and is the only source of civilization in the forest—though it is far from an easy or safe trek. The end of this section features major locations that can serve as hubs of adventure, travel, or respite for the PCs.

DANCING STONES

Dancing Stones are any of the magic stones within the Margreve Forest that are connected to the ley lines that run through the forest. Although many ley line conjunctions and mystical crossroads are marked with a set of runestones or standing stones, the dancing stones of the Margreve Forest are quite a bit more animated and dangerous than the typical circle of stones. They are not animated often, but when they are, the Dancing Stones come alive and hold various forms of celebrations, ceremonies of ley line manipulation, imprisonments, and even executions. They are most often awakened to help shift a ley line in some useful fashion, as their dancing can enhance, dampen, or reroute a ley line.

TIMING

The stones are well known for being active at solstices and equinoxes and are rather quiet most of the rest of the year, with a few important exceptions. The dancing stones can be awakened by a druid of 4th level or higher that spends 10 minutes communing with the power within the stones and the forest, by anyone who has a connection to ley lines or ley magic (see *Midgard Worldbook*, *Midgard Heroes Handbook*, and *Midgard Magic: Ley Lines* for more information on ley lines and ley magic), or by anyone casting a *meld into stone* spell on them.

Once awakened, the stones dance, and those who see them are also compelled to dance. A creature that sees a stone dancing and is within 30 feet of the stone must succeed on a DC 14 WIS save or dance alongside the stone until the stone returns to rest, typically 1d4 hours later. On a success, a creature is immune to the dancing compulsion of that set of stones for the next 24 hours. Other than requiring the creature to continue dancing and to stay within 30 feet of the stone, the dancing doesn't inhibit the creature's movement or actions. At the GM's discretion, dancing might disrupt or prevent casting spells with somatic components or actions that require fine control, such as picking a lock. At the end of each hour of dancing, a creature must succeed on a DC 14 CON save or suffer one level of exhaustion.

LOCALES AND KNOWN STONES

The sites of the dancing stones are associated with the various twists, flows, and tributaries of the Black Road and the Red Boar's Run, the two titanic ley lines that surge or trickle through the Margreve Forest (see the *Midgard Worldbook* for more information on the ley lines of Midgard). At some times, these ley lines are quite easy for anyone with arcane training to detect; at other times they are wisps of magic, their strength dependent on the flow of arcane seasons that few understand.

BLACK ROAD STONES

The Black Road's standing stones are usually simple menhirs set in a triangle; at other times, two stones support a third as the lintel (in these cases, entering the Black Road requires passing through the doorway constructed by the stones). The five stone markers of the Black Road in the Margreve Forest are:

- **Mother's Maw.** Two side stones and a lintel that somehow suggests a giant's face or an open mouth. Rather intimidating, and also quite chilly underneath it, even in summer.
- **Hungry Bears.** Two large and one small stone that lean toward each other, but that do not quite form a tripod. Popular among the bearfolk, who sometimes run off "trespassers" who squat at the site for too long.
- **Silver Spinners.** Four stones with veins of some silvery material, said to be a site of rituals conducted by **lunarchidna** (see the **Appendix**). Web strands woven into nets hang like a canopy between the stones.
- **Teller of Tales.** Three tall stones and one fallen one that are said to speak to visitors on occasion, if addressed politely or invoked through ritual. The three standing stones are always marked with runes, but rarely the same ones twice; the fallen stone is blank. A

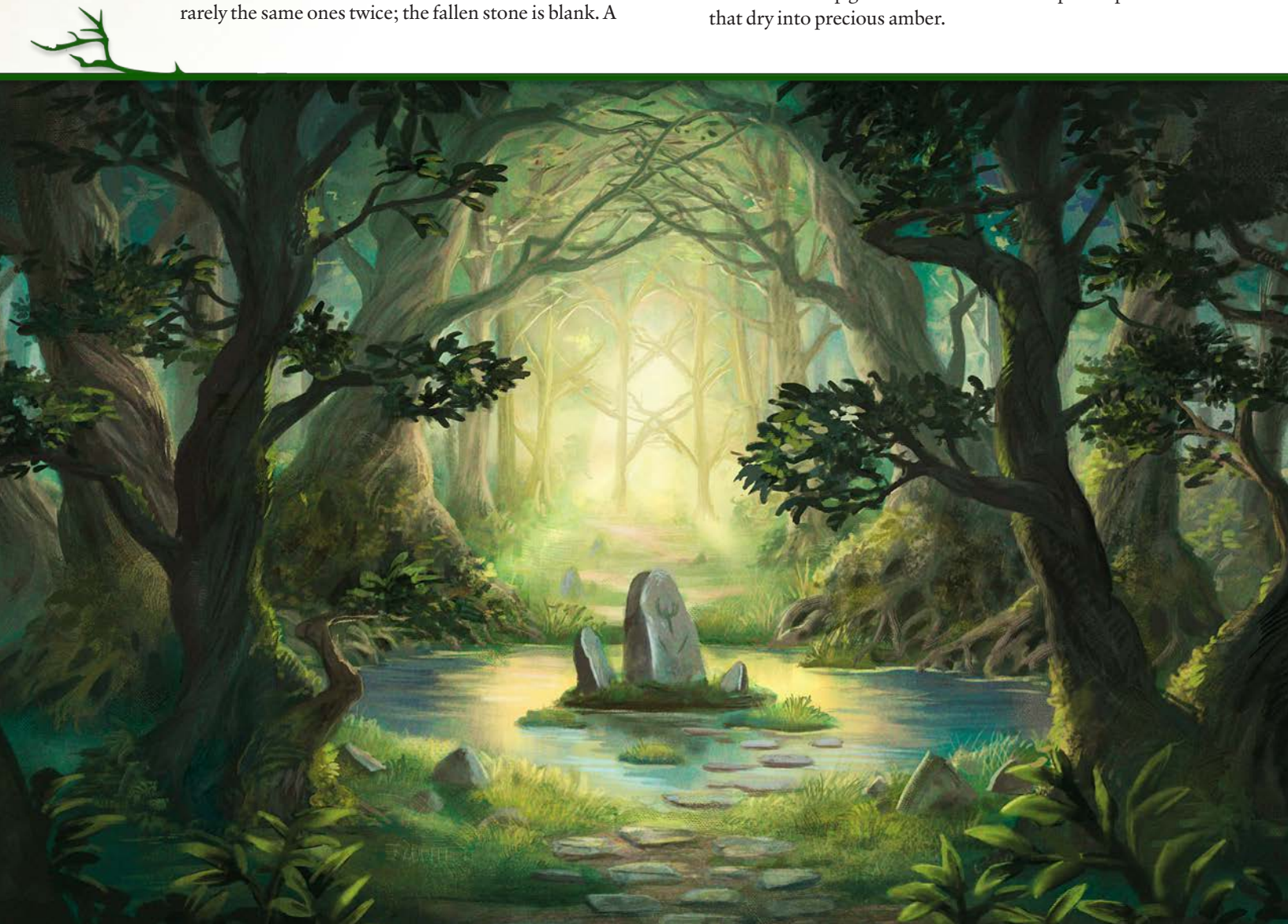
comprehend languages spell is required to decipher them. Sometimes they discuss the weather, sometimes they speak of danger and adventure, depending on how one stands with the Old Margreve.

- **Three Soldiers.** Widely believed to be an elven general's burial mound, this small hillock stands over the surrounding forest and provides a view to the horizon. The three pale gray stones on top of the mound are heavily marked with elvish runes describing a warrior's life.

RED BOAR'S RUN STONES

For the more direct line of Red Boar's Run, the stones are a bit more intimidating; offerings to dark gods such as the Hunter and Marena are often found at these stones, and (more rarely) offerings to Sarastra, Holda, or Yarila and Porevit. The stones of Red Boar's Run are all marked with elvish runes, sometimes defaced in the northerly reaches running through Morgau to the Nieder Strait. The three best-known stones of the Red Boar's Run in the Margreve Forest are:

- **Queen's Daughters.** These three stones surround the entrance to a cairn that was looted long ago. The stones sometimes weep golden tears that smell of pine sap and that dry into precious amber.





- **The Coven.** These deep reddish-brown stones are streaked with black and gold inclusions, and each is carved with spirals, stars, and other symbols. There are usually three or four stones in the Coven, but visitors have reported as many as six stones gathered; it seems that some members of this set of stones regularly wander off. The invocation of the ley line road here seems to be much easier for females than for males, especially female spellcasters.
- **The Spires.** The tallest of the Margreve Forest's stones, each of the seven spires stands more than 30 feet tall. Made of a pale gneiss, they are aligned to the stars and the sun, and druids often come here at the solstice or the equinox for particular rituals and measurement of the seasons. It is said that one can step directly from the top of the spires onto Red Boar's Run and emerge at the shore of the Nieder Strait or the palace at Cronepisht in a day.

LESSER STONES

In addition to the ley-line anchoring stones, dozens if not hundreds of lesser stones are scattered through the Margreve Forest, some mossy and forgotten, others still tended by the alseid or the bearfolk. Here are five of the better-known ones for you to place as you wish in the forest.

- **Antler Hill Stones.** Beloved by the alseid and considered sacred ground for the deerfolk, the Antler Hill Stones are relatively small and round, as smooth as fine-wrought pillars. Each is carved with either a set of antlers at the top or a flowery set of ferns and greenery, and there are more than a dozen such stones. The alseid say each one is the grave of a grand druid from among their people, and the hill itself is a place of worship and remembrance each year at the autumn equinox. The spirits of these druids sometimes animate the Antler Hill Stones to strike down interlopers who visit the stones.
- **Fish Stones.** These stones are always found in water, usually in Grandfather's Tears but occasionally in a pond or on a marshy hummock. They are five blue-gray stones, carved with images of fish, frogs, and a crab. The stones produce an ear-shattering array of croaking noises in the spring, and some believe a minor ley line connects these stones to the court of the River King in the Arbonesse.
- **Gentlemen of the Gate.** These four pink and gray stones and two lintels create two portals and are widely believed to be connected to a trickster god, possibly Baccho or Loki or even Volund in a whimsical mood. Gamblers believe the site is lucky and make pilgrimages to it when their luck has turned sour. Bandits likewise find the place congenial, since servants of the law seem to have great difficulty finding these particular stones.

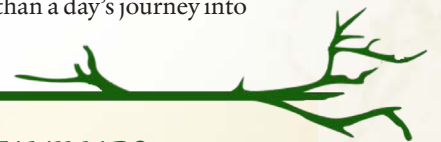
- **Three Silent Lads.** These stones all lean a bit, and two of them lean against each other for support. They are usually found on the western edge of the Margreve Forest, between Obertal and Valach, and when discovered, they invariably attract a pilgrimage of Ninkash worshippers, who consider them propitious and holy. Their small pilgrim caravan usually rolls up with some carts of ale and offers an impressive service with a hundred holy toasts. When the pilgrims wake up the next morning, the Three Silent Lads have moved on.
- **Troll Picture Stones.** Simple tan stones carved with images of birds and deer, the troll picture stones were once venerated by trollkin and other darker fey creatures. They seem to have been abandoned since the Retreat; though power still hums at the site. Only a very few trollkin and some ogres know how to channel it. An ogre shaman named Snowdrop lived there for a time, but she seems to have wandered away. A trollkin band led by a young shaman has been tracking her to learn some of the tales and spells associated with the picture stones.

WESTERN MARGREVE

The Western Margreve represents the one third of the forest that lies west of the Great Northern Road. Here, old growth trees and dense underbrush predominate. Line of sight ranges from 30 to 60 ([1d4 + 2] × 10) feet. The primary canopy is unnaturally thick, and the environment on the floor is perpetually dim or dark.

The terrain is fairly flat, with the exception of the perch of Castle Shadowcrag in the center of this area and the rise of the Dwarven Cantons off to the west. Numerous streams meander down from these higher grounds and stagnate in small lakes that dot this side of the forest. In many places, the multitiered dense underbrush make the forest impossible to traverse except by canoe.

The Western Margreve is the oldest section of the forest, and the least densely inhabited. No known human communities exist. But less than a day's journey into



DANCING STONE FAMILIARS

On rare occasions, a lesser dancing stone might choose to follow a spellcaster as a familiar or companion. A dancing stone familiar is somewhat oblong or spherical, and it moves by rolling or dancing. It uses the statistics of a **homunculus**, except it doesn't have a flying speed, and it replaces the homunculus's Bite attack with a Slam attack that deals bludgeoning damage and force damage (instead of piercing damage and poison damage) and doesn't poison the target. The stone understands Common and Sylvan but can't speak.

the fringes of the forest, evidence of numerous failed settlements hide among the trees. Decrepit structures slowly weather and collapse, and vines overrun statues and stone arches. The Western Margreve is defiantly wild and actively resists habitation. Here, villages fail and individuals struggle to survive.

The head of the School of Star and Shadow Magic at Zobeck's Arcane Collegium claims that shadow magic threads through the trees of the Western Margreve. He points to the magic woven at Castle Shadowcrag, the shadow fey that still emerge, and the midnight echoes of baying **hounds of the night** (see *Tome of Beasts 1*). He discourages anyone from entering the Western Margreve without first learning fundamental shadow magic and undertaking lessons he teaches at the Collegium. Lesson One: Never discount Old Margreve superstitions, especially those about shadows and death. When a Margrevian says, "Never sleep against a tree's west side, lest its morning shadow swallow you," best take heed.

ASHEN GLADES

Legend claims that Perun, god of lightning and war, threw a pair of lightning bolts across the Western Heart of the Margreve Forest, scarring the face of the landscape with wide swaths of charred wood. To this day, nothing grows in these places. Blackened logs cover the forest floor, and the jagged edges of snapped trunks poke between them like a spiked pit made of trees. Dozens of **ala** (see *Tome of Beasts 1*) nest in the charred tree trunks and herald the preternatural storms that rage over the forest. The Old Margreve tolerates the **ala** because the **ala** do not tolerate interlopers, especially humanoids. The hags attempt to kill or eject any who enter their domain.

Adventure Hook. The priests of Perun believe that the survival of Zobeck depends on their obtaining a fragment of one of Perun's lightning bolts that still sparks somewhere beneath the Ashen Glades. The temple hires the PCs to locate and retrieve the relic. Divination reveals that a **zmey** (see *Tome of Beasts 1*) is imprisoned somewhere under the Western Margreve, and that these **ala** hate dragons even more than they hate humanoids. Freeing the beast might be the PCs' only chance to distract the powerful **ala** away from the site where the hags roost.

BRIARBLACK HILL

A field of baby's breath surrounds a hill covered in jet black buds and briars. Few have ever seen the place, but legends say that a mighty battle once took place in the sky above it. A dozen **ala** (see *Tome of Beasts 1*), wicked spirits of lightning and pain, brought down an elder **zmey**, a multiheaded black dragon of lust and dominance. The great creature crashed to the ground. Thanks to happenstance and a magical wellspring on the site, the dragon's corpse never completely decayed. In time, soil covered it, forming Briarblack Hill.

Adventure Hook. A magical wellspring with powers of rejuvenation does indeed flow beneath Briarblack Hill, but it is not quite the fountain of youth that the PCs seek. Wait ... did the hill just move?

CASTLE SHADOWCRAG

Perched on a hill, commanding a panoramic view of the Western Margreve, lie the ruins of Castle Shadowcrag, once the home of kobold miners, shadow fey, and a noble human house named Stross. More recently, the dwarves of Clan Grimbold stayed at the castle for a spell. And certain unnamed wizards and cultists visited them from time to time, to purchase illicit goods. Likewise, fighters seeking weapons forged of starmetal or pure shadow often made their way to the Grimbold dwarves, paying steep prices for weapons and armor not available anywhere else.

Adventure Hook. The dark magic infused into weapons, armor, and wondrous items created at Castle Shadowcrag is fading, and the wizards, cultists, and fighters of old are drawn en masse to Shadowcrag to renew them. In fact, the fading magic is all the ploy of Stross shadow fey half-breed ghosts who extort the gathered magic items' owners into advancing the ghosts' plot to take revenge against Zobeck, the city that was once theirs.

GENEZEK KRAJ RUIN

Little remains of the temples of Genezek Kraj, except for legends of relics and an archipelago of ruined stone arches rising from a sea of underbrush. Hedge witch Vara's flock of thirty wereravens roosts on the arches and in treetop hovels whose entrances face the sky. This "roost" is also home to several varieties of lesser blackbirds and ravens.

Adventure Hook. A forest crone rewards the PCs with a map that leads them toward the fabled relics of Genezek Kraj. It directs them to the grove of arches, up the trees, through the wereravens' lofty hovels, down through hollow trunks, and into the ancient temples' buried chambers. Perhaps the PCs can defeat the traps and guardians that the "forest crone" Vara could not. She and her flock wait topside in ambush.

MINERS' LAMENT

In the Western Margreve, any magics that detect or divine the presence of metal or minerals point to Miners' Lament, a dry gulch nestled along the southwest edge of the forest. The place is a veritable treasure trove of raw ores. Embedded bronze nuggets glow at sunset, and new rain exposes pockets of uncut opal and veins of gold. The first dwarf excavators rubbed their hands in glee, eager to lay claim to the bounty that lay at their feet. But the moment their first pick struck, the walls of the gulch hemorrhaged a great red torrent of clay, mud, and magic that buried all. Some say the gulch turns greed, blood, and bones into the very precious metals that it uses to lure the next victims.



In truth, the gulch is the Western Margreve's cesspool, where the forest channels the dregs of siphoned magic. The forest is incapable of using up siphoned magic completely, and some spells—such as those that deal force damage or radiant damage—leave trace amounts of magical “ash” behind. As this ash flows toward Miners' Lament, precious metals absorb some of it as they too are swept into the gulch. Few have ever claimed any such “treasures” from Miners' Lament.

Adventure Hook. The Western Margreve's cesspool reaches deep into the earth, and its corruption has begun to affect creatures above and below ground. Malignant earth elementals and creatures that can only be described as walking spells make their way toward Zobeck's outlying farms. The Margreve Forest parts trees and foliage to let the creatures pass. It is more than happy to watch its magical refuse show itself out.

PARIYA

The “leper” colony, of infected intelligent undead that fled Morgau a decade ago has, against all expectations, survived to form a small hamlet in the northwestern edge of the Margreve Forest. Their contagious radiant energy illness is a clear and present danger to their former masters in the Grand Duchy. Their existence is known only to King Lucan and select advisors. Should it become more widely known, the Grand Duchy's position of dominance would be greatly weakened.

Adventure Hook. King Lucan's efforts to destroy the colony have all been rebuffed by the Old Margreve, and he has been forced to pursue a different approach. A single priestess of the Blood Sisters has been dispatched to recruit a group of heroes to find and destroy the hamlet by any means necessary. If the heroes discover the truth, they will have knowledge that King Lucan and many others would kill for.

THE CRUMBLING TOMB

Covered in lichen and gripped by ivy, the Crumbling Tomb rests in the eternal darkness of the forest canopy. Behind its mithral-barred doors lies a mummified sage, guarded by a pair of sorcerous vines. A unicorn is the only recurring visitor. Shadow fey legends say that when the time comes, the corpse will gain unlife and take sides in a pivotal conflict in the Margreve Forest. At dawn, shadow ivy pulls the Crumbling Tomb underground, leaving a small chip of stone to mark the site. At dusk the Crumbling Tomb emerges in another Western Margreve location. Some say that the tomb is searching for something.

Adventure Hook. The PCs require critical information that only the unicorn possesses. To meet the unicorn, the PCs must locate the Crumbling Tomb after dusk and enter it before it disappears at dawn. When the unicorn doesn't show on the first night, the PCs must either abandon their

mission or remain inside the tomb and shadow walk with it to its next location. On the shadow walk between dawn and dusk, the PCs experience an adventure on the tattered edge of the Plane of Shadow and learn the terrible truth about the tomb's unicorn visitor.

UNDEAD AND THE NORTHERN SWAMPS

Zombies, skeletons, and other mindless undead prowl the northwestern edge of the Margreve Forest. Centuries past have seen countless battles in the swamps, and the ground is littered with the remains of those that fought there.

Adventure Hook. The Black Canton dwarves have noticed a change in the behavior of the omnipresent mindless undead and enlist the aid of adventurers to seek out the source. They believe, incorrectly, that Lord Fandorin is behind the changes. The heroes learn that worshipers of Chernobog are using the fertile grounds to establish a base for further incursions into the Forest.


CENTRAL MARGREVE

The Central Margreve is the third of the forest that lies east of the Great Northern Road and west of the Cloudwalls. The underbrush is less twisted and dense than in the Western Margreve, the canopy is not as thick, and the forest floor is not as dark. Line of sight ranges from 50 to 120 ($[1d8 + 4] \times 10$) feet. Pine, spruce, cedar, and other coniferous trees and shrubs dominate the northern portion and fill the valleys between the fingers of the Cloudwalls. Needles, pine cones, and ferns carpet the forest floor. In the south, deciduous trees dominate, dropping their colored leaves and seeds upon a floor thick with detritus, creeping ivy, and night blooming flowers.

A contagious wildness permeates the Central Margreve, and the place smells of cedar and musk. Malefic Beasts and rabid animals are common. In general, the forest seems more alive than the oppressively dark Western Margreve. In the Central Margreve, Spider Crones spin tales and proffer poisons, **feral hunters** kill those who wander too deep into the forest, and **leshy** (see *Tome of Beasts 1*) erase trails and imperil interlopers. Old World magic throbs with power. The uncontainable spells of Baba Yaga and her sisters hide in the hollows and chase each other through the trees.

ARMIGER WOOD

In the crook of Grandfather's Tears lies a stretch of forest where rusty armor girdles the trees, as if a regiment of warriors had been transformed to gnarled wood or saplings had sprouted within suits of discarded plate. Forest goblins sometimes run through here beating on their tarnished breastplates like drums, a sure sign that they are whipping themselves up to cause major trouble. Despite years of such abuse and layers of rust, the armor shows no sign of falling apart.



Adventure Hook. The residents of Whistlehollow Village, south of the Armiger Wood, recently experienced a sort of enlightenment, a vision of life not predicated on superstitions. They expelled their old puritanical leadership in favor of the new ways. The exiled leaders are returning to take revenge, and they are not alone. As the vengeful druids of old once did, the exiles have animated many of the trees in the Armiger Wood, creating raving treants with a level of barbarian and a distinctly un-treelike blood lust.

CRADLE GROVE

The hearty maple trees in this part of the forest feature giant burls at their bases. A natural depression on the top gives each burl a basin shape, and the formations collect rainwater as it runs down the trees. Villagers from nearby Ulchik Village ladle out the water and pour it over newborns in a forest baptism ceremony. Babes dedicated to the forest are left overnight in the burl cradles, defended only by the great trees. On nights of the full moon, as many as seven babies might be found lying in Cradle Grove.

Adventure Hook. A party of powerful do-gooders “rescued” three babes from Cradle Grove, committed them to an orphanage in Zobeck, and then disappeared on some promising new adventure. Terrible tragedies erupt around the children. People die. The PCs must discover where the “unlucky ones” came from and take them back safely to Ulchik Village. The orphanage is anxious to see the babes go, especially the one with the white pupils.

DARKBUD MARSH

A sacred species of lily-of-the-valley grows in a marsh beside the River Argent. When this flower, appearing like a chain of tiny white bells, is picked, it doesn’t die. Instead, its buds blacken and wither when touched by sin, disloyalty, and deception. Margrevians respect this flower that sees into the heart, but outsiders have no such compunction. Some courtiers and rich merchants have begun sewing the blossoms into their cuffs as an ostentatious display of their purity and honesty.

Of course, such individuals have the coin to replace the rare flower when it blackens. Forest folk worry that outsiders will harvest the darkbud to extinction, a troubling fact in light of their belief that the flowers absorb the evil proclivities of the forest, and as the flowers’ numbers dwindle, the dark side of the forest slowly emerges.

Adventure Hook. Spent and blackened darkbuds, smelling of rotting meat, quickly draw rats, dogs, and other carnivores. Creatures that eat the discarded buds see the black hearts of those who divested their sin into the flowers. All over Zobeck, such animals are turning on their masters. It is as if the animals are seeing their deceptive, perfidious owners and companions for the first time.

DEAD DRUID’S RUN

A fast-running river thunders through the north end of the Central Heart of the forest. Where the rapids are roughest, no trees or underbrush encroach near the river’s bank for one hundred feet. Instead, an elliptical-shaped bank lies open to the sky. Rising from the whitewater, five jagged, roughly humanoid-shaped rocks burst toward the sky. The folk of Ulchik Village say the rocks were once druids that one of Baba Yaga’s children encased in stone, presumably as punishment for some treacherous deed they suffered upon her—or attempted to. If one concentrates on drowning out the cacophony of the whitewater, a chorus of screams can be heard emanating from the rocks. It is said that the druids will grant a wish to whomever frees them.

Adventure Hook. A thousand years ago, a gold plaque at Dead Druids’ Run told the tale of the sacrifice the druids made to protect Midgard. A witch did petrify the druids, but at their request. Under each stony figure, an elder vampire lies buried in the riverbed. Stakes shatter against the chests of these legendary creatures. Sunlight warps around their foul bodies. Running water blackens where they step. Only the sacrifice of the druids holds the unnatural creatures down, and only a (foolish) creature of good heart can free the druids from their timeless duty in the stone.

Commander Beleneus of the Order of the Knights Incorporeal holds the lost plaque, and his patience wears thin. The rumors he has circulated for generations have not had the effect he’d anticipated. It is time that he and his consort take an active role in freeing the trapped vampires.

FIVE WAGON OAK

The largest oak south of the Pine Bogs once grew on the southern edge of the Central Margreve. But an enterprising family of retired loggers chopped it down, cleared the surrounding land, and built an entire farming community out of its wood. The community is gone now. All that remains on the overgrown site is a forlorn windmill, covered in vines and moss. The creaking of the mill can still be heard in the dead of night, but the wheel has not turned in a century. Those who hear the sound slowly lose their minds. Some messengers following the Argent’s southern bank toward Zobeck have drowned themselves in an attempt to escape the terrible creak by submerging themselves.

Adventure Hook. Too many messengers from the East are not showing up in Zobeck as expected. The latest one to go missing carried crucial documents. The Free City, suspecting bandits or dangerous creatures, sends the PCs to investigate and neutralize the threat. The heroes discover a thriving farm at Five Wagon Oak—but none of it is real, except for the old windmill. Inside it lie the hollow shells of the messengers, which now house rats. The PCs do reclaim some documents, though—documents they never should have seen.

FOGROLLS

Along the southern edge of the Margreve Forest, hot water bubbles up from the swampy ground. Mud fields, each deeper than a man is tall, swallow unsuspecting and unprepared travelers. The hot water heats the air, and convection carries the warmth toward the River Argent. Throughout winter, a dense fog bank forms over the water and rolls over the surrounding land, cloaking fields and hanging in the forest for miles. Even at high noon, visibility is limited to a few handspans.

Adventure Hook. While traveling along the River Argent in late fall, the PCs and a group of Kariv wake to a bitterly cold morning shrouded in mist. Fog shadows haunt the Fogrolls, calling to worried Kariv parents in the muted voices of their lost children. Unlike regular shadows, fog shadows are dark gray, have a soft, three-dimensional quality, and feed on life in the manner of will-o'-wisps.

GRANDFATHER'S TEARS

In the center of the Central Margreve, cedar water flows out of the Pine Bogs. Farther northeast, fresh water trickles down the Cloudwalls, gathers at Splitoaks Crossing, and creates a fast-moving river that meets the slower tributary through the Pine Bogs at Three Sisters Lake. The lake overflows into an artery called Grandfather's Tears, which emerges from the Central Margreve near Five Wagon Oak and joins the River Argent heading south.

Where the Western Margreve miners' Lament as a cesspool for the dregs of siphoned magic that the forest can't completely burn, the Central Margreve washes its magical ash away. Strange and terrible things, dead and alive, float out of the forest in Grandfather's Tears. Over the millennia, trace magic has accumulated on the riverbed and infused the river water like salt. At night, the rocky riverbed glows with a faint blue luminescence. Dead organic material rots quickly when submerged. Wooden boats and oars decay quickly, making river travel nigh impossible.

Aquatic wildlife has adapted to breathing and swimming in the tainted water. Because the river removes protective layers of dead skin and scales before wounds have the chance to heal and new skin grows underneath, many species have developed regeneration (1 hit point per round) to compensate. Those who have superior healing abilities survive and breed themselves to the top of the food chain. Fish, eel, and frogs grow patches of horny plate instead of skin or scales, and many appear as devolved as the horseshoe crabs that skim the river bottom. Forest denizens that habitually eat these creatures or slake their thirst with the water of Grandfather's Tears appear equally changed.

Adventure Hook. Tin-bottomed boats and living vessels, like the canoes grown at Edgewater Village in the Eastern Margreve, are the only watercraft capable of surviving the rot, fighting the current, and carrying the PCs upstream along Grandfather's Tears. Getting to Edgewater, one hundred miles into the forest, is the hard part.

MOONDRAWN CAVES

A wellspring captures the magic of the moon. It carries moonlight to the deepest depths of a network of caves in the far north of the Margreve Forest. Far below the surface world, a slothful **lunar devil** (see *Tome of Beasts 1*) uses the stream as a source of nourishment and power. The devil emerges from the cave periodically to do the bidding of the Moonlit King.

Adventure Hook. A middle-aged woman hires the PCs to recover her father, a renowned explorer who refuses to retire. Clues point toward a magical wellspring that her father believed (mistakenly) to be the fountain of youth. The PCs follow the trail of the old man deep into the Moondrawn Caves and find him with his new ally.



PALEWOOD

Amid a copse of white birch no larger than a town market, a limestone outcrop rises nearly as high as the treetops. Riddled with small holes, the crag is home to a burgeoning cadre of tiny wicker effigies. When a forest resident commits a sin, he or she weaves an effigy, divests the sin into it, sacrifices a month of life energy, and stakes the newly animated wicker figure on the forest floor for the wild beasts to ravage. Sometimes the sin-eating effigies escape their ignominious fate. Why they gather at the crag at Palewood is a mystery that most forest folk believe is best left unsolved.

Adventure Hook. The sin-eater effigies at Palewood possess memory of and feel guilt for sins they never committed. Many of them have become the epitome of the sins from which they are woven. The wrathful boil with hatred for their creators. The envious want to change places with their creators. The proud demand their due, and the greedy want their creators' very souls. Soon, they will organize. Soon, they will march.

SPIRITSIGN

Tall trees ring an unremarkable clearing fifty miles northeast of the Fogrolls. High overhead, their branches mingle in the wind. The alseid believe that the true of heart experience omens here. Unless such petitioners know they are in a sacred place, however, they might remain oblivious to the signs that the trees cast as dappled light upon the forest floor. The alseid have taken back the glen from the griffons that had claimed it, renamed it Spiritsign, and consider it a holy site.

Adventure Hook. The shadow fey want to establish a hunting lodge in the Central Margreve and have chosen this clearing to begin construction. The alseid have been decimated in the past by the shadow fey, and now they fear they will lose the holy site they so recently reclaimed. But the signs show that a group of champions (the PCs) might succeed in removing the shadow fey threat once and for all.

TWILIGHT FORK

Drawnbow Trail heads east from the banks of the River Argent and terminates at Twilight Fork. By day or at night, Twilight Fork looks like an ordinary forest trail. But not so at twilight, when ghostly fog and an ominous quality settles upon the site. They say that a traveler who is torn over a life-and-death decision can take two paths at the same time. One path leads half his soul to the reaper. The other path infuses the other half of his soul with the power to overcome whatever problem besets him. The desperate and the indecisive come to Twilight Fork, but only tattered half-souls leave.

Adventure Hook. Two men hire the PCs to capture and return a woman who has fled into the forest. She is a spouse to both men. When the first husband returned after his wife had long presumed him dead, she became torn between her old and new husbands and fled toward Twilight Fork. If the PCs don't catch her in time, she returns with only half a soul. Catching the woman is not easy, for she is a talented rogue and wizard.

ULCHIK VILLAGE

Isolated from the civilized world by the Cloudwalls and thousands of square miles of dangerous wilderness, Ulchik Village is one of the most remote human settlements in this area of the world. It is also one of the strangest. The villagers worship Pyotr, a withdrawn tree-aspect of the Green Gods, Porevit and Yarila. The village adults live the silent, enduring lives of trees, without clothing or shelter, and very often in tree shape. The village children feed and water their elders. It is a difficult task for the youngsters, who hobble along with twisted necks, clubfeet, and degenerate limbs that centuries of inbreeding have begotten.

Adventure Hook. Ever since a midwife came to the village a few years ago, the telltale signs and aftereffects of inbreeding among the villagers have miraculously receded. The heroes come across the village and immediately notice the physical differences between the younger and older children. The villagers readily volunteer that the midwife has blessed them with healthy offspring for the first time in many generations. They don't as readily admit to the existence of the shrine to the Red Goddess Marena that she brought with her.

WHISTLEHOLLOW VILLAGE

South of Armiger Wood lies the village of Whistlehollow. Proponents of the new ways have expelled the puritanical leaders of old and are forging toward a new era in the Margreve Forest. Heretical druids have developed methods to mask themselves from the forest and make frequent use of proxies and subterfuge to further their goals.

Adventure Hook. The PCs are approached by an elder of the village and enlisted to destroy an inert **wickerman** (see *Creature Codex*) that has been seen in the nearby forest. He explains that followers of the new ways seed these constructs throughout the forest and are waiting until the right time to activate them. He tells the heroes that the constructs are vulnerable to fire, and downing one should be as easy as putting it to the torch.

The elder is in fact a druid of the new ways and is using the PCs to activate the wickermen. He hopes not only to progress his agenda but to also make sure that the ire of the forest is directed firmly toward the PCs.



EASTERN MARGREVE

The Eastern Margreve is the third of the forest that lies east of the Cloudwalls. The youngest section of the wood, its trees are merely millennia old. Conifers dominate the higher elevations and fade into deciduous varieties as the land falls toward the Rothenian Plain and the open steppe of centaur territory. There is a grand openness to the Eastern Margreve, like walking through a palace of pillars. Fewer trees reach for the sky, but their branches and leaves are legion and form a canopy just as thick as that in the Central Margreve. In most locations, the underbrush is not dense enough to impede movement and not remarkable enough to use as landmarks. A monotony of trees stretches in every direction, making the forest especially difficult to navigate (WIS [Survival] checks to avoid getting lost are made with disadvantage). Line of sight ranges from 90 to 180 ($(\text{Id}10 + 8) \times 10$) feet.

A handful of small, freshwater lakes hide in the woods, but they are difficult to find. Interlopers who lack survival skills and who do not carry in their own water frequently die of thirst (WIS [Survival] checks associated with locating potable water and game are made with disadvantage). Because of the dearth of fresh water, fewer wild animals make their homes in the Eastern Margreve. Many of these, forced to drink the tainted water of Grandfather's Tears, appear both dire and devolved, with aggressive personalities, tumors, spines, and patches of horn and shell plating. Trees survive by tapping the water table, which provides the same sustenance as the lakes.

Aberrations, Undead, and other unnatural creatures roam the eastern woods and contribute to its inhospitable reputation. But these denizens are uncommon, and one is as likely to die of thirst, hunger, or exposure as one is to perish in the claws of a wandering monster.

Compared to the dark, overgrown feel of the Western Margreve and the wild, old magic atmosphere of the Central Margreve, the Eastern Margreve seems vacant and dreamlike. It includes vast areas of utter silence, where no birds sing and nothing moves but the wind through the branches and leaves. At night, the conspicuous absence of chirping insects and hooting owls becomes especially disconcerting. Were it not for night falling and sunrise coming to pass, time might lose meaning for a party camping under these boughs.

Indeed, some legends tell of travelers who enter the Eastern Margreve young and emerge old, and some who enter old and emerge at a younger time of life. The basis for these tales is unclear. Perhaps the windblown branches hold the power to entrance and sustain. Perhaps explorers stumble upon cursed wellsprings in their search for water. Or perhaps the veil to the Astral Plane thins here, and unbidden dreams carry folk to its timeless expanse. This last conjecture would also explain the numerous sightings of ghosts, as spirits of loved ones pass through the Astral Plane on their way to the afterlife.

BRAIDWOOD VILLAGE

Every year, more centaurs abandon the isolationist ideals of their ancestors and gravitate toward cosmopolitan trade centers. Not so at Braidwood Village, where tradition and the Old Ways thrive. Legendary hunters and warriors, the Braidwood centaurs dominate the southeastern Margreve Forest. They frequently challenge nearby alseid tribes over hunting grounds and water sources and defend their territory from Rothenian centaurs looking for wood and game. Every structure at Braidwood Village is grown, not constructed. With purposeful grafting, pruning, and braiding, the centaurs shape living trees into homes and art. Complex living sculptures of ancestors locked in battle with their enemies decorate the grounds.

Adventure Hook. A coven of hags from the Hag's Tooth Hills has teased the centaur warriors out of Braidwood Village before surrounding it in an impenetrable ring of whirling leaves and hair. Inside the ring, the PCs and a pathetic cadre of young, old, and infirm centaurs fight for their lives against hags and their poisonous allies. If the hags capture the centaur elder for whom they came, they plan to coax desired knowledge out of him through torture.

CAVES OF SORROW


High in the Cloudwall Mountains, a shallow cave forms what looks like an eye and tear from below. A sect of Kariv travel across the Rothenian Plain, brave the forest, and climb the mountain to practice an incredible form of ancestor worship in the cave. They make sacrifices to a local forest god, who rewards them with one-on-one discussions with their departed loved ones. For worthier sacrifices, the godling allows intimate relations with their departed spouses. It has been this way for generations. A Kariv woman always leaves pregnant.

Adventure Hook. To solve a mystery, the PCs need to speak with a departed soul, but they have no corpse upon which to cast the *Speak with Dead* spell. The Kariv tell the PCs of the Caves of Sorrow and the powers of the godling there. The PCs might offer sacrifices, meet the godling, and walk away satisfied. Or they might realize that the godling is actually an incubus sorcerer using its abilities to don the faces of the departed and keep the sacrifices coming.

DJURDJA FALLS

What little water falls on the eastern side of the Cloudwalls gathers at Djurdja Falls. Here, it plunges into the four-hundred-foot-wide mouth of an upturned cave, where it disappears into darkness, one thousand feet deep. Strange plants dangle hundred-foot-long tendrils over the lip to gather water and nutrients from the waterfall's mist.

Adventure Hook. The PCs lead an expedition up the Cloudwalls, over the cave lip at Djurdja Falls, and down into darkness. The thousand-foot drop leads to whitewater torrents, mile-long belly crawls, and vast caverns. What



alien Aberrations or prehistoric Beasts lurk below the mountain or fight for dominance in this isolated ecology? Can the PCs escape after Baba Yaga's sisters seal the cave mouth? Are the witches trying to bury the same power that the PCs have arrived to explore or that they have inadvertently roused?

LOST HEART'S COPSE

Here, the ghosts of bent-backed men search the underbrush for lost items, missing loved ones, and the souls of their departed mates. Legend says that this stretch of forest calls to all who refuse to move on after loss. Any living creature that enters this area experiences temporary life-blindness. Any affected creature sees only other creatures with life-blindness normally; all others appear incorporeal with muted voices. Unlike when looking at the Material Plane from the Ethereal Plane, inanimate objects and dead creatures appear normal.

Adventure Hook. After stumbling into Lost Heart's Copse, a weeping ghost picking through the underbrush asks the PCs to help him find his wife. The mission takes the life-blind PCs to Zobeck, whose bustling streets now

seem like lonely cobblestones through a quiet, clockwork ghost town. To locate the ghost's wife, the PCs must solve the mystery of her abduction and murder. The crime is old. Clues haunt places that no longer exist. There are no NPCs to help our heroes.

SALT SPRINGS

In the center of the Eastern Margreve, toxic, salt water bubbles up through crusty sores between the rocks. As more water oozes up and cools, the salt precipitates from the suspension, accumulating around the vent and forming roughly human-sized pillars of salt over time. Few know of the site where the "salt men" stand among the trees. A brave kobold family risks making their way here to collect the salt men, bartering them within the forest and selling them beyond the wood to alchemists who claim the salt men have special properties.

Adventure Hook. A wealthy Zobeck merchant learns of the salt springs' existence and sends the PCs to find it, claim it, and build a stockade around it. On their way, the PCs encounter a family of kobolds carrying coffins through the predawn forest. Inside each coffin is a salt man they





are hiding from possible bandits. A dead rat, added to each coffin for smell, completes the deception. The kobolds attempt to thwart the PCs' mission in every way possible. They have already trapped the site of their source of wealth and have no intention of sharing their find, let alone allowing a stockade to be built.

SLEEPWALKER'S HILL

In the northeastern corner of the Margreve Forest, atop a single forested hill, aerial plants drape over the branches strands of moss-like hair and drop their puffy pollen like snowflakes from the canopy. Once a year, the forest's **aridni** (see *Tome of Beasts 1*) collect the pollen and grind it into the dust that imbues their arrows with the power of confusion, fear, uncontrollable laughter, and sleep. The aridni seem to be the only creatures who can remember the hill at all, which is quite remarkable. How can one forget the menagerie of individuals—Beasts and Humanoids alike—that wander here without yesterdays?

Adventure Hook. Creatures too powerful for the aridni to handle have taken up residence near the aerial plants whose pollen they value for their own defense. The aridni need something or someone to vanquish the intruders. The aridni have captured a friend of the heroes and offer the person's freedom in exchange for help exterminating the cluster of **chelicera** (see *Tome of Beasts 1*) now residing in the area.

HEARTS OF THE FOREST

The western and central sections of the Margreve Forest each feature a geographical region known as a heart, and each heart encompasses approximately 5 square miles of forest. Vast concentrations of magical power, siphoned and stored over millennia, pulse through the landscape in these places, adding shadow powers to the Western Heart, and feral powers to the Central Heart. A heart has not yet formed in the Eastern Margreve, but that event is on the cusp. Once realized, it will feature a concentration of dream powers.

The power held in the hearts of the forest exceeds that of major artifacts. Like a major artifact, a singular method for destroying a heart might exist. However, no mortal knows it, and carrying out the deed is nigh impossible. Fire, blight, natural disasters, and the magic of mortals pale before these great seats of the Old Margreve's power. Even the terrible magic of the world's great sorcerers can't destroy a heart, any more than a man can kill a lake with a sword thrust.

Despite the meager threat that individuals present, the Old Margreve tolerates few interlopers in its hearts. Only those well versed in the Old Ways have any chance of surviving the forest's often aggressive response to their presence.

MAJOR LOCATIONS

The Margreve Forest is home to many sites of adventure for PCs. This section details three major areas where PCs might find respite, adventure, or creatures in need of their talents.

BLUEBELL COACHING INN

The old Bluebell is one of the small and cozy coaching inns that lie along the Great Northern Road through the depths of the Margreve Forest. These inns are stocked with oats and hay, fresh water, warm stables, and taprooms full of cheer. Usually, if you don't offend the locals. And if the inn hasn't been overrun with flowering vine golems in a pollen-heavy springtime revel, or left abandoned by staff taking the day off to celebrate at the Dancing Stones.

The Bluebell is a bit peculiar in that it is simultaneously an inn catering to travelers, and a trading post between humans, alseid, pineys, bearfolk, and other deep woods peoples. Humans are often outnumbered on the smooth oaken benches of the taproom, and the menu offers both fragrant well water and road apples for the plantfolk who savor such things. Venison is rarely served when alseid are visiting, and large tubs of honey are kept for the bearfolk shaman, Otterskin, who sometimes visits with a full clan in tow.

At the Bluebell, the forest denizens come to chatter, to share their wisdom, and to sing. City folk rarely understand the place, though some few do stay for a year and a day before setting their feet once more on the Great Northern Road.

BLUEBELL'S INHABITANTS

The Bluebell sees a wide variety of visitors, but a handful of creatures call it home, tending to the inn and its visitors.

Barkeep. The barkeep, Hlara Goldfeather, always leaves a thimble of spirits next to the fireplace for the soot sprites in exchange for a clean fireplace and chimney once the embers die down. She is brave but prefers to stay out of other people's fights if she can. In winter, she'll just ask Rootglum to throw offenders out; in summer, she might ask one of the staff to spike their ale or one of the gnomes to bend their anger into calm with an enchantment.

One night a year, she clears the bar from sundown to sunup. That afternoon Hlara shuts doors and windows, and she and the cook prepare the finest meats, cheeses, mulled wines and ales—and scatter bones full of marrow on the floor. Some say that at these times, a blindfolded Hlara entertains the **Lord of the Hunt** (see *Tome of Beasts 1*) and his hounds and minions. She covers her eyes because those who see the Lord are compelled to join the Hunt and never return to the Bluebell.

Cook and Kitchens. Shilo of the Argental, a human cook who has been at the inn for a full decade, is known for a superb goulash, for a masterful loaf of longbread, and

for his dalliances in witchcraft. Shilo's strange, rat-like familiar, Knickers, has been known to watch over the entrance and hiss a warning at those who enter with ill wishes in their hearts.

The kitchen help includes a rotating group of halflings, gnomes, humans, and even pineys who wash dishes and peel vegetables, feed the hearth, carry water, stir pots, and turn the spit for long hours. All of them know they will be well fed and housed in comfort, though some might complain about Shilo's insistence on everyone doing a fair share of the work. The laziest often get a nasty bite from his rat familiar.

The Bluebell kitchen helpers rarely stay around, because the kitchen is frequently cursed or haunted. Pots and pans come to life and shout: "We've had it, you burning our faces and mouths; let's see how you like it!" It might be trickery and illusion, but mealtime has gone poorly of late.

In addition, a colony of enchanted, poisonous fly agaric mushrooms lives in the kitchen herb garden gathering information for the Moonlit King on the quality of beer, the names of travelers, and the strength of moonlight and starshine. Although they detect as magical, their link to the Moonlit King is tenuous and difficult to track. Culinary secrets of the Bluebell are sometimes stolen and presented at the Courts of the Shadow Fey.

Grooms and Stable Hands. All the Bluebell's grooms and stable hands are gnomes and halflings, who wear livery of robin's-egg blue and vie with one another to be helpful to every coach, cart, wagon, and mule train coming through. The head groom is Yllesh Doublebarker, a female gnome who seems very good at telling all the other grooms what to do and when—but never seems to lift a finger herself. Instead, Yllesh sits on a pile of straw and dreams of long-gone days.

The Leafy Owner. What few know about the Bluebell is that it is owned by the forest itself, for the elves who built it long ago bequeathed it to a gnarled, oak-like treant named Leafhair Rootglum to watch over. He has made it a gathering place for creatures normally found only in the deep woods. The inn has always been closely connected to the fey and the land, and some believe that the Bluebell is both the oldest of the coaching inns and the most heavily enchanted. Rootglum makes it a welcome place for sprites and drakes, redcaps and gnomes, aridni,

and alsuids—all are welcome, and humans often find themselves outnumbered by creatures more often found in the Summer Lands of the elves.

That said, the towering Leafhair rarely shows himself except in winter. In the growing season, he lives nearby in a patch of deep forest overrun with **bulbous violets** (see the **Appendix**) that devour trespassers and intruders. When he does appear after the first frost, he settles in a corner and is sometimes mistaken for part of the architecture. Rootglum is known for singing mournful, day-long songs of remembrance of all the trees dead and burned in the hearth. When questioned on topics of forest lore, he is invariably truthful and long-winded. He is known to disappear from the inn for a few days after midsummer and midwinter each year.





FRONT VIEW



N
1 square = 5 feet

FIRST FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR



Bluebell Coaching Inn

PECULIARITIES OF THE BLUEBELL

A fey and elvish place with roots as deep as the Bluebell has a number of strange features beyond its rather unstable kitchen. Here are the most prominent.

Cellars. Hundreds of albino spiders that dwell in the Bluebell's deep cellar carry rumors about the goings-on of the Ghoul Imperium—though only those who read Undercommon can decipher the web-scrawled messages.

Chambers. A tiny, carnivorous fey named Nibbler lives in the walls of the Bluebell—and it must consume its own weight in flesh once a month. Usually Rootglum or Hlara sets out a morsel of meat at night to satisfy the creature. Occasionally they forget, and a guest might awaken to find they are missing the tip of a finger or a toe.

Soul and Spirit Gambling Hall. An old passage leads from the kitchen through a window into a secret, invitation-only back room, where the Wild Roses, a degenerate local gnome gang, operates an illicit gambling den. The fey wager memories, songs, and promises of years of service. Gold and jewels won't get you a stake at these tables, but a new melody or a willing period of servitude might.

Stables. The Acorn's Cap is a small pub located within the Bluebell stables that caters to the smallest denizens of the forest and is run by a particularly proud **brownie** (see

Tome of Beasts 3) barkeep named Moxi Umberson. Mice, hedgehogs, pixies, and rabbits are among its customers. A single lantern illuminates the Acorn's Cap, and most of its beverages fit in a thimble. Customers as large as gnomes and halflings are sometimes allowed in for a tipple.

Well. The old stable well has been a reliable source for fresh water for as long as anyone can remember. Recently, though, the younger grooms and children have heard voices calling out from the well. But so far, no adults have heard anything. The children and grooms avoid the well entirely; their elders believe they are just shirking the work of pulling up the bucket.

RUMORS AND ADVENTURES

The **Rumors and Adventures** table provides some grist for the conversations, rumors and plot hooks found at the Bluebell; some are just wild tales spun to amuse travelers, others are part of the fabric of the forest, and it's up to you to decide what's going into your version of the Margreve Forest (you know what your players are likely to enjoy). Roll a d12 whenever a PC starts chatting with other patrons at the inn and consult the table. Alternatively, choose a favorite tale from the table and make sure the bartender fills in the PCs with a bit of "not everyone knows this, but I'll tell you" inside story.

RUMORS AND ADVENTURES

d12	RESULT
1	The "Hourglass Mushroom" is a rare and gruesome fungus found rarely in the Margreve Forest and sometimes near the Tliggan Stream, about a mile from the Bluebell. If you eat it, you travel backward in time to a point 1 minute before you ate it. At the end of the minute, something terrible always happens to the other "you" whom you meet upon traveling back—only one version of you remains alive.
2	While staying at the old Bluebell, a pregnant river selkie named Pearpaws has a mighty craving for smoked carp. Her husband, Cloudsmoke, refuses to leave her side but is willing to pay good coin for any fish from the Margreve Forest.
3	Piney plantfolk arrive and ask for help. A peculiar disease is rotting the trees from the inside out. Plantfolk and natural plants alike are affected, and some believe the disease can turn living humanoids into plant creatures by gradually infecting them.
4	After being offered venison jerky, a timid ogre weeps into his bowl of porridge. He claims that the woods are full of deerfolk that have hunted him remorselessly ever since he mistakenly killed a young alseid that he mistook for a fawn. Perhaps the adventurers will take his sincere apologies to the alseid circle of druids?
5	Travelers tell tales of three young women who spin and weave their way through the forest deep, gathering spider silk and starshine into luminous nets. When they meet a traveler, they seize the strands of that one's fate, to bind into their own weavings.
6	A leprechaun (use the statistics of a sprite or a clurichaun [see <i>Tome of Beasts</i> 1]) has painted the stable's horses in her favorite color—green—several times, annoying the grooms. The grooms think someone should find a way to catch that joker and paint her purple.
7	At summer solstice or on midwinter day, all the wooden beams in the Bluebell bloom. Foliage fills the windows. Roots choke the fireplace. Holly sprouts from the door frames. Thorns puncture tapestries, while greedy mosses soak up kegs of beer.
8	A goblin merchant sells trinkets, general supplies, basic weapons, and minor magic items or potions. He pushes a handcart from inn to inn and from dungeon to dungeon, picking through the remains of dead adventurers along the way.
9	On summer nights, a white pegasus sometimes appears at the edge of the clearing by the Bluebell where the carts and wagons are circled up at night, seemingly waiting or searching for something. By sunrise, it has disappeared.
10	A wandering human merchant named Noromo Esdallefin swears that a great black owlbear is stalking him, its beak full of great teeth. He swears it is a stryxbear, but he's probably just seeing things. He comes to the inn to hide and sometimes to seek a bodyguard.
11	In winter and spring, the woods are filled with fairy fog, a joyous, delirious thing, full of music and lights. Mortals who stumble into it wake up to find themselves robbed, feverish, and often bruised or raw, but strangely happy. These mists are especially common near the Bluebell.
12	Every now and then, a veiled stag shows up. Tale-spinners claim it is a fallen alseid, one who has succumbed to the curse of vampirism. Others believe it is a novitiate druid, sworn to a wandering quest that is connected to Rootglum and the bulbous violets (see the Appendix) near the Bluebell.

NPCS IN THE BLUEBELL

d20	RESULT
1	Long escaped from the witch's coven that created her, the hyperintelligent ferret Keflute lounges on windowsills, masquerading as a community pet while begging for table scraps. In reality, she expertly eavesdrops and reports information to various merchant groups in Morgau and Doresh.
2	A young ravenfolk claims to be His Feathered Majesty, Treeprince Geogawa, a deposed prince of the Morgau ravenfolk. He offers anyone who will listen a large share of a princely treasure he will soon have—if someone will but lend him a small sum of money to help him regain his rightful lands and fiefdom.
3	Occasionally, the blue-haired human bard, Hallistra, and her lover, Danafey the elven ranger, stop in for a bath and a meal. These two girls, united in love, search the Margreve Forest for a spring of eternal youth (or perhaps simply explore the forest together).
4	Punara Leif, an elfmarked ranger, wears green dragon hide leather and is equipped only with his walking stick and his vast knowledge of the forest. He seeks his niece, Danafey, who has run away from home with a human friend.
5	The Willow Maiden, an ancient dryad, sometimes comes to sing sorrowful songs; her mere presence brings silence to the otherwise raucous hall. Her heart was broken by a former lover, and she feeds on the tears of her audience. There's never a dry eye when the Willow Maiden sings.
6	A ravenfolk, Moonglow, runs the Bluebell's night shift. She trades moonshine for stories from the night creatures—stories that her prodigious memory enables her to tell again and again in their original form. Of course, the creatures of the night are known for their lies and deception.
7	Garryth, the resident alehouse drake (see <i>Tome of Beasts 1</i>), absolutely loves playing matchmaker. Though he is chronically tipsy, he means well, even when advocating matches that seem unlikely at best.
8	A seedy-looking gnome in the corner named Octavius Gloompuddle is peddling what he claims is a memory trapped in amber. Despite his claim that the memory leads to great riches, he is desperate to sell it and will take almost any offer.
9	Loopmutton Ningel, a gnomish bard, has spent the last decade living among the forest goblins in hopes of writing her dissertation: <i>Matriarchy in Goblin Society, a Treatise on Merit-Based Leadership in Goblin Tribal Communities</i> . She tends to have leaves in her hair, mud on her breeches, and ink on her fingers.
10	On new moon nights, Gackitch the roachling merchant delivers his odiferous wares from the Lands Below, such as darakhul brining salts, kobold spicy truffle-cheese, and his own people's nettle beer. Kobolds and the folk of Morgau are his best (and only) customers.
11	Xanry Honeywine, a halfling brewer of mead, has a new secret recipe that will provide magical benefits to the imbiber, but he needs help with an ingredient often found in a dragon's cave. Also, he needs people to fetch river water, harvest clover, and keep bears away from his brewing vat.
12	Ulliam Bonedrinker, a halfling warrior with a wild shock of bone-white hair, sits in the corner, hunched over a cup of ale. He shudders despite the warm hearth, and with each loud noise he almost jumps out of his worn boots. (Some believe he is not a halfling at all, but rather a Niemheim gnome jumpy in Baba Yaga's backyard.)
13	A mushroom creature named Xilluck sits in a corner. This mycolid spore lord who lost his colony long ago drinks only hot water in a battered tin cup he brings in himself, but he pays for the water with ancient golden coins. He never speaks, but if approached he places two cracked bone dice on the table. If someone beats him two out of three, he leads them into the woods. Those who have won say that the visions he reveals can make a person's fortune, or break their spirit entirely.
14	Gray-haired and smelling of liniment, Lord Carvaren has retired from adventure a dozen times. His eyes are clear, however, and his enthusiasm infectious. The pastoral life of a minor noble is not for him, and the map he's showing...Well, all he needs are a few brave souls to reach a legendary trove, the Golden Tomb of Saint Idracallos, patron saint of goldsmiths.
15	Trusk is a grumpy, middle-aged elfmarked man who likes to drink a pint by the hearth. He always wears dirty worker's clothes and has a pig's snout instead of a nose. If addressed, he always replies, "You think you know me? Well, you don't." A sour note in any evening.
16	Fenric Nine-Fingers, a bard in mourning, is reluctant to tell of his loss: his favorite lute, smashed by bandits. He still carries the pieces with him. A cup of fine wine might loosen his tongue (and a <i>mending</i> spell might restore the lute to wholeness).
17	The Green Knight of the Woods (see <i>Creature Codex</i> or use the statistics of a moon knight) appears and challenges an arrogant PC to a contest. If they can cut off the Green Knight's head with only three blows, they win the Knight's magnificent fey warhorse. If they fail, the Green Knight gets the chance to cut off the PC's head.
18	Xanry Honeywine, a halfling brewer of mead, supplies the Bluebell with fine honey and is here with his latest delivery. It is smaller than usual, since several of his hives have recently gone missing.
19	Krasnak the beardless dwarf is sometimes found in the Bluebell talking to his axe, Exiter, which he insists is a cursed god, and acting as though he's drunk, even though he never orders drinks.
20	A rogue aridni (see <i>Tome of Beasts 1</i>) named Tamarisk can be found nursing a thimble of excellent dark wine (she is a snob about vintages). She offers potions or gold, trying to find the elves her ancestors served—and she's trickster enough to slip a sleeping potion to a rowdy dwarf, bearfolk, or loudmouth. They fall asleep face first in their pudding.

NPCS IN THE BLUEBELL

The **NPCs in the Bluebell** table features named characters that are frequent guests or permanent residents at the Bluebell, with hopes and schemes of their own. Choose a favorite or roll a d20 to randomly choose one, if the party seeks to recruit allies or quiz locals.

GREAT NORTHERN ROAD

The Great Northern Road stretches some 200 miles from Zobeck to Castle Valach, on its way to the city of Bratislor in the north. High overhead, the branches of flanking trees reach for each other, turning the road into a long tunnel with a tall gothic arch. Some sun reaches travelers on the road, but night falls early even in high summer.

Due to boggy, rocky, and overgrown stretches, travelers frequently take a fortnight to traverse the road's full length on foot. Riders typically make the trip in 8–10 days if they pull no wagons. Coaching inns, spaced 1–3 days' travel apart, offer travelers a respite from monsters and weather.

Though snow and cold challenge winter travelers, the road's condition is affected most by meltwater, spring rain, and mud. Coaching inns are either closed or not prepared to cater to travelers during this time. Merchants who are willing to risk traversing the Great Northern Road before the annual road opening festival in Zobeck can expect tough going, both in terms of terrain and hungry creatures emerging from the deeper hollows.

TRAVEL AND SECURITY ON THE ROAD

The northern road is the only passable route to the rich cities of the Red Queen and the undead princes of Morgau and Doresh. As the second source of wealth for the city of Zobeck—the first being the River Argent—the Great Northern Road sees its share of travelers.

The traffic of dwarf muleteers, nomadic Kariv, and Zobeck traders keeps the path from growing over. It falls to the traveler to clear trees that storms throw across the road. Creeks provide water for abound, but superstitious travelers burden themselves with water drawn from outside the forest. Boggy sections of the road claim a cart or two each year, and rocky sections can cripple wheels, hooves, and ankles. It is not an easy road to travel, certainly, but there are no dwarven tolls or the risk of centaur banditry on it either.

Small caravans of Kariv trundle along the road more frequently than any other merchants dare. Each train of four or five wagons, painted with wards and sigils, carries a trickle of goods and what pass for luxuries. Somehow, more wagons arrive in Zobeck than a traveler heading in the other direction would pass. Some claim that the Kariv have entered into a bargain with the shadow fey, allowing the nomads to travel along a shadow trail that runs parallel to the road. Others say that Kariv witches can make their most valuable wagons invisible to conceal them from bandits. Either fact could be true for folk as canny and ambitious as the Kariv.

The Order of the Griffon Riders in the city of Zobeck takes responsibility for security along the road. The order often hires auxiliaries and irregulars for clearing out nests of bandits. Merchant houses also pool funds to buy additional security for the first mule train of the season.

GRIFFON TOWERS AND COACHING INNS

Many years ago, House Stross constructed twelve Griffon Towers to defend its fortunes. Eight of them were spaced evenly along the Great Northern Road to guard its full length. Four more were constructed in the woods to guard hunting lodges, mines, or powerful wellsprings of magic. Most people assume that the towers got their name from the griffon blazons carved in their walls, but that is merely the mark of the Stross border guards.

House Stross built the towers as watch stations for its griffon riders, an elite company of couriers and shock cavalry. The parsimonious council of the Free City has done away with that tradition in recent years, so now the

LEGEND OF THE GREAT NORTHERN ROAD

Ol' Mikhail, a family man, took the Old Margreve's trees.

So the Old Margreve took his family and brought him to his knees.

Ol' Mikhail, a vengeful man, embraced his ax and pain.

As it had his heart, he vowed to cut the Old Margreve in twain.





griffons run wild in the Margreve Forest. A top predator along the forest road, they pose a constant threat to caravans and mule trains. The griffons come in both black and speckled varieties, and knowing the difference can prove critical. The black griffons are more aggressive and very fond of horseflesh; some claim they are faerie steeds. The speckled ones are shy, tameable, and can serve as companions and mounts.

With the disbanding of the griffon riders, the abandoned towers fell into disrepair. In spring, feral griffons nested in them, and in summer and fall, travelers took shelter behind their thick stone walls. The Free City Council saw the opportunity to make coin and sold the heavily reinforced strongholds to enterprising businessmen, who turned them into coaching inns. These combination hostels, stables, and resupply centers double as trading forts for wagons meeting mid road.

Though these coaching inns inherit stalwart defenses from their days as Griffon Towers, the Margreve Forest remains a dangerous place to live and work. The inns change hands frequently. At any given time, there is a 10 percent chance that an inn that bustled with trade wagons last season now sits empty, has new “owners,” or is occupied by a nightmare creature from the Old World.

The Bluebell Coaching Inn

The old Bluebell is one of the small and cozy coaching inns that lie along the Great Northern Road. It is detailed further as an adventure location earlier in this section.

The Eye of the Forest Coaching Inn

This inn marks the midpoint of the Great Northern Road and is a hub of activity as wagons meet from both directions to trade and share news. Compared to the other coaching inns, the Eye of the Forest is quite civilized. Defended by a full-time retinue of experienced military men and managed by Zobeck natives, the inn feels out of place, seemingly mocking of the backward wilderness that surrounds it. Years ago, the owner discovered a tangled clearing just off the road, where the forest had reclaimed a burned-down cottage. In the midst of the charred ruin stood a large brick oven. The oven now sits in the Eye of the Forest’s common room. The owner keeps the oven’s cast iron door slightly ajar, and many a traveling child has creaked it open with curiosity. Inside lies a sweet reward and a blackened skeleton—the remains of a human female, hunched and shrunken with age.

The Ruined Griffon Tower

Between Ol’ Mikhail’s inn and the Witch’s Teat inn lies the burned-out ruins of an inn whose name no one recalls and whose walls no one dares rebuild. It sits in a logistically awkward spot for those who fear the sounds that escape it during the night, as it rests midway between two other inns, precisely where travelers and their beasts of burden would need to rest.

Adventure Hook. His Excellency Ambassador Glaninin Thelamandrine wants to restore the Griffon Towers and establish new ones. Before he can make much headway, he needs someone to clear out the current occupants.

The Shadow Sister Inn

The Kariv tell a campfire tale that has caused many travelers to press their tired horses past the Forest King inn at the road’s northern end. The inn’s gnoll owner claims that the Kariv invented the tale to hurt his business, but the Kariv swear the tale is true. “Step from the Forest King inn at midnight,” the Kariv say, “and squint your eyes at the moon-kissed mists of the Eastern Margreve. Do you see the Shadow Sister inn standing in the trees? Do you see the mist pour from its chimney? Do you see the shadow man squinting back at you?”

MEADOW OF FEY REVELS

In the forested foothills of the Black Hills in the Central Margreve lies the enchanting Meadow of Fey Revels. Here, elves and diverse fey of peculiar mien come together to celebrate on four special nights of the year: the spring equinox (the Rites of Spring), the summer solstice (the Summer Festival), the autumn equinox, and finally the winter solstice. The Meadow of Fey Revels has a tenuous connection to the Summer Lands, and it is said that the fey roads lead mortals to the meadow only on days of the revels. It is likely that fey and mortal alike are able to find their way here at other times, though outside the revels, it might be mistaken for just another meadow in the forest.

The PCs might be wandering through the Arbonesse or on a fey road or shadow road and find themselves deposited in the Meadow of Fey Revels in the Margreve Forest. Alternatively, they could travel to the meadow purposefully in search of information from the fey revelers or to obtain fey magic.

The revels feature Fey, courtiers, servitors, and nobles from the fey courts as well as Fey, elves, sentient Plants, and awakened animals from the Arbonesse and Margreve Forests. Each revel is presided over by a different noble of the fey courts, often determined by who has earned the favor (or ire) of the lords and ladies of the Fey that season. Some common nobles tasked with presiding over the revels are:

- **Lady Loretta Honeydew.** Loyal Custodian of Topiary and Unicursal Hedge Mazes, Lady Loretta Honeydew is a matronly elf and gardener from the fey courts of the Summer Lands. She takes great joy in presiding over the revels and often spends months crafting topiary just for the occasion.
- **Lord Cedartail.** The Piping Lord of Birds and Song, Lord Cedartail is a **satyr** and minor noble in the fey courts, more concerned with song and having a good time than the machinations of those at court. A chorus of songbirds heralds his arrival, and song flows behind his every word.

- **Lord Chelessfield.** The Sidhe Lord of the Alpine Marches, Lord Chelessfield serves the River King of the Arbonesse and has many connections among the shadow fey. He is an elderly, elf with golden hair and purple eyes, and he takes the task of ensuring the safety of every reveler very seriously.
- **Misty Thunderbreeze.** Storm Herald and Lady of Lightning, Misty Thunderbreeze is a **nimbostratus spirit** that serves as ambassador between the fey courts and storm giant clans of the Material Plane. A fast-talking, mischievous fey, Misty spends more time electrifying thrones, creating rainclouds in bedchambers, and causing minor thunderclaps when larger fey nobles walk than performing her duties. A tolerated nuisance in the fey courts, she is often assigned to the revels to give those at court a respite from her antics.
- **Sir Lazuli Wipperskip.** Knight Captain of the Golden Oak, Arrow of Undimmed Glory, and the Radiant Warrior, Sir Lazuli is a sprite **knight** in service to Queen Valda Limineska of the Court of the Golden Oak and one of her most loyal warriors. Every few years, the queen rewards his dutiful and tireless service with a brief vacation in the form of presiding over the revels—as it is the closest thing to a vacation he will allow himself.
- **Vine Lord Darryl.** The Facilitator of Ducal Soirees, Crooked Jamborees, and Maudlin Merriment, Darryl took the name of a human who stumbled into a revel centuries ago and won every contest, impressing the young plant. Darryl is a **vine lord** (see *Tome of Beasts 1*) from the Margreve Forest and often presides over the revels when the fey courts can't decide who to send.
- **Willow Oakthistle.** The Flowering Lady of the Feral Heart, Willow is one of many **dryads** from Central Margreve. More politically savvy than her sisters, she represents the dryads of the Margreve Forest in the fey courts. Her hair changes with the seasons, from flowering during the spring revel to becoming strands of thorny brambles during the winter revel.

LOST IN THE MARGREVE FOREST

We knew we had reached our destination when we heard sounds of revelry up ahead. The fey road came to an end at the edge of a large meadow encircled by a ring of standing stones; a great bonfire burned in the middle. Here, dozens of strange creatures, some from our world, many others from the Summer Lands and the Shadow Realm, made merry.

SEASONAL REVELS

Each season's revels begin shortly after midday and continue until early the next morning. All involve music, dancing, feasting, and drinking large amounts of wine and beer, but each season's revel has its own distinct elements too.

Spring. On the morning of the spring revel, the sun rises precisely between the two largest standing stones. Tents and stalls are decorated with red, green, and yellow ribbons, and the revelers feast on cheese, eggs, wheaten cakes, and pancakes. To mark the start of the revel, the fey scatter magical seeds around the meadow to decorate it. Yellow primroses and celandines and pure white anemones carpet the grass, while vibrant bluebells spring up the trees. Attempts to stand a green dragon egg on one end (without using magic) and other games take place in the afternoon. As dusk falls, a great poetry contest begins. Lyrical elegance and razor-sharp wit are both valued, and PCs can gain advantage on their CHA (Performance) checks by quoting or composing a few entertaining couplets.

Summer. In summer, the meadow becomes a riot of color as bright blue cornflowers, scarlet poppies, and purple knapweed spring up, and bees and beautifully patterned butterflies flit among the flowers. Revelers at the summer festival wear wreaths of colorful flowers and garlands of oak leaves. The raising of the midsummer pole marks the start of the revel. This tall wooden column is decorated with ivy, oak leaves, and flowers, and it is hung with many-colored ribbons. Once it has been erected in the middle of the meadow, the dancing and merriment get under way, with a troupe of sprites flying around the pole, pulling the ribbons behind them.

Contests at the summer revel are tests of physical prowess, including foot races, mock combats, and archery competitions where the participants shoot at straw targets carried by running goblins. PCs can try their luck in the contests by making skill checks that use STR or DEX or by making melee and ranged attack rolls. When the sun goes down, bonfires are lit, and contestants can prove their bravery by jumping over the flames or walking barefoot across burning coals.

Autumn. By autumn, grazing deer have trimmed the grass, and wet weather has encouraged mushrooms and toadstools to sprout, forming dozens of fairy rings across the meadow. Food is abundant following the harvest, and the feasting is excellent. Carts piled high with loaves of bread, vegetables, and fruit arrive via the fey roads or via deer trails, gifts from the cities of Dornig or the Coaching Inns of the Margreve Forest to honor the fey. Much trading of spells, magical items, and the like takes place at the autumn revel, with contests held to demonstrate magical prowess in the evening. Creativity is prized over sheer power. PCs can gain advantage on their CHA (Performance) checks by inventing imaginative magical displays to amuse, scare, and astonish onlookers.



Winter. With winter's arrival, frost coats the grass, and robins feast on the juicy white berries of the mistletoe growing on the leafless oak and beech trees around the meadow's edge. A great log is paraded around the stone circle and then set aflame to mark the start of the festival. Wine and beer made during the year are now fermented and ready to drink. As the libations are poured, the Midwinter Goat, a goat-headed fey, appears before the lords and ladies to demand his customary gifts. Candles are lit all around the meadow as night begins to fall, and an evening of elegant dancing ensues, with a prize awarded to the most talented dancers. Light-footed PCs can impress their hosts with DEX (Performance) checks, but dancers must be prepared to whirl and twirl all night long until the first flurry of snow on the following morning marks the end of the revel.

EXPLORING THE MEADOW

Surrounded by the dense trees of the Margreve Forest, the Meadow of Fey Revels measures about 500 feet across. It is a large, grassy open space whose appearance changes with the seasons, with the following regular features.

Bog. A small stream flows through the southeastern corner of the meadow, causing the ground to become boggy, particularly in spring and autumn when rainfall is plentiful. Tall reeds and yellow irises grow around the edge of the bog, which is home to Gerribbit, a giant frog (see the **Personalities of the Meadow** section later in this chapter).

Court's Pavilion. This large, open-sided tent is made from fine blue and silver silk. Here, the current noble presiding over the revels and their honored guests enjoy the revels, waited on hand and foot by servants from their court and protected by a dozen guards. If a PC wins one of the contests, they will be invited to the pavilion to be awarded their prize.

Stalls. At each revel, an ever-changing lineup of brightly colored tents and wooden stalls springs up at the entrance to the meadow. Staffed by goblins, gnomes, and fey, these stalls offer food and drink for sale, as well as other goods, including herbs and medicinal plants, potions and minor magical



items, and interesting trinkets. PCs shopping at these stalls should keep their wits about them, since the fey like little more than getting one over on a foolish mortal. Cursed items, wands with but a single charge, and mislabeled potions are common tricks, but one should be cautious when sampling the foodstuffs too. Snargle the goblin's spicy mushroom pastries are delicious but cause weird hallucinations for 1 hour (treat as the poisoned condition) when eaten by non-fey that fail a DC 11 CON save.

Stone Circle. A ring of over one hundred ancient, lichen-covered standing stones runs around the circumference of the field, not far from the treeline. These weather-worn megaliths are between ten and twelve feet high and date back to when the Central Margreve was just forming. Faint spiral patterns can be seen etched into some of the stones, while others are carved with petroglyphs depicting stick men, birds, and animals. Fey magic is enhanced within the ring formed by the stones, and saves against spells cast by elves, gnomes, and fey inside the circle are made with disadvantage.

MINOR EVENTS AT THE REVELS

As the PCs explore the meadow, they might witness various events. Choose an option in the **Revels Events** table or roll to randomly determine which event the PCs encounter.

REVELS EVENTS

d10	EVENT
1	A rabbit in a waistcoat and a hedgehog in a pinafore serve glasses of mead to a group of elegant elven lords and ladies.
2	Two young children with piercing blue eyes are selling little gingerbread houses. Close inspection reveals a tiny squeaking witch inside.
3	A tiny sprite who has over-indulged in blackberry wine flies into a menhir and crash lands in a crumpled heap.
4	Three leprechauns in bottle green hats and jackets sit on a wooden bench reciting a nonsensical poem that rhymes "garden" with "pardon."
5	A pure white swan swoops down to land in the meadow. As its webbed feet hit the ground, it transforms into a beautiful sylvan maiden.
6	A group of small fey arrive riding giant weasels . Armed with glaives fashioned from antlers, these are emissaries from Thistlegloom, King of the Far Darrig.
7	A hag chants softly to herself while resting her right hand on one of the standing stones. The spiral pattern carved into the stone begins to glow with a fiery red light.
8	A gang of five boorish bugbears take it in turns to throw axes at a magnificent ancient oak tree.
9	Prowling in the shadows with razors in their hands, two vile barbers (see <i>Tome of Beasts 1</i>) get ready to slash open the throat of an unsuspecting gnome who has angered the Queen of Witches.
10	A crow-like fey dressed in fine clothes rushes across the meadow bearing an important message.

PERSONALITIES OF THE MEADOW

Hundreds of fey and other creatures attend the revels. Here are a few of the most notable and interesting personalities.

Anya Gristlegrot

This nine-foot-tall ogre hag has greenish skin, a bulbous nose covered in pimples, and a mouth filled with crooked and broken teeth. She reeks of a heady combination of sweat and patchouli. Anya has few friends among the other revelers. She resents most fey, particularly elves, for looking down their perfectly formed noses at her, and likes nothing more than to see them taken down a peg or two. Anya hates the Holly Queen for humiliating her at the last winter revels and longs for revenge. She spends a lot of time brooding on her lowly status and is quick to anger, but she can be won over with flattery focusing on how fearsome and devious she is. Anya sometimes has potions and other minor magic items for sale.

Gerribbit

Until a few days ago, Gerribbit was Solanquis, a young and arrogant minor elf noble at the River King's Court. Now he is a giant frog. The foppish youth made the mistake of upsetting Anya Gristlegrot by failing to treat her with respect, and the angry ogress transformed the hapless elf into his present form. Gerribbit is cursed to remain a frog until he wins a big, slobbery kiss from a hairy dwarf, orc, or satyr. He has had no luck so far but that doesn't stop him from leaping beside any suitable PC in the hopes they will kiss him.

Gerribbit tries his best to communicate with the PCs but can only say "gerribbit." If they are able to talk to him, such as with the *Speak with Animals* spell, he explains his predicament and begs for their help. If Gerribbit returns to his true form, he tells the PCs some secret or piece of knowledge about the Margreve Forest, either related to their next quest, an NPC at one of the coaching inns, or similar.

Holly Queen

This raven-haired **shadow fey enchantress** (see the **Appendix**) is a guest of honor at the winter revel, usually attends the spring and autumn revels, and is seen at the summer revel only rarely. She wears a holly crown with bright red berries on her horned head, and she dresses in long, black robes adorned with winter wolf fur. A tiny robin redbreast perches on her shoulder.

The Holly Queen is a loyal vassal of the Moonlit King, and she is out of favor at the Courts of the Shadow Fey while the Queen of Night and Magic and her Summer Court are in the ascendant. Quiet, observant, and somewhat sorrowful, she comes to the revels to keep abreast of affairs among the fey and to gather intelligence on the various courts they represent. The winners of the dancing contest at the winter revel each get to dance with the Holly Queen in turn. As they twirl around together, she whispers in their ear, asking

them if they are willing to wear her badge. Those that say yes may find themselves performing a service for the queen in the future and may even be whisked off to spend the summer months at her castle in the Shadow Realm.

The Holly Queen has been given Pumpkin Jack's candle by a **pombero** (see *Tome of Beasts I*) named Gloamwalker who wanted to curry favor with her. If the PCs ask her respectfully, she is willing to exchange it for a "small service," which might be related to the PCs' current quest or send them to a part of the Margreve Forest they have yet to explore.

Pumpkin Jack

This Fey bogeyman makes his home in the Shadow Realm, venturing into the Material Plane to frighten mortals at the behest of his mistress, the Queen of Night and Magic. A terrifying figure of woven vines with a grinning, evil-looking jack-o-lantern for a head and long, wicked claws, Pumpkin Jack steps out from the trees to steal the souls of those who wander too deep in the forest.

But Pumpkin Jack has a problem. After overindulging in Snargle's hallucinogenic mushroom pastries at the revel, Jack passed out and someone stole the burning candle inside his head. This candle was the source of Jack's power.

Utterly humiliated, Jack is a pathetic figure. If the PCs talk to him, he tells them, through constant sobbing, what happened. He has since discovered his candle is now in the possession of the Holly Queen. If they are prepared to intercede with her on his behalf and recover his candle, he offers to take them wherever they want to go in Midgard via the shadow roads or perform some other favor within his capabilities for them. Pumpkin Jack uses the statistics of a **wickerbeast**, except his candle acts as the mirror and he knows Common and Sylvan.

Zelos Clovenfoot

Zelos is a lovelorn **satyr**. The object of his affections is Nyessa, a dryad who lives in an ancient oak tree on the edge of the meadow. Unfortunately, the hot-headed Zelos has blown his chances with her by giving her a love potion he purchased from Anya Gristlegrot that wore off all too briefly, leaving Nyessa in no doubt that she had been duped. Now, he sits slumped against a menhir, drowning his sorrows with mead.

The PCs can help Zelos if they take pity on him. A gang of bugbears have been upsetting Nyessa by using her tree as target practice for their axe-throwing. The dryad charmed one of them and got him to stop, but there are still five left. Maybe Zelos can impress Nyessa with his bravery by driving the bugbears off? Of course, he should probably sober up first, and the PCs might need to offer some backup. If they can find a way to make Zelos into a hero, Nyessa will at least start speaking to the satyr again. If this transpires, Zelos is overcome with gratitude and is even willing to kiss Gerribbit if the PCs request it.



RUNNING THE OLD MARGREVE

The Old Margreve is three quarters location and one quarter magical creature. Its personality, will, and mindset are ancient, bordering on alien. It has perceptions and powers beyond the understanding—and often beyond the notice—of those who dare to enter its bounds. It nourishes itself. It defends itself. And it remembers those who have challenged it in the past. It is in many ways like any other creature, with the notable exception that it is the size of a country.

MOOD AND MYSTERY

Very little is known in the world at large about the Margreve Forest's interior. There is simply something wrong with the place, something that unsettles the nerves, plays upon fears, and discourages exploration. Too many stories of danger exit the wood, and too many travelers do not. The few adventurers who dare the forest's deep trails return with strange scars, stranger stories, and too few prizes to warrant either.

From the outside, the Margreve Forest looks like any Old World forest. In some places it is dark, tangled, and foreboding. In other places, it is sun-dappled and open, like an evergreen palace of towering tree pillars, ivy carpet, and wind-rustled canopy. But there is something more to it. Something hiding behind the wind and the leaves and the trees. Something living and vigilant. A presence that none who stand dwarfed among the trees can deny.

The Margreve Forest unsettles the nerves of interlopers, evoking fear and trembling, especially in first-time visitors. It conjures awe and intimidation as the intruder delves deeper. And nearest the heart of the forest, the unsettling feeling of being in proximity to a supernatural or divine "other" is intensified.

Most describe this faceless "other" as a dark, sinister presence, but perhaps they are simply not in touch with the natural order of this ancient place. Deep-woods druids cast the Margreve Forest in a brighter, if not wilder, light, describing the supernatural presence as beautiful, terrible, and bestial. They talk of the "Old Margreve" as if it were a living creature with a personality and a will of its own. Religious figures reject the idea that the forest is alive but acknowledge that some great presence lives therein. Worshipers of Porevit and Yarila claim to hear the whispers of a withdrawn aspect of their Green Gods. Others sense older gods, inimical to man and dwarf, brooding in the forest's vastness and waiting for the age of man to pass. Perhaps they are all right. Even Baba Yaga confesses, "The Old Margreve came before such recent inventions as gods and spells and names and language."

ATTITUDE

The forest dreams of ancient times, of the behaviors of long-dead creatures and pre-civilized forest dwellers, just as people dream of idealized crops, forests, or orchards. What the fledgling humans and elves call progress, the Old Margreve considers pale shadows, intolerable deviations into the madness of civilization, and corruptions of the green and ancient state of life. As a consequence, the Old Margreve considers those behaviors of old to be correct, and incorrect behavior must be pruned.

MEMORY


What the Old Margreve consumes, it remembers. In addition to recognizing and remembering creatures by the blood they spill, the Old Margreve absorbs many of the memories and much of the knowledge of those who expire beneath its canopy. To something as old and alien as the Old Margreve, this knowledge is rarely valuable on an individual level, but it helps to refine the forest's viewpoint of the individual's species.

MOVEMENT

Like all intelligent creatures, the Old Margreve knows that the element of surprise provides a great tactical advantage. The forest tends to act when creatures aren't looking. Since the forest can't see normally, it uses earth and roots to determine when creatures are still and their heartbeats are slowed. Its activity typically occurs when creatures are sleeping, but it isn't uncommon for a relaxed (or drunken) person on watch to hear or notice movement while sitting quietly at a campfire.

The Old Margreve can move paths, add forks, or redirect game trails at will. Explorers who wake in the forest might feel disoriented, as if their camp had rotated during the night. Trails that should lead deeper into the forest now lead out of it. Landmarks can't be trusted. A compass is the explorer's only friend. The best advice comes from a handful of successful trappers and furriers. "Don't make any appointments," they say, "A path may take three days, or it may take a fortnight. It just depends." Cautious groups go around large, ancient trees on the same side, lest they risk being separated.

Night comes early in the Margreve Forest. This is true not only because of the forest's canopy but because the Old Margreve can thicken (or thin) it at will. During the day, the Old Margreve filters the sun's rays, blocking most before they reach the forest floor and creating an area of dim light centered on creatures who suffer in such conditions. Vampires and undead travelers experience the opposite effect, as the canopy opens above them and subjects them to the full glare of the sun. At night, the Old Margreve typically hides the moon and stars, making navigation by celestial bodies impossible and the prospect of getting lost dangerously likely. The exception is for



lycanthropes, whose wildness the Old Margreve favors and from whom the forest never conceals the moon.

One of the Old Margreve's most insidious defenses against interlopers is to starve them. It moves its roots to redirect streams underground and withhold fresh water. It shakes its branches to spook game and withhold fresh food. An Old Margreve saying, "Deer and rabbits dance around the starving man," has been memorialized in wood sculptures whittled by emaciated men and found near their bones.

SENSES

The Old Margreve feels. Keenly. It enjoys forest-wide tremorsense, keen enough to pinpoint the location of any creature and identify it by species. Some say the forest recognizes individuals by their unique footfalls. Although this assertion isn't true, it spawns from the accurate observation that deep woods inhabitants sometimes "step" like other creatures to protect themselves from the surveillance of the ever-vigilant trees. Inhabitants also worry that the forest "feels" their voices, so secrets are often spoken in whispers while rapping loudly on a tree.

The Old Margreve can indeed recognize individuals—not by their footfalls, but by the blood they spill. The first time an individual bleeds on the forest floor, the forest knows of that creature and can track it effortlessly until it leaves the forest. If an individual reenters the forest and bleeds again, the forest remembers the uniqueness of that blood and connects the individual's current activity to the past deeds the forest witnessed.

Often, the Old Margreve connects newcomers to blood relatives who spilled their blood in the past, perhaps many generations or even centuries before. Those whose ancestors performed dark deeds in the forest's borders feel a great threatening presence all around them. In many ways, the rumor that the Old Margreve punishes men for the sins of their fathers is correct.

During times of stress or need, the forest may act. The manifestation is largely determined by what will have the most impact on the situation and how the forest views the source of the stress or the creatures potentially impacted.

VOICE

In addition to the challenges of disorientation and starvation, an interloper must come to grips with the forest's haunting sounds and voices. The Old Margreve has the power to listen to vibrations and repeat them anywhere within its borders. It doesn't understand languages or the meanings of sounds in the way other creatures might, but it often experiments with the repetition of sounds. It has cataloged centuries of reactions that certain creatures have to various noises. The Old Margreve might repeat the roar of a mountain lion or the wail of a banshee to scare interlopers into perilous terrain or the domain of a territorial creature.

These strange, disconnected sounds have prompted many rumors among neighboring folk. Some wrongly believe that the Old Margreve has the power to teleport creatures within its borders, which explains why dreadful creatures can be anywhere (Can't you hear one now?!) and why people get lost inside the forest. Most folk simply believe that the forest is haunted. It is, but forest crones know that the sounds the forest makes aren't true evidence of that fact. Such crones often listen to the leaves to gather imprecise information about distant areas of the woods. Baba Yaga and her sisters have even mastered a type of clairaudience they can enjoy by stepping into trees or burying themselves next to roots that vibrate with carried sounds.

POWERS AND HEARTS OF THE OLD MARGREVE

The Old Margreve isn't a creature in most respects, and thus it doesn't have a true stat block. It acts more like a sentient environment than a creature, but it has some features that can be defined in game terms for better ease of play. The powers described in this section apply to any location within the forest, while the powers noted for the hearts are specific to those regions of the forest.

SENSES AND MEMORIES

The Old Margreve has forest-wide tremorsense, and it can sense the location and general disposition of any creature in the forest that has spilled blood within the forest. In addition, the Old Margreve has access to the knowledge and memories of any creature that has decomposed within the forest. Though it doesn't understand or communicate in languages the way other creatures do, the Old Margreve can access these memories to understand the general context of languages spoken in the forest.

REGIONAL EFFECTS

The Old Margreve has several passive effects that always fill the forest, affecting everything within its bounds. In addition to the effects listed here, the Old Margreve passively siphons magic from spells cast within it, which is detailed further in the **Magic in the Margreve Forest** section later in this chapter.

Bestial Wildness. Domesticated Beasts feel the call of the wild strongly within the Margreve Forest. Every 24 hours a domesticated Beast, such as a horse or dog, is left untended by a Humanoid, it must succeed on a DC 8 WIS save or lose its training, becoming wild. The DC increases by 1 for each day the Beast is left untended by a Humanoid. A wild Beast is treated as if it has never been domesticated, though the Beast doesn't lose all its memories. A horse treated well by its owners might still favor and be affectionate toward them, but it has forgotten how to be ridden, acting like a wild horse when the owners attempt to saddle or ride it.



Rapid Decomposition. Dead creatures and plants in the forest decay 25 percent faster than normal. Iron and iron alloys rust quickly within the forest, making large-scale logging unprofitable and long trips in heavy armor unfeasible. Every 24 hours a nonmagical ferrous object spends within the forest, it takes a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to damage rolls or to the AC it offers. If a nonmagical weapon's penalty drops to -5 , the weapon is destroyed. Nonmagical armor reduced to an AC of 10 or a nonmagical shield that drops to a $+0$ to bonus is destroyed. A *mending* spell repairs objects rusted by this feature. Alternatively, a bottle of deer tallow, linseed oil, or other special oil can prevent rusting for 24 hours. Each bottle costs around 5 sp, depending on the seller, and holds five applications, with one application needed to treat a weapon and two applications needed to treat armor. A creature made almost entirely of ferrous metal loses 3d6 hit points from rusting at the end of each week spent in the forest.

SOVEREIGN OF FLORA AND FAUNA

The Old Margreve can move and manipulate any tree, root, branch, or plant within the forest. It often uses subtle movements to express its displeasure or happiness with an individual (see the **Character Status with the Margreve** section in this chapter). It uses more overt movements when greater threats present themselves, such as using roots to entangle and bury intruders, vines to whip fire starters, or branches to pummel loggers.

Even these more overt actions are minor and temporary versions of the Old Margreve's true power: the ability to awaken any animal or plant born or grown within the bounds of the forest. None know the limit of this power. The forest awakens animals to speak with and help travelers, spawns **wood heralds** as guardians, and creates permanent protectors like **treants** and **leshys** (see *Tome of Beasts 1*) to ward certain springs, runestones, groves, and ley line sites. All serve the forest, and many act as extensions of the forest's defenses.

Some creatures the Old Margreve doesn't awaken but merely controls or prompts aggression in for a time. Stories abound of biting ants invading bed rolls, poisonous grubs spoiling food, wasp swarms gathering on weapon hafts, and curious squirrels turning suddenly feral when a campfire's sparks spread too far.

The Old Margreve's power to awaken and control animals, vermin, and plants of the forest transcends death. A dead animal, even one already cooked, animates if the Old Margreve so chooses. Though rare, such an event has occurred often enough to prompt forest dwellers to ritually bless their food. They have a saying: "Thank the Old Margreve for your breakfast, for the forest has let you catch it. Thank the Old Margreve for your supper, lest it rise up and flee."

Reincarnation. The Old Margreve can reincarnate any dead animal that was born within the bounds of the forest as if the forest had cast the *reincarnate* spell on the creature. The new body must be another Beast native to the forest, not a Humanoid.

Wood Warping. In addition to moving plants around to disrupt or aid travelers, the Old Margreve can choose to warp and bend non-living objects made of wood, such as bows, clubs, or shields, provided the object is on the forest floor, leaning against a tree, or similarly left unattended and in contact with the forest for at least 1 minute. Wooden ammunition warped by the Old Margreve becomes useless, warped wooden weapons impose disadvantage on attack rolls with them, and warped wooden shields reduce their AC bonus by 1.

HEART OF THE FOREST POWERS

Each of the Old Margreve's hearts, including the area where the Eastern Heart is slowly developing, have the following regional effects, in addition to the powers described in this section and within each heart's entry.

Drawn Curtain. Divination spells can't perceive anything within the heart or within 1 mile of the heart, and each creature within the heart can't be the target of the *detect thoughts* spell. Teleportation spells cast within the heart have a 75 percent chance of failing. Those that succeed place the targets outside the Margreve Forest at a location nearest the heart, regardless of the target destination.

In the area where the Eastern Heart is developing, the chance of teleportation failure is only 50 percent, and those that succeed are teleported just outside of the heart's area rather than outside of the forest.

Hungry Heart. Magical effects within the heart, except for any the Old Margreve creates, have a cumulative 5 percent chance each round to be suppressed as if in the area of the *antimagic field* spell, their power being absorbed by the heart.

In the area where the Eastern Heart is developing, there is only a cumulative 1 percent chance each round that magic is suppressed.

Quench. A nonmagical fire is automatically extinguished when it enters the heart, and nonmagical fires can't be lit within the heart. Magical fire—including any ongoing fire effect created by a spell—is automatically dispelled 1 round after it appears, no check required.

In the area where the Eastern Heart is developing, magical and nonmagical fires can last up to 1 minute before being extinguished or dispelled instead.

WESTERN HEART

The Western Heart of the Margreve Forest has taproots older than the modern gods. Like a tangle of world-snakes, these titanic roots branch, intertwine, and bore deep into the earth. The Western Heart encompasses approximately 5 square miles of forest in the Western Margreve.

The Western Heart harnesses the bulk of its power from the Shadow Plane. The heart's roots pierce the Plane of Shadow and grip its tattered edges. In this part of the forest, the shadows of trees and animals are disproportionately long, even at noon. Sometimes they move with slight independence or detach entirely.

Plant life flourishes even in the dim light. In many places, it grows with such density that it reduces travel to a crawl. Mindless **shadows**, sustained by the heart's magic, patrol the heart and protect it from invaders. Ivy spirals up abandoned spider webs, filling in the gaps, and forming great leafy sheets between the trees. The wind puffs the sheets back and forth, and walking through this heart of the forest is like hacking one's way through the gills of a breathing fish.

Western Heart Powers

The Western Heart has the following regional effects in addition to the standard powers and effects of the Old Margreve and its hearts:

Aura of Desecration. While within the heart, undead advantage on saves against effects that would turn them, and they have a +1 bonus to attack rolls, damage rolls, and saves.

Early Grave. A creature that starts its turn prone in the heart and below half its hit point maximum becomes grappled (escape DC 13) by shadowy vines. A dead creature is drawn into the ground by these vines within 1 minute and fully decomposed within 10 minutes.

Shadowed Heart. A creature reincarnated within the heart is forever touched by shadow and knows the *claws of darkness* cantrip (see *Deep Magic* 2).

CENTRAL HEART

The Central Heart of the forest is a place of unbridled wildness. Trails disappear behind those who blaze them. Structures shake themselves down. Poisons are more deadly. Diseases are more virulent. Travelers devolve to beasts. The Central Heart encompasses approximately 5 square miles of forest in the Central Margreve.

Baba Yaga frequently calls the Central Heart home. The most daring of explorers might find her living house wandering somewhere between Baba's Wend and the Mistwallows. Even with all her powers, Baba Yaga can but nudge the wild heart of the wood toward her ends, and only then at great cost. She can't harness its deeply rooted power, although she and others fight over the knowledge of how to cajole the forest—and the wisdom of doing so.

Central Heart Powers

The Central Heart has the following regional effects in addition to the standard powers and effects of the Old Margreve and its hearts.

Enhanced Wildness. A domesticated Beast within the heart must make the save against the forest's Bestial Wildness effect, even if it has been tended by a Humanoid within the past 24 hours. In addition, domesticated Beasts in the heart have disadvantage on the save against the forest's Bestial Wildness effect.

Lycanthropic Needles. Coniferous trees within the heart have needles tipped with the curse of lycanthropy. Each minute a Humanoid moves through the heart, it has a cumulative 10 percent chance to brush against one of these needles, exposing it to the curse. The creature must succeed on a DC 10 CON save or contract lycanthropy (see *Monster Vault* for more on lycanthropy). The type of Beast associated with the lycanthropy is chosen randomly from the terrestrial, forest-dwelling Beasts found in *Monster Vault*. See the *Game Master's Guide* for guidance on creating lycanthrope creatures of types not listed in *Monster Vault*.

Heightened Emotions. Emotions and emotional reactions of creatures within the heart and within 1 mile of the heart are enhanced. Each emotion feels stronger and lasts longer, and each creature in the area has advantage on checks and saves against effects and spells that would calm them, such as the *calm emotions* spell.

Virulence. Each creature within the heart has disadvantage on saves against disease and being poisoned.

EASTERN HEART

Though the Margreve Forest crested the Cloudwalls and spilled upon the Rothenian Plain untold centuries ago, a true Eastern Heart of the forest has not yet formed. The mountains have slowed the necessary transfer of power... until now. The Eastern Heart finally stands on the brink of coming into existence. And that fact has Baba Yaga worried.

There is a prophecy that begins with "An Eastern Heart shall be born" and ends with "And the great witch shall die." Baba Yaga believes that the verse refers to her, and she has gone to incredible lengths to slow the Eastern Heart's formation. Though her power is nearly limitless, Baba Yaga can't prevent the Eastern Heart from being born altogether. She has, however, enacted a plan to buy herself time.

With the help of her sorcerous daughters and at great expense to her health and sanity, Baba Yaga has chipped off shards of the embryonic "soul" of the Eastern Heart, effectively shattering what would have been a full heart into thirty-seven pieces. Each chipped shard, as it flew off, coupled with the soul of a living creature. Baba Yaga doesn't know which individuals bear the soul fragments, nor in what small or grievous way the shard affects each of them. But she is happy, because until those creatures die, the disjointed heart can't fully form.

In time, Baba Yaga plans to locate these "forest-hearted" individuals and offer them attractive ways to extend their lives. She might assign a daughter or a minion to act as



their guardian, lingering in the background and protecting them from time to time. If a forest-hearted insists on putting itself in danger, Baba Yaga instructs the guardian to abduct and imprison it.

Meanwhile, Baba Yaga's archrival, an ancient *zmey* named Czarizeby ("Black Teeth"), seeks the same individuals—but to kill them and thus hasten the prophecy. Even if the *zmey* is unsuccessful, Baba Yaga has the harder task, for some of the forest-hearted already stand on the opposite sides of a battlefield. Some are prey animals, and some are adventuring people who frequently wander close to their own deaths.

Forest-Hearted

The manifestation of a sliver of the heart's soul in a creature varies widely and is unique to the individual. All forest-hearted are friends of the Margreve Forest, and it may actively protect them, sensing their connection to it. The forest-hearted live their lives, oblivious of the power and potential connected to their soul. In some, sorcerous powers develop, flashing out during moments of emotional turmoil. Those that pursue magic tend to be sorcerers of great skill and power. Due to their unique connection with the forest, forest-hearted spellcasters ignore the siphoning of magic and other effects described in the **Magic in the Margreve Forest** section later in this chapter.

Eastern Heart Powers

Though the Eastern Heart hasn't yet formed, an area roughly 3 square miles is slowly developing into a heart. That area has the following regional effect in addition to the standard powers and effects of the Old Margreve and its hearts. As it grows, it will gain other powers and strengthen its roots and magic.

Paranoid Dreams. The fractured soul of the Eastern Heart haunts the dreams of sleeping creatures within the area where the heart is slowly forming and within 2 miles of that area. The dreams sometimes feature the dreaming creature lost in the depths of the forest, and other times, the dreams appear to be from the perspective of forest-hearted animals, hunting or being hunted in the forest. A creature that sleeps or enters a trance during a long rest in the area must make a DC 13 CHA save. On a failure, the creature is paranoid for 2d6 days, feeling anxious and suspecting danger around every corner—even behind the eyes of friends.

A paranoid creature has disadvantage on CHA checks to interact socially with other creatures, it can't benefit from or take the Help action, and it can't willingly accept aid (including healing) from another creature. The paranoid creature can repeat the save after each night's sleep outside the area where the Eastern Heart is slowly forming, ending the effect on itself on a success. Alternatively, the effect can be ended with the *restoration* spell.

MAGIC IN THE MARGREVE FOREST

Sun, rain, and soil are the basic needs that must be met for any forest to thrive. The Old Margreve takes more. It hungers for magical energy, and it siphons magic from every spell cast within its borders.

The Old Margreve wants spellcasters to cast more spells, allowing it to siphon more energy. Siphoned spells aren't quite as effective, and this lowered efficacy often leads spellcasters to repeat the casting or try a different spell, further feeding the forest.

When spellcasting visitors aren't in great profusion, the Margreve Forest's permanent inhabitants unknowingly provide a base amount of magic to feed the forest. The energy is woven into daily rituals, blessings, curses, sacrifices, and children's rhymes. These subtle incantations and rote traditions hold little magic individually, but they are an integral part of every inhabitant's daily life, repeated at meals, before and after rest, and during many common tasks. The energy from each usage is slight, but they are provided so frequently by the inhabitants that they sustain the forest.

Baba Yaga suspects that the Old Margreve hides "reservoirs" of siphoned spell energy somewhere in the Hearts. She has yet to locate one. If one does exist, it could hold devastating potential—an accumulation of magic collected across a massive area over a period of centuries.

NON-CASTER CASTERS

Every intelligent creature born in the Margreve Forest and raised in the Old Ways treasures an intimate magical connection with the forest. Even those who have no talent for the magical arts cradle a tiny spark of Margrevian magic in their soul. While within the forest, the individual can create a minor magical effect that might not even appear magical to the average observer. The gestures or rhyme necessary to create the effect are unique to the individual and innately understood by the individual. This effect represents both the creature's relationship with the forest and the expenditure of magic that feeds the forest. Through this magic, one Margrevian may have a knack for keeping blades sharp and free from rust, another for locating game, and another for predicting storms or the arrival of travelers. The power of these effects is equivalent to a cantrip, and the effects often manifest in the same ways similar cantrips might.

SIPHONED SPELLS

The dissipation of siphoned energy into the forest when a spell is cast frequently manifests visually, in a fashion associated with the spell's primary function. Such "spell marks" often last for days and, for those who have learned to read them, can reveal a great deal about the nature and power of the spell that was cast and the events that may have transpired around it.

In some cases, spellcasters experience more than just a minor loss of power from the siphoning. During the process, eldritch energy from the forest commingles with a cast spell's energy, noticeably twisting the spell's normal effect. The extra effects for spells of particular types are described here.

SPELL ATTACKS AND SAVE DCs

The Old Margreve's power to siphon magic affects all spells cast within its borders. Spell save DCs are reduced by 1, and spell attack rolls suffer a -1 penalty. Baba Yaga and the forest-hearted (see the **Eastern Heart** section earlier in this chapter) are notable exceptions to this effect. There may be others with similar exceptions, at the GM's discretion.

BLIGHT AND DESTRUCTIVE SPELLS

Blight spells are spells that directly target or harm plants, causing them to wither, desiccate, or decay, such as the *blight* spell. Destructive spells are spells that deal direct damage. Blight and destructive spells are typically of the evocation or necromancy schools.

When such a spell is cast within the Margreve Forest and doesn't cause harm to the forest, such as a spellcaster hitting a bandit with the beams of a *scorching ray* spell, the forest exhibits minor effects based on the type of damage dealt: frost coats the grass around the target if the damage was cold, leaves blacken around the target if the damage was fire or necrotic, harmless and brief sparks of lightning arc between the spellcaster and target if the damage was lightning, light swirls around the target if the damage was radiant, and so on.

When such a spell is cast within the Margreve Forest and causes harm to the forest or if the spell is a blight spell—regardless if the blight spell harms the forest—the spellcaster must succeed on a WIS save against the spellcaster's spell save DC or take damage of the spell's type equal to one quarter of the highest single instance of damage dealt by the spell. If the spellcaster is immune to that type of damage, it takes force damage instead. Afterward, nearby leaves shake in an unfelt wind, warning the spellcaster against continuing such behavior.

DIVINING SPELLS

Divining spells are spells that seek to understand the future, glean some obscure knowledge, or determine the success of a particular action, typically in the form of beseeching the gods, burning special incense, or rolling carved bones, such as in the *augury* or *contact other plane* spells. Divining spells are typically of the divination schools.

When such a spell is cast within the Margreve Forest, the nearby plants turn toward the spellcaster during the casting, as if every leaf and blade of grass is listening in on the result of the divining. If the result is negative in some way, the plants then lean away from the spellcaster, while a positive result causes the plants to lean toward the spellcaster. If two or more divining spells are cast at the same time within

30 feet of each other within the forest, there is a 10 percent chance the energies of the spells and the forest intermingle, resulting in inaccurate and sometimes wildly inappropriate information for all divining spells involved.

HEALING SPELLS

Healing spells are spells that restore hit points, restore a creature to life, or help a creature recover from an ailment, such as the *restoration* spell. Healing spells are typically of the abjuration or necromancy schools.

When such a spell is cast within the Margreve Forest, the grass around the target grows a few inches and flowers sprout in a circle around the target. More powerful spells create wider circles or cause more pronounced growth. For example, the *raise dead* spell causes a young tree to sprout beneath the corpse so that the target awakens in its boughs.

The target of a healing spell cast within the Margreve Forest is covered in harmless, small patches of bark and vine-like growths across its body, with the number of patches increasing with the power of the spell. These patches of growth last for 1 day per spell circle, shedding like fallen leaves at the end of the duration.

ILLUSORY SPELLS

Illusory spells are spells that create false images, sounds, smells, or other false stimuli, and they are often of the illusion school. When such a spell is cast within the Margreve Forest, they often have minor details added, as if the forest is attempting to make them fit better into the forest. Moss grows on illusory trees, brambles curl around illusory walls, and chirping birdsong accompanies ghostly sounds. The DC to discern the spell is an illusion is increased by 2.

PROTECTIVE SPELLS

Protective spells are spells that create barriers, reduce damage a creature takes, or otherwise protect their targets, and they are often of the abjuration school. When such a spell is cast within the Margreve Forest, the magic curls around the target, falls to the ground, and strengthens the grass and undergrowth with protective force. For 1 minute per spell circle in a radius of 5 feet per spell circle centered on the space where the target was when the spell was cast, trodden grasses spring back and retain no footprints, underbrush slides past the bite of a machete, and campfire sparks and other collateral fire damage leave no mark. Creatures moving through or hiding in the affected area have a +10 bonus to DEX (Stealth) checks, and their movement through the area can't be tracked.

SUMMONING SPELLS

Summoning spells are spells that create, call, or conjure other creatures to the spellcaster's service, and they are often of the conjuration school. When such a spell is cast within the Margreve Forest, a transparent image of the summoned creature or creatures screams out from



the spellcaster's face and melts, wide-mouthed, into the ground. The Old Margreve chooses what kind of creatures are summoned by the spell, unless the spellcaster includes a tooth, claw, or other body part from the desired creature as an additional material component. The forest's wildness intertwines with the spell's energy, and summoned creatures have a 10 percent chance upon being summoned to become disoriented until the start of their next turn. A disoriented creature is incapacitated, and if it moves, it moves in a random direction.

TELEPORTATION SPELLS

Teleportation spells are spells that allow a creature to magically move from one location to another, such as the *dimension door* and *misty step* spells, and they are often of the conjuration school. When such a spell is cast within the Margreve Forest, a loop of silver cord briefly drifts out of the target in the direction of the destination, like a fishing line taken by the tide. The forest's magic tugs at the spell, distorting the path to the spellcaster's desired destination. If the Old Margreve views the spellcaster favorably, the spell's maximum distance is increased by 10 feet per circle of the spell, and if the spell requires the spellcaster to have familiarity with the destination, the spellcaster is treated as one step more familiar with the location than they actually are. If the Old Margreve views the spellcaster unfavorably, the spell's maximum distance is reduced by 10 feet per circle of the spell, and if the spell has a chance of mishap, that chance is increased by 10 percent.

CHARACTER STATUS WITH THE MARGREVE

The forest is encompassed by an antediluvian intelligence with a personality all its own. The inhabitants of the Margreve Forest learn quickly that their every move, action, and word are witnessed by the nearly omniscient forest. They know that the Old Margreve is quick to anger, slow to forgive, and will hold a grudge that passes from generation to generation like a powerful curse. This is represented in the game by treating the Old Margreve similar to a faction, allowing the PCs to gain or lose status with it. While the PCs can have status with the Old Margreve, it isn't a true faction in the sense of being an organization the PCs can join or that will provide them with quests. The guidance in this section uses the Status rule found in the *Game Master's Guide* but tailored specifically to the Old Margreve.

THE OLD MARGREVE'S VALUES

The Old Margreve's three core values are preservation, community, and growth, in that order of importance. How it interacts with the PCs and how their status with it changes always ties back to at least one of these core values. The score associated with each value is noted in the **Old Margreve Value Scores** table.

Community. The Old Margreve protects its own, which includes long-established communities of Humanoids that follow the Old Ways and the native flora and fauna of the forest. It subtly encourages adherence to the Old Ways and encourages inhabitants to follow them, as many of the rituals, traditions, and incantations of the Old Ways provide it a steady flow of magical sustenance.

Growth. The Old Margreve wants to expand its borders, creating more hearts and spreading its trees and grasses ever outward.

Preservation. Like most living things, the Old Margreve wants to survive. It wants its hearts protected, it wants more plants growing and healthy than not, and it wants magic to siphon into itself for further preservation.

OLD MARGREVE VALUE SCORES

SCORE	VALUE
1	Grow its borders. (Growth)
2	Encourage Old Ways and safety of its inhabitants. (Community)
3	Survive whatever this century's creatures throw at it. (Preservation)

OLD MARGREVE STATUS LEVELS

The PCs' status with the Old Margreve affects how the forest conducts itself toward them. The forest rarely acts overtly, but even a subtle hindrance or aid can have a lasting impact—especially if locals witness it. The **Old Margreve Status Levels** table details how the forest's attitude toward the PCs changes based on their status level. See the **Helping and Hindering** section for more information about ways the forest might help or hinder the PCs based on their status level.

Alternate Option: Individual Status. Since the Old Margreve identifies creatures by their blood, it is possible for the forest to treat each PC as having a separate status from the others of its group. The Old Margreve recognizes accomplishments they do together, but it also recognizes which PC is more likely to set the forest on fire or provide healing to an animal caught in a hunting trap. Tracking status separately for each PC requires a bit more bookkeeping than treating the PCs as a group, but it can be more rewarding when roleplaying how the forest interacts with individual PCs.

INCREASING OR DECREASING STATUS

This section provides examples of the kinds of activities that can change the PCs' status, increasing or decreasing their status (and potentially changing status level) with the forest. As described in the *Game Master's Guide*, repeating most status-affecting actions doesn't continue to affect status unless a new approach to that action or alternate strategy forces the shift in status. The exception is excessive

OLD MARGREVE STATUS LEVELS

STATUS LEVEL	BENEFIT OR PENALTY
5	Welcoming. The Old Margreve is very aware of the PCs and views them as active allies and key assets. It actively spends resources to help them accomplish their goals. At this level, PCs have no difficulty finding fresh water and securing wild game, and seemingly every bush or tree seems sports edible and nourishing fruits, nuts, or berries.
3	Friendly. The Old Margreve knows and spends some resources in observing the PCs, seeking to reward them for their deeds within its bounds. It doesn't consider them a key asset, but it helps them more often. It won't go out of its way to actively help the PCs, but it aids their plans when convenient for it. At this level, the PCs have little difficulty finding fresh water and securing wild game, provided the PCs don't overhunt.
1	Intrigued. The Old Margreve has vague awareness of the PCs and feels slightly positively toward them, waiting to see what else they accomplish within its bounds. It helps the PCs in minor ways, such as shifting trails and light to hasten their journey, but it doesn't expend a lot of effort to do so.
0	Indifferent. The Old Margreve has no particular interest in the PCs. It doesn't help or hinder the PCs and allows them access to any basic resources (such as fresh water or to hunt game, within reason) like any other traveler through the forest.
-1	Vexed. The Old Margreve has vague awareness of the PCs and feels slightly negatively toward them, unhappy with what they have so far accomplished within its bounds. It hinders the PCs in minor ways, such as shifting trails and light to slow their journey, but it doesn't expend a lot of effort to do so.
-3	Unfriendly. The Old Margreve knows and spends some resources in observing the PCs, seeking for them to receive punishment for their deeds within its bounds. It doesn't consider them a pressing threat, but it hinders them more often. It won't go out of its way to harm the PCs, but it foils their plans when convenient for it. At this level, the PCs start having a difficult time securing wild game and fresh water while within the forest.
-5	Hostile. The Old Margreve is very aware of the PCs and views them as an active threat to its existence. It actively spends resources to harm and hinder them. At this level, the PCs never find fresh water in the forest, as paths twist and turn to move them away from such resources, and successfully hunted game hops off the campfire spit and either attacks or runs off into the woods. Picked fruit, berries, and nuts are scarce and when discovered are bitter and sometimes poisonous.

damage to the forest itself—such an action always causes a reduction in status, as it goes against the forest's core value of preservation. At the GM's discretion, some actions repeated every week or once a month might continue to affect status, such as planting a tree every month or chopping down two or more trees each week.

GROWTH STATUS ADJUSTMENTS

The following are examples of actions the PCs can take that would positively or negatively align with the Old Margreve's growth value, reducing or increasing their status by 1:

- **(Positive)** Plant a tree or sow the forest's seeds in or near the forest.
- **(Positive)** Cast a healing spell (as defined in the **Magic in the Margreve Forest** section) in the forest.
- **(Negative)** Chop down more than one tree on the outskirts of the forest.
- **(Negative)** Cast the *blight* spell on a nonmagical plant in the forest.

COMMUNITY STATUS ADJUSTMENTS

The following are examples of actions the PCs can take that would positively or negatively align with the Old Margreve's community value, reducing or increasing their status by 2:

- **(Positive)** Save a creature acting on behalf of the forest or controlled by the forest from danger.

- **(Positive)** Defeat an intelligent Undead of at least CR 5 within the forest.
- **(Negative)** Break an oath sworn to an inhabitant of the forest.
- **(Negative)** Destroy or stop a creature acting on behalf of the forest or controlled by the forest.

PRESERVATION STATUS ADJUSTMENTS

The following are examples of actions the PCs can take that would positively or negatively align with the Old Margreve's preservation value, reducing or increasing their status by 3:

- **(Positive)** Protect the forest from a major, potentially forest-wide threat or danger.
- **(Positive)** Restore a damaged portion of the forest.
- **(Positive)** Cast a spell of 7th-circle or higher that isn't a blight or destructive spell (as defined in the **Magic in the Margreve Forest** section).
- **(Negative)** Cause major damage to a portion of the forest, such as burning an acre or more of land.
- **(Negative)** Unleash, direct, encourage, or aid a destructive force or creature that is a major threat to the forest.
- **(Negative)** Create or control a number of Undead whose combined total CRs equal 5 or more.



HELPING AND HINDERING

Depending on how the forest feels about the PCs, which is reflected in their status level with the forest, the Old Margreve might help or hinder them in subtle ways. Every 24 hours the PCs are in the forest, roll a d6 and consult the table associated with their status level (friendly, unfriendly, welcoming, or hostile) to determine how the forest helps or hinders them that day. PCs with status levels outside of those don't gain enough attention from the forest to earn its aid or ire. The forest's help or hindrance can last for the next 24 hours or happen at any point during the next 24 hours, as noted in the table's entry.

These tables offer examples of ways the Old Margreve might help or hinder a group of PCs, but the forest's power is nearly limitless within its bounds. Depending on the PCs' status level, the forest might help or hinder them in larger or less-subtle ways. See the **Powers and Hearts of the Old Margreve** section in this chapter for details on the extent of the Old Margreve's power and influence. The forest might bring these powers to bear against the PCs, might exempt the PCs from some of its regional effects, or might use these powers to directly communicate or interact with the PCs.

FRIENDLY OLD MARGREVE EFFECTS

d6	EFFECT
1	The PCs find ample trails, spoor, and deer-sign around every corner. Once before the 24 hours ends, one PC can automatically succeed on a WIS (Survival) check to hunt wild game in the forest.
2	A stream, brook, or small pond seems to always be just off the trail. Once before the 24 hours ends, one PC can automatically succeed on a WIS (Survival) check to find clean, fresh water in the forest.
3	The flora and fauna of the forest open flowers at the right moment, turn their heads at the right angle, or reveal details about themselves in other subtle ways to the PCs. All INT (Nature) checks made in the forest gain a +2 bonus.
4	A branch, tree, or other natural cover is always nearby. Once before the 24 hours ends, one PC has advantage on a DEX (Stealth) check to hide in the forest.
5	The canopy of the forest bends and extends to aid the PCs. PCs with Sunlight Sensitivity are never in direct sunlight, and PCs that rely on sight to see don't have disadvantage on WIS (Perception) checks during the day while in dim light created by the forest's canopy.
6	The forest alters the path as the PCs journey. While traveling in the forest, the PCs cover an additional 1 mile for each hour of travel.

UNFRIENDLY OLD MARGREVE EFFECTS

d6	EFFECT
1	The animals of the forest avoid the PCs at all costs. All WIS (Survival) checks to hunt game in the forest are made with disadvantage.
2	Brackish, still water is abundant, and clean water is rare. All WIS (Survival) checks to find potable water in the forest suffer a -2 penalty. If the check fails by 5 or less, the PCs find water, but it is tainted. PCs that drink tainted water must succeed on a DC 13 CON save or be poisoned for 1d4 hours.
3	A root is always underfoot. When a PC takes the Dash action and moves at least 5 feet, the PC must succeed on a DC 12 DEX save or fall prone.
4	Shadows and strange sounds are everywhere, confusing the PCs' senses. Any WIS (Perception) check made in the forest suffers a -2 penalty.
5	Toxic plants line the path the PCs take that day, and at one point on their journey, the PCs walk into a patch of poisonous plants. Each PC must succeed on a DC 13 CON save or be poisoned for 1d4 hours.
6	Sinkholes, quicksand, and brambles appear in the PCs' path as they journey. While traveling in the forest, the PCs cover 1 less mile for each hour of travel.

WELCOMING OLD MARGREVE EFFECTS

d6	EFFECT
1	There is always a branch or handhold within reach. All STR (Athletics) checks made to climb in the forest gain a +2 bonus.
2	A cool breeze and plentiful shade aid the PCs' trek through the forest. All checks and saves to avoid exhaustion from environmental effects in the forest gain a +2 bonus.
3	The PCs' steps are muffled by the soft undergrowth and terrain. All DEX (Stealth) checks made to hide in the forest gain a +2 bonus.
4	Wind parts the leaves and birds quiet at just the right moment to aid the PCs. All WIS (Perception) checks made in the forest gain a +2 bonus.
5	The inhabitants of the forest are uncharacteristically curious and unafraid of the PCs. All WIS (Animal Handling) checks made to influence Beasts in the forest have advantage.
6	The ground always seems to be clear wherever the PCs go. While traveling in the forest, difficult terrain doesn't slow the PCs.

HOSTILE OLD MARGREVE EFFECTS

d6	EFFECT
1	When given the opportunity to flee or attack, Beasts in the forest always attack the PCs.
2	Tree branches are out of reach, and rock faces are sheer or choppy. All STR (Athletics) checks made to climb in the forest suffer a -2 penalty.
3	Foliage and objects in the forest move away from the PCs at inconvenient times. All DEX (Stealth) checks made to hide in the forest suffer a -2 penalty.
4	Difficult terrain is riddled with brambles. While traveling in the forest, each hour a PC travels through difficult terrain, the PC must succeed on a DC 13 DEX save or take 1d4 piercing damage and 1d4 slashing damage from thorns, serrated leaves, and other prickly plants.
5	Biting insects plague the PCs, making it difficult to focus on fine tasks. While in the forest, all CON saves made to maintain concentration on a spell or effect have disadvantage.
6	Malevolent intent and fey magic emanate from the forest, putting them on edge and making them more easily caught off guard. Each PC suffers a -2 penalty on initiative rolls and on saves against being frightened.

CUSTOMIZING THE MARGREVE EXPERIENCE

The degree to which the Old Margreve uses its powers to intervene against interlopers depends on the mood you want to elicit. A less aggressive Old Margreve tends to evoke a more mysterious atmosphere, filled with occasionally justified superstitions, unexplained disappearances, strange creatures, and terrifying stories. Fear derives from the unknown, and it is never quite clear whether the Old Margreve or its inhabitants are responsible for the effects that the PCs experience. The Old Margreve reacts subtly and sporadically. One can't learn from cause and effect. One can't trust one's senses. Perhaps darkness has fallen unnaturally early, or perhaps it is just later than one thinks.

With a less aggressive Old Margreve, the setting is one of ominous foreboding, as much about mystery as about terror. Lower aggression could result from the forest's relatively slow responses to stimuli. Or the forest might simply not always address concerns as small as Humanoid trespassers. With this option, the powers of the Old Margreve function something like an immune system, designed to deal with trivial invaders without requiring conscious will or much energy. This doesn't imply that the Old Margreve doesn't have a consciousness, but simply that the phenomena detailed above pale in comparison with the true powers of the Old Margreve, should it ever deign to turn its eye and attention to confronting a grievous assault on its body.

To elicit feelings of a major power at play, ratchet up the Old Margreve's aggressiveness. Outsiders are never welcome and rarely tolerated. Hostile **leshy** (see *Tome of Beasts 1*) and **wood heralds** patrol the borders and thwart casual exploration by thickening the underbrush with vines and brambles. The forest responds to undeterred interlopers quickly and consistently. Stepping into the Margreve Forest demands the same amount of care taken when entering a dungeon. The forest shifts from backdrop to active participant, warping and rusting outsiders' weapons at critical moments, forcing spellcasters to deplete their power whenever possible, and twisting trails so that they lead toward peril rather than away from it.

This elevated aggression might be temporary or permanent. If it is long-lasting, inhabitants and outsiders can, through experience, predict the Old Margreve's reaction to their actions, and through trial and error, learn something about how the Old Margreve works. Feelings of fear and mystery diminish as PCs begin thinking of the Old Margreve as a foe with predictable reactions, which naturally suggest clever tactics and spells to blunt those reactions. The use of obsidian blades can eliminate the problems of warping and rust. Levitating casters can fool the forest's ability to sense them. Until the Old Margreve turns its full attention against the invaders, an appropriately equipped party, armed with spells to deceive the forest, might enjoy a measure of success.

Whatever level of aggression you choose, factor in the Old Margreve's demeanor toward each PC. This allows the PCs some control over their environment, and through their actions, the opportunity to temper (or inflame) the Old Margreve's aggression toward each of them.



2

Heroes of the Margreve

The Margreve Forest is home to a variety of peoples, many of whom have been touched by the forest's magic in some way. Whether the creatures live in harmony with the ancient forest or barely scrape a living together, the forest changes its inhabitants over time. This chapter presents lineages, heritages, and a background appropriate for people born, raised, or residing within the forest, and it includes a naming table with names common to many of those peoples. The heritages section also includes new languages spoken within the Margreve Forest and granted by some of the heritages. If these languages aren't in your world, feel free to replace them with Sylvan or other languages of the forest or fey in your world.

This chapter includes subclasses commonly found among adventurers in the forest. While druid and ranger characters will find plenty of support in this chapter, many other classes that might have some connection to the forest

or hunting also feature new subclasses, from the Wildlife bard to the Courser Mage wizard.

Finally, this chapter includes spells and magic items wielded or crafted by the forest's inhabitants, so that even those new to the forest might find ways to harness its power.

If you are a player, talk with your game master before using any of the material presented in this chapter to ensure it fits into the game world and the campaign you are playing.

LINEAGES

This section features four new lineages of people that are often found within the Margreve Forest: alseid, bearfolk, erina, and piney. Lineage represents the blood ties and hereditary traits of a creature. It's what you're born to, no matter where you were born.

ALSEID

Alseid are graceful woodland cousins to centaurs, blending humanoid torsos with the lower bodies of nimble deer. Because they rarely venture far from their wooded glades, some call them “grove nymphs,” although they’re more closely related to humanoids than fey.

Alseid innately feel a close connection to the natural world and often feel a disconnect between themselves and creatures who dwell in more urban areas. They typically feel uncomfortable in large cities where their hooves tread the cobblestone streets and relaxed in the wilderness where they can feel the earth beneath them.

Alseid have antlers growing from their foreheads. Antlers grow very slowly, branching every 10 years for the first century of life (so an alseid with six points per antler should be between 60 and 70 years old). As creatures with a deep connection to the Old World magic of ancient forests, alseid antlers develop further points only with the blessing of the alseid’s home forest.

ALSEID TRAITS

Your alseid character has the following hereditary traits.

Age. Alseid reach maturity by the age of 20. They can live well beyond 100 years.

Size. Your size is Medium. Alseid stand over 6 feet tall and weigh around 200 pounds.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 40 feet.

Heightened Senses. You have advantage on Perception checks that rely on sight or hearing. You can see through lightly obscured areas normally and areas of dim light as if it were bright light.

Hybrid Humanoid. Though your type is Humanoid, you have traits in common with Monstrosities. You have advantage on saves against effects that would cause you to become exhausted, and you have advantage on saves against being frightened.

Light Hooves. You have advantage on DEX (Stealth) checks. In addition, your steps leave no tracks, unless you choose for them to do so.



Quadruped. The mundane details of the structures of Humanoids can present considerable obstacles for you. You have to squeeze (see **Squeezing into a Smaller Space** in *Player’s Guide*) when moving through trapdoors, manholes, and similar structures even when a Medium creature wouldn’t have to squeeze. In addition, ladders, stairs, and similar structures are difficult terrain for you.

HORNS AS STATUS SYMBOL

In the Margreve Forest, horns are a symbol of status and power among the alseid. No 14-point imperial alseid are known to exist, but many tribes in the Margreve Forest are governed by princes with 13 points, indicating that they’ve done a great service to the forest on at least three

occasions. Because antlers signify status, alseid don’t fight with them the way deer do. Cutting an alseid’s antlers is one of the direst punishments an alseid can receive, and an alseid with shorn antlers is typically an exile from its people.

BEARFOLK

The bearfolk are broad-shouldered, bipedal humanoids that strongly resemble upright bears. Though they lack a bear's sharp claws, their hands are as dexterous as any human craftsman. They are covered in black or brown shaggy fur that often have light frosting on the chest, shoulders, and upper back. The color of their fur sometimes gives clues as to a particular bearfolk's ancestry and what tribe they hail from. As they get older, the fur around their muzzle begins to silver, giving them a distinguished look.

BEARFOLK LINEAGE TRAITS

Your bearfolk character has the following hereditary traits.

Age. Bearfolk reach adulthood in their late teens, living up to 80 years.

Size. Your size is Medium. Bearfolk are typically large and muscular, reaching a height of over 7 feet and weighing anywhere between 250 and 350 pounds.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 30 feet.

Apex Predator. When you make a CHA check, you can add your STR or CON modifier to it (choose which during character creation). You can use this trait a number of times equal to your PB, and you regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Wild Heart. You and allied creatures within 5 feet of you have advantage on saves against being frightened while you are conscious and not incapacitated.

Thick Coat. You are resistant to cold damage and immune to the effects of extreme cold.

ERINA

The erina are a small-statured lineage of creatures resembling bipedal hedgehogs. They tend to live in large, underground communities and are typically very curious people. Erina young are always probing the limits of their community's territory, and many erina have a keen eye for things that are out of place or novel.

Erina typically subsist by scrounging, and their diet consists of fruit, roots, snakes, poisonous insects, and small animals. Even erina raised outside of erina communities tend to enjoy eating poisonous insects and spicy foods.



ERINA TRAITS

Your erina character has the following hereditary traits.

Age. Erina reach maturity around 15 years and can live up to 60 years, though some erina burrow elders have memories of events which suggest erina can live much longer.

BEARFOLK IN MIDGARD

Bearfolk in Midgard are wide-ranging in their wandering and settling. While most hail from the cold climates of the Northlands, standing against both the challenging environment and fearsome neighbors, many bearfolk families inhabit the Margreve Forest and the cities of Midgard. Several families of bearfolk have even carved out a small nation of light in the Shadow Realm, bringing the healing power of moonlight to that twilight realm.

Size. Your size is Small. Erina average about 3 feet tall and weigh about 50 pounds.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 30 feet.

Darkvision. You have darkvision to a range of 60 feet.

Digger. You have a burrowing speed equal to your walking speed, but you can't burrow through ice or rock.

Erina Resilience. Your ancestor's diet of snakes and poisonous insects has made most toxins little threat to you. You have advantage on saves against being poisoned, and you are resistant to poison damage.



Heightened Senses. You have advantage on Perception checks that rely on sight or hearing.

Spines. Needle-sharp spines grow in small clusters atop your head and along your back. While you are grappling a creature or while a creature is grappling you, it takes piercing damage equal to your PB at the start of your turn.

PINEY

Many villages scattered through the Margreve Forest are home to an elusive lineage of Humanoids known as the pineys. They follow a code known by most as “the Old Ways,” but for them, these rules of the forest are as natural as the leaves growing on the boughs above.

While the pineys were once human, their bodies have been changed by the magic of the great forest over many generations. When a piney leaves the Margreve Forest, the forest's influence fades but never fully disappears. Their too-long limbs and blank inchoate eyes suggest a fey influence, but their kind is mostly known for strange plant-like qualities to their skin, hair, and nails. Though these plant-like aspects manifest in different ways for each piney, all pineys appear genderless, the forest's power removing differences between male and female in favor of plant features. When two pineys want to reproduce, they do so via spores, typically shed from their bark-like skin or leaf-like hair.

Some elder pineys in the deepest parts of the forest exhibit very strong plant-like aspects, often appearing closer to a treant than a human. Most pineys, however, appear humanoid with plant-like features.

ERINA IN MIDGARD

In Midgard, the enigmatic hedgehog-folk of Midgard trace their history back to the beginning of the world—farther back than the rule of the elves—to the first groves and wild grasslands, to those green places between the elemental poles that birthed all that is. Or so the erina druids like to claim.

They typically worship the Hedge Mother, an erina goddess often associated with the elven goddess Holda (though the erina firmly state their worship of the Hedge Mother came long before the elves' Holda existed), whose tenets regarding the defense of home align very well with the hedgehog-folk's territorial nature.

LIFE IN THE FOREST

Piney villages are located deep in the Margreve Forest. Though their homes evoke human architecture, the villages are often melded into the trunks of trees or dug into the side of grassy hills. From these enclaves, pineys patrol their territory from dusk until sunrise ensuring the woods are safe and free from interlopers. Pineys feed through photosynthesis, which often requires them to chase patches of sunlight throughout the day before returning to their villages for a few hours of rest.

PINEY TRAITS

Your piney character has the following hereditary traits.

Age. Pineys reach adulthood in their late teenage years and typically live to be just over 100 years old.

Size. Your size is Medium or Small. Pineys vary widely in height but tend to have sturdy builds with bark-like growths. They range from barely 5 feet to well over 6 feet tall and average around 175 pounds. If you choose to play a piney shorter than 4 feet however, you can choose your size to be Small.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 30 feet.

Hybrid Humanoid. Though your type is Humanoid, you have traits in common with Plants. You have advantage on saves against effects that would cause you to become exhausted. In addition, you have advantage on saves against being paralyzed or petrified and against effects that would make you fall unconscious.

Living Wood. In moments of peril, you can rapidly grow tough bark, vines, or similar growth to shield you from harm. When an attacker you can see would hit you with a melee attack, you can use your reaction to increase your AC by an amount equal to your PB against the triggering attack. You can use this trait a number of times equal to your PB, and you regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Photosynthetic. If you spend at least 1 hour in an area of sunlight or natural bright light, your daily food requirements are met (see **Starvation and Dehydration** in the *Player's Guide*). In addition, if you spend the entirety a short rest in such an area, you can regain a number of expended hit dice up to your PB. Once you recover hit dice in this way, you can't do so again until you finish a long rest.



PINEY CHARACTERS

Though pineys appear mostly human, they possess many plant-like characteristics. When making a piney character, decide how the Margreve Forest's influence on your bloodline manifests itself in your physical form. Here are some physical characteristics your character might have:

- Your skin is rough with harmless cracks resembling tree bark.
- Heavily-perfumed flowers grow wherever your body hair is dense. They can be plucked, but they grow back within a few days.
- Your eyes are twice as large as typical human's, and their color is a changing swirl of green, orange, and brown.
- Your finger and toe nails are wood.
- Your major joints (shoulders, hip, knees) creak like tree branches when you move.

HERITAGES

This section features four new heritages that represent some of the cultures found within the Margreve Forest. Heritage represents the upbringing and culture of a character. It's what your family, community, or other formative authority figures taught you.

Any lineage can work with any heritage, regardless of whether the character is of a lineage associated with the forest, but some lineages go more naturally with certain heritages. The **Common Heritages by Lineage** table shows which ones match up if you want to play a more “typical” character from the Margreve Forest.

MARGREVIAN NAMES

The names of the people of the Margreve Forest are as varied as the people themselves, but some names are particularly popular. Most of these names originated from specific peoples within the Margreve Forest but have since spread to those who have traded with, been raised by, or otherwise interacted with such people. Use the **Margreavian Names** table when choosing a name for a character from the Margreve Forest or as inspiration for creating a name for such a character.

Alseid Names. Alseid tend to name those in their community using a combination of Elvish and Sylvan syllables. The names are often extremely long, and many youth choose shorter nicknames for themselves when they come of age.

Bearfolk Names. Bearfolk tend to give those in their community names heavy with consonants or growling sounds.

Erina Names. Erina tend to bestow names with long, open vowel sounds, and they often extend the sounds of vowels in names when speaking affectionately to or about someone.

Piney Names. Those in piney communities often declare new names for themselves each Spring. The names typically evoke the sounds, colors, flora, and fauna of the forest and often avoid relying on distinct words.

Deed Names. Many raised within the bounds of the Margreve Forest receive a second name from their community—often known as a deed name—as part of the passage into adulthood. This name typically describes some honorable or prominent trait of the individual or some great deed they accomplished when coming of age. Those who carry deed names typically keep the names throughout their lives to remind them of their past, but many change their deed name as they accomplish greater deeds in their lives.

LANGUAGES

The heritages in this section introduce two new languages: Erina and Piney. These languages were originated by erinas and pineys, respectively, and they are spoken primarily in communities of those peoples or that associate with those peoples.

Erina. This language consists of a series of whirring sounds punctuated by clicks.

Piney. This language mixes many Elvish words with a vocal approximation of the sounds heard in the forest.

COMMON HERITAGES BY LINEAGE

Any lineage can work with any heritage, but some lineages go more naturally with certain heritages. The **Common Heritages by Lineage** table shows which ones match up if you want to play a more “typical” character. The heritages listed in this table but not found in this book can be found in the *Player's Guide*.

COMMON HERITAGES BY LINEAGE

LINEAGE	RECOMMENDED HERITAGES
Alseid	Forest Bastion, Old Ways, Wildlands
Bearfolk	Cottage, Hiveheim, Moonlit
Erina	Delver, Forest Bastion, Salvager
Piney	Forest Bastion, Grove, Old Ways

MARGREVIAN NAMES

d10	ALSEID NAMES	BEARFOLK NAMES	ERINA NAMES	PINEY NAMES	DEED NAMES
1	Erymleetidoral (Erym)	Anga	Die-Nu	Auur	Chiefheart
2	Jassinalynix (Jass)	Beorst	Einore	Brbl	Firedancer
3	Kaelpsynarel (Kael)	Cauldvyr	Kreelay	Caw	Ironhide
4	Levesaelynore (Salyn)	Dorngal	Leemay	Hoom	Lightblade
5	Mhyrithalya (Lyna)	Erlundt	Lowno	lai	Moonheart
6	Nalesariabella (Abella)	Farla	May-nay	Kikoko	Razorclaws
7	Roanxilana (Anxi)	Gurralt	Neeraw	Oaungoang	Shadowbane
8	Sarioneldorivh (Dorivh)	Hrosvir	Uurtoo	Sususus	Stonebones
9	Thanarifaren (Anari)	Ingyrd	Wayee	Whihop	Unbreakable
10	Vurenaedar (Ren)	Padhra	Zaawnee	Whiii	Yellowfang

DELVER HERITAGE

Delver heritage characters are raised in underground communities that fill networks of burrows and warrens. You grew up in a tight-knit community made up of a collection of large families, typically of erina, kobolds, or rabbit-like beastfolk.

Delver warrens contain a dizzying number of tunnels and chambers with multiple camouflaged entrances and exits. These tunnels hold the multitude of large families, food storage chambers, and community gathering spaces, and if a warren is ever attacked, these tunnels allow the vulnerable members of the community to quickly flee while the warriors attack, burrowing in from every angle. Living in cozy tunnels leaves most delvers mildly uncomfortable in wide, open spaces, such as grassy plains or on the open ocean.

Most delver communities are scroungers and gatherers, growing some root vegetables but primarily subsisting on the bounty of the land above their warrens. When not gathering fruits and nuts, tending crops, or honing your skills as a defender of the community, you spent your days surrounded by family, listening to stories from elders and helping to teach and raise those younger than you. Even characters who choose to leave this life behind understand the value of being connected to others.

Burrower. You have a burrowing speed equal to your walking speed, but you can't burrow through ice or rock.

Feed a Horde. Growing up in a large family, you know how to make a little food go a long way. You are proficient with provisioner tools. If you have enough food to feed at least one Medium or smaller Humanoid, you can use provisioner tools to cook that into a meal large enough to feed twice as many Humanoids as it could normally feed.

Wrangler. Being part of a large family has taught you how to wrangle groups of people, whether chasing younglings or negotiating compromises among differing personalities. You have proficiency in either the Acrobatics or Persuasion skill.

Languages. You know Common and one additional language of your choice. Typical delver heritage characters choose Draconic or Erina.

FOREST BASTION HERITAGE

Forest bastion heritage characters are raised in communities on the edges of forests, where civilization meets the wild.

While you were raised far from the urbanized world, your people are keenly aware of your unique position between it and the untamed wilderness. Your people live in relative harmony with the forest, hunting and harvesting sustainably. You grew up enjoying festivals and



practicing traditions centered around planting new trees in spring, hunting only animals of certain ages, and giving percentages of any crops to the forest in fall to ensure wintering animals thrive into the next year.

Forest bastion heritage communities are often led by a tripartite council: a mayor recognized by whatever far-away government lays vague claim over the community, the current leader of the community's hunters, and a druid that provides spiritual counsel to the community and a connection to the forest. This tripartite upbringing is reflected in all people of this heritage, who understand a balance between civilization and nature is key to the long-term survival of all. At a young age, you were trained to respect the forest, take from it only what you need, and to return any excess to the forest. You were also taught some of the careful dance needed to interact with more urbanized people.

Druid's Training. You have proficiency in either the Animal Handling or Nature skill.

Hunter's Training. You have trained with your community's hunters to catch and harvest prey for your people. You have proficiency with trapper's tools.



HIVEHEIM HERITAGE

Characters from the hiveheim heritage were raised in bearfolk communities focused on bees and bee hives. You grew up enjoying the bounties of nature which provided you with homely comforts.

Hiveheim communities make use of bee hives as a major part of their defenses, and honey, wax, and other commodities harvested from bees are regular luxuries for their people. These communities often engage in fishing competitions, honeyed confectionary bake-offs, and contests displaying foraging skills, and you grew up participating in these feats of skill. You see the gifts the natural world can supply, and you know how to wrest them from nature with prowess and grace.

Hive Minded. You have an affinity with hive-creating insects and understand where and how they move and live, which allows you to better orient yourself and find food in areas where such creatures dwell. While in an environment where hive-dwelling creatures live, you have advantage on DEX (Stealth) checks to hide in the environment and on WIS (Survival) checks to find food, water, and shelter in the environment.

Ursine Tact. You have proficiency in either the Nature or Survival skill and in either herbalist or provisioner tools.

Languages. You know Common and one additional language of your choice. Typical hiveheim heritage characters choose Sylvan.

Mayor's Training. You know that you don't understand all the ways of the urbanized world and know how to recover from some social fumbles. When you fail a CHA check while interacting with a creature from an urban home, such as a fey noble, a city shopkeeper, or even a cloud giant king, you can reroll the check and must take the new result. Once you use this trait, you must finish a short or long rest before you can use it again.

Languages. You know Common and one additional language of your choice. Typical forest bastion heritage characters choose Elvish, Erina, or Sylvan.





MOONLIT HERITAGE

Moonlit heritage characters have a supernatural charge to purify the places and people touched by the influence of the Shadow Realm. You were raised in an area on the edge of the Shadow Realm or influenced by the Shadow Realm, such as the Moonlit Glades or the Western Margreve. Your culture is dedicated to fighting back the Shadow Realm's corruption and allowing purifying moonlight to find purchase there.

While the bearfolk created the first moonlit enclaves against shadow, these enclaves have since attracted a variety of warriors and druids who seek to sanctify and purify. Being able to grow up in such a place is a minor miracle, and those raised here believe in the power of faith to restore and protect. A moonlit heritage character knows the magical marks of corruption and believes that no person or place is so tainted that it can't be reclaimed by the light.

Harness Moonlight. You know minor magic to enhance light, making it painful for many creatures of shadow. You can use a bonus action to enhance a source of light you are wearing or carrying. The bright light emitted by that source counts as sunlight for a number of rounds equal to your PB, provided you continue wearing or carrying the source of light. You can use this trait a number of times equal to your PB, and you regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Shadow Survivor. Lifelong exposure to the dangers that lurk in the shadows on the edges of your moonlit home has inured you to some of those horrors. You have advantage on checks and saves against being frightened.

Languages. You know Common and one additional language of your choice. Typical moonlit heritage characters choose Umbral.

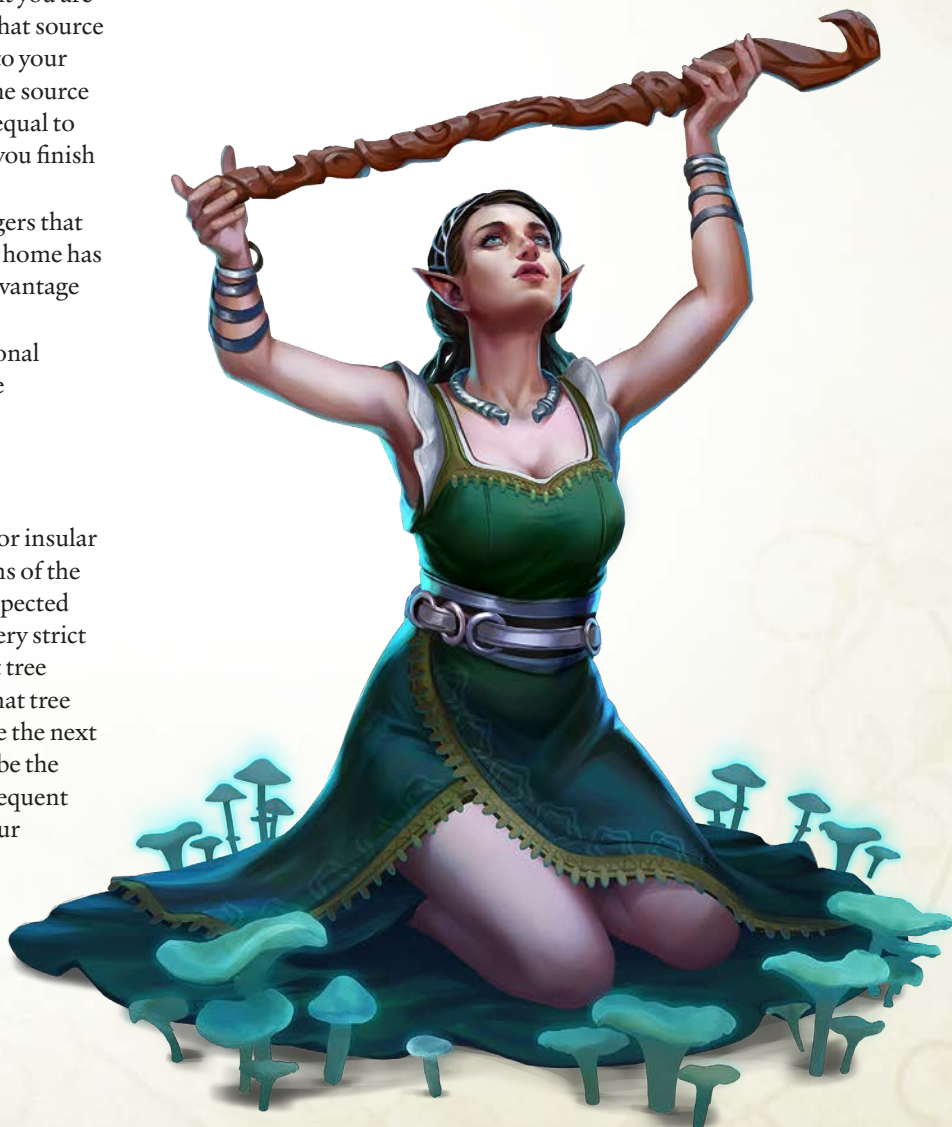
OLD WAYS HERITAGE


Old Ways heritage characters come from hidden or insular communities far from the more populated regions of the world and where the most ancient trees are as respected as the village's elders. The community follows a very strict set of naming conventions that honors the oldest tree standing within five miles of the community. If that tree dies, the community's name is changed to include the next oldest. In this way, your community's name may be the same for centuries then go through a period of frequent change. These names are treated reverently by your community, and swearing an oath on the tree's name feels as binding to you as any magical contract.

You were born in a place of undeveloped natural majesty, where the inhabitants live harmoniously with nature. Your people are part of an ancient ecosystem that has endured for millennia without an axe felling a tree for hundreds of miles. As such, many of your community view outsiders with superstition and mistrust, and their interaction with the other folk of Midgard is extremely limited.

Your people don't worship the gods or their masks. Prayer is strictly forbidden and is seen as an expression of the outsiders' moral inferiority. Those who are caught worshipping gods are swiftly banished from their villages. While your people revere a forest or other natural biome, they do so not from a desire to approach the divine, but from an absolute and practical surety that their continued existence depends on the enigmatic will of Midgard's oldest lands. You may not innately understand concepts such as spirituality and faith.

Your people follow an unspoken series of social contracts which outsiders refer to as the "old ways." These rules are learned by the young through cautionary tales told





by village elders, and through accidental infractions which are quickly corrected. The “old ways” are generally centered around respecting the forest’s power, honoring the memories which lie in the forest’s loamy floor, and making the required sacrifices to ensure the village remains in good standing with the creatures and spirits beyond the village’s borders.

Ancient Roots. You have a deep and pragmatic connection with the natural world. You are proficient in the Nature and Survival skills.

Primeval Bond. You have a learned connection with the natural world and can sense the mood of wild creatures you study. You know the *druidcraft* cantrip, and you have advantage on WIS (Animal Handling) and WIS (Insight) checks to discern the disposition of Beasts, Plants, and vegetation, such as if an animal is hungry or scared or if a tree is comfortable or sick.

Languages. You know Common and one additional language of your choice. Typical Old Ways heritage characters choose Piney or Sylvan.

SUBCLASSES


This section features several new subclasses for adventurers interested in exploring deep forests, hunting quarry, or protecting the natural world. A subclass helps a character establish a unique place in the Margreve Forest and the world of Midgard.

BARBARIAN

The subclass you choose as a barbarian reflects both the teachings of your forebears and the ways your might manifests when influenced by the natural world.

HIVE TENDER

The bearfolk of Midgard, particularly those who worship Bengta the Bear Maiden, are renowned for their use of bee hives as sources of sustenance and defense. Among the most powerful of these bearfolk warriors are the Hive Tenders of the Bear Maiden. Their deep connection with the primal magic of the Bear Maiden allows them to summon and control swarms of magical bee spirits who aid them in defending the tribes. These warriors occasionally



*When did our ways become so old?
A stump, a frog, a flower unfold,
I heard em' call us worse than sin,
The forest was deep 'for we slipped in,
The shadows were here 'for we slipped in.*

pass their teachings to non-bearfolk in their communities, provided those who seek training are dedicated to the Bear Maiden, bees, and honey.

HIVE TENDER PROGRESSION

BARBARIAN LEVEL	FEATURES
3rd	Honey of the Bear Maiden, Raging Swarm
7th	Thousand-Sting Hide
11th	On Buzzing Wings
15th	Clinging Swarm

HONEY OF THE BEAR MAIDEN

3rd-Level Hive Tender Feature

You can forage for 1d4 servings of blessed honey each day. To forage, you must be in an environment where bees are naturally found. A creature can use its action to consume one serving of blessed honey. A serving of blessed honey has one of the following effects of your choice:

- **Golden!** Nonmagical light sources you are carrying don't shed dim light, instead they shed golden, bright light to the limit of their range until the end of your next long rest.
- **Hearty!** You recover one additional level of exhaustion after you finish your next long rest, and the honey provides you with enough nourishment to sustain you for two days.
- **Smooth!** A single bee escorts you until the end of your next long rest. You can use a bonus action to command the bee to sting one creature within 30 feet of you for 1 piercing damage. If you are raging, the bee deals additional piercing damage equal to your bonus rage damage as shown in the **Barbarian Progression** table (see *Player's Guide*). The bee dies after dealing this damage.
- **Sweet!** You exude a sweet, floral aroma until you finish a long rest. While exuding this aroma, you have advantage on WIS (Animal Handling) checks when interacting with Beasts with an INT of 3 (-4) or lower.

A creature can benefit from only one serving of blessed honey at a time. Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.

RAGING SWARM

3rd-Level Hive Tender Feature

While raging, translucent bee spirits form a bear-like visage over your face. For the duration of your rage, you can make one bite attack with this visage against a creature you can see within 5 feet of you as a bonus action on each of your turns. The bite is considered an unarmed strike, and it deals piercing damage equal to 1d6 + your modifier on a hit, instead of the bludgeoning damage normal for an unarmed strike.

THOUSAND-STING HIDE

7th-Level Hive Tender Feature

You are resistant to poison damage, and you have advantage on saves against being poisoned. If you are poisoned when you activate your Rage feature, the effect is suspended for the duration of the rage.

ON BUZZING WINGS

11th-Level Hive Tender Feature

The bee spirits that appear when you rage grow into a small swarm. While raging, you can use a bonus action to command your bee spirits to lift you into the air. If you do so, you gain a flying speed of 30 feet until the end of your turn. If you are in the air at the end of your turn, you immediately fall.

CLINGING SWARM

15th-Level Hive Tender Feature

Your bee spirits become a deadly swarm when you activate your Rage feature. The range of the bite attack you gain from your Raging Swarm feature increases to 15 feet, and when you hit a creature with this bite, some of the swarm clings to the creature until the start of your next turn. While bee spirits cling to a creature, the creature has disadvantage on weapon attack rolls, and if the creature casts a spell with a somatic component, it must succeed on a CON save or fail to cast the spell, losing the action but not the spell slot or daily spell use. The DC for this save equals 8 + your PB + your CON modifier.

SHADOW CHEWER

Moonlit people who live in their enclaves of light in the Shadow Realm or in areas where the Shadow Realm encroaches on the Material Plane keep the darkness at bay thanks to the green magic of Freyr and Freya. When the shadows gather too close to the borders of their land, the people call upon the wild warriors known as the Shadow Chewers. Sometimes called "Angels of Freyr," these fearsome heroes bring tooth, sword, and radiance to bear against the darkness.

SHADOW CHEWER PROGRESSION

BARBARIAN LEVEL	FEATURES
3rd	Chew Shadows, Teeth of the Sun
7th	Divine Sustenance
11th	Emboldening Light
15th	Rage of the Roaring Sun



CHEW SHADOWS

3rd-Level Shadow Chewer Feature

You are imbued with radiant power when you rage. While raging, you shed bright light in a 10-foot radius and dim light for an additional 10 feet. The bright light shed by this feature is immune to the effects of magical darkness and can't be covered or dispelled; however, it can't pass through solid objects and otherwise behaves like normal light.

TEETH OF THE SUN

3rd-Level Shadow Chewer Feature

When you activate your Rage feature, your face grows a short muzzle and your mouth sprouts radiant, bear-like fangs, granting you a bite, which you can use to make unarmed strikes. This transformation doesn't inhibit your ability to speak. When you hit with your bite, the attack deals piercing damage or radiant damage (your choice) equal to 1d8 + your STR modifier, instead of the bludgeoning damage normal for an unarmed strike.

As you gain levels in this class, your bite becomes more powerful. Your bite attack's damage die increases to a d10 at 7th level and to a d12 at 11th level.

DIVINE SUSTENANCE

7th-Level Shadow Chewer Feature

While raging, you can use a bonus action to bolster each creature of your choice—which can include yourself—that is in the bright light shed by your Chew Shadows feature. Each target regains hit points equal to half your barbarian level (rounded down). This feature can restore a creature to no more than half its hit point maximum. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your PB, and you regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

EMBOLDENING LIGHT

11th-Level Shadow Chewer Feature

You and friendly creatures in the bright light shed by your Chew Shadows feature are immune to the frightened condition. When you reach 18th level, this benefit extends to friendly creatures in both the bright and dim light shed by your Chew Shadows feature.

RAGE OF THE ROARING SUN

15th-Level Shadow Chewer Feature

While raging, you can use a bonus action to send searing light toward each creature of your choice that is in the light shed by your Chew Shadows feature. Each target takes radiant damage equal to half your barbarian level (rounded down). You can use this feature a number of times equal to your PB, and you regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.



BARD

The subclass you choose as a bard represents the traditions handed down to you from your teachers and the unique ways these traditions manifest themselves in your performances.

WILDLIFE

Bards who align with the college of Wildlife thrive in nature and have a natural connection with animals. These colleges are often on the outskirts of settlements with one foot in the woods and one in the streets. Whether delighting passersby with their dancing squirrel companions or leading legions of rats away from settlements, these bards excel at enchanting animals with their performances, driving the creatures to protect allies or attack enemies.

WILDLIFE PROGRESSION

BARD LEVEL	FEATURES
3rd	Bardic Performance: Hymn of the Hunt, Lasting Familiar, Nature's Call
7th	Nature's Song
11th	Shared Inspiration
15th	Inspiring Familiar

BARDIC PERFORMANCE

3rd-Level Wildlife Feature

You gain the following Bardic Performance option.

Bardic Performance: Hymn of the Hunt

Your performance awakens primal fervor in your Humanoid allies, bringing them closer to nature and feeling as a unified pack alongside your bestial allies. While your performance lasts, each non-Beast ally within range has advantage on the first attack roll it makes each turn, if at least one of your Beast allies is within 5 feet of the target of the attack and that Beast isn't incapacitated.

LASTING FAMILIAR

3rd-Level Wildlife Feature

You learn the *create familiar* ritual spell if you don't already know it. This spell doesn't count against your rituals known, and you can cast it as an action. Your familiar is considered a Beast, not a Construct, and if it dies while you are still alive, it regrows a new body in 1 minute instead of 1 hour.

NATURE'S CALL

3rd-Level Wildlife Feature

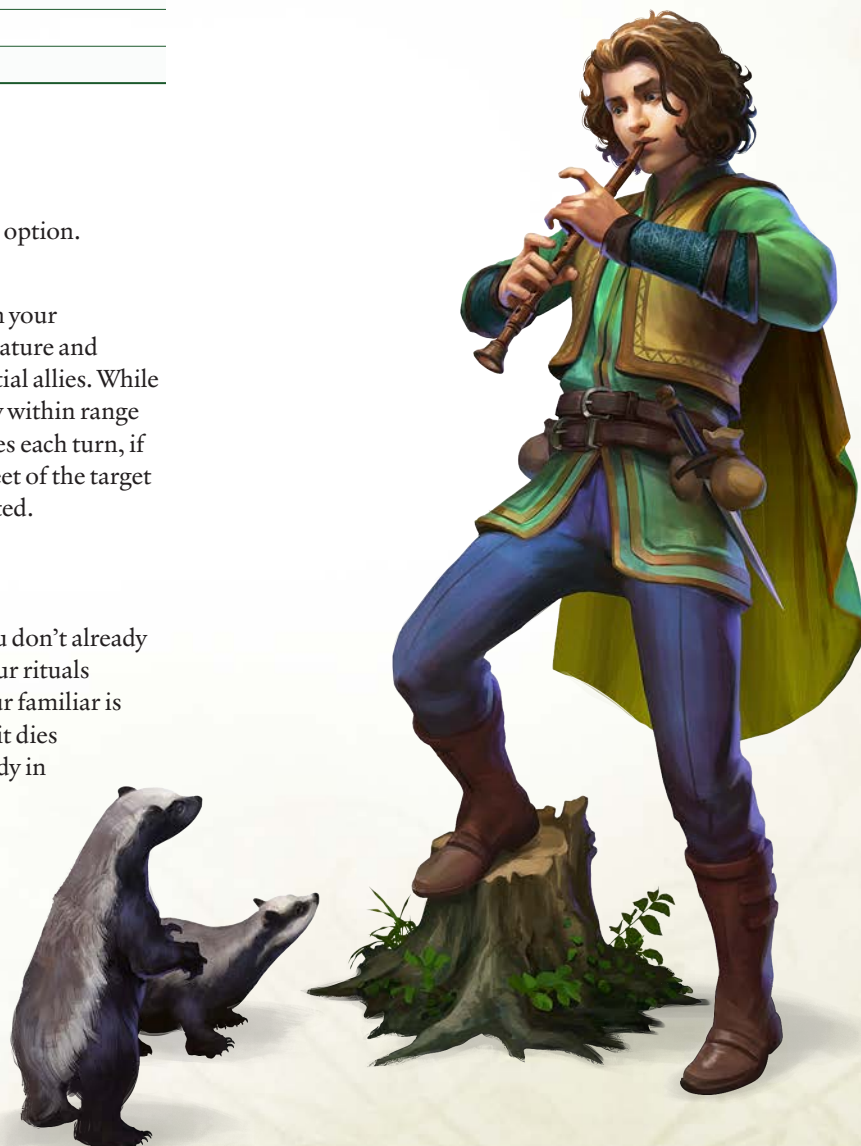
You can use an action to magically call to a creature of the natural world to aid you. The creature can be any Beast with a challenge rating (CR) of 1/4 or less, and it appears in an unoccupied space

you can see within 15 feet of you. The called creature is friendly to you and your companions and obeys your verbal commands (no action required by you). In combat, it acts on your initiative count, taking its turn immediately after yours. If you don't issue any commands during combat, it takes the Dodge action and uses its movement to avoid danger. The Beast remains for 1 hour, until it dies, until you die, or until you dismiss it as a bonus action. Once you call a Beast in this way, you can't do so again until you finish a short or long rest. When you reach 11th level in this class, you can use this feature a number of times equal to your PB, and you regain all expended uses when you finish a short or long rest.

NATURE'S SONG

7th-Level Wildlife Feature

Creatures you call with Nature's Call or conjure with a spell are more powerful. When you create a familiar, it has additional hit points equal to twice your level in the bard class, and it gains a bonus to its armor class and saves equal to your PB. When you use your Nature's Call feature or



conjure a Beast or a creature with the Animal tag—other than via the *create familiar* spell—each creature gains temporary hit points equal to twice your PB, and its attacks count as magical for the purpose of overcoming resistance and immunity to nonmagical attacks and damage while it has temporary hit points.

In addition, when you use your Nature's Call feature, you can now call Beasts or creatures with the Animal tag, or you can call a swarm of Beasts. If you call a creature with the Animal tag, it counts as a Beast when determining its interaction with your Hymn of the Hunt bardic performance. You can now also use the feature to call a number of creatures up to twice your PB, provided the combined total CR of the called creatures is no higher than 2. Creatures with a CR of 0 are treated as having a CR of 1/8 for the purpose of this calculation. This combined total CR limit increases to 3 when you reach 11th level in this class and 4 when you reach 15th.

SHARED INSPIRATION

11th-Level Wildlife Feature

When you grant a Bardic Inspiration die to a non-Beast ally, one friendly Beast or creature with the Animal tag within 60 feet of you also gains one Bardic Inspiration die.

INSPIRING FAMILIAR

15th-Level Wildlife Feature

Your familiar's connection to you imbues it with the power to inspire other creatures as well, granting the familiar its own Bardic Inspiration feature. As a bonus action on its turn, your familiar can grant a Bardic Inspiration die, using the same die as your Bardic Inspiration, to a creature within 60 feet of it, other than itself, that can hear or see it. Your familiar can do this a number of times equal to half your PB (rounded down), and it regains all expended uses when you finish a short or long rest. When your familiar grants Bardic Inspiration to a creature, it expends its own use of its Bardic Inspiration feature, not yours. Your familiar's Bardic Inspiration feature doesn't benefit from the Shared Inspiration feature you gain from this subclass.

The number of times a familiar can use this feature between rests remains the same regardless how many times the familiar dies and regrows a new body or how often you recast the *create familiar* spell.

PLAYER ADVICE: HYMN OF THE HUNT

Although the feature is a bit more specific to Beasts and non-Beasts, the Wildlife bard's Hymn of the Hunt performance works like the Pack Tactics trait that appears on many monsters, like wolves and lions.

CLERIC

The subclass you choose as a cleric grants you access to the powers of a domain that your god presides over or that best aligns with your faith.

HUNT

Many terrible creatures prey on the villages, towns, and inns that dot the forests of Midgard. When such creatures become particularly aggressive or can't be dissuaded by local druids, the settlements often call on servants of gods of the hunt to solve the problem.

Deities devoted to hunting value champions who aid skillful hunters or who lead hunts themselves. Similarly, deities focused on protecting outlier settlements or who promote strengthening small communities also value such clerics. While these clerics might not have the utmost capability for tracking and killing prey, their gods grant them blessings to ensure successful hunts. These clerics might use their abilities to ensure their friends and communities have sufficient food to survive difficult times, or they might enjoy the sport of pursuing and slaying intelligent prey.

HUNT PROGRESSION

CLERIC LEVEL	FEATURES
3rd	Channel Divinity: Hunter's Prowess, Bonus Proficiencies, Expanded Talent List, Hunt Domain Spells
7th	Relentless Hunter
11th	Shared Prowess
15th	Deadly Stalker

CHANNEL DIVINITY

3rd-Level Hunt Feature

You gain the following Channel Divinity option.

Channel Divinity: Hunter's Prowess

As a bonus action, you present your holy symbol and empower yourself with a predator's hunting prowess. Until the start of your next turn, you have advantage on weapon and spell attack rolls. When such an attack hits a creature, the attack deals additional damage of the weapon's or spell's type equal to your PB.

BONUS PROFICIENCIES

3rd-Level Hunt Feature

You gain proficiency in the Survival skill and with one martial ranged weapon of your choice.

EXPANDED TALENT LIST

3rd-Level Hunt Feature

When you gain a new talent, you can select it from the magic or martial talents list.

HUNT DOMAIN SPELLS

3rd-Level Hunt Feature

You gain domain spells at the cleric levels listed in the **Hunt Domain Spells** table. See the Cleric Subclass class feature for how these spells work.

HUNT DOMAIN SPELLS

CLERIC LEVEL	SPELLS
3rd	<i>bloodhound*</i> , <i>illuminate spoor*</i> , <i>instant snare*</i> , <i>mark prey*</i>
5th	<i>blood offering*</i> , <i>tracer*</i>
7th	<i>harry*</i> , <i>heart-seeking arrow*</i>
9th	<i>harrying hounds*</i> , <i>maim*</i>

*indicates a spell found in the **Spells** section later in this chapter

RELENTLESS HUNTER

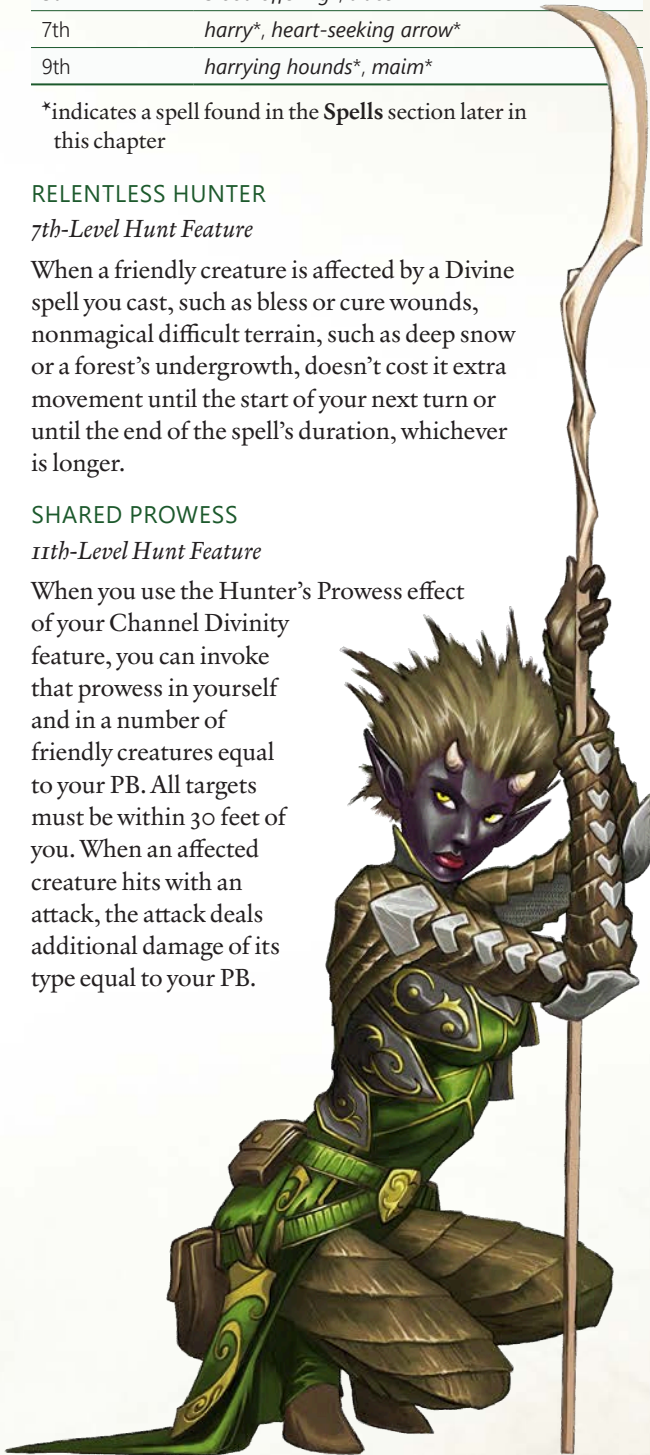
7th-Level Hunt Feature

When a friendly creature is affected by a Divine spell you cast, such as *bleed* or *cure wounds*, nonmagical difficult terrain, such as deep snow or a forest's undergrowth, doesn't cost it extra movement until the start of your next turn or until the end of the spell's duration, whichever is longer.

SHARED PROWESS

11th-Level Hunt Feature

When you use the Hunter's Prowess effect of your Channel Divinity feature, you can invoke that prowess in yourself and in a number of friendly creatures equal to your PB. All targets must be within 30 feet of you. When an affected creature hits with an attack, the attack deals additional damage of its type equal to your PB.



DEADLY STALKER

15th-Level Hunt Feature

Choose a creature you can see within 120 feet of you. For 24 hours or until the target is dead, whichever occurs first, you have advantage on WIS (Survival) checks to track the target and WIS (Perception) checks to detect the target. When the target is below half its hit point maximum, your weapon and spell attacks deal extra damage of the weapon's or spell's type equal to half your cleric level (rounded down), and you score a critical hit against the target on a d20 roll of 19 or 20. You can't use this feature again until you finish a short or long rest.

DRUID

The subclass you choose as a druid represents the rites, traditions, and mysteries you embrace in your quest to better understand the awesome powers of nature.

BEES

Druids of Bees are friends to all stinging insects but focus their attention on honeybees and other pollinating insects. When not adventuring, they tend hives, either created by the insects or by themselves. They tap into the horror inherent in stinging insects to protect their allies or the fields hosting their bee friends.

BEES PROGRESSION

DRUID LEVEL	FEATURES
3rd	Bees Ring Spells, Bee Bond, Wild Shape: Bee Stinger
7th	Bumblebee Rush
11th	Hive Mind
15th	Mantle of Bees

BEES RING SPELLS

3rd-Level Bees Feature

You gain ring spells at the druid levels listed in the **Bees Ring Spells** table. See the Druid Subclass class feature for how these spells work.

BEES RING SPELLS

DRUID LEVEL	SPELLS
3rd	<i>blur</i> , <i>bombardment of stings*</i> , <i>longstrider</i> , <i>speak with animals</i>
5th	<i>fly</i> , <i>haste</i>
7th	<i>giant insect</i> , <i>storm of wings*</i>
9th	<i>insect plague</i> , <i>primal infusion*</i>

*indicates a spell found in the **Spells** section later in this chapter

BEE BOND

3rd-Level Bees Feature

You gain proficiency in the Acrobatics skill, and you can understand Bee Dance, a language shared by bees (see the **Appendix**). Bees refuse to attack you, even with magical coercion, unless you attack them.

When a Beast attacks you with a weapon that deals poison damage, such as a giant spider's Bite or a scorpion's Sting, it must succeed on a CHA save against your spell save DC or have disadvantage on attack rolls against you until the start of its next turn.

WILD SHAPE

3rd-Level Bees Feature

You gain the following Wild Shape option.

Wild Shape: Bee Stinger

As a bonus action, you can expend a use of your Wild Shape feature to grow a stinger, typically from your wrist, which you can use to make unarmed strikes.

When you hit with an unarmed strike with this stinger, you use WIS instead of STR to determine the stinger's attack bonus, and the stinger deals piercing damage equal to $1d4 +$ your WIS modifier + poison damage equal to half your PB (rounded down), instead of the bludgeoning damage normal for an unarmed strike. The stinger lasts for a number of hours equal to your PB.

As you gain levels in this class, your stinger becomes more powerful. At 7th level, unarmed strikes with your stinger count as magical for the purpose of overcoming resistance and immunity to nonmagical attacks and damage, and the poison damage dealt by your stinger equals your PB. In addition, the stinger's damage die increases to a d6 at 7th level, to a d8 at 11th level, and to a d10 at 15th level.

BUMBLEBEE RUSH

7th-Level Bees Feature

As a bonus action, you can Dash, and creatures have disadvantage on attack rolls against you until the start of your next turn. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your PB, and you regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

HIVE MIND

11th-Level Bees Feature

You can perform a 10-minute ritual with a number of willing creatures up to your PB. This ritual connects the minds of you and the targets in a mental network. Creatures with an INT of 3 (-4) or lower aren't affected by this ritual. Each member of the mental network can communicate telepathically with each other regardless



of distance or languages, but communicating creatures must be on the same plane of existence. While linked to each other, each creature in the network has advantage on INT, WIS, and CHA checks that involve a skill if at least one creature in the network has proficiency in that skill. If at least one creature in the network succeeds on a WIS (Perception) check to notice a hidden creature, each creature in the network also succeeds on the check. Finally, when one creature in a network makes an attack, it has advantage on the attack roll if another creature in the network can see the target of the attack, is within 5 feet of the target, and uses its reaction to assist the attacker.

Once you perform this ritual, you can't do so again until you finish a short or long rest.

MANTLE OF BEES

15th-Level Bees Feature

As an action, you can cover yourself in bees for 1 hour or until you dismiss them (no action required). While you are covered in bees, you gain the following benefits:

- You gain a +2 bonus to AC.
- You are immune to poison damage.



- The stinger from your Bee Stinger feature deals poison damage equal to twice your PB rather than equal to your PB.
- You have advantage on CHA (Intimidation) checks.
- When a creature within 5 feet of you hits you with a melee attack, it must succeed on a CON save against your spell save DC or take 1d8 piercing damage and 1d8 poison damage and be poisoned until the end of its next turn.

When you create the mantle or as an action while the mantle is active, you can direct the bees to swarm a point you can see within 60 feet of you. Each creature within 10 feet of that point must make a CON save against your spell save DC. On a failure, a creature takes 4d6 piercing damage and 4d6 poison damage and is poisoned for 1 minute. On a success, a creature takes half the damage and isn't poisoned. A poisoned creature can repeat the save at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. After you command the bees to swarm in this way, the bees disperse, and your mantle ends.

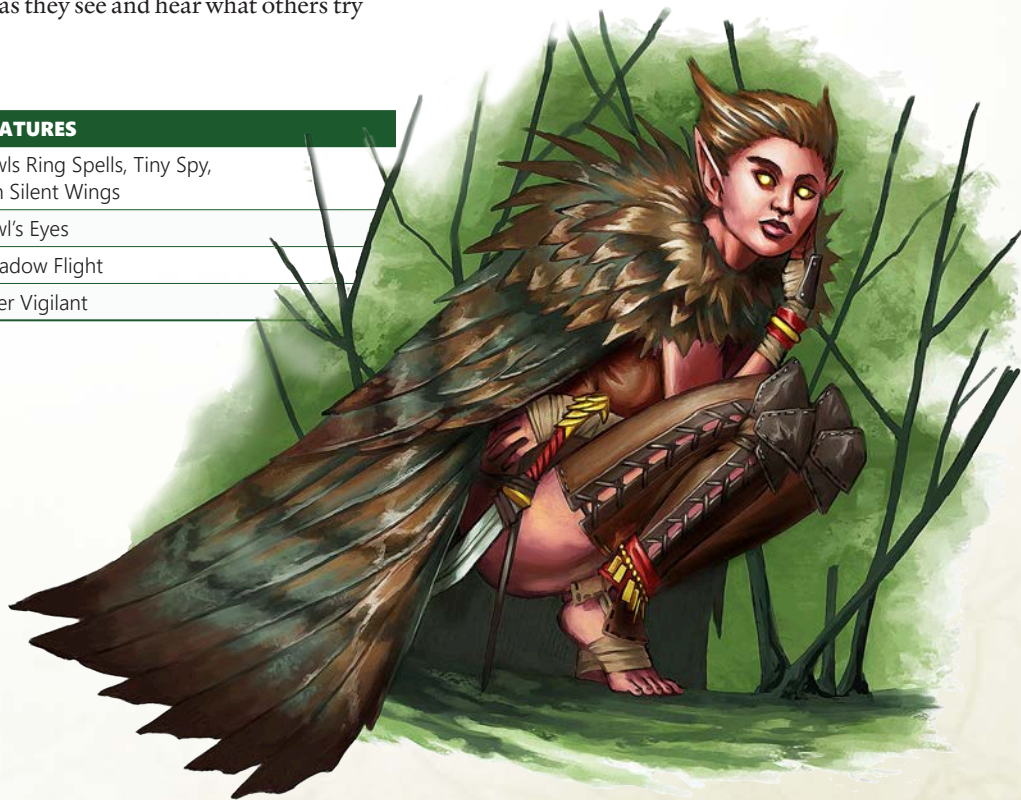
Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a short or long rest, unless you expend a spell slot of 5th circle or higher to create the mantle again.

OWLS

Druids of Owls maintain a tradition of spying and gathering knowledge and, occasionally, of permanently silencing those who would misuse knowledge. Owls druids draw on the power of their namesakes, moving about the world unnoticed as they see and hear what others try desperately to hide.

OWLS PROGRESSION

DRUID LEVEL	FEATURES
3rd	Owls Ring Spells, Tiny Spy, On Silent Wings
7th	Owl's Eyes
11th	Shadow Flight
15th	Ever Vigilant



OWLS RING SPELLS

3rd-Level Owls Feature

You gain ring spells at the druid levels listed in the **Owls Ring Spells** table. See the Druid Subclass class feature for how these spells work.

OWLS RING SPELLS

DRUID LEVEL	SPELLS
3rd	<i>detect thoughts, disguise self, expeditious retreat, invisibility</i>
5th	<i>nondetection, sending</i>
7th	<i>arcane eye, greater invisibility</i>
9th	<i>modify memory, passwall</i>

TINY SPY

3rd-Level Owls Feature

You gain proficiency in the Insight or Stealth skill. In addition, the number of beast forms you can know increases by an amount equal to half your PB (rounded down), but these extra known forms must be Tiny Beasts.

ON SILENT WINGS

3rd-Level Owls Feature

You can magically evade the notice of even those who watch you. You can use a bonus action to take the Hide action, and while in dim light or while lightly obscured by foliage, heavy rain, falling snow, or other natural phenomena, you can always attempt to Hide, even if circumstances wouldn't normally allow you to do so.

OWL'S EYES

7th-Level Owls Feature

You learn the *clairvoyance* ritual spell, and it doesn't count against the total number of ritual spells you know. As an action, you can cast the spell without requiring material components, and a creature that can see the sensor sees a luminous, intangible owl.

When you reach 11th level in this class, you learn the *scrying* ritual spell, and it doesn't count against the total number of ritual spells you know. As an action, you can cast the spell without requiring material components.

Once you use this feature to cast a spell, you can't do so again until you finish a short or long rest.

SHADOW FLIGHT

11th-Level Owls Feature

If you are in dim light or darkness, you can use a bonus action to sprout feathered wings from your back, gaining a flying speed equal to your walking speed for 1 minute. While these wings are active, you can choose to spend half your flying speed to slip into the Ethereal Plane in the area where it overlaps with your current plane or slip back into your current plane. This effect works like the *etherealness* spell, except you can go back and forth between the two planes by spending half your flying speed. When the wings end, you immediately return to the plane you originated from in the spot you currently occupy, being shunted and taking damage as normal for the *etherealness* spell if you return inside a solid object or a creature.

You can use this feature a number of times equal to your PB, and you regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

EVER VIGILANT

15th-Level Owls Feature

You embody the patient, watchful, all-seeing nature of owls. You gain the following benefits:

- Your initiative bonus now equals your DEX modifier + your WIS modifier.
- As long as you are conscious, you can't be affected by the surprised condition.
- Once on your turn, when you hit a creature that can't see you with an attack or when a creature that can't see you fails its save against your spell, the creature takes psychic damage equal to half your druid level (rounded down).

ROSES

Druids of Roses use the power of nature to influence the minds and hearts of those around them, alleviating sorrow, spreading terror, and ensnaring hearts in equal measure. They create sweet and bitter perfumes that transmit their power to any who inhale the scent.

ROSES PROGRESSION

DRUID LEVEL	FEATURES
3rd	Roses Ring Spells, Bonus Proficiencies, Wild Shape: Wild Perfume
7th	Rose's Remedy
11th	Lingering Perfume
15th	Rose's Thorns

ROSES RING SPELLS

3rd-Level Roses Feature

You gain ring spells at the druid levels listed in the **Roses Ring Spells** table. See the Druid Subclass class feature for how these spells work.



ROSES RING SPELLS

DRUID LEVEL	SPELLS
3rd	<i>calm emotions, disguise self, sleep, suggestion</i>
5th	<i>hypnotic pattern, tongues</i>
7th	<i>confusion, phantasmal killer</i>
9th	<i>dominate, seeming</i>

BONUS PROFICIENCIES

3rd-Level Roses Feature

You gain proficiency in the Deception, Intimidation, or Persuasion skill and with herbalist tools.

WILD SHAPE

3rd-Level Roses Feature

You gain the following Wild Shape option.

Wild Shape: Wild Perfume

As an action, you can expend a use of your Wild Shape feature to infuse the area around you with floral power, filling the area with floral scents of the wilderness.

When you use this feature, a barely visible, perfumed haze fills the area in a 10-foot-radius sphere centered on you. The perfume lasts for a number of hours equal to half your PB, until you use a feature that causes it to be destroyed, or you fall unconscious. You can choose to end this effect early (no action required). You can maintain only one wild perfume at a time.

As part of the action when you create the perfume and as a bonus action on your turn, you can choose one of the following magical properties for the perfume to have while its magic is active:

- **Musky.** This warm, slightly sweet, and musky perfume has notes of vanilla, patchouli, rose, and labdanum. At the start of each of your turns, choose one creature you can see within the perfume's area. The target must succeed on a CHA save against your spell save DC or be charmed by you as long as it remains in the area of your perfume and for 1 minute after it leaves the area. If it ends its turn outside the area, it can repeat the save, ending the effect on itself on a success.
- **Pungent.** This sharp, strong, and pungent perfume has notes of corpse flower, cabbage, and lily. At the start of each of your turns, choose one creature you can see within the perfume's area. The target must succeed on a WIS save against your spell save DC or be frightened of you as long as it remains in the area of your perfume and for 1 minute after it leaves the area. If it ends its turn outside the area, it can repeat the save, ending the effect on itself on a success.

- **Refreshing.** This fresh, cool, and invigorating perfume has notes of basil, eucalyptus, and mint. Each friendly creature in the perfume, which can include yourself, has advantage on saves against two of the following conditions of your choice: charmed, frightened, poisoned, or knocked unconscious.

If you or your allies attack or harm a charmed creature, it is no longer charmed. If the target of your Musky or Pungent perfume's save is successful or if the effect ends for it, it is immune to your perfume for the next 24 hours. A creature that doesn't breathe is immune to your perfume.

ROSE'S REMEDY

7th-Level Roses Feature

Your spells are infused with the invigorating power of roses. When you cast a spell of 1st circle or higher that helps or enhances a friendly creature or restores hit points to a friendly creature, such as *barkskin* or *cure wounds*, the target has advantage on the next attack roll or ability check it makes before the start of your next turn.

LINGERING PERFUME

11th-Level Roses Feature

Your perfume grows more potent and extends farther. The perfume you create using the Wild Perfume effect of your Wild Shape feature now fills a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on you, and it gains unique benefits based on which magical property you have active:

- **Musky.** Allies within your perfume have advantage on ability checks to interact socially with a creature charmed by your perfume.
- **Pungent.** Each ally within your perfume has advantage on the first attack roll it makes each turn against a creature frightened by your perfume.
- **Refreshing.** The list of conditions you can choose from also now includes the incapacitated and paralyzed conditions.

WILD PERFUME UNDERWATER

Scent can carry just as well underwater as in air, and a druid of roses can use Wild Perfume while underwater without any major issues. At the GM's discretion, the perfume might affect only creatures that can breathe underwater, either naturally or by magic, while the druid is using the perfume underwater.

ROSE'S THORNS

15th-Level Roses Feature

A whiff of your perfume surrounds you at all times and lingers. You are immune to harmful gases and vapors, and you have advantage on saves against being charmed, frightened, or poisoned.

In addition, when a creature hits you with an attack while within 5 feet of you, you can use your reaction to cause a whiff of your perfume to flare up. If the attacker is a breathing creature, it takes psychic damage equal to half your druid level (rounded down). If your Wild Perfume is active, you can use this reaction against any creature that attacks you while within your perfume or while suffering the perfume's effects.

VERDANT

Verdant druids embrace the wild, ancient growth of deep forests and tropical jungles. They devote themselves to protecting plant life and spreading it. They know the importance of plants in the grand scheme of life and revere plants for their role in giving life and reabsorbing life back into the earth. They find joy in the sound of wind through the trees, in digging roots into rich soil, and in the warmth of dappled sunlight through a forest canopy.

VERDANT PROGRESSION

DRUID LEVEL	FEATURES
3rd	Verdant Ring Spells, Grasping Vines, Wild Shape: Plant Form
7th	Thorny Armor
11th	Verdant Body
15th	Verdant Ascendant

VERDANT RING SPELLS

3rd-Level Verdant Feature

You gain ring spells at the druid levels listed in the **Verdant Ring Spells** table. See the Druid Subclass class feature for how these spells work.

VERDANT RING SPELLS

DRUID LEVEL	SPELLS
3rd	<i>barkskin, goodberry, pass without trace, tree speak</i>
5th	<i>daylight, speak with plants</i>
7th	<i>elemental shield, freedom of movement</i>
9th	<i>greater restoration, tree stride</i>

GRASPING VINES

3rd-Level Verdant Feature

As a bonus action, you can imbue the next attack you make or spell you cast before the start of your next turn with the power of plants. When you hit with an attack or when a



creature fails a save against your spell, the target's speed is reduced by 10 feet as vines grasp at its limbs. If you score a critical hit with the attack or if a creature fails the save by 5 or more, its speed is halved instead. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your PB, and you regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

WILD SHAPE

3rd-Level Verdant Feature

You gain the following Wild Shape option.

Wild Shape: Plant Form

As an action, you can magically assume the form of a Plant. This feature works like the Beast Form Wild Shape option, except it applies to Plants instead of Beasts. Choose two Plants of challenge rating (CR) 1 or less as your known forms. To select a known form, you must have seen or interacted with a Plant in your past. The Plant you choose can't have any legendary actions or lair actions. When you take the form of a Plant, you use the hit points of the creature, not the **Hit Points by Form Size** table found in the *Player's Guide*.



As you advance in druid levels, you can choose more plant forms instead of beast forms, as shown in the **Beast Forms Known** column of the **Druid Progression** table (see *Player's Guide*). When you gain a level of druid, you can replace one known form with a different form of your choosing. Any new form you choose must abide by the form restrictions.

You can't speak while in plant form—unless your new form is capable of doing so—but you do have a limited form of telepathy that allows you to communicate simple emotions and images with creatures within 30 feet of you. As normal, you can't cast spells while transformed.

At higher druid levels, you can choose plant forms with a CR as high as your druid level divided by 3, rounded down. For example, upon achieving 8th level of druid, you can choose any Plant of CR 2 or lower as a known form, CR 3 or lower at 12th level, and so on. See the **Appendix** and *Monster Vault* for a selection of Plants to choose from.

THORNY ARMOR

7th-Level Verdant Feature

When you cast a Primordial spell of 1st-circle or higher, thorns sprout across your body for 1 minute, and they remain even if you change into or out of your plant form. While the thorns are active, you gain a bonus to your AC equal to half your PB (rounded down), and a creature that hits you with a melee attack while within 5 feet of you takes piercing damage equal to half your druid level (rounded down).

VERDANT BODY

11th-Level Verdant Feature

Your body gains characteristics similar to Plants, granting you the following benefits:

- You don't need to eat as long as you spend at least 30 minutes each day in direct sunlight.
- You have keensense to a range of 10 feet.
- You have advantage on saves against effects that would cause you to become exhausted.
- You have advantage on saves against being paralyzed or petrified and against effects that would make you fall unconscious.
- When you use your Grasping Vines feature, the effect lasts for 1 minute rather than for the next attack roll or spell.

VERDANT ASCENDANT

15th-Level Verdant Feature

You have learned to become truly one with your plant form. You can now cast Primordial spells while in plant form, and your form doesn't hinder performing the somatic and verbal components of spells. You must still provide any required material components as normal.

RANGER

The subclass you choose as a ranger deepens your relationship with the natural world and represents the way your connection to the Primordial manifests.

GRIFFON SCOUT

Elves of the forested woodlands and mountain foothills often uphold the tradition of taming and riding griffons, living on the same windswept crags where griffons nest, thus giving themselves the ability to command vast tracts of woodland territory. Trained by elf veterans and beast tamers, rangers of the Griffon Scout subclass learn to move swiftly and stealthily both on foot and while mounted, gathering information on their enemies and mounting devastating hit-and-run raids with precision and coordination.

GRIFFON SCOUT PROGRESSION

RANGER LEVEL	FEATURES
3rd	Griffon Scout Calling Spells, Mounted Scout, Skirmisher's Step
7th	Griffon Wings
11th	Coordinated Strikes
15th	Strike and Fade

GRIFFON SCOUT CALLING SPELLS

3rd-Level Griffon Scout Feature

You gain calling spells at the ranger levels listed in the **Griffon Scout Calling Spells** table. See the Ranger Subclass class feature for how these spells work.

GRIFFON CALLING SPELLS

RANGER LEVEL	SPELLS
3rd	<i>feather fall</i>
5th	<i>alter self</i>
9th	<i>haste</i>
13th	<i>greater invisibility</i>
17th	<i>telepathic bond</i>

MOUNTED SCOUT

3rd-Level Griffon Scout Feature

Mounting and dismounted costs you only 5 feet of movement rather than half your speed. While mounted, you have advantage on WIS (Perception) checks, and your DEX (Stealth) checks apply to both you and your mount.

SKIRMISHER'S STEP

3rd-Level Griffon Scout Feature

When you move at least 20 feet straight toward a creature and hit it with a melee weapon attack in the same turn, that attack deals extra damage. The extra damage is equal to the amount your Mystic Mark feature deals at your level and is of the same damage type as the weapon. You can deal this extra damage only once per turn.

If you move out of the target's reach before the end of your next turn, whether you are mounted or not, you don't provoke an opportunity attack from the target.

GRIFFON WINGS

7th-Level Griffon Scout Feature

You learn the *find steed* ritual. The mount you summon can be one of the options presented in that spell or a young griffon, which uses the statistics of a **tiger** with a flying speed of 20 feet. If you summon a young griffon, its type is always Fey.

When you reach 11th level in this class, the mount you summon can be a full-grown griffon, which uses the statistics of a **griffon**, except its type is Fey.

COORDINATED STRIKES

11th-Level Griffon Scout Feature

You can deliver punishing flurries of attacks in perfect coordination with your allies. When one of your allies hits a target you can see within 30 feet of you with an attack, you can use your reaction to make one weapon attack against that target, provided the target is within range of a weapon you are wielding.

STRIKE AND FADE

15th-Level Griffon Scout Feature

When you move at least 20 feet during your turn, whether you are mounted or not, you become an evasive blur. Until the start of your next turn, a creature that attacks you or your mount has disadvantage on the first attack roll it makes against you or your mount.

GROVE WARDEN

Fiercely protective of their territory, **alseid** herds form close bonds with their home forests. In return for their diligent protection, the forests offered their blessings to dedicated **alseid** rangers. These rangers learned to pass this connection to the land down to other rangers, who have expanded this knowledge to connect with any land with natural growth. Grove Wardens can tap into the subtle magic within the land itself, calling on it to help the ranger protect the wilds and themselves. Grove Wardens are dedicated to using martial might to keep the land safe from otherworldly dangers and those who would despoil it.



GROVE WARDEN PROGRESSION

RANGER LEVEL	FEATURES
3rd	Grove Warden Calling Spells, Whispers of the Land, Land's Aid
7th	Intruder's Bane
11th	Living Bulwark
15th	Wrath of the Land

GROVE WARDEN CALLING SPELLS

3rd-Level Grove Warden Feature

You gain calling spells at the ranger levels listed in the **Grove Warden Calling Spells** table. See the Ranger Subclass class feature for how these spells work.

GROVE WARDEN CALLING SPELLS

RANGER LEVEL	SPELLS
3rd	<i>entangle</i>
5th	<i>branding smite</i>
9th	<i>speak with plants</i>
13th	<i>elemental shield</i>
17th	<i>animate objects</i>

WHISPERS OF THE LAND

3rd-Level Grove Warden Feature

Your senses are attuned to the natural world around you, always noting the subtle changes in the feel of the wind, the sounds of animals, and the smell of plants. You gain a bonus to initiative rolls equal to your PB.

In addition, while you are conscious and within 5 feet of vegetation such as a bush or tree or a patch of grass or fungi, you can't be surprised.

LAND'S AID

3rd-Level Grove Warden Feature

You can magically draw on the living essence of the land to come to your aid. As a bonus action, choose one creature you can see within 60 feet of you that is on the ground or within 15 feet of vegetation, such as a tree or patch of fungi. Your next weapon attack against that creature has advantage. If that attack hits, the creature's speed is reduced by 10 feet until the start of your next turn, as vines, mud, and other natural phenomena briefly cling to the creature. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your PB, and you regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

When you reach 11th level in this class, if that attack hits, the creature's speed is instead halved until the start of your next turn.

INTRUDER'S BANE

7th-Level Grove Warden Feature

You can call on the land around you to hamper your foes. As a bonus action, choose a point you can see on the ground within 60 feet. The area within 15 feet of that point undulates and warps. Each creature on the ground or within 5 feet of vegetation, such as a tree or patch of fungi, in the area must succeed on a DEX save against your spell save DC or be pushed up to 15 feet in a direction of your choice and knocked prone. Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

LIVING BULWARK

11th-Level Grove Warden Feature

The land around you comes to your aid when you are in danger, interposing rocks, branches, vines, roots, or even the ground itself between you and your foes. When a creature you can see targets you with an attack, you can use

your reaction to call on the land to increase your AC by an amount equal to a die roll against that attack, potentially negating the attack. The type of die you roll is the same as the die you roll when using your Mystic Mark feature.

WRATH OF THE LAND

15th-Level Grove Warden Feature

If you are reduced to 0 HP while within 100 feet of natural, nonmagical vegetation, such as trees, grass, or fungi, your body is filled with nature's wrath, and you don't fall unconscious. You still make death saves and can be killed outright if you take damage from a single source equal to your hit point maximum or if you fail three death saves. This effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to half your PB or until you die, whichever occurs first. At the end of the duration, if you didn't die outright, you call unconscious, stabilize at 0 HP, and suffer one level of exhaustion.

Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.



SPEAR OF THE WEALD

Rangers of ancient forests often develop a connection with the Fey who guard such sacred areas. Gifted with a brief foray into areas overlapping the Plane of the Fey or even a trip into the fey lands themselves, these rangers return touched by fey magic, able to call on it to create magical spears or to bring the forest to their aid. They can make a dizzying variety of attacks, using ancient fey magic to flash across the battlefield in the blink of an eye.

SPEAR OF THE WEALD PROGRESSION

RANGER LEVEL	FEATURES
3rd	Spear of the Weald Calling Spells, Weald Spear, Touch of the Fey Land, Expanded Talent List and Martial Action
7th	Canopy
11th	Steps of the Fey
15th	Fey Shroud

SPEAR OF THE WEALD CALLING SPELLS

3rd-Level Spear of the Weald Feature

You gain calling spells at the ranger levels listed in the **Spear of the Weald Calling Spells** table. See the Ranger Subclass class feature for how these spells work.

SPEAR OF THE WEALD CALLING SPELLS

RANGER LEVEL	SPELLS
3rd	<i>faerie fire</i>
5th	<i>misty step</i>
9th	<i>plant growth</i>
13th	<i>mass faerie fire</i>
17th	<i>tree stride</i>

WEALD SPEAR

3rd-Level Spear of the Weald Feature

You can use a bonus action to call forth a magical, wooden spear from the Plane of the Fey into your empty hand. The spear disappears if it is more than 5 feet away from you for 1 minute or more. It also disappears if you use this feature again, if you dismiss the weapon (no action required), or if you die. You are proficient with the spear while you wield it. The spear can be thrown with a range of 20/60 feet, and when you throw the spear, it reappears in your hand after the attack. The spear's damage die is a d8, it has the finesse and reach properties, and it has the pull and trip weapon options.

At 7th level, your weald spear attack counts as magical for the purpose of overcoming resistance and immunity to nonmagical attacks and damage, and your weald spear's damage die increases to a d10. At 11th level, your weald spear's damage die increases to a d12.

TOUCH OF THE FEY LAND

3rd-Level Spear of the Weald Feature

The touch of the Plane of the Fey is always on your spear, hinting at its otherworldly ties. When you summon your weald spear, choose one of the following effects.

Aflame. Your spear is ensorcelled in heatless, white, magical flames whose intensity rise and fall to reflect your mood. When you are at your happiest, your spear sheds bright light in a 5-foot radius and dim light for an additional 5 feet.





Entwined. Your spear appears to be wrapped in writhing green vines which occasionally coalesce into the shape of a slender, grasping hand. The hand always points in the direction of your home forest.

Everblooming. Your spear is covered in small wildflowers that bloom, die, bud, and bloom again within minutes. Pollinating insects are often drawn to your spear as the spear constantly exudes a pleasant, floral fragrance.

Moonlit. Your spear appears as a pale length of wooden moonlight. A trail of star-like motes travels behind the spear's point.

EXPANDED TALENT LIST AND MARTIAL ACTION

3rd-Level Spear of the Weald Feature

When you gain a new talent, you can select it from the martial or technical talents list as normal, or you can select the Teleporting Harrier magic talent (see **Talents** later in this chapter).

In addition, you know the following martial action option.

Weald Throw

After you take the Attack action on your turn and make a melee attack with your weald spear, you can use a bonus action to make one ranged weapon attack with your weald spear against a different creature. You don't have disadvantage on the ranged attack roll from being within 5 feet of the first creature you hit, however, you can still have disadvantage on the attack roll from being within 5 feet of other hostile creatures.

CANOPY

7th-Level Spear of the Weald Feature

When a creature within 30 feet of you, which can include yourself, is targeted by a ranged weapon attack, you can use your reaction to summon a magical canopy of glowing leaves and branches over the target. The target is resistant to the damage dealt by the attack, and the canopy bursts into shredded leaves afterwards. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your PB, and you regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

STEPS OF THE FEY

11th-Level Spear of the Weald Feature

When you hit a creature with an attack with your weald spear, you can use a bonus action to teleport to an unoccupied space within 10 feet of the target.

FEY SHROUD

15th-Level Spear of the Weald Feature

When you teleport, you can shroud yourself in strands of the magic. Until the start of your next turn, attacks against you have disadvantage, and any damage you take is halved. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your PB, and you regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

ROGUE

The subclass you choose as a rogue represents the brand of skullduggery you bring to the table, and in the context of the forest, it represents how you blend trickery and a connection to the natural world.

UNDERFOOT

Though most rogues prefer ambushing their opponents from the shadows, Underfoot rogues ambush their opponents from below. These rogues use druidic magic and their natural aptitude for burrowing to defend their forest homes. Using a combination of guerilla attacks and druidic magic, they are a force to be reckoned with. Many erina colonies have elite orders of burrow warriors made up of Underfoot rogues.

PRIMORDIAL SPELLCASTING

3rd-Level Underfoot Feature

You enhance your subterfuge with the ability to cast Primordial spells. See the *Player's Guide* for the general rules of spellcasting and the Primordial spell list.

Cantrips

At 3rd level, you learn the *shillelagh* cantrip and two cantrips of your choice from the Primordial spell list. You choose more Primordial cantrips to learn at higher levels, as shown in the Cantrips Known column of the **Underfoot Spell Progression** table.

Casting Spells

You know a small number of spells and can cast any of them by using a Primordial spell slot of the spell's circle or higher. You don't need to prepare spells ahead of time.

The **Underfoot Spell Progression** table shows how many spells you know and how many spell slots you have at a given level. For example, at 7th level, you have four 1st-circle slots and two 2nd-circle slots. If you know the 1st-circle spell *longstrider* and have a 1st-circle and 2nd-circle spell slot available, you can cast *longstrider* using either slot. If you use a 1st-circle slot, you have three 1st-circle slots remaining.

You regain all used spell slots when you finish a long rest.

Spells Known of 1st Circle and Higher

At 3rd level, choose three 1st-circle spells from the Primordial list that you know, two of which must be from either the abjuration or transmutation schools.

The Spells Known column of the **Underfoot Spell Progression** table shows when you learn additional Primordial spells. Each spell you choose must be an abjuration or transmutation spell and from a circle for which you have Primordial spell slots. The spells you learn at 8th level and beyond can come from any school of magic.



In addition, when you gain a level of rogue, you can choose one Primordial spell you know and replace it with another spell of your choice from the Primordial spell list. The replacement spell must be of a circle for which you have Primordial spell slots, and it must be an abjuration or transmutation spell—unless you’re replacing the third spell you gained at 3rd level or any of the spells you chose at 8th level and beyond.

Spellcasting Ability

Wisdom (WIS) is your spellcasting ability. Your WIS modifier determines the save DC or the attack modifier for certain spells you cast:

Spell save DC = 8 + your proficiency bonus (PB) + your WIS modifier

Spell attack modifier = your proficiency bonus (PB) + your WIS modifier

VERSATILE SHILLELAGH

3rd-Level Underfoot Feature

When you cast the shillelagh spell, it is modified in the following ways:

- Its duration increases to 1 hour.
- You can use WIS or DEX (your choice) instead of STR for the attack and damage rolls of melee attacks with the weapon.

UNDERFOOT PROGRESSION

PRIMORDIAL SPELL SLOTS BY CIRCLE

ROGUE LEVEL	FEATURES	PRIMORDIAL CANTRIPS KNOWN	PRIMORDIAL SPELLS KNOWN	1ST	2ND	3RD	4TH
3rd	Underfoot Ambusher, Expanded Talent List, Primordial Spellcasting, Versatile Shillelagh	3	3	2	—	—	—
4th	—	3	4	3	—	—	—
5th	—	3	4	3	—	—	—
6th	—	3	4	3	—	—	—
7th	Undermine	3	5	4	2	—	—
8th	—	3	6	4	2	—	—
9th	—	3	6	4	2	—	—
10th	—	4	7	4	3	—	—
11th	Death from Below	4	8	4	3	—	—
12th	—	4	8	4	3	—	—
13th	—	4	9	4	3	2	—
14th	—	4	10	4	3	2	—
15th	Rapid Growth	4	10	4	3	2	—
16th	—	4	11	4	3	3	—
17th	—	4	11	4	3	3	—
18th	—	4	11	4	3	3	—
19th	—	4	12	4	3	3	1
20th	—	4	13	4	3	3	1

- The spell ends early if you cast it again, if another creature holds the weapon, or if the weapon is more than 5 feet away from you for 1 minute or more.
- Your Sneak Attack feature can be applied to attack rolls made with the weapon.

UNDERFOOT AMBUSER

3rd-Level Underfoot Feature

Your combat style focuses on ambushing your enemies from below. You gain a burrowing speed of 10 feet, but you can't burrow through ice or rock. If you already have a burrowing speed when you gain this feature, it increases by 10 feet.

Your burrowing speed increases by 10 feet when you reach 7th level and again at 11th level.

EXPANDED TALENT LIST

3rd-Level Underfoot Feature

When you gain a new talent, you can select it from the magic or technical talents list.

UNDERMINE

7th-Level Underfoot Feature

As an action, you can mess with the footing of a Large or smaller creature on the ground within 5 feet of you by disrupting the ground beneath it, typically digging a small hole, slamming on a loose floorboard, dislodging a stone tile, or similar. That creature must succeed on a DEX save (DC = 8 + your PB + your DEX modifier) or fall prone. If the target fails the save and falls prone, you can make one weapon attack against that target as a bonus action.

When you reach 11th level, you can use this feature against Huge or smaller creatures.

DEATH FROM BELOW

11th-Level Underfoot Feature

When you burrow at least 10 feet toward a creature, your next attack roll against that target with a weapon enchanted with shillelagh has advantage. In addition, you have tremorsense to a range of 15 feet.

RAPID GROWTH

15th-Level Underfoot Feature

When you deal damage with Sneak Attack, the target is restrained by vegetation and soil until the end of its next turn. When roll Sneak Attack damage against a creature that is grappled, restrained, or that has its speed reduced in some way, you can roll one extra die of damage.

SORCERER

The subclass you choose as a sorcerer reflect your greater understanding and mastery of the source of your power.

FLORA

The natural world is in your blood. Whether dryad or similar plant-like fey blood mixed with your ancestors or your ancestors were touched by the magic of a powerful natural entity like the Old Margreve, you are inextricably tied to the natural world. Your power manifests as plant-related magic, but how that manifests is up to you. Your magic can reflect a connection with spores and fungi, flowers and vibrant fruits, or sturdy deep-woods trees.

FLORA PROGRESSION

SORCERER LEVEL	FEATURES
3rd	Flora Origin Spells, Floral Manifestation, Rampant Growth
7th	Floral Metamagic
11th	Wild Growth
15th	Green Transformation



FLORA ORIGIN SPELLS

3rd-Level Flora Feature

You gain origin spells at the sorcerer levels listed in the **Flora Origin Spells** table. See the Sorcerer Subclass class feature for how these spells work.

FLORA ORIGIN SPELLS

SORCERER LEVEL	SPELLS
3rd	<i>barkskin, spike growth</i>
5th	<i>plant growth, speak with plants</i>
7th	<i>blight, cloudkill</i>
9th	<i>tree stride, yarila and porevit's mantle*</i>
11th	<i>transport via plants, wall of thorns</i>

*indicates a spell found in the **Spells** section later in this chapter

FLORAL MANIFESTATION

3rd-Level Flora Feature

When you cast a spell of 1st circle or higher, your body undergoes subtle changes, taking on more plant-like aspects. This might manifest as flowers blooming in your hair, as leaves growing along your elbows, spine, and knees, or as mycelial growths along your skin. For 1 minute, you are resistant to effects that cause exhaustion and to the paralyzed, petrified, and unconscious conditions.

When you reach 7th level in this class, this manifestation becomes more powerful. For the duration, your speed isn't halved when you move through nonmagical or magical difficult terrain. You suffer other penalties caused by moving through difficult terrain as normal.

RAMPANT GROWTH

3rd-Level Flora Feature

When you reduce a hostile creature to 0 HP or when a hostile creature within 30 feet of you is reduced to 0 HP, the ground around the creature erupts with life. A Plant springs up in an unoccupied space within 5 feet of the target. The plant can be any Plant with a CR of 0, such as an awakened shrub or a shrieker, except it has a number of hit points equal to twice your PB instead of its normal hit points. The Plant is friendly to you and your companions, obeys your verbal commands (no action required by you), and acts on your initiative count, taking its turn immediately after yours. If you don't issue any commands to the Plant, it takes the Dodge action and uses its movement to avoid danger. The Plant remains for 1 minute, until it dies, until you die, or until you dismiss it as a bonus action. You can't have more than one Plant active in this way at a time.

At the GM's discretion, the Plant you create with this feature can be a bramble beast (see the bramble beast template in the **Appendix**).

FLORAL METAMAGIC

7th-Level Flora Feature

When you cast a spell of 1st circle or higher, you can spend one or more sorcery points to infuse the spell with the power of nature, using one of the following Metamagic options.

Metamagic: Paralyzing Spell. You can spend 3 sorcery points to imbue the spell with paralyzing spores. One creature affected by the spell is paralyzed for a number of rounds equal to the spell's circle, magical spores coating it. A paralyzed creature can make a CON save against your spell save DC at the end of each of its turns, ending the condition on itself on a success. A creature immune to the poisoned condition has advantage on this save.

Metamagic: Sap Spell. You can spend 3 sorcery points to fill the spell with magical tree sap. Each creature affected by the spell has disadvantage on attack rolls until the end of its next turn, as sap clings to its limbs.

Metamagic: Verdant Spell. You can spend 2 sorcery points to flood the spell with life and growth. Difficult terrain composed of roots, vines, and other vegetation centered on the target of the spell or on the point of origin of the spell fills the area in a radius equal to 5 feet for each circle of the spell. The difficult terrain lasts 1 minute.

WILD GROWTH

11th-Level Flora Feature

Plants created by your Rampant Growth feature become stronger. A Plant created by Rampant Growth now has HP equal to four times your PB, lasts for 1 hour, and it can be any Plant with a CR up to 2, such as an awakened tree or a child of the briar (see the **Appendix**). In addition, you can have a number of such Plants under your control at one time equal to half your PB.

GREEN TRANSFORMATION

15th-Level Flora Feature

As a bonus action, you tap into the plantlife in your blood and take on the characteristics of plants. For 1 minute, you gain the following benefits:

- You become resistant to bludgeoning and piercing damage, but you become vulnerable to fire damage.
- You gain tremorsense to a range of 30 feet.
- When you use a Floral Metamagic option, the option costs only 1 sorcery point instead of its normal cost.
- You can use an action to conjure a Plant in an unoccupied space you can see within 30 feet of you, as if you had triggered your Rampant Growth feature. This otherwise follows all other restrictions of your Rampant Growth and Wild Growth features.

Once used, you can't use this feature again until you finish a long rest, unless you spend 5 sorcery points to do so.

WARLOCK

The subclass you choose as a warlock represents the type of patron your continued prowess has attracted.

ELDRITCH INVOCATIONS

When you learn an eldritch invocation, you can choose from the following additional options. If an eldritch invocation has prerequisites, you must meet them to learn it. You can learn the invocation at the same time that you meet its prerequisite. If a prerequisite lists a level requirement, that is the minimum warlock level required (you can take it at higher warlock levels).

ENTANGLING BLAST

Prerequisite: Elder Wood Patron

When you use your Eldritch Blast feature, you can entangle one of the creatures you hit in roots, vines, and other vegetation. The creature must succeed on a DEX save or be grappled until the end of its next turn. The DC for this save and to escape this grapple is your spell save DC.

EXTINGUISHING BLAST

Prerequisite: Hunter in Darkness Patron

When you use your Eldritch Blast feature, you can reduce the light surrounding one of the creatures you hit until the start of your next turn. If the creature is in bright light, the area within 10 feet of it becomes dim light. If the creature is in dim light, the area within 10 feet of it becomes nonmagical darkness.

GREEN THUMB

Prerequisite: 5th Level, Elder Wood Patron

You can cast plant growth once without expending a spell slot or material components. You can't do so again until you finish a long rest.

HUNTING HOUND

Prerequisite: Pact of the Chain Feature, Hunter in Darkness Patron

In addition to the forms your familiar can normally take, you can choose for it to take the form of a **death dog** or **dire wolf**.

When you reach 9th level, you can use a bonus action to transform your familiar into a **winter wolf** for 1 minute. Once you have transformed your familiar, you must finish a short or long rest before you can do so again.

KNOWLEDGE OF THE WOOD

Prerequisite: 15th Level, Elder Wood Patron

When you are within 5 feet of a body of water in a forest, you can cast scrying on any creature in that forest at will without expending a spell slot or material components. You must remain within 5 feet of the body of water for the duration or the spell ends.

LURKER IN GLOOM

Prerequisite: 7th Level, Hunter in Darkness Patron

As a reaction when you take damage while in dim light or darkness, you wrap shadows around yourself and halve that instance of damage. Once you use this invocation, you can't use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

NATURE'S ARMOR

Prerequisite: Elder Wood Patron

You can use your action to sprout hard thorns across your skin for 1 hour. For the duration, your AC becomes 14 + your CHA modifier, and when a creature hits you with a melee weapon attack while within 5 feet of you, it takes piercing damage equal to half your warlock level (rounded down). Once you use this invocation, you can't use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

PATIENT HUNTER

Prerequisite: Pact of the Tome Feature, Hunter in Darkness Patron

When you identify a creature's tracks using your tome, you have advantage on WIS (Perception) and WIS (Survival) checks to find and track the creature for the next 24 hours.

SHADOW ARROW

Prerequisite: 12th Level, Pact of the Blade Feature, Hunter in Darkness Patron

When you hit a creature with an arrow shot from your pact weapon, you can fire a second, shadow arrow at the creature as a bonus action. If it hits, the shadow arrow deals necrotic damage equal to the damage dealt by the first arrow.

SPEAKER FOR THE TREES

Prerequisite: 9th Level, Elder Wood Patron

You can cast speak with plants as often as you wish, without expending a spell slot or material components.

TOUCH OF THE FOREST

Prerequisite: 13th Level, Elder Wood Patron

You can cast awaken once without expending a spell slot or material components. You can't do so again until you finish a long rest.



ELDER WOOD

You have made a pact with the ancient intelligence of a primeval forest. Before the rise of human civilization, before the time of the elves, before even the dragons, there were the forests. Empires rise and fall around them, but the forests remain as a testament to nature's endurance.

However, times are changing, and the unchecked growth of civilization threatens the green. The intelligences that imbue the ancient forests seek emissaries in the world that can act beyond their boughs, and one has heard your call for power. You are a guardian of the Elder Wood, a questing branch issuing from a vast, slumbering intelligence sent to act on its behalf, perhaps even to excise these lesser beings from its borders. Your patron bestows upon you the power of its unchecked growth and its hunger for magic.

ELDER WOOD PROGRESSION

WARLOCK LEVEL	FEATURES
3rd	Elder Wood Pact Spells, Expanded Pact Boons, Forest's Grace
7th	Sap Magic
11th	Nature's Endurance
15th	Avatar of the Wood

ELDER WOOD PACT SPELLS

3rd-Level Elder Wood Feature

You gain origin spells at the warlock levels listed in the **Elder Wood Pact Spells** table. See the Warlock Subclass class feature for how these spells work.

ELDER WOOD PACT SPELLS

WARLOCK LEVEL	SPELLS
3rd	<i>animal friendship, faerie fire</i>
5th	<i>spike growth, wildsense</i>
9th	<i>conjure animals, protection from energy</i>
13th	<i>conjure woodland beings, giant insect</i>
17th	<i>greater restoration, tree stride</i>

EXPANDED PACT BOONS

3rd-Level Elder Wood Feature

Your patron's influence subtly changes your Pact Boon.

Pact of the Blade. The blade of the Elder Wood is a weapon made of wood and thorns and grows out of your palm. When you cast *shillelagh*, your Pact Blade is affected by the spell, regardless of the form your Pact Blade takes.

Pact of the Chain. Your familiar can be a plant that uses the statistics of an **awakened shrub** or a **child of the briar** (see the **Appendix**), or it can be one of the other options normally available to you.



Pact of the Tome. The Elder Wood grows a tome for you. The tome's cover is hardened bark from the forest's native trees, and its pages are leaves whose color changes with the seasons. When you gain this feature, choose one cantrip from the Primordial spell list. While the tome is on your person, you can cast this cantrip, and the cantrip counts as a Wyrd spell for you. When you gain the Enhanced Boon feature, the rituals you choose or find can be from the Primordial or Wyrd ritual lists, and rituals transcribed in the tome count as Wyrd spells for you. With your tome in hand, you can cast any rituals transcribed in it. If your tome is lost or destroyed, you must return to your patron forest for it to grow you a new one, but the ceremony is otherwise the same.

FOREST'S GRACE

3rd-Level Elder Wood Feature

You learn the *shillelagh* cantrip. It counts as a Wyrd spell for you, and it doesn't count against your number of cantrips known. In addition, difficult terrain caused by roots, underbrush, and other natural vegetation doesn't cost you extra movement. You suffer other penalties caused by moving through difficult terrain, as normal.

SAP MAGIC

7th-Level Elder Wood Feature

Your patron hungers for magic and imparts some of that hunger on you. When a creature you can see within 30 feet of you casts a 1st-circle or higher spell, which can include yourself, you can use your reaction to synthesize the magic. The spell resolves as normal, but you regain hit points equal to your warlock level + your CHA modifier (minimum of 1 HP). You can use this feature a number of times equal to your PB, and you regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

NATURE'S ENDURANCE

11th-Level Elder Wood Feature

Your patron has suffused your body with a portion of its ability to withstand harmful magic. You are resistant to damage from spells.

In addition, when you fail a save against a spell, you can reroll the save and take the new result. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your PB, and you regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

AVATAR OF THE WOOD

15th-Level Elder Wood Feature

You can channel the power of the forest to physically transform, taking on many of its aspects. Your legs, arms, and torso elongate, your body becomes covered in thick bark, and branches sprout from your head as your hair recedes. You can transform as a bonus action, and the transformation lasts 1 minute. While transformed, you gain the following benefits:

- Your Armor Class is 16 + your DEX modifier.
- You gain tremorsense to a range of 30 feet, and your attacks can reach 5 feet farther.
- Your hands become branch-like claws, which you can use to make unarmed strikes. When you attack with a claw, you use CHA instead of STR to determine the attack bonus, and the claw deals slashing damage equal to 1d6 + your CHA modifier, instead of the bludgeoning damage normal for an unarmed strike. The claws count as magical for the purpose of overcoming resistance and immunity to nonmagical attacks and damage. If you have the Pact of the Blade feature, your claw attack benefits from your invocations as if it was a pact weapon.
- Your Sap Magic feature changes to Arcasynthesis: When a spell of 5th circle or lower is cast within 60 feet of you, you can use your reaction to synthesize the magic. The spell resolves as normal, but you have a 50 percent chance of regaining 1d10 hp per circle of the spell cast.

Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

HUNTER IN DARKNESS

A manifestation of the primal dynamic present in every animal, the Hunter in Darkness is an entity that sees all creatures as prey—and it enjoys instilling fear in its prey. It prefers intelligent prey over mere beasts, as their fear tastes so much sweeter. Hunters who display impressive prowess for hunting pique its interest. The Hunter in Darkness often bestows its power on such individuals to spread fear farther than the Hunter can by itself.

Though your patron isn't mindless, it cares only for the thrill of the hunt and the spreading of fear. It cares not what you do with the power it grants you beyond that. Your connection with the Hunter can sometimes cause changes in your worldview. You might view every creature you meet as either predator or prey, or you might face problems with a "kill or be killed" attitude.



HUNTER IN DARKNESS PROGRESSION

WARLOCK LEVEL	FEATURES
3rd	Hunter in Darkness Pact Spells, Expanded Pact Boons, Expanded Talent List, Savage Hunter
7th	Step into Shadow
11th	Strike from the Dark
15th	Avatar of Fear

*indicates a spell found in the **Spells** section later in this chapter

HUNTER IN DARKNESS PACT SPELLS

3rd-Level Hunter in Darkness Feature

You gain origin spells at the warlock levels listed in the **Hunter in Darkness Pact Spells** table. See the Warlock Subclass class feature for how these spells work.

HUNTER IN DARKNESS PACT SPELLS

WARLOCK LEVEL	SPELLS
3rd	<i>agonizing mark*</i> , <i>illuminate spoor*</i>
5th	<i>mark prey*</i> , <i>nip at the heels*</i>
9th	<i>blood offering*</i> , <i>tracer*</i>
13th	<i>harry*</i> , <i>heart-seeking arrow*</i>
17th	<i>harrying hounds*</i> , <i>legend lore</i>

*indicates a spell found in the **Spells** section later in this chapter

EXPANDED PACT BOONS

3rd-Level Hunter in Darkness Feature

Your patron's influence subtly changes your Pact Boon.

Pact of the Blade. Your pact weapon can be a longbow or shortbow in addition to a melee weapon. You must provide arrows for the weapon.

Pact of the Chain. Your familiar can be a hunting hound that uses the statistics of a **wolf** or one of the other options normally available to you.

Pact of the Tome. Your tome contains descriptions of tracks made by a multitude of creatures. If you consult your tome for 1 minute while inspecting tracks, you can identify the kind of creature that left the tracks (such as a winter wolf), though not the creature's name or specific appearance.

EXPANDED TALENT LIST

3rd-Level Hunter in Darkness Feature

When you gain a new talent, you can select it from the magic or martial talents list.

SAVAGE HUNTER

3rd-Level Hunter in Darkness Feature

When you reduce a hostile creature to 0 HP, its nearest ally within 30 feet of you and that can see you must succeed on a WIS save against your spell save DC or be frightened of you until the end of its next turn.

STEP INTO SHADOW

7th-Level Hunter in Darkness Feature

While in dim light or darkness, you can use a bonus action to teleport to an unoccupied space you can see that is in dim light or darkness and within 5 feet of a creature within 30 feet of you. If that creature is frightened and you attack it, you have advantage on the attack roll. When you teleport in this way, you disappear and reappear in a puff of inky smoke. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your PB, and you regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

STRIKE FROM THE DARK

11th-Level Hunter in Darkness Feature

Your patron's constant hunger for fear inures you to it. You are immune to being frightened. In addition, when you are in dim light or darkness and you hit a creature with a weapon attack, it must succeed on a WIS save against your spell save DC or be frightened of you for 1 minute or until it takes any damage.

AVATAR OF FEAR

15th-Level Hunter in Darkness Feature

When you reduce a hostile creature to 0 HP, you can use a bonus action to force each ally of that creature within 30 feet of it and that can see you to make a WIS save against your spell save DC. On a failure, a creature is frightened of you for 1 minute or until it takes any damage. If a creature is immune to being frightened, it is instead stunned until the end of its next turn. Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a short or long rest.

WIZARD

The subclass you choose as a wizard represents the lens through which you focus your ongoing study of magic.

COURSER MAGE

Wizards who follow the Courser Mage tradition are interested in ancient tomes, but they are just as interested in archery and the art of blending magic and archery to stalk and take down quarry. Their magical study focuses on subtle spells centered around finding or hiding from enemies, and their martial study focuses on combining magic and archery. They eventually learn to imbue their arrows with spell energy to deliver more deadly shots. Many monarchs employ Courser Mages in a dual role as magical counsel and personal assassin.

COURSER MAGE PROGRESSION

WIZARD LEVEL	FEATURES
3rd	Expanded Talent List, Stalking Savant, Unseen Assailant
7th	Spell Arrow
11th	Pinpoint Weakness
15th	Multitudinous Arrows

EXPANDED TALENT LIST

3rd-Level Courser Mage Feature

When you gain a new talent, you can select it from the magic or martial talents list.

STALKING SAVANT

3rd-Level Courser Mage Feature

You gain proficiency with longbows and shortbows, and you gain proficiency in the Stealth skill. In addition, you can still perform the somatic components of wizard spells even when you have a longbow or shortbow in one or both hands.

UNSEEN ASSAILANT

3rd-Level Courser Mage Feature

As a bonus action, you can choose a creature you can see within 60 feet of you and become invisible to only that creature until the start of your next turn. This effect ends early if you attack that creature or cast a spell that includes that creature. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your PB, and you regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

SPELL ARROW

7th-Level Courser Mage Feature

Once per turn, when you hit a creature with a longbow or shortbow attack, you can expend one spell slot to deal extra force damage to the target, in addition to the weapon's normal damage. The extra damage is 2d4 for a 1st-circle spell slot, plus 1d4 for each circle higher than 1st.



PINPOINT WEAKNESS

11th-Level Courser Mage Feature

When you hit a creature with an arrow imbued by your Spell Arrow feature, your next ranged weapon attack against that creature before the end of your next turn has advantage.

MULTITUDINOUS ARROWS

15th-Level Courser Mage Feature

On your turn, you can attack twice, instead of once, when you take the Attack action, provided you are attacking with a longbow or shortbow. If you use your Spell Arrow feature, you can imbue both arrows with arcane power by expending one spell slot. If you imbue two arrows with this feature, you can't cast spells other than cantrips until the end of your next turn.

BACKGROUND AND TALENTS

Backgrounds help define your character's personal history before becoming an adventurer. When choosing a background, consider how it plays into your character's heritage and class.

FOREST DWELLER

You are a creature of the forest, spending your days hunting and lounging under a canopy of green. You expected to live all your days in the forest, at one with the green things of the world, until an unforeseen occurrence, traumatic or transformative, drove you from your familiar home and into the larger world. Civilization is strange to you, the open sky unfamiliar, and the bizarre ways of the so-called civilized world run counter to the truths of the forest. Forest dwellers tend toward solitude, introspection, and self-sufficiency. You keep your own council, and you are more likely to watch from a distance than get involved



in the affairs of others. You are wary, slow to trust, and cautious of depending on outsiders.

Skill Proficiencies: Survival and choose from Animal Handling, Nature, or Stealth

Additional Proficiencies: You know Sylvan, and you gain proficiency with one of the following: construction tools, herbalist tools, or trapper tools.

Equipment: A hunting trap, a wood staff, a set of fur-lined traveler's clothes, one set of tools you are proficient with, and a pouch containing 5 gp.

TALENT

Your experience living, hunting, and foraging in the woods gives you a wealth of experience to draw upon when you are traveling the wilds. Choose a talent from this list to represent your experience: Athletic, Forest Denizen, or Relentless Hunter.

ADVENTURING MOTIVATION

You have lived a simple life deep in the sheltering boughs of the Margreve Forest, be it as a trapper, farmer, or villager eking out a simple existence in the forest. But something happened that set you on a different path and marked you for adventure. Choose or randomly determine a defining event that caused you to leave your home for the wider world.

TALENTS

Talents represent the specific ways an adventurer improves over the course of their adventures. Talents are divided into three categories: magic talents, martial talents, and technical talents. Your class typically determines which talent lists you can access. The talents presented here reflect a character's connection to the forest or to the hunt.

Magic Talent: Teleporting Harrier

Prerequisite: Ability to Teleport Due to a Feature, Spell, or Trait

You have learned to maximize the strategic impact of your teleportation. You appear in a flash and attack with deadly precision. When you teleport, the next weapon attack or spell attack you make before the start of your next turn gains your choice of two of the following benefits:

- The attack has advantage against the target if the target is within 15 feet of the space you teleported into.
- If the attack hits, it deals additional damage of its type equal to your PB.
- If the attack hits, the target is frightened of you until the end of its next turn.

To gain any of these benefits with a weapon attack, you must be proficient with the weapon.

d8 ADVENTURING MOTIVATION

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | You were living within the Western Margreve when the cesspools of magical refuse expanded and drove away the game that sustained you. You had to move to avoid the prospect of a long, slow demise via starvation. |
| 2 | Your village was razed by a contingent of Ghost Knights from King Lucan of the Grand Duchy of Morgau. For reasons of its own, the Old Margreve protected and hid you from their raid. |
| 3 | The Night Cauldron of Chernobog has bolstered the ranks of the mindless Undead within the Northern Swamps. A roving band of skeletons and zombies attacked your family while you were hunting. |
| 4 | You are an ardent believer in the Old Ways. When the people of your village abandoned those beliefs, you were cast out. |
| 5 | One day, you stumbled upon a fey holding a strange flower. After breathing in its pollen, you stumbled through the forest in a delirious haze for what felt like weeks. You have since lost many of your memories, especially of your youth. You have faint memories of a village and the sound of that fey's laughter. |
| 6 | You were your village's premier hunter. They relied on you for game and without your contributions their survival in the winter was questionable. Upon returning from your last hunt, you found your village in ruins, as if decades had passed overnight. |
| 7 | Your quiet, peaceful, and solitary existence has been interrupted with dreams of the forest's destruction, and the urge to leave your home compels you to seek answers. |
| 8 | Once in a hidden glen, you danced with golden fey and forgotten gods. Nothing in your life since approaches that transcendent moment, cursing you with a wanderlust to seek something that could. |

Martial Talent: Stunning Sniper

Prerequisite: Proficiency with at Least One Ranged Weapon

You have mastered the use of ranged weapons to disable your foe from a distance. Choose a simple or martial ranged weapon (such as sling, longbow, or light crossbow) you are proficient with. While wielding that weapon, you gain these benefits:

- You score a critical hit on a d20 roll of 19 or 20 with your chosen weapon.
- When you score a critical hit with your chosen weapon, you can choose to forgo dealing damage and stun the target until the end of the target's next turn instead.
- When you hit a stunned creature with your chosen weapon, you can roll one additional weapon damage die for damage.

You can select this talent multiple times, selecting a different weapon each time.

Technical Talent: Forest Denizen

Your time in forests has made you familiar with the ways and dangers of the forest and its inhabitants. You gain these benefits:

- You have advantage on any ability check you make related to climbing or swimming.
- You are resistant to the poisoned condition, and you can discern if a plant or fungal growth is safe to eat.
- You have advantage on checks and saves to avoid being grappled or restrained or to escape being grappled or restrained, provided you are being grappled or restrained by nonmagical vegetation or a Beast or Monstrosity's feature, such as a giant frog's Bite or a spider's Web.

Technical Talent: Friend of the Fey

Your exposure to fey has taught you how to get by in their circles and the dangers of interacting with them. You gain these benefits:

- You learn the Sylvan language.
- When you converse with a Fey or a creature that understands Sylvan, you have advantage on a single CHA check made to influence or interact with that creature. Once you use this feature, you can't do so again until you finish a long rest.
- When you make a save against being charmed or frightened, you can choose to have advantage on the save. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your PB, and you regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Technical Talent: Friend of the Forest

After spending time in forests, you have attuned yourself to the ways of the woods and the creatures in it. You gain these benefits:

- Double your PB for any ability check you make that uses the Animal Handling skill.
- You learn the *druidcraft* cantrip. If you have the Spellcasting class feature, this cantrip counts as being from that class's source instead of Primordial.
- Any Beast or creature with the Animal tag whose CR is equal to your less than your PB that targets you with an attack must first make a WIS check contested by your WIS (Animal Handling). If you succeed, the creature must choose a new target or lose the attack.

Technical Talent: Relentless Hunter

You are an expert at hunting prey. You are never more at home than when on a hunt, and your quarry rarely escapes you. You gain the following benefits:

- You can add your PB to checks made to track a creature, even if you aren't proficient with the skill to do so, and you can give yourself advantage on one ability check made to track a creature. Once you use this, you can't do so again until you finish a long rest.
- If you have tracked a creature for at least 10 minutes, you have advantage on WIS (Perception) checks to detect the creature, and you have advantage on DEX (Stealth) checks to hide from the creature.
- While you are tracking a creature or following the trail left by a creature, such as tracking fleeing prey or following the tracks of a horse-drawn wagon, you and your allies can travel up to 10 hours each day, instead of the standard 8, before you must make a CON save for a forced march.
- When combat starts, choose one creature you can see within 30 feet of you as your quarry. The first time you hit that creature with an attack within the next minute, the attack deals extra damage equal to your PB.

SPELLS

Spells related to hunting or surviving in the Margreve Forest and spells related to forestry in general are detailed here. The spells are listed in alphabetical order. Refer to specific source spell lists to determine which spells your character can use.

SPELL LISTS

This section lists the spells available to casters of the various sources of magic. Each list is organized by source, then by spell circle. Each spell also belongs to a school of magic, identified in parenthesis after the spell's name. Finally, each spell includes a brief summary of its effects. These summaries aren't comprehensive; they're meant as reminders and introductions to help you make quick choices when consulting the spell lists.

ARCANE SPELL LIST

These spells are available to casters who draw power from the Arcane source.

CANTRIPS

Hamstring (Evocation) Fire eldritch arrow.
Hobble (Evocation) Trap slows target.

1ST CIRCLE

Agonizing Mark (Evocation) Mark target with pain.
Feed the Forest (Evocation) Slow the Margreve's siphon.
Step Like Me (Transmutation) Steal target's footsteps.

2ND CIRCLE

Bleating Call (Enchantment) Sound calls nearby creatures.
Mark Prey (Divination) Mark quarry for tracking.
Nip at the Heels (Illusion) Illusory dogs chase target.
Spy My Shadow (Transmutation) Turn your shadow into a spy.

3RD CIRCLE

Cynophobia (Enchantment) Make a target fear dogs.
Tracer (Divination) Mark target with tracking beacon.

4TH CIRCLE

Harry (Enchantment) Cause lasting terror.

5TH CIRCLE

Harrying Hounds (Enchantment) Targets feel hunted.

ARCANE RITUAL LIST

These rituals are available to casters who draw power from the Arcane source.

3RD CIRCLE

Going in Circles (Illusion) Illusory paths confuse travelers.

4TH CIRCLE

Looping Trail (Transmutation) Make trail loop.

DIVINE SPELL LIST

These spells are available to casters who draw power from the Divine source.

CANTRIPS

Tree Heal (Evocation) Heal a plant.

1ST CIRCLE

Bleed (Necromancy) Weapon makes target bleed.
Feed the Forest (Evocation) Slow the Margreve's siphon.

3RD CIRCLE

Blood Offering (Necromancy) Steal corpse's life force.
Tracer (Divination) Mark target with tracking beacon.



4TH CIRCLE

Heart-Seeking Arrow (Transmutation) Empower next ranged attack.

5TH CIRCLE

Maim (Necromancy) Claws hinder target.

PRIMORDIAL SPELL LIST

These spells are available to casters who draw power from the Primordial source.

CANTRIPS

Tree Heal (Evocation) Heal a plant.

1ST CIRCLE

Bloodhound (Transmutation) Increase target's sense of smell.

Cobra Fangs (Transmutation) Target grows fangs.

Cure Beast (Necromancy) Heal a Beast.

Feed the Forest (Evocation) Slow the Margreve's siphon.

Forest Native (Transmutation) Ease travel in forests.

Hunter's Endurance (Enchantment) Relentlessly hunt your quarry.

Illuminate Spoor (Divination) Illuminate creature tracks.

Scentless (Transmutation) Disguise target's scent.

Step Like Me (Transmutation) Steal target's footsteps.

Tree Speak (Divination) Talk to a tree.

2ND CIRCLE

Bestial Fury (Enchantment) Imbue target with fury.

Bleating Call (Enchantment) Sound calls nearby creatures.

Bombardment of Stings (Evocation) 30-ft. cone of stingers.

Instant Snare (Abjuration) Trap lifts and restrains.

Mark Prey (Divination) Mark quarry for tracking.

3RD CIRCLE

Cynophobia (Enchantment) Make a target fear dogs.

Legion of Rabid Squirrels (Conjuration) Call a squirrel swarm.

Monstrous Empathy (Enchantment) Charm a monster.

Putrescent Faerie Circle (Conjuration) Create a ring of poisonous fungi.

Tracer (Divination) Mark target with tracking beacon.

4TH CIRCLE

Heart-Seeking Arrow (Transmutation) Empower next ranged attack.

Storm of Wings (Conjuration) Create storm of flying creatures.

5TH CIRCLE

Conjure Fey Hound (Conjuration) Call a hunting hound.

Harriyng Hounds (Enchantment) Targets feel hunted.

Primal Infusion (Transmutation) Channel the fury of nature.

Yarila and Porevit's Mantle (Transmutation) Gain plant-like features.

PRIMORDIAL RITUAL LIST

These rituals are available to casters who draw power from the Primordial source.

1ST CIRCLE

Mud Pack (Conjuration) Protect target from environment.

4TH CIRCLE

Hunting Stand (Conjuration) Create camouflaged shelter.

Looping Trail (Transmutation) Make trail loop.

5TH CIRCLE

Killing Fields (Transmutation) Create hunting reserve.

6TH CIRCLE

Conjure Forest Defender (Conjuration) Turn a corpse into a plant ally.

9TH CIRCLE

Forest Sanctuary (Abjuration) Protect a stretch of forest.

WYRD SPELL LIST

These spells are available to casters who draw power from the Wyrd source.

CANTRIPS

Hamstring (Evocation) Fire eldritch arrow.

1ST CIRCLE

Agonizing Mark (Evocation) Mark target with pain.

Feed the Forest (Evocation) Slow the Margreve's siphon.

2ND CIRCLE

Spy My Shadow (Transmutation) Turn your shadow into a spy.

3RD CIRCLE

Blood Offering (Necromancy) Steal corpse's life force.

Tracer (Divination) Mark target with tracking beacon.

4TH CIRCLE

Storm of Wings (Conjuration) Create storm of flying creatures.

5TH CIRCLE

Conjure Fey Hound (Conjuration) Call a hunting hound.

Maim (Necromancy) Claws hinder target.

WYRD RITUAL LIST

These rituals are available to casters who draw power from the Wyrd source.

6TH CIRCLE

Conjure Forest Defender (Conjuration) Turn a corpse into a plant ally.

SPELL DESCRIPTIONS

This section presents descriptions of the spells in alphabetical order.

AGONIZING MARK

1st-Circle Arcane and Wyrd (Evocation)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 90 feet

Components: S

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You mark a creature with pain.

You choose a creature you can see within range to mark as your prey, and a ray of black energy issues forth from you. Until the spell ends, each time you deal damage to the target it must make a CHA save. On a failed save, it falls prone as its body is filled with torturous agony.

BESTIAL FURY

2nd-Circle Primordial (Enchantment)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 30 feet

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You imbue a target with fury and strength.

You instill primal fury into a creature you can see within range. The target must make a CHA save; a creature can choose to fail this save. On a failure, the target must use its action to attack the nearest enemy it can see with unarmed strikes or natural weapons. For the duration, the target's attacks deal an extra 1d6 damage of the same type dealt by its weapon, and the target can't be charmed or frightened. If there are no enemies within reach, the target can use its action to repeat the save, ending the effect on a success.

This spell has no effect on Undead or Constructs.

At Higher Circles. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 3rd circle or higher, you can target one additional creature for each slot above 2nd. The creatures must be within 30 feet of each other when you target them.

BLEATING CALL

2nd-Circle Arcane and Primordial (Enchantment)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 90 feet

Components: S, M (a bit of fur or hair from a young Beast or Humanoid)

Duration: 1 minute

You create an illusory sound that draws creatures to it.

You create a sound on a point within range. The sound's volume can range from a whisper to a scream, and it can be any sound you choose. The sound continues unabated throughout the duration, or you can make discrete sounds at different times before the spell ends.

Each creature that starts its turn within 30 feet of the sound and can hear it must make a WIS save. On a failed save, the target must take the Dash or Disengage action and move toward the sound by the safest available route on each of its turns. When it arrives to the source of the sound, the target must use its action to examine the sound. Once it has examined the sound, the target determines the sound is illusory and can no longer hear it, ending the spell's effects on that target and preventing the target from being affected by the sound again for the duration of the spell. If a target takes damage from you or a creature friendly to you, it is no longer under the effects of this spell.

Creatures that can't be charmed are immune to this spell.

BLEED

1st-Circle Divine (Necromancy)

Casting Time: 1 bonus action

Range: Self

Components: V, S, M (a drop of blood)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You empower a blade with necrotic energy to make a target bleed.

Crackling energy coats the blade of one weapon you are wielding that deals slashing damage. Until the spell ends, when you hit a creature with the weapon, the weapon deals an extra 1d4 necrotic damage, and the target must succeed on a CON save or suffer a bleeding wound. Each time you hit a creature with this weapon while it suffers from a bleeding wound, your weapon deals an extra 1 necrotic damage for each time you have previously hit the creature with this weapon (to a maximum of 10 necrotic damage).

Any creature can take an action to stanch the bleeding wound by succeeding on a WIS (Medicine) check against your spell save DC. The wound also closes if the target receives magical healing. This spell has no effect on Undead or Constructs.

BLOODHOUND

1st-Circle Primordial (Transmutation)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (a drop of ammonia)

Duration: 8 hours

You grant a creature an enhanced sense of smell.

You touch a willing creature to grant it an enhanced sense of smell. For the duration, that creature has advantage on WIS (Perception) checks that rely on smell and on WIS (Survival) checks to follow tracks.

At Higher Circles. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 3rd circle or higher, you also grant the target keensense out to a range of 30 feet for the duration.

BLOOD OFFERING

3rd-Circle Divine and Wyrld (Necromancy)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: Instantaneous

You heal yourself using the waning life force of a dead creature.

You touch the corpse of a creature that isn't Undead or a Construct and consume its life force. You must have dealt damage to the creature before it died, and it must have been dead for no more than 1 hour. You regain a number of hit points equal to $1d4 \times$ the creature's challenge rating (minimum of 1 hit point). Once you have consumed its life force, you can't use this on that creature again, and the creature can be restored to life only by means of a *true resurrection* or a *wish* spell.

BOMBARDMENT OF STINGS

2nd-Circle Primordial (Evocation)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self (30-foot cone)

Components: V, S, M (a handful of bee stingers)

Duration: Instantaneous

You launch a cone of insect stingers from your hands.

Each creature in a 30-foot cone must make a DEX save. On a failure, a creature takes 4d6 piercing damage and is poisoned for 1 minute. On a success, a creature takes half as much damage and isn't poisoned. At the end of each of its turns, a poisoned target can make a CON save. On a success, the condition ends on the target.

At Higher Circles. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 3rd circle or higher, the damage increases by 1d6 for each slot above 2nd.

COBRA FANGS

1st-Circle Primordial (Transmutation)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (a drop of snake venom or a patch of snakeskin)

Duration: 1 minute

You cause a creature to grow poisonous cobra fangs.

The spell causes the touched creature to grow great, snake-like fangs. An unwilling creature must make a WIS save to avoid the effect. The spell fails if the target already has a bite attack that deals poison damage.

If the target doesn't have a bite attack, it gains one. The target is proficient with the bite, and it uses its STR modifier for the attack and damage rolls. The damage is piercing, and the damage die is a d4.

When the target hits a creature with its bite attack, that creature must make a CON save, taking 3d6 poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

At Higher Circles. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 3rd circle or higher, the target's bite counts as magical for the purpose of overcoming resistance and immunity to nonmagical attacks and damage.

CONJURE FEY HOUND

5th-Circle Primordial and Wyrld (Conjuration)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S, M (a wooden or metal whistle)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

You summon a fey hound to fight by your side.

You summon fey hounds to fight by your side. The hounds appear in unoccupied spaces that you can see within range. Choose one of the following options for what appears:

- One **hound of the night** (see *Tome of Beasts 1*)
- Two **winter wolves**
- Four **dire wolves**

Each creature is considered Fey, and it disappears when it drops to 0 HP or when the spell ends.

The summoned creatures are friendly to you and your companions. The summoned creatures act on your initiative, taking their turns immediately after yours. They obey any verbal commands you issue to them (no action required by you). If you don't give any commands, they defend themselves from hostile creatures but otherwise take no actions. The GM has the creatures' statistics.

At Higher Circles. When you cast this spell using certain higher-circle spell slots, you choose one of the summoning options above, and more creatures appear: twice as many with a 7th-circle slot and three times as many with a 9th-circle slot.

CONJURE FOREST DEFENDER

6th-Circle Primordial and Wyrđ Ritual (Conjuration)

Casting Time: 1 hour

Range: 30 feet

Components: V, S, M (one Humanoid body, which the spell consumes)

Duration: Until destroyed

You animate a corpse to do your bidding through the will of the forest.

When you cast this spell in a forest, you fasten sticks and twigs around a body. The body comes to life as a forest defender, which uses the statistics of a **vine golem** (see the **Appendix**). The forest defender is friendly to you and your companions. Roll initiative for the forest defender, which has its own turns. It obeys any verbal or mental commands that you issue to it (no action required by you), as long as you remain within its line of sight. If you don't issue any commands to the forest defender, if you are out of its line of sight, or if you are unconscious, it defends itself from hostile creatures but otherwise takes no actions. A body sacrificed to form the forest defender is permanently destroyed and can be restored to life only by means of a *true resurrection* or a *wish* spell. You can have only one forest defender under your control at a time. If you cast this spell again, the previous forest defender crumbles to dust.

At Higher Circles. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 9th circle, you can summon two forest defenders instead of one, and you can control up to two forest defenders at a time.

CURE BEAST

1st-Circle Primordial (Necromancy)

Casting Time: 1 bonus action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S

Duration: Instantaneous

You heal a nearby beast.

A Beast of your choice that you can see within range regains a number of hit points equal to a 1d6 + your spellcasting ability modifier.

At Higher Circles. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 2nd circle or higher, the healing increases by a 1d6 for each slot above 1st.

CYNOPHOBIA

3rd-Circle Arcane and Primordial (Enchantment)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 30 feet

Components: V, S, M (a dog's tooth)

Duration: 8 hours

You instill a devastating fear of canines in your target.

Choose a creature that you can see within range. The target must succeed on a WIS save or develop an overriding fear of canids, such as dogs, wolves, foxes, and worgs. For the duration, the first time the target sees a canid, the target must succeed on a WIS save or be frightened of that canid until the end of its next turn. Each time the target sees a different canid, it must make the save. In addition, the target has disadvantage on ability checks and attack rolls while a canid is within 10 feet of it.

At Higher Circles. When you cast this spell using certain higher-circle spell slots, the duration changes: 24 hours with a 5th-circle slot, 1 month with a 7th-circle slot, and until dispelled with a spell slot of 8th circle or higher.

FEED THE FOREST

1st-Circle Arcane, Divine, Primordial, and Wyrđ (Evocation)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V, S

Duration: 1 hour

You feed a trickle of magic to the Margreve Forest, soothing its hunger.

When cast in the Margreve Forest, this spell feeds a constant trickle of magical energy into the forest. For the duration of the spell, you don't suffer the penalty to spell attacks and spell save DCs from being within the Margreve Forest (see **Magic in the Margreve Forest** in **Chapter 1**). This doesn't protect you from any of the forest's other effects or the special effects that happen from casting certain types of spells within the forest, such as bark-like patches that appear on the targets of healing spells.

At Higher Circles. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 2nd circle or higher, the duration increases by 1 hour per slot above 1st.



FOREST NATIVE

1st-Circle Primordial (Transmutation)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (a clump of soil from the forest)

Duration: 1 hour

You grant a target ease and comfort in forest terrains.

While in a forest, you touch a willing creature and infuse it with the forest's energy, creating a bond between the creature and the environment. For the duration of the spell, as long as the creature remains within the forest, its movement isn't hindered by difficult terrain composed of natural vegetation. In addition, the creature has advantage on saves against environmental effects, such as extreme heat or cold or high altitude.

FOREST SANCTUARY

9th-Circle Primordial Ritual (Abjuration)

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: 300 feet

Components: V, S, M (a bowl of fresh rainwater and a tree branch)

Duration: 24 hours

You protect an area of forest from environmental threats.

While in a forest, you create a protective, 200-foot cube centered on a point you can see within range. The atmosphere inside the cube has the lighting, temperature, and moisture that is most ideal for the forest, regardless of the lighting or weather outside the area. The cube is transparent, and creatures and objects can move freely through it. The cube protects the area inside it from storms, strong winds, and floods, including those created by magic such as *control weather*, *control water*, or *meteor swarm*. Such spells can't be cast while the spellcaster is in the cube.

You can create a permanently protected area by casting this spell at the same location every day for one year. You can have any number of areas permanently protected, but you can't have more than one area protected at a time, unless the others are permanently protected.



GOING IN CIRCLES

3rd-Circle Arcane Ritual (Illusion)

Casting Time: 10 minutes

Range: Sight

Components: V, S, M (a piece of the target terrain)

Duration: 24 hours

You create illusory paths to confuse travelers as they cross the terrain.

You make natural terrain in a 1-mile cube centered on a point within range difficult to traverse. The area can't include Huge or larger manufactured structures, and if such a structure exists in the area, the spell ends. A creature in the affected area has disadvantage on WIS (Survival) checks to follow tracks or travel safely through the area, as paths through the terrain seem to twist and turn nonsensically. The terrain itself isn't changed, only the perception of those inside it. A creature that succeeds on two WIS (Survival) checks while in the terrain discerns the illusion for what it is and sees the illusory twists and turns superimposed on the terrain. A creature that reenters the area after exiting it before the spell ends is affected by the spell even if it previously succeeded in traversing the terrain. A creature with truesight can see through the illusion and is unaffected by the spell. A creature that casts the *find the path* spell automatically succeeds in discovering a way out of the terrain.

When you cast this spell, you can designate a password. A creature that speaks the word as it enters the area automatically sees the illusion and is unaffected by the spell.

If you cast this spell on the same spot every day for one year, the illusion lasts until it is dispelled. You can have any number of areas under a permanent illusion, but you can't have more than one area under an illusion at a time, unless the others are permanently under an illusion.

HAMSTRING

Arcane and Wyrld Cantrip (Evocation)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: S

Duration: Instantaneous

You fire an eldritch arrow at an enemy.

You send an arrow of eldritch energy at a target you can see within range. Make a ranged spell attack against the target. On a hit, the target takes 1d4 force damage, and it can't take reactions until the start of its next turn.

The spell's damage increases by 1d4 when you reach 5th level (2d4), 11th level (3d4), and 17th level (4d4).

HARRY

4th-Circle Arcane (Enchantment)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 120 feet

Components: V, S, M (a bit of fur from a game animal)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

You inflict lasting terror on a target.

You instill an irresistible sense of insecurity and terror in the target. The target must make a WIS save. On a failure, the target has disadvantage on DEX (Stealth) checks to avoid your notice and is frightened of you while you are within its line of sight. While you are within 1 mile of the target, you have advantage on WIS (Survival) checks to track the target, and the target can't take a long rest, terrified that you are just around the corner. The target can repeat the save once every 10 minutes, ending the spell on a success.

On a successful save, the target isn't affected, and you can't use this spell against it again for 24 hours.

At Higher Circles. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 6th circle or higher, the duration is concentration up to 8 hours, and the target can repeat the save once each hour. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 8th circle or higher, the duration is concentration up to 24 hours, and the target can repeat the save every 8 hours.

HARRYING HOUNDS

5th-Circle Arcane and Primordial (Enchantment)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 180 feet

Components: V, S, M (a tuft of fur from a hunting dog)

Duration: 8 hours

You convince creatures to flee from illusory pursuit.

When you cast this spell, choose a direction (north, south, northeast, or the like). Each creature in a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on a point you choose within range must succeed on a WIS save when you cast this spell or be affected by it.

When an affected creature travels, it travels at a fast pace in the opposite direction of the one you chose, as it believes a pack of dogs or wolves follows it from the chosen direction. When an affected creature isn't traveling, it is frightened of your chosen direction. The affected creature occasionally hears howls or sees glowing eyes in the darkness at the edge of its vision in that direction. An affected creature will not stop at a destination, instead pacing half-circles around the destination until the effect ends, terrified that the pack will overcome it if it stops moving. An affected creature can make a WIS save at the end of each 4-hour period, ending the effect on itself on a success.

An affected creature moves along the safest available route unless it has nowhere to move, such as if it arrives at the edge of a cliff. When an affected creature can't safely move

in the opposite direction from your chosen direction, it cowers in place, defending itself from hostile creatures, but otherwise takes no actions. In such circumstances, the affected creature can repeat the save every minute, ending the effect on itself on a success. The spell's effect is suspended when an affected creature is engaged in combat, enabling it to move as necessary to face hostile creatures.

At Higher Circles. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 6th circle or higher, the duration increases by 4 hours for each slot above 5th. If an affected creature travels for more than 8 hours, it risks exhaustion as if on a forced march.

HEART-SEEKING ARROW

4th-Circle Divine and Primordial (Transmutation)

Casting Time: 1 bonus action

Range: Self

Components: V

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You empower your next ranged attack with deadly power.

The next time you make a ranged weapon attack during the spell's duration, the weapon's ammunition—or the weapon itself, if it's a thrown weapon—seeks its target's vital organs. Make the attack roll as normal. On a hit, the weapon deals an extra 6d6 damage of the same type dealt by the weapon, or half as much damage on a miss, as it streaks unerringly toward its target. If this attack reduces the target to 0 hit points, the target has disadvantage on its next death save, and if it dies, it can be restored to life only by means of a *true resurrection* or a *wish* spell. This spell has no effect on Undead or Constructs.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 5th circle or higher, the extra damage on a hit increases by 1d6 for each slot above 4th.

HOBBLE

Arcane Cantrip (Evocation)

Casting Time: 1 bonus action

Range: 30 feet

Components: V, S, M (a broken rabbit's foot)

Duration: Instantaneous

You hinder a target with a magic trap.

You create an ethereal trap in the space of a creature you can see within range. The target must succeed on a DEX save or its speed is halved until the end of its next turn.

HUNTER'S ENDURANCE

1st-Circle Primordial (Enchantment)

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: Self

Components: V, S, M (a fingernail, lock of hair, bit of fur, or drop of blood from the target if unfamiliar)

Duration: 24 hours

You grant yourself the endurance to hunt a quarry relentlessly.

You call on the land to sustain you as you hunt your quarry. Describe or name a creature that is familiar to you. If you aren't familiar with the target creature, you must use a fingernail, lock of hair, bit of fur, or drop of blood from it as a material component to target that creature with this spell.

Until the spell ends, you have advantage on all WIS (Perception) and WIS (Survival) checks to find and track the target, and you must actively pursue the target as if under the *geas* spell. In addition, you don't suffer from exhaustion levels you gain from pursuing your quarry, such as from lack of rest or environmental hazards between you and the target, while the spell is active. When the spell ends, you suffer from all levels of exhaustion that were suspended by the spell. The spell ends only after 24 hours, when the target is dead, when the target is on a different plane, or when the target is restrained in your line of sight.

You can have only a single casting of *hunter's endurance* active on yourself at one time. If you cast this spell a second time, the first casting immediately ends.

HUNTING STAND

4th-Circle Primordial Ritual (Conjuration)

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: 120 feet

Components: V, S, M (a crude model of the stand)

Duration: 8 hours

You create a magical camouflaged shelter.

You make a camouflaged shelter nestled in the branches of a tree or among a collection of stones. The shelter is a 10-foot cube centered on a point within range. It can hold as many as nine Medium or smaller creatures. The atmosphere inside the shelter is comfortable and dry, regardless of the weather outside. The shelter's camouflage provides a modicum of concealment to its inhabitants; a creature outside the shelter has disadvantage on WIS (Perception) and INT (Investigation) checks to detect or locate a creature within the shelter.

ILLUMINATE SPOOR

1st-Circle Primordial (Divination)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (a firefly)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

You illuminate a set of tracks to ease your pursuit.

You touch a set of tracks created by a single creature. That set of tracks and all other tracks made by the same creature give off a faint glow. You and up to three creatures you designate when you cast this spell can see the glow. A creature that can see the glow automatically succeeds on WIS (Survival) checks to track that creature. If the tracks are covered by obscuring objects such as leaves or mud, you and the creatures you designate have advantage on WIS (Survival) checks to follow the tracks.

If the creature leaving the tracks changes its tracks, such as by adding or removing footwear, the glow stops where the tracks change. Until the spell ends, you can use an action to touch and illuminate a new set of tracks.

At Higher Circles. When you cast this spell using certain higher-circle spell slots, the duration changes: concentration up to 8 hours with a 3rd-circle or higher slot and concentration up to 24 hours with a 5th-circle or higher slot.

INSTANT SNARE

2nd-Circle Primordial (Abjuration)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 120 feet

Components: V, S, M (a loop of twine)

Duration: 24 hours

You set a magical trap to restrain trespassers.

You create a snare on a point you can see within range. You can leave the snare as a magical trap, or you can use your reaction to trigger the trap when a Large or smaller creature you can see moves within 10 feet of the snare. If you leave the snare as a trap, a creature must succeed on an INT (Investigation) or WIS (Perception) check against your spell save DC to find the trap.

When a Large or smaller creature moves within 5 feet of the snare, the trap triggers. The creature must succeed on a DEX save or be magically pulled into the air. The creature is restrained and hangs upside down 5 feet above the snare's location for 1 minute. A restrained creature can repeat the save at the end of each of its turns, escaping the snare on a success. Alternatively, a creature, including the restrained target, can use its action to make an INT (Arcana) check against your spell save DC. On a success, the restrained creature is freed, and the snare resets itself 1 minute later. If the creature succeeds on the check by 5 or more, the snare is destroyed instead.

This spell alerts you with a ping in your mind when the trap is triggered if you are within 1 mile of the snare. This ping awakens you if you are sleeping.

At Higher Circles. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 3rd circle or higher, you can create one additional snare for each slot above 2nd. When you receive the mental ping that a trap was triggered, you know which snare was triggered if you have more than one.

KILLING FIELDS

5th-Circle Primordial Ritual (Transmutation)

Casting Time: 10 minutes

Range: 300 feet

Components: V, S, M (a game animal, which must be sacrificed as part of casting the spell)

Duration: 24 hours

You designate an area for predators and prey of your choice.

You invoke primal spirits of nature to transform natural terrain in a 100-foot cube in range into a private hunting preserve. The area can't include Huge or larger manufactured structures, and if such a structure exists in the area, the spell ends.

While you are conscious and within the area, you are aware of the presence and direction, though not exact location, of each Beast and Monstrosity with an INT of 3 (-4) or lower in the area. When such a Beast or Monstrosity tries to leave the area, it must make a WIS save. On a failure, it is disoriented, uncertain of its surroundings or direction, and remains within the area for 1 hour. On a success, it leaves the area.

When you cast this spell, you can specify individuals that are helped by the area's effects. All other creatures in the area are hindered by the area's effects. You can also specify a password that, when spoken aloud, gives the speaker the benefits of being helped by the area's effects.

Killing fields creates the following effects within the area.

- **Pack Hunters.** A helped creature has advantage on attack rolls against a hindered creature if at least one helped ally is within 5 feet of the hindered creature and the helped ally isn't incapacitated.
- **Slaying.** Once per turn, when a helped creature hits with any weapon, the weapon deals an extra 1d6 damage of the type dealt by the weapon to a hindered creature.
- **Tracking.** A helped creature has advantage on WIS (Survival) and DEX (Stealth) checks against a hindered creature.

You can create a permanent killing field by casting this spell in the same location every day for one year. You can have any number of permanent killing fields, but you can't have more than one killing field at a time, unless the others are permanent killing fields. Structures built in the area after a killing field is permanent don't end the spell.

LEGION OF RABID SQUIRRELS

3rd-Circle Primordial (Conjuration)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S, M (an acorn or nut)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You summon a swarm of squirrels.

While in a forest, you call a legion of rabid squirrels to descend from the nearby trees at a point you can see within range. The squirrels form into a swarm that uses the statistics of a **swarm of poisonous snakes**, except it has a climbing speed of 30 feet rather than a swimming speed. The legion of squirrels is friendly to you and your companions. Roll initiative for the legion, which has its own turns. The legion of squirrels obeys your verbal commands (no action required by you). If you don't issue any commands to the legion, it defends itself from hostile creatures but otherwise takes no actions. If you command it to move farther than 60 feet from you, the spell ends, and the legion disperses back into the forest. A canid, such as a dog, wolf, fox, or worg, has disadvantage on attack rolls against targets other than the legion of rabid squirrels while the swarm is within 60 feet of the canid. When the spell ends, the squirrels disperse back into the forest.

At Higher Circles. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 4th circle or higher, the legion's poison damage increases by 1d8 for each slot above 3rd.

LOOPING TRAIL

4th-Circle Arcane and Primordial Ritual (Transmutation)

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (a piece of rope twisted into a loop)

Duration: 8 hours

You magically alter a path to loop back on itself.

You touch a trail, path, or road no more than 1 mile in length, reconfiguring it to give it switchbacks and curves that make the trail loop back on itself. For the duration, the trail makes subtle changes in its configuration and in the surrounding environment to give the impression of forward progression along a continuous path. A creature on the trail must succeed on a WIS (Survival) check to notice that the trail is leading it in a closed loop.

MAIM

5th-Circle Divine and Wyrld (Necromancy)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V, S

Duration: Instantaneous

You empower your strikes with devastating necrotic energy.

Your hands become black claws bathed in necrotic energy. Make a melee spell attack against a creature you can reach. On a hit, the target takes 4d6 necrotic damage and a section of its body of your choosing withers:

- **Body.** Choose one damage type: bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing. The target is no longer resistant to that damage type. If the target isn't resistant to the chosen damage type, it is vulnerable to that damage type instead.
- **Lower Limb.** The target's speed is reduced by 10 feet, and it has disadvantage on DEX ability checks.
- **Upper Limb.** The target has disadvantage on STR ability checks, and, if it has the Multiattack action, it has disadvantage on the first attack roll it makes each round.

The effect is permanent until removed by *remove curse*, *greater restoration*, or similar magic.

MARK PREY

2nd-Circle Arcane and Primordial (Divination)

Casting Time: 1 bonus action

Range: 120 feet

Components: V

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

You magically mark a prey to track and kill.

You choose a creature you can see within range as your prey. Until the spell ends, you have advantage on WIS (Perception) and WIS (Survival) checks to find or track your prey. In addition, the target is outlined in light that only you can see. Any attack roll you make against your prey has advantage if you can see it, and your prey can't benefit from being invisible against you. If the target drops to 0 hit points before this spell ends, you can use a bonus action on a subsequent turn to mark a new target as your prey.

At Higher Circles. When you cast this spell using certain higher-circle spell slots, the duration changes: concentration up to 8 hours with a 4th-circle or higher slot and concentration up to 24 hours with a 6th-circle or higher slot.

MONSTROUS EMPATHY

3rd-Circle Primordial (Enchantment)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 30 feet

Components: V, S, M (a morsel of food)

Duration: 24 hours

You charm a monstrous creature.

This spell lets you forge a connection with a Monstrosity. Choose a Monstrosity that you can see within range. It must be able to see and hear you. If the Monstrosity's INT is 5 (-3) or higher, the spell fails. Otherwise, the Monstrosity must succeed on a WIS save or be charmed by you for the spell's duration. If you or one of your companions harms the target, the spell ends.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 4th circle or higher, you can target one additional Monstrosity for each slot above 3rd. The creatures must be within 30 feet of each other when you target them.

MUD PACK

1st-Circle Primordial Ritual (Conjuration)

Casting Time: 1 minute

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (a clump of mud)

Duration: 1 hour

You protect a target from environmental hazards with magical mud camouflage.

This spell covers you or a willing creature you touch in mud consistent with the surrounding terrain. For the duration, the spell protects the target from extreme cold and heat, giving the target to advantage on saves against environmental hazards related to temperature. In addition, the target has advantage on DEX (Stealth) checks while traveling at a slow pace in the terrain related to the component for this spell.

If the target is subject to heavy precipitation for 1 minute, the precipitation removes the mud, ending the spell.

You can have only one casting of *mud pack* active at one time. If you cast this spell a second time, the first casting immediately ends.

At Higher Circles. As you unlock higher circles, this ritual grows in potency. Once you have access to 3rd-circle spell slots or higher, the duration is 8 hours, and you can target up to ten willing creatures within 30 feet of you.

NIP AT THE HEELS

2nd-Circle Arcane (Illusion)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 30 feet

Components: V, S, M (a dog's tooth)

Duration: 1 minute

You create an illusory pack of dogs to chase a target.

You create an illusory pack of wild dogs that bark and nip at one creature you can see within range, which must make a WIS save. On a failure, the target has disadvantage on ability checks and attack rolls for the duration as it is distracted by the dogs. At the end of each of its turns, the target can make a WIS save, ending the effect on itself on a success. A target that is at least 10 feet off the ground (in a tree, flying, and so forth) has advantage on the save, staying just out of reach of the jumping and barking dogs.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 3rd circle or higher, you can target one additional creature for each slot above 2nd. The creatures must be within 30 feet of each other when you target them.

PRIMAL INFUSION

5th-Circle Primordial (Transmutation)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V, S, M (fur from a carnivorous animal)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You increase your strength and toughness with the power of nature.

You channel the fury of nature, drawing on its power. Until the spell ends, you gain the following benefits:

- You gain 30 temporary hit points. If any of these remain when the spell ends, they are lost.
- You have advantage on attack rolls when one of your allies is within 5 feet of the target and the ally isn't incapacitated.
- Your weapon attacks deal an extra 1d10 damage of the type dealt by the weapon on a hit.
- You gain a +2 bonus to AC.
- You have proficiency in CON saves.

PUTRESCENT FAERIE CIRCLE

3rd-Circle Primordial (Conjuration)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S, M (a piece of poisonous fungus)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You create a ring of poisonous fungi that paralyzes those who cross it.

You create a 20-foot-diameter circle of loosely-packed toadstools that spew sickly white spores and ooze a tarry substance. At the start of each of your turns, each creature within the circle must make a CON save. A creature takes 2d8 necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

If a creature attempts to pass through the ring of toadstools, such as to leave or enter the ring, the toadstools release a cloud of spores, and the creature must make a CON save. On a failure, the creature takes 2d8 poison damage and is poisoned for 1 minute and paralyzed until the end of its next turn. On a success, the creature takes half as much damage and isn't poisoned or paralyzed. A poisoned creature can repeat the CON save at the end of each of its turns, ending the poisoned condition on itself on a success.

A creature can fly in or out of the ring without triggering the effect of passing through the ring, provided it flies at least 10 feet above the toadstools.

SCENTLESS

1st-Circle Primordial (Transmutation)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (1 ounce of water)

Duration: 1 hour

You completely disguise a target's scent.

You touch a willing creature or item that isn't being worn or carried. For the duration, the target gives off no odor. A creature that relies on smell has disadvantage on WIS (Perception) checks to detect the target and WIS (Survival) checks to track the target. The target is invisible to a creature that relies solely on smell to sense its surroundings. This spell has no effect on targets with unusually strong scents, such as ghosts.

SPY MY SHADOW

2nd-Circle Arcane and Wyrld (Transmutation)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You turn your shadow into a spy.

You bring your shadow to life as a tenebrous spy that can slip under doors, between shutters, and through the narrowest of cracks. You can stretch your shadow up to ten times your height and move it as you desire. It remains two-dimensional and can't interact with physical objects.

You can spy through your shadow's eyes and ears as if they were your own, but magically enhanced senses, such as you being affected by the *darkvision* spell, don't work through this spell. You can utilize the Stealth skill normally if trying to keep your shadow's presence a secret: it has advantage on DEX (Stealth) checks in areas of dim light but disadvantage on DEX (Stealth) checks in areas of bright light. It is invisible in areas of darkness.

STEP LIKE ME

1st-Circle Arcane and Primordial (Transmutation)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S, M (blood, hair, or a personal item of target)

Duration: 24 hours

You steal a creature's footsteps, leaving its tracks instead of your own.

Choose a creature within one size category of yourself that you can see within range. The target must succeed on a CON save or you steal its footsteps. For the duration of the spell, you leave the tracks of the target, while it leaves tracks as if it were you. In addition, those capable of identifying creatures through tremorsense mistake you for a creature of the target's kind.

STORM OF WINGS

4th-Circle Primordial and Wyrld (Conjuration)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S, M (a drop of honey)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You summon a storm of flying creatures to harry your enemies.

You create a storm of spectral birds, bats, or flying insects in a 15-foot-radius sphere on a point you can see within range. The storm spreads around corners, and its area is lightly obscured. Each creature in the storm when it appears and each a creature that starts its turn in the storm suffers the storm's effects, as detailed below.

As a bonus action on your turn, you can move the storm up to 30 feet. As an action on your turn, you can change the storm from one type to another, such as from a storm of bats to a storm of insects.

Bats. The creature takes 4d6 necrotic damage, and its speed is halved while within the storm, as the bats cling to it and drain its blood.

Birds. The creature takes 4d6 slashing damage, and it has disadvantage on attack rolls while within the storm, as the birds fly in the way of the creature's attacks.

Insects. The creature takes 4d6 poison damage, and it must make a CON save each time it casts a spell while within the storm. On a failure, the creature fails to cast the spell, losing the action but not the spell slot.

TRACER

3rd-Circle Arcane, Divine, Primordial, and Wyrld (Divination)

Casting Time: 1 bonus action

Range: Self

Components: V, S, M (a drop of bright paint)

Duration: 8 hours

You tag a target with a magical beacon to track its location.

When you cast this spell and as a bonus action on each of your turns until the spell ends, you can imbue a piece of ammunition you fire from a ranged weapon with a tiny, invisible beacon. If a ranged attack roll with an imbued piece of ammunition hits a target, the beacon is transferred to the target. The weapon that fired the ammunition is attuned to the beacon and becomes warm to the touch when it points in the direction of the target as long as the target is on the same plane of existence as you. You can have only one tracer target at a time. If you put a tracer on a different target, the effect on the previous target ends.

A creature must succeed on an INT (Arcana) check against your spell save DC to notice the magical beacon.

TREE HEAL

Divine and Primordial Cantrip (Evocation)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: Instantaneous

You heal a plant or plant-type creature.

You touch a plant, and it regains 1d4 hit points. Alternatively, you can cure it of one disease or remove pests from it. Once you cast this spell on a plant or Plant creature, you can't cast it on that target again for 24 hours. This spell can be used only on plants and Plant creatures.

TREE SPEAK

1st-Circle Primordial (Divination)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: 1 minute

You communicate with a tree.

You touch a tree and ask one question about anything that might have happened in its immediate vicinity (such as "Who passed by here?"). You get a mental sensation of the response, which lasts for the duration of the spell. Trees don't have a Humanoid's sense of time, so the tree might speak about something that happened last night or a hundred years ago. The sensation you receive might include sight, hearing, vibration, or smell, all from the tree's perspective. Trees are particularly attentive to anything that might harm the forest and always report such activities when questioned.

If you cast this spell on a tree that contains a creature that can merge with trees, such as a dryad, you can freely communicate with the merged creature for the duration of the spell.

YARILA AND POREVIT'S MANTLE

5th-Circle Primordial (Transmutation)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

Channeling the power of the Green Gods, you become more plant like.

You take on the physical characteristics of the plant life around you: grass and tiny mushrooms grow in your hair, moss sprouts from your chin, and your flesh takes on the mottled hue of leaf green and bark brown. With your plant-like features, the sun's life-giving energy now heals and sustains your body.

For the duration, while you are in bright light that is sunlight, you ignore the effects of having one level of exhaustion (having two or more affects you normally), and you heal 1 hit point at the start of each of your turns. Spending 30 minutes or more in direct sunlight provides you enough nourishment to sustain you for one day. While you are in dim light, you regain only 1 hit point at the end of each minute and don't ignore the effects of exhaustion.

In addition, you have advantage on DEX (Stealth) checks while in terrain with vegetation, such as a forest, grassland, or even fungal cavern.

MAGIC ITEMS

The magic items in this section are found throughout the Margreve Forest, many of which were crafted and traded by the various peoples that dwell within the forest, using materials from the forest.

Bag of Bramble Beasts

Wondrous Item, Uncommon 4,000 gp

This ordinary bag, made from green cloth, appears empty. Reaching inside the bag, however, reveals the presence of a small, spiky object. The bag weighs 1/2 pound.

You can use an action to pull the spiky object from the bag and throw it up to 20 feet. When the object lands, it transforms into a creature you determine by rolling a d6 and consulting the **Bramble Beast** table. The creature is a bramble version (see Bramble Creature in the **Appendix**) of the Beast listed in the table. The creature vanishes at the next dawn or when it is reduced to 0 HP.

The creature is friendly to you and your companions, and it acts on your turn. You can use a bonus action to command how the creature moves and what action it takes on its next turn, or give it general orders, such as to attack your enemies. In the absence of such orders, the creature acts in a fashion appropriate to its nature.

Once three spiky objects have been pulled from the bag, the bag can't be used again until the next dawn.

Alternatively, one willing familiar or willing friendly Large or smaller Beast can be placed in the bag for 7 days. The creature disappears once placed in the bag, and the bag's magic is dormant until 7 days have passed. At the end of that time, the creature exits the bag as a bramble creature (see Bramble Creature in the **Appendix**) and can be returned to its original form only with a *wish* spell. The creature retains its other statistics and its memories after its transformation and can choose to activate or deactivate its Thorn Body trait as a bonus action. A transformed



familiar can be re-summoned, still transformed, with the appropriate *create familiar* or *find familiar* spell. Once the bag has been used to change a creature into a bramble creature, it becomes an ordinary, nonmagical bag.

BRAMBLE BEAST

D6	CREATURE	D6	CREATURE
1	Weasel	4	Boar
2	Giant rat	5	Panther
3	Badger	6	Giant badger

Blue Willow Cloak

Wondrous Item, Uncommon 4,000 gp

This light cloak of fey silk is waterproof. While wearing this cloak in the rain, you can use your action to pull up the hood and become invisible for up to 1 hour. The effect ends early if you attack or cast a spell, if you use an action to pull down the hood, or if the rain stops. The cloak can't be used this way again until the next dawn.



Bracelet of the Fire Tender

Wondrous Item, Uncommon

500 gp

This bracelet is made of thirteen small, roasted pinecones lashed together with lengths of dried sinew. It smells of pine and woodsmoke. It is uncomfortable to wear over bare skin. While wearing this bracelet, you don't have disadvantage on WIS (Perception) checks that rely on sight when looking in areas lightly obscured by nonmagical smoke or fog.



Charm of Restoration

Wondrous Item, Common

100 gp

This fist-sized ball of tightly-wound green fronds contains the bark of a magical plant with curative properties. A natural loop is formed from one of the fronds, allowing the charm to be hung from a pack, belt, or weapon pommel. As long as you carry this charm, whenever you are targeted by a spell or magical effect that restores your HP, you regain an extra 1 HP.



Circlet of Holly

Wondrous Item, Uncommon (Requires Attunement)

500 gp

While wearing this circlet, you gain the following benefits:

- **Language of the Fey.** You can speak and understand Sylvan.
- **Friend of the Fey.** You have advantage on ability checks to interact socially with Fey.
- **Poison Sense.** You know if any food or drink you are holding contains poison.



Firebird Feather

Wondrous Item, Uncommon

500 gp

This feather sheds bright light in a 20-foot radius and dim light for an additional 20 feet, but it creates no heat and doesn't use oxygen. While holding the feather, you can tolerate temperatures as low as -50 degrees Fahrenheit.

Spellcasters with access to Primordial spells and clerics and paladins who worship nature deities can use the feather as a spellcasting focus. If you are a cleric and use the feather in place of a holy symbol when using your Turn the Profane feature, Undead in the area have a -1 penalty on the save.

Ghost Thread

Wondrous Item, Rare

4,000 gp

Most of this miles-long strand of enchanted silk, created by phase spiders, resides on the Ethereal Plane. Only a few inches at either end exist permanently on the Material Plane, and those may be used as any normal string would be. Creatures using it to navigate can follow one end to the other by running their hand along the thread, which phases into the Material Plane beneath their grasp. If dropped, the thread, except for the two ends, disappears back into the Ethereal Plane in 2d6 rounds.

Goblin Shield

Armor (Shield), Rare (Requires Attunement)

4,000 gp

This shield resembles a snarling goblin's head. It has 3 charges and regains 1d3 expended charges daily at dawn. While wielding this shield, you can use a bonus action to expend 1 charge and command the goblin's head to bite a creature within 5 feet of you. Make a melee weapon attack with the shield. You have proficiency with this attack if you are proficient with shields. On a hit, the target takes 2d4 piercing damage.



Half-Sword of the Margreve Knights

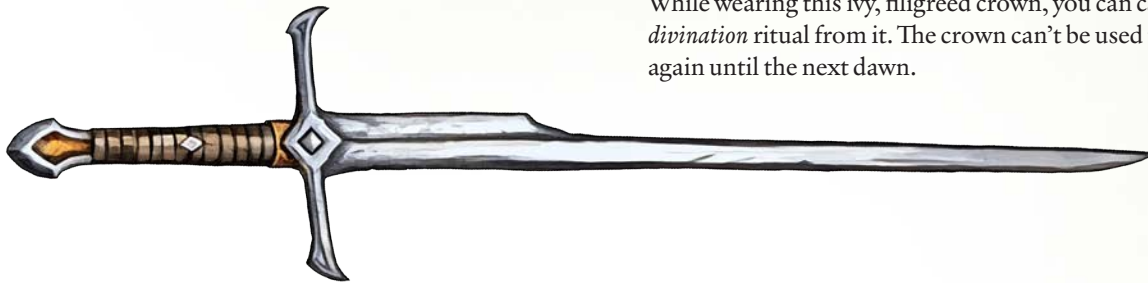
Weapon (Longsword), Rare
(Requires Attunement)

4,015 gp

The story of the ill-fated Margreve Knights, adventurers who perished in the heart of the woods, is little remembered except in the name of this strange sword. To all appearances, this sword has been shorn down the middle of the blade.

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. This longsword has the Finesse property, and you score a critical hit on a d20 roll of 19 or 20 with it.

Legend says that the second half of the blade lies forgotten in the Margreve, and if the halves are rejoined, it becomes a *vorpal sword*.

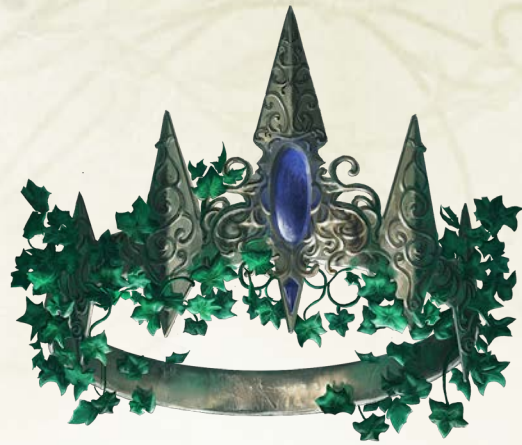


Honey Lamp

Wondrous Item, Common

200 gp

This orb, made from glowing honey encased in beeswax, sheds bright light in a 20-foot radius and dim light for an additional 20 feet. Though most often found in the shape of an orb, the glowing honey can also be sealed inside stone or wood. If the wax that shields the honey is broken or smashed, the honey crystallizes in 7 days and ceases to glow. Eating the honey while it is still glowing gives the consumer darkvision to a range of 30 feet for 7 days.



Ivy Crown of Prophecy

Wondrous Item, Rare

5,500 gp

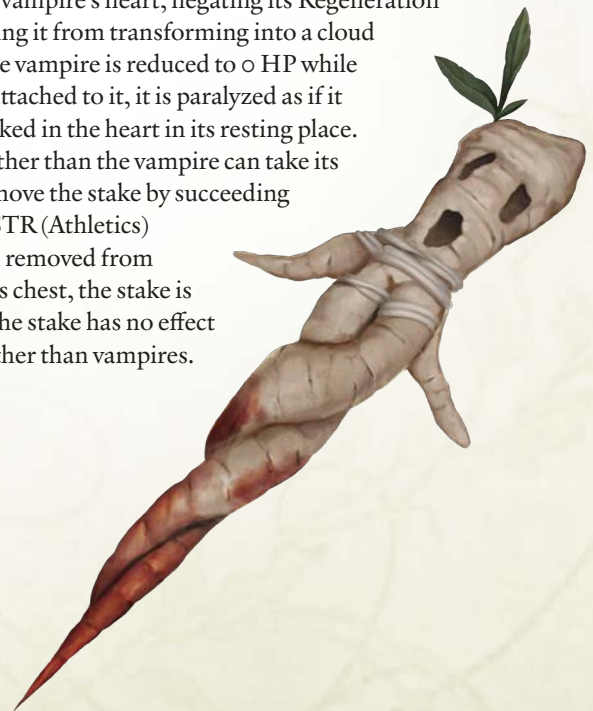
While wearing this ivy, filigreed crown, you can cast the *divination* ritual from it. The crown can't be used this way again until the next dawn.

Living Stake

Wondrous Item, Rare

4,000 gp

Fashioned from mandrake root, this stake longs to taste the heart's blood of vampires. Make a melee attack against a vampire in range, treating the stake as an improvised weapon. On a hit, the stake attaches to the vampire's chest. At the end of the vampire's next turn, roots force their way into the vampire's heart, negating its Regeneration and preventing it from transforming into a cloud of mist. If the vampire is reduced to 0 HP while the stake is attached to it, it is paralyzed as if it had been staked in the heart in its resting place. A creature other than the vampire can take its action to remove the stake by succeeding on a DC 17 STR (Athletics) check. If it is removed from the vampire's chest, the stake is destroyed. The stake has no effect on targets other than vampires.



Margreve Fur

Wondrous Item, Uncommon
(Requires Attunement)

2,000 gp

This cloak imparts on you the heightened senses and awareness of Beasts, and it can be used to camouflage yourself in grass and trees. While wearing this cloak, you have advantage on WIS (Perception) checks that rely on smell, and you have advantage on initiative rolls.

You can use an action while in terrain with ample plant life, such as a grassland, forest, or fungal forest, to become invisible for 1 minute. The effect ends early if you attack or cast a spell. Once you have used the cloak to become invisible, you can't do so again until the next dawn.



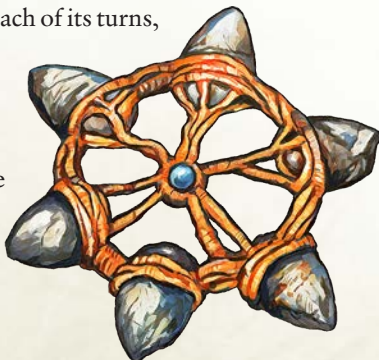
Moon Through the Trees

Wondrous Item, Rare
(Requires Attunement)

16,000 gp

This charm is comprised of six polished river stones bound into the shape of a star with glue made from the connective tissues of animals. The reflective surfaces of the stones shimmer with a magical iridescence.

While you are within 20 feet of a living tree, you can use a bonus action to become invisible for 1 minute. While invisible, you can use a bonus action to become visible. If you do, each creature of your choice within 30 feet of you must succeed on a DC 15 CON save or be blinded for 1 minute. A blinded creature can repeat this save at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's save is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to this charm's blinding feature for the next 24 hours.



Ogre's Pot

Wondrous Item, Rare
(Requires Attunement)

6,000 gp

- This cauldron boils anything placed inside it, whether venison or timber, to a vaguely edible paste. A spoonful of the paste provides enough nourishment to sustain a creature for one day.

As a bonus action, you can speak the pot's command word and force it to roll directly to you at a speed of 40 feet per round as long as you and the pot are on the same plane of existence. It follows the shortest possible path, stopping when it moves to within 5 feet of you, and it bowls over or knocks down any objects or creatures in its path. A creature in its path must succeed on a DC 13 DEX save or take 2d6 bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone. When this magic pot comes into contact with an object or structure, it deals 4d6 bludgeoning damage. If the damage doesn't destroy or create a path through the object or structure, the pot continues to deal damage at the end of each round, carving a path through the obstacle.

Quilted Bridge

Wondrous Item, Common

50 gp

A practiced hand sewed together a collection of cloth remnants from magical garb to make this colorful and warm blanket. You can use an action to unfold it and pour out three drops of wine in tribute to its maker. If you do so, the blanket becomes a 5-foot wide, 10-foot-long bridge as sturdy as steel. You can fold the bridge back up as an action.

Rowan Staff

Staff, Rare
(Requires Attunement by a Cleric, Druid, Sorcerer, Warlock, or Wizard)

16,000 gp

Favored by those with ties to nature and death, this staff can be wielded as a magic quarterstaff that grants a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with it. While holding it, you have advantage on saves against spells.

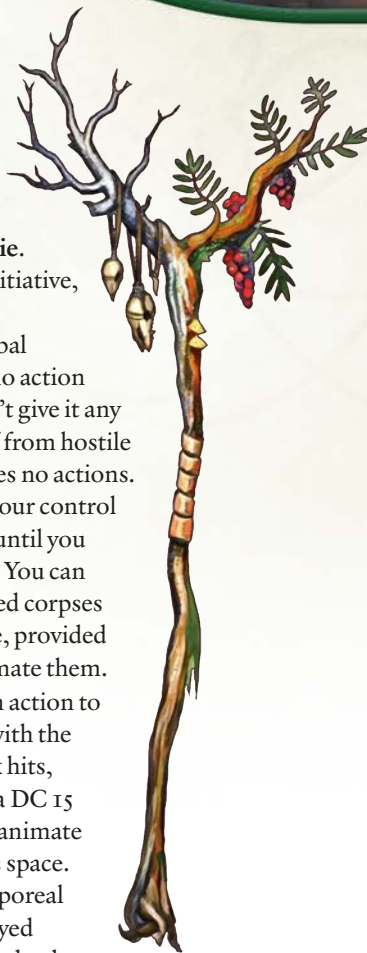
The staff has 10 charges for the following properties. It regains 1d4 + 1 expended charges daily at midnight, though it regains all its charges if it is bathed in moonlight at midnight. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the staff loses its properties and becomes a nonmagical quarterstaff.

Animate Corpse. While holding this staff, you can use an action to expend 1 or more of its charges to animate the corpse of a Large or smaller Humanoid or Beast you can see within 30 feet of you. The corpse becomes an Undead, and it uses the statistics of a **skeleton** or **zombie** or of the base creature with the skeleton or zombie template (see *Game Master's Guide*) applied to it. Animating the

corpse expends 1 charge for each CR of the creature (minimum of 1 charge), or it expends only 1 charge if you animate only a standard **skeleton** or **zombie**.

The creature acts on your initiative, taking its turn immediately after yours. It obeys any verbal commands you issue to it (no action required by you). If you don't give it any commands, it defends itself from hostile creatures but otherwise takes no actions. The corpse remains under your control for 1 hour, until you die, or until you dismiss it as a bonus action. You can have any number of animated corpses under your control at a time, provided you have the charges to animate them.

Deanimate. You can use an action to strike an Undead creature with the staff in combat. If the attack hits, the target must succeed on a DC 15 CON save or revert to an inanimate pile of bones or corpse in its space. If the Undead has the Incorporeal Movement trait, it is destroyed instead. Deanimating an Undead creature expends a number of charges equal to twice the challenge rating of the creature (minimum of 1 charge). If the staff doesn't have enough charges to deanimate the target, the staff doesn't deanimate the target.



Scrimshaw Comb

Wondrous Item, Uncommon
(Requires Attunement)

3,000 gp

Aside from being carved from bone, this comb is a beautiful example of functional art. It has 3 charges. As an action, you can expend a charge to cast *invisibility*. Unlike the standard version of this spell, you are invisible only to Undead creatures. However, you can attack creatures who aren't Undead (and thus unaffected by the spell) without ending the effect. Casting a spell breaks the effect as normal. The comb regains 1d3 expended charges daily at dawn.



Sickle of Thorns

Weapon (Sickle), Uncommon (Requires Attunement) 1,501 gp

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this weapon. As an action, you can swing the sickle to cut nonmagical vegetation up to 60 feet away from you. Each cut is a separate action with one action equaling one swing of your arm. Thus, you can lead a party through a jungle or briar thicket at a normal pace, simply swinging the sickle back and forth ahead of you to clear the path. It can't be used to cut trunks of saplings larger than 1 inch in diameter. It also can't cut through unliving wood (such as a door or wall). When you hit a plant creature with a melee attack with this weapon, that target takes an extra 1d6 slashing damage.

This weapon can make very precise cuts, such as to cut fruit or flowers high up in a tree without damaging the tree.



Sand Arrow

Weapon (Arrow), Uncommon 100 gp

The shaft of this arrow is made of tightly packed white sand that shatters into a blast of grit when it strikes a target. On a hit, the sand catches in the fittings and joints of metal armor, and the target's speed is reduced by 10 feet until it cleans or removes the armor. In addition, the target must succeed on a DC 11 CON save or be blinded until the end of its next turn.

Scorn Pouch

Wondrous Item, Rare
(Requires Attunement) 4,000 gp

As the heart of a lover scorned turns black and potent, so too does this pouch when enemies approach. While wearing or carrying this small, leather pouch, you can't be surprised by a creature within 30 feet of you, as the pouch darkens from brown to black and turns cold to the touch when a creature hostile to you moves to a space within 30 feet of you.



Soul Jug

Wondrous Item, Very Rare 45,000 gp

If you unstopper the jug, your soul enters it. This works like the *magic jar* spell, except it has a duration of 9 hours and the jug acts as the gem. The jug must remain unstopped for you to move your soul to a nearby body, back to the jug, or back to your own body. Possessing a target is an action, and your target can foil the attempt by succeeding on a DC 17 CHA save. Only one soul can be in the jug at a time. If a soul is in the jug when the duration ends, the jug shatters.

Treebleed Bucket

Wondrous Item, Uncommon 250 gp

This combination sap bucket and tap is used to extract sap from certain trees. After 1 hour, the bucketful of sap magically changes into a potion. The potion remains viable for 24 hours, and its type depends on the tree as follows: oak (*potion of poison resistance*), rowan (*potion of healing*), willow (*potion of animal friendship*), and holly (*potion of climbing*).

The *treebleed bucket* can magically change sap 20 times, then the bucket and tap become nonmagical.



Ward Against Wild Appetites

Wondrous Item, Uncommon 1,500 gp
(Requires Attunement by a Druid or Ranger)

Seventeen animal teeth of various sizes hang together on a simple leather thong, and each tooth is dyed a different color using pigments from plants native to old-growth forests. When a Beast or Monstrosity with an INT of 4 or lower targets you with an attack, it has disadvantage on the attack roll if the attack is a bite. You must be wearing the necklace to gain this benefit.



Worg Salve

Wondrous Item, Uncommon 400 gp

Brewed by hags and lycanthropes, this oil grants you lupine features. Each pot contains enough for three applications. One application grants one of the following benefits (your choice): darkvision out to a range of 60 feet, advantage on WIS (Perception) checks that rely on smell, a walking speed of 50 feet, or a new attack option (use the statistics of a wolf's bite attack) for 5 minutes.

If you use all three applications at one time, you can cast *polymorph* on yourself, transforming into a wolf. While you are in the form of a wolf, you retain your INT, WIS, and CHA scores. In addition, you don't need to maintain concentration on the spell, and the transformation lasts for 1 hour, until you use a bonus action to revert to your normal form, or until you drop to 0 HP or die.



Adventures in the Old Margreve

This chapter features eleven adventures from levels 1 to 10, guidance on tying those adventures together, and the impacts completing these adventures might have on the PCs' Status (see **Running the Old Margreve** in Chapter 1).

USING THESE ADVENTURES

To run each of these adventures, you need the **Tales of the Valiant**® *Player's Guide* and *Monster Vault*. Though these stories take place in the Margreve Forest of the Midgard campaign setting, they can easily be placed in any ancient, semi-sentient forest on any world—or the whole Margreve Forest itself can be placed on a different world. These adventures are designed to help you build a story with your players—wherever that story is—with a variety of helpful cues.

Text like this is meant to be read aloud to the players.

The full statistics for creatures whose names appear in **bold** can be found in the *Monster Vault* or in the **Appendix** at the back of this book. Similarly, magic item and spell names which appear in *italics* can be found in the *Player's Guide* or in the **Spells** and **Magic Items** sections of Chapter 2.

ADVENTURE SUMMARIES

The adventures in this chapter take characters across the Margreve Forest and can be connected in a larger story arc called Daesanderena's Mission. This section gives the background of that story arc, provides the summary and expected PC level of each adventure, and gives guidance on how each adventure can be connected via the Daesanderena's Mission story arc.

DAESANDERENA'S MISSION

Two centuries ago, a creature known as the Weft of Shadows broke into a fey noble's extraplanar vault in the Summer Lands and shunted several powerful magic items from the vault into the Material Plane, where they fell into the Margreve Forest. Thanks to an unusual set of rules involved in the creation of the items, once mortal hands have touched the artifacts, the bright fey can't reclaim the items themselves. The Weft of Shadows planned to make shadow versions of the relics to further its schemes, but these odd rules also prevented it from making shadow versions without them first touching mortal hands. So, the Weft waits with immortal patience for signs of the released relics wreaking havoc in mortal hands, crafting shadow versions as each relic shows itself.

The bright fey Daesanderena researched the missing artifacts and has recently come to realize the danger in the little she has discovered of the Weft of Shadows' schemes. Armed with a spell that can detect the items, she seeks heroes to help her reclaim or destroy the items and stop the Weft's plans. The strange magic protecting the items doesn't prevent their destruction, and it allows the bright fey to reclaim the items if freely given by mortal hands. For the full details on the Weft's plans and its history, see *Shadow's Envy* later in this chapter.

Shimmer of the Margreve. If your campaign focuses on the enigmatic power of the Old Margreve, consider making Daesanderena an envoy or even a manifestation of the Old

DAESANDERENA (SHE/HER, BRIGHT FEY MAGE)

Dark hair tied in a ponytail. Dressed for travel. Motes of light shimmering off her body and clothes. Careworn expression. Scar that seeps shadow.

Found initially in the *Wrath of the Bramble King* adventure and lastly in the *Shadow's Envy* adventure. If using the Daesanderena's Mission story arc, the PCs can meet her in each adventure in this anthology.

Background: An ambassador from the Summer Lands, Daesanderena (also known as Dae) identified the threat posed by the Weft of Shadows. After failing to secure help from other Summer Lands bright fey and after losing a brief encounter with the Weft that left her scarred with shadow, she sought adventurers on Midgard to help her thwart the Weft's plans.

Personality Traits: Driven to destroy the Weft of Shadows. Worried about sending others to fight her battles.

Bonds: The Summer Lands. The Margreve Forest.

Flaws: Uncaring about collateral damage in her quest to stop the Weft of Shadows from destroying the Summer Lands. Disdainful of her colleagues, who have dismissed her concerns about the Weft's plans as trivial and not a real threat.

Wants: Initially, pieces of or the destruction of the artifacts scattered by the Weft to thwart its schemes. Ultimately, the Weft's destruction.

Talking to Daesanderena: Dae shares the following information with curious PCs:

- Her research has revealed to her who the Weft of Shadows was before it became the Weft (see **Adventure Background** in the *Shadow's Envy* adventure).
- She can detail the general powers of the artifacts she sets adventurers out to find and the last known location



of each, though this information is old and doesn't include recent events. See the **Daesanderena's Mission** subheading in each adventure summary in this section for more information about the artifacts and how each has affected recent events in the adventures in this anthology.



Margreve. Her mission remains the same, as the items and the Weft's machinations are dangerous to the forest and its denizens. In such a scenario, the Weft's Blot straddles the boundary between the Summer Lands and the Margreve Forest, endangering both. The fatal flaw in the Weft's plans just might be that it forgot to factor in the power of the silent, subtle Old Margreve...

HOLLOW

A 1st-level adventure set on the edges of the Margreve Forest in the village of Levoča, which finds itself plagued by a sudden madness in its animals and the murderous visits of a wooden construct called the Hollow Man. The PCs must uncover the truth behind the Singing Tree and its wooden allies before every villager succumbs to the Hollow Man's scythe.

Daesanderena's Mission. The Huntsman's Axe was a powerful, wood-cutting and plant-killing magic item from the vault opened by the Weft of Shadows. It fell on the edge of the Margreve Forest, and the forest subsequently worked to hide it from mortal eyes. Recently, a lone woodsman stumbled upon the axe not far from Levoča and, spellbound by the magic of the axe, proceeded to chop down nearby trees. One such tree was the magically sealed Singing Tree. The magic enchanting the axe collided with the spell the ancient witches placed on the tree, shattering both. The axe, now nonmagical, crumbled in the woodman's hands, and the Singing Tree claimed its first victim, finding its voice again for the first time in centuries. That voice eventually awoke the Hollow Man, who seeks to bring the tree more voices. Daesanderena arrives sometime after the PCs defeat the Singing Tree, following faint traces of the axe's magic. Finding it destroyed, she seeks out those responsible, eventually leading her to the PCs, who she believes can help her find or destroy the remaining items from the vault.

WRATH OF THE BRAMBLE KING

A 2nd-level adventure set in the Central Margreve, where the village of Cambervale is plagued by creatures made of vines and brambles controlled by a plant king. Speaking with the king reveals that his crown was recently stolen. The PCs must track the thieves to an abandoned and overgrown tower, and in the process, they discover a greater plot hiding in the shadows of the Margreve Forest.

Daesanderena's Mission. The Bramble King's Bramble Crown is one of the artifacts Daesanderena seeks. The first of the artifacts to fall into mortal hands, the Crown was claimed two centuries ago by a gentle soul who seeks only to protect the forest. The Bramble King's peaceful nature kept him hidden from the Weft of Shadows until recently. Daesanderena first reveals herself to the PCs in this adventure and tells them of her mission.

THE HONEY QUEEN

A 2nd-level adventure that sends the PCs into the Margreve Forest in search of magical honey for a supplier's unknown client. Along the way, they discover the bees who make the magical honey have a girl in a decades-long magical slumber deep within their hive. It is up to the PCs to carefully negotiate a fair price for the honey and for the return of the girl from the bee queen who has supplied her magical honey to fey and mortals alike throughout the Margreve Forest for centuries.

Daesanderena's Mission. The sleeping girl, Lyla, wears the Beespeaker Amulet, which she found in the forest fifty years ago. Its power allowed her to commune with and befriend bees, but it was slowly transforming her. The Honey Queen that was in power at that time saw what was happening, took in the girl, and used magic honey to put her into an eternal slumber to halt the corrupting magic of the amulet. Each generation of Honey Queen since has devoted some time and research to freeing the girl from the amulet's power without success. Daesanderena is unaware of the full situation regarding Lyla and the Honey Queen, but she knows the amulet causes a horrific transformation on the wearer. She has a vial of honey from the hive where the amulet was created. If the PCs pour the vial on the amulet, the amulet becomes encased in amber, freeing the girl from its magic and protecting any other mortals from the amulet's power. The PCs can then safely return the amulet to Daesanderena.



WEFT OF SHADOWS TRILOGY

Daesanderena and her mission were first detailed in a short adventure trilogy published as part of the *Warlock Lair* series: *Wrath of the Bramble King*, *Pride of the Mushroom Queen*, and *Shadow's Envy*. Those three adventures appear in this adventure anthology with some changes, and they are automatically connected via Daesanderena's Mission.

If you want to play any of these three adventures without the connected Daesanderena's Mission story arc, simply remove Daesanderena as an NPC in all but *Shadow's Envy* and remove all references to the Weft of Shadows and its shadow allies from all but *Shadow's Envy*. These removals might remove one or two encounters in the adventures but should not otherwise impact the stories in those adventures.

THE VENGEFUL HEART

A 3rd-level adventure where the PCs find themselves hired by a group of children orphaned by the machinations of charismatic cultists. The PCs must navigate negotiations with the cultists and with shadow fey to prevent more innocents from dying, which involves finding an elusive herb the cultists seek.

Daesanderena's Mission. Chairo unknowingly wears the Faceless Sash, a plain-looking magic item from the vault opened by the Weft of Shadows. A cursed item, the sash gives its wearer the power to transform into a variety of people, but each wearer is eventually absorbed by the sash, losing their lives and becoming another face in the sash's repertoire. Chairo found the sash while exploring in the forest a few weeks ago. Her connection to the forest protects her from the sash's magic, but its power seeks a victim and now subtly reaches for Chairo's younger sister, Rhosyn. Rhosyn has started asking to wear the sash, and Chairo, occupied with their current predicament, is close to acquiescing, unaware such an action would condemn her sister. Daesanderena warns the PCs of the sash's power and encourages them to retrieve it from its latest victim. She gives them an enchanted length of string to tie up the sash, ending the sash's influence on the wearer and making it safe for delivering to the bright fey.

CHALLENGE OF THE FANG

A 4th-level adventure in which the PCs get caught up in an ancient ritual between villagers and wolves of the Margreve Forest. Serendipitously coming into possession of a ceremonial axe, the PCs must take on the role of civilization in the ritual and slay the leader of the wolves before he consumes the red-cloaked child.

Daesanderena's Mission. Bone of the Giant King is the fingerbone of an ancient hill giant from a world long-since lost to time. Through his machinations and military might, the giant king commanded an army that almost eradicated the elves of that world. He was eventually defeated, and his fingerbone, enchanted by fragments of his spirit, was all that remained. Ejected from the vault opened by the Weft of Shadows, the fingerbone rested in the depths of the Margreve Forest for nearly two centuries. A few years ago, a starving wolf found the bone deep in the Margreve Forest and consumed it. The bone slowly transformed the wolf, imbuing it with malign intelligence, causing it to grow, and making it capable of swallowing almost anything whole. The wolf was also infused with some of that hill giant's spirit and ambition, and he has been building an army of wolves to eventually rule the Margreve Forest. The Challenge of the Fang ritual, which will earn him the Old Margreve's blessing, is merely the next step in his plan. Killing the wolf with the *Wolf Killer* axe destroys the Bone

of the Giant King in his belly, as the magic of the ancient ceremony unweaves the bone's magic and frees the last of the giant king's spirit.

THE GRIFFON HATCHLING HEIST

A 5th-level adventure set in an abandoned griffon tower in Western Margreve. The PCs meet an unusual cat, who beseeches them to rescue her griffon eggs, which are being held hostage in the tower by a band of brigands. The PCs must infiltrate the tower, rescue the eggs, and escape from the tower without any of the slowly hatching brood imprinting on one of them.

Daesanderena's Mission. Zyzha'shacha, the leader of a group of ogres and goblinoids, found an odd-looking branch jutting awkwardly from a tree a year ago. She freed the "branch" and discovered it was the Wand of Bestial Transformation. After weeks of playing with the wand's magic, transforming wolves and bears into squirrels and birds, Zyzha'shacha developed a lump on her shoulder. This lump eventually transformed into a second head that convinced her she was destined for greater things. She made connections with human merchants from Zobeck and turned her ragtag band into a full-blown mercenary company based in the Margreve Forest, assaulting or protecting merchant caravans, procuring dangerous ingredients from the forest, and performing other odd and dangerous jobs. Her latest task is to gather griffon eggs for an Undercity contact who wants to auction them off to the highest bidder in the Cartways Black Market. When her band was unable to take down the powerful griffon matriarch, Lesharrkk, she took a gamble and used the magic of the wand to transform the griffon into a cat. This great expenditure of magic strained the wand, which now lies dormant in a pouch on Zyzha'shacha's belt. Unbothered by the wand's silence, Zyzha'shacha continues her current mission, protecting the eggs until her contact at the Black Market arrives to take them. Dormant, the wand poses no threat to the PCs, who can safely give it to Daesanderena for destruction.

PRIDE OF THE MUSHROOM QUEEN

A 6th-level adventure set in the northwestern reaches of the Margreve Forest where a small community of elves is being devastated by a mysterious fungal infection. The PCs discover the source of the infection is a large garden of fungi dominated by a massive mushroom grown in the shape of a fortress. They must enter the Fungal Citadel and stop the Mushroom Queen before she covers the forest in fungi, transforming all its inhabitants into shambling fungal servitors.



Daesanderena's Mission. After a disagreement with her people over the beauty and wonder of fungi, Elela Argaria Sheoloss found the Enoki Scepter, unknowingly led to it by the Weft of Shadows' machinations. After using the scepter's magic to transform her former colleagues into shambling fungal creatures, she steadily grew more confident with the scepter, devastating other small communities, which fell to virulent fungal infections inflicted by the scepter. After a few short years, she grew bored with the shambling fungal creatures she created, and she decided she needed a place to study the scepter to further unlock its magic. Unknowingly led to a clearing in the forest with a thinning border to the Plane of Shadow, she used the scepter to create a modest garden of fungi. Seeing success, she nearly depleted the scepter's power to create her grand Fungal Citadel in the center of the garden, which stands as a blight in the forest and a beacon to her "converts."

GALL OF THE SPIDER CRONE

A 6th-level adventure in which the PCs discover a hag has become infected with a strange, magical illness. The hag beseeches them to save her by retrieving a magic item in her sister's hut. Unfortunately, the hag's life is quickly fading, and her sister isn't home. The PCs must take control of the sister's spider-like hut, ride it to the dying hag, and save her by capturing her spirit in a magic jug and defeating the creature that erupts from the infection in her dying body.

Daesanderena's Mission. A magic mirror whose original identity has been lost to time was shattered long ago, and a shard of that mirror, simply called The Shard, fell into the Margreve Forest when the Weft of Shadows broke into the vault. The Shard embedded itself into a willow tree, creating a gall. When Jędza melded with the tree, The Shard transferred into her body, causing a gall to grow on her. After Jędza's soul is transferred to the jug and her body erupts into a wickerbeast, the Shard serves as the mirror in its belly. Killing the wickerbeast destroys The Shard.

BLOOD AND THORNS

A 7th-level adventure that starts with a disrupted wedding in the Central Margreve. The PCs hear that the source of the disruption is a King of Thorns, who is hidden by an ancient Margreve ritual. They must negotiate help from a Spider Crone and use her gift to bypass the ritual. Then the PCs must sneak into the king's palace, discover the source of his power, and put an end to his schemes.

Daesanderena's Mission. Some months ago, Catchweed, a child of the briar fed up with the lowly status his people received among the shadow fey, set off deep into the Margreve Forest in search of something better. He stumbled upon the Cap of Bloodthirsty Thorns and felt compelled to don the decayed and dying item. As the

thorns burrowed into his head and drank his sap-like blood, he was slowly transformed into a larger and more humanoid form—and he now craved blood. Drinking blood grew his power, restored vibrancy to the cap, and furthered his transformation. Convinced this was the power he needed to bring his people out of the shadows, he gathered a collection of plant creatures and captured a vampire from the Blood Kingdoms. He now uses the blood of the vampire and the spawn he forced it to create, enhanced with the magic of the cap, to imbue plant creatures with vampiric powers, building an army to one day bring all non-plant inhabitants of the Margreve Forest to heel. The Weft of Shadows has sent shadows to aid Catchweed and ensure his plan succeeds—at least until the cap is fully recharged and able to be copied. Killing Catchweed destroys the cap.

GRANDMOTHER'S FIRE

An 8th-level adventure where the PCs find that all fire has ceased to exist in the Margreve Forest. They discover Baba Yaga might know why fire has left the forest and must carefully enter her domain to speak with her. Learning that a thief stole the fire from Baba Yaga's hearth, the PCs must track down the thief, uncover why the theft occurred, and recover Baba Yaga's fire from the fey who stole it from the thief.

Daesanderena's Mission. Originally created for controlled burns of the wild, rampant growth found in the Plane of the Fey, the Ring of Forest's Fire has the potential to set a blaze capable of destroying every forest and grassland of Midgard within weeks. Baba Yaga found the ring when it fell into the Margreve Forest long ago and has since kept it sealed in a glass box in her hut. Though the idea of holding onto the ring as leverage against the Old Margreve appeals to Baba Yaga, the inherent danger in the ring's existence on the Material Plane just barely outweighs that appeal. She is willing to give the PCs to ring for Daesanderena if they retrieve her lost skull and hearth embers.

SHADOW'S ENVY

A 10th-level adventure that sends the PCs to the Summer Lands, where the enigmatic Weft of Shadows created and encourages the growth of a pocket of shadow called The Blot, using the power of lost fey artifacts. The PCs must delve into the pocket plane, battle the Weft of Shadows' allies, and confront the Weft of Shadows itself to put an end to The Blot before it overtakes the Summer Lands.

Daesanderena's Mission. Daesanderena's mission is to put a stop to the Weft of Shadows and its schemes permanently, saving her people and her world. This adventure is the ultimate showdown and the end of her mission.



HOLLOW

An adventure by Richard Pett for four to five 1st-level characters.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Her voice is hoarse now, for the lone head she sings with is frail. Soon, she knows, she'll become as silent as the other trees of the forest unless she can find new heads to sing through and learn to walk again as in ages past.

The Singing Tree is an ancient, sentient tree whose voice was once heard across the entire forest, but centuries ago, a coven of witches cast her into a deep sleep from which she thought she would never awaken. Now, however, something stirs again in the deep of the forest, its call dredging up many creatures from beneath fallen leaves, awakening many things that should not be awake.

The animals were the first to answer the Singing Tree, but they could not help her, and her singing and weeping drove them to madness. It was not long before one came to her who could help—the Hollow Man. Now at last she has hands to chop with and legs to do her fetching and carrying. She told her new servant to gather a head each night for twelve nights, and once thirteen heads adorn her thorny boughs, she will become a treant with a dark soul once more.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

This adventure takes place in and around Levoča—a village plagued by a wooden Construct called the Hollow Man, made of trees and spit and babies' tears. It collects heads for its mistress, the Singing Tree, a magical tree that awakens the minds and the anger of animals.

The adventure begins when the PCs enter Levoča, where things are amiss: a bull has killed its owner, a young girl has disappeared, and on the very night of the PCs' arrival, a pack of wolves menaces the village.

Soon the culprit—the Hollow Man—is found as it begins knocking on doors at midnight with its scythe, eager to collect heads for the Singing Tree. The Hollow Man effectively besieges Levoča, and the locals resolve to kill it.

Even if the Hollow Man and its wards are dealt with, the animals remain angry because the vile Singing Tree continues to call in the dark. The PCs must locate the tree and destroy it, facing a dense forest alive with angry creatures before a final confrontation with the Singing Tree herself.

STARTING THE ADVENTURE

The PCs need only to arrive at Levoča for the events of this adventure to occur. Perhaps Levoča is simply a stop on their journey, or their first steps in exploring the Margreve. The adventure begins as the PCs approach the village late one afternoon, just as the sun begins to drop behind the pines.

A WORD OF WARNING

The Hollow Man, a Construct made of twisted wood, is a challenge rating 2 creature that would, under normal circumstances, easily wipe out a party of 1st-level adventurers, even with the help of the villagers. The intent of this adventure is to create a seemingly unassailable foe, forcing the PCs and villagers to work together to overcome it using brains as well as brawn. Do not use the Hollow Man as an excuse to kill the party but, instead, as a precursor to other foes that lie within the forest. The Hollow Man is interested simply in harvesting heads for the Singing Tree and doesn't sully its weapon with unchosen blood.

Running an adventure such as this one can provide an interesting change of pace, making PCs think twice about boldly entering the Margreve Forest while assuming that they can deal with whatever lies within.

LEVOČA: A TROUBLED VILLAGE

The muddy byway winds its way through the forest and eventually reaches a damp clearing where the sun struggles to reach the ground through a canopy of forlorn trees. About thirty moldering, thatched cottages sit in this clearing. Local children chase pigs and sheep in play. The clearing around the dark village is watched by hundreds of scarecrows made from bones and branches wound together.

Levoča is a community of 75 humans that subsists on farming and hunting. Ostensibly, leadership is awarded by default to Brother Arkadi, who is a follower of Porevit and Yarila; in truth, however, the brother is little more than a weak-willed old man.

Houses are made of wattle and daub (AC 10; HP 10; resistant to piercing damage) and have thatched roofs built around a central stone chimney. Doors are simple, wooden doors held shut by a latch. Each one-room house has two to five windows with shutters.

Levoča is a troubled village; the normally sleepy village has been plagued by unexpected events recently.



RUNNING THE VILLAGE

Most of this adventure takes place within the village and over the course of days after the PCs arrive. The PCs might try to gain allies among the villagers to help them resolve the troubles, and they might encounter enraged wildlife over the days. This adventure doesn't detail events beyond Day 6, but such days should follow the pattern of the previous days.

ALLIES

Although the PCs can overcome events in and around the village themselves, things may be easier with help. A torch-wielding mob is more likely to be capable of driving the Hollow Man into a fiery grave, and any extra muscle is always useful for low-level PCs. The locals begin with a neutral attitude (see **Attitude** in *Game Master's Guide*) toward the PCs, and they are treated as a single entity for the sake of resolving any CHA checks. Each adult resident of Levoča uses the statistics of a **commoner** unless noted otherwise.

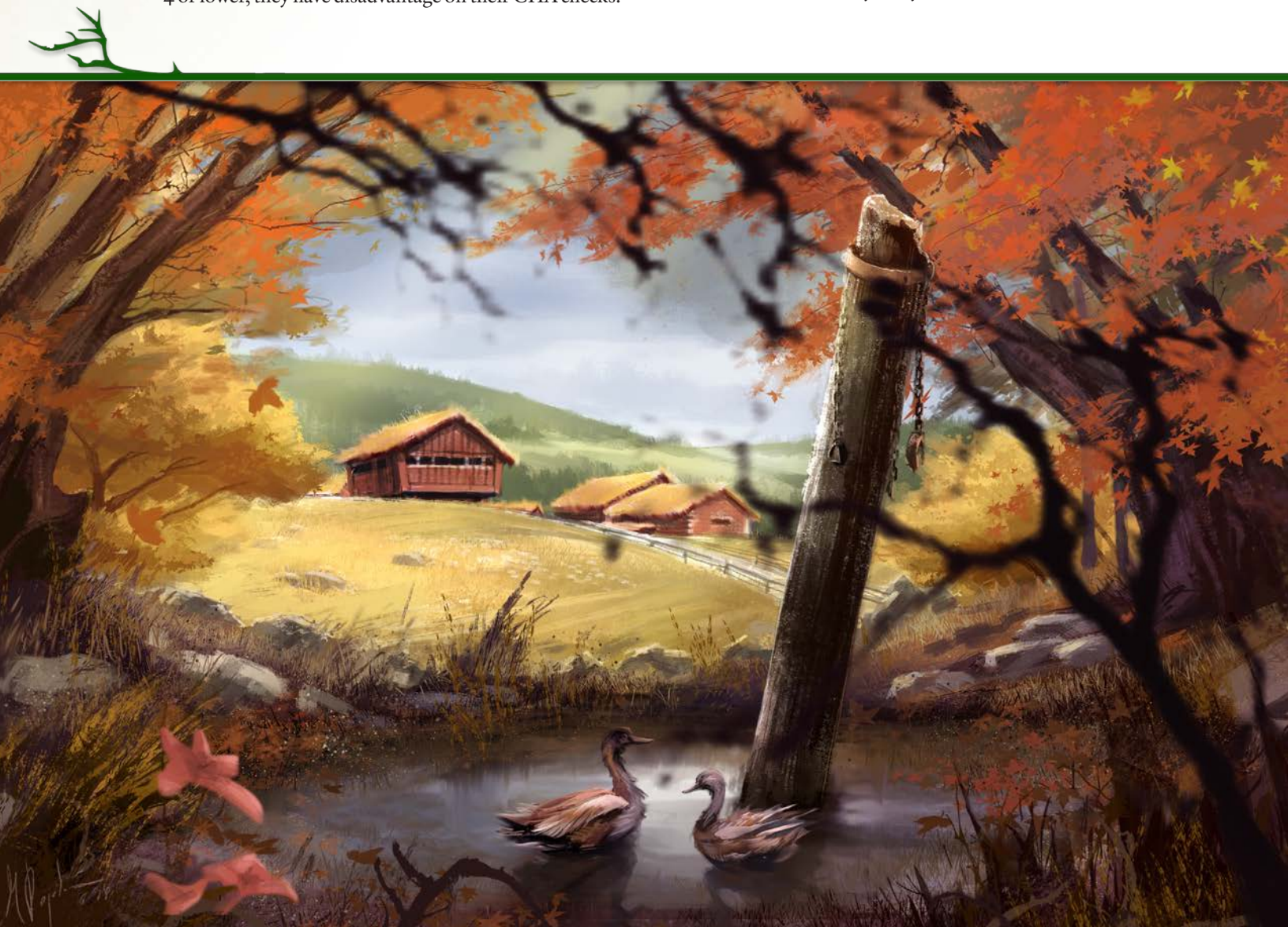
If the total of all the PCs' CHA modifiers is +4 or higher, they have advantage on their CHA checks to get the aid of the villagers. If the total of all the PCs' CHA modifiers is -4 or lower, they have disadvantage on their CHA checks.

A total of three citizens are willing to help the PCs at the start of the adventure; this number rises to six if the locals' attitude improves to friendly. If the locals' attitude becomes hostile at any time, the PCs receive no help.

As the adventure progresses, the following events add a bonus or penalty to any CHA check the PCs make to attempt to get the locals to help them:

- -4 for being caught digging up Yurt's body
- -1 for each villager killed (whether by the PCs' hands or not)
- +1 for each wolf killed by a PC
- +1 for helping to drive off the wolves
- +2 for rallying the locals into firing at the wolves, not shadows
- +2 for returning Karda's body and destroying the swarm
- +2 for telling Drash of the connection between the bull's madness and the forest

The PCs can probably count on the support of at least some of the locals, who gladly help in any reasonable way, but when things start to get scary, the locals might lose heart and run away. They will stick around if the PCs





succeed on a CHA check (DC 10 if the locals are friendly, DC 12 if neutral, and DC 15 if hostile). For each villager who was left unconscious or dying after any dangerous encounter, the DC increases by 1.

WILDLIFE

The sudden madness of animals, caused by the Singing Tree, is a backdrop to events in this adventure. Use animals to provide hints to the PCs that all is not well, and expand upon the listed events as you see fit. For example, the village is full of domestic animals, and though some have made their saves against the Singing Tree's effects, some have not—or they may fail at various points in the adventure. You can have some fun with unexpected nips from dogs and scratches from cats, but keep these things as occasional features; it could soon become tiresome to the players if every goat they pass butts them or every bird that flies past pecks them.

The PCs' mounts and pets (though not familiars) are also subject to the Singing Tree's song while in the village and its surrounding areas. Each such animal must make a DC 12 CHA save at midnight each day. At your discretion, a mount with a particularly strong bond with its PC can use the PC's CHA modifier instead of its own. On a failed save, the animal becomes enraged by the Singing Tree's song and attacks random targets nearby, including the PCs. If not stopped, the animal flees into the forest, returning on a later night if it succeeds on the save or if the Singing Tree is silenced, otherwise remaining wild. Assume that such mounts and pets come to no harm while they are wild.

AREA 1. THE OLD LIME KILN

The collapsed remains of an old lime kiln lie here.

Less than a decade ago, the locals planned to use limestone quarried nearby to make quicklime, which has various purposes. The kiln fell into disuse over a series of three bad summers and now sits here slowly collapsing.

The kiln is a 5-foot-wide shaft that is 20 feet deep; an exposed chimney top embedded in the hillside links to a funnel-shaped burning area 10 feet across at the base, which is loaded with fuel through an 18-inch-wide crawl hole.

The kiln can be repaired. Doing so requires two successful DC 10 DEX (Construction Tools) checks. One attempt per person per day is allowed, and on a failed check, the day's work is lost. Another day's work is required to fill the kiln with fuel and fire it for 8 hours.

A creature that starts its turn in the burning kiln takes 3d6 fire damage and begins to suffocate. The only escape is through the crawl hole. Escaping the kiln through the crawl hole is effortless when it isn't filled with fuel or lit. When it is filled with fuel or lit, a creature inside the kiln must succeed on a DC 10 STR (Athletics) or DEX (Acrobatics) check to crawl out.

AREA 2. THE WITCH PIT

A pair of mangy-looking ducks calls this perfectly circular pond home. A timber stake mysteriously rises from its center, and three rusted manacles dangle from the top of the stake.

The Witch Pit, left over from ancient times, was once used to burn witches. It hasn't been used for many years and has slowly filled with water and muck. A PC that succeeds on a DC 12 WIS (Perception) check notices that the ironwood stake shows signs of severe scorching.

If the water is removed, an act that takes five workers at least three days, the 15-foot-deep, 10-foot-wide pit is revealed in all its glory, complete with more rusting manacles and vague stone markings on its smooth walls.

Another day's work would place enough fuel in the pit to let it burn for 8 hours. A creature that starts its turn in the burning pit takes 3d6 fire damage and begins to suffocate. Escaping from the pit requires a successful DC 12 STR (Athletics) check.

AREA 3. THE WOOD WARDS

The edges of the village are thick with strange figures staring outward, scarecrows of sack and stick. Each has been carefully fashioned to appear angry and wakeful.

There are nearly one hundred wooden figures of stick and moss on the edge of the village. Traditionally, one is placed each year just as winter arrives to keep away evil spirits. They are significant to the locals, who would look upon their destruction—even in light of the Hollow Man animating them—as sacrilege. When the Hollow Man animates one of these figures, it uses the statistics of a **wood ward** (see the **Appendix**).

AREA 4. THE CHAPEL TO YARILA AND POREVIT, THE GREEN GODS

A fresh grave stands in the lonely graveyard beside this small, simple chapel, whose roof is sagging dangerously.

This chapel with a cornucopian altar is used by Brother Arkadi to conduct religious ceremonies. The fresh grave is that of Olay Yurt (see **Area 7**).

Brother Arkadi, the senile clergyman (human **acolyte**), is very old. His sight is almost gone, and his hearing is practically nonexistent. He stays in Levoča to give the occasional service, to marry and bury people, and to bless festivals. That Arkadi is the elder of the village is not in doubt; he has become so senile, however, that in effect Levoča has no leader.

AREA 5. ANNA'S PLACE

This large farmstead has an attached barn, complete with an iron weather vane.

Anna's place is roomy, and the widow allows travelers to stay in her barn for a very modest fee—providing they behave. Anna might even cook for travelers if they can change her neutral attitude to friendly, although this mother of three has a difficult time making her food stretch far.

The barn is 20 feet square with a large, simple door that can be broken open with a successful DC 10 STR check. The hayloft is 10 feet above the floor and filled with hay in autumn, a supply that depletes to nothing by the following spring.

AREA 6. KARL'S PLACE

This small farmstead has a huge amount of timber drying in an open outhouse, next to which is a large, sturdy storage shed.

Karl, dour and age-weary, fires charcoal once a fortnight by building a large timber mound; the wood is covered with soil and turf before firing. This process takes Karl about two days, and the resulting charcoal is then sold.

Karl has enough charcoal and timber to fill both the lime kiln and the Witch Pit once (or one of them twice), but he doesn't give it up readily unless he becomes friendly with the PCs or someone offers him the right price (around 25 gp).

AREA 7. OLAY YURT'S HOUSE

This small croft has a pair of walled fields at the rear.

Yurt was killed three days ago by his bull. Yurt's son, who lives on the other side of the village, spends the first few days of this adventure removing his father's belongings and trying to decide what to do about the bull.

AREAS 8–11. FARMSTEADS

Each of these four locations is a standard farmstead with a small shed or barn and a fenced-off area for some livestock, which primarily consists of pigs, cows, and chickens. Unless prevented from doing so, the Hollow Man visits each of these locations in the following order to claim another head for the Singing Tree:

- Kostya's Farmstead (Area 8), Day 2.
- Bača's Farm (Area 9), Day 3.
- Koreň's Croft (Area 10), Day 4.
- Chrobák's Place (Area 11), Day 5.

BEFORE TODAY

Unbeknownst to the locals, the Singing Tree's cries have already begun their unsettling effect on local animals in the events described here, both of which started to unfold before the PCs arrived.

THE ANGRY BULL

Olay Yurt was a farmer in his late forties. He had achieved something of a reputation as the village comedian and always had a tall tale to tell or a yarn to spin. Yurt lived alone in his house (see **Area 7**) since the death of his wife during childbirth 22 years ago.

Yurt bred cows and calves to eat and sell, and his bull was his pride and joy. It had sired over forty calves and made Yurt a good living and a sizable belly.

All that changed three days ago. Yurt was tending his beloved bull, preparing for a new batch of cows he expected to buy soon, when the bull attacked him. It's unclear what happened exactly, but the entire village was alerted to Yurt's yelling. It took the villagers several minutes to rescue Yurt from being gored and stomped, so fierce was the bull, and by that time the animal had mangled the body beyond help.

The locals buried Yurt yesterday; his grave can be seen outside the chapel. Yurt's son, Drash, initially tried to kill the bull but was driven back. He is now busy emptying his father's house, intending to burn it when he is done. At that time, Drash intends to walk into the field where the bull is confined and slaughter it with a hunting spear. It takes Drash a total of three days to empty his father's house.

Drash is not inclined to talk, and any CHA checks the PCs make involving him suffer a –1 penalty. The locals unhappily relate what little they know, but any talk of digging up Yurt and casting *Speak with Dead* on the remains is looked upon with horror. With a successful CHA (Persuasion) check, the PCs learn that the bull has never attacked anyone before—indeed, occasionally brave lads rode its back.

Creature. The **bull** (see the **Appendix**) is in the field at the back of Yurt's house. The field is 50 feet square and edged with stone walls 5 feet high. If subjected to a *Speak with Animals* spell, the bull is decidedly aggressive, and the only information the PCs learn is that it keeps hearing a maddening singing noise coming from the forest. It recalls nothing of the attack. WIS (Animal Handling) checks involving the bull are made with disadvantage, and the bull has advantage on saves against the *Animal Friendship* spell. A successful DC 17 WIS (Perception) check while observing the bull notices that every few minutes the bull suddenly looks up and bellows toward the north (singing in response to the tree's song). A successful DC 10 INT (Nature) check recalls that it is not unusual for a bull to become aggressive during spring, but at other times, such behavior is unusual.

If Drash attempts to kill the bull, play out the combat. If the PCs point out that it might be something in the forest that has driven the bull mad, Drash agrees to wait until the PCs find out more information.



THE MISSING GIRL

Six-year-old Karda often goes into the forest in search of truffles with her beloved pig. Her parents have never minded, since she rarely came back empty-handed, and truffles fetch high prices. And Karda was a careful little girl who never went deeper than the edges of the forest.

Last evening she didn't return, and as the PCs arrive in town, her mother Jarka is in the woods searching for her while her father tends to their farm.

Karda strayed a little farther than usual into the forest this last time, following her pig as it went on the trail of truffles. The pig succumbed to the maddening noise of the Singing Tree and fled. Karda gave chase and stumbled as she ran beneath a tree where a beehive hangs. A **swarm of bees** (see the **Appendix**), also angered by the singing, stung the poor girl to death.

The PCs can follow Karda's tracks with a successful WIS (Survival) check. The DC begins at 10 and increases by 1 for each day that has passed since she ran away.

Creatures. Karda's body lies at the foot of a large beech tree. The PCs can easily see that she has been stung to death (no check required). PCs with a passive Perception score of 13 or higher notice the beehive, which hangs 15 feet up in the branches.

The swarms are fierce, and they attack anyone who comes within 20 feet of the tree. A swarm isn't easily deterred and attacks until reduced to 0 hit points, at which point it dissipates. The bees don't give chase beyond 30 feet from their tree.

A successful DC 10 INT (Nature) check realize that bees normally don't swarm and attack unless they are provoked.

If the PCs don't intervene, Jarka finds her daughter's body on day 3 and is also killed by the swarms.

DAY 1: THE WOLVES

Allow the PCs to explore the village, remembering that it is early evening when they arrive. As the evening wears on, wolf howls are heard near the village, and as midnight approaches, a pack of six **wolves** nears. The villagers light torches and arm themselves with shortbows, standing watch with the wooden figures on the edge of the village.

Use this encounter to show how disorganized and scared the villagers are: there are twenty-four in all, divided into two groups. The villagers are a greater danger to themselves than to the wolves, firing arrows hastily into the dark, dashing out into each other's line of fire, and accidentally setting fire to crofts. If necessary, have Anna (see **Area 5**) plead with the PCs to help the locals.

This incident gives you a chance to introduce the villagers as a mob using torches and driving opponents away (see **Destroying the Hollow Man** for more information). At some point in the evening, have a group of twelve locals rush a wolf, driving it back and demoralizing it until it flees.

The wolves are angered by the Singing Tree and behave with uncharacteristic aggression. They stalk 50 feet from the village. Every 1d6 rounds, two or three of them surge in to attack, withdrawing the round after. If three wolves are slain, the rest flee.

The villagers jump at their own shadows, fire shots at random noises, and dash around foolishly. They are armed with shortbows, and each round, several of them (1d4 + 1) fire into the woods at what they believe to be wolves. If a villager sees a wolf, by the wolf rushing in to attack or by the PCs pointing it out, the villager attacks it; otherwise, the villagers' arrows are wasted as they fearfully shoot at shadows. At your discretion, if a villager rolls a 1 on the attack roll, the failed attack might hit another villager or a PC. Locals that take any damage from the wolves flee indoors.

A successful DC 13 CHA (Persuasion) check calms the fearful villagers enough so that they fire arrows only when they see wolves.

DAY 2: THE HOLLOW MAN COMES KNOCKING

Guided by the Singing Tree, the **Hollow Man** (see the **Appendix**) comes knocking at midnight the day after the PCs arrive and for twelve nights hereafter. The Hollow Man enters the village from the forest, accompanied by a **wood ward** (see the **Appendix**), and proceeds directly to its victim's house. Tonight, it comes after Kostya (see **Area 8**). Unless the PCs intervene, the Hollow Man enters, pushes Kostya's wife aside, and lops off the old farmer's head in a single swing.

When the Hollow Man enters the village, read or paraphrase the following:

A crooked thing lurches into view—a creature made of moldering briar, bone white parched branches, and polypore-infested tree trunks. It grips a long, cruelly bent scythe in one hand, the weapon hung with the corpses of countless animals, some of which seem to still twitch. The creature has no eyes, but its formless head of aged wood turns back and forth as if searching for something. As it moves, a haunting moan drones from it.

The Hollow Man knocks three times on the door of its intended victim with its scythe before entering the building. Assume that once the Hollow Man enters a house, unless a PC intervenes (either physically preventing the Hollow Man from reaching its victim or using fire to force the Hollow Man to flee), it takes 3 rounds for the Hollow Man to sever the chosen head and gather it up. Once the Hollow Man collects a head, it moves back toward the Singing Tree as quickly as possible.

If attacked, the Hollow Man directs the wood ward with it to protect it, not wanting to sully *Harvester* (see sidebar) with impure blood. It directs the wood ward to either stand guard outside the door of its victim's home or directly intervene against any attackers in combat. The wood ward attacks until destroyed, and it remains animated as long as the Hollow Man is under attack or within the village. The Hollow Man can continue to animate more wood wards from around the village while it is within the village and does so if its current wood ward is destroyed.

If the Hollow Man finds its intended target's house empty, it uses the guidance of the Singing Tree's song to find the chosen victim, tirelessly pursuing the person. It returns to the Singing Tree empty-handed only if reduced to half its hit points or fewer.

A HOLLOW TALE

The Margreve Forest has been haunted by Hollow Men for centuries. Some, like the one encountered in this adventure, are animated servants of powerful entities within the forest, such as the Singing Tree, Spider Crones, or Baba Yaga's daughters. Others have been gouged from trees, and at least one was made by the Old Margreve itself out of a naughty child. In each case, the Hollow Man has a weakness—a vulnerability to fire—and the PCs can exploit this.

The curious Rhyme of the Hollow Man (see **Rhyme of the Hollow Man** sidebar) is well known to most residents of

the Margreve Forest as a children's rhyme, and any adult or child can repeat it for the PCs. The locals know that villagers once burned an effigy of a hollow man at a special festival, although this event is no longer held. A successful DC 17 INT (History) check recalls being familiar with the rhyme and knows that it celebrates the way such things were killed by warriors in centuries past. A PC with a heritage or background associated with the Margreve Forest has advantage on this check.

DESTROYING THE HOLLOW MAN

The Hollow Man is a considerable foe, and one that could easily conquer a party of low-level adventurers. There are two key factors that the PCs can learn that make the challenge manageable:

- The Hollow Man is concerned only with its intended victims. It has no interest in any kind of combat except what is involved in securing a head each night for the Singing Tree.
- The Hollow Man is vulnerable to fire. There are two locations in the village where the PCs can deal considerable damage to the Hollow Man with little personal risk—assuming they can lure it to one of them: the Lime Kiln (**Area 1**) or the Witch Pit (**Area 2**).

MAGIC ITEM: HARVESTER

The Hollow Man uses a unique scythe made of wood from a treant of the Margreve Forest. The scythe has a magical connection to the forest, and the Old Margreve is said to keep an extra eye on any creature that wields it. There is only one *Harvester* in existence, though rumors abound that Baba Yaga knows the secret to creating another.

Harvester

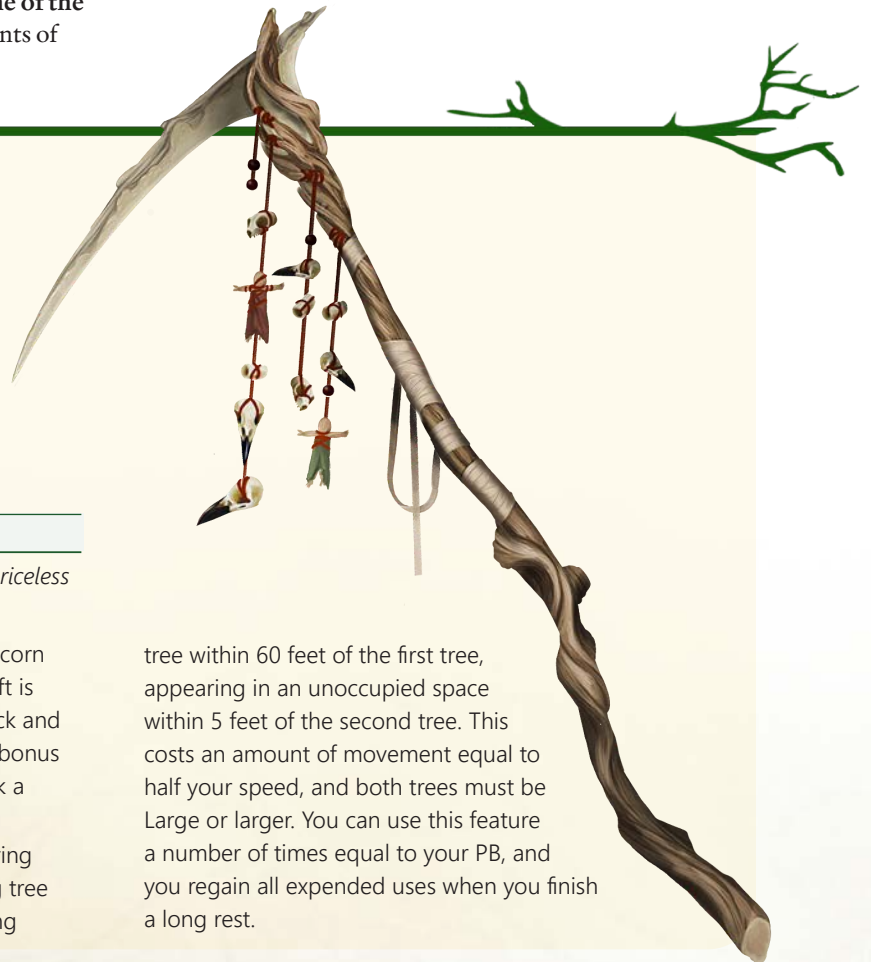
Weapon (Scythe), Rare
(Requires Attunement)

Priceless

This scythe is draped with the remains of ancient corn dolls and mummified rodents, and its wooden haft is gnarled and ancient. You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. The bonus increases to +3 when you use the scythe to attack a Beast or Humanoid.

Tree Stride. While wielding this scythe, once during your move, you can step magically into one living tree within your reach and emerge from a second living

tree within 60 feet of the first tree, appearing in an unoccupied space within 5 feet of the second tree. This costs an amount of movement equal to half your speed, and both trees must be Large or larger. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your PB, and you regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.



There is enough flammable material at Karl's Place (**Area 6**) to fill both the kiln and the pit, each burning for 8 hours, and there is enough other timber in the village for a second attempt at one location. Using less timber or charcoal lowers the time and temperature (reducing the fire damage to 1d6 instead of 3d6), but a minimum of 4 hours of flammable material is needed to get both locations burning efficiently.

The Hollow Man isn't about to conveniently step into a burning pit and must be lured or driven there. It doesn't willingly move closer to any fire source, even one as small as a candle, but it can be forced into such an area with effects like the Shove action or the *thunderwave* spell. Creative PCs might also attempt to force the Hollow Man to flee into the pit or kiln before it is lit by using portable burning objects, such as a cart filled with burning hay. Alternatively, the PCs might try to lure the Hollow Man into a house and then torch the place. A house set afire burns for 1 hour, and a creature that starts its turn in a burning building takes 1d6 fire damage.

A less risky method involves using the locals to help: a crowd of torch-wielding citizens might be able to help drive the Hollow Man to its doom. The PCs can be made aware of this option in several ways: by having the locals use torches to drive away wolves on day 1, by having the Hollow Man back away from a small fire, or by having an NPC suggest the tactic based a rhyme they remember from their childhood (see the **A Hollow Tale** section).

DAY 3: THE CRONE ARRIVES

At dawn, Bača (see **Area 9**) and his family leave the village, packing their belongings into a handcart and vowing never to return. The Hollow Man returns tonight for its next victim, which was supposed to be Bača—but, after finding him gone, it seemingly leaves the village. The Hollow Man follows the Singing Tree's song to locate the man and his family, beheads the farmer, and returns to the village to parade the head—almost gratuitously—around Levoča before returning to the Singing Tree.

Two hours after Bača and his family leave, Mother Molvor (human **druid**), an elder herbalist that lives on the outskirts of the village, arrives to check that everyone is safe. She comes to Levoča from her house, Dead-Nettle Cottage, which lies about a mile north of the village. She saw the Hollow Man pass her cottage the night before on its way to the village and was worried. Though the locals have some superstitions around Mother Molvor, they have great respect for her wisdom and remedies, and they are likely to alert the PCs to her arrival if the PCs don't notice her themselves. PCs who accompany the herbalist back to her cottage might find some clues about the source of the Hollow Man (see **The Singing Tree** later in this adventure).

If the PCs haven't heard it already, Mother Molvor can



RHYME OF THE HOLLOW MAN

Knock, knock, knock;

The Hollow Man calls.

Swing, swing, swing!

His greedy sickle falls!

Chop, chop, chop;

He takes another head.

Burn, burn, burn!

The Hollow Man is dead!

relate the Rhyme of the Hollow Man (see **A Hollow Tale** earlier in this adventure), she can confirm a mysterious fury seems to have taken hold of the local wildlife in the forest as well as in the village, and she can confirm that Hollow Men are typically agents of powerful entities of the forest. If the PCs spoke with Yurt's bull (see **Area 7**) and tell her the bull mentioned hearing a song, Mother Molvor remembers an old story about a Singing Tree. The story goes that long ago a corrupted treant bent on the destruction of all fauna could sing a song that stirred animals into a frenzy. A coven of witches led by a powerful witch rumored to have been Baba Yaga or one of her daughters sealed the treant in a deep slumber, never to awaken again. Mother Molvor doesn't know anything beyond that, but the animals being driven to aggression by a song worries her. She won't join the PCs in combat, but if the PCs promise to help the village, she offers to help them in any other ways she can. As a skilled herbalist, she has $1d4 + 1$ *potions of healing* in her cottage that she offers them free of charge. At your discretion, she might have other common or uncommon potions available for the PCs.

DAY 4 AND BEYOND

The situation escalates as the days progress.

Day 4, A Cry for Help. If the Hollow Man is still alive, the terrified locals organize a meeting in which angry words are exchanged. Allow the PCs to take part in this meeting and present their ideas to this large, captive audience.

Unless the PCs provide proof of their intention and ability to help the villagers (such as successfully directing the villagers during the wolf attack on the first night, finding Karda's body, or driving off the Hollow Man), the locals decide to send for help. If the PCs have caused the villagers' attitude to become hostile, no amount of proof of intention or ability to help convinces them to not send for help. They instruct Kahr, the fastest runner in the village, to hurry to Zobeck and beg for help from Free Mayor Constantia Olleck (see *Midgard Worldbook* or *Zobeck: Clockwork City*). If the PCs provide a horse, Kahr rides. On his journey, Kahr is attacked and killed by a pack of wolves. (If the PCs are with Kahr, use the wolf pack detailed in the **Day 1: The Wolves** section to play out this encounter.)

That night, Koreň's Croft (Area 10) is attacked by the Hollow Man. Koreň is a widow, but her eldest son, Torb, is beheaded unless someone stops the Hollow Man.

Day 5, The Returning Messenger. The Hollow Man returns tonight and enters Chrobák's Place (Area 11). The farmer puts up a fight but meets the same fate.

Day 6 and Beyond, The Hollow Man Comes Knocking on the PCs' Door. Day 6 begins the turn of the PCs—one by one they are targeted, until either the Hollow Man or the PCs have been disposed of. Once the final victim is taken, the Hollow Man's mission is completed.

THE SINGING TREE

The **Singing Tree** (see the **Appendix**) lies 4 miles northeast of Levoča, but the Hollow Man follows a route 6 miles in length. The PCs can find the Hollow Man's trail by spending four hours searching the forest surrounding the village. A successful DC 15 WIS (Survival) check halves this time, and the DC is reduced by 1 for each day that has passed since Day 1. Alternatively, the PCs can follow Mother Molvor (see **Day 3** earlier in this adventure) to her cottage, where she points out where she saw the Hollow Man.

Regardless of how the PCs find the trail, the Hollow Man's trail is marked by the mangled corpses of various animals. Animals enraged by the Singing Tree's song have attacked the Hollow Man as it moves through the forest. So common are these attacks—and so numerous are their victims—that they offer a trail that can be followed back to the Singing Tree.

If the PCs move at a normal pace and succeed on a DC 15 WIS (Survival) check, they can follow the trail. It's easier to follow the route (DC 12) if they travel at a slow pace, and more difficult (DC 18) if they keep up a fast pace. Reduce the DC by 1 for each day that has passed since Day 1, as the number of animal bodies increases, leaving a clearer trail.

THE WOODS ABOUT THE SINGING TREE

As the PCs follow the trail, they are likely to encounter enraged animals. If the PCs move at a slow pace, they face two encounters with animals; if they move at a normal pace, they face one encounter; and if they move at a fast pace, they have a 50 percent chance of facing one encounter. An encounter with animals is one of the following:

- Two **elks**
- Two **giant badgers**
- Three **panthers**

Alternatively, you can use the encounter tables in the **Appendix** to determine the encounters the PCs face while following the trail.

THE SITE OF THE TREE

Here is the pitiful wreckage of a once magnificent tree. The plant is riddled with sick fungal growths; its thorny boughs hang wasted, swaying in the wind; its once great girth withered to little more than a black, lightning-tortured canker swollen by disease. Human heads leer from the branches, and the meeting point of plant and flesh is a cluster of lesions.

The tree stands in a clearing blighted by decay and covered in fungus. The air here is thick with buzzing things, even in winter, and the ground crawls with insects.

If the Hollow Man still lives, it sleeps in the boughs of the Singing Tree by day. As soon as she spots intruders, the Singing Tree instructs it to attack and doesn't enter combat until the Hollow Man is defeated or if she is attacked. If the Hollow Man has already been defeated, the Singing Tree enters combat, and 2d4 badgers or weasels, 1d4 poisonous snakes, or 1 swarm of ravens arrive to protect her, enraged by her song. They act as allies to her and obey her telepathic commands. Already enraged by her song, they automatically succeed on the save against her Infuriating Melody trait.

If reduced to 10 hit points or lower, the Singing Tree offers the PCs a dark secret if they let her go. The details of this secret are left to your devising, but it should be something of great use in future adventures in the forest (perhaps some knowledge of the Old Margreve's powers). The secret is her only bargaining chip, and once she has lost it, she flees to recover from her wounds and find another village to provide her with voices. If cornered, she fights to the end.

If the Singing Tree gains thirteen heads, she regains her lost power and grows to a CR 9 creature with all her same traits and features, except the heads can be destroyed only if she is reduced to below half her hit point maximum. She terrorizes the nearby villages, and her singing continues to drive animals into furious rages. How the adventure progresses beyond this point is up to you, but perhaps some way can be found to kill her.

Treasure. Upon her death, the Singing Tree turns bone white, and a portion of her trunk forms into the face of a weeping woman. Her branches contain a number of apples equal to the number of PCs that participated in the fight. The apples disappear after 24 hours, and the tree slowly crumbles to dust over the next few months. Each apple radiates a strong aura of transmutation magic. While attempts to identify the apples' magic fail, a successful DC 15 INT (Arcana) check determines the apples are safe to eat and contain no harmful magic. A PC that bites into an apple can permanently increase one ability score by 1, up to a maximum of 20, then the apple crumbles to dust. A PC can gain the benefits of an apple only once.



A successful DC 15 WIS (Perception) check finds the buried possessions of former victims among what remains of the tree's roots. Alternatively, PCs that dig near the tree's roots need only a successful DC 10 INT (Investigation) check to uncover the treasure. The possessions are fragile from the passage of time but show strange filigree and almost disturbing fey imagery. They are a silver mirror with an ebony handle (worth 75 gp), a *potion of poison resistance* in a green glass jar with a silver stopper (jar and stopper worth 10 gp), a *scrimshaw comb* (see **Magic Items** in **Chapter 2**) with dire boar bristles, 34 gp, an elaborate ring fashioned of walnut depicting dancing fey (worth 50 gp), and a chain shirt.



WRATH OF THE BRAMBLE KING

*An adventure by Mike Welham for four to five
2nd-level characters.*

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Two centuries ago, a creature known as the Weft of Shadows broke into a minor fey noble's extraplanar vault in the Summer Lands and released several powerful magic items from the vault into the Margreve Forest. Thanks to an unusual set of rules involved in the creation of the items, once mortal hands have touched the artifacts, the fey can't reclaim them.

Such was the case with the Bramble Crown, which landed in the Margreve Forest. A young orphan lost in the deep woods discovered the crown shortly after it arrived in the forest. The boy's curiosity about the object overrode his fears about its thorns glistening with green poison, and he reached out for it. To his surprise, the thorns retracted where his hand touched, allowing him to grab the crown and place it on his head. As the crown settled on his head, it transformed him into a plant-like Fey.

The Bramble King, as he is now known, is a reclusive creature who has lived deep in the Margreve for a century and a half. His distance from most settlements keeps civilization away from him, and terrible bedtime stories about the Bramble King prevent most reasonable people from looking for him. As with all such stories, the warnings about the Bramble King hold a kernel of truth. When a hunter encroaches in his territory, he threatens the trespasser with writhing, thorny vines and plants pruned in the likenesses of predatory animals. All the thorns belonging to the Bramble King's plants are tipped with a poison that creates an itchy rash. Those who persisted in their intrusion on his peace returned with horrifying red patches on their skin.

In actuality, the Bramble King is a gentle soul, who wishes only to be left with his creations. However, he often takes in lost souls and tends to their injuries before sending them

back to civilization with a bramble animal escort. Perhaps ancient memories of his orphaning guide him to help those similarly lost.

This all changed when the Weft of Shadows took notice of the Bramble King's relative inactivity. It incited nearby children of the briar to envy the Bramble King's crown, and a contingent managed to wrest the crown from his head while he slept. They poisoned the vines and captured or killed many of the Bramble King's creations.

When the Bramble King awoke, he saw the devastation wreaked by the children of the briar and realized the Bramble Crown had been stolen. Despite the loss of his crown, he still wielded power over his surviving creations, and he sent them to the village of Cambervale. He had recently sent a lost elfmarked girl named Tremika to the village, and he reasoned the villagers must have raided his home as some sort of twisted revenge. He spoke through his creations, demanding the villagers return his crown, and when they denied having it, he instructed his bramble animals to tear apart homes in search of the prize. The Bramble King's servants now hold the village hostage, while he forces villagers to search elsewhere for the crown.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The PCs may be traveling to Cambervale following a lead on a rare herb only found near the village. They may be on other business in the Margreve Forest but run across a villager desperate for help. Finally, the PCs may be searching for the Bramble Crown independently (see **A Strange Interlude** later in this adventure) and investigations have directed them to Cambervale.

THE MAD PLANTS OF CAMBERVALE

The PCs arrive to Cambervale in a state of verdant chaos. A thick, circular wall of thorny vines surrounds a group of villagers, while a pair of badgers made of the same vines patrols around them. These two **bramble giant badgers** (see the **Appendix**). The Bramble King withdraws his creations if one of them is damaged; he can't risk losing more of his precious creations. It is possible for the PCs to give chase, but the wall of vines closes around the trapped villagers, who cry out for help.

The wall of vines is 20 feet in diameter and 20 feet high.





Each creature that touches the wall or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it must succeed on a DC 12 DEX save or take 2d4 piercing damage and be poisoned for 1 minute. The wall can be attacked and destroyed (AC 12; HP 10; vulnerability to fire; immunity to piercing, poison, and psychic damage per 10-foot section). A successful DC 11 WIS (Insight) check realizes the wall's retraction posed no immediate danger to the villagers, who are too panicked to realize the lack of threat.

If the PCs rescue the villagers, the villagers offer them thanks and a reward of 5 sp. The villagers relate the sudden attack by the bramble badgers and the Bramble King's demands for his crown, spoken through the badgers. They speak with horror about the attack on their village.

They feared for their lives, but they do note, with some confusion, that none of the villagers were harmed during the attack. A successful DC 10 INT (Nature) or WIS (Survival) check notices the poisonous nature of the vines but none of the villagers have been poisoned.

The villagers are desperate to escape the Bramble King's grasp but are too afraid to confront him. They humbly offer a *rope of climbing* or 20 gp as a reward for ending the Bramble King's threat, leaving the details of how to the PCs.

THE BRAMBLE KING (HE/HIM, FEY LORD)

Thorn-covered humanoid. Forlorn, flower-like eyes.

Background: An orphan who was transformed into a fey lord a century and a half ago by a powerful artifact known as the Bramble Crown. The crown and the king are now magically and irreversibly bound to each other.

Personality Traits: Pacifistic, creative, friendly, artistic, and driven to help those lost or in great need.

Bonds: The Margreve Forest. His bramble creations.

Flaws: Childlike in whimsy and wonder—and in being emotionally reactive to events, angering, forgiving, crying, and laughing in equal measure and intensity.

Wants: To get his crown back. To live in peace in the forest where he can create his bramble beasts and thorned and vined sculptures. Harmony with the local village.

Talking to the Bramble King: The Bramble King can share the following information (in this order):

- A week ago, he helped a lost child find her way back home to Cambervale. He sent Patches, a half-completed bramble panther the child was fond of, with her as a guide. Patches has since been slain by the monsters that stole his crown.
- His crown was stolen a few days later.
- Convinced the villagers were responsible for stealing the crown after the child was returned, he sent his bramble beasts to the village to demand the return of the crown.
- After calming down and having some time to reflect, he is now doubting himself and isn't certain the villagers are responsible. However, he fears that if the villagers didn't steal it, he will never find out what happened to his crown or where it is.

FINDING THE BRAMBLE KING

The PCs have a few avenues available to them in their search for the Bramble King. If they immediately set after the bramble badgers, a successful DC 8 WIS (Survival) check allows them to follow the badgers' tracks. If they assist the villagers, the delay increases the DC to 12. The villagers recall the general direction to the Bramble King's abode based on old reports about him. If the PCs overtly ask the villagers about the Bramble King's whereabouts, a successful DC 8 WIS (Insight) check notices a girl in the crowd nervously shifting from one foot to the other.

The girl is Tremika, the elfmarked child the Bramble King saved and sent to the village. She is reluctant to speak to the PCs. The Bramble King was nice to her (even having his "brambimals" perform tricks to delight her), and she doesn't want anyone to hurt him. In her mind, the Bramble King is mad because someone stole something he liked an awful lot, and he didn't mean to scare the others. A successful DC 11 CHA (Persuasion) check convinces her to open up about the Bramble King and give the PCs enough details to find his lair. If the PCs haven't been hostile toward the villagers, they have advantage on the check. If Tremika shares the Bramble King's location with the PCs, she asks them to promise not to hurt him.

A STRANGE INTERLUDE

As the PCs travel to, or search for, the Bramble King's lair, they come across an oak tree with a pair of broken branches that touch the ground, forming an archway large enough for a person to pass through comfortably. The archway shimmers and an elven woman composed of thousands of motes of light steps through. She addresses the PCs by name and commends them on a previous victory of your choice. She introduces herself as Daesanderena (see the sidebar at the beginning of this chapter) and tells the PCs she hails from the Summer Lands. She relates the first paragraph of the **Adventure Background** to inquisitive PCs and notes that receiving the crown or any piece of it freely from mortal hands bypasses the rule that would prevent her from obtaining the item. She understands the crown has become part of the Bramble King—who is now a powerful, if minor, fey lord—and she asks for only a clipping from the crown to complete her task. She promises the PCs 100 gp if they return with a clipping of the crown.

As noted in the Adventure Hooks, you can introduce Daesanderena prior to this adventure. If the PCs are at a loss for finding the Bramble King's lair, she can help them. This is a great place to introduce the Daesanderena's Mission story arc (see **Daesanderena's Mission** at the beginning of this chapter), if you are using it.

THE BROKEN KING

When the PCs reach the Bramble King, he is still angry about his missing crown, but his anger is tinged with despair that he will never find it again. He stands a head taller than the average human, and his body is composed of hundreds of thorny vines. Despite his physical age and appearance, he has matured very little beyond the boy who transformed into the Bramble King. He blusters and threatens the PCs when they arrive but makes no initial move to stop them from trespassing in his lair. If the PCs attack him, he begins to sob, leaking poisonous "tears" from his eyes. If the PCs cease attacking, he tells them about the theft of his crown and his desire to get it back. If the PCs continue their attack, he protects himself by creating a wall of thorny vines between himself and the PCs, like the wall that surrounded the villagers, and commands them to leave him alone. Coaxing information out of him after a continued attack requires a successful DC 15 CHA (Persuasion) check.



The Bramble King is a force of nature and, though distraught and without his crown, too powerful for the PCs to fight directly. The PCs must use diplomacy and tact to resolve the villagers' plight. If the PCs continue to attack him after he creates the wall, the King retreats from them, disappearing into the thorns and shadows of the forest. He keeps an eye on them either directly or through his bramble beasts and reappears if the PCs seem more receptive to conversation.

While the PCs are talking to the Bramble King, he suddenly becomes noticeably distracted shortly before his flower-like eyes widen in horror. He tells the PCs that Spike, one of his creations that he sent out scouting, was just murdered by a group of thorny people. He implores the PCs to go to the tower and stop the thorny people, and he expresses hope that these thorny people might be responsible for the missing crown instead of the villagers. He gives the PCs the directions to the tower, which lies just outside his territory. He promises to stop harassing Cambervale while the PCs undertake this mission, but he refuses to go with them, fearful of having his hopes dashed again. If the PCs ask about a reward, he indicates he will happily provide them with something wonderful if they find his crown.

THE OVERGROWN TOWER

Predating the Margreve Forest's famed Griffon Towers, the ancient Deepwood Towers stood watch within the more remote parts of the forest. These towers never achieved the same level of renown as the Griffon Towers, since even the most stalwart of soldiers could not fulfill their assigned duties. Many left the haunted woods early with their sanity intact, while those who tried to persevere broke from the onslaught of the forest's never-ending dangers, the towers' deep isolation, and in the case of this tower, the assault of restless Undead. The woods eventually reclaimed the land occupied by the towers. Overgrowth hides the buildings from all but the most determined searches, and vegetation has returned to formerly cleared ground.

Children of the briar (see the **Appendix**) claimed the tower as their home, where they safely return after they waylay travelers in the woods. They attracted the attention of the Weft of Shadows, which asked them to steal the crown. Jealous of the Bramble King but fearful of his power, they reluctantly agreed to the task after the Weft of Shadows provided them with a magical powder to knock the Bramble King unconscious. The Weft left a pair of **shadows** behind to ensure the children of the briar performed their duties and to create a shadow clone of the crown after the children of the briar returned with it.

The tower's walls are 15 feet tall and enough light penetrates the overgrowth to create dim light throughout the tower, except where noted.

AREA 1. ENTRANCE TO THE DEEPWOOD TOWER

An overgrown tower sits among the trees, its tower barely visible among the branches.

The Bramble King provided accurate directions to the tower, but the overgrowth makes it difficult to spot the entrance. A successful DC 12 WIS (Survival) check finds the entrance among the plants. If they fail to find the entrance initially, the PCs find it after half an hour of searching, but the creatures in the compound are aware of their presence. Just inside the entrance, the PCs find Spike, a bramble giant lizard that has been cut to pieces.

AREA 2. HALBERD-WIELDING STATUE

The dim hallway extends toward a door to the north. A mostly intact stone statue stands proudly with a halberd in hand.

The inner part of this hallway is the most intact section of this building. A secret door to Area 3 hides among the overgrowth on the western wall's masonry. A successful DC 12 WIS (Perception) check notices a thin line of damaged vegetation that marks the outline of the door. A statue of a heavily armored Humanoid stands at the center of the hall along the eastern wall and faces the secret door to Area 3. The statue's right hand holds a stone halberd, which forms the basis of a simple trap left by the children of the briar. The hole in the wall next to the statue is filled with rubble and is only big enough for Small or smaller creatures to squeeze through it into Area 7.

Falling Halberd Trap. This simple trap triggers when a creature opens the secret door to Area 3, snapping a trip wire and releasing the halberd. The stone halberd falls in the spaces between the statue and the door, and each creature in those spaces must make a DC 11 DEX save, taking 11 (2d10) bludgeoning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A successful DC 12 INT (Investigation) check notices the tripwire hidden among the thick grass covering the floor. Alternatively, a successful DC 15 WIS (Perception) check notices a fracture on the right wrist of the statue where it was broken and then reattached to form the trap. A successful DC 12 DEX (Thieves' Tools) check harmlessly detaches the tripwire from the halberd. A PC without thieves' tools can attempt this check with disadvantage using any edged weapon or edged tool. On a failed check, the trap triggers. If no creatures are between the statue and the door when the trap triggers, the halberd loudly, but harmlessly, clatters to the floor.

AREA 3. THE FALSE CROWN

This chamber's roof collapsed long ago, leaving a mound of soil and rotten debris in the center of the room. A single tree grows in the soil, and a crown of thorny vines sits on a pedestal in the northwestern corner.

This chamber is open to the sky and filled with a mound of weed-covered soil. The overgrowth on the tower obscures its full dimensions, which helps to hide the existence of this room. An **awakened tree**, charged by the children of the briar to guard the crown in its possession from "despoilers of the forest," sits in this room.

The tree watches the PCs closely, assessing if they are despoilers of the forest. It moves to protect the crown if the PCs get within 15 feet of the crown, but it doesn't attack unless the PCs push past it to the crown, grab the crown, or attack it. The tree knows Common and can be convinced to hand over the crown if the PCs prove they aren't despoilers of the forest with a successful DC 13 CHA (Deception or Persuasion) check. A PC that can cast Primordial spells or that has some other connection with forests, such as from a heritage or background, has advantage on the check.

Fake Crown. Unknown to the tree, the thorny crown in this room is a fake, crafted by a child of the briar and given to the tree to perpetuate the ruse. A successful DC 10 INT (Arcana) check makes it clear the crown has no power other than a glamour to make it seem magical. If the PCs are on friendly terms with the tree, they can convince the creature to join them in searching for the real crown with a DC 14 CHA (Persuasion) check. The PCs have advantage on the check if they play on the tree's anger at being fooled. The tree's name is Irontrunk and only joins the PCs long enough to take its revenge on the children of the briar. Due to its size, it is unable to join them in Areas 9–11, but it otherwise aids them in the rest of the tower and guards their backs while they explore the upper reaches. After they obtain the crown, Irontrunk leaves the PCs with the warning to not despoil the forest. If the PCs make a particularly good impression on Irontrunk, it may return and aid them later if they are ever in the Margreve Forest again.

AREA 4. SHADOWY ALCOVE

Unnatural gloom permeates this alcove.

The Weft of Shadows created a tiny rift to the Shadow Realm in this alcove, causing it to fill with nonmagical darkness that overrides nonmagical light. Magical light operates normally in the area. Two **shadows** are finishing up the creation of the shadow copy of the Bramble Crown. Because they are focused on their task, they aren't alerted to the PCs' presence. When combat starts, one of the shadows places the shadow copy of the crown on its head and attempts to escape through one of the openings in the wall, while the other shadow stays behind to delay the PCs.



AREA 5. COMMANDER'S OFFICE

A rotting, wooden desk with the remains of a single chair stands in the center of this room. Vines cover what remains of the chamber's broken windows, and a large rug molders under the desk.

The desk holds extremely faint traces of abjuration magic, the remnants of protective spells that kept prying eyes and hands out of the commander's desk. These traces of magic have managed to keep enough of the desk whole that some slightly moldy papers in the middle drawer are still legible, if frail. A successful DC 12 INT (Investigation) check while searching the desk finds the papers. They detail the last harrowing days of the final group stationed in the tower. The papers describe spirits and ghosts assaulting the tower for weeks, and they end with an entry about the commander's reluctant decision to abandon the tower. A gold band studded with sapphires worth 25 gp sits in what remains of the desk's bottom drawer.

AREA 6. SEALED WELL

A stone well juts up from the center of this small room, and the remains of the well's wooden frame and bucket lie broken and scattered around it. A stone slab sits atop the well, covering it.

A **gray ooze** took up residence in the tower's well a few decades after the soldiers abandoned the tower. It has been living out its existence in peace here, catching birds, insects, rodents, and other small animals that seek shelter in the tower or water via cracks in the well's mortar. The ooze likes its well home, knowing food will eventually come to it, and rarely leaves this area unless hungry. Though it prefers flesh and blood creatures, it isn't above devouring the children of the briar who recently occupied the tower. The children lost some of their number to the gray ooze when they first moved into the tower and have since used the hole in the wall between Areas 2 and 7 to travel deeper into the tower. The children occasionally toss captured rodents and birds toward the well to keep the ooze content and discourage it from seeking food elsewhere in the tower.

AREA 7. FLOWER-OVERGROWN KITCHEN

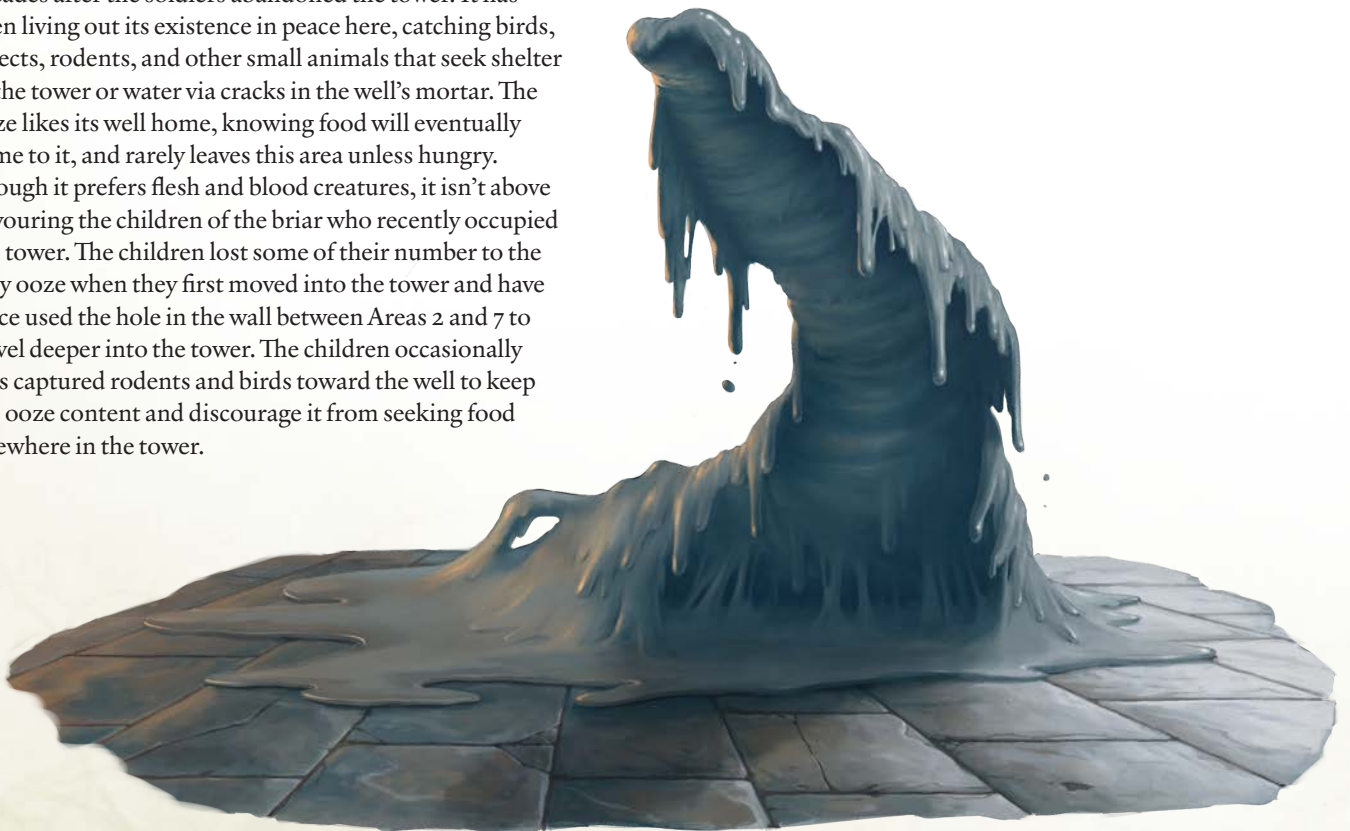
Sunlight pours down from a hole above the oven in the remnants of this large kitchen. A wide variety of weeds and flowers carpet the oven and the surrounding floor.

Excited by the prospect of carnage, two **steam mephits** took up residence in the tower's kitchen when the children of the briar moved in. They are accompanied by a **child of the briar** who keeps watch through the hole in the wall between Areas 2 and 7. If alerted to the presence of the PCs, this group might use the door in Area 7 to ambush the PCs in Area 2 from behind.

AREA 8. COMMON ROOM

Rubble, thorns, vines, and remnants of misshapen bramble creatures cover what remains of the floor of this chamber.

The children of the briar used this relatively spacious area to experiment with the Bramble Crown, channeling their energy through it to manipulate plants near them. Discarded remains of misshapen bramble beasts litter the floor, marking their failures. After dozens of attempts, they managed to create a deformed **bramble giant wolf spider** (see the **Appendix**). One **child of the briar** rides the newly-created monster to attack intruders.





AREA 9. STAIRS TO THE BATTLEMENT

Thorny vines climb the walls and cover the floor in this partially collapsed tower.

A tangle of thorny vines fills the base of this battlement but doesn't climb up the stairs. Each creature that moves into or within this area takes 2 (1d4) piercing damage for every 5 feet it travels. The vines can be attacked and destroyed (AC 10; HP 5; vulnerability to fire damage; immunity to piercing, poison, and psychic damage), clearing a path for others. If the PCs attack the vines, the creatures on the battlement above are alerted to their presence.

AREA 10. MID BATTLEMENT

If the PCs reach this spot without unduly alerting the tower's current residents, they clearly hear an argument from above.

AREA 11. THE BATTLEMENT'S CROWN

Three **children of the briar** fight over the Bramble Crown, each arguing that it is the most suited for the item over the other two. The crown rejected each of them after a short time as it is bound to the boy who became the Bramble King, but each is convinced the crown will be swayed to its side with time and persuasion. They briefly set aside their differences to attack intruders.

THE BRAMBLE CROWN

The Bramble Crown's centuries of being attuned to the boy-turned-Bramble-King have given it a limited sentience and tied it inexorably to the Bramble King. It desires to be returned to the King and projects this desire continuously at whichever creature is holding it. If the bearer promises to return the crown to the King, it quiets its projections for 1 hour. It can sense the direction of the Bramble King and grows more insistent if its bearer carries it in the opposite direction of the Bramble King.

The Bramble Crown is not happy being worn by any creature other than the Bramble King and only tolerates such creatures for 1 hour. Afterwards, it becomes quiescent and appears nonmagical until a creature it believes can return it to the Bramble King is within 30 feet. Once such a creature is within range, it calls out to the creature for assistance in returning it to the King.

PCs attempting to take a clipping from the crown for Daesanderena face a challenge: it is physically impossible to cut the crown unless the crown permits it. A successful DC 18 CHA (Persuasion) check convinces the crown to let a PC take a clipping from it. A PC has advantage on this check if it promises to return the crown to the King.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If the PCs return the Bramble Crown to the Bramble King, he is delighted to have his crown back and rewards them with a *bag of bramble beasts* (see **Magic Items** in **Chapter 2**). Because of the PCs' assistance, the Bramble King is open to making an arrangement with the nearby village for mutual protection. This gives the Bramble King a little more insight into his neighbors and the goings-on of the area outside his section of the forest. The arrangement also provides the villagers safe passage into parts of the forest to harvest herbs and fruits, though the Bramble King doesn't agree to allow logging in the forest. Finally, if the PCs have been unable to obtain a clipping from the crown, the Bramble King gives them one.

The Weft of Shadows is aware of Daesanderena's involvement, and if the PCs encountered the shadows in Area 4, it becomes aware of them as her champions. If the PCs destroyed the **shadow** that held the shadow copy of the Bramble Crown, the Weft of Shadows is annoyed at the setback but doesn't immediately plot revenge against the PCs unless they continue to interfere.

If the PCs return the clipping from the crown to Daesanderena, she pays them 100 gp, as promised.

If the PCs resolve the issue between the Bramble King and the village—regardless if that resolution involves a mutual protection arrangement—the villagers give the PCs any promised rewards.



THE HONEY QUEEN

An adventure by Jonathon McAnulty for four to five 2nd-level characters.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

A rare purple flower, the effildawnan, blooms within the Margreve Forest. Herbalists prize the flower's sleep-inducing properties and use it to create teas, poultices, and medicines. A colony of bees also makes use of the flower's pollen to create a magical form of honey, which they sell to the forest fey. This hive, a curious blend of honey bees and giant bees, inhabits a cave near a glade along the southern border of the Margreve Forest. A succession of awakened queen bees rules the hive, and these queens are responsible for the honey's creation. The PCs are hired to journey into the forest and confront the bees.

The honey has two special qualities. It prevents aging in those that eat it—but this eternal youth comes at a steep cost, for the taste of the honey sends a soul into an ageless sleep. The fey prize the honey as the preferred method for extending the lives of their valued guests as they spend the time between festivities sleeping in stasis.

In addition to the queen, a second intelligence dwells within the hive. A young girl named Lyla, some fifty years ago, befriended the bees and tasted their honey. The hive,

for reasons of their own, have kept her slumbering and perpetually young. Over the years, her mind has found a way to wander free of her sleeping body, entering the simple consciousnesses of the honey bees.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The PCs are tasked with journeying into the Margreve Forest and confronting the Honey Queen. With little to go on, they encounter a trio of potential helpers, the last of which can guide them toward the Queen's Glade, a meadow frequented by bees. From there, the PCs follow the bees to their home. Effildawnan blossoms fill the area around the glade, and the fragrance of the flowers induces dream-like hallucinations, forcing the PCs to question reality.

At the entrance to the honey bees' home, the PCs must get past the old bear that guards the entrance. They then meet a large face made of bees, which asks them their business and identifies herself as Lyla. Whether by guile or force, the PCs must enter the bees' home, a series of tunnels in the forest floor. Within the extensive hive are several traps and guardians. As the PCs finally reach the door of the queen's chambers, they again meet Lyla, who seeks to prevent them from entering and disturbing "Mother." After overcoming this swarm of bees, the PCs enter her chamber and



confront the Honey Queen, an awakened queen bee. They also discover a girl in an enchanted sleep, being cared for by the bees. The PCs now have the chance to bring the Honey Queen to task and rescue the girl.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Terelsa Garlook is a go-between, an agent who knows how to hire the right people for any sort of job: domestic, dangerous, mundane, or odd. Although she avoids strictly illegal commissions, she sometimes works for less than savory PCs who often want, for obvious reasons, to remain anonymous. She also does occasional work for the Zobeck City government. A friend of an acquaintance (or a relative) put Elsa onto the PCs, and now she approaches them with a job offer:

"I have been told you lot aren't completely unfamiliar with danger and might even be able to find your way through the woods at night without getting lost and eaten. There's a certain rare purple flower blooming in the Margreve Forest, and I have a client interested in it. That is, interested in the honey that it is rumored might be made from this flower's pollen. The stories say it's like getting back a little bit of youth and that interests my client, who would be willing to pay quite handsomely for a container of the stuff. The thing is, the sellers of this honey won't do business with my client, so we want you to convince them to part with some. We'll give you something to buy the honey with, and we'll pay you afterward for making the journey and the acquisition."

Terelsa offers 350 gp in exchange for a vial of the honey. She refuses to reveal the identity of her client, even if threatened. If the PCs accept the job, Terelsa shares what she has been told:

- The purple effildawnan flower blooms near the southern border of the Margreve Forest, westward and well away from the Great Northern Road.
- Some claim the forest fey have access to the honey, knowing both where and how to acquire it. Enticing the sellers to sell to non-Fey might require a delicate touch.
- The honey in question has a slight purple cast to it and radiates magic.

Terelsa supplies the PCs with a *ring of warmth*, which they are supposed to trade for the honey, although they can use it until the time comes to part with it.

PART 1: IN THE FOREST

You can determine how long the PCs adventure in the Margreve Forest as they search for the magic honey, but it is suggested that over the course of one to three days, they have the following three encounters, designed both to give a fairy-tale quality to the adventure and to spur the action forward.

THE CRONE

As the PCs travel in the forest, they hear soft singing coming from a small clearing. The source of the song is an elderly woman in a simple dress and wrapped in a shawl.



OPTIONAL: HONEY SELLERS RUSE

Terelsa is unaware the sellers of the honey are also the bees that produce it. She believes the honey is produced by beekeepers deep in the forest who enchant the honey produced from the effildawnan flower, and she is likely to convey this belief to the PCs if they press her for more details. The PCs can quickly discover the truth in the encounters in **Part 1**, or you can maintain the ruse through the beginning of this adventure with references to a Honey Queen, the Queen's Glade, and the Honey Cave without explicitly mentioning the bees themselves.

It's plausible that none of the locals mention she is a bee because either: it's already known by most locals or the fact that she is a bee is irrelevant to most conversations around her. In the same way that one person telling a story about something funny their friend did is unlikely to mention that friend has blond hair, the locals are unlikely to clarify that the Honey Queen is a bee unless specifically asked.

Here are some reasons why you might want to consider maintaining the ruse throughout most of this adventure:

- It adds an air of mystery to the adventure. The PCs aren't given much information from Terelsa and must puzzle their way through the assignment, discovering truths along the way.
- It reminds the PCs they aren't from around here, or it allows the PCs who are from the Margreve Forest to "get it" when the average adventurer in the forest wouldn't.
- It drives home the personhood of the Honey Queen, making her more familiar and human. Though the PCs can approach this adventure with swords swinging, obfuscating her true nature in the stories of her before the PCs meet her helps make her less monstrous and helps open the negotiation solution of the adventure.

The woman is Baba Migori, also called Grandmother Migori. A powerful druid who is very familiar with the forest, she often tests travelers for their worthiness. She asks the PCs for food, stating it has been a while since she last ate and travel has made her weary. Uninterested in fighting, she transforms into an air elemental and flees if attacked. If the PCs share some food with her, Baba Migori says:

“Thank you kindly. One good deed deserves another. I know your journey and your business. I advise you to head west and search for the Queen’s Glade. Remember to always treat royalty with respect, but sometimes even the noblest need to be corrected. Still, the sword is not the answer to all problems, and the Honey Cave opens to those that know the name of Lyla.”

If questioned about Lyla, she volunteers that there is a girl by that name in the Honey Queen’s palace and that it’s “time the child awoke.” After imparting this wisdom, Baba Migori vanishes.

If the PCs share their food but are rude and hostile, Baba Migori merely tells them to continue west. If the PCs threaten her, she leaves without helping them at all.



THE MOTHER

As the PCs travel in the forest, they hear a worried scream of “Don’t move! Stay still!” coming from a large clearing nearby. The clearing is an open area with lush grass and a single, very large tree. A family of bearfolk lives in a small cottage just north of this clearing. The scream came from the mother, Elsee Barkcot, who is wringing her hands while staring up into the tree. Her youngest son, Obiah, is in a predicament after climbing high in the tree. Getting down wouldn’t be much of a problem, except that a **giant spider** lairs in the tree and has crawled out onto the trunk between the boy and the ground. Elsee and her son use the statistics of **commoners**, though neither participates in the fight except to Dodge or Disengage.

Obiah clutches the tree 80 feet above the ground, and the mother pleads with the PCs to help as the spider closes in on her son. A successful DC 12 STR (Athletics) check while climbing is needed to reach the boy. A second DC 12 STR (Athletics) check is needed to return to the ground safely with him. Branches between the spider and the ground hinder most attacks from the ground, providing the giant spider with half cover. If the PCs rescue the child, Elsee gives them a *spell scroll of animal friendship* for saving her Obiah.

THE MAIDEN

As the PCs travel in the forest, they hear frantic cries for help and the sound of something large crashing through the growth moments before an **alseid** pursued by an **ogre** bursts through the brush near the PCs. A successful DC 12 WIS (Perception) check notices the alseid has an injured leg and runs with a limp. When the alseid, Frauleene, sees the PCs, she rushes to them for help, the ogre not far behind her. The ogre was hoping for an easy meal and flees once reduced below half its hit point maximum.

If the PCs question Frauleene, she explains she is an herbalist who was gathering plants in the forest when she was ambushed by the ogre. If the PCs rescue her, she responds with sincere gratitude. She knows where to find Queen’s Glade and can lead the PCs in that direction. She has no interest in venturing among blooming effildawnan and doesn’t accompany the PCs all the way to the glade, but she can share the following information:

- Blooming effildawnan induces hallucinations and should not be taken lightly.
- Once in Queen’s Glade, the PCs should follow the giant bees who collect the effildawnan nectar back to the Honey Cave.
- There are those in the Margreve Forest who trade with the Honey Queen for her magic honey, and Frauleene warns the PCs against being openly hostile or rude to the queen. There are many in the forest who would be most irate should the flow of magic honey stop.

PART 2: AMONG THE EFFILDAWNAN

Frauleene leaves the PCs as soon as she sees one of the purple effildawnan flowers, but she tells them the meadow they seek is only 1 mile farther west.

THE SCENT OF THE FLOWERS

Effildawnan grows as a vine on the sides of trees. As the PCs near Queen's Glade, they see more and more of the purple flowers, some growing so thickly as to threaten the health of their hosts. At the same time, the scent of the flowers increases in intensity. Buzzing around the blossoms, hundreds of honey bees busily gather the pollen.

Few harvest the effildawnan flower, for in addition to its rarity, the pollen of the flower induces dreamlike hallucinations. As the PCs approach within a mile of the glade, they are surrounded by trees covered in effildawnan vines. Each PC must make a DC 12 CON save. On a failure, the PC begins to hallucinate and has disadvantage on ability checks. On a success, a PC doesn't hallucinate, but the PC feels as if they are walking in a dream-like state. The ramifications of each hallucination and how often they change are left to you and the players. You can choose what each hallucinating PC sees, or roll a d12 and consult the following list for each affected PC:

1. A giant bee buzzes among the flowers, singing a cheerful tavern tune.
2. Goblins peek around the trees and laugh at the PC.
3. The PC is sure they aren't wearing any pants.
4. Cold red rain begins falling through the green leaves.
5. The trees are walking alongside the PCs.
6. The shadow of a large, multiheaded flying creature circles above the PCs as if it were tracking them.
7. A large stone starts following the PCs, moving only when it is not being watched.
8. A warm, moist feeling spreads through the PC's pants, suggestive of a weak bladder.
9. Bats in the daytime! Hundreds of bats all fly from the heart of the forest to the north.
10. The PC hears the distressed calls of a loved one, constantly just out of sight.
11. The smell of something cooking fills the air. Someone close by is baking something very tasty.
12. A veritable storm of pollen swirls heavily through the air, a white cloud reducing visibility.

PCs that experience these hallucinations can otherwise act normally, and the visions stop 2d6 minutes after entering Queen's Glade or after leaving the section of vine-covered trees within one mile of the glade.

THE BOAR IN THE STREAM

While the PCs are still among the effildawnan and only a quarter of a mile from Queen's Glade, they meet a very real danger—one they might at first take for a hallucination. A **giant boar** has wandered among the flowers and is now confused and disoriented, as it splashes through a small, shallow stream in the forest. Once it spots the PCs, it rushes to attack, eager to vent its frustration. The boar has been seeing things for the last 2 days, and any attempt to calm it is made with disadvantage. The boar has advantage on any attempt to resist an enchantment.

THE DRONING OF BEES

Queen's Glade is a meadow in the Margreve Forest and is nearly half a mile in diameter. In the spring, flowers and bees fill the entire glade. A PC that enters Queen's Glade while hallucinating under the influence of effildawnan pollen must succeed on a DC 10 WIS save or be frightened by the overpowering droning of the bees for 1 minute. A creature frightened in this way must take the Dash action and move away from the glade and back to the safety of the effildawnan vines by the safest available route on each of its turns, unless there is nowhere to move.

THE GIRL IN THE GLADE

When the PCs first enter Queen's Glade, those who aren't hallucinating under the influence of the effildawnan notice what appears to be a child dancing near the northern edge of the glade. This child is Lyla (see **Area 2**). If the PCs approach her stealthily (Lyla's Perception is 13), they discover that the image of the girl is a swarm of flying honey bees moving as one. As soon as Lyla is aware of any onlookers, she disappears, returning home. If the PCs manage to watch her long enough, they see her head north through the woods, back home, as the sun begins to set.

TRACKING A BEE

Though the PCs can attempt to track the smaller honey bees back to the Honey Cave, there are also several **giant honey bees** (see the **Appendix**) in the glade, which are more easily followed. The giant honey bees don't bother the PCs in any fashion unless attacked first. The smaller bees can be tracked back to the Honey Cave to the north with a successful DC 30 WIS (Survival) check. Alternatively, the giant honey bees can be tracked back to the cave with a successful DC 10 WIS (Survival) check.

PART 3: IN THE HONEY CAVE

Following the bees home, the PCs come to the base of a great tree. Two roots of this ancient oak form a door frame, beyond which is a cave. The earthen cave has few stone walls, but the great roots of the surrounding trees and walls of thick wax provide the necessary stability to keep the roof from collapsing. Unfortunately for those who might plan on smoking the bees to sleep, the air always blows out of the cave's mouth, never in. Except where noted, the tunnels within are 9 feet in height, and once past the initial chamber, all the walls, ceilings, and floors are coated in 6 inches of wax. There are numerous *honey lamps* (see **Magic Items** in **Chapter 2**) in the cave on both the walls and the floors (but none on the ceilings except where noted in the text). The Honey Queen has placed these for the benefit of visiting fey, for reasons of aesthetics, and for disguising certain traps. These lamps can't be removed from their locations without destroying them. The fragrant smell of honey and the constant buzzing of thousands of bees fill the whole complex.

Two kinds of bees live in the honey cave. The first, diminutive honey bees, buzz constantly to and fro. Though a few might land on the PCs, these bees aren't aggressive unless the Honey Queen instructs them to be. Giant honey bees also lair within. These giant honey bees are, except for their size, identical to the smaller honey bees in habits and temperament. Despite their generally passive nature, the Honey Queen has set several of them as guards, and these bees fight to the death. Still, you should have a few of these large bees zip noisily past the PCs as a reminder that this is an active, working hive.

AREA 1. THE GUARDIAN

The roots of an ancient tree frame the entrance of this earthen cave. The sweet smell of honey wafts out on the gentle, cool breeze emanating from the large hole. A dark chamber sits just past the entranceway, but light glows from deep within the complex.

An old grizzly bear (use the statistics of a **polar bear**), grown fat on honey and easy living, lairs inside the entrance to the honey cave. A gift from a fey to the Honey Queen years ago and well trained, the bear knows to allow bees, Duxt, the Honey Queen, and anyone who mentions the name of Lyla to enter. Those who don't mention Lyla are forcefully barred entry. The bear attacks if provoked.

A successful DC 13 WIS (Perception) check notices a pile of old bones in the northern corner with a coin purse containing 11 gp.

AREA 2. THE FACE OF Lyla

The scent of honey grows stronger as the dirt floor of the bear's den gives way to a slick, waxy floor. The walls and ceiling are likewise coated with a thick layer of golden wax, all illuminated by the warm glow of lights embedded in the floor. The tunnel opens into a large circular room. Lights, like those in the floor, are embedded in the walls, giving the whole room a golden glow. Clouds of bees buzz busily through the air. Along the walls are benches of stone covered in the ubiquitous beeswax.

This is where guests of the hive, those seeking to do business with the Honey Queen, are expected to wait. Typically, Duxt (see **Area 5**) retrieves expected guests from this chamber and escorts them to the Honey Queen. As the PCs enter the room and get their bearings, tiny bees begin coalescing in the center of the chamber, forming a buzzing swarm. Within 2 rounds, the swarm shapes itself into the three-dimensional head and face of a young girl with curly locks.

This swarm of bees is a manifestation of Lyla, a 12-year-old girl who has been asleep for 50 years. It can shape itself to match the self-image of Lyla, sometimes appearing in the image of a dancing girl, sometimes as a sword fighter, sometimes as a large, talking head.

After a round of shaping itself, the face speaks. The voice is that of a girl, modulated through the filter of a thousand bees. Named Lyla, she serves as the Honey Queen's adopted daughter and spokesperson. If the PCs hurt or killed the guardian bear, she knows this and severely berates them for their rudeness before asking them their business. If the PCs ask about her identity, she becomes recalcitrant, giving them only her name. If they mention their desire for the magic honey, she responds, "Magic is for fey. Not for you!" She doesn't agree to sell them the honey under any circumstances.

If the PCs attack, she retaliates, unleashing herself upon them as a **swarm of bees** (see the **Appendix**). A swarm of bees possessed by the personality of Lyla is identical to other swarms of bees, with the exception that it has a Perception of 13 and is no longer immune to the charmed or frightened conditions. If the swarm is affected by one of those conditions, the swarm is dispersed as Lyla loses influence over the bees.

If the PCs don't attack but persist in going farther into the hive, she says only, "Turn back before it is too late, I warn you," before dissipating.



Honey Queen's Cave

AREA 3. A FLOOR OF HONEY

Just 10 feet beyond the meeting room, the floor of the tunnel is trapped, and a pair of giant bees are under orders to attack any non-bees until notified of guests.

Honey Floor Trap. The wax floor of the tunnel is rigged to break when stepped on, trapping trespassers in two feet of glue-like honey. When triggered, the floor breaks, and each creature in the area must succeed on a DC 12 DEX save or be restrained in honey. A creature, including the restrained creature, can take its action to free the restrained creature by succeeding on a DC 12 STR check. The trap can't be disabled, but it can be spotted with a successful DC 15 WIS (Perception) check.

Creatures. Two **giant honey bees** wait on the wall, just beyond the trapped square. They attack as soon as the PCs enter the spaces containing the trap. They have no regard for their lives and fight to the death. They don't coordinate their attack and simply go straight for the intruder in the lead.

AREA 4. HONEY BEE HIVES

Honeycombs line a recess in the wall that is crawling with tiny honey bees. Golden honey drips thickly from the honeycomb onto the floor.

Many hives fill the tunnels, each with their own tiny queen and workers. The hives work together under the guidance of the Honey Queen. Though the bees don't attack en masse, they sting anyone reaching for the honey or attempting to break off the honeycomb without proper attire, such as gloves. Anyone stung must succeed on a DC 10 CON save or be poisoned for 1 minute.

AREA 5. A THIN FLOOR AND A SHORT FALL

This hallway has been trapped to prevent intruders from reaching the hives of the giant honey bee colony.

Honey Pit Trap. The wax floor is constructed in such a way as to break when someone reaches the designated area. When triggered, the floor drops away, and each creature in the area falls 10 feet into a pit lined with giant honey bee stingers. Each creature takes 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage from falling 10 feet and 5 (2d4) piercing damage. Climbing out of the pit requires a successful DC 13 STR (Athletics) check. The pit can't be disabled, but the weak floor can be spotted with a successful DC 15 WIS (Perception) check.



Creatures. Just beyond the trapped hallway, in a small earthen tunnel, lives a portly, insectoid fey by the name of **Duxt** (see the **Appendix**). Duxt receives room and board from the Honey Queen in exchange for a few light duties, one of which is the guarding of this area. Duxt bursts out of his den, uttering a series of blustery threats, two rounds after the PCs encounter the honey pit trap. He is accompanied by a lone **giant honey bee**, which he directs to attack any intruder not in the pit. The giant honey bee attacks only as long as Duxt is directing it to do so. If Duxt is killed or knocked unconscious, the bee stops attacking and goes about its duties within the hive, oblivious to any threat the PCs might pose.

Duxt knows the location of the Honey Queen and the next trap, and if captured alive, he can easily be made to talk with a successful DC 12 CHA (Intimidation or Persuasion) check. Duxt himself typically gets across the traps by riding on a giant honey bee or climbing on the walls.

Treasure. Duxt keeps a pouch in his lair containing three emeralds, each worth 100 gp.

AREA 6. GIANT BEE CELLS

Set into recesses in the wax-covered walls are giant honeycombs, each dripping with golden honey. In more than one of them, giant honey bee larvae squirm.

There are several of these areas, each one identical except for the number of giant honey bees encountered at each location.

At any given time, each section of giant honeycomb contains 1d3 **giant honey bees**, each busily at work. These giant honey bees ignore the PCs unless attacked or unless the PCs touch one of the larval giant honey bees. If the PCs do either of these things, the giant bees swiftly attack, fighting to the death to protect the young.

A narrow tunnel in the ceiling of the northern-most set of hives leads to Area 7.

AREA 7. THE YOUNG QUEEN

The narrow tunnel exits into a chamber inside the polished hollow of an ancient tree. A high ledge encircles the room, and in several places, eggs rest atop it.

This chamber, set inside the polished hollow of an ancient tree, can be reached only by climbing the tunnel leading up to it from Area 6. Climbing the slick, honey-soaked tunnel requires a successful DC 17 STR (Athletics) check. The room is 20 feet high, and the ledge, upon which the newly laid eggs are first kept, is 15 feet from the rounded floor. Unlike the halls and chambers below, it has no lighting.

Funnel Floor. The round chamber is slick with honey and is sloped like a funnel leading to the tunnel down to Area 6. A creature that moves more than 5 feet on the floor of the room in a turn must succeed on a DC 10 DEX (Acrobatics) check or fall and begin sliding at a speed of 10 feet per turn toward the tunnel in the floor. When a creature reaches the tunnel's mouth, it must succeed on a DC 10 DEX save or fall through the hole and land prone 20 feet below in Area 6.

Creatures. Two **giant honey bees** occupy this chamber, and they attack anyone that climbs to the ledge that holds the eggs. They also attack if either they or the eggs are threatened. Otherwise, they ignore intruders. One of the bees is a young queen and serves as the current egg layer for the giant bee hive. The other is a worker that periodically carries eggs to various honeycombs below.

AREA 8. A THIN FLOOR AND A LONG FALL

This hallway has been trapped to prevent intruders from reaching the chambers of the Honey Queen.

Honey Pit Trap. The wax floor here is constructed similarly to the floor in Area 5 and drops those who walk across it into a pit. This trap works the same as the trap in

Area 5, except it is 20 feet deep, and the check required to climb out of it has a DC of 20.

Creatures. If the PCs fall into the pit, Lyla meets them here rather than in Area 9, choosing to fight them while they are trapped.

AREA 9. LYLA THE SWORD WOMAN

Honey bees swarm in the room. As they buzz and fly, they form an image in the air of a woman dressed in armor. The three-dimensional silhouette, formed of buzzing gold and black bodies, seems to be holding a sword—albeit one made entirely of flying bees. The buzz of a thousand bees forms the voice of a girl, "Intruders! Mother must not be disturbed. What do you want?"

Lyla appears before the PCs again in a guise she views as a powerful warrior, hoping to intimidate the intruders into leaving. Though she is willing to talk to the PCs, Lyla can't be persuaded to allow the PCs to pass. Since they made it this far, she perceives them to be enemies and thieves. Eventually, she attacks, intent on driving the PCs out of the hive. The swarm disperses and re-coalesces into the warrior woman form



throughout combat, but it uses the same statistics as Lyla's other projection in Area 2. Lyla can manipulate any swarm in the hive in this way, but defeating her here leaves her reeling for a time and unable to manipulate another swarm for 1 hour.

AREA 10. THE HONEY QUEEN'S CHAMBERS

The root-filled tunnel opens into a vast, magnificent golden chamber. It is lit by a dozen golden globes, each attached to the plethora of wax-covered roots that have been laced together to form the ceiling. Four more lights are placed around a wax-covered bed of stone on the west side of the room. A young girl lies upon it, apparently asleep, while small honey bees crawl across her face.

This massive chamber has a 30-foot-high ceiling and is filled with roots. Medium or larger creatures treat the chamber as difficult terrain, except the Honey Queen who knows the chamber well and can fly effortlessly through the dangling roots. A creature with a climbing speed can move freely through the room at its climbing speed. Alternatively, each 5-foot section of roots can be attacked and destroyed (AC 10; HP 8; vulnerability to fire; immunity to poison and psychic damage). Destroying a section of roots removes the difficult terrain from that section.

Creature. Honey Queen is the title of a dynasty of awakened queen bees. How these creatures first came to self-awareness remains a mystery, but when one Honey Queen dies, another always rises to take her place. Within the Margreve Forest, the Honey Queen maintains a brisk

TRANSFER OF POWER

Traditionally, when a Honey Queen dies, her gift of intellect transfers magically to a young queen, such as the one in Area 7, transforming her. Thus, there is always a Honey Queen to oversee the hive. If the PCs kill this young queen and subsequently kill the current Honey Queen, the line of queens is broken, and the magic honey ceases to be produced until a new queen matures. If the PCs destroy all the bees in the hive, they also destroy any possibility of a new Honey Queen. Doing so severely angers many important Margrevians, who appreciate the goods produced by this hive. If you are using the **Character Status with the Margreve** rules found in **Chapter 1**, destroying all the bees in the hive reduces the PCs' status with the Margreve by 2, as it goes against the Old Margreve's Community value.

business selling honey (both magical and nonmagical) to the fey of the forest. The bees trade nonmagical honey for glassware, wooden tools, and occasional repairs to the hive tunnels. They trade magic honey for fairy magic, often scrolls or small temporary magical favors, which in turn allow the Honey Queen to continue manufacturing her magic honey.

When the PCs enter this chamber, the **Honey Queen** (see the **Appendix**) exits from the tunnel leading into her laboratory (Area 10B) and promptly demands they state their business.

This final confrontation, the showdown with the Honey Queen, can go several ways, depending on the PCs and how they present themselves to the queen. The Honey Queen isn't overly concerned about her slain bees, for their lives are short, easy to replace, and dedicated to the production of the hive's unique honey. She takes offense to the PCs slaying Duxt, who she views as a valuable if a bit sycophantic asset, and is terse with the PCs if they have slain the fey. Rudeness angers her and overt aggression brings retaliation. Though the queen begins with a neutral attitude, the fact that the PCs have made it this far intrigues her. If the PCs can improve her attitude to friendly through roleplay or a successful DC 15 CHA (Persuasion) check, she relents and sells them the honey they seek. If the PCs attack, she defends herself. If the PCs try to force their way into the laboratory, remove Lyla from her bed, or attempt to intimidate the queen, she likewise becomes aggressive. In short, though the queen isn't naturally violent, neither is she possessed of a generous spirit.

If combat ensues, the Honey Queen surrenders when reduced to 10 hit points or fewer. In surrendering, she is agreeable to two concessions: the PCs can purchase her honey (an uncommon magic item, such as the *ring of warmth* provided by Terelsa, or any item of similar value is accepted as payment), and they may remove Lyla. She doesn't, however, quickly forgive them.

Treasury Bower. In the room's northeastern corner, the queen has created a bower of woven-together roots 20 feet up the wall. The bower functions as her resting place and a storage for special treasures. A successful DC 13 WIS (Perception) check finds the following treasures woven into the roots of the bower: *potion of greater healing*, *potion of mind reading*, and *spells scrolls of mage armor*, *magic missile*, and *pass without trace*. The potions are small vials of honey that otherwise act as potions.

AREA 10A. THE SLEEPING LYL

The child sleeping on the wax-covered bed of stone is Lyla. The PCs may try any number of ways to break the enchantment she lies under. If removed from the care of the bees, she wakes naturally within 1 week, as the spell wears off. Otherwise, the antidote in the next chamber can break the enchantment, and the queen might be convinced to disclose this information.

AREA 10B. THE QUEEN'S LABORATORY

Unlike the rest of the complex, the walls of this smaller side room are cut stone, and the ceiling is worked timber. Oversized counters line the walls, all covered with vials, bottles, jars, burners, candles, and chinks.

This laboratory contains all the equipment, powders, and expensive ingredients needed to manufacture a multitude of magical creations. The Honey Queen uses it to craft her magical honey.

Treasure. Besides the many expensive ingredients in this room, two wax vials containing *ageless honey* sit beside another vial that contains a black-tinged honey (an immediate antidote for *ageless honey*). A fourth vial holds a magic honey that operates identically to a *potion of greater healing*. The queen carries a vial like this one on a belt around her waist, but the curative honey in this room has been manufactured to fill an order from an important Margrevian. A *honey lamp* (see **Magic Items** in **Chapter 2**), resting in a bowl, illuminates the room. If the PCs impress the queen with their diplomatic efforts, she gifts them this lamp.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If the PCs deliver the honey to Terelsa, she makes good on their payment, but she never reveals her client. The true nature of Terelsa's client is outside the scope of this adventure, and the discovery of the truth could provide further adventures for the PCs.

If rescued, Lyla presents her own difficulties. Her family, woodsmen from the borders of the Margreve Forest, are dead or gone, and no one remains to care for her. She awakens disoriented, remembering the events of her slumber only as a dream. If the PCs can find Baba Migori again, the elderly druid takes in and cares for Lyla. Others the PCs have encountered in their travels might also be willing to take in the girl, at your discretion. Within a

month, Lyla begins manifesting magical abilities, including a strong connection with bees.

If the PCs wipe out the honey bees, they might find themselves on the wrong side of the Old Margreve's or the fey courts' attention—or both. See the **Transfer of Power** sidebar earlier in this adventure for more details on the ramifications of killing the entire hive.

If the PCs attacked the Honey Queen and made her surrender, she holds a grudge and might find ways to subtly hinder the PCs from afar while they are in the Margreve Forest.



MAGIC ITEM: AGELESS HONEY

The Honey Queen of the Margreve Forest crafts a unique honey from the pollen of the effildawnan flower. Fey from across Midgard seek out the Honey Queen for this honey and often use it in small doses to keep their mortal companions alive in an ageless slumber between seasonal soirees and once-a-decade events. Only the Honey Queen knows the secret to creating this honey, giving her a uniquely safe place in the ever-evolving hierarchy of the fey.

Ageless Honey

Potion, Rare

Priceless

When you drink this potion, you must make a DC 20 CON save. On a success, you fall into a deep sleep for 1 day. On a failure, you fall into a deep sleep for 30 days. During this time, you are in a magical stasis, don't require sustenance, and don't age. This effect can be ended early only by drinking a dose of the antidote or by a *wish* spell.



THE VENGEFUL HEART

An adventure by Matthew Corley for four to five 3rd-level characters.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Hard times have fallen on the small hamlet of Incot. The families have come together to ration their food, but the outlook for winter is bleak. A week ago, a stranger and his retinue came to them, offering hope and a way to survive the upcoming winter. His request was simple: one gold piece and a hearty meal for a small blood offering; a more substantial tithe would earn as much as five gold pieces. The stranger assured the village folk that they would recover quickly and completely from their donation.

The children were hungry, stores were sparse, and so the choice was easily made. Over the next few days, the stranger was visited by every able-bodied adult in the village. True to his word, the donation took little time, and although uncomfortable, it was hardly debilitating. As he left, the villagers thanked the stranger for his custom, asked him to come back any time, and lauded their gods for the friendly visitor that saved them from starvation.

The stranger's name is Eagehrt, a cultist of the Sanguine Path (see *Demon Cults and Secret Societies*). Eagehrt was dispatched to the Margreve Forest by the Path to gather collybiscus root for a grand ritual. Knowing the forest's deadly reputation, he devised a simple plan: Stop at the first village he came to, ingratiate himself with the locals, and use their blood, given freely or not, to create blood marks (see the **Blood Mark** sidebar) to protect himself and his entourage.

Eagehrt's plan worked beautifully, and the folks of Incot were able to supply enough blood for everyone in his party to have a handful of blood marks. Shortly after leaving Incot, his party was targeted while resting for the night by a scouting party of shadow fey. They survived the encounter, just barely, and in doing so they were forced to use the blood marks they had harvested in Incot. In a matter of minutes, the entire adult population of the hamlet perished. The children of Incot are lost, confused, and looking for protection. Eagehrt and his troops are in search of more villages to replenish their stock of blood marks as they continue their search for the root. The shadow fey,



who lost several of their number to Eagehrt, are looking for revenge—and the PCs are caught in the middle of it all.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Use the following examples as methods to get the PCs involved in this adventure or as inspiration for tying this adventure into your campaign.

An Abandoned Village. The PCs are traveling through the Margreve Forest and find a recently abandoned hamlet. With little effort they discover that all the adult inhabitants of the village are dead, most within their homes or beds. There are no obvious wounds or signs of foul play on the bodies.

Sent from Zobeck. Lucca Angeli, high priestess of Lada in Zobeck, has heard the rumors of increased shadow fey activity in the Margreve Forest. She sends an intermediary to hire the PCs to investigate and report their findings back to her.

Portents and Omens. Visions of dread and disaster have assailed Master Diviner Rudwin Whitstone. He has been able to determine that blood magic and rare material components from the Margreve Forest are involved. Eagehrt Mathye, a suspected member of the Sanguine Path, left for the forest last week, and Master Whitstone hires the PCs to follow and stop him.

THE VILLAGE OF INCOT

A grouping of small huts sits atop a short hill. A well, an animal pen, and a small garden complete the picture of a small and self-sufficient village.

The huts of the village are primitive affairs of daub and wattle with thatch roofs. They aren't particularly distinct and have little to distinguish themselves from one another. If the PCs investigate the huts, read the following:

The door swings open easily, revealing a common room filled with the distinct scent of death. The room holds a fireplace with a large cooking pot on the hearth, and a threadbare cloth is the only separator between this room and the next.

Beyond the hanging cloth, the PCs find a pair of adults motionless on a straw pallet. A smaller, empty pallet lies in the other corner of the room.

This same scene plays out in each of the huts. If the PCs examine all six huts, they find one hut with two small pallets, two huts with a single small pallet, and larger pallets that the adults sleep on in all the huts. There are two dead adults in each hut.

If the PCs examine the bodies, they can learn several pieces of information through successful ability checks that might give them an idea of what happened:

- **DC 10 INT check:** If they don't figure it out themselves, allow the group this check to realize that all the victims are adults and all the children are missing from the village.
- **DC 10 INT (Investigation) check:** A thorough examination of the bodies shows signs of livor mortis.
- **DC 10 WIS (Perception) check:** Each body has a small puncture wound in the crook of its arm.
- **DC 12 WIS (Medicine) check:** The wounds are minor, had begun healing, and could not have caused death in and of themselves.
- **DC 15 WIS (Medicine) check:** The lividity of the bodies indicates that the victims have been dead for about 2 days.
- **DC 20 WIS (Medicine) check:** The bodies have less blood in them than expected.

A PC that makes a cursory examination of the bedroom and succeeds on a DC 12 INT (Investigation) or WIS (Perception) check finds a small pouch poorly hidden away from prying eyes. The contents of the pouch vary depending on whether there were any children in the household (as indicated by small sleeping pallets). If there were children living in the hut, the pouch is empty. If the hut had only adult inhabitants, it contains 5 gp per adult. The coins are from the Free City of Zobeck.

PEN, WELL, AND GARDEN

The door to the pen lies open, and whatever animals had been in it are no longer there. The well and the garden are unremarkable. The PCs can replenish their food and water in these places. PCs who examine the well, garden, or animal pen can make a WIS (Survival) check to gain some or all this information:

- **DC 10:** A well-worn trail leads into the forest.
- **DC 15:** There are two distinct sets of prints, larger Humanoids and a second smaller set of Humanoid tracks.
- **DC 18:** The larger tracks are a few days older than the smaller tracks.

INTO THE MARGREVE

If the PCs follow the trail into the forest, the shadows grow heavier as the canopy gets thicker and the landscape more primeval with each step. This part of the forest is dimly lit, with plentiful shadows. You can use the encounter tables in the **Appendix** to determine any encounters the PCs might face while following the trail.

As the PCs travel, they come across some shadow fey, an owlbear, and Incot's missing children.

WATCHFUL EYES

Five shadow fey emerge from the forest. One of them, a woman with small horns, steps forward. The four other fey flank her, weapons at the ready. "You'll not be so lucky this time. Leave now, or no amount of healing magic will save you."

The leader, named Suzenga, and the other **shadow fey** (see the **Appendix**) previously encountered Eagehrt and his band and assume that the PCs are in league with him. If the PCs succeed on a DC 12 WIS (Perception) check, they notice small wounds, scuffs, and other signs of recent battle on the shadow fey. Any attempts to intimidate the shadow fey immediately incite combat.

If the PCs choose to parley, Suzenga answers questions about their prior encounter. She makes it clear that she wants revenge on Eagehrt and that she's willing to bargain with the PCs. She wants them to deliver Eagehrt to her or to drive him from the forest. She doesn't expect the PCs to defeat him and is satisfied if they engineer an ambush or a similar encounter. Her group keeps tabs on the PCs throughout their journey, watching and making sure they are doing as they promised.

THE OWLBEAR AND FINDING EMPLOYMENT

While following the trail, the PCs notice a second, fresh set of tracks if they succeed on a DC 12 WIS (Survival) check. On a check total of 15, they see that the new tracks are from

SUZENGA (SHE/HER, SHADOW FEY)

Small horns and fangs. Hunting bow and attire. Flowing, white hair.

Background: Suzenga was tasked with leading this hunting party from the Shadow Realm into the Margreve Forest to hunt game for a fey court feast and to collect collybiscus root for the court's alchemist.

Personality Traits: Authoritative, terse, no nonsense.

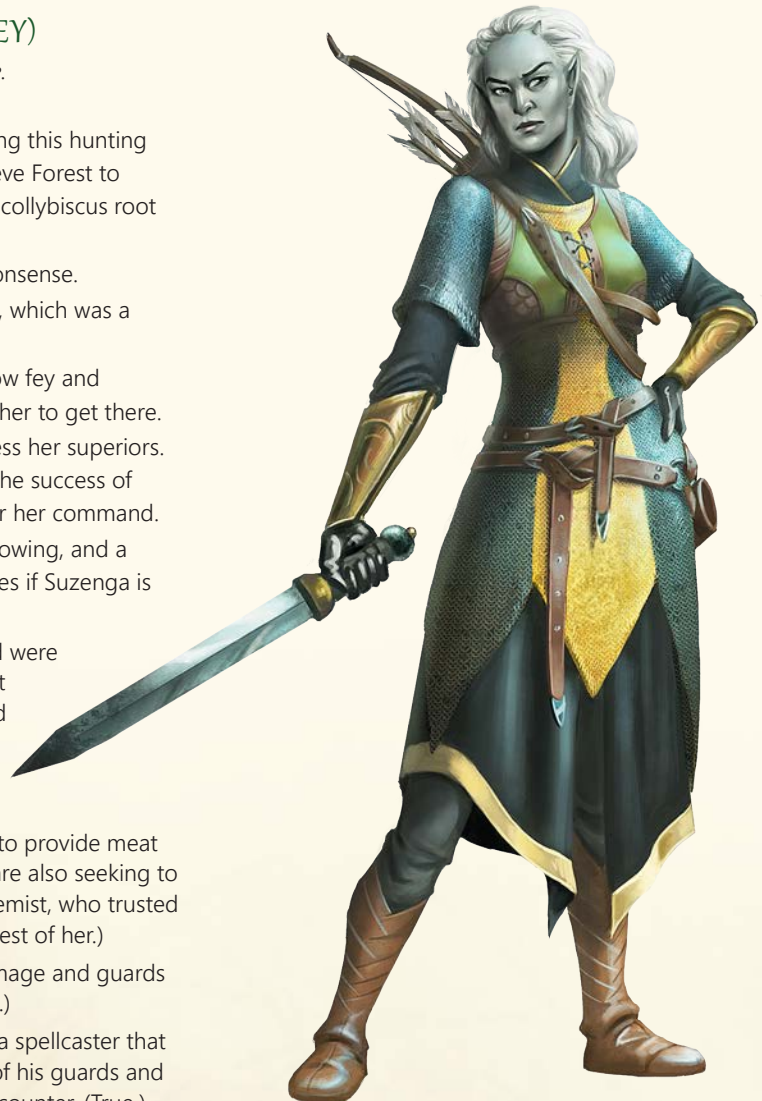
Bonds: Her fellow hunters and her shortbow, which was a gift from her mentor.

Flaws: Eager to rise in the ranks of the shadow fey and unconcerned with whomever might suffer for her to get there.

Wants: To accomplish her mission and impress her superiors. To get revenge on Eagehrt, who jeopardized the success of her mission by killing two of the hunters under her command.

Talking to Suzenga: Suzenga relates the following, and a successful DC 12 WIS (Insight) check determines if Suzenga is lying or withholding information:

- Her group approached Eagehrt's group and were attacked. She implies the attack was without provocation. (Partially true: Eagehrt was told to leave the forest immediately when he revealed he was after the same root they were, and he responded with force.)
- Her group is in the forest on a hunting trip to provide meat for an upcoming feast. (Partially true: they are also seeking to gather a rare plant for their fey court's alchemist, who trusted Suzenga's discretion when making the request of her.)
- Her group was winning the fight, then the mage and guards used blood magic to heal themselves. (True.)
- The group that attacked them consisted of a spellcaster that used blood magic and his six guards. One of his guards and two of the shadow fey didn't survive the encounter. (True.)



a large predator, possibly a bear. On a check total of 18 or higher, they determine that the tracks are from an owlbear and are very fresh.

If the PCs succeeded on the check, they have enough time to prepare for the encounter and possibly surprise the **owlbear**. As soon as the owlbear has been defeated or driven off, read or paraphrase the following:

No sooner has the owlbear been dealt with than the leaves and branches a nearby tree start to move. The branches part and gently deposit four children onto the ground.

The children are from Incot and are the source of the smaller footprints the PCs have been following. When they realized their predicament, they took to the forest. They followed the same trail as Eagehrt toward the nearest village, Wheedon, where they have family.

The oldest, a girl, as tall and waifish as an elf, introduces herself as Chairo. She has a palpable, charismatic presence, and something about her demeanor is slightly unsettling. The other three children, two girls



MAGIC ITEM: BLOOD MARK

Blood marks are gold coins found throughout the Blood Kingdoms of Midgard. They are one of the many ways the blood-drinking nobility gains their tithes from the peasantry. Many people indebted to the vampire nobility also regularly offer their blood to *blood marks* in exchange for lowered debt or as payment for debt. However, people foolish enough to pledge to more than one coin each season might find them all redeemed at once, since such redemptions often happen at great blood feasts. Living creatures that lose too much blood grow weak and die, and desperate peasants discover this to their sorrow at the great feasts each year.

Blood Mark

Wondrous Item, Uncommon

1,000 gp

This coin, more commonly called the drop, resembles a gold ring with a single hole in the center. It holds 1 charge, visible as a red glow in the center of the coin. As an action, you can expend 1 charge and regain 1d6 hit points. At the same time, the Humanoid who pledged their blood to the coin takes necrotic damage and reduces their hit point maximum by an equal amount. This damage lasts until that Humanoid finishes a long rest. It dies if this damage reduces its hit point maximum to 0. You can expend the charges in up to 5 blood marks as part of the same action.

To replenish an expended charge in a *blood mark*, a Humanoid must pledge a pint of their blood in a 10-minute ritual that involves letting a drop of their blood fall through the center of the coin. The drop disappears, and the center fills with a red glow. There is no limit to how much blood a Humanoid can pledge, but each coin can hold only 1 charge. To pledge more, the Humanoid must perform the ritual on another *blood mark*.

and a boy, are younger than Chairo. The girls are Rhosyn, Chairo's sister, and Eriu, her best friend. The boy and the smallest of the bunch, Eoin, is holding hands with Rhosyn.

Considering the circumstances, the children are remarkably calm and in no apparent distress. They defer completely to Chairo, treating her as the leader of their group. Chairo steps forward and addresses the PCs. Without preamble, or so much as mentioning the owlbear, she says:

"You will to take us to Wheedon." She reaches into a filthy pouch and produces ten gold pieces. "I'll give you the rest when we get there."

She gathers the other children and continues down the trail they had been following. If the PCs don't follow her, she turns around, her irritation clear, and reminds them that they are working for her and they need to catch up. A successful DC 12 WIS (Insight) check determines

Chairo's confidence is a little bit of show in front of the other scared children but mostly sincere. A successful DC 15 WIS (Perception) check notices the leaves of the forest seem to reach reverently toward the girl, roots seem to shift ever-so-slightly out of her way, branches seem to curl above her protectively, and Chairo herself leaves no footprints when traveling through the forest. If a PC succeeds on this check and is familiar with the Margreve Forest and its legends (such as from a heritage or background or if the PC is a scholar of the forest), the PC recognizes the girl is one of the forest-hearted (see the **Eastern Heart** section of **Chapter 1**), which are thought by many to be a myth.

Chairo freely chats with the PCs once they are on their way to Wheedon. The trail is noticeably easier to follow now that the children have joined the group. There are no random encounters along the way, and any attempts at foraging or hunting are made with advantage.

CHAIRO (SHE/HER, MAGE APPRENTICE)

Red hair and blue eyes. Confident posture. Wry smirk.

Background: Chairo is the adolescent and eldest child of pig keepers in Incot. She was born forest-hearted, but she is unaware of this. She knows she has some connection to the forest and that her minor magical powers come from that connection. With her parents gone and her life in upheaval, she plans to seek more knowledge about her connection after she ensures those in her care are safe.

Personality Traits: Confident in her role as leader of her group. Protective of the children in her care.

Bonds: The children of Incot. Subconsciously, the Margreve Forest.

Flaws: Naïve to the dangers of being a forest-hearted. Self-assured and frequently over-confident and reckless, often brought about by the forest's tendency to protect her.

Wants: To ensure the children of Incot reach safety and their relatives in Wheedon. To make Eagehrt pay for what he did to Incot and their parents.

Talking to Chairo: Chairo can relate everything from the **Adventure Background** section as seen from the eyes of a child, and she can relate the following details (in order):

- The adults were not sick when they went to bed, but they didn't wake up.
- The children waited to see if anyone would come to Incot or if the adults would awaken.
- She decided they should leave, and they took money from their parents and left.
- She doesn't know exactly what the stranger did to her parents, just that they were tired afterward, and as soon as they seemed to be getting better, they died. She suspects Eagehrt is behind the "illness."



THE VILLAGE OF WHEEDON

The journey to Wheedon is remarkably uneventful. The path is clear, game is plentiful, and the children are in excellent spirits. Early the next morning, the path becomes a road of sorts, and soon Wheedon stands in the distance.

The PCs enter the town just as Eagehrt and his entourage are leaving. A small group of villagers have come to see them off. He has performed his rituals, paid for the donations, and is continuing his mission. Much the same as at Incot, the folk of Wheedon consider Eagehrt's intervention a blessing.

WHEN CHAIRO SEES EAGEHRT

Before the children and Eagehrt's retinue get too close together, but after Chairo gets a good look at him, the situation changes quickly.

The forest comes alive, and the air thickens suddenly with humidity. Clouds gather overhead. The ever-present sounds of the forest disappear. Everything is deathly still. In a small voice, Rhosyn says, "Chairo? What's happening? You're scaring me ..."

As an aspect of the forest seems to have taken hold of Chairo. Her hair whips in the air around her, and her eyes shimmer with magic. A primeval rage plays across her face, and she starts to move in the direction of the man at the head of the entourage.

Chairo is intent on bringing harm to Eagehrt for what he did in Incot, and the nearby forest is responding to her rage. The PCs must succeed on a DC 13 CHA (Persuasion) check to calm her, or she confronts Eagehrt. As she calms down, the aspect of the forest leaves her, and she stands in place, breathing heavily and not quite aware of what just happened. If the PCs calmed her, Eagehrt is far enough away that he didn't see what transpired.

CONFRONTING EAGEHRT


If Chairo confronts Eagehrt, the venom of her words is enough to stop him in his tracks. He takes a step back before remembering who she is and realizing that a little girl is berating him before the villagers and his guards. Chairo loses steam after a few moments and moves away, clearly exhausted.

If the PCs calm Chairo and prevent her tirade, Eagehrt greets them with indifference. The villagers are simple folk and describe Eagehrt's ritual if asked. They confirm that though they were tired afterward, there are no apparent long-term effects.

Eagehrt is the epitome of a selfish, arrogant, and narcissistic noble. A successful DC 12 WIS (Insight) check can see that Eagehrt, a **fanatic cultist**, is uneasy and nervous. His time in the Margreve Forest has been difficult, and he wants to return to Zobeck. He has five **cultists** with him, who act as his guards. Eagehrt admits to being sent into the forest to gather rare plants but is vague on the details. He says he will leave this "gods-forsaken" forest once he has them.

Eagehrt doesn't reveal his affiliation with the Sanguine Path under any circumstances and doesn't know what the collybiscus root will be used for. While in the Margreve Forest he has visited two villages, Incot and Wheedon. In both places, he has offered gold in exchange for a tithe of blood. Eagehrt believes the ritual is a fair exchange for the gold he is offering. If pressed, he reluctantly explains the basics of how *blood marks* work and say they are necessary to ensure his safety while in the dangerous forest. When asked





about the shadow fey, he glances at the forest nervously and says he is convinced they are everywhere, hunting him and his guards.

He is afraid of the shadow fey and of going back into the forest. If the PCs haven't thought of it already, he suggests that he would no longer need the *blood marks* and would be willing to leave the forest if the PCs get the collybiscus root for him. Once she hears this, Chairo urges the PCs to save this village the potentially lethal effects of the *blood marks*.

If the PCs approach Eagehrt with hostility or attack, he and his cultists fight to the best of their ability and freely use their *blood marks* (they each have four) as needed. For every two *blood marks* expended, one villager dies before the PCs' eyes. Eagehrt accepts surrender from the PCs, and in return, he expects them to retrieve the collybiscus root and return it to him in exchange for their lives.

FINDING THE PLANT

Eagehrt describes the collybiscus plant in detail, providing a drawing as a reference. Showing the villagers the picture gives the PCs a +1 bonus on their first check to locate the plant. Showing the picture to Chairo gives the PCs advantage on all their checks to find the collybiscus plant, as she gives them detailed directions. Chairo and the children don't accompany the PCs into the forest.

While searching in the forest, the PCs must make a DC 15 INT (Nature) check each hour to find signs of the root. After three successful checks, the PCs find a small forest glen with several patches of the root—more than enough to satisfy Eagehrt's needs. You can use the encounter tables in the **Appendix** to determine any encounters the PCs might face while searching the forest.

Collybiscus root grows only in the Margreve Forest and is said to have connections to the fey realms, giving the resulting concoction unique magical properties when processed correctly. Suzenga's group was tasked with gathering some of the collybiscus root for her court's alchemist. After discovering Eagehrt was also seeking the plant, she tasked her second-in-command, a **shadow fey guardian** (see the **Appendix**) named Vuldrud, with protecting this glen while she took the others to hunt for game and Eagehrt. The guardian has been made aware of the PCs by Suzenga, and how he reacts to them depends on their previous actions:

- If the PCs agreed to help Suzenga, the guardian greets them cordially and allows them to take collybiscus root from one of the patches in the glen—an amount sufficient to fulfill Eagehrt's request.
- If the PCs meet with Suzenga, refused her request, but were otherwise not hostile to her, the guardian greets them and warns them that they aren't welcome in the

glen. He attacks if they persist in taking the root, but he can be convinced to let them take a patch of the root with a successful DC 15 CHA (Persuasion) check.

- If the PCs were hostile toward or even killed Suzenga or her hunting party, the guardian attacks them from the shadows the moment they enter the glen, fighting to the death to avenge his fallen comrades and protect the root.

Regardless of how the encounter plays out, the PCs must make their way back to Eagehrt with the plant. Returning to Wheedon requires half a day of travel and a successful DC 12 WIS (Survival) check. On a failure, the return trip takes a full day and risks a random encounter in the forest (see the **Encounter Tables** in the **Appendix**).

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Chairo and the children stayed in Wheedon while the PCs were in the forest, all being accepted into the homes of their relatives. Eagehrt waits impatiently in the village for his plants. What happens next is largely dependent on the actions the PCs have taken to this point, what their intent is regarding the collybiscus, and any promises they made to Suzenga.

If the PCs were hostile to Suzenga or refused to work with her, her group attacks and kills Eagehrt when he leaves Wheedon, which results in the deaths of many of the villagers of Wheedon, if the PCs didn't convince him to part with the *blood marks*. The consequences of Eagehrt's death will be felt from Wheedon to Zobeck.

If the PCs gave Eagehrt the root and tell Suzenga they convinced Eagehrt to leave the forest, the shadow fey finish their duties in the forest and return to the Shadow Realm without further bloodshed.

If the PCs killed Suzenga or Eagehrt, they gain new enemies in the shadow fey or the Sanguine Path. These new enemies might hinder the PCs in future adventures in the Margreve Forest or Zobeck.

If the PCs didn't calm Chairo and she was allowed to approach and berate Eagehrt, other villagers witnessed and talk about the event. Rumors of the girl's power might eventually reach the ears of Baba Yaga, potentially changing the fate of the Old Margreve and its Eastern Heart.

Adventure Hook Conclusions. For PCs following the Portents and Omens adventure hook, reporting to the Master Diviner about the Sanguine Path and Eagehrt's actions in the forest earns them a new ally and contact within Zobeck. For PCs following the Sent from Zobeck adventure hook, the priesthood of Lada views them as agents of light and protectors of the people and may call on them again in the future when more public channels aren't appropriate.



CHALLENGE OF THE FANG

An adventure by Dan Voyce for four to five 4th-level characters.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Some stories never die. They demand to be told again and again. They weave themselves into reality, age-old rituals with age-old power. Mortals, of course, forget such things. Even long-lived elves forget, in time. But the Old Margreve remembers, and now the time has come for one such ancient tale to play out yet again. The Challenge of the Fang is a battle between wolf and man—between the tooth and claw of nature, and the fire and steel of civilization—for the Old Margreve's blessing. Chosen by omens, an innocent is sent into the forest, sought by both sides—one trying to devour her, the other to save her. Whoever wins earns the forest's favor for three generations. In the early days of the forest, the Beasts always won the Challenge, leaving the forest a perpetually scary and hostile place, but recent centuries have seen Humanoids victorious more and more often, making the forest more hospitable and allowing for

the development of villages and even the Great Northern Road within its borders.

This time, a young girl named Czerwonya wears the red cloak that marks a sacred offering. While she was being sent into the forest by her tearful father, deep in the Margreve Forest the title of Would-Be-King of Wolves was taken by the smartest and toughest of the lupine horde, and that creature set off to hunt her down. The third part of the ritual triad is the Hunter, wielder of axe and fire, who must slay the wolf to ensure that it is civilization that gains the forest's boon. Fate chooses a PC to fill this role.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

A panicked horse carries a dead man into the PCs' midst, with wolves pursuing close behind. Brave PCs can claim the woodsman's magic hatchet, called *Wolf Killer*. At the nearest refuge, Czerwonya's father pleads for help, and fellow travelers turn out to be shapeshifters in service to the Would-Be-King of Wolves.

Heading into the deep woods, the PCs are tested in their knowledge of the Old Ways. Besting these challenges earns help and grudging respect from local fey. Failure means an encounter with the Mora—moths whose touch brings lethal apathy and deadly dreams.

Their final destination is the tree house of a forest crone, nestled in the canopy of a meandering treant. The lupine champion has devoured the witch, who is visibly writhing in its swollen belly. The outcome of this battle decides not just the fate of Czerwonya but who gains the Old Margreve's blessing: beast or man.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Fate chooses the PCs to represent the forces of civilization in the Challenge of the Fang, and this decision is enforced by the Old Margreve itself. PCs with connections to the fey or to nature wake that morning with an ambiguous but strong impression that the forest has a task for them. The Old Margreve also lures them in with twisting trails and misdirection, sending PCs to the Paths of Gamayun whether they want to go there or not.

Recalcitrant PCs can be hooked in several ways. Local druids and elders can communicate the forest's will—stressing the honor of being chosen, the danger if the wolves should succeed, and the sure death of an innocent girl. If greed can sway the PCs, Czerwonya's father also offers a magical reward.

PART 1: ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE FOG

The adventure begins as the PCs travel the Great Northern Road, clouds descending from the nearby mountains to become fog. Their ultimate destination is immaterial, for fate will interrupt the journey. You can stage this adventure wherever you want along the road.

FIGHT IN THE FOG

The PCs are near the end of a day's travel. The sun is descending behind the tree line, and a thickening fog muffles the sounds of the forest, making it seem as if the PCs were one step removed from the normal world. A

MAGIC ITEM: WOLF KILLER

Every few generations, the Old Margreve puts forth the Challenge of the Fang, choosing a Humanoid as the Hunter, a lupine creature as the Wolf King, and a Humanoid child as the victim to be protected or consumed. The Hunter is gifted *Wolf Killer* by the forest, often still held in the clutches of the previous Hunter, who wielded it until their death. The axe compels the Hunter to protect or save the victim while the Challenge is active. There is only one *Wolf Killer* in existence, and it is said the axe—and often its wielder—return to the Margreve Forest when the wielder dies, remaining hidden within the forest until the axe is needed by the next Hunter.

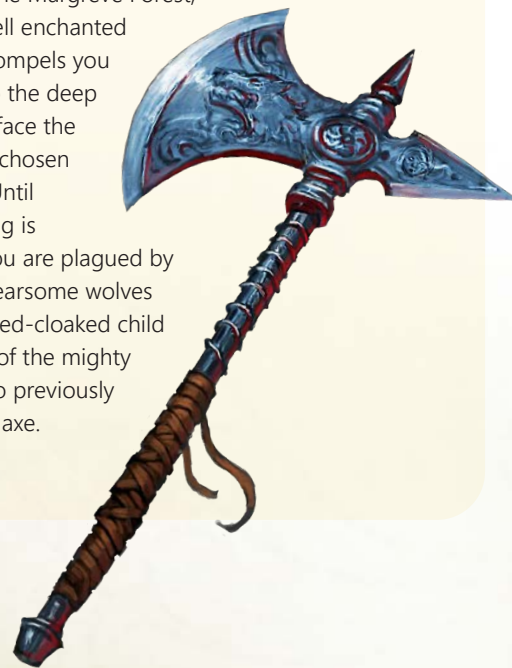
Wolf Killer

Weapon (handaxe), rare (requires attunement) Priceless
This ancient silver hatchet was cast by the first woodsman to face the Challenge of the Fang. One side of the blade is engraved with a snarling wolf's face, the other with a young child's visage. You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon.

When you use it to hit a wolf, canine, or creature with the Shapechanger tag or associated subtags, the creature takes an extra 2d6 damage of the weapon's type, and it becomes frightened until the start of your next turn.

When you use it to hit a creature that has the Shapechanger tag or associated subtags or a creature that isn't in its true form, the creature must succeed on a DC 13 CHA save or immediately return to its true form.

Challenge of the Fang. The axe has a permanent *geas* spell enchanted in it. Attuning to the axe places you under this *geas* until you are targeted by the *remove curse* spell or similar magic. Dropping the axe doesn't end the *geas* on you. While the Challenge of the Fang is active in the Margreve Forest, the *geas* spell enchanted in the axe compels you to head into the deep woods and face the Challenge's chosen Wolf King. Until the Wolf King is defeated, you are plagued by dreams of fearsome wolves pursuing a red-cloaked child and visions of the mighty Hunters who previously wielded the axe.





distant sound grows louder by the moment, and it becomes clear that the clatter of galloping hooves is coming from behind the group:

A wild-eyed horse bursts out of the fog, blood flying from its wounded flanks. Its fur-swathed rider sways in the saddle, gleaming hatchet in his hand.

The PCs' mounts and animals might panic, but can be prevented from doing so with a successful WIS (Animal Handling) check (DC 10 for battle-trained creatures and DC 17 for other animals). The horse runs straight into their midst, its rider bouncing and swaying but not making an attack. Any blow sends him tumbling to the ground, but he was dead long before the blow was swung. Both horse and master have been mauled, but the rider seems to have died of old age rather than his wounds. He is swathed in wolf furs, and his saddle and tack look ancient. Clasped in his death grip is a silver hatchet.

Give the PCs a round or two to react, and then read or paraphrase the following:

Low shapes prowl nearby, hazy silhouettes in the fog. From the mist a gravelly voice says, "That prey is ours. Leave it and be gone, and we may spare you."

The fog makes the entire area heavily obscured, but the speakers quickly make their presence known.

Creatures. Five awakened wolves (use the statistics of a wolf, except its INT is +0) lurk in the fog, using scent to detect the PCs. They are proud and belligerent if the party tries to talk, demanding the surrender of the horse, the man, and the man's axe. Although able to converse in Common, these wolves know nothing of the civilized world. They call the axe by its name, *Wolf Killer*, and Humanoids "furless" or "two-legs." If asked who sent them, they say only, "One who would be king."

The wolves lunge out of the fog before retreating, only to attack again from a different direction. If a PC is wielding *Wolf Killer* (see the **Wolf Killer** sidebar), the wolves attempt to take it. When a wolf bites that PC and the PC fails the STR save, the PC is disarmed of the weapon instead of being knocked prone, and the weapon falls to the ground at the PC's feet. The wolves make off with the axe if possible, taking an action to pick up the unwieldy object by mouth. The fog continues to thicken, and twilight soon gives way to impenetrable darkness. If the wolves make off with the axe, all is not lost, however. The Old Margreve wants the challenge to be fair, and the Would-Be-King sending wolves to prevent the axe from reaching a Hunter is a dirty trick in the eyes of the forest. It hinders the thieving wolf's movement and makes the wolf's tracks obvious for the PCs to follow, even in the gloom.

After the PCs defeat the wolves and have the axe in hand, the forest subtly directs them to a small coaching inn off the beaten path, a refuge from the encroaching darkness and thickening fog.

REFUGE AND REVELATION

Flickering hearth flames send light and shadow dancing across the room. A man nurses an empty flagon by the fire, looking up with tearful eyes. Nearby, a shriveled crone tells the fortune of an awed young man while a dwarf peddler sharpens knives on a small, mechanical grinding wheel. Another corner is filled with road-stained pilgrims, intent on a card game while a pair of barber-surgeons, gaily dressed and overloud, lean on the bar and court the attentions of a flustered serving girl.

The barber-surgeons, Janusz and Marek, are loud and drunk but otherwise harmless. The dwarf is Baldernek Gunnacksen, traveling mainly for some respite from his large and disputatious family. The young man having his fortune told is Pavel Gruszka, on his way to be married in a nearby village. All four individuals use the statistics of a **commoner**.

The main topics of gossip are the ill-omened weather and how wolves seem to be growing bolder and more cunning of late.

THE FORTUNE TELLER

Mother Babushka is a tiny and wrinkled, elderly human woman, almost buried beneath a cloak of owl feathers and layers of patterned cloth. Patches of moss and wood-like nubs mark her skin, a sure sign of someone who has drunk deep of the Margreve Forest's power. She calls to anyone passing by:

"A coin for your future, traveler? I know much that is spoken of in the gossip of crows, the howls of wolves, and the whispers of leaves."

If *Wolf Killer* is carried by a PC, Babushka watches its bearer with an odd look in her eyes. She wistfully admits to knowing one of its previous bearers long ago, having worn the red cloak herself once upon a time. She knows that the Challenge of the Fang involves a battle with the Would-Be-King of Wolves and tests in a sacred place called the Paths of Gamayun.



If anyone asks to have their fortune told, she has that individual drip candle wax into a bowl of cold water, then examines the shapes that form:

"I see choice, catechism, and consequences. You will pass through places that were old before iron was born, and iron will avail you little there. Knowledge of the Old Ways is better than sword or shield. Not all that's devoured is dead and gone. When offered a choice, the brave may earn a great reward by boldly choosing 'All!'"

THE DESPERATE FATHER

The tearful man is Hodel Köhler, drowning his sorrows in cheap liquor. Nervously wringing his hands, he soon approaches the PCs, as they appear to be capable combatants to him, then he bursts into tears, begging for help. He says that his daughter has become lost in the forest, and no one dares go look for her. His emotions are genuine, but a successful DC 17 WIS (Insight) check can tell that he is hiding something. If the PCs press him on this, he proves to be poor at concealing the truth.

The truth is that his daughter, Czerwonya, was chosen to take part in the Challenge of the Fang, and he felt he had no choice but to submit to the forest's will and hope that civilization's chosen champion could save her. Hodel starts out indifferent toward the party, becoming friendly if he sees that someone carries *Wolf Killer* or if the PCs assure him they will save his child.

A PC might recognize Hodel's story, with a successful DC 14 INT (History) check. A PC that was raised in the Margreve Forest or that is otherwise familiar with its legends, such as from the PC's heritage, background, or training, has advantage on this check. Hodel's story is like many ancient stories from different locales, but the root always seems to be some kind of contest between beast (typically wolves) and humanity, with the life of an innocent caught in the middle. If the PCs show *Wolf Killer* to him, Hodel's face lights up with hope. He begs its bearer to slay the creature the forest chose to be the next Wolf King. If the PCs ask where Czerwonya might be, he tells them to head into the forest. "The Old Margreve will guide you," he assures them. Then he offers them a small gift:

"Long ago, I saw the firebird and tried to catch it, but all I managed to grab was this. Please take it with you as a light for the dark places and a token of my love for little Czerwonya."

Treasure. Hodel promises his eternal gratitude if they save his daughter, but he can provide little in the way of a cash incentive. As a gift however, he presents a small tin box that is warm to the touch. Inside is a golden *firebird feather* (see **Magic Items in Chapter 2**), which flickers with a flame that never burns out.

In exchange for the feather, Hodel asks that the PCs stand beneath one of the nearby trees with him and swear to save his daughter. No magical force binds them to their oath, but the tradition is common among those who practice the Old Ways when a great promise is asked of someone.

WOLVES IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING

The pilgrims, of which there are ten (four **scouts**, five **commoners**, and a leader), wear green woolen cloaks and the holy symbol of the Green Gods. Their occasional unfriendly glances suggest that they are sizing up the PCs.

They rebuff attempts at conversation or requests to join them, seemingly obsessed with a deck of fortune-telling cards that their leader is dealing from. Again and again, he casts readings for his companions, and a handful of cards keep cropping up each time. If a PC gets a good look at these repeating cards, they see something strangely familiar in the cards: each represents one of the PCs, suggesting that the fates of the pilgrims and the PCs are soon to be intertwined.



Four of these men (the scouts) are vargamors—woodsmen who worship the power of the wolf and use enchanted oils to take on lupine characteristics. Repeated use of *worg salve* (see **Magic Items** in **Chapter 2**) has left them all with physical characteristics like those of werewolves: moon-shaped birthmarks on their palms, elongated index fingers, snaggletooth grins, eyes that reflect the moonlight, and brows that meet in the middle.

Their leader, Boleslav, is a **werewolf** and a *šestaci*—a wicked man with six fingers on each hand who can see the true form of ala and serves their evil whims.

Destined Attack. Boleslav and the vargamors know their fates are linked with the PCs and prefer to attack when they can get the upper hand on them—such as when the PCs are asleep or occupied with eating—or as soon as their cover is blown. Boleslav flees in wolf form if the battle goes poorly.

The travelers—Baldernek, Hodel, and the barber-surgeons—assist the PCs as well as they can but are terrified of the curse of lycanthropy and of being overmatched by the vargamors' ferocity. Mother Babushka mysteriously disappears during the fight.

Beast Versus Man. From this point onward, lupine adversaries shadow the PCs' every move. If they stray from the path set out by the forest for the Challenge, the Old



Margreve sets wolves, worgs, werewolves, and vargamors on them. All try to make a name for themselves by killing the PCs or stealing *Wolf Killer*.

Treasure. Each vargamor has one or two doses of *worg salve*. Boleslav carries an amulet of lightning-struck stone in the shape of an ala (50 gp).

PART 2: THE PATHS OF GAMAYUN

Whether or not they are searching for the missing girl, once they leave sight of civilization, the PCs are engulfed in the Old Margreve's power. The forest leads them ever deeper; paths shift, compasses veer, noises lure them on, and dangerous creatures block the way home. They are drawn inexorably into the deep woods. At some point in their travels, read:

The forest path narrows toward a living arch formed from a pair of intertwining trees. Flanking it are gnarled trees in vaguely humanoid shapes, almost swallowed by weeds. Vines curl around their branches, and tiny flowers poke through their beards of moss. Beyond the arch, thick briars and brambles flank a narrow path.

Creatures. The two trees flanking the entrance are **awakened trees**. They slumber here, guarding this ancient path of the Challenge of the Fang. They awaken and attack only if they are attacked or if the PCs attempt to burn the bramble maze beyond their arch. Anyone who examines them closely notices tiny ribbons, twisted leaves, and other offerings in their branches. Adding a token to the branches marks a PC as respectful of and faithful to the forest's power, which is noted by the fey that wait farther in.

TRAVELING THE PATHS

If the PCs pass through the arch, they have embarked upon the Paths of Gamayun. This is a labyrinth with no physical solution; it forms and shifts according to the Old Margreve's will, and the only way to leave is by confronting the tests that await the PCs (detailed later in this adventure) or forcing a way out through the thick, tall briars flanking the trail (treat as a *wall of thorns* spell). The path forks many times during their journey, but if the party splits up, the PCs find themselves meeting up again at the site of their next test.

Time is of the essence in reaching Czerwonya before the Would-Be-King of Wolves does, and PCs can speed their journey by making checks to reveal the best path to take through the maze. Intersperse these checks with the minor encounters described below:

- **DC 14 WIS (Perception) check:** See a strand of red cloth caught on a thorn.
- **DC 11 WIS (Survival) check:** Identify local trail marks that show the correct path.

- **DC 12 WIS (Survival) check:** Spot wolf tracks or a child's footprints in the mud.

The following minor encounters can be used to add extra detail to the PCs' journey through the maze:

- **Crumbling Cadavers.** Dusty gray corpses crouch in the underbrush, some huddled in fear and others curled up as if merely sleeping. They are the remains of those who failed the tests and became victims of the Mora. Touching a corpse makes it to crumble to dust.
- **Laughing Little Man.** A **sprite** follows the PCs, taunting and hindering them. It's all good fun, though, and PCs who can laugh at themselves earn the sprite's respect. Those who attack the sprite suffer ill fortune and minor inconveniences throughout their time in the forest.
- **Polymorphing Pool.** A pool of water reflects not the viewer's appearance but the animal that best fits their personality. Drinking from the pool changes the PC into an animal for 1 minute, as the *polymorph* spell.
- **Wolfish Wiles.** A silver-tongued **worg** shadows the PCs' progress from beyond the wall of briars. It tries to convince them to abandon their quest so that wolves can take their rightful place as masters of the forest. It offers *worg salve*, an opportunity to become a lycanthrope, and the friendship of its kind as bribes.

Three tests await the PCs as they navigate the labyrinth. They encounter the tests in the order presented here, and they must complete all three before the forest lets them leave the labyrinth.

THE TEST OF KNOWLEDGE

A small river runs across the path ahead. Dark, muddy water swirls and bubbles around a ford composed of mossy stepping stones.

The river is 25 feet wide, and though the water swirls and bubbles, it is no challenge for most swimmers. A creature can hop across the stones with a successful DC 12 STR (Athletics) or DEX (Acrobatics) check. As the PCs approach the river, a **selkie** leaps out onto a mossy stone in seal form. It barks at them:

"How dare you tread in her sacred place! I demand tribute for this affront!"

The Test. This encounter tests the PCs' knowledge and respect of the Old Ways, which teach respect to the denizens of the forest, especially the fickle fey. A successful DC 15 INT (History) check recalls the teachings of the Old Ways. Alternatively, a PC familiar with the Margreve Forest and its traditions, such as from the PC's heritage,

background, or training, automatically understands the test's challenge.

The selkie grows indignant if asked too many questions, and the PCs fail the test if they kill the selkie. To pass the test, the PCs must provide the selkie with some kind of tribute. Such tribute can be food, a gold coin, a funny story, a colorful bit of cloth, or similar memory or bauble.

THE TEST OF RESOLVE

A break in the bramble reveals a clearing with a green pavilion tent, an archery butt, and a stone altar covered in cakes, ribbons, fruit, and flowers. Two women with emerald eyes stand beside the altar.

The clearing appears to be the perfect campsite and is purposefully inviting. A successful DC 12 WIS (Perception) check notices wolf prints and impressions in the ground where wolves lounged.

Creatures. These two **vila** (see the **Appendix**) are Iwona ("yew tree") and Jagoda ("berry"). Iwona, the elder, is calmer and shrewder. Jagoda is more vivacious but quicker to anger. They are friendly, if somewhat aloof. They invite the party to rest a moment, and they become angry if the PCs try to depart in disrespectful haste.

The Test. This encounter tests the PCs' resolve in their mission, as the vila focus on distracting them. The vila suggest a meal, then a friendly archery competition, and various other diversions (including hints of a possible romantic liaison) to distract the PCs from their purpose.

They also have a request: they ask to administer a single slap to each PC, to remind each one of the seriousness of their quest and the seriousness of oaths taken in the forest. This slap deals 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage. If the target has ever broken an oath sworn in the forest, the target takes an additional 28 (8d6) lightning damage. Oath-breakers are scorned and reviled by the forest and its fey. If the PCs swore to Hodel beneath a tree to rescue his daughter (as detailed in **Part 1**), they aren't considered oath breakers unless they actively try to escape these tests and the Challenge of the Fang altogether or if they later fail to rescue the child.

The PCs fail this test if they refuse the vila's slap request, if they allow themselves to be overly delayed (spending more than 1 hour in the clearing), or if more than one PC proves to be an oath-breaker.

Archery Contest. If the PCs accept the vila's archery challenge, the vila and the PCs take turns shooting an archery target. The target has an AC of 10. The creature with the highest attack roll result wins that round of shots. The turns continue one at a time until each participant has taken three shots. The participant with the most winning shots wins the contest.



Treasure. Each vila carries three *sand arrows* (see **Magic Items** in **Chapter 2**) in addition to their normal equipment, which they use to confound violent PCs and offer as a prize to anyone who can beat them at archery.

THE TEST OF TALENT

The maze ends at a circular clearing. An elderly woman with green skin sits cross-legged on a flat rock surrounded by bones. She finishes sucking the marrow out of a bone then says, "Greetings, would-be champions of axe and flame. I am the final test of the Paths of Gamayun. I offer you three challenges: one of skill, one of strength, and one of wits—choose one now or the game is over, and I'll feast on more than bones!"

The woman on the rock is a **green hag** named Stuhac. She is haughty, scornful, and thoroughly enjoys that she oversees this set of challenges. Countless eyes peer out from the underbrush, as dozens of fey and other forest denizens observe the final test.

Stuhac presents the PCs with a choice of one of three challenges. She responds angrily if the PCs recall Mother Babushka's advice and demand to try all three challenges, but she acquiesces grudgingly if they insist. She also reacts poorly to threats, violence, or attempts to avoid trying any of the challenges.

CHALLENGE OF SKILL

A PC must play a balalaika that is crawling with a **swarm of insects**. Doing this requires three successful DC 15 DEX (Sleight of Hand) checks to avoid disturbing the wasps, then one successful DC 12 CHA (Performance) check to play a decent tune. Failing more than one Sleight of Hand check imposes disadvantage on the Performance check. On each failed Sleight of Hand check, the swarm deals 5 (2d4) piercing damage before settling back down on the balalaika. Stuhac heckles the PC throughout, but if the PC is still successful on the Performance check, the hag is satisfied. If all checks are successful, both Stuhac and the watching fey are highly impressed.

CHALLENGE OF STRENGTH

This test involves outwrestling a **brown bear**. The bear uses its action each round to attempt to grapple the PC. The first creature to maintain a grapple on the other creature for two rounds in a row wins the challenge. Stuhac taunts and jests at the PC each time the PC is grappled, fails to grapple the bear, or fails to escape the bear's grapple.

CHALLENGE OF WITS

Stuhac produces a gul bara (backgammon) board of lacquered green and black wood and invites the PCs to choose one of their number to defeat her in a game.

Stuhac and the PC playing against her must each make a DC 10 INT check each round, taking turns rolling dice and moving pieces on the board. The creature with the highest INT check result wins that round. The turns continue one at a time until each participant has made five checks. The participant with the highest number of winning rounds wins the game.

Stuhac uses magic to cheat and has a +3 total bonus to her check. A PC can detect she is cheating with a successful DC 15 WIS (Insight) check. If the PCs point out she is cheating, she hits the board angrily, jostling the pieces and requiring the game to start over—without her gaining the extra bonus from cheating. If the PC wins the challenge, Stuhac hurls the board into the trees in a fit of rage.

COMPLETING THE CHALLENGES

If the PCs win at least one challenge, they are permitted to depart unmolested. If they overcame all three of Stuhac's challenges, she is forced to grant them a boon: a *rust bag of tricks*, *boots of elvenkind*, or the return of *Wolf Killer* (if the PCs don't have it).

If the PCs fail all three challenges (or refuse to play), Stuhac magnanimously offers to let them go unmolested if someone volunteers to be eaten. If they refuse that bargain, she attacks them.

FAILING THE TESTS: ENTER THE MORA

Some say the Mora is a swarm awoken by the Old Margreve; others that its moths are possessed by the spirits of witches and shadow fey, who gather to drink the dreams and souls of travelers. If the PCs fail all the tests, refuse to try them, force their way out of the maze or otherwise anger the forest, it sends the Mora (use the statistics of a **swarm of insects**, except the swarm has a flying speed instead of a climbing speed) to punish them.

If the PCs defeat the Mora, they can go on their way, or they can return to the Paths of Gamayun and try again.

PART 3: THE BELLY OF THE BEAST

One way or another, the party leaves the Paths of Gamayun, and the trail leads back into the forest proper. Allow the PCs time for a long rest after their trials, before they come across a small dell where Czerwonya spent the night.

A GATHERING OF DOLLS

The remains of an improvised camp sit in a small dell, the fire pit properly ringed with stones and the ashes scattered. The underbrush is filled with small wooden dolls, their paint faded and peeling, that ring the camp as if watching over it.

Several small boot prints, a strand of red wool, and an impression where a small body was curled up in the mossy earth mark this site. The dolls are nonmagical, but there is no sure sign of how they got there. A PC that makes a successful DC 12 INT (Religion) check surmises that they serve as proxy sacrifices, left on altars and set adrift in streams by superstitious villagers throughout the region.

Ringling the camp are the tracks of a large wolf. It circled the clearing several times, then apparently ran off ahead of the girl.

Just beyond the camp are a series of odd, uneven depressions in the underbrush about 3 feet in diameter and almost as deep. The tracks are easily found by anyone who searches the area. Identifying them as **treant** tracks requires a successful DC 15 INT (Nature) check. Czerwonya's footprints follow these tracks for a while before suddenly vanishing, but the treant tracks continue. If the PCs don't surmise that the child hitched a ride with the treant, they soon hear the treant moving through the forest nearby.

GRANDMA'S HOUSE

Czerwonya's destination is the tree house of Mother Babushka, the ancient crone who might have read the PCs' fortune back at the inn. Her hut is nestled in the leafy canopy of a meandering treant named Raudnun, who resembles a witchwood tree:

A massive, ancient tree plods through the forest. Its upper half is a wide spray of green leaves and crimson berries, its trunk-legs wrapped in mistletoe vines. Surmounting its canopy is a rickety-looking hut. Crows flap around it, agitated and cawing loudly. Amid their shrieking, the words "Axe! Axe! Wolf! Wolf! Cloak! Cloak!" echo.

Mother Babushka's hut is 30 feet off the ground. Climbing up to it requires a successful DC 12 STR (Athletics) check. A creature that falls while climbing can make a DC 12 DEX save to grab a branch and halt its fall.

Creatures. Raudnun is a slow-witted and slow-moving **treant** (INT -2) that doesn't speak Common. He ignores the PCs unless they use fire or start hammering pitons into him. Annoying Raudnun earns an irritated swat from him, which should be enough to discourage further bad behavior.

If the PCs manage to communicate, Raudnun eventually confirms that the old witch who lives in his branches has had a couple of recent visitors: a little human and a big wolf. PCs who speak with the crows find them in a jubilant mood, expecting a good feast one way or the other.

THE BIG BAD WOLF

The situation in Mother Babushka's hut depends on how well they did in the tests of the Paths of Gamayun.

If the PCs completed all tests without failing any of them, they reach Raudnun only a few minutes after Czerwonya (a **commoner**). The **Would-Be-King of Wolves** (see the **Appendix**) has devoured Mother Babushka and is conversing with the girl in the old woman's guise, trying to gain Czerwonya's confidence. With a successful DC 15 WIS (Perception) check, a PC can hear snatches of conversation from above, such as "My, what big eyes you have ..."

If the PCs failed at least one test, they arrive at Raudnun just as the wolf is about to throw off its disguise and leap at Czerwonya. The PCs have only a few rounds to get into the hut before he catches and kills her.

If the PCs failed at least two of the tests, they arrive at Raudnun just after the wolf has killed Czerwonya. His ritual complete, the new Wolf King is jovial. He banters with the PCs while disguised as an abnormally fat Mother Babushka. He tries to lure *Wolf Killer's* bearer to approach alone if he can, but he is content with gloating if they pierce his disguise. His main aim is to escape and consolidate his power. Any fight becomes a chase as he races through the forest in search of reinforcements.

FIGHTING THE WOLF

A bear-sized wolf rears back on its hind legs, eyes gleam with malice and hunger. Its jaws open wider than any normal wolf's, revealing a bright red tongue and gore-stained fangs. The shapes of a screaming face and clawing hands are visible beneath the skin of its swollen belly, as if it had devoured someone who is struggling to escape.

Mother Babushka's hut is full of clutter: crude tables, discarded clothes, potted plants, and scattered bric-a-brac. Cabinets balance precariously; their shelves overflow with jams and preserves, ceramic vials, and ancient scrolls. Countless herbs dangle from the roof. The floor of the hut counts as difficult terrain, and PCs moving more than 10 feet in a turn must succeed on a DC 10 DEX save or fall prone.

Several branches outside the hut are wide enough to walk on. The **Would-Be-King of Wolves** retreats onto them if the PCs try to corral him inside the hut.

Cauldron. Mother Babushka's cauldron is a hazard. Magically enchanted to boil its contents, it boils vigorously without a fire beneath it. A creature that starts its turn within 5 feet of the pot must succeed on a DC 13 CON save or take 5 (2d4) fire damage. The cauldron can be picked up and its boiling contents thrown on a creature within 10 feet of the thrower. The target must make a DC 15 DEX save,

taking 10 (3d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. This fire damage doesn't ignite objects in the hut or harm Raudnun.

Creature. The **Would-Be-King of Wolves** begins the fight having swallowed Mother Babushka and can't swallow another creature until his belly is empty. Cutting Mother Babushka free requires dealing at least 20 slashing damage in a single attack against the Would-Be-King of Wolves.

Among the herbs dangling from the ceiling is a sprig of fresh wolfsbane, which a PC can recognize with a successful DC 13 INT (Nature) check. Using an action to present the wolfsbane to the Would-Be-King of Wolves forces him to succeed on a DC 15 WIS save or become frightened until the end of his next turn. Once frightened of the wolfsbane, he can't be frightened by it again for the next 24 hours.

If she is rescued from the wolf's belly, Mother Babushka, a **druid** that is resistant to acid damage, profusely thanks the PCs and recovers enough to assist them after 1d3 rounds. If they are in serious need of help and the fighting has moved outside of the hut, Raudnun can be enticed to pitch in by someone who succeeds on a DC 16 CHA (Persuasion) check.

After the fight, if Czerwonya still lives, Mother Babushka offers the PCs 2d4 potions of common or uncommon rarity and 1 potion of their choice of rare rarity. At your discretion, she can become an ally and teacher to the party, allowing them to learn more of the forest's ancient lore or some of its alchemical secrets.

Babushka smiles coyly if the PCs ask how the wolf was able to devour her whole or what events she knew of in advance. She admits only that "We all had our parts to play."

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If PCs save Czerwonya and kill the Would-Be-King of Wolves, then the wolves and other beasts of the forest must bow before Humanoids for three generations. They become wary of civilization, attacks on livestock lessen, and fewer Humanoid hunters are challenged for their game by the forest's predators. The PCs cause many beasts of the forest pause, as the forest whispers the PCs' deeds ahead of their travels.

If both Czerwonya and the Would-Be-King die, the situation is a stalemate. The wolves eventually learn of the



PCs' involvement, and some try to prove themselves by hunting the PCs down. The boundaries between the worlds of beast and man remain uncertain, with lives lost on both sides as the borders are tested. In another decade or two, the forest reissues the challenge to resolve the stalemate.

If Czerwonya dies and the Would-Be-King escapes, the Old Margreve judges beasts to be superior to men, and the Would-Be-King of Wolves takes up the mantle of Wolf King. United by their new king, wolf packs are soon a menace; prowling fearlessly up to villages, campsites, and coaching inns alike. Livestock is plundered, lone travelers waylaid and devoured. Wolves become the most common animal awakened to do the forest's bidding, and tales of werewolves and wolf worship soon begin to spread. Killing the Wolf King does little to stem the tide—wolves continue to run victorious and proud until the next Challenge of the Fang.



THE GRIFFON HATCHLING HEIST

An adventure by Michael Fulanetto for four to five 5th-level characters.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Centuries ago, House Stross, rulers of Zobeck, built a dozen griffon towers under the boughs of the Margreve Forest. Each of these towers housed a unit of elite griffon cavalry. Eight guarded the Great Northern Road, while the other four stood watch over hunting grounds, mines, and other important locales. The Still Tower falls in the last category. It is built over a magical oddity—a location that enhances divination spells. Under the guise of a quiet forest retreat, the nobleman who ordered its construction hoped to use this effect to his advantage and to study its origin.

Not long thereafter, House Stross fell, and the Griffon Towers fell into disuse and disrepair. As the most isolated of the lot, the Still Tower housed only the descendants of its black griffon inhabitants. These griffons, the largest and most aggressive in the forest, are currently led by Lesharrkk, whose voracious appetite for horseflesh is matched only by her self-regard.

The Still Tower was attacked ten days ago. A group of

brigands led by an **ettin** named Zyzha'shacha struck during a thunderstorm. Their first blow used a purloined scroll—and some luck—to polymorph Lesharrkk into a less threatening form. With their greatest opposition neutralized, the brigands were able to kill the other adult griffons and capture a clutch of valuable eggs to sell to Zobeck traders looking for exotic goods for an illicit market. Zyzha'shacha sent part of the gang to sell their other loot and negotiate a deal with the traders in Zobeck, while she, three ogres, and a host of goblinoids remained to guard the clutch.

Lesharrkk, who escaped the massacre in her new form, seeks help in rescuing her eggs.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The PCs are approached by a talking housecat who claims (truly) to be Lesharrkk, the pride-mother of the oldest and most ferocious pack of black griffons in the Margreve Forest. She explains that her tower was attacked by brigands and that her pride mates are dead, her eggs are held hostage, and she has been transformed. She asks the PCs to retrieve her eggs before they hatch; in return, she offers her gratitude and all the treasure left by the previous masters of the Still Tower.



The PCs make their way up a narrow forest track to a hidden back entrance to the tower. After dealing with an ancient shambling mound, a claustrophobic swim up an underground stream, and the dusty animated armors guarding an ancient library, the PCs sneak through the tower under the noses of the band of brigands. Atop the tower, they fight the ettin leader of the brigands to retrieve the griffon eggs.

Of course, the eggs hatch as soon as the party takes possession of them. The PCs must escape the surrounding brigands, while guarding their hungry cargo and ensuring that the hatchlings don't begin to believe that one of the PCs is their mother. Success wins the party a powerful ally, a long-forgotten magical secret, and a potential future base of operations. Failure probably leads to a slow roast on an ogre's spit.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The adventure takes place during springtime in the Margreve Forest, when griffon eggs hatch and seasonal rains turn the roads and paths to mud. The PCs should be near or in the forest when the adventure begins. They can get involved in one or more of the following ways:

- If the PCs have built a reputation as competent problem-solvers, Lesharrkk might have heard of their exploits from other forest denizens. Alternatively, an ally of the party from a previous adventure might have recommended them to the griffon.
- If the PCs have been struggling with a recurring villain, make that villain either the leader of the brigands or the buyer for the griffon eggs. In this case, the PCs might be hunting for Lesharrkk after hearing rumors of their foil's exploits.
- If the PCs have done some service for the forest, perhaps the Old Margreve itself guides Lesharrkk to them. If your campaign is emphasizing the otherworldly and magical aspects of the Margreve Forest, this hook reinforces those themes.

INTRODUCTION

Just ahead in the forest, a snarling cat leaps out at a low-flying raven. "Perun's bolts!" spits the cat as the bird flies away. The cat turns and bares its teeth in what seems to be an attempt at a friendly smile.

The cat is a polymorphed, awakened black-feathered griffon named Lesharrkk. She has retained her INT, WIS, and CHA scores and her ability to read and write. In the Common language, she introduces herself to the PCs as Lesharrkk, the pride-mother of the oldest and most ferocious pack of black griffons in the Margreve Forest. A successful DC 17 INT (Arcana or Nature) check confirms she is indeed a griffon that has been polymorphed, albeit poorly, into a cat. Lesharrkk is desperate for help, and given her time constraints, the PCs are her only remaining option.

If the PCs attack her, she retreats, refusing to engage in combat in her current form, and continues her search for a way to reverse the transformation. Once restored, she and all the griffons of the Margreve Forest harry the PCs at every opportunity for the next year. If the PCs agree to talk with her, Lesharrkk recounts the events of the brigand attack as described in the Adventure Background. One of her pride mates flew her away from the tower before he succumbed to the missile fire of the goblins and bugbears. After the attack, Lesharrkk stayed hidden nearby to observe the comings and goings of the criminal band. She



learned that they are planning to sell her eggs for a princely sum and that the tower would be lightly guarded while part of the group escorted the buyer to the eggs. Since she couldn't carry her eggs to safety in her current form, she left to seek help.

She is unsure why the transformation hasn't worn off yet, and if the PCs attempt to use *dispel magic*, the casting fails. While the PCs are recovering her eggs, she plans to visit one of the crones deeper in the Margreve Forest to reverse her condition. The crone is a fair distance away for her current body, and Lesharrkk fears she won't have enough time to receive a cure from the crone, return, and clear the tower of its intruders before the eggs hatch or are sold. She asks the PCs to retrieve the eggs for her while she seeks a cure, and she hopes this split approach will ensure the utmost safety for her eggs.

If the PCs agree to help, Lesharrkk gives them some information to help in their quest:

"Just north of the Eye of the Forest is a hunting track heading east between two mossy stumps. Follow it, always choosing the right-hand fork, until you reach a clear pond under a bluff. There the trail ends, but a guardian of some sort waits by the pond. Take care! The tower will be on top of the bluff to your left. You can swim into the cellar of the tower through the pool—head upstream until you find air again. Most of the brigands camp outside the tower, so once you are behind its walls, you should be able to make your way to right under the noses of the filthy swine who slaughtered my kin.

"My clutch of eggs awaits atop the tower—those criminals are too mercenary to risk moving them and losing their reward. You have no more than a week before the eggs hatch. After you recover the eggs, I will meet you at the two stumps where the trail begins. If the eggs hatch before we meet again, my hatchlings will either try to imprint on you or eat you. Be certain they succeed at neither. To avoid the imprinting, you can hide your faces or keep the hatchlings covered in darkness, which will make them sleepy. To feed them, catch and kill whatever small game you can find. The rest of the brigands will return to the tower soon with their buyer, so please hurry!"

PART 1: TO THE TOWER

The Still Tower lies 30 miles southeast of the Eye of the Forest, an inn on the Great Northern Road. Lesharrkk directs the party to a hunting trail that leads to the hidden entrance to the tower. The PCs should cover that distance in two days at a normal pace or just over one day at a fast pace. You can use the encounter tables in the **Appendix** to determine any encounters the PCs might face while following the hunting trail, but be sure to allow the PCs a long rest before they reach the tower.

Rain begins to fall late on the first day. It's just a drizzle at first, but during their journey it strengthens steadily. By the time the PCs reach the tower spring, they should be tired of slogging through mud in the driving rain. The rain makes the entire area lightly obscured, and it continues until the PCs enter the tower.

LESHARRKK (SHE/HER, GRIFFON, CAT)

Black and brown cat. Hook-like nose and feathery whiskers. Feather-like ruff around her neck.

Background: Lesharrkk is the pride-mother of the black griffons of the Still Tower in the Margreve Forest. She is an awakened griffon blessed by the Old Margreve and has been the leader of the Still Tower griffons for decades. Though she officially leads only one pride, all other prides of griffons in the Margreve Forest treat her with respect and occasionally bring her pride gifts of meat and treasure. She was recently transformed into a cat.

Personality Traits: Fiercely protective of her pride. Constantly turns and cocks her head when conversing with other creatures.

Bonds: Her pride of griffons. The Margreve Forest.

Flaws: Arrogant and excessively confident in her prowess as a hunter and ruling matriarch of the griffons. Despises her current form's limitations compared to the majesty of her true form.

Wants: The return of her eggs. The reversal of the transformation that has her stuck in the body of a cat.

Talking to Lesharrkk: Lesharrkk can give the PCs directions to the Still Tower. If the PCs promise to retrieve her eggs from the tower and return them to her not far from the Eye of the Forest inn, she offers them her *ring of protection* to aid them on the journey. She gives them permission to keep whatever they find in the tower—except for her eggs.

TOWER SPRING

The track finally reaches its end at a small pool. A bracken-covered bluff towers over the pool, and a tower stands atop the bluff. The forest thins around the pool with only a few waterside trees shading a small field of wildflowers and grass.

The builders of the Still Tower recognized that the underground spring that fed their well emerged aboveground not far from the tower. To protect against foes who might take advantage of this vulnerability, they hired druids to grow a **shambling mound** by the pool. For decades, it has protected the pool from any creature that isn't a griffon or of the Stross bloodline, and it awaits the PCs at the end of the hunting trail, ambushing them if it gets the chance. The pond is too far away and too shielded acoustically by the Still Tower for the brigands to notice the PCs, unless they employ particularly flashy tactics.

The Pool and Bluff. The area within 10 feet of the pool is difficult terrain, and the pool itself is 5 feet deep on the shore, growing deeper where it meets the edge of the bluff. The bluff is 50 feet high and covered in thick brush. The brush provides ample handholds, and climbing requires a successful DC 10 STR (Athletics) check.

The pond is fed by an underground spring near the edge of the bluff. The 5-foot-wide channel flows from the depths to the well room of the Still Tower (see **Area A1**) and then to the pond. To reach the well room, the PCs must go through a 60-foot swim against the frigid stream's current. This means 3 or 4 rounds of swimming with each round requiring a successful DC 12 STR (Athletics) check to make progress. Because the stream is underground, breathing PCs must hold their breath or find an alternative way of breathing while underwater.

Treasure. A successful DC 12 WIS (Perception) check notices a patch of recently turned soil. Digging into it reveals a half-buried leather sack that contains 45 gp, 190 sp, and 98 cp—loot formerly owned by a bugbear who was killed by the shambling mound after fleeing from the companions he robbed. Time and rain have rendered his trail down the bluff almost impossible to follow, requiring a successful DC 30 WIS (Survival) check. If the PCs succeed, the trail leads directly to the main goblinoid encampment.



PART 2: THE STILL TOWER

A thin, square tower rises sharply above the top of the bluff. Its ground floor connects to a wooden building, and its top is crowned in crenellations that obscure the roof. Windows open into the main floor and two upper levels of the tower. The sides are scarred with soot and scorch marks. A noisome camp lies in the lee of the tower opposite the bluff.

The Still Tower has some common architectural features. All ceilings are 9 feet high. The exterior walls of the main tower are reinforced masonry worth smooth by decades of weather, and the stables and barracks building has wooden walls. All doors are old but strong wood, and only the main

entry door (see **Area B3**) into the tower can be locked.

The most straightforward way for the PCs to complete this adventure is for them to sneak into the well room. From there they can proceed up through the secret rooms A2, B7, C2, D1, and E2 to the roof, where they can retrieve the eggs. Remember, the eggs hatch no more than a week after the meeting with Lesharrkk, so slow sniping at the brigands might not be an effective tactic. The remainder of the brigand band doesn't return until after the week is up, so they aren't detailed here.

Brigand Camp. The band of brigands that assault the tower has set up a camp outside the Still Tower. It sits 10 feet east of B1 and B2.

Resting in the Tower. The tower is crawling with goblinoids and ogres who await the arrival of the egg buyer from Zobeck, making resting difficult but potentially necessary. **Areas A2** and **D1** are safe enough for a rest, provided the PCs closed the secret door in **Area A2** (or otherwise prevented the guards in **Area B3** from investigating the area and discovering the hidden room) and don't make excessive noise while resting.



STILL TOWER AND MAGIC

The Still Tower sits on a particularly powerful wellspring of divination magic. All spells of the divination school cast within the tower and within 100 feet of it behave as if they were cast with a spell slot one higher than what was expended in the casting.

Casters must know of this effect to take advantage of it. This knowledge can be gained from the texts inside the tower or with a successful DC 20 INT (Arcana) check when casting a spell within 100 feet of the tower. The caster has advantage on this check if the spell is a divination spell. Very few know of this secret wellspring—the powers of the Old Margreve probably know, as might some surviving Stross scions or retainers. Lesharrkk knows that the tower was built for some sort of arcane study, but she doesn't understand the details.

Divination magic cast within the tower and within 100 feet of it isn't subject to the Old Margreve's magic siphoning or divining unique effects, as detailed in **Magic in the Margreve Forest** in **Chapter 1**, regardless if the spellcaster is aware of the wellspring of divination magic around the tower.

THE BRIGAND CAMP

A large camp lies near the base of a stone tower.

At least two dozen furred creatures mill about among the tents.

There are thirty goblinoids at the tower, a mixture of **bugbears**, **goblins**, **goblin captains**, and **hobgoblins**. The camp clearly holds accommodations for twice as many, an indication that nearly half the group has returned to Zobeck to operate as the escort for the buyer. The goblinoids in the camp are bored and spend most of their time wrestling and boasting.

If combat occurs, the goblinoids swarm their foes, attempting to overwhelm attackers with superior numbers. Note that they are well-equipped with javelins and bows—a consequence of their preparations for combat with flying opponents—and they don't hesitate to attack intruders from range. Once half the goblinoids are dead, the survivors flee when reduced to 5 hit points. The guards in **Area B3** join combat after 1d4 rounds. All other inhabitants in the tower, except the animated armors and Zyzha'shacha and the bugbears with her, investigate any commotion in the camp after 2d4 rounds, dismissing most sounds of combat as standard roughhousing unless it continues.

Treasure. The goblinoids have a total of 3,000 gp worth of coins, gems, and jewelry.

LEVEL A. CELLAR

This level contains both the well room for the tower and the secret library of the tower's former master.

AREA A1. WELL ROOM

The western wall of this chamber contains a pool of water surrounded by a low stone wall. Broken ladles, smashed kegs, and rotted pails sit around the wall, and rotted sacks of grain lie in piles along the walls. The southeastern corner holds the broken remains of what was once a wooden staircase ascending to the next floor.

This room once served as the well to the tower's denizens, but it has long since been abandoned. The broken staircase can't be easily repaired, but a creature can climb up the remains or gingerly pick a path up with a successful DC 12 STR (Athletics) or DEX (Acrobatics) check.

Secret Door. The southern wall holds a secret door to **Area A2**. A successful DC 15 WIS (Perception) check finds the door behind a pile of grain sacks.

AREA A2. SECRET LIBRARY

This square room was once a library, but the bookcases and tomes now form piles of smashed and torn refuse along the walls and across the floor. A metal ladder leads up in the northeast corner. Two suits of old, rusted armor hang from stands on either side of the ladder.

The piles of broken bookcases and torn tomes fill the room with difficult terrain. The ladder leads up to **Area B7**.

Creatures. Two **animated armors** guard the room and attack anyone who enters, except those who wear the badge of the Still Tower griffon riders.

Treasure. Three old tomes can be pieced together with 2 hours of patient work. Two of the tomes concern the nature of divination magic and could be sold for 400 gp. The third explains the magical effect on which the Still Tower was built. A PC that reads the third tome discovers the information discussed in the **Still Tower and Magic** sidebar.



What's That Noise? This stone chamber echoes with the sounds of combat. If combat lasts for more than 3 rounds, three of the guards in **Area B3** open the door between **Areas B3** and **A1** to investigate the source. One round later, those guards hop into **Area A1** and continue investigating, coming upon the secret door if the PCs left it open. The guards potentially follow the PCs through the hidden rooms, ambushing or attacking the PCs as they rest or as they descend with the eggs.

LEVEL B. MAIN FLOOR

This level contains the main floor of the tower, including the great hall, barracks, kitchen, and stables.

AREA B1. STABLE STOREROOM

The stalls and the accoutrements of a stable still fill this room, although the large doors have been knocked down into timber. The central aisle is filled with torn bridles, ruined bits, and shredded, bloodstained saddles. The wooden walls are stained and worm-eaten but stable.

The horse gear is all that remains of the few horses kept in this stable long ago. The stable typically held horses for messengers, visitors, or hired guards that weren't griffon riders, as griffons find horseflesh a delicacy.

AREA B2. BARRACKS

This wooden-walled room contains two rows of broken beds and shattered wooden chests.

The Stross guards and griffon riders slept here while serving at the Still Tower. Now the beds' only inhabitants are a handful of rodents and insects. The only door in the room leads to **Area B3**.

Treasure. One wooden chest lies partially intact beneath the rubble of a broken bed. A successful DC 15 WIS (Perception) check notices it. The chest contains an onyx statuette of a griffon (worth 100 gp) and a Still Tower griffon rider badge, which features a black griffon rampant and wielding a spear on a red background.

What's That Noise? If the PCs make noise in this room, such as talking or casting a damage-dealing spell, three guards from **Area B3** come to investigate one round after the PCs made the noise.

AREA B3. MAIN HALL

This large stone room is empty, with even the windows missing their shutters and panes. The ashes of long-cold campfires smear the floor. The main double doors exit to the east, while other closed doors pierce the south and west walls. A large fireplace fills the northeast corner, surrounded by windows on the north and east walls.

The doors are closed and a small fire burns in the fireplace. The door in the southern wall leads to **Area B2**, and the doors in the western wall lead to **Area B4** and the broken staircase down to **Area A1**.

Creatures. A **goblin captain** and a **hobgoblin conjurer**, two of Zyzha'shacha's lieutenants, lounge by the fireplace here with four **goblins**. They attack any intruders that aren't members of their band of brigands.

What's That Noise? If combat lasts more than 4 rounds in here, one **hobgoblin** and either two **goblins** or one **bugbear** from the camp outside come to investigate every 1d4 rounds or until combat ends.

AREA B4. KITCHENS

This rectangular, stone-walled room was once a kitchen. Large cooking fireplaces fill the west wall. Discarded cooking implements litter the floor, and dusty debris covers the cobwebbed tables and counters. A single window is set in the south wall.

The brigand band's cooks took what tools were still viable from this kitchen but otherwise prepare meals for the brigands over fires and in large cookpots in the camp itself. The kitchen's doors lead to **Areas B3** and **B5**.

AREA B5. PANTRY

This roughly rectangular room contains a variety of tattered sacks and broken, overturned barrels. Windows in the west wall overlook the high bluff, while doors in the east and south walls lead to other rooms. A small fireplace graces the northern wall, and a rusty metal ladder in the southeastern corner climbs through the ceiling.

This room was once a dining room for the servants and served as a pantry. The ladder leads up to **Area C1**, and the doors lead to **Areas B4** and **B6**.



AREA B6. SERVANTS' QUARTERS

Spiders and rats have replaced the former inhabitants of these windowless sleeping quarters. The furniture seems better preserved here than elsewhere in the tower, although it is still stained and sagging. A fireplace fills much of the north wall.

This room once served as a resting place for servants. The stacked beds are sagging and break if more than 20 pounds are placed on them.

What's That Noise? If a bed breaks from too much weight on it, three of the guards from **Area B3** arrive to investigate the noise 1 round after the bed broke.

AREA B7. SECRET BEDROOM

The northwestern leg of this L-shaped room contains a dresser, bed, and basin. The southern leg contains tools, tables, and broken glass implements. A sturdy metal ladder drops through the floor and rises through the ceiling. No windows allow light into this chamber.

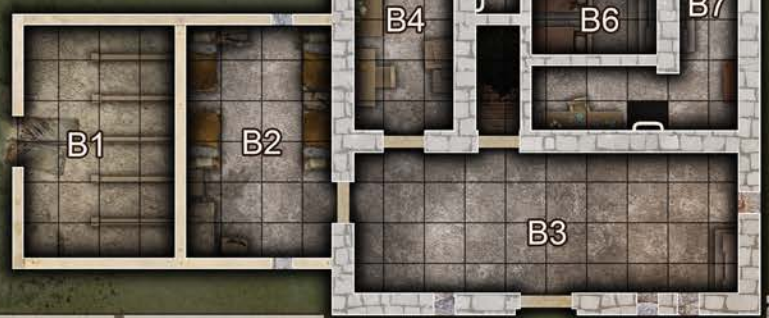
This hidden chamber once served as the secret bedroom and workshop for the Stross noble who commanded the tower. Though the noble took everything of value



The Griffon Tower



N
1 square = 5 feet



when the tower was abandoned, a successful DC 15 INT (Investigation) check can piece together a set of old and dusty alchemist tools from the debris on the tables.

The ladder rises from **Area A2** and ascends through **Area C2** to **Area D1**.

LEVEL C. MEETING ROOM

This level contains a secluded meeting room for the Stross and the hidden passageway between levels B and D.

AREA C1. TREATY ROOM

Two window frames pierce three of the walls of this square room, looking out over the north, east, and south. A metal ladder passes through the floor by the south wall, and a staircase rises along the western wall. An old, wooden table fills the center of the room, surrounded by rickety but standing wooden chairs. Moth-eaten upholstery and tapestries decorate the chamber. A small fire crackles in a fireplace in the northeastern corner. Four figures sit at the table, playing a card game.

The table is cracked and swollen with age and the bouts of moisture that seasonally enter the room through the fireplace. The chairs are in worse shape with some missing legs or weakened to the point of being unable to bear the weight of a person. A few chairs sturdy enough for sitting remain and hold the room's occupants. The ladder leads down to **Area B3**, and the stairs lead up to **Area E1**.

Creatures. Two **bugbears** and two **hobgoblins** play a game of cards on the table, their weapons resting on the table or nearby. They function as the go-betweens for any information from the lieutenants in **Area B3** to the commanders in **Area E1**.

Treasure. The table contains a pack of playing cards, 10 gp, 20 sp, and 50 cp the goblins were using for betting.

What's That Noise? If combat lasts more than 6 rounds in here, one **ogre** from **Area E1** comes down to investigate the noise. If reduced to below half its hit point maximum, that ogre flees to **Area E1** for help from its fellows. If combat lasts more than 3 rounds, two **goblins** from **Area B3** are sent to investigate, and if they see the PCs, immediately flee back downstairs to gather their companions.

AREA C2. LADDERWAY

The metal ladder continues upward from B7 to D1.



LEVEL D. SCRYING ROOM

This level contains a secret room used by the Stross for powerful divinations and the stairs connecting levels C and E.

AREA D1. SCRYING ROOM

Time has been kinder to this windowless, low-ceilinged room than to the rest of the tower. In the northeast corner, a ladder rises through the floor and continues through the ceiling. Antique chairs, several small tables, stained papers, and a variety of cracked crystals, broken mirrors, and tarnished metal are strewn around the room.

This hidden room served as an area for the Stross noble who commanded the tower to scry on enemies, conduct research, and practice divination magic. Its ceiling is only 7 feet high, giving the room a cramped feeling. The papers on the central table don't hold relevance to the modern day, but at your discretion, they can contain notes from past secret meetings, hints at the fate of the tower's Stross noble, or ancient divinations about the PCs, their past actions, or even their discovery of this room.

Treasure. While none of the contents of the room are in good enough condition to retain any value, a successful DC 15 WIS (Perception) check notices the paper-strewn table in the center of the room holds a small, pewter key. This key fits the chest in **Area E2**.

AREA D2. STAIRWAY

The staircase continues upward from C1 to E1.

LEVEL E. SUPPLIES AND SECRETS

This level contains a storeroom for the Griffon Riders and a secret treasury for the Stross family.

AREA E1. SUPPLY ROOM

This square room connects to stairs leading both upward and downward. Windows on the south and east walls look out over the goblin encampment and stables roof below. The bulk of the room contains pegs, lockers, chests, and tables reminiscent of an army quartermaster's storage room. The tables and chests sit in a heap against the wall, a campfire smolders in a large stone bowl on the wooden floor, and a large haunch of roasted meat sits against one wall. Three bedrolls sprawl across the floor.



This ancient storage room holds bits of griffon down and fur among the tables and chests that were pushed into a corner. Several of the tables and chests sport claw and beak marks from decades of mischievous hatchlings who snuck away from their roosts for games amid the old occupants' clutter. One staircase leads down through **Area D2** to **Area C1**, while the other leads upward to **Level F**.

Creatures. This room is currently home to Zyzha'shacha's three most-trusted commanders, Bruk, Goz, and Urg. These three siblings have been by Zyzha'shacha's side since the beginning and are her most loyal companions. They trust she will lead them to great riches and feasts, and so far, she hasn't disappointed them. They while away the time until the eggs' buyer arrives by playing a game of dice and casually gnawing their way through the last black griffon corpse, which was roasted and now sits against one wall. Bored, they attack any who enter this room and that aren't either part of or escorted by members of the goblin encampment, hoping for sport or food—or both.

Treasure. Goz and Urg each have 5 gp and 12 sp on them. Bruk has a small statuette of Zyzha'shacha he has been carving out of a chunk of obsidian worth 25 gp.

What's That Noise? Zyzha'shacha is accustomed to the toddler-like squabbling—and resulting altercations—that occasionally happens between the sibling ogres. She and the two scouts with her come down to investigate this area only if combat lasts more than 6 rounds. The bugbears and hobgoblins in **Area C1** have a healthy respect for the strength of the ogres and investigate the sounds of combat only if combat lasts more than 3 rounds.

AREA E2. TREASURY

A thick layer of dust covers every horizontal surface of this windowless, rectangular room. In the east, a ladder rises from the floor, and to the west, another metal ladder rises to a trapdoor in the ceiling. A small wooden chest sits under its own layer of dust in the center of the room.

The Stross noble that ran the tower used this room for storage, for a quick escape to the roof, and for the rare occasion that the commander showing up seemingly from nowhere for surprise inspections was needed for keeping the Griffon Riders in line. One ladder leads down to **Area D1**, while the other rises to a secret trapdoor in **Level F**. The trapdoor is clearly visible from this side.

Treasure. The chest is locked and can be opened with the key in **D1** or with a successful DC 17 DEX (Thieves' Tools) check. The chest contains an imperial topaz and gold necklace (worth 125 gp), a *spell scroll* of *restoration*, and a pouch with two doses of *dust of disappearance*.

LEVEL F. GRIFFON ROOSTS

A short battlement surrounds the top of the tower. On the south and west, the wall extends up to a ten-foot-high ceiling, but the north and east sides of this enclosure are open to the elements. In the southeast corner, a staircase descends beneath the roof. In the northeast, three stone roosts rise in tiered heights like massive steps. The entire area is covered with feathers, fur, and bits of discarded food. In the southwest corner, a large nest holds four enormous eggs wrapped in blankets, sticks, and feathers. A small fire crackles next to the nest.

This area served as the primary nesting area for Lesharrkk and her consorts, with the lowest roost 5 feet above the ground and each roost another 5 feet above the one below it. All other griffons of her pride roosted on the bluff below the tower or in large nearby trees. The battlement is approximately 50 feet above the ground and 40 feet above the roof of the stables.





Creatures. Zyzha'shacha, an **ettin** with an INT of +2 and a CHA of +1, spends her days here, keeping watch over the landscape and the goblin encampment and receiving reports from her scouts. Two **bugbears** are two such scouts who recently returned from exploring the area around the tower. They are reporting to Zyzha'shacha when the PCs arrive.

Zyzha'shacha believes the PCs are here to raid the tower, and it doesn't occur to her that they might be after the eggs in any capacity other than as treasure. She doesn't harm the eggs and protects them if the PCs attack them, but she otherwise doesn't think to use them as hostage leverage against the PCs. She and the bugbears attack the PCs, unless the PCs are escorted by other members of the goblin encampment.

Griffon Eggs. Though Zyzha'shacha trusts the capabilities of those in her retinue, she doesn't trust any of them enough to watch the eggs without wanting to eat them or otherwise disturb them. She doesn't know much about caring for eggs, but she does know they need to be kept warm if they are going to hatch. She keeps a small fire next to the nest and has wrapped the eggs in blankets and nesting material to maintain warmth.

If combat breaks out, be mindful of attacks and spells that affect an area. The eggs can be destroyed (AC 10; HP 10; vulnerability to bludgeoning damage; immunity to poison and psychic damage).

Secret Door. A hidden trapdoor sits in the northwestern corner of the room and leads down to **Area E2**. A successful DC 20 WIS (Perception) check finds the door. Zyzha'shacha and her band of brigands are unaware of the trapdoor.

What's That Noise? If combat lasts more than 4 rounds, one of the **ogres** in **Area E1** investigates sounds of combat. The other two ogres follow 1d4 rounds later.

PART 3: HATCHLINGS!

The four blue-speckled eggs, each the size of a sheep's head, lean against one another. Suddenly, one starts to shake. A thin crack appears at its peak. The other three eggs then start to shake and crack too. After several more cracks and shakes, a hatchling emerges, its feathers plastered to its scalp, its legs covered in mated fur, and its back bearing two, spindly wings.

The eggs hatch within 1 minute of the end of combat with Zyzha'shacha. Lesharrkk's estimate of the eggs hatching in one week was under the assumption that the eggs would be left without any care, potentially stunting their growth but not disrupting the development process. Zyzha'shacha's care for the eggs inadvertently kept the eggs on track, ensuring healthy, well-developed chicks.



Hatchlings. The hatchlings are Tiny and use the statistics of a **cat**. They sleep for most of the first few days of their life, awakening every 5 hours for approximately 20 minutes in search of food and a parent on whom to imprint. While awake, they are noisy, making stealth nearly impossible. If they are fed, they quiet and return to sleep within minutes. Each hatchling needs about a quarter of a pound of meat each time it wakes, or approximately 1 pound of meat each day. They eat any meat they are given and might even nip at PC fingers if not fed.

Imprinting. To prevent the hatchlings from imprinting on the PCs, the PCs can blindfold the hatchlings or otherwise keep them in a backpack, box, or similar dark container, or the PCs can cover each of their faces with cloth or similar material to obscure their features. Keeping the hatchlings in a dark container reduces their waking time to 5 minutes, unless the hatchlings haven't eaten in 10 hours.

Otherwise, the first time a hatchling sees a PC's face when it wakes, the PC must make a CHA (Deception) check opposed by the hatchling's WIS (Insight) check. If the PC fails, the hatchling imprints on the PC, nuzzling the PC and wanting to be held and fed by only that PC. The PCs must make this check only once per hatchling per hatchling waking period.

PART 4: ESCAPE FROM THE STILL TOWER

All that remains for the PCs is to escape with the hatchlings. They have a few options. Although the hatchlings won't survive an unprotected trip down the underground stream, PCs that think to enclose them in insulated, air-filled containers might leave successfully the way the PCs arrived. At the other extreme, PCs could fly magically away from the rooftop itself, trusting on their speed or magical protections to avoid the attacks of the goblin encampment.

Whatever the plan, ensure that the PCs have at least one encounter with a challenge benchmark of 6 on their way out (see *Monster Vault* for more information on challenge benchmarks).

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Lesharrkk's travel was faster than she expected, and the crone's cure was surprisingly quick and painless. Lesharrkk meets the PCs one day's travel up the trail from the Still Tower rather than at the originally agreed-upon meeting spot. Depending on the PCs' level of success, Lesharrkk could make a valuable ally in later adventures. She could serve as a scout, a source of information, a safe hideout, or even transportation for the PCs.

If the PCs rescued all four hatchlings, fed the hatchlings at least once, and prevented all hatchlings from imprinting on the PCs, Lesharrkk is forever indebted to them and is willing to help in whatever way the PCs need while they are in the Margreve Forest, provided she has time to get the hatchlings safely settled before the PCs call on her. She can also call on other griffons throughout the forest to aid them if the PCs' ask is bigger than one griffon can accomplish.

If the PCs rescued at least two of the hatchlings, fed the hatchlings at least once, and prevented at least half the rescued hatchlings from imprinting on the PCs, Lesharrkk begrudgingly calls it a win, knowing the outcome could have been worse. She thanks them for their help and promises the PCs one favor they can call upon anytime within the

next year but not before the hatchlings are settled.

If the PCs failed to rescue the hatchlings, failed to feed the hatchlings, or allowed more than half the rescued hatchlings to imprint on them, Lesharrkk is upset with them. She actively works against the PCs for the next year while they are within the Margreve Forest and commands the griffons of the forest to disrupt the actions of the PCs whenever they are within forest. If you are using the **Character Status with the Margreve** rules found in **Chapter 1**, upsetting Lesharrkk in this way reduces the PCs' status with the Old Margreve by 2, as it goes against the Old Margreve's Community value.

The Still Tower. Feeling it is no longer a safe roost for her pride, Lesharrkk abandons the Still Tower. If Zyzha'shacha was killed, the brigands disband into disparate groups, each with a different subcommander taking over. An enemy of the PCs might gather some of these wayward goblins and later turn them into a mighty force against the PCs. Regardless of the fate of the band of brigands, the Still Tower lies empty within a month. The PCs might repair it for use as a base of operations within the Margreve Forest, visit it when they need to perform powerful divinations, or leave it to eventually be overgrown and consumed by the power of the Margreve Forest.





PRIDE OF THE MUSHROOM QUEEN

An adventure by Mike Welham for four to five 6th-level characters.


ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Two centuries ago, a creature known as the Weft of Shadows broke into a minor fey noble's extraplanar vault in the Summer Lands and released several powerful magic items from the vault into the Margreve Forest. Thanks to an unusual set of rules involved in the creation of the items, once mortal hands have touched the artifacts, the fey can't reclaim them.

Similarly, these odd rules prevented the Weft of Shadows from making shadow versions of the relics without them first touching mortal hands. While the Weft of Shadows was content to allow the other artifacts to wreak havoc in their own ways, it had different plans for the Enoki Scepter. The device was capable of corrupting plants and flesh with fungi, and the Weft planned to use it to inflict terrible harm on the elves who wronged him—but first he needed a mortal to activate and bond with the scepter.

The Weft of Shadows' agents found a victim in Elela Argaria Sheoloss, an elf druid with a predilection for mushrooms growing in the shadows of the Margreve Forest's great trees. After flooding her mind with visions of a paradise filled with all varieties of beautiful fungi, they watched as she embraced these visions and espoused the rights of these overlooked plants. Her fellow druids regarded her as eccentric and ignored her rantings as harmless...until she began to poison plants and cultivate harmful fungi. The druid circle's leaders had no choice but to imprison her while they discussed her fate. They didn't want to execute her, but exiling her into the forest would allow her to continue endangering it.

It was a moot point since she escaped with the aid of the Weft of Shadows' agents. Angered at her treatment and her fellows' lack of understanding about the inevitable fungal paradise, she "conveniently" discovered the Enoki Scepter at the most opportune time. After surreptitiously infecting a small community with the scepter's magic, she



remained nearby until the people began to succumb to the fungal rot that resisted druidic magic. Disappointed when the first casualties transformed into shambling plant creatures that followed her around, she decided she needed a place to study the scepter and further unlock its magic. Unknowingly led to a clearing with a thinning border to the Plane of Shadow, she used the scepter to create a modest garden of fungi. As she grew more confident with the scepter, she devastated other small communities, which fell to virulent fungal infections inflicted by the scepter. Finally, she nearly depleted the scepter's power to create her grand Fungal Citadel, which stands as a blight in the forest and a beacon to her "converts."

Survivors watch helplessly as their loved ones die and arise the next morning to shamble mindlessly deep within the forest toward the citadel. They seek outside assistance to defeat the so-called Mushroom Queen and put their shambling relatives to permanent rest.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The PCs may be traveling through the Margreve Forest on other business and end up in an afflicted village or encounter a villager seeking assistance. Daesanderena may have worked with the PCs to retrieve portions of the wayward artifacts (as detailed in **Daesanderena's Mission** at the beginning of this chapter) and seeks their assistance once again (see **A Simple Request** later in this adventure). Finally, one of the PCs may be related to or know someone in one of the suffering communities and that person seeks them out for help.

A ROTTEN STATE OF AFFAIRS

The PCs arrive at an afflicted village and can view the horror of people covered in a wide variety of mushrooms, toadstools, and other fungi. Most of the village's citizens are bedridden, hours or days away from their terrible fate of transforming into shambling plants bound to walk toward the Fungal Citadel. The fungus resists efforts to remove it as a disease or to destroy it as a plant and seems to intensify its growth in response to such countermeasures. Investigating the spread of the fungus reveals it seems to affect only elves and Humanoids born in the Margreve Forest. This is corroborated by anecdotes of uninfected blood relatives touching infected and waking the next morning with fungi growing from their bodies. The affected villages are reticent at best to confront the Mushroom Queen, and they plead for the PCs to eliminate her and find a cure for their condition. The villagers' desperation induces them to offer the recently deceased elder's *bracers of archery* and *cloak of elvenkind* rewards to the PCs.

To find the Fungal Citadel, the PCs can follow a dead victim that arises and meanders toward the complex. Alternatively, a successful DC 10 WIS (Survival) check picks up a broken trail of mushrooms leading to the citadel.

A SIMPLE REQUEST

Daesanderena, a bright fey from the Summer Lands, finds the PCs as they travel to the Fungal Citadel. If the PCs helped her with the Bramble Crown or any of the other artifacts scattered by the Weft of Shadows (see **Daesanderena's Mission** at the beginning of this chapter), she expresses her appreciation for their assistance. She asks the PCs to destroy the Enoki Scepter, ending its tainted magic. Once the PCs return after destroying the scepter, she gifts them with a *gem of brightness*, hoping it will serve them well in future dealings with the Weft of Shadows.

THE FUNGAL CITADEL

The Mushroom Queen found this clearing in the Margreve Forest with its meandering stream feeding a couple of ponds and decided this was the perfect location for her seat of power. She expended most of the Enoki Scepter's power to erect this compound from fungal material. The center-piece of the citadel (**Area 6**) is shaped like a tall mushroom measuring 30 feet high and topped with a bright red cap, which shades most of the remainder of the complex. She built the other rooms out of sturdy fungal material that gives the walls and doors the consistency of wood; however, the walls constantly sweat and breathe, giving the whole place an unsettling appearance.

Atmosphere. Though the citadel's floors are spongy, they provide adequate support for most creatures and are normal terrain except where noted. Bioluminescent fungi provide dim light throughout the Citadel except where noted. Innumerable spores float gently in this light.

Corrupted Magic. The Enoki Scepter's corrupted magic permeates the citadel. While within the Fungal Citadel, elves and Humanoids born in the Margreve Forest suffer a -2 penalty on all saves against poisons and diseases.

Rotten Air. The smell of rot pervades every room in the citadel. A PC who doesn't take precautions to cover their nose and mouth within 1 minute of entering the Citadel must succeed on a DC 15 CON save or be poisoned for 1 hour. An unprotected PC must repeat this save every 10 minutes while within the citadel.

AREA 1. ENTRANCE TO THE CITADEL

A myriad of fungi in a rainbow of colors flank a pair of doors made of black and red fungi. The surrounding fungi ranges in size from a child's shoe to a young treant.

Black and red fungal material forms striped doors, marking the entrance to the Mushroom Queen's compound. There are no handles or knobs to open the doors, but a successful DC 14 INT (Investigation) check finds an indentation on the door that holds a slimy nodule. The doors swing inward when the nodule is pressed. The doors can also be hacked apart with a successful DC 15 STR check using an edged weapon or tool, but the noise alerts the creatures in **Areas 4** and **6** to the PCs' presence. If the PCs followed a risen victim here, it melds through the door and into the Citadel without issue. The body then continues to shamble to **Area 5** where the fungal vines on the wall embrace the new convert and hang it from the wall in a supplicating pose.

Creatures. A successful DC 20 INT (Nature) or WIS (Perception) check notices four **shriekers** hidden among the fungi surrounding the door. The shriekers create a loud enough noise to alert every creature in **Areas 4** and **6**.

Through the Door. Opening the door reveals a grand hallway covered by a pale "carpet" of nauseating orange striations on the floor. The "carpet" changes color to a deep purple hue in the hallway to **Area 2**, to the color of fresh blood in the hallway to **Area 3**, and to a golden color as it



curves into **Area 5**. The alcoves in the western wall are filled with fungal statues of the Mushroom Queen, albeit less ostentatious than the one found in **Area 2**.

AREA 2. THE MUSHROOM QUEEN'S EFFIGY

The pervasive rotting stench of the citadel gives way to a sweet, earthy fragrance in this room. One door sits in each of the room's four walls. A massive statue made of fungus and depicting an elven woman stands in the center of the chamber. The statue's arms reach out, pointing to two of the doors.

As the PCs round the corner to the north, the rotting stench gives way to an intoxicatingly pleasant fragrance. Doors seem to lead out of this chamber from all cardinal directions. The floor and walls shift from a deep purple to lavender, and the bioluminescent fungi intensifies such that the room is filled with bright light. A statue of the Mushroom Queen with her arms outstretched and pointing to the east and west doors stands 15 feet tall and fills most of this chamber. None of the doors open to any chambers, but accessing the northern and southern doors unveils two parts of the key necessary to gain entrance to the central garden in **Area 6**, exposing PCs to two traps. The eastern and western doors are not trapped, but they conceal abstract carvings of the Mushroom Queen.

Split Key. Two key halves carved from a gold-colored mushroom sit imbedded in the walls behind the northern and southern doors. Tendrils wriggle out from each half, harmlessly grasping at any creature that holds it. When the two halves are put together, they make a sucking sound and combine into one triangular, golden mushroom key. Once formed, the key can't be separated into its two halves again.

Violet Fungus Expulsion Trap. When a creature opens the southern door, a wall of violet fungus explodes in rotting spores. Each creature within 20 feet of the door must make a DC 15 DEX save, taking 22 (4d10) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A successful DC 15 WIS (Perception) check notices the smell of rot emanating from behind the southern door. A successful DC 15 STR check when opening the door slows the flow of spores, limiting how many are ejected at one time. If successful, each creature within 20 feet of the door has advantage on its save. On a failure, the trap triggers as normal. Alternatively, a *gust of wind* spell timed with opening the door disperses the spores harmlessly.

Vomiting Slime Mold Trap. When a creature opens the northern door, a barely-contained flow of slime mold sprays out. Each creature within 15 feet of the door must make a DC 15 DEX save. On a failure, a creature takes 5 (1d10) bludgeoning damage and 11 (2d10) poison damage and is poisoned for 10 minutes. On a success, a creature



takes half the damage and isn't poisoned. A successful DC 14 WIS (Perception) check hears a gurgling sound behind the northern door as if a high-pressure fluid is pushing against it. A successful DC 15 STR check when opening the door holds it open just enough for the pressure from the slime to be released without harming nearby creatures. On a failure, the trap triggers as normal.

AREA 3. RECEPTION AREA

This lavish chamber features two red-surfaced fungal tables surrounded by chairs made of a spongy fungus. The fungal carpet in the room has a checked white and brown pattern, and lacy, luminous moss dangles from the ceiling like a chandelier.

The Mushroom Queen believes that once she becomes established in the Margreve Forest as a ruler in her own right, she will need to meet with guests. She carved out this chamber near the main entrance to serve as a room where she can greet subjects and visiting dignitaries in a comfortable and friendly manner. The floor is checkered in alternating patches of white and dark brown fungi, and the ceiling is covered in lacy, luminous moss, filling the room with bright light. Two red-surfaced tables surrounded by chairs carved from sturdy fungi rest near the northern and western walls.

AREA 4. RESPLENDENT POND

This small chamber is filled with a shallow stream surrounded by purple and orange flowering plants. Insects flutter and buzz between the flowers.

The Mushroom Queen preserved the vibrant purple and orange flowering plants in this room when she found the colony of five **bulbous violets** (see the **Appendix**) living here. The queen regularly brings them treats of her failed experiments on local wildlife, and the plants are content with this arrangement. They attack any potential prey that enters the room and that isn't the Mushroom Queen or her fungal creations. A successful DC 14 INT (Nature) check recognizes the true nature of the violets before they attack, disrupting the flowers' element of surprise.

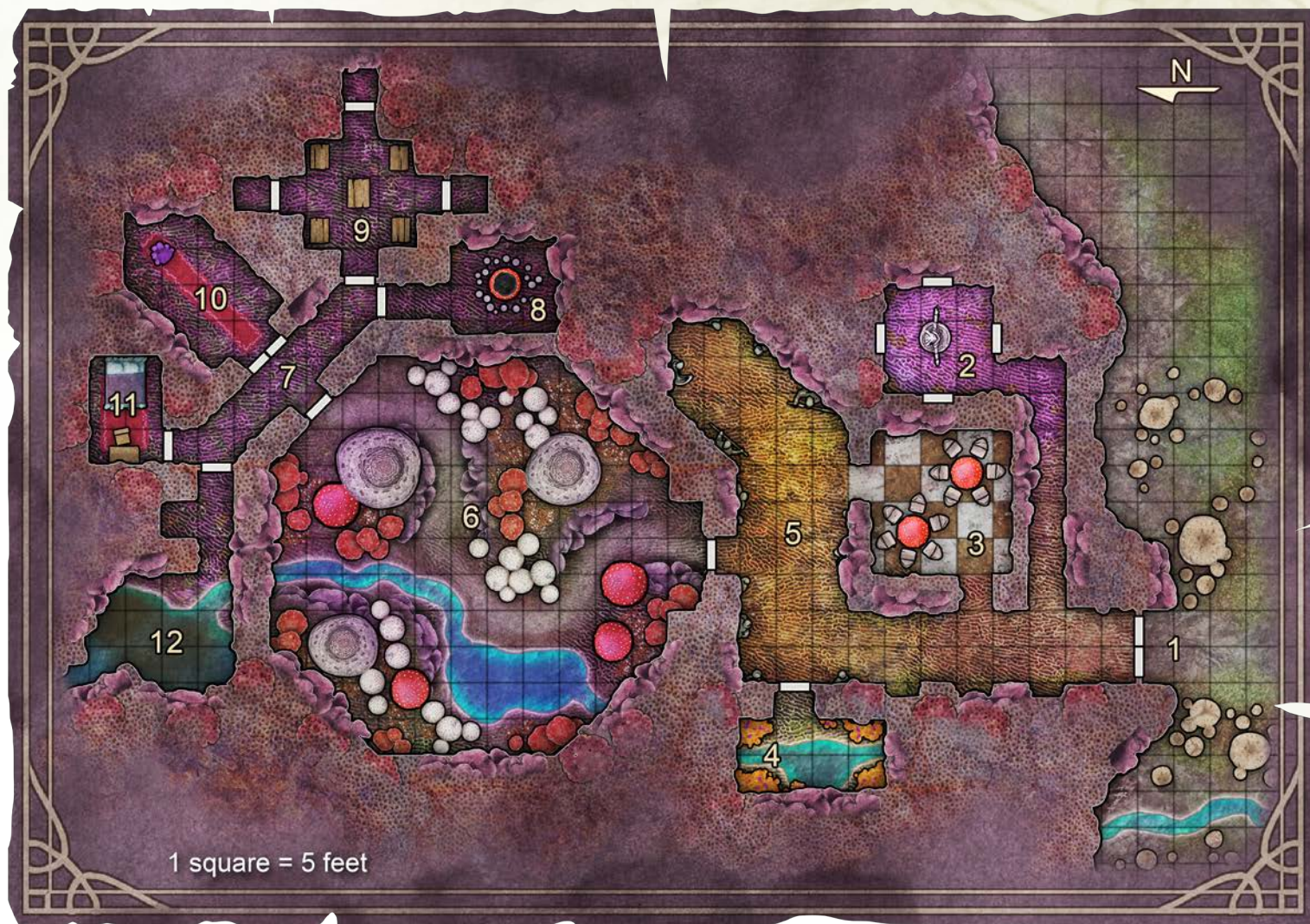
AREA 5. GALLERY

The fungal carpet of this room shimmers with a golden color. Vines made of a glowing, silver fungus hold the decaying bodies of infected people on the walls in various heroic and supplicating poses.

Victims who die because of the Enoki Scepter's fungal infestation become mobile, semi-sentient, humanoid-shaped plants and wander to the Fungal Citadel. They station themselves along the walls of this gallery, becoming "statues" that give the Mushroom Queen a grand view of her handiwork when she leaves the central garden. All of them are long dead, but each hangs on the wall, suspended by "vines" of silver fungus in various poses of supplication or heroism—whichever the Mushroom Queen found most pleasing upon the creature's arrival. After the Mushroom Queen's magic is reversed in the Fungal Citadel, these unfortunates revert to flesh, but they remain dead. The gallery's floor is a spongy carpet of golden fungus, and the walls are drapes of silver fungus that emit bright light.

Door. The door to **Area 6** appears to be a contiguous section of the wall broken only by a circular, golden panel made of fungus. A triangular indentation sits in the center of the panel. A successful DC 15 INT (Arcana or Investigation) check realizes the unique and slightly-magical nature of the lock and that it requires a special key to open.

Treasure. Many of the victims still wear or carry mementos of their former lives. A successful DC 18 WIS (Perception) check while inspecting the "statues" finds a few wedding rings, necklaces, wooden carvings, and other personal trinkets worth a total of 75 gp.



AREA 6. THE CENTRAL GARDEN

This massive chamber is filled with an assortment fungal life, from towering tree-mushrooms to garden-variety edible mushrooms, broken only by a meandering walking path. A stream flows from a small opening in the southern wall, forms a small pond along the western wall, then plunges under the northern wall.

While the other areas in the Fungal Citadel have been cultivated to mimic passageways and rooms in an ordinary building, the central garden has been allowed to run rampant. A meandering walking path cuts through the veritable forest of fungi. Standing mushrooms and toadstools in the area have a disturbing tendency to lean toward flesh-and-blood creatures. If a creature brushes up against a fungus, the fungus releases relatively harmless spores, which induce a mild cough, watery eyes, or a runny

nose but otherwise inflict no harm. The water from the stream pools into a pond in the southwestern portion of the garden. The pondwater is clear, allowing creatures to see its entire 20-foot depth.

Creatures. Shortly after the Mushroom Queen built the Fungal Citadel, she was approached by a young **mycolid spore lord** who was just starting its own colony. She felt a strong affinity for the creature and agreed to let it stay within her garden. With the spore lord's help, she has already unlocked further secrets of fungal magic and has made great progress in perfecting the infection she has been spreading to neighboring villages. Since settling in the garden, the spore lord has created four **mycolid commoners** to establish and grow its colony. Unwaveringly loyal to the Mushroom Queen, the spore lord and its mycolids attack any intruders they don't recognize or that aren't accompanied by the queen or one of her fungal creations.



Decayed Faerie Circle. A clearing in the northeast holds the remains of a *putrescent faerie circle* spell (see **Spells** in **Chapter 2**). The wilting black toadstools that form the ring are harmless now, but the circle contains the bones of animal and Humanoid victims brought here by the Mushroom Queen's servants. A successful DC 17 INT (Arcana or Nature) check realizes the ring was created by a spell. A spellcaster that can cast spells from the Primordial source can spend 1 hour studying the ring and learn the *putrescent faerie circle* spell.

AREA 7. THE SHADOW HALL

This dark hallway extends from the southeast to the northwest and is lined with doors. A set of double doors decorated with spirals of red and purple fungus sits in the northern wall. The carpet of black fungi is streaked with purple in dizzying, geometric patterns.

The walls and floors in this hall are made of a black fungus with dark purple geometric patterns. The hall is shrouded in darkness. Unless otherwise noted, the rooms connected to this one are made of the same material and are similarly dark.

Creature. This hallway is guarded by a **vine golem** (see the **Appendix**) made of hard, spiked fungi. It was created through the combined efforts of the Mushroom Queen and her spore lord ally (see **Area 6**).

AREA 8. THE GARDEN OF DEAD MUSHROOMS

This chamber is filled with dead, gray mushrooms, and a chill pervades the room. A large mushroom in the center of the room has a hollowed-out cap filled with a dark liquid.

Contrasting to the vibrant, if grotesque, life pervading most of the Fungal Citadel, this room is covered in what appear to be dead mushrooms. A ring of twenty such mushrooms surrounds a 5-foot-tall toadstool, which sits in the center of the room. The tall toadstool's cap has been carved out and filled with an inky liquid. The ring of surrounding mushrooms has smaller hollows carved out of them, each with a few drops of a similar liquid. The air in the room is noticeably colder than the others in this hallway.

Creature. A **black pudding** under the command of the Weft of Shadows and tasked with protecting the Mushroom Queen (or consuming her should she fail the Weft), resides in this room, where the presence of the Plane of Shadow and its connection to the Weft is strongest. It attacks any creature that enters this room, except the Mushroom Queen.





Scrying Room. The room's close tie to the Plane of Shadow allows the Mushroom Queen to use the pool of inky liquid to commune with the Weft of Shadows. It rarely speaks to her directly, but it quietly listens to her reports on her progress in unlocking the scepter's secrets. The Mushroom Queen is part of the Weft's backup plan to get its revenge should the Blot fail (see the *Shadow's Envy* adventure for more details about the Weft's plans). A successful DC 15 WIS (Insight) check gives a PC the feeling of being watched. A successful DC 15 INT (Arcana) check while inspecting the pools of dark liquid recognizes the pools' use as rudimentary scrying devices. However, the pools currently only allow for something to view into this chamber and not vice versa. If a PC attempts to remove any liquid, it evaporates into wisps of shadow within 1 round of being removed from its mushroom.

AREA 9. MACABRE EXPERIMENTATION

A wooden table covered in oozing plant matter stands in each of this chamber's corners. Another, larger table sits in the chamber's center, and a mold-covered corpse lies on the table.

As the Mushroom Queen's attempts to create rotting thralls grew more sophisticated, her minions improved from short-lived, mindless, shambling plants that rooted themselves in her gallery (**Area 5**) to shambling zombies capable of following orders. She used this room for various experiments after creating the two **sporeborn bloatblossoms** in **Area 12**. The table holds the body of her latest experiment, a **sporeborn skullbloom**. The sporeborn awaits the Queen's orders or for intruders to disturb its slumber. Each of the three chambers adjoining this room contains a **sporeborn skullbloom** similarly awaiting the Queen's next order or the sounds of combat in the main chamber, such as if the skullbloom on the central table attacks or is attacked.



AREA 10. MUSHROOM QUEEN'S THRONE ROOM

A mottled purple throne covered in bright red mushrooms sits on a dais in the northeastern section of this chamber. Sheets of fungus in various hues of red and purple with varying degrees of transparency hang like banners from the ceiling.

The Mushroom Queen spends much of her time in this room. She waits upon her throne, even if alerted to the PCs' presence. She is imperious and regards non-plant creatures as her inferiors. However, she is impressed by the PCs making it past her guardians. She offers to harmlessly remake them if they agree to serve her. Indeed, the Mushroom Queen is true to her word, and the process is pain-free for those who peacefully submit to her. If attempts to convince the PCs to join her don't work, she resigns herself to the task of killing them and attacks without restraint. She also attacks if the PCs become hostile, move threateningly toward her, or move to within 5 feet of her. If the PCs destroyed the scepter before confronting the Mushroom Queen, she is enraged and doesn't bother with formalities or an offer of servitude, instead attacking the PCs the moment they reveal themselves.

Creatures. The **Mushroom Queen** (see the **Appendix**) attempts to trap as many PCs as possible in a casting of the *putrescent faerie circle* spell. The **sporeborn bloatblossoms** in **Area 12** can sense when the Queen is in danger and arrive to the throne room on initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties) of the second round of combat, if they are still alive.

AREA 11. MUSHROOM QUEEN'S BEDCHAMBER

This simply-appointed room contains a plush, canopy bed made of fungus with transparent drapes of fungal matter hanging from it. A small, wooden desk with a mushroom stool beside it sits across from the bed.

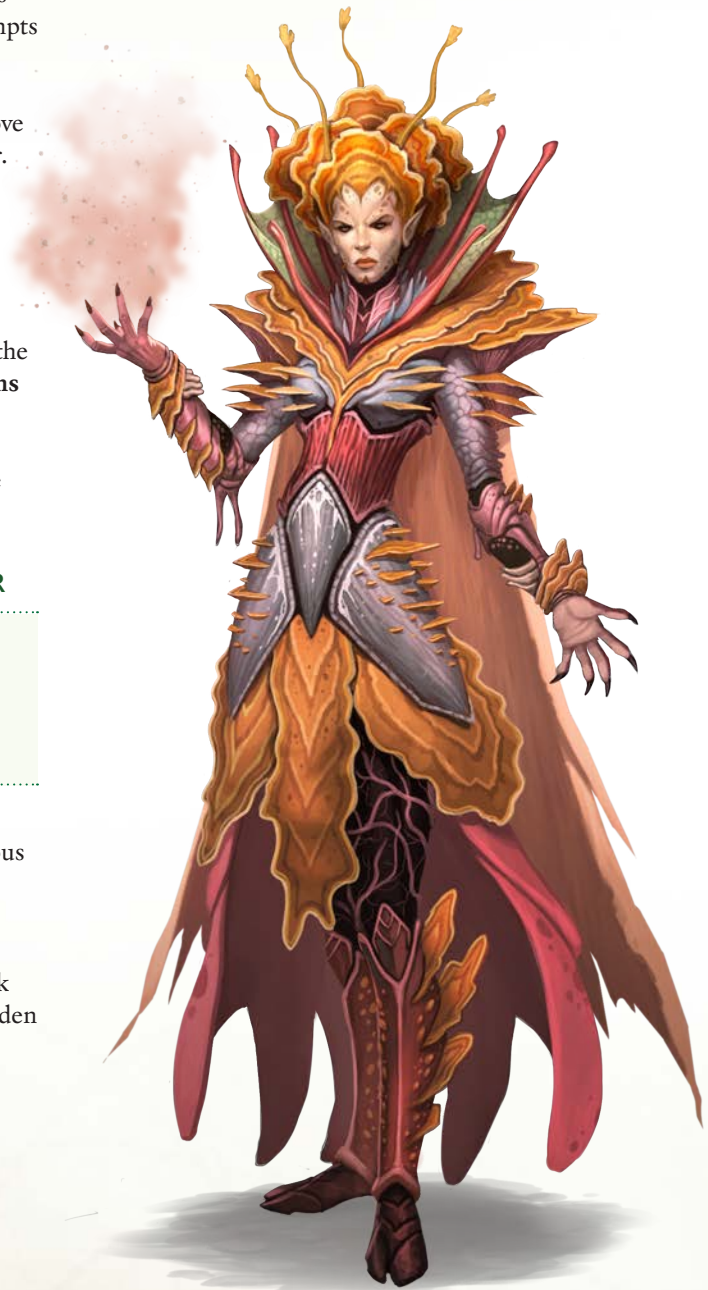
The desk contains parchment, quills, and ink. Several pieces of the parchment contain what appear to be various iterations of a royal emblem—the Mushroom Queen's attempts at creating her own seal in preparation for her establishment as a ruler in the Margreve Forest.

Treasure. A successful DC 15 INT (Investigation) check finds a hidden compartment in the desk that holds a golden crown set with rubies and amethysts worth 150 gp.

AREA 12. THE POLLUTED POOL

A muck-filled pool fills this chamber, which is thick with the stench of earthy decay.

The Mushroom Queen shoved the Enoki Scepter into the bottom of this stream-fed, muck-filled pool to keep it out of her enemies' hands and to give it time to recollect power. A successful DC 15 WIS (Perception) check notices the scepter protruding just above the pool's surface. A successful DC 15 INT (Arcana) check reveals the scepter has gone dormant, depleted of much of its magic. The Mushroom Queen used most of it in the creation of the Fungal Citadel.



Creatures. After the Mushroom Queen achieved her greatest success by creating a pair of **sporeborn bloatblossoms**, she placed them in this chamber to guard the weakened scepter. The creatures tried in vain to communicate their desire for closer proximity to her to protect her better, but she refused. She feels the scepter needs more protection than she does, and she feels it would be a sign of weakness if she entertained guests with a retinue of guards at her side. The creatures are linked to her, though, and make their way to her throne room (**Area 10**) if they sense she is in distress. They are also linked to the Enoki Scepter and can sense when a creature other than the Mushroom Queen touches it.

Destroying the Scepter. A successful DC 15 INT (Arcana or Nature) check reveals a process for destroying the depleted scepter. A PC that spends an hour studying the scepter has advantage on this check. To destroy the scepter, it must be exposed to 8 continual hours of sunlight with a creature dealing at least 10 radiant damage to the scepter by the end of that time. Destroying the scepter in this way cures all creatures of any diseases inflicted by the Mushroom Queen. If the Mushroom Queen is still alive after the scepter is destroyed, creatures have advantage on saves against her diseases. In addition, the Fungal Citadel remains vibrant and alive only while she remains within it. If the Mushroom Queen is dead, and the scepter is destroyed, the Fungal Citadel rapidly dissolves over the course of 7 days. After another 7 days, the Margreve Forest sprouts saplings and flows pure, clean water in its place.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If the Enoki Scepter isn't destroyed, it goes into a period of dormancy for 50 years. The druids of the Margreve Forest prefer to sequester the relic away to avoid possible misuse again, while some of their number spend time researching its destruction. A successful DC 20 CHA (Persuasion) check convinces the druids to give the scepter to the PCs for study or eventual destruction. The afflicted villages are quarantined, and the infected die within a week as their fungus-covered bodies root themselves where they perish. The druids burn the affected villages to the ground after they are certain the disease no longer spreads.

If the PCs destroy the scepter, the villagers slowly return to normal and all signs of the Mushroom Queen's influence, aside from the Fungal Citadel itself, vanish within 24 hours. Daesanderena feels the scepter's destruction and rewards the PCs with the *gem of brightness*, as promised.



If the PCs defeat the Mushroom Queen, the villagers are elated and give the PCs any promised rewards, such as the *bracers of archery* and *cloak of elvenkind*.

If the PCs defeat the Mushroom Queen and destroy the scepter, the Margreve Forest breathes a sigh of relief. Though mushrooms are natural to the forest, the Old Margreve saw the Fungal Citadel as an unnatural blight infecting it and needing to be cleansed. If you are using the **Character Status with the Margreve** rules found in **Chapter 1**, defeating the Mushroom Queen and causing the destruction of the Fungal Citadel increases the PCs' status with the Margreve by 3, as it supports the Margreve's Preservation value by cleansing the tainted land and returning the land to the forest.

The Weft of Shadows becomes directly aware of the PCs' involvement, and it begins watching them more closely, plotting ways of hindering them in the future. In the interim, it occasionally sends shadowy minions to harass them.



GALL OF THE SPIDER CRONE

An adventure by Tim Connors for four to five 6th-level characters.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Jędza Nansa is a Spider Crone that lives among the monstrous spiders of the Margreve Forest, where she traffics in potions and poisons, divinations, and enchanted ropes and nets. Many trade their most precious possessions for her services.

Earlier today, Jędza Nansa prophesied that she would die. To avoid her fate, she melded with a willow tree, hoping to escape any harm that might otherwise befall her. Unbeknownst to her, the tree bore a powerful parasite in a gall high in its branches. The willow expelled her, and horror flooded her as she discovered a gall now growing upon her own belly. She took her knife to it. She focused her magic upon it. Both attempts to remove it failed.

Something began to twitch inside the parasitic pocket. Something began to claw at her from the inside. She doubled over, sickened and dazed. Jędza Nansa stumbled through the woods toward her sister's house, but she soon collapsed.

A woodcutter named Sandor found Jędza Nansa unconscious. He had braved the deep forest to offer her his life in exchange for a potion that would cure the terminally ill babe that was strapped to his back. Now he carried the crone too.

A thunderstorm brewed as Sandor carried the woman and the child toward the Great Northern Road. Lightning flashed. Rain and sweat slid down his face. A Kariv band, securing their wind-blown wagons against a coaching inn, spotted Sandor as he stepped from the trees.

Soon thereafter, the Kariv tended to the Spider Crone in an upper room of the Witch's Teat coaching inn. With healing potions, they have revived Jędza Nansa. She has promised the Kariv her treasured *ivy crown of prophecy* (see **Magic Items in Chapter 2**), 1,000 gp . . . anything they want, if they will just remove the gall that is killing her. The Kariv have agreed, but they are not faring well. One of them takes a hot knife to the crone's belly. Four others brave the storm-wracked woods to collect a magic jug from Jędza Nansa's sister's house at her request. Meanwhile, the storm grows ever more violent as something struggles to be born from the gall.



ADVENTURE HOOK

A preternatural storm rages over the Margreve Forest. Lightning flashes, wind howls, and trees crash across the Great Northern Road. Through the darkness and slanted rain, the PCs spot the lantern that marks the Witch's Teat inn. Whether the PCs have business at the inn or are traveling the Great Northern Road on some other errand, the adventure begins as they enter the inn.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

A storm drives the PCs into the Witch's Teat inn. Inside, screams of pain echo from an upper room, and a Kariv midwife dashes downstairs with water and blood-soaked rags. She begs the PCs for healing potions but suspiciously denies them access to the "pregnant woman" upstairs until it is nearly too late.

The PCs discover that the pregnant woman is the gall-bellied Spider Crone Jędza Nansa. Something squirms inside her parasitic pocket. The crone kicks the incompetent Kariv surgeon aside and begs the PCs to cut the gall out of her.

Attempts to excise the gall fail. Jędza Nansa tells the PCs that if they can retrieve her sister's magic jug in time, she might be able to capture the unborn creature before it devours her soul. In exchange, she promises the PCs everything she previously promised to the Kariv, which vexes the Kariv.

The PCs rush into the wild night, armed with a crude map and the crone's struggling homunculus, which acts as a grumpy and anxious key to her sister's domain. Her sister's "house" is the abdomen of a giant, rickety spider Construct. It hangs from a chasm-spanning spider web. Defeating the trap that protects the jug requires eight hands. But the PCs will never make it back in time unless they manipulate the spider-silk ropes that control the home and ride it back to the inn.

While the PCs are away, the Kariv continue their reckless attempts to excise the gall to earn Jędza Nansa's reward. Unless the PCs get back in time, the gall creature devours the crone's soul and finally erupts in a whirlwind of claws and vines.

PART 1: THE PREGNANT WOMAN UPSTAIRS

The Witch's Teat was once a griffon tower, built by House Stross for its griffon riders, an elite company of couriers and shock cavalry. When the parsimonious council of the Free City abandoned that tradition in recent years, a Kariv named Vassily purchased the tower, and the fortified structure began its second life as a coaching inn. As the PCs approach the inn, they see the light of a lantern struggling against the night. A wooden placard bearing the words "Witch's Teat" clacks in the wind against the inn's stone walls. Kariv wagons are secured along the side of the building.

THE WITCH'S TEAT INN

As the door opens, half a dozen candles snuff out from the stormy wind as it whips into the building. A young woman latches the door closed against the howling wind as another young woman relights the candles. One by one, the faces of men and women appear in the candle light. Each is clothed in the colorful garb of the Kariv and many sit or stand at tables throughout the common room. A middle-aged woman descends a nearby staircase with an armload of bloody rags, and screams of pain echo from an upper room. On every table, a gleaming knife stands on end, pointing toward the sky.

The woman who closed the door is Mishenka, the daughter of the inn's owner, a retired Kariv soldier named Vassily, who once belonged to a mercenary company in the Seven Cities, where he earned his fortune and lost his leg. Vassily leans on a cane and eyes the PCs warily. After a moment, he surmises the PCs are just travelers escaping the storm and not some new horror produced by the forest, and he motions for Mishenka to usher them to an empty table near the fire. Vassily then resumes a hushed conversation with Adrik, the patriarch of the Kariv band staying at the inn.

More screams come down at intervals from the upper room. Tanya, the midwife and mother of Adrik, carries her load of bloody rags down the stairs, then wrings them out in a bucket near the fire and lets them hang over it. She deflects any questions from the PCs, instead asking if they have any healing potions for her "daughter" who is in labor upstairs. If the PCs refuse, she offers them twice the usual price for the potions. If the PCs ask her daughter's name or offer to attend to the girl personally, Tanya stammers suspiciously and heads back up the stairs. Alternatively, a successful DC 15 WIS (Insight) check notices Tanya's fumbling on the word "daughter" and her discomfort. Any questions related to this results in Tanya stammering and heading quickly back up the stairs.

Let the players drive the pace of this scene. As the anxious but tightlipped Kariv (use the statistics of **commoners** and **scouts**) pretend that all is well, build tension and suspicion with the following random events:

- Increasingly frequent screams (and curses) are heard from upstairs.
- Everyone quickly resets the tables' upturned knives when a loud thunderclap topples them. If asked, the Kariv claim that the knives protect against evil storm spirits.
- Tanya reappears periodically, silently wringing out her bloody rags and whispering into Adrik's ear.

- Vassily and Adrik continue their whispered but heated conversation. Vassily wants Adrik to murder “her” (Jędza Nansa) before “it” (the gall creature) is born. Adrik refuses, because if she dies, he will never learn the locations of the promised treasures.
- A hot-headed young Kariv suddenly draws his sword and makes for the stairs to “end this.” Adrik and two others intervene, and Kariv dissent blossoms.
- A baby (the woodcutter Sandor’s ill daughter) starts crying upstairs, but the screams of pain continue.

If the PCs still don’t try to ascend the stairs, Adrik approaches them directly. Either way, he decides that the PCs might be his only avenue to saving the Spider Crone and securing her riches. Perhaps they can keep the crone alive long enough for his brother and three nephews to return with Jędza Nansa’s sister’s magic jug. Before leading the PCs upstairs, he gravely warns them not to judge by appearances.

THE GALL AND THE PLEA

Stone stairs spiral up into the inn’s second story, where a gossamer curtain separates a landing from a dark bedchamber. In the center of the room, an old woman lies on a featherbed soaked in blood. A Kariv man stands beside her with a bloody knife in his hand. Behind him, a shaking Kariv woman cups her mouth with one hand and tries to hold the room’s only lantern over the man’s shoulder so that he can see. In the corner, a woodcutter feeds goat’s milk to a baby.

The old woman in the bed is not pregnant. A large gall grows upon her belly, like a burl on a tree. The surgeon lowers his knife against the gall, and the crone screams, curses, and kicks him aside. Something big squirms inside the gall. When the PCs arrive, Jędza Nansa reaches out to them, pleading for their help. She doesn’t tell them of the prophecy she saw this morning that she would die, but she otherwise conveys the information (with Sandor’s help) from the **Adventure Background**.





The creature inside Jędza Nansa claws away at her. Reducing her hit points by 3 each hour. She has only 11 hit points left, so unless provided with magical healing, she has only 4 hours to live. Once reduced to 0 hit points, she can't be stabilized, and magical healing has no effect. The Kariv have depleted all the healing measures at their disposal. All attempts (by anyone) to excise the gall are ineffective and deal 1 damage to the crone per round of surgery. If she is moved or carried, she also takes 1 damage per round. Healing magic and potions can't cure her, but they can buy her time by restoring lost hit points. However, no amount of healing will restore her to more than half her hit point maximum, which is 38. Such healing buys the PCs more time to help her.

If the PCs consider harming the crone, give her the chance to warn them (truthfully) of the dire consequences of her death. She says that the gall creature is immune to any harm inflicted on its host and that, if she dies, the creature will doom her immortal soul by claiming it as its own. Moreover, it will erupt more powerful than she ever was—powerful enough to slaughter everyone at the inn. A PC that succeeds on a DC 15 INT (Nature) check recalls corroborating tales of gall-borne creatures devouring treants' souls. Though the crone is no treant, Spider Crones are as tied to the forest as most treants, and the crone's assessment of the situation is likely accurate.

Sandor the woodcutter gravely adds that if the crone dies, she can't brew the potion to save his ill child. The rare king's sleep poison that courses through the babe's veins has already killed her mother. The child can be cured by someone who succeeds on a DC 16 WIS (Medicine) check using a healer's kit.

Jędza Nansa promises the PCs everything she previously promised to the Kariv: namely her *ivy crown of prophecy*, hidden somewhere in the forest. This offer vexes Adrik, who has risked his band's safety for a prize he can no longer win. He adroitly suggests that the PCs merely heal Jędza Nansa (for "a lesser but still generous reward") to give his brother and three nephews time to return with the magic jug that the crone will use to contain the gall creature.

Jędza Nansa retorts that the four men are already dead. She asks pale-faced Tanya to open the shuttered window, after which her **homunculus** climbs over the sill, into the room, and across the wall. The goblin-faced homunculus has four arms and four legs and holds the other end of its broken leash in its maw. The Kariv men took the homunculus with them as a key to access Jędza Nansa's sister's domain. Now, it reports telepathically to the crone that monsters in the forest have killed the four men.

While Tanya grieves for her son and his children, the Spider Crone begs the PCs to succeed where the Kariv men failed. If they retrieve her sister's magic jug in time, she might be able to save her soul and maybe even save Sandor's child.

If the PCs agree to collect the jug, Jędza Nansa asks them to swear an oath on the child's head that they will succeed. This oath is not magically binding, but Jędza Nansa is a Spider Crone and an agent of the Margreve Forest. If the PCs break their oath by allowing her to permanently die, they risk losing favor with the forest (see **Character Status with the Margreve in Chapter 1**). She draws a crude map to her sister Mavra's house, featuring four major landmarks: from the inn, they travel southeast to a clearing, south to an alseid graveyard, and east along a ravine to Mavra's house, with each location 3/4 mile from the previous site. She also explains that the PCs will require the presence of Nitca, her homunculus, whom Mavra knows and trusts. Nitca dislikes traveling away from Jędza Nansa again, grumpily stamping its foot as it argues with her telepathically, but eventually agrees.

If the PCs attack Jędza Nansa, Sandor and the Kariv defend her. She swears revenge and defends herself as well as she can, using the statistics of a **green hag** with the hit points described earlier in this section, until she dies, then the **wickerbeast** bursts from her corpse (see **Part 4**).

Negotiating with the Kariv. Adrik is the patriarch of the Kariv clan currently in the Witch's Teat inn, and the clan hasn't fared well this season. He wants to earn Jędza Nansa's favor to help his family, and the discovery of his brother's death makes him even more desperate. He alternates between confrontational and pleading with the PCs to promise to split the rewards with him should they succeed. A successful DC 15 WIS (Insight) check plainly sees the man is under excessive emotional strain and is trying any tactic he can to help his family. How the PCs interact with Adrik before they leave the inn determines Adrik's behavior in **Part 4**.

PART 2: INTO THE WOODS

As the PCs leave the inn, dozens of fist-sized spiders converge on the building. The harmless spiders brave the storm to be near the Spider Crone on her death bed, clinging to windowsills, sheltering under awnings, and hiding under floorboards. As the PCs travel to Mavra's house, they discover the fate of the Kariv who went in search of the house earlier that day, go through the alseid graveyard, follow the ravine holding the house, and meet a local alseid that can help them.

Rough Weather. The thunderstorm rages. Poor visibility and a trackless forest reduce all movement to 1/4 normal. (For example, a PC with a speed of 30 feet walks 3/4 mile in 1 hour.) The Kariv and their killers are 3/4 mile (1 hour) away. Mavra's house is an additional 1-1/2 miles (2 hours) away. At this speed, the round trip will take 6 hours. Unless the PCs heal Jędza Nansa before they depart, she dies—and Nitca rages (see **Nitca Rages**)—after 4 hours.

The downpour reduces visibility to 1/4 normal, and everything more than 10 feet away is considered lightly

obsured. Gusts of wind cause ranged weapon attacks to be made with disadvantage. Tiny creatures (such as Nitca) must succeed on a DC 17 DEX (Acrobatics) check to fly. The wind automatically extinguishes unprotected flames, such as normal torches. Protected flames dance wildly but don't automatically go out. Each hour, check if protected flames are extinguished (50 percent chance).

NITCA RAGES

If Jędza Nansa dies before the PCs return, Nitca goes into a rage. It lashes out at the PCs, their allies, nearby animals, and even nearby trees, tearing into anything it can reach and sobbing uncontrollably. If the PCs can calm Nitca with a successful DC 17 CHA (Persuasion) check or with a spell like *calm emotions*, they can convince Nitca to pantomime what happened: that the Spider Crone died and something

with claws ripped itself out of her body. The PCs should surmise that the people in the Witch's Teat inn are likely now in danger.

THE DEAD KARIV

A wide clearing lies open to the rolling thunderclouds. The downpour has turned the forest floor into an impromptu bog. Tufts of grass form islands that rise from shin-high water. A short distance ahead, a young man dressed in colorful traveling clothes lies facedown, his arms above his head, clinging to the grass.

JĘDZA NANSA (SHE/HER, GREEN HAG)

White hair and wrinkled skin. Facial tattoos giving her face the vague appearance of a spider's face. Web-like embroidery on black clothing.

Background: One of the Spider Crones of the Margreve Forest, Jędza Nansa specializes in poisons, antidotes for poisons, and minor prophecy. Like many of her sisters, she provides her goods in bargains of equivalent exchange, requesting payment as simple as a handful of eggs or as complex as a quest into the forest for a specific type of mushroom.

Personality Traits: Normally aloof and sure of herself, thanks in part to her daily prophetic consultations. Currently terrified of dying, which is an occurrence rare among Spider Crones, and willing to do or offer anything to prevent it.

Bonds: The Margreve Forest. Her Spider Crone sisters. Her homunculus Nitca.

Flaws: Short temper. Believes altruism is a myth and that no one acts without expecting something in return.

Wants: To be free of this gall, to live, and to return to her life the way it was.

Talking to Jędza Nansa: Jędza Nansa wants to be free of this gall and tasks the PCs with obtaining a special jug from her nearby sister's home to survive the gall. She can tell them most of what happened to her as described in the **Adventure Background**, and she can give them directions to her sister's house along with a description of the jug they need to retrieve. She sends her homunculus, Nitca, along to aid them. If they obtain the jug and save her, she rewards them with an *ivy crown of prophecy* (see **Magic Items** in **Chapter 2**) and 1,000 gp.



Nitca (and Jędza Nansa's map) leads the PCs directly to the last place it saw the Kariv it was escorting. The man lying in the grass is Adrik's nephew, Driskaw. He twitches, alive but dying. A successful DC 10 WIS (Medicine) check or any magical healing can stabilize him. If roused, Driskaw wants to try to save his father and brothers and return to the inn. He is a noncombatant and doesn't join the party.

Driskaw's father, Rurik, and his two brothers lie dead in the same clearing, their bodies 30 feet apart from one another. In the darkness and downpour, the PCs might notice them only one at a time. The downpour has turned the field into a shallow bog, making it difficult terrain.

Creatures. As the PCs approach the third man—Rurik, who wears a blue cloak—the PCs hear a territorial roar from a nearby mated pair of **owlbears**. The owlbears were responsible for the deaths of the men and now lay claim to the bodies, gorging themselves on whatever they can catch before building a nest for the eggs they will soon lay. They see the PCs as a threat to their feast and the nesting site they have now claimed, and they attack.

Treasure. Woefully ill-equipped for their task, the Kariv have little of value, except for four *potions of healing* (one each) and Rurik's *blue willow cloak* (see **Magic Items** in **Chapter 2**). If the PCs recover all the bodies, Driskaw gives them the cloak and all the potions except for one, which he drinks to recover from his own wounds.

THE ALSEID GRAVEYARD

Enormous antler racks protrude from the sopping ground and catch weeds that the storm has uprooted and blown away. The sound of rushing water issues from the southeast. From out of the darkness ride grass-covered alseid skeletons. Each gallops forward in a series of imperfect, jarring motions.

The map leads the PCs another 3/4 miles south of the clearing with the slain Kariv to the overgrown acreage of the alseid graveyard.

Creatures. Six **alseid skeletons** (see the **Appendix**) protect this sacred place of the alseid. They focus on driving out the PCs, retreating only when the PCs exit the graveyard on the southeast side of the graveyard, which lies 80 feet away from where the PCs entered. They fight to the death if necessary. If slain, six more alseid skeletons rise in their place at dawn the next day, bound to forever protect the graveyard. A successful DC 15 INT (Religion) check recognizes the skeletons are guardians bound to the graveyard and won't pursue the PCs beyond it.



THE RAVINE

The graveyard slopes toward a ravine along the graveyard's southeast edge. The 15-foot-wide ravine carries a torrent of 8-foot-deep floodwater east at 60 feet per round. A creature that enters it must succeed on a DC 17 STR (Athletics) check every round to avoid going under and being swept away. Forging the ravine requires three successful checks. The PCs don't need to cross the ravine to reach Mavra's house—a fact that a calm Nitca can share—but the alseid skeletons follow at a safe distance for half a mile while the PCs remain on the graveyard's side of the ravine, unable to leave the graveyard but wary of the PCs.

As the ravine heads east, it gradually widens and deepens, forming a steep-walled chasm that runs like a scar toward Mavra's house. Over the 3/4-mile course between the graveyard and Mavra's house, the chasm becomes 40 feet wide, its sidewalls grow to 40 feet tall above the water, and the water reaches 15 feet deep. After Mavra's house, the chasm narrows, its walls shrink, and the water recedes, returning the chasm to a 15-foot-wide ravine with 8-foot-deep water within another 3/4 mile.

Climbing the walls in this chasm requires a successful DC 17 STR (Athletics) check. The branches of the trees meet 70 feet above the ravine.

SPIDER'S PREY

The ravine is slowly widening and deepening as it proceeds east. Less than a mile from the alseid graveyard, a large, partially submerged web spans the chasm. The web has caught a great deal of debris, including some sizable logs. A half-cocooned alseid struggles at the water line to free itself from the sticky webs and swim against the current, but the rushing water repeatedly drives it back into the web. Near the top of the web, a large spider slowly crawls toward its escaping prey. The alseid screams a cry for help.

After following the ravine for 1/4 mile east from the graveyard, the PCs discover an alseid in danger. At this point, the ravine has widened to 20 feet across, and its walls tower 10 feet over the rushing water. This widening has slowed the rush of the water enough that it requires only a successful DC 13 STR (Athletics) check each round to stay afloat.

Creature. The alseid is being held in the web of a **giant spider** that slowly advances on him. The web is unstable and crumbling under the weight of the water and the debris caught in it. The spider moves at half its speed each round toward the alseid, as it tests the web with each step, and it reaches the alseid on its turn on the third round of combat. The spider fights to the death if cornered but otherwise retreats up the opposite wall of the ravine from the PCs if reduced to below half its hit point maximum, seeking an easier meal.

Spider's Prey. The trapped alseid can be freed with a successful DC 15 STR check or by dealing 10 slashing damage (AC 10) to the webbing around him.

THE ALSEID EXILE

The young alseid's name is Flawn, and he is an exile from his tribe. He was banished because he was recently cursed to leave human tracks, which means he is no woodfriend. His tribe sawed off his horns and sent him into exile after months of deliberation, and he has spent the past week seeking a Spider Crone.

In truth, Flawn was cursed by his tribe's matriarch after the tribe's wise man made a prediction during Flawn's coming-of-age ceremony that he would grow fourteen points—an extremely rare occurrence in alseid and a prediction that threatened the matriarch's own son's rise to power. Flawn doesn't know the truth and seeks one of the forest's Spider Crones in hopes of finding a cure for the curse that resulted in his banishment. He knows he can't go back to his people even if cured. He seeks a cure because he mourns the loss of his connection to the forest. No longer being a woodfriend is more devastating to him than the loss of his place among his people.

If rescued, Flawn becomes a lifelong friend of the PCs and accompanies them to Mavra's house. He tells them his situation and says he seeks a Spider Crone for a cure. He admits that if the Spider Crone can't cure him—if this curse was put on him by the Old Margreve due to perceived failures during his coming-of-age ceremony—he plans to go to the alseid graveyard and end his life, as a life disconnected from the forest is no life at all. If the PCs save Jędza Nansa and introduce Flawn to her, she cures the alseid and tells him the truth of his curse. Flawn dedicates himself even more to the forest, and the Old Margreve eventually restores his horns to him. The forest recognizes the PCs' hand in regaining one of its lost protectors, and the PCs increase their Status with the Old Margreve by 1 (see **Character Status with the Margreve in Chapter 1**) immediately and by 1 in a year when Flawn finishes his druidic training, becoming a powerful protector of the forest.

THE WEATHER CLEARS

After the PCs follow the ravine toward Mavra's house another 1/4 mile, the weather lightens. The 2-mile-radius thunderstorm centers on Jędza Nansa's gall and the creature that lurks within it. When the PCs trek beyond this radius, the thunderstorm and its torrential downpour cease as if travelers had passed through a curtain. The PCs still have another 1/4 mile to go, but there is no wind, no lightning, and no rain impeding their progress. Darkness still cloaks the forest, and the terrain remains difficult due to dense undergrowth and mud.

TINY COFFINS

The ravine has widened and deepened further, becoming a chasm. On the side opposite the alseid graveyard, over two dozen child-sized coffins are arranged in a circle outward from two central coffins.

The PCs come across these coffins just before Mavra's house is in sight. Somewhere far upstream, the folk of several small villages confess their yearly wrongdoings, from minor theft to adultery to murder, in whispered rituals to wicker effigies and send the effigies downstream in tiny coffins. The ritual imbues the effigies with memories of those deeds and a fragment of the creator's spirit. Each year, Mavra plucks some of the coffins from the water, infuses them with a modicum of power, and places them as a form of defense outside her home. The coffins cover a 20-foot square area and are an area curse.

Cursed Effigies. When a creature that isn't a Construct or Undead moves within 10 feet of the two coffins in the center of the collection of coffins, the effigies within all the coffins leap up, knocking the lids off their coffins, and howl



visions of the wrongdoings whispered into them into the minds of those nearby. When the effigies leap up and on initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties) each round, each creature in the coffins' area must make a DC 15 WIS save. On a failure, a creature takes 5 (2d4) psychic damage and has disadvantage on attack rolls and on CHA checks and saves for 1 hour or until the curse is lifted from the effigies.

The curse can be lifted by casting *remove curse* on the two coffins in the center of the collection of coffins. Alternatively, if Flawn is with the PCs, he places his hand on one coffin, closes his eyes, and says, "Child of the Margreve, child of man, I take back your name." This quiets the coffin and each coffin within 5 feet of it, lifting the curse from those coffins. If asked, Flawn explains he is an adherent to the Old Ways and this saying is how objects cursed by the wrongdoings of humans are cleansed in the Margreve Forest.

PART 3: MAVRA'S HOUSE

A single taut cord spans the chasm. Hanging upside down like a bat from the center of the cord is a ramshackle wooden building in the shape of a spider. Its legs hook over the cord to hold it in place, while its wagon-sized abdomen dangles above the rushing water below. Most of the spider's innards, including some cabinets, ropes, and fastened-on furniture, are visible. Other areas are concealed by the tattered molt of a massive spider, which the wooden house has slipped a few of its own legs into, like fingers into a ruined glove.

Mavra is not at home and doesn't appear in this adventure. She typically leaves her home dangling here for safekeeping when she is away. The cord holding up the house functions as a *rope of climbing*. Mavra has purposely increased the weight of the house so that the rope is just strong enough to support a Medium creature (which Mavra is) in addition to the house, which weighs nearly 3,000 pounds. Any more weight than that causes the rope to snap and the house to plummet into the 15-foot-deep torrent below. A successful DC 15 INT (Arcana) or DC 18 WIS (Perception) check notices the weight and the rope's magical nature and assesses that it can hold only one Medium creature before breaking under the weight.

The house doesn't discourage intruders, and getting inside is as simple as slipping from the outside to the inside of its wood-frame body. Possible ways to get to the house include:

- Flying to Mavra's house is accomplished without incident.
- Tightrope walking 20 feet along the slightly sloped thread and climbing down into the house from the

center of the thread. Doing this requires a successful DC 18 DEX (Acrobatics) check while moving at no more than half speed.

- Using hands and feet to slowly inch along the rope for 20 feet (moving at no more than one quarter speed). Dangling and traversing with only one's hands requires a successful DC 15 STR (Athletics) check.

The House Drops. If the house drops into the water from the rope breaking, it immediately animates like a giant, mechanical spider and tries to escape the water and the chasm. Any PC inside the house when it falls must succeed on a DC 19 STR (Athletics) check or begin to drown. Any PC swimming within 15 feet of the house has disadvantage on STR (Athletics) checks to swim as the house's eight legs blindly flail, seeking purchase to slow its movement. Clinging to the house's abdomen or legs requires a successful DC 15 STR (Athletics) check. Perching safely atop the house's body requires a successful DC 18 DEX (Acrobatics) check. When the house moves, the wooden structure within the spider's abdomen rolls and rotates, remaining upright regardless of the house's current orientation.

Rescuing the House. The house's 15-foot-long legs scrape the ravine bottom, slowing its downstream movement to 50 feet per round. PCs not clinging to the house are swept downstream at 60 feet per round. It will be 1/4 mile (26 rounds) before the depth of the water decreases to 10 feet and the house gains the purchase it needs to clamber out of the ravine of its own accord.

Once the house escapes the chasm, it magically climbs up a tall elm and remains in the branches, 50 feet above the ground. Climbing to reach it requires successful DC 12 STR (Athletics) check.

INSIDE THE HOUSE

Moss, spittle, and ichor seem to hold the rickety spider house's wooden pieces together. The monstrous spider molt into which the house has slipped itself covers a few of the legs and forms a makeshift roof over the wood-ribbed abdomen. Inside rest the bare bones of what could otherwise be a wagon. Two wide, flat chests form the floor, a cabinet is fastened to the frame with webs, and a second cabinet's door opens at the back of the spider house's head. A sticky net swings like a hammock, and eight silk ropes pass down through a metal ring above it.

Up to four Medium creatures can cram into the spider house.

Cabinets. Both cabinets are unlocked but secured with *arcane lock* spells. Opening a lock requires a successful DC 20 DEX (Thieves' Tools) check. The first cabinet contains



several knives, eight *sand arrows* (see **Magic Items in Chapter 2**), various minor material spell components, five *potions of greater healing*, and a *potion of poison resistance*. The second cabinet acts as the head of the spider house and acts as a *bag of holding* with three clay jugs in it. Each jug is 2 feet tall and shaped and painted like a grotesque head, complete with nose spout and ear handles. Each bears a different comical expression, might give off a magical

aura if inspected with the *detect magic* spell or similar effect, might be sealed with a stopper, and has specific contents:

- Jug 1 is sealed and appears to be holding back a sneeze. It radiates an aura of conjuration magic. If the jug is unsealed, an *ochre jelly* bursts out and attacks, hungry from its lengthy stay in the jug. This jug also contains ten amber gems worth 250 gp each.



- Jug 2 is unsealed and wears an expression of surprise. It doesn't detect as magical. The jug is empty.
- Jug 3 is sealed and looks like its cheeks are filled with air. It radiates an aura of necromancy. The jug is empty, but it is a *soul jug* (see **Magic Items** in **Chapter 2**)—the magic item that Jędza Nansa wants the PCs to retrieve. A creature opening the jug or a successful DC 12 INT (Arcana) or DC 12 WIS (Perception) check recognizes the jug as the one the crone wants.

Chests. If the house fell into the water, the two chests are smashed open and empty. Otherwise, they contain:

Chest 1—Utensils, dried apples, salt, and a jug of sweet sap.

Chest 2—Clothes, fasteners, empty bottles, common tools, and a *treebleed bucket* (see **Magic Items** in **Chapter 2**).

Hammock and Ropes. Each rope controls one of the spider house's legs, but someone must sit in the hammock for them to function (see **Riding the House**).

PLEA ON THE WIND

Before the PCs leave the house, Jędza Nansa, who has been watching their progress through Nitca's eyes, speaks through Nitca: "Hurry, I beg you! You won't make it back in time on foot. Drive the house! Nitca knows how. Take the trees. Hurry!"

The Kariv, desperate to earn the Spider Crone's favor, have continued their desperate surgical procedures in the PCs' absence. Thanks to their meddling, Jędza Nansa now has only 6 hit points (one and a half hours to live), regardless of whether the PCs healed her before departing. The PCs can ride the spider house back to the inn in 1 hour, but first they must learn how to control it.

If Nitca is present when the message comes through, it jumps into the hammock, which activates the control ropes. The homunculus bounces excitedly, pointing to the ropes and anxiously miming directions.

RIDING THE HOUSE

Any weight placed in or on the hammock activates the ropes. Pulling a control rope requires so little energy that Mavra can manipulate each one by tying them around her individual fingers. Each rope controls a leg, but the spider house moves only when the ropes are manipulated in a coordinated way.

The rope handlers must be inside the house, which accommodates up to four Medium creatures. Others, like Nitca and Flawn, can ride by clinging to the side or top, which requires a successful DC 10 STR (Athletics) check while the house is being controlled.

To drive the spider house quickly through the forest, the rope handlers must take turns making DEX checks (each one is DC 6). The group must achieve 10 successes before 3 failures. The DC of each check increases by 2 for each

handler less than four. If Nitca is present, the handlers have advantage on their checks, as Nitca mimes which ropes to pull and when.

You are encouraged to add descriptive flavor to the roll results. Every time a handler succeeds on a check, the house steps forward, turns appropriately, or gains momentum. Every time a handler fails a check, the house bucks wildly. Nitca waves and points, and depending on the handlers' recent results, its face bears an expression of glee or disgust.

After three failures, the house comes to a dead stop, flips upside down, or rears wildly (at your discretion). In addition, the group loses 10 minutes while regrouping and must begin making checks all over again.

After ten successes, the party drives the house as desired, controlling it completely, as long as the same handlers continue to operate the ropes. If they are up in a tree, they safely descend.

A RIVAL DROPS IN

A giant lizard, the size of a horse, climbs over the inn, gobbling up fist-sized spiders. Another appears behind it, gobbling up more. They rush down the side of the inn and hiss in anger. A brightly colored frill flares around each of their heads and shakes like a rattle.

As the PCs approach the Witch's Teat inn, they are met with a hungry foe drawn to the inn by the massive number of spiders converging on it.

Creature. The two **giant frilled lizards** (see the **Appendix**) claim the arachnid feast for themselves and attack any who attempt to enter the inn.

Mavra's House. The house is a land vehicle that uses the statistics of a kobold crawler (see *Game Master's Guide*), except it is only Large and has a crew of 2. Alternatively, it uses the statistics of a war wagon (see *Player's Guide*) but Large and with a crew of 2, a climbing speed of 20 feet, and a spider's Spider Climb trait.

PART 4: BACK AT THE INN

While the PCs were away, nothing good has happened back at the inn. In a desperate attempt to win Jędza Nansa's reward and save his family from starvation this season, Adrik continued his surgical attempts with ever-increasing aggressiveness and at great peril to the Spider Crone while the PCs were away. Just before she fell unconscious, she begged Adrik to stop. Only Adrik, a **veteran**, and his mother Tanya, a **druid**, remain in the inn. All others are hiding in the woods 1 mile away, having been scared off by the appearance of the spiders and the arrival of the giant frilled lizard.

If Flawn is with the PCs, he chooses to stay with Mavra's house to protect it from any who might attempt to steal it and to be the first line of explanation should the crone arrive while the PCs are in the inn. He reasons that a native of the forest and follower of the Old Ways might have a better chance of earning a moment of parley before facing the crone's wrath.

JĘDZA NANSA'S STATUS

If the PCs arrive in time, assume that Adrik's surgical foibles have reduced Jędza Nansa to 0 HP. She is unconscious and stable for 1 minute but dies thereafter. All magical healing attempts fail. The gall erupts when Jędza Nansa dies. If the PCs don't get back to the inn in time, assume that they arrive just as the crone dies—Nitca rages, and the gall erupts.

Unless the *soul jug* is used on her, Jędza Nansa's death from the gall's eruption is a permanent death, reducing the PCs' status with the Old Margreve by 2 if they swore an oath to save her (see **The Gall and the Plea** earlier in this



adventure). If the *soul jug* is used to house Jędza Nansa's soul, Nitca doesn't rage when she dies and instead serves a different role (see **What Jędza Nansa Does**).

WHAT THE KARIV DO

How Adrik and Tanya interact with the PCs here depends on how the PCs interacted with them in **Part 1**.

If the PCs were sympathetic toward the Kariv's plight and agreed to share at least some of the rewards for saving Jędza Nansa with the Kariv (or agreed to some other form of help for them), Adrik and Tanya are excited to see the PCs and do everything in their power to aid the PCs. Tanya, who has some familiarity with the magic of the forest's crones, knows how the *soul jug* works and can help the PCs use it to save the Spider Crone. If the PCs were too late to save Jędza Nansa but built a rapport with the Kariv, Adrik and Tanya help them fight the monster that erupts from the gall.

If the PCs refused to share any of the rewards for saving Jędza Nansa with the Kariv, Adrik and Tanya attempt to manipulate the PCs, insisting that Tanya, who knows how the *soul jug* works, use it on the crone. Then after the gall erupts, they actively work against the PCs, attempting to one-up the PCs or deal the killing blow to the monster. If the PCs were too late to save Jędza Nansa and refused to help the Kariv, Adrik and Tanya flee when the gall erupts, cutting their losses.

USING THE JUG

The *soul jug* must be unstoppered by Jędza Nansa to save her spirit as her body dies. Tanya knows this and can convey it to the PCs if she and Adrik are on the PCs' side. Otherwise, a successful DC 15 INT (Arcana) check while inspecting the jug discovers this. The crone's hand can be manipulated to unstopper the jug, pulling her soul into the jug. Once Jędza Nansa's soul is in the jug, her body dies, and the gall erupts (see **The Gall Erupts**).

WHAT JĘDZA NANSA DOES

If Jędza Nansa's soul is moved to the *soul jug*, she becomes aware of her surroundings again. Her connection to Nitca and the fact that Nitca was made with bits of her blood and hair allow her to use the jug to possess Nitca as if it was part of her body, using the homunculus's powers and speaking through it. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties) of the round after Jędza Nansa possesses Nitca, the crone's body dies, and the gall erupts. She joins the PCs in the fight as Nitca, but she fights mostly defensively and focuses on protecting the jug, knowing that if it breaks, she dies permanently.

THE GALL ERUPTS

A tremendous thunderclap rocks the Margreve. Lightning spears the night, strikes the inn, and splits nearby trees with crackling fire. Wind sucks the shutters from the building, and a gale snuffs out all candles and lanterns inside. In the darkness, sparks dance across the cracked surface of the Spider Crone's gall. It bursts open, and claws rip out from within as a beast of wicker and branches rises out of the body.

As soon as Jędza Nansa's body dies, the gall erupts. As it erupts, a **wickerbeast** climbs out of the remains of her body, a tiny mirror in its belly. If the PCs aren't present, the wickerbeast kills Adrik and Tanya then leaves the inn to hunt down and capture the souls of the rest of the Kariv. If the PCs are present, it attacks them first, perceiving them as the more rewarding souls to capture.

If the gall erupts while Jędza Nansa's soul is still in her body, her soul fuses with and powers the wickerbeast, tying the two together. Even if the wickerbeast is defeated, the Spider Crone is permanently killed and can't be restored to life, except with a *wish* spell.

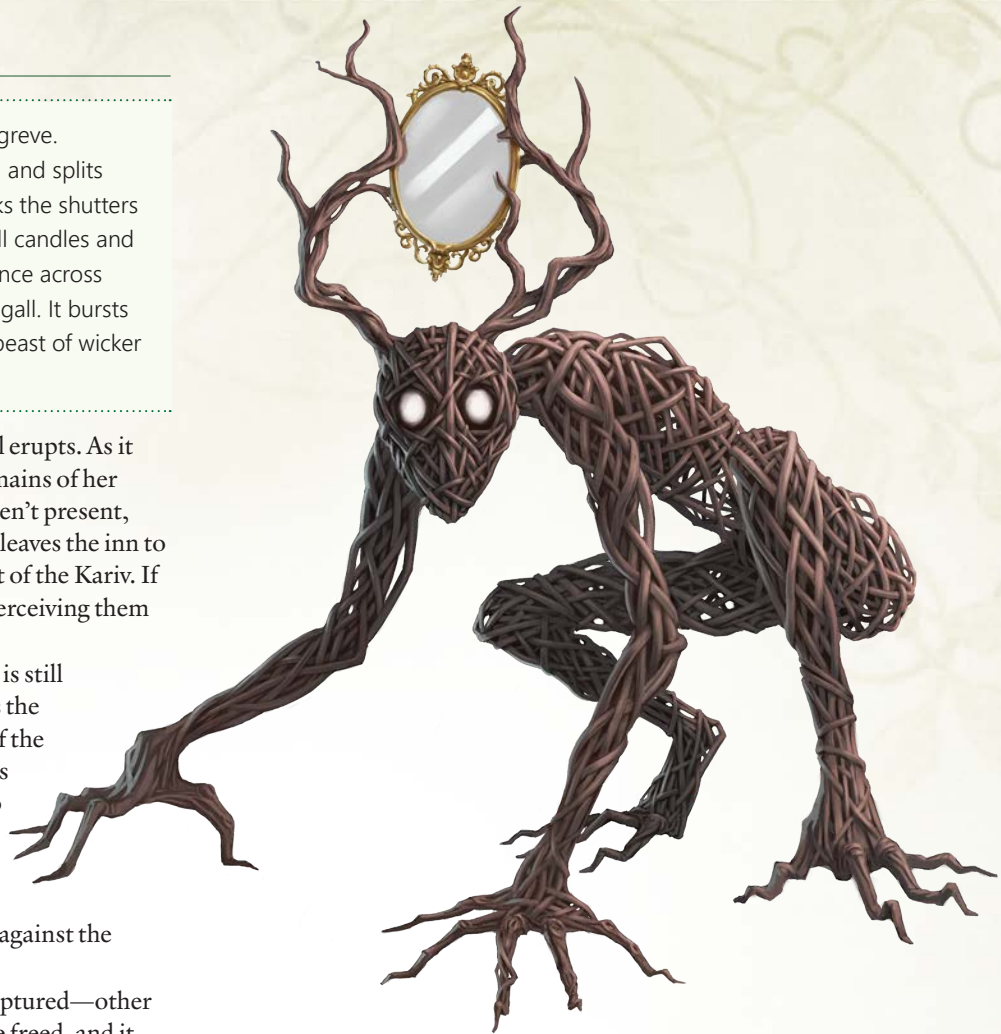
If the gall erupts after Jędza Nansa's soul has been transferred to the *soul jug*, creatures have advantage on their save against the wickerbeast's Capture Souls action.

When the wickerbeast dies, any souls it captured—other than Jędza Nansa's, if it captured hers—are freed, and it and its mirror crumble to dust.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If Jędza Nansa permanently dies, her sister Mavra is livid—not only because the PCs failed to save Jędza Nansa but also because they stole her house in the process. Mavra potentially becomes a recurring antagonist for the PCs, hindering them whenever possible as they adventure in the Margreve Forest. If the PCs made an oath to save Jędza Nansa, and she permanently dies, their status with the Old Margreve is reduced by 2, as the Spider Crones are recognized by the Old Margreve as key denizens and protectors of the forest (see **Character Status with the Margreve** in **Chapter 1**).

If Jędza Nansa's soul is placed in the *soul jug*, and the wickerbeast is defeated, the crone continues to possess Nitca and tells the PCs she can feel her sister Mavra approaching. Mavra arrives about an hour after the wickerbeast dies. She is irate that her house was moved but quickly calms after seeing the situation. Mavra takes her sister/Nitca and the jug to her house, wherever the PCs left it, and returns an hour later with a restored Jędza Nansa. The Spider Crones then hand over the promised rewards:



Jędza Nansa's *ivy crown of prophecy* (see **Magic Items** in **Chapter 2**) and 1,000 gp. The Spider Crones ultimately don't care who receives what rewards, and they have no issue with the PCs keeping everything or sharing it with the Kariv—Jędza Nansa's main concern was her survival and that has happened.

If Jędza Nansa is saved, Sandor returns to the inn after the storm dies down, hoping that the crone survived and can cure his sick child. Once Jędza Nansa is restored to life, she brews a potion to save the child and charges only a minor fee, feeling generous and elated at her restoration.

If Jędza Nansa is saved and Flawn is with the PCs, he converses privately with the crone about his curse and exile. Fluent in prophecies, she is aware of the one around Flawn, tells him the truth of his curse, and cures him free of charge, knowing that curing him will earn her extra favor with the forest in the future.

If the PCs don't kill the wickerbeast, it hunts for souls throughout the forest, starting a series of mysterious, woundless murders along the Great Northern Road. Eventually, it threatens the Zobeck farmlands, and the Free City seeks brave adventurers to track it to its resting place in the Margreve Forest and destroy it.



BLOOD AND THORNS

An adventure by Dan Joyce for four to five 7th-level characters.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

For years, the **children of the briar** (see the **Appendix**) have traded favors, secrets, and droplets of blood. A nuisance more than a menace, they are quickly ignored when their spying stops being useful. Things are changing, however. An adventurous child of the briar named **Catchweed** (see the **Appendix**), who long served the wiles of the shadow fey, has decided that enough is enough. It's time for his people to rise and become a power in the Margreve Forest—the match of any hag, nymph, or scáthsidhe.

Assembling an alliance of **shambling mounds**, **shadows**, and **children of the briar**, he ambushed a traveling vampire, immobilizing her with a *living stake* (see **Magic Items** in **Chapter 2**) made of mandrake root. Her necromantic blood provided a potent catalyst for his growing power.

Under Catchweed's command, briars and brambles are spreading throughout the forest and infesting the flesh of fey and beast alike. Wise enough not to threaten the Old Margreve itself, he instead challenges other forest dwellers for dominion. His crusade has a simple philosophy: plants have the strongest ties to the forest, and all other creatures should bow before them.

If Catchweed isn't stopped, a new power will arise in the forest, fueled by the blood of vampires: a spiteful Kingdom of the Briar to clash with the Courts of the Shadow Fey, the shroud-eaters of Walker's Wood, and Zobeck's dominion over the Great Northern Road.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The adventure begins at a wedding, when briar-tangled boars on a pain-maddened rampage interrupt the proceedings. In the aftermath, the PCs hear many tales of similar occurrences throughout the area. Investigation uncovers rumors of a "King of Thorns," but an ancient



ritual hides him. Only the Spider Crone Jędza Padak has the means to find the king, but to get her help, the PCs must climb high into a maze of webs.

By bargaining or through force, the party gains Padak's aid in the form of a strand of magic spider silk that they can follow to the villain's lair. To stop the King of Thorns, they need to sneak past his forces and into his Palace of Briars, where the source of Catchweed's power is revealed.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Although the PCs have danger thrust upon them in the opening scene, they are at their leisure to investigate (or not) afterward. Things only get worse as time goes on, and sooner or later, they must either stop the King of Thorns or bow to his power.

If they need a nudge to get involved, use existing friends and allies to spur them on. Innkeepers and village elders promise to scrounge up every penny they can as a reward.

Getting help from the authorities is easier said than done. City-based merchants are concerned only for the sanctity of their trade route, and though Zobeck's griffon riders are responsible for the area's security, they have learned the hard way not to get involved in matters beyond the road. Convincing either party that the threat of the King of Thorns is credible, with a successful DC 25 CHA (Persuasion) check, merely spurs them to hire expendable irregulars (like the PCs) to sort things out.

INTRODUCTION

The PCs are guests at a wedding feast in the open air at the forest's edge on the northwestern side of the Margreve Forest, amid trees hung with lanterns and bright cloth pennants. The rituals are over: The happy couple has tasted sacred salt, they have stood back to back and gazed at each other in bronze mirrors, and each guest has tied a ribbon around the couple's clasped hands as they stood, palms against an ancient tree, and swore the marriage oath. Now they are bound together as closely as Porevit and Yarila.

When the ceremonies are over, the party begins. Friends and relatives sit down to a feast at long tables. Ale, wine, and wedding mead flow copiously. A handful of minstrels beat drums, pluck their balalaikas, and sing.

Getting the PCs Involved. As 7th-level characters, the PCs are big fish in the very small pond of local villages. Elders seek their advice, children come to gawp, and lusty local lads and lasses try to catch their eye. Perhaps the PCs are invited purely because of their celebrity. Maybe they are related to the bridal party, or they saved one of the attendees during a previous adventure. Even complete strangers are welcome, since tradition dictates that anyone arriving during a feast must be offered hospitality.

As a holy hero favored by the gods, a PC cleric or paladin might be asked to officiate the ceremony. Arcane spellcasters will be politely badgered to provide magical

entertainment, and bards are begged to perform their masterpieces. Rogues can find ample opportunity to charm potential patrons (or victims), while martial types might take part in a pre-wedding hunt with the family to catch the boar that is destined to serve as the banquet's centerpiece.

PART 1: THE HANDFASTING

This event is a social occasion, not a dungeon delve, so the PCs shouldn't be equipped for combat. None of the guests are wearing armor, and the only weapons on scene are a few daggers and staves. Etiquette allows the PCs, as famous adventurers, to carry swords and other flashy weapons, but if the PCs allow themselves to be disarmed (including swapping their combat spells for flashy, entertaining magic), consider awarding them extra Luck or other bonuses when combat breaks out.

FEAST INTERRUPTED

A horrible choking and moaning disturbs the festivities, accompanied by the sudden screams of guests. The boar on the spit—skinless, cooked, and carved down to its ribs—is twisting and groaning as if alive.

The spasms of the carcass are unnerving but harmless, a warning from the Old Margreve of what is to come.

Creatures. As the meat starts to groan, a living **giant boar** with briars erupting from its flesh bursts into the glade. Two more charge into the clearing in round 2, and three more on round 3. The boars overturn tables, send mead barrels rolling, and trample gifts, guests, and food alike. They charge the nearest group in each round and are easily distracted. The boars fight to the death.

If all the boars are defeated, the wedding party profusely thanks the PCs (assuming they helped) before beating a hasty retreat with whatever remains of the food and drink. In the aftermath, the PCs hear many similar tales of recent encounters with maddened forest beasts and the recent unnatural abundance of brambles and briars. The locals naturally look to their leaders for answers, who then might look to the capable PCs.

Here are some of the stories the PCs might hear from the wedding's attendees:

- An elderly druid was recently found dead, tangled in a bramble patch the druid traverses almost daily without issue.
- A trio of dryads haunts a campsite a day's walk away. Enraged by itchy thorns growing out of their flesh, they attack travelers attempting to rest at the site.
- Grandmother Bear, an awakened bear, has lived peacefully outside a nearby village for decades, protecting locals from danger and accepting offerings to the forest. Now she batters down fences, shatters



cabin walls, and slaughters livestock without reason.

Those who have seen her and survived say she is covered in thorny vines that pierce her thick hide.

- **Children of the briar** (see the **Appendix**) have been disappearing. Many local nests are empty, and those that remain are much more belligerent.

PART 2: A THORNY PROBLEM

It's obvious that something wicked is brewing in the forest's depths, but to discover exactly what that is, the PCs will need good knowledge of the forest's secrets or answers from someone similarly skilled. While talking to the wedding's attendees, the PCs can learn more about the situation by succeeding on CHA (Persuasion) checks:

- **DC 10:** Maybe the children of the briar know something about what's going on, as they are known for an association with thorns and brambles.
- **DC 12:** Someone or something calling itself the King of Thorns is rumored to dwell in the deep woods.
- **DC 15:** The king's servants are plants and creatures infested with thorny briars. They hate all Humanoids.
- **DC 20:** The king is said to live in a briar palace somewhere near the Northern Swamps. Powerful magic hides its exact location.

The PCs might be able to seek advice from wise NPCs they met in earlier adventures. Those individuals can confirm that something important is afoot that the Old Margreve seems to be either ignoring or supporting. They can also point PCs in the direction of the children of the briar, both as a good source of information and another type of briar-related trouble.

QUESTIONING THE KING'S SERVANTS

If PCs investigate the children of the briar, they find the plants' normal haunts abandoned, inhabitants run off to join the King of Thorns's army. After an hour of searching, they can eventually locate an active nest. This time can be reduced to 10 minutes with a successful DC 15 WIS (Survival) check, which finds more recent, active tracks.

The nest is a mass of spiky brambles filling a dell about 100 feet in diameter. Entrances sized for Tiny creatures dot the circumference, and similar-sized paths run through its center. The surrounding terrain is heavy undergrowth, filled with thorny plants.

A community of twenty **children of the briar** (see the **Appendix**) live here, though only twelve are present when the PCs arrive. These children aren't allies of Catchweed, but they also aren't in the mood to talk to Humanoids stomping through their bramble patches. If the PCs want to talk to a child of the briar, they need to catch one, succeed on a DC 15 CHA (Intimidation or Persuasion) check, or find some other way to physically or magically coerce one into talking to them.



Once a child of the briar has been convinced to talk to the PCs, the child says:

The King of Thorns promises that we shall rule this forest. Dryad, nymph, and vila will serve us; man and alseid, wolf and hag, will bow to us. He says the Kingdom of the Briar is coming.

The child of the briar rolls its eyes and speaks “Kingdom of the Briar” mockingly. It explains the nest has a good relationship with the nearby villages and a lesser noble house in the shadow fey courts that they don’t want to jeopardize on some upstart’s empty promises. They lost some of their number to this king, but most of their community agreed that this king was full of hot air and refused to join him.

If the child of the briar is asked where the king resides, the child shrugs and says all they know is a rhyme:

*Thorn King nestles in a green enclasp,
Seekers find nothing but thorny rasp.
His lair cannot be known or shown,
Thanks to the wisdom of a Spider Crone.*

The child or any local villager, such as one of the wedding’s attendees, can point the PCs toward Jędza Padak as the local Spider Crone and can give the PCs directions to her home.

SISTER OF SPIDERS

PCs who go searching for Jędza Padak eventually reach a section of the deep woods shrouded by webbing. Bundles of cocooned prey dangle overhead, getting larger as the PCs move deeper: animals at first, then the shriveled corpses of forest goblins, alseid, and unwary woodsmen.

Creatures. Three **ettercaps** roam the forest floor, harvesting silk and poison from local spider swarms. They are bent double carrying huge bundles of raw silk, and half-filled glass vials dangle around their necks. If questioned about the Spider Crone’s whereabouts, they point upward and gesture to indicate that PCs should climb the webbing.

AND THE BLADE WENT SNICKER-SNACK!

The webs are crowded with spiders both large and miniscule. Strands thick enough to walk on spiral high into the canopy, passing between pulsating grey egg sacks, entangled victims, and globular buildings made from spittle and silk. Eightfold eyes watch from a veritable city of spiders.

There are spiders everywhere here, some hidden, some blatantly visible, watching the PCs as they travel. The spiders are wary but willing to talk if a PC can talk to them. They wonder why the PCs are here and become hostile and violent if the PCs mention harming their “sister” Jędza Padak. They otherwise are friendly and curious in the same way that young children in a remote village might curiously surround and interrogate new arrivals.

Creatures. The entrance to Jędza Padak’s home is guarded by three **giant spiders** and **Snickersnack**, a **flesh golem** made of spider parts and dressed in a feathered hat and



cloak. Unlike most flesh golems, Snickersnack can talk and prides himself on his charm and combat prowess. He uses a rapier in combat (making four rapier attacks in place of two Slam attacks), though he resorts to brute force Slam attacks against foes threatening his mistress. He is an honorable and flamboyant swashbuckler, flourishing his hat and rapier and swishing his cloak with each movement. He stops any PCs ascending the webs to Jędza Padak's home and questions their purpose.

As long as the PCs didn't kill every spider and ettercap on their way up and don't tell Snickersnack they are here to kill Jędza Padak, Snickersnack lets them pass if one of them can best him in a duel (the first to three successful hits against the other wins; Snickersnack pulls his hits and deals only half damage, aiming for a fun fight, not a bloodbath). During the duel, the other nearby spiders merely watch, clicking their mandibles as if commenting excitedly on the battle. If the PCs are hostile, Snickersnack and the giant spiders attack and fight to the death defending the Spider Crone. If the PCs spoke to and were friendly toward the spiders on the way up, Snickersnack automatically allows them to pass, having been told of the PCs by the other spiders.

Traversing the Web. This area of forest is covered in webbing connecting a swath of trees and their canopies in horizontal and vertical strands. The webbing is too dense for a Small or larger creature to fly through it. To climb from the forest floor to Jędza Padak's home 100 feet up in the trees requires three successful DC 10 STR (Athletics) or DEX (Acrobatics) checks. A PC with a climbing speed has advantage on the check. Failing causes the PC to fall to the forest floor, but the dense webbing reduces falling damage to 1d3 bludgeoning damage per 10 feet fallen. While in combat, a PC must succeed on such a check each time the PC moves more than 5 feet or risk falling.

THE CRONE AND THE STRAND

An old woman sings wordlessly as she weaves on a living loom—a large spider with silk twisted into a cat's cradle around its legs. The crone has chitinous skin and wispy white hair, her toothless mouth showing just a hint of mandible as she smiles. Her round head and pronounced hump combine with thin gangly limbs and overlong fingers to give the disturbing impression of an arachnid in not quite perfect human guise.

If the PCs weren't escorted in by Snickersnack, Jędza Padak, an **ambush hag**, asks them to swear on the Old Margreve that no harm will come to her or her spiders before she speaks any further with them. She then offers



them nettle tea and asks why they have come. If they mention the rhyme the children of the briar know, she tells them:

"I didn't hide the King of Thorns, but I taught him how to ask the Old Margreve for sanctuary. It seems the forest has given it to him. Poor little thing. Such a nice boy when he was young, but time and scorn have made him as cold and angry as a winter storm. I wonder: what is so wrong about someone wanting to do right by their people, ensuring respect, safety, and a kingdom of their own?"

The Old Margreve hides Catchweed from all in the forest, including Jędza Padak. She does have a means of finding him, however.

The question she puts to PCs is why she should help. Why undo the King of Thorns' plans? She doesn't care who claims rulership of the Old Margreve, and the forest certainly doesn't. Humans, dwarves, and kobolds all engage in war and conquest, so why shouldn't the children of the briar? Perhaps people are being hurt, but that is true everywhere—especially in vampire-haunted Doresh. Why doesn't the party go help them instead?

If the PCs have a good response to these questions, Jędza Padak will aid them. This isn't a matter of CHA

checks, just good roleplaying; she is interested in their opinions, not their ability to present them. If they spared Snickersnack, he supports the PCs, pointing out a place for a people is fine, but subjugating all within the forest is something different.

If she remains unconvinced, Jędza Padak is prepared to sell them her *ghost thread* (see **Magic Items** in **Chapter 2**). She accepts something in barter of at least equal value, rising to twice or three times that much if the PCs destroyed Snickersnack. Promises of future service can make up part of this bargain, but she also demands something tangible.

If they use force, she surrenders when reduced to 20 hit points or fewer, relinquishing the thread and marking the PCs for later vengeance.

Treasure. Currently, one end of the *ghost thread* is wrapped around a bent nail in the hut's wall while the other is tied to the Palace of Briars—a safety policy she secured when she taught Catchweed how to ask the forest to hide his home. If a PC always keeps a careful grip on the strand, the PCs can follow it to Catchweed's lair.

PART 3: KINGDOM OF THE BRIAR

By carefully following the *ghost thread*, the PCs can defeat the Margreve Forest's shifting trails and attempts at misdirection. It leads them north, to a location northwest of the Northern Swamps. The King of Thorns' domain is eerily silent—the air stale and the undergrowth thick with briars. Animals seem to be completely absent.

GREEN GUARDIANS

The area surrounding the Palace of Briars has large trees and dense undergrowth that is difficult terrain. Once the PCs reach this area, they can see the large dome of the palace and can't be further fooled or misdirected by the forest's magic, meaning they can safely drop the *ghost thread* at this time. If the PCs want to keep the magic item, they can untie the end attached to the outer wall of the palace and return to Jędza Padak. If they successfully defeated Catchweed, she unties the end of the thread in her hut and gives it to them as a reward.

Creatures. The area is dotted with **shriekers** spaced approximately 30 feet apart. A **giant ape** with the bramble creature template (see the **Appendix**) patrols this area and arrives to investigate 2d4 rounds after a shrieker is set off, attacking any intruders. The shriekers know to not shriek if Plants pass through the area. Shriekers are fickle creatures, and only the ape checks on their shrieks. The palace's guardians (see **Thorn King's Defenders**) don't respond to shrieks or even pay much attention to them unless three or more shriekers are set off within half an hour of each other, at which point the patrol arrives within 2d6 rounds of the third shrieker going off.

THE THORN KING'S DEFENDERS

Catchweed uses a cluster of ancient barrows as his base of operations. Every tomb has been broken open: unwanted bronze regalia is discarded beside empty biers, and carvings on the walls depict a people who revered the forest and never knew how to smelt iron. Catchweed's capture of vampires and experimentation with necrotic energies has caused some of the skeletons in the barrows to rise and wander the area and caused some shadows to rise. The Undead see Catchweed and his allies as their allies and fight intruders alongside the briarfolk.

Creatures. A patrol of two **children of the briar** (see the **Appendix**) and six **skeletons**, wearing the ragged raiment of ancient lords, keeps watch on the surface above and around the barrows, trusting the bramble giant ape and the shriekers to guard the outskirts of the area. They attack any intruders they detect, but their patrol is wide, taking them more than 60 feet from the barrows twice each hour.



THE PALACE OF BRIARS

At the heart of the tumult sits a dome of stygian briars. Finger-length thorns protrude in all directions, like a regiment of tiny spears.

A successful DC 15 INT (Arcana or Nature) check realizes the black briars making up the palace are native to the Shadow Realm. The passageways in the barrow are unlit unless noted otherwise. The palace is filled with a rhythmic clickety-clack sound as hundreds of children of the briar chant in unison.

Briar Floor. The floor of the palace is covered in briars. A creature that takes the Dash action must succeed on a DC 12 DEX save or take 2 (1d4) piercing damage and fall prone. Similarly, a creature that falls prone within the palace takes 2 (1d4) piercing damage from the briars each time it falls prone. Children of the briar are immune to this effect.

Shadow Walls. Though the palace is made of thorns and briars, it is also made partially of shadow stuff. Its walls and roof are as impervious to fire as stone is and generate a haze of nonmagical dim light around them, even in the middle of the day.

AREA 1. DOOR OF THORNS

A mass of taut vines held together by a tangle of interlocked spines forms a thorny mesh door.

The palace's dome overhangs this thorny doorway. A creature, other than a child of the briar, that opens the door takes 2 (1d4) piercing damage from its thorns.

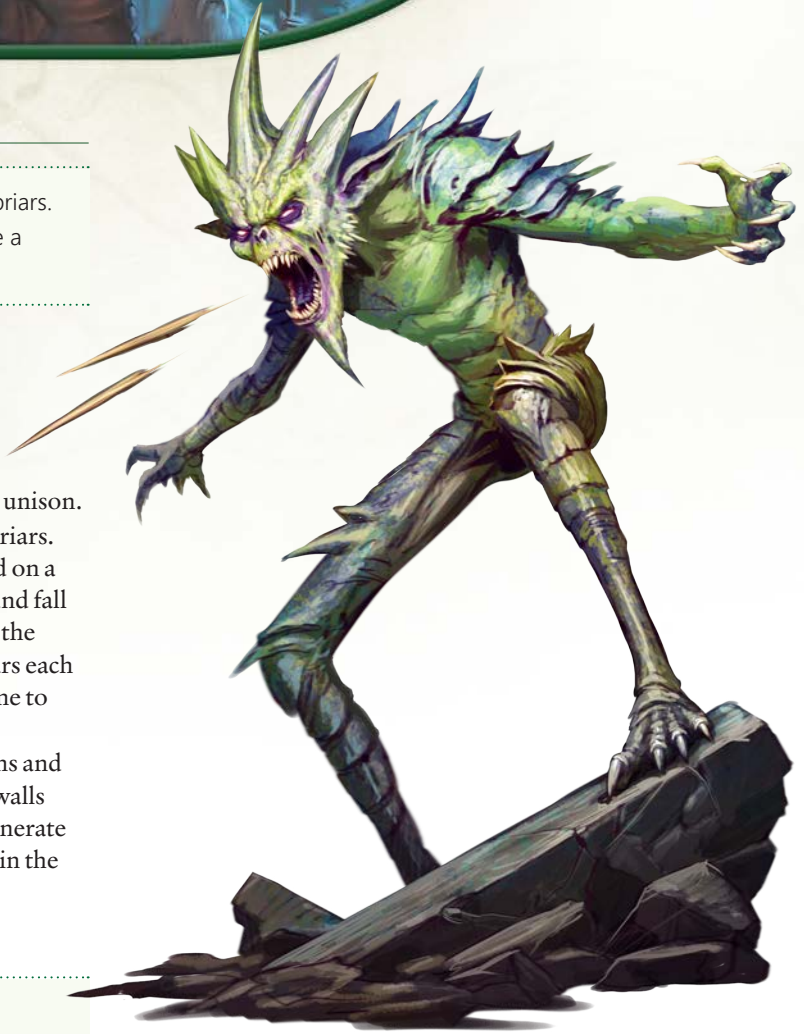
Creatures. Two **greater children of the briar** (see the **Appendix**) guard this door and attack anyone not escorted by one of Catchweed's allies.

AREA 2. EXSANGUINARIUM

Blood drips slowly from bodies tangled in the thorny ceiling of this large room. Hundreds of children of the briar crouch here, swaying and clicking as one. Occasionally, one of them stretches up to catch a falling droplet in its mouth.

These rooms serve two primary purposes: collection sites for the blood Catchweed uses to enhance children of the briar into greater children of the briar and the heart of the magic that keeps the palace hidden.

Creatures. One **swarm of children of the briar** (see the **Appendix**) inhabits each of these two rooms, maintaining the ritual that Catchweed started. Their rhythmic clicking is a necessary part of the magic that feeds the Old Margreve, ensuring the palace remains hidden by the



forest's power. They don't immediately attack intruders, knowing the maintenance of the ritual is paramount, unless intruders attack them or intruders attempt to free the vampire spawn on the ceiling.

Hanging Victims. The emaciated Humanoids tangled in the ceiling are **vampire spawn** (each with 1 HP), presently immobilized by hawthorn roots piercing their chests. Each room has two such spawn. The spawn remain aware of their situation—eyes wide in terror, fanged mouths open in silent screams. If freed, the spawn don't remember much outside of being dragged here by briar people and have hazy memories of seeing a woman bound in a chair (see **Area 5**) before being hung here. They don't fully realize they are vampires, but they don't remember who they were and know they hunger for blood—which a strange elf (see **Area 3**) occasionally brings them. They abhor what they have become and beg the PCs to end their lives. They talk to and cooperate with the PCs for 10 minutes, even consenting to being put to the sword, but after that, the hunger for blood takes over, forcing them to attack the PCs in a frenzy. The identities of these vampire spawn are outside the scope of this adventure, but their clothing and small mementos hidden away in their pockets can serve as clues to the PCs that these are local villagers who were taken from their homes by Catchweed's people.



The Briar Palace

AREA 3. SANGUINE ALCHEMY

This chamber is filled with red-stained alchemical equipment. Desiccated bats hang from the ceiling. The foul scent of decaying blood hangs heavy in the air.

Here, the King of Thorns experiments in harnessing the power of vampire blood. Amid the test tubes are a dissected child of the briar and small pots that hold cuttings of various Plants. Using the child of the briar's ability to gain power from imbibing blood, Catchweed and his alchemist have been enhancing children of the briar with doses of fey and vampire blood, eventually unlocking the secrets to creating vampiric children of the briar (see **Area 4**).

Creatures. Karayan is a shadow fey **master alchemist**. Longtime companion to Catchweed, he works to perfect new recipes and helps Catchweed enhance children of the briar. Karayan speaks in a murmuring voice that undulates in and out of audibility. He can matter-of-factly tell the PCs much of what occurs in the palace, but he doesn't betray Catchweed. His aim in any negotiation is to escape unharmed and resorts to violence only if there is no other option.

Treasure. Karayan's table holds three completed potions: a *potion of climbing*, a *potion of gaseous form*, and a *potion of heroism*. It also holds a full set of alchemist tools.

AREA 4. HALL OF TRIBUTE

Treasures of all types are scattered throughout this chamber. Coins, jewelry, knickknacks, and curiosities fill this room alongside hundreds of tiny acorn cups, each holding a blood-red pellet. A portrait painted in an inexperienced hand hangs on the eastern wall, depicting a tall, human-like child of the briar wearing a crown.

This chamber holds every gift, bribe, and token offered to a child of the briar or Catchweed over the past decade. Children of the briar are known for exchanging an acorn cap of blood for information or their services as spies, and many of those offerings appear here as pellets of partially dried blood. A child of the briar can imbibe one as a bonus action and have a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls for 1 minute. A child can be affected by only one blood pellet at a time.

Creature. A **vampiric child of the briar** (see the **Appendix**) rests in a bramble nest near the ceiling in the northern section of the chamber. It attacks any intruders, hiding near the ceiling to get the jump on the PCs.



Treasure. The room contains 1,350 gp in coins, gemstones, baubles, and curios. The treasure also includes a few magic items: a *living stake* (see **Magic Items** in **Chapter 2**), a *potion of greater healing*, a *spell scroll of plant growth* carved into tree bark, and a *rowan staff* (see **Magic Items** in **Chapter 2**).

AREA 5. THORN KING'S SANCTUM

The walls of this room are adorned with umbral tapestries and statuettes of delicate silver filigree. Opposite the entrance is a pair of wooden thrones. The left one is occupied by a severe woman in scarlet robes. Briars seem to be growing all around her, pinning her to the chair. A miniature forest stands in the center of the room.

The miniature forest is a living replica of the Margreve Forest, produced in exacting detail. The PCs can easily see and identify places they have been in this miniature forest. A spellcaster can use the miniature forest to cast the *scrying* ritual on almost any location within the Margreve Forest. The Old Margreve can prevent this effect (and does so if a creature attempts to see any of its Hearts).

Creatures. **Catchweed** (see the **Appendix**) resides in this room and commands four **skeletons** and two **shadows** to aid him in battle. He has no interest in explaining himself to intruders and sees the PCs as more fodder to replace the vampire spawn in **Area 2**. He gloats while he has the upper hand and threatens if the PCs begin to get the better of him. He refuses to back down or surrender, preferring to die in a fight to be the king of the Margreve Forest than to return the life he had before.

Thrones. The wooden thrones are ornate and carved with images of children of the briar frolicking in the Margreve Forest. One holds the bound Dame Valanora, a **vampire**. A minor noble of the Blood Kingdoms, she was captured by Catchweed and a band of children of the briar while traveling through the Margreve Forest on a return trip to Doresh from Zobeck. She is severely weakened (at 88 HP and suffering three levels of exhaustion from poor nourishment), and she is immobilized by a *living stake* pushed through her heart and into the wooden throne behind her. Catchweed has forced her to create a few vampire spawn, but mostly he harvests blood from her for his alchemical experiments, feeding her just enough to keep her from dying.

She wants nothing more than to be freed and return home to Doresh. As a minor noble, she can offer the PCs a future favor, safe transport through the Blood Kingdoms at a later date, or a gift of 1,000 gp to be delivered to their base of operations within a month. To secure any promise she makes to them, she offers a family heirloom bracelet with her house's crest of a rampant chimera.

Treasure. Mementos from Catchweed's trips to the Shadow Realm line the walls and are worth a total of 800 gp. A long, thin, cloth-lined box holds a partially broken longsword known as the *half-sword of the Margreve Knights* (see **Magic Items in Chapter 2**), an ancient blade Catchweed found in the haunted shadows near the Western Heart. He hoped to one day repair it and wield it as part of his royal regalia, using the sword as a symbol of nature's triumph over humanity.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Unless stopped, Catchweed forges a new kingdom that soon clashes with the other powers of the forest. He eventually perfects his method for creating spawn, and a new breed of vampiric children of the briar become the enforcers of his regime. Battles with shadow fey and ghost knights keep his power in check for a time, but for the foreseeable future, the northern Margreve Forest is a much more dangerous place.

If Catchweed is defeated, his necromantic influence over the palace ends, causing the Undead to crumble, and his army soon falls to squabbling and disbands. Briars cease to spread unnaturally, and those who followed the king return to their nests with renewed senses of purpose and autonomy. Catchweed might not have made a kingdom of briar, but he left a mark on his people, ensuring future dealings between children of the briar and fey within the Margreve Forest would be more equitable.





GRANDMOTHER'S FIRE

An adventure by Ben McFarland for four to five 8th-level characters.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Once, there was a werewolf named Dmitri who loved a village girl named Elena. Knowing Elena's family would never accept his curse, Dmitri met Elena as a woodcutter and concealed his true nature. They fell in love, continuing to meet secretly in the woods until Dmitri could "find the right moment" to talk to Elena's family.

Creekfoot, a **vodnyanoi** (see the **Appendix**), watched their trysts from the river and eventually grew to covet Elena and the love the two shared. After learning the werewolf's secret, Creekfoot kidnapped Elena, drowned her, and turned her into his ghostly wife. Despite the werewolf's pleas, Creekfoot refused to release the girl's spirit, growing more possessive of her the more Dmitri begged.

Desperate to free his beloved from Creekfoot, Dmitri sought advice from a Kariv oracle who claimed that only Grandmother's fire could manage the task of drying the shawl that bound the girl's spirit. With the conviction of true love, Dmitri stole a skull filled with embers from Baba

Yaga. But while he raced back to dry Elena's shawl with the magical fire, Dmitri was captured by ghouls, and the skull was lost to the vodnyanoi. A furious Baba Yaga cursed the whole of the Margreve Forest for the theft—so long as she has no cinders in her hearth, no fire burns within the forest, and the people suffer the cold until they return what was stolen.

Into all of this come the adventurers...

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

While crossing the Margreve Forest, the PCs encounter ghoulish Ghost Knights of Doresh hunting peasants. During the ensuing battle, it's revealed that fire spells produce cold or acid effects. Afterward, the rescued serfs fearfully explain that they seek Baba Yaga to ask why fires no longer burn. They beg for the PCs to escort them.

At her walking hut, Baba Yaga declares that a thief has stolen the fire from her stove. The forest will know only the cold of her hearth and the bile of her anger until the embers return. If the PCs accept this mission, she grants them magical sight to follow the thief's trail, with a warning of dire consequences for failure.



Tracking the culprit leads to a site near the edge of the Margreve's Central Heart. Werewolves are tearing apart well-armored corpses while unconscious captives, including the thief, hang in cages. The werewolves attack any PCs who try to rescue Dmitri. Upon waking, Dmitri explains his actions and explains that if the PCs help him recover the skull, they may claim the cinders.

On the way to Creekfoot's sacred pool near the Central Heart, the ghostly Elena begs them to turn back, afraid that Creekfoot will harm Dmitri. If the PCs insist on continuing, she ultimately aids them in defeating the vodyanoi. While Dmitri steals the shawl, Creekfoot fights bitterly at its pool, determined to keep Elena for himself. His death allows the PCs to recover Elena's shawl and the ember-filled skull to free the ghost and return the embers to Baba Yaga.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The PCs can begin this adventure during any trip through the Margreve Forest, although the story has its greatest urgency when it's set in late fall, since the lack of fire means the impending winter will be deadly to many forest denizens. This hook relies upon the adventurers' good nature and willingness to help a group of scared commoners.

Other motivations might include:

- The party might know Dmitri but be unaware of his true nature. He asks for their aid with a task.
- The party might know Elena. Her family asks the group to recover her body and attend her funeral pyre.

PART 1: PROPER HUNTED

As the adventure begins, the PCs are traveling along the road in the Margreve Forest on a late autumn day.

COURSING PEASANTS

The autumn air is crisp, with a hint of approaching frost, and the forest is calm along the trail. Suddenly, the quiet is broken as a group of people burst from the foliage ahead. They look back with panic evident in their faces. Faint, hollow-sounding barks echo through the woods, as if hounds were pursuing them, and are quickly joined by the muted thunder of hooves.

The PCs have only a moment to react to the appearance of the commoners before the riders arrive and attack. This area of the forest is mostly old growth with a tall canopy and scattered brush that makes the area not on the trail difficult terrain and imposes disadvantage on WIS (Perception) checks to perceive beyond 30 feet. A successful DC 14 WIS (Perception) check sees glimpses through the trees of Undead riders on skeletal horses with skeletal

hounds beside them, all in pursuit of the fleeing humans. A successful DC 15 INT (History) check recognizes glimpses of the riders' livery, which identifies them as Ghost Knights from Doresh.

Creatures. This is a contingent of Ghost Knights from Doresh, ghoulish warriors of that principedom. The knights are a **ghast** leader and four **ghouls** mounted on five **war horse skeletons**. Two **lich hounds** (see the **Appendix**) accompany them. Ghost Knights on leave often hunt the forest's occupants for sport and food, and this group is no different.

Fleeing Humans. The fleeing humans are six **commoners** from a nearby village, and they hide in the bushes or up nearby trees when fighting breaks out. Their defacto leader, a young man named Robert, approaches the PCs after the fighting ends. See **The Peasants' Plight** for more details on this interaction.

No Fire. During the encounter—and until the PCs return Baba Yaga's embers to her—no fire burns. Alchemist's fire and oil do nothing but soak the target, and spells or items that deal fire damage deal either acid or cold damage instead. If the PCs don't discover this during the fight, the fleeing humans warn them that no torches or hearths can be lit within the forest right now.

THE PEASANTS' PLIGHT

A group of rough and weary peasants, all human, emerge from where they had been hiding. The fear from their recent experience still colors their faces, and the boldest among them approaches.

"Mighty lords," he says, "we owe you our lives. Still, we must beg such powerful folk as you for another favor. No fire burns in the forest, and we don't know why. The Kariv oracle we consulted clutched her head, crying out when she tried to read the innards of her divining crab. She made a warding sign and told us to seek out old Baba Yaga, telling us that only Grandmother could say why we must live in the dark and cold. The Fell Crone is potent, and we are humble woodsmen with families to provide for. Please. Winter is coming, and without fire, the snows will kill our children. Will you go to her hut and ask mercy on our behalf? Or perhaps learn what angers her so?"

The group's leader is a young man named Robert, who is the eldest son of the village elder. The peasants have little to offer as a reward outside of a promise of a warm meal and lodging whenever the PCs need it. If the PCs agree to help, Robert can lead them to where Baba Yaga's hut typically rests during this part of the year.

If the PCs decline, Robert nods his understanding and leads the reluctant group deeper into the forest. When they arrive, Baba Yaga, still in a foul mood, eats them before

they have a chance to explain the reason for their visit. If the PCs have second thoughts and decide to backtrack, they can follow the peasants' trail and find Baba Yaga's home after all.

THE DANCING HUT

The peasants lead the PCs deeper into the Margreve Forest, following game trails and woodcutters' footpaths for 2 hours before coming upon a clearing. Within the meadow is a small wooden hut surrounded by a cast-iron fence. On each fencepost, except for one, sits a bare skull. A tiny spark flickers in each eye socket.

The hut always seems to face away from the PCs, no matter how they approach it. To enter, one must say, "Turn your back to the forest, your front to me." If the peasants are with the PCs, Robert or another member of their number speaks the phrase, trained at an early age on how to reach their local crone. If the peasants aren't with the PCs, a PC can recall stories of this phrase with a successful DC 18 INT (Arcana or History) check. A PC with a heritage or background associated with the Margreve Forest has advantage on this check. Once the phrase is spoken, the hut suddenly stands up on an enormous pair of chicken legs, turns, then settles back down again with the gate positioned directly in front of the speaker.

When the group approaches the gate, it swings open untouched. The hut shudders like a bird settling into a nest as the group passes through the gate. The peasants beg to remain outside, offering to watch the PCs' mounts. They fear Baba Yaga, and even Robert, who has been trained from a young age on the proper ways to speak with the crone, is afraid to enter her home. The front door swings open without a touch.

Those who enter the hut find it is larger inside than outside. Random objects float about; disembodied hands use knives to cut slivers of meat and sweep the floor with a silver birch broom. An old woman leans over a cylindrical basin, holding an enormous pestle while staring into the waters in the basin. Several lanterns illuminate the interior.

"Pffaw," spits the crone, slapping the surface of the water with her dark nails. Her face twists with anger, her iron teeth evident in her scowl. She stands slightly hunched, but her eyes hold a terrible ferocity. She leers with a butcher's appraising glance. "What brings you to Grandmother?" she says. "Speak! Before I grow angry and add your skulls to my fence." Adding weight to the comment, invisible hands slam the door shut.





Hut of Baba Yaga

Doors 2 & 3 open to random doors and are one way

The floor plan includes the following rooms and features:

- Entrance:** Located at the bottom left, leading into a Stables room.
- Stables:** Multiple rectangular rooms with stalls, located at the top, middle, and bottom.
- Curio Rooms:** Circular rooms containing various items, located at the top left and bottom right.
- Dining Room:** A circular room with a table and chairs, located on the left side.
- Kitchen:** Two circular rooms, one labeled '1st Kitchen' and another 'Kitchen'.
- Storage:** A circular room with a chest, located on the left side.
- Parlor:** A circular room with a table and chairs, located in the center-left.
- Forge:** A circular room with a furnace, located in the center-left.
- Dungeon:** Two circular rooms with traps, located in the center and bottom right.
- Guest Rooms:** Two circular rooms, located in the center-right.
- Treasure Room:** A circular room with a chest, located in the center-right.
- Store Room:** A circular room with a chest, located in the center-right.
- Fountain:** A circular room with a central fountain, located in the center-right.
- Central Passage:** A vertical passage labeled 'infinite doors to other Huts'.
- Central Area:** A circular area labeled 'sequence repeats 17 times'.
- Doors:** Numbered doors (1-5) and lettered exits (A, Q, P, S, T, Z) are scattered throughout the plan.

Baba Yaga doesn't attack the PCs inside her hut, but she threatens violence more than once. Any attack against her here by the PCs simply fails to deal damage, although she vows to "remember your little tantrum for another day." Baba Yaga answers the following questions:

- *Why won't fires burn?* "A thief took the fire from my stove inside a skull from my fence. And so, I cursed the forest."
- *When will you lift the curse?* "When the fire and the skull carrying it are returned. Until then, the Margreve Forest will know only the cold of my hearth and the bile of my anger."
- *Do you know who stole your fire?* "A fool of a boy named Dmitri, who claimed he had a question. Oh, I'll not forget his face."
- *Why don't you reclaim it yourself?* "Because I've another task to tend to elsewhere. And as long as I suffer, the forest suffers. Suffering tends to motivate people like you."
- *What will you give us if we recover the fire?* "I'll not eat you this day, or the day you return my fire."
- *Can you give us any help?* "Heh. Since you're willing, yes. Until the sun rises, you can see the thief's footsteps through the forest. This is my aid to you."

Time flows differently inside Baba Yaga's hut. The conversation with her might take a blink of an eye or several hours. Depending on when you want the PCs' journey to begin (daytime or nighttime), adjust the passage of time spent conversing with Baba Yaga accordingly. When the PCs exit the hut, its location seems slightly changed, as if the hut had moved while they were inside, but the fence around it is in the same relative position. The peasants are gone when the PCs leave the hut, but any mounts or other beasts remain, secure and unmolested. If the PCs later find the peasants and question them, the peasants explain the house walked away, and they heard a voice telling them to return home.

Baba Yaga's gift of magical sight lasts until the sun rises on the following day and makes the thief's steps appear as faintly glowing footprints. Keeping to the trail isn't difficult, but the trip takes several hours due to the terrain. At normal movement rates, they arrive at the next encounter area in 3 hours.

PART 2: INTO THE BUSH

The trees become closer together in the depths of the forest. Thick trunks of birch and pine crowd out most of the low brush, leaving only enough room for the narrow trail of glowing footprints. Few sounds echo through the shadows, and the air hangs heavy with the smell of peat.

As the group follows the glowing trail of footprints through the forest, they must narrow to single file and eventually come across a small clearing. When within 50 feet of the clearing, a successful DC 12 WIS (Perception) check notices several men moving and stacking logs in the clearing. A successful DC 18 WIS (Perception) check notices several of the men are werewolves in hybrid form and the "logs" are corpses. The werewolves are distracted by their work and the stench of the decaying Undead, reducing their Perception by 5.

TWO IN THE BUSH

Four werewolves in hybrid form move, stack, and dismember ghoulish corpses wearing the livery of Ghost Knights. A ring of human-sized cages sits on one side of the encampment.

This clearing was the encampment for the Ghost Knights the PCs encountered earlier. Junior members of their group, all **ghouls**, were tasked with keeping watch over the camp and the prey held in the cages. The group was planning to spend a few days on the hunt then return to Doresh with a grand meal for their group. In this way, their leader hoped to gain favor with his superiors and earn some renown for his platoon. The forest is thick here, and the areas outside of the clearing are difficult terrain.

Creatures. Four **werewolves** stack and dismember the group of eight ghouls they defeated earlier in the day. They aim to destroy the corpses to prevent the corpses rising again before freeing the prisoners, one of which they recognize as a member of their village. On edge after the tough fight, they are aggressive to approaching PCs, unless the PCs approach without weapons drawn and succeed on a DC 18 CHA (Deception or Persuasion) check. If the PCs fail to calm the werewolves, the werewolves attack, retreating when one of their number falls or if at least half their number are reduced to below half their hit point maximums. A successful DC 15 WIS (Insight) check as the werewolves flee notices that one briefly looks over at Dmitri's cage with concern before fleeing. If the PCs calm the werewolves, the werewolves explain they destroyed this patrol of Ghost Knights tainting the forest and are in the process of freeing the prisoners after



ensuring the dead don't rise again. They refuse to allow the PCs to take Dmitri, unless Dmitri convinces the werewolves otherwise, and they become hostile toward the PCs that try to take Dmitri without their permission. The werewolves don't care about the fate of the other prisoners. For more information about talking to Dmitri, see **Confessions of a Werewolf**.

Footprints. The glowing footprints lead straight as an arrow to Dmitri's cage as if the thief walked from the forest directly into the cage. A successful DC 15 INT (Arcana) check while looking at this oddity in the footprints realizes that the footprints the PCs were following weren't actual tracks left by the thief but a magical trail Baba Yaga conjured to lead the PCs to him. A PC can surmise from this information that the thief might have gone other places before ending up in this cage and that this trail isn't the true route of Dmitri's full trip after leaving Baba Yaga's hut.

Prisoners. The wooden cages hold Dmitri (see **Confessions of a Werewolf**) and six humans and dwarves from nearby villages. The ghouls were careful to avoid infecting the prisoners with the ghoul hunger disease, as the prisoners are intended to be used for a feast, not as new recruits. A successful DC 14 STR check breaks open a cage. Alternatively, a cage can be attacked and broken open (AC 10, 10 HP, vulnerability to fire damage; immunity to poison and psychic damage). Other than Dmitri, the prisoners are **commoners** with one **scout** and are grateful to be freed. Inhabitants of the Margreve Forest, they can quickly find their bearings and find a way home on their own. The scout in the group promises to get everyone home safely, if the PCs express concern.



CONFESSIONS OF A WEREWOLF

Dmitri is a hearty young man with a full beard, piercing hazel eyes, and a broad build. If the PCs knocked out the werewolves but didn't kill them, Dmitri asks for mercy on their behalf, saying they didn't capture him. If they are dead, he says nothing but remains visibly upset. Feeling distraught and hopeless, he confesses most of his situation if the PCs question him about Baba Yaga and her stolen fire:

"Yes. I stole Baba Yaga's fire. I had to. A cruel and jealous vodyanoi named Creekfoot drowned my Elena, and now it wants to keep her spirit trapped as his ghostly bride. I couldn't let her spend forever like that, and so I sought out the Kariv. Their oracle said that if I could dry Elena's shawl, I would free her from the fey," he swallows back tears. "The oracle claimed the only thing that could do that was Grandmother's fire."

He gives a bitter laugh. "I can be a charming fellow. I found the dancing hut and spoke with one of Grandmother's daughters in the woods nearby. I convinced her that I could help her finish her chores for naught but a cup of tea."

Shaking his head, Dmitri continues. "We worked until afternoon. Then I suggested to her daughter to collect the firewood, and I would prepare the kettle. After I had helped all day, she trusted me." Sniffing, his voice full of disgust, he goes on. "Once she was off to find firewood, I took a skull from the fence and filled it with the cinders from the hearth. Like a rabbit, I bolted from there, but now I don't even have the skull and won't be able to save my poor Elena."

Dmitri breaks into small sobs, and a successful DC 10 WIS (Insight) check determines the sincerity of his story. If asked about the skull, Dmitri dries his tears and says:

“As I made my way to Creekfoot’s pool, the Ghost Knights began hunting me. They chased me across the river where the vodyanoi was waiting. Creekfoot churned the river to an angry froth and tripped me as I balanced on a fallen tree. It snatched up the skull while I dangled over the rapids.” He chokes back a sob. “The miserable fey fled, and the ghouls caught me as I scrambled back to my feet. They stuffed me in that cage before hunting further.”

If asked about the werewolves, he states that they look familiar but he doesn’t know them. A successful DC 18 WIS (Insight) check that he is lying. If pressed, he says they are fellow villagers, but he didn’t want to slander their reputation by identifying them to strangers who might not understand that some villages hold hidden werewolves who just want to live out their lives. Dmitri denies being a werewolf if asked, and his denial of it is so practiced after years of hiding that only a successful DC 25 WIS (Insight) check determines he is lying.

Dmitri wants to save Elena and, if told about the curse of no fire, wants fire restored to the people of the Margreve Forest. He asks the PCs to help him face Creekfoot and recover the skull. If they agree, he asks that they stand with a hand on a nearby tree and swear on the power of the forest to allow him to use the embers to dry Elena’s shawl and free her trapped spirit before returning the embers to Baba Yaga. Only if the PCs swear this does Dmitri agree to lead them to Creekfoot’s pool. If the PCs refuse, Dmitri disappears into the forest at the first opportunity, intending to face Creekfoot on his own. The PCs can follow his tracks with a successful DC 18 WIS (Survival) check. If the PCs discover or suspect he is a werewolf, they have advantage on this check, as Dmitri shifts form during the trip for speed. Travel to Creekfoot’s pool takes 1 hour.



CROSSING THE RIVER

Halfway to Creekfoot’s pool, the PCs come to a river crossing. A soaked young woman with a bluish tinge to her complexion stands on a large fallen tree that serves as a bridge across the water. Dmitri recognizes the woman and starts to go toward her.

Creatures. The woman is Elena, a **ghost**. She doesn’t attack the PCs, but she does attempt to stop them from crossing the river, which she fears will lead to the death of her beloved, Dmitri.

“Wait, my love!” she calls. “Do not do this. I chose this fate to free you from your blood curse,” Elena gives him a mournful look, then she turns to you. “Creekfoot claimed Dmitri was doomed to be a werewolf. I offered to become its wife if the fey altered his fate. It agreed.” She begins crying. “Not days after he drowned me and claimed me as his bride, he sent word to the Ghost Knights, claiming that death frees everyone.”

A painful sob escapes from Dmitri. “Oh, Elena,” he says, his voice breaking, “In truth, I was born a werewolf. I can’t be ‘freed.’”

Her eyes shining with tears, Elena's demeanor shifts to otherworldly anger, water beginning to swirl around her. "Creekfoot tricked us, but I'll have my revenge." She walks to the far side of the river and plucks a large toadstool, its cap dripping with moisture. "Anoint your boots with this dew and then wash your faces with just a splash. Until the sun sets tomorrow, you will be able to walk upon the vodyanoi's pool and breathe its waters as if they were air. If you do this, you can kill the cursed fey and free me. Will you do this for me? For us?" she motions to Dmitri and herself.

Dmitri nods his agreement with Elena's offer, asking the PCs to participate in this act of righteous vengeance. He apologizes for concealing his true nature until now but claims he needed help in freeing Elena and didn't want to risk gaining the PCs' enmity.

Doing as Elena instructs grants the PCs the benefit of the *water breathing* and *water walk* spells until sunset on the following day. Dmitri plans to dive into the water to reclaim the skull while the party engages the fey, and he doesn't put the dew on his boots. Afterwards, Elena melts into the river, unable to leave the river but promising to see them again at Creekfoot's pool.

PART 3: THE HEART OF THE MATTER

Creekfoot's pool is deep within the forest, not far from the Central Heart. The air is heavy with the forest's magic, and the Old Margreve can easily observe the PCs and their actions while here, leaving them with the constant feeling of being watched. As the group gets close to the pool, Dmitri reveals his plan to the PCs:

"Creekfoot certainly knows we're coming. If you go to the edge of his pool and challenge him, his pride will draw him out to face you. While you fight, I'll dive into the water and steal the skull from his lair with Elena's help. Don't worry, you have my word—I won't try to run away with the skull. All I want is to free Elena."

With the plan confirmed, he slinks into the underbrush and shifts into wolf form.

Creatures. Creekfoot is a **vodyanoi** (see the **Appendix**) and

is accompanied by a **water elemental** bound to his service in some long-ago pact with a wizard and a **shambling mound** he grew over the past few years. When the PCs arrive, he rises out of the water and speaks to the PCs:

A frog-like humanoid climbs from the water and stands on its surface as if it were solid. His skin is gray-blue, and his beard is a tangle of reeds and sticks. His voice is cruel and grating, a light mist rising from his form. "Trespassers! You have no business here and no right to challenge me. The boy was a clumsy fool, and the girl made a bargain with me. I'll not let her go."

Creekfoot isn't interested in discussion, believing he is in the right. He intends to destroy the PCs to prove his superiority and that his actions were justified. His allies join him in combat. As combat begins, Dmitri runs and dives into the pool, changing into human form as he does so.

The Pool. Creekfoot's pool descends from a depth of 5 feet



near the shore to a depth of 20 feet at its center. A large fallen tree lies in the center of the deep pool and serves as Creekfoot's home. Buried in the silt in the crook of the tree's branches is a sack with treasures Creekfoot has gathered over the years: 58 gp, 104 sp, 763 cp, a bronze statuette of some long-forgotten hero worth 75 gp, a chunk of uncut moonstone worth 100 gp, a *ring of feather falling*, and a *dagger of venom*. A successful DC 15 WIS (Perception) check while underwater and near the tree finds the sack.

DEAD MAN TALKING

When the vodyanoi is defeated, Dmitri emerges from the depths of the pool with the steaming skull, and Elena rises from the waters shortly afterward, bearing her shawl:

Dmitri transforms into his hybrid form as he turns the skull's bronze gaze upon Elena's shawl, causing steam to dissipate into the air as the shawl dries. Elena's face brightens and she smiles broadly before speaking.

"We cannot thank you enough. Know that you will find Grandmother's hut at the river crossing where we met. You can return her fire to her there." She begins to fade out of sight and reaches up toward Dmitri's face. "Come with me, my love." He responds by scooping up her lithe frame in his arms, and the two embrace. Water washes over them, pouring from Elena and engulfing the werewolf. The skull falls into the shallow edge of the pool, small wisps of vapor curling up from it.

The couple melts into the waters of the pool, dissolving into nothing while leaving Dmitri's abandoned pelt floating on the surface. Their mingling voices speak as if from the empty air: "And now we will be together forever. Please accept this cloak as a token of our gratitude." Gentle waves break the surface of the pond, pushing the wolf pelt toward shore.

At the same time, sapphire-hued roses begin to sprout and blossom around where the skull resides, their blooms opening in moments. "And take these roses," the voice continues. "Brew a tea from their petals, and you'll be certain to gain Baba Yaga's favor. Again, thank you for your kindness." With a ripple of wind across the water, their voices fade—leaving behind only the sounds of the forest.

Although it looks like a simple cloak fashioned from a wolf skin, the wolf pelt is a *Margreve fur* cloak (see **Magic Items in Chapter 2**). The four blue roses blooming around the skull are enough to brew a single pot of tea. This tea has special value to Baba Yaga but otherwise tastes and appears unremarkable.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

With the vodyanoi slain, Elena's shawl dried, and Dmitri dead, there is nothing left to do but return the skull to Baba Yaga.

If the PCs decide not to return the skull, which houses embers that never extinguish, they earn Baba Yaga's ire. She might send her horsemen (see *Tome of Beasts 1*) or her *vila* daughters to cover the skull and embers. Failing to return the skull also causes Baba Yaga to not only steal fire but warmth from the forest, sending it into an early winter that starts to kill off the forest's denizens. The PCs' status with the Old Margreve (see **Character Status with the Margreve in Chapter 1**) is reduced by 3, as the PCs actively participated in disrupting its preservation. Failing to resolve the issue within 30 days removes all positive status the PCs might have had from other adventures in the forest, and the forest becomes actively hostile toward them.

If the PCs decide to return the skull, Baba Yaga cackles gleefully, returns the embers to her hearth and skull to her fence, and lifts the curse from the Margreve Forest. She then thanks them for their service and tells them they may leave with their lives.

If the PCs bring Baba Yaga the tea or the blue roses for the tea, she offers them a boon: the PCs may seek out her hut at any point in the future and safely ask her a single question, which she promises to answer truthfully to the best of her ability.

The Old Margreve isn't happy about losing one of its fey denizens, but it is more unhappy that the loss of fire would mean the deaths of many more of its denizens over the next century—denizens whose traditions and rituals keep it fed with a constant trickle of magic. If the PCs defeat Creekfoot and restore fire to the forest, their status with the Old Margreve increases by 1 (see **Character Status with the Margreve in Chapter 1**), as their actions to preserve the forest are tempered by the death of a fey inhabitant.





W2

20' 15' 10' 5'

V

10'

W1

W3

N

1 square = 5 feet

The Vodzyanoi's Pool



SHADOW'S ENVY

An adventure by Mike Welham for four to five 10th-level characters.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The creature now known as the Weft of Shadows was once a bright fey named Qeldar, who enjoyed the light and warmth of the Summer Lands just like his brothers and sisters. However, one day he encountered a shadow fey on one of his journeys along the shadow roads and spoke at length with her. After that encounter, he felt sorrow for the shadow fey's attachment to the shadows and exile from his home. He knew the shadow fey were once like him and had heard the stories about their turning to darkness. Idealistically, he believed they had suffered long enough and wanted them to rejoin the fey of the Summer Lands. After all, he reasoned, the shadow roads were connected to the Summer Lands and the Shadow Realm, so the divide between bright fey and shadow fey was unnecessary and should be closed.

Qeldar first gained an audience with the Queen of Night and Magic, who hid her amusement at his proposal. She had no problem agreeing to close the gulf between the shadow fey and the bright fey he ostensibly represented. She knew his naïve efforts would result in failure, but she was delighted to follow his efforts and witness his disappointment. If he achieved the miracle of bringing the Birch Queen and Oak and Holly Kings to his side, she would find a technical reason to back off from her promise.

Decades later, Qeldar finally met with the Holly King. He went into the meeting full of confidence, having used the intervening time to hone his arguments. He had also gathered a few allies convinced of the righteousness of his plan to unite the bright fey with the shadow fey. The Holly King gave Qeldar less than ten minutes to make his case before flatly denying his request. Guards dragged the sputtering bright fey out as he tried in vain to shout his arguments at the Holly King. This would have been embarrassment enough for Qeldar, but nearby courtiers heard his impassioned plea to rejoin the two elven peoples. They whispered poetic, yet ugly, epithets about



Qeldar, which spread far and wide. No longer wishing to be associated with the disgraced bright fey, Qeldar's former allies left, either shunning him or joining in on the name-calling.

His calls for protest met with even more mockery, so he plotted to engineer a confrontation between the shadow fey and his people to show them there was no real difference between them. He researched a way to divert travel along the shadow roads and found a group of traveling shadow fey to forcibly bring to the Summer Lands. The surprised shadow fey, thinking they were under attack, drew weapons and attacked equally surprised bright fey, who defended themselves. Qeldar futilely tried to bring order to the chaotic scene, but the shadow fey were all dispatched. The bright fey charged him with treason for bringing shadow fey unbidden to the Summer Lands. His explanation fell on deaf ears, and his punishment was exile.

Consumed by rage but knowing he needed to bide his time, he brooded within the Shadow Realm and unknowingly drew shadows to him, which ever-so-slowly transformed him into something else. He approached the Queen of Night and Magic again, and she gave him a sympathetic audience as he described his anguish at his treatment. She claimed to be unable to work directly against her counterparts in the Summer Lands, but she slyly indicated several entities, shadow fey included, who no longer acquiesced to her. Many of these creatures were swayed by the shadowy Qeldar and allied with him.

The fully transformed and newly self-designated Weft of Shadows learned about several artifacts contained within a minor fey noble's extraplanar vault in the Summer Lands. It wanted to create shadow copies of the artifacts that would allow it to grow a shadow blight to engulf the Summer Lands. However, it learned about an unusual set of rules involved in the creation of the items: once mortal hands touched the artifacts, the bright fey couldn't reclaim the items themselves. This set of rules also indicated that only mortals could possess and use these artifacts, preventing the Weft from making its shadow duplicates while the artifacts remained in the vault. Two centuries ago, the Weft of Shadows broke into the vault and scattered the artifacts across the Margreve Forest to set its plans in motion.

The bright fey Daesanderena researched the missing artifacts and realized the inherent danger in the Weft of Shadows' schemes. She found heroes to help her reclaim some of the artifacts (see **Daesanderena's Mission** at the beginning of this chapter). Despite her interference, the Weft was able to create an undetectable blight in the Summer Lands—an area it calls the Blot. As it brought more shadowy artifact duplicates to its new demesne, it was able to grow the Blot and draw more shadowy allies to it. The Weft of Shadows defined a horrific price for entry into its home, which serves to deter intruders from storming its lair. To its delight, this price incidentally

prevents the bright fey from entering the Blot. Unless the bright fey find allies of their own from outside the Summer Lands, the Weft of Shadows will achieve its goal of uniting shadow fey and bright fey by consuming the Summer Lands in shadow.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Daesanderena may know the PCs from previous adventures, or in her searches for competent allies, and asks them to delve the Blot and destroy the Weft of Shadows before the Blot engulfs the Summer Lands. If the PCs are helping Daesanderena, she brings them to the Summer Lands with her through a portal near the Blot. Alternatively, the PCs could be traveling the shadow roads for unrelated business, and warps in their path caused by the Weft of Shadows dump them into the Summer Lands near the Blot. Finally, the PCs may have heard rumors about the Weft of Shadows and learn of its presence in the Summer Lands.

THE ENCROACHING SHADOW

Once in the Summer Lands, it should be clear to the PCs that most of the bright fey there don't trust the PCs and resent Daesanderena for looking to outsiders to solve their problem. They openly talk about the PCs whether the PCs are within earshot or not. If the PCs are within earshot, the bright fey leave off all discussion about their efforts to stop the spread of the Blot. They become indignant if the PCs ask anyone other than Daesanderena about their efforts or for any information on the Blot. Daesanderena helpfully explains to the PCs that the Blot demands something in return for entrance, though they are uncertain what it demands. All bright fey from the Summer Lands who have attempted to breach the structure have disintegrated when they tried to enter, leaving only a vague shadowy outline where they once stood.

If the PCs ask for a reward for entering the Blot and destroying it and the Weft of Shadows, the bright fey become incensed at their presumption. Daesanderena, a practical bright fey more in tune with the ways of mortals, calms them down and offers to pay the PCs either 50,000 gp or with a *ring of shooting stars* or a *scimitar of speed*.

THE BLOT

Fed by an influx of shadow from the Shadow Realm, the Weft of Shadow's lair continuously expands its boundaries. The Weft isn't quite powerful enough to impose its will on the halls and rooms composing the complex, but it and its allies have worked together to physically mold the shadowstuff surrounding and filling the area. As the Blot creeps outward, it creates indistinct chambers that fool the senses when someone enters them. PCs have no problem navigating the chambers within the bounds presented on the map.

However, it is possible to step beyond the boundaries into

shadowstuff. When this happens, a creature must make a DC 15 WIS save for every 5 feet it attempts to move within the shadow stuff. On a failure, the creature moves 5 feet in a random direction (roll a d8 to determine the direction). After a creature moves 30 feet in the shadowstuff, it ends up exiting in the same place it first entered the shadowstuff. Creatures calling the Blot home can maneuver through the shadowstuff without the possibility of getting lost, but they too end up exiting where they entered if they go farther than 30 feet into the shadowstuff. While a creature is within the Blot's hazy boundaries, all attacks against the creature have disadvantage, and all the creature's attacks have disadvantage.

Accessing the Blot requires a creature to give up its soul or essence. The Weft set up this failsafe to ensure that those who fled the compound would be unable to return. An additional unintended "side effect" is that the bright fey, who only consist of their essences, are wholly consumed when they attempt to enter the Blot, their essences trapped in the Cauldron of Souls in **Area 24**. As creatures attuned to the Shadow Realm's magic, shadow fey are immune to this effect.

The Blot is illuminated by dim light, and all colors are washed out in the gloom. The shadows consume *light* and *continual flame* spells, reducing their durations to 1 minute and 10 minutes, respectively, and only allowing a 10-foot radius of bright light. *Daylight* lasts for 10 minutes and sheds bright light out to only 30 feet.

DAESANDERENA'S HANDIWORK

If the PCs completed the **Daesanderena's Mission** arc in any of the previous adventures (see **Daesanderena's Mission** at the beginning of this chapter), the Weft of Shadows is unable to use the shadow version of those items, relieving the PCs of the need to find and destroy the copies in the Blot. This allows the PCs to avoid some encounters and dangers related to the shadow copies of those items, and it makes some combat encounters easier, as the opponents won't have access to the magic granted by the items. If the PCs successfully completed Daesanderena's missions in all the adventures, they must destroy only the Mask of Unmitigated Terror (held by the chain devil tormenter in **Area 20**) and the Belt of Draconic Ruination (hidden in the black dragon's false hoard in **Area 16**) to open the way to the Weft of Shadows. Daesanderena knows which artifacts remain under the Weft's control, and she relays this information to the PCs. However, she is unaware that the destruction of the shadow copies of the artifacts acts as a complex key to access the Shadow Dome (**Area 25**) where the PCs can confront the Weft.

Destroying or returning the artifacts to Daesanderena in all the adventures in this book renders many encounters in this adventure optional. A GM may wish to have the PCs tackle one or two encounters they may ordinarily skip past. In this case, agents working for the Weft of Shadows

switched out the items Daesanderena needed to stop the Weft or found some artifacts she didn't know had been released from the vault. However, since she briefs the PCs before they enter the Blot, assume she has discovered the deception and informs the PCs about the shadow items they need to destroy within the complex. The setting for each shadow artifact encounter calls back to the artifact's associated adventure, and the Shadow Dome (**Area 25**) has indentations indicating which artifacts remain—both of which should help the PCs easily determine which shadow artifacts still need to be destroyed.

AREA 1. ENTRYWAY

A solid black door inscribed with flowing gray script, reading, "Offer only your lightest possession, and you will be permitted entry," blocks entry into the shadowy structure.

The riddle on the door constantly shifts between the Common, Elvish, and Umbral languages. The black door is the only fixed outer location in the complex. While the rest of the Blot stretches and flows as it extends its boundaries, the southern border remains unchanging. The Weft of Shadows enjoys the door's taunting riddle, which doesn't require a creature to solve it to gain entry.

Merely touching the door transports the touching creature to its other side and to a set of stairs made of grasping shadowstuff. In the process, the creature loses its soul or essence, which teleports to the Cauldron of Souls in **Area 24**, leaving the creature feeling lethargic and like something vital is missing. Exiting the Blot requires no cost, but a creature that hasn't reobtained its soul or essence can't reenter the complex. A success on a DC 12 INT (Arcana or Religion) check understands this effect. A creature whose home plane is not the Material Plane or Shadow Realm is consumed by the Blot and ends up in the Cauldron of Souls in **Area 24**.

AREA 2. ANTECHAMBER

This comfortably appointed room features a long table and six chairs which fill the southern wall.

This room serves to comfortably seat visitors to the Blot while they await an audience with the Weft of Shadows. The table and chairs are all made of shadowstuff solid enough to comfortably use.

The Weft's Herald that lairs in **Area 3** keeps an eye on arrivals to the Blot from **Area 1** and from the shadow river flowing into **Area 5**. She escorts Shadow Realm dignitaries to this chamber. If she spots the PCs and realizes they don't belong here, she prepares to attack them.

AREA 3. SHADOW'S ADVISOR

All sorts of shadowy fungi fill this chamber. Some of the fungi looks functional, with a toadstool suitable as a table, fungal shelves holding books, and a spongy bed covered with a continuous sheet of fungus.

A shadow fey **assassin** heard rumors among the shadow fey about the Weft of Shadows and its plans for the Summer Lands. Intrigued by this and hoping to assist in the Summer Lands' literal corruption by the spreading Blot, she insinuated herself as a consultant and herald to the Weft of Shadows. She convinced the Weft with a well-spun story about her status as a rogue agent of the Queen of Night and Magic. She stationed herself in this room, where she can counsel the Weft when it needs a sympathetic ear regarding the suitability of its plans and potential allies. Though allied with the Weft only to help it harm the Summer Lands and not out of some sense of loyalty, she respects its power and authority, and she warns

it about capable intruders. She flees when reduced to 40 HP or fewer and uses the Shadow River (Area 5) to elude pursuit and reach the Weft's chamber (Area 25).

The Enoki Scepter. If the PCs didn't destroy the Enoki Scepter in the *Pride of the Mushroom Queen* adventure, the assassin carries a shadow version of the artifact. When the assassin dies or if she enters the Shadow Dome (Area 25), the scepter dissipates in a puff of black smoke. In addition to using the scepter to push the Blot's boundaries to the north, the assassin can use an action once each day while holding the scepter to spray shadowy spores in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 18 CON save. On a failure, a creature takes 21 (6d6) necrotic damage and becomes infected with the shadow mold disease. On a success, a creature takes half the damage and doesn't become infected with the disease. A target infected with shadow mold sprouts gray fungal growths from its body. Until the disease is cured, the target can't regain HP except by magical means. At the end of each long rest, the infected target must succeed on a DC 18 CON save or



have its HP maximum reduced by 7 (2d6). The target dies if this effect reduces its HP maximum to 0, and it rises as a **bloatblossom sporeborn** 24 hours later.

AREA 4. DEATH'S DOOR

The temperature drops and the illumination dims noticeably from the passageway to the west. Desiccated bodies line the bank of a black river.

A human **knight** (reduced to 2 STR) who has managed survive the Shadow River's enfeebling properties is among the bodies but has little remaining physical might to escape. A success on a DC 12 WIS (Perception) check notices the survivor. Pulling the knight free requires a success on a DC 11 STR (Athletics) check and exposes the PC to the river's shadow tendrils. Despite the human's weakened state, he insists on joining the PCs so he can complete his mission (given to him by Daesanderena). A success on a DC 12 CHA (Intimidation or Persuasion) check convinces the knight to move to safety. If the check fails by 5 or more, the knight becomes convinced the PCs are in league with the Weft of Shadows and attacks in the hope of avenging his companions and going out with his honor intact.

The ghosts currently inhabiting the river watch the scene unfold with interest but don't intervene.

AREA 5. SHADOW RIVER

A black river flows from south to north through this area. Light appears in ripples on the water's surface only to be snuffed out instantly. The river's chill seems to pull at one's very essence.

This writhing shadow river feeds the chamber and winds its way through **Area 22** to the shadow pool in **Area 25**. The river provides travel to the Shadow Realm to those who know how to travel on shadow roads, and it generates much of the energy fueling the complex's expansion. It poses a threat to creatures not native to the Shadow Realm or granted protection by the Weft of Shadows.

Creatures. Four explorers previously sent by Daesanderena died to the river's shadow tendrils and returned as **ghosts**, who guard the river and attempt to prevent others from meeting the same fate. The ghosts initially hide in the shadows produced by the river and watch for creatures approaching the river. They don't stop shadow fey or others immune to the river's powers from entering the river, but they plead with and eventually attack any others that try to enter the river. Since the explorers never completed their task of neutralizing the Blot, they permanently die when the Blot is destroyed, gaining their eternal rest.

Shadow Tendrils. A creature that touches the shadow river or ends its turn within 10 feet of the shadow river takes 2 (1d4) cold damage and 2 (1d4) necrotic damage and must succeed on a DC 15 CON save or have its STR score reduced by 1d4. The creature dies if this reduces its STR to 0. Otherwise, the reduction lasts until the creature finishes a short or long rest. A Humanoid that dies from this damage or STR reduction rises as a ghost answerable to the Weft of Shadows after 1 minute. A creature with at least half its body immersed in the shadow river has disadvantage on its CON save and its STR score is reduced by 1d6 on a failed save.

AREA 6. DANCE OF THE SHADOW SCARVES

Whirling scarves with varying patterns of black, gray, and white limit visibility in this area. On occasion, one of the scarves whips out and produces a sharp snap.

This chamber, thick with hanging and spinning cloth, is difficult terrain. Moving through the scarves presents another inherent danger: for every 10 feet a creature moves through the chamber, 1d4 scarves attack the creature. The scarves also attack if a creature ends its turn in the chamber. The scarves have a +8 bonus on their attack rolls, and on a hit, they deal 5 (2d4) bludgeoning damage then grapple the target (escape DC 14). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the other scarves no longer attack it.

The scarves snap at seemingly random intervals, but a success on a DC 18 INT (Investigation) check recognizes a general pattern and reveals a safer path through the scarves, causing them to attack with disadvantage.

The chamber has a total of 64 scarves. Each scarf has AC 12, 14 HP, is vulnerable to fire and slashing damage, resistant to bludgeoning and thunder damage, and immune to necrotic, poison, and psychic damage. If a creature uses a spell or effect that targets an area, the scarves move toward that creature, even moving up to 10 feet beyond this chamber to do so. When reduced to 32 or fewer scarves, the number of attacking scarves becomes 1d3, and reducing the count to 16 or fewer changes the number to 1d2.

Faceless Sash. If the PCs never turned over the Faceless Sash in *The Vengeful Heart* adventure to Daesanderena, its shadow version hangs among the scarves. It grants a +1 bonus to the attack rolls of all the chamber's scarves and increases the escape DC to 16. In addition, each time a scarf attacks, there is a 5 percent chance it is the shadow Faceless Sash making the attack. If the sash hits a target, the target must succeed on a DC 15 WIS save or have its CHA score reduced by 1d4. The creature dies if this reduces its CHA to 0. Otherwise, the reduction lasts until

the creature finishes a short or long rest. If the sash kills a creature in this way, the scarves' attack roll bonus and escape DC increase by 1. Destroying all but one of the scarves causes the sash to disintegrate.

Boon. If the PCs destroy all the scarves, even if it doesn't involve the Faceless Sash, each PC has advantage on the next check or save the PC makes to escape or avoid the grappled condition within the next hour.

AREA 7. GARDEN OF PLIGHTS

A riot of flowers in full bloom fills this large chamber. However, the gray-hued blossoms emanate only muted scents reminiscent of the full-color versions. A droning arises from the field as various insects fly among the flowers.

Twelve **shadow stirges** and four **giant wasps** flit among gray-hued roses, violets, and daisies filling this chamber. If any of them notice the PCs, they all move to attack.

Shadow Flower Pollen (Recharge 6). The flowers in this strange garden release a puff of pollen that affects all creatures in a random 10-foot-radius area. Each creature in that area must make a DC 15 CON save, taking 3 (1d6) poison damage and 3 (1d6) necrotic damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one. A creature that fails its save becomes vulnerable to poison and necrotic damage for 1 hour or until it is affected by a spell or effect that removes the poisoned condition (such as *restoration*). The chamber's inhabitants are immune to the pollen's effects, as are any creatures immune to the poisoned condition.

The Beespeaker Amulet. If the PCs didn't retrieve the Beespeaker Amulet from *The Honey Queen* adventure for Daesanderena, the shadow stirges can access the shadow version's warped magic. A stirge in contact with the amulet can use an action to fire a glob of amber at a target within 30 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 16 DEX save or be restrained by the amber which hardens on contact. A restrained creature can take its action to break free of the amber by succeeding on a DC 16 STR check. The amber can also be attacked and destroyed (AC 10; HP 10; resistance to piercing and slashing damage; immunity to poison and psychic damage). When all the stirges have been killed, the shadow amulet dissolves into smoke.

Boon. If the PCs kill all the stirges, even if it doesn't involve the amulet, each PC subtracts 1 from the roll for any effect that reduces the PC's STR score (minimum 0), potentially preventing the STR score reduction, for the next hour.



AREA 8. SHADOW WILDFIRE

Scrubby trees burn noiselessly in black flame. Shadowy soot fills the air, obscuring vision and smelling faintly of burning plant matter.

When the PCs enter the room, choose four 5-foot spaces at random to be on fire. Rather than fire damage, the flames burning in this room deal cold and necrotic damage, spreading the deathly chill of the Shadow Realm. A creature that ends its turn in the chamber while the flames still burn must make a DC 15 DEX save, taking 3 (1d6) cold damage and 3 (1d6) necrotic damage on a failed save or half as much on a successful one. The creature has advantage on its save if it is not within 5 feet of an ignited space.

Each ignited space has 17 HP and is immune to all damage except bludgeoning and radiant damage. Each ignited space counts as an individual creature with AC 14 for the purpose of resolving spells and effects. The flames instinctively avoid damage dealt to an area and have a +4 bonus to saves against spells and effects that allow saves for half or no damage. When a creature uses a ranged attack, casts a spell, or otherwise uses an effect from a distance, an arc of dark flame feeds back to the creature as a ranged spell attack with a +7 bonus and dealing 2 (1d4) cold damage and 2 (1d4) necrotic damage on a hit. This effect has a range of 30 feet and functions like a reaction, and each ignited space can cause this effect only once per round. An ignited space that took no damage during a round regains 4 (1d8) HP at the end of the round as the flames rebuild.

Ring of Forest's Fire. If the PCs hadn't retrieved the Ring of Forest's Fire in the *Grandmother's Fire* adventure from Baba Yaga, a shadow version intensifies the ever-burning flames. The flames deal 7 (2d6) cold damage and 7 (2d6) necrotic damage to creatures in the chamber, and an arc of dark flame deals 5 (2d4) cold damage and 5 (2d4) necrotic damage on a hit. Each round on initiative count 0, the ring affects 1d6 5-foot squares in the room at random. If a square has an ignited space, the space's flames regain 9 (2d8) HP. If a square has no flames, the space becomes ignited with 5 HP. When every ignited space has been extinguished, the ring folds in on itself and disappears with a nearly inaudible "pop."

Boon. If the PCs extinguish the flames, even if it doesn't involve the ring, each PC becomes resistant to the next three instances of necrotic damage the PC suffers within the next hour.

AREA 9. BALCONY

The ground rises to a balcony that overlooks part of the Blot. One can see four additional chambers from this height. A portrait of a young bright fey noble stands out, as its vibrant colors contrast with the otherwise dull black-and-white vistas.

This raised area looks down on **Areas 16** through **19**. The Weft of Shadows spends most of its time near the shadow pool in **Area 25**, but when it wishes to address gathered allies, it moves here, where it can speak from on high. The chamber contains the Weft of Shadows' sole personal touch: a centuries-old portrait of Qeldar as a young man hangs on the northern wall. The portrait shows scoring and scratches all around the portrait's subject, which is unmarred by the damage.

Creature. A young black dragon allied with the Weft lairs on the balcony, where it enjoys its lofty view over the rest of the Blot. Where every other creature serves to achieve the Weft's goals, the dragon is left to roam the Blot as it pleases, though it usually remains here with its growing hoard. The dragon, who met the Weft as a hatchling, has grown extraordinarily cunning while working with the Weft and promises the PCs the secret of its hidden "main hoard" in **Area 16**, hoping the PCs will foolishly don the shadow copy of the Belt of Draconic Ruination. Its lifelong exposure to the Weft's withering and corrupt magic has imbued the dragon with some protection; it is resistant to necrotic damage and immune to the effects of the Shadow River (**Area 5**).

Treasure. The portrait of Qeldar is worth 500 gp to a collector of esoteric objects. The Weft reinforces its alliance with the dragon by allowing the dragon to collect trinkets belonging to former explorers that perished in the Blot. To maintain its trick about the false hoard, the dragon has buried its treasure in shadowstuff. A success on a DC 14 INT (Investigation) or DC 19 WIS (Perception) check uncovers the treasure's location in this room. The dragon's hoard consists of 1,200 gp, a gold band set with diamonds worth 2,000 gp, a pair of amethyst-inset earrings worth 1,750 gp, and a *goblin shield* (see **Magic Items** in **Chapter 2**).





AREA 10. TWISTED SHADOW FOREST

This formless area is filled with shadowy imitations of trees and brush. Spectral squirrels and rabbits dart around the foliage.

Though nearly insubstantial, the shadows of the vegetation still grasp at the PCs' feet, causing the entire chamber to be difficult terrain. This doesn't affect the forest's denizens: a **wraith bear** (see the **Appendix**) and six **shadows** who lurk among the trees. The wraith bear, a bear spirit caught up in and warped by the Blot and the Weft of Shadows, benefits from the Blot's inherent shadowy environment and can use a bonus action to teleport anywhere within this forest chamber.

The Bramble Crown. If the PCs didn't give a clip of the Bramble Crown in the *Wrath of the Bramble King* adventure to Daesanderena, the wraith bear wears a shadowy version of the crown. If the bear dies, the crown dissipates in a puff of black smoke. While the bear wears this item, it can use an action once each day to create a *wall of thorns*, except half the damage dealt by the wall is necrotic.

Boon. If the PCs kill the bear, even if it doesn't involve the Bramble Crown, one PC is imbued with the power of the forest and can cast the *conjure animals* spell once while in the Blot. This boon doesn't require spell slots and can be used by any PC.

AREA 11. BLACK TOWER

Eight tall trees surround a replica tower fashioned from onyx and topped by a spire. A massive nest tops each tree. The forlorn cries of a majestic, winged beast echo seemingly from outside the complex.

Any examination of the replica tower reveals an egg just small enough to fit through the door. When an egg is removed from the tower, the egg grows into a roughly two-foot-diameter, 20-pound ovoid, and another egg appears at the tower door. The egg pulls toward an empty nest as if urging the bearer to return it there. If the egg loses contact with the creature that took it for more than 1 round (for example, when it is stowed in a backpack), it disappears. To solve this puzzle, the PCs must carry eight eggs from the tower door to each of the nests, placing one egg in each nest. Each nest is 30 feet up in its tree.

Climbing a tree requires a success on a DC 16 STR (Athletics) check made with disadvantage if burdened with an egg. On a failure by 5 or more, the climbing creature falls.

Throwing the egg into the nest requires a success on a DC 19 DEX check. Alternatively, a creature can throw the egg to a creature atop the tree, requiring each creature to succeed on a DC 14 DEX check. If any check fails by 5 or more, the egg falls, breaks, and unleashes a squawk that

emanates in a 20-foot radius from its landing spot. Each creature in that area must make a DC 15 CON save, taking 10 (3d6) thunder damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Once each nest holds an egg, the tower stops producing them.

Wand of Bestial Transformation. If the PCs never retrieved the Wand of Bestial Transformation in *The Griffon Hatchling Heist* adventure for Daesanderena, the shadow version forms the tower's spire. Its magic activates when a creature directly touches it or when a creature touches the tower. When it activates, it targets such a creature with the *polymorph* spell (spell save DC 17), changing the creature into a cat. A creature holding an egg has advantage on this save. The effect lasts for 1 hour. A creature wishing to avoid touching the tower when retrieving an egg can do so with a successful DC 12 DEX check. Clever PCs can use tools or magic to remove an egg without triggering the wand's effect. Once all the nests have been filled with an egg, the wand shrinks to nothingness.

Boon. If the PCs return all the eggs, even if it doesn't involve the wand, one PC is imbued with the power of the ancient griffon riders and can use an action to summon two **griffons**, which remain for 1 minute or until killed. The griffons follow the PC's verbal commands (no action required) or act on their own if they receive no commands, but usually choose to protect the PC. The PC can summon the griffons only once and only while within the Blot.

AREA 12. SHADOW FEY BARRACKS

A set of four cots fills this narrow chamber, leaving little room to maneuver. A single lead coffer sits under each of the well-appointed cots.

Apart from the shadow fey and the dragon, all the creatures residing in the Blot have no need for food, water, or rest. This spartan room serves as a place of recuperation for the few shadow fey guarding the complex. The Weft of Shadows intends to expand this room as he grows in power, knowing he must have an army of disposable minions to protect the Blot as it consumes more land and gains the attention of the Summer Lands' rulers. As it stands, the Weft of Shadows doesn't entirely trust the shadow fey, so it posts them near the entrance where they can repel intruders at no great cost to the Weft's plans.

The Weft of Shadows' distrust is not misplaced. The Queen of Night and Magic purposefully disowned the three shadow fey currently operating in the Blot, so she can retain the appearance of diplomatic neutrality. She enjoys the metaphysical punch in the nose delivered by the Weft of Shadows but wishes to suffer no backlash when its plans eventually fail. At the same time, she presents herself as an impartial adviser to the Weft. She subtly directed it to find allies not associated with her court, and the shadow fey

quartet was conveniently available. One of them regularly uses the Shadow River (Area 5) to travel to the Shadow Realm and report on the Weft's activities and the bright fey's reactions to the Queen.

Creatures. Two **shadow fey duelists** (see the **Appendix**) and a **shadow fey enchantress** (see the **Appendix**) rest in the barracks when not on duty. A third **shadow fey duelist** keeps watch on the entry to the Blot to guide legitimate visitors to the Antechamber (Area 2) if the Weft's Herald (Area 3) doesn't greet them first. The duelists and enchantress find the Weft's Herald in Area 3 disturbing and untrustworthy, as she isn't one of the Queen's transplants, and tend to keep their distance from her.

Trapped Coffer. The enchantress's coffer is protected by a poison needle trap (see *Game Master's Guide*).

Treasure. The shadow fey keep their meager treasure locked in the coffers under their cots. A success on a DC 14 DEX (Thieves' Tools) check unlocks a coffer. A success on a DC 16 STR (Athletics) check forces open a coffer's lid. The duelists' coffers each contain 30 gp and a personal item: an amulet set with garnet worth 150 gp, a gem-studded gold signet ring of a defunct fey court worth 100 gp, and an onyx statuette of a dancing couple worth 200 gp. The enchantress's coffer contains 20 pp, a small emerald worth 250 gp, a *potion of invisibility*, and a *scorn pouch* (see **Magic Items** in Chapter 2).

AREA 13. A DEADLY GAME

A square table stands in this chamber's eastern recess. A closer look at the table reveals a battlefield upon which two groups of tiny shadowy beasts stand in opposition.

Two **vampire spawn** attempting to wrest control of the Blot from the Weft of Shadows face a curious punishment imposed by the Weft. They must play a game until one of them wins. Since they are equally matched, neither can gain enough of a lead to win outright, so they face an eternity of conflict. The Blot sustains them, but they still feel their hunger for blood, which the shadow version of the Cap of Bloodthirsty Thorns amplifies.

When visitors arrive, the spawn propose the visitors serve as advisors to the spawn, so they can finally declare one of them as the winner. As part of this proposal, the vampire spawn insist the winning spawn gains a blood tribute (5 ounces or one use of *Draining Bite*) from each of the PCs on the losing side as a fair condition.

The vampire spawn won't attack except in self-defense. When reduced to 0 HP, a spawn disintegrates but reappears, fully healed, in the same spot on its next turn. None of the previous adventurers could stomach the deal proposed by the vampire spawn, and upon discovering that the spawn returned fully healed to this chamber after their

destruction, the adventurers left the spawn to their fate.

Opponents. The two vampire spawn are Vadim and Elina. Vadim has grown bored with the eternal game, and the PCs present a way to spice things up. He acts overly friendly toward them, but it quickly becomes apparent that his friendliness masks a desire to use the PCs as tools to win the game and get out of here. Elina is morose, believing this game will never end, and has grown to hate Vadim and the Weft. While she accepts the PCs' help if offered, she is convinced their assistance won't change the vampires' fates and acts mostly indifferent about their involvement in the game. Both vampires grow more engaged as the game goes on, with Vadim making demands and berating his team for losses and Elina paying more attention and cheering and grumbling with each success or failure.

If Vadim wins, he shouts triumphantly and demands the blood tribute from the losing team. He attacks the PCs if they refuse, his hunger and arrogance giving him renewed strength and confidence. If given the tribute, he then leaves the Blot. If Elina wins, she leaps out of her melancholy (and her seat), whooping and hollering with joy. She doesn't demand the losing PCs pay the blood tribute, but she is visibly disappointed if they refuse. Regardless, she then





leaves the Blot, eager to be out of it. If either spawn is slain after the game ends, the spawn doesn't return, the magic of the game no longer protecting them.

Playing the Game. If the PCs agree to play the game and help the vampires, the PCs can divide up between the two in whatever way they wish. However, at least one PC must be on each side. The PCs advise the spawn on their side to choose the optimum moves on the game board to defeat the opponent's side. Each PC and vampire spawn makes a DC 12 INT (Nature) or WIS (Animal Handling) check to move the illusory beasts in an optimal way. If one side scores three successes before the other, that side wins. On the other hand, if one side scores three failures before they score three successes, that side loses. Alternatively, a PC can choose to make a CHA (Deception) check against the next opponent's passive WIS (Insight). The result has no impact on the tallies of successes and failures, but on a success the next opponent has disadvantage on its next check, while a failure means the next opponent has advantage on its next check. The same side can't attempt a CHA (Deception) check two turns in a row, and the opposing side can't attempt a CHA (Deception) check immediately after the initial check. Unknown to the vampire spawn, losing means that spawn's instant destruction.

Cap of Bloodthirsty Thorns. If the PCs never destroyed the Cap of Bloodthirsty Thorns in the *Blood and Thorns* adventure, one of the vampire spawn now wears it. While the shadow Cap of Bloodthirsty Thorns is in play, that vampire spawn deals one extra die of necrotic damage with Draining Bite. In addition, when the spawn wearing the cap is reduced to 23 HP or fewer, it becomes reckless, gaining advantage on its attack rolls, but creatures attacking it have advantage on their attack rolls. Winning the game causes the cap to dry out and wither away, destroying it.

Treasure. Ending the competition rewards the PCs with a *beastbattle board* (see the **Beastbattle Board** sidebar).

AREA 14. SHADOW ARMORY

Racks of weapons and suits of armor line this chamber's walls.

Realizing the need for mortal protectors in the Blot and having accepted help from shadow fey and moon knights, the Weft of Shadows decided to create an armory out of shadowstuff to arm and protect its earthly allies. The armory updates based on the will of those perusing it. Creatures designated by the Weft can manifest any nonmagical weapon or armor from the shelves and racks of this room without any effort.

Manifest Arms. A success on a DC 14 INT (Arcana) check realizes the possibility of exerting a force of personality to manifest something without the Weft's permission. Once per day, a creature can attempt a DC 14 CHA (Intimidation or Persuasion) check to force the armory to produce a nonmagical weapon or suit of armor. Alternatively, the creature can attempt a DC 19 CHA (Intimidation or Persuasion) check to force the armory to create an uncommon magic weapon or suit of armor that doesn't require attunement. This DC increases to 24 to create a rare magic weapon or armor, or an uncommon magic weapon or armor that requires attunement. On a failure, the creature takes 7 (2d6) necrotic damage, and its HP maximum is reduced by the amount of damage taken. If the creature fails by 5 or more, the necrotic damage is 14 (4d6) instead. The creature dies if this effect reduces its HP maximum to 0. On a success, the weapon or armor appears 1d6 rounds later. The item disintegrates when removed from the Blot.



MAGIC ITEM: BEASTBATTLE BOARD

Two vampire spawn in the Blot are magically bound by the Weft of Shadows to play a game with a magic game board. Once the game is resolved, the magic binding the vampires and the board ends, transforming the game board into a *beastbattle board*. On this board, illusory beasts battle each other in small armies. Each of the two armies is controlled by one player, and the players use tactical skills and strategy to move each unit of their army until one army's general is defeated.

Beastbattle Board

Wondrous Item, Rare 6,000 gp
(Requires Attunement)

This magical board provides entertainment for those wishing to while away their time pitting illusory creatures against each other. This oaken game board is carved with a grid of 1-inch squares. You can use an action to activate the game board while it is on a flat surface. Once activated, the board features illusory versions of animals combatting each other on its surface. You can use a bonus action to deactivate the board, ending the game.

The board has 3 charges. You can use an action to spend one charge to cast the *conjure animals* spell. The board regains 1d3 expended charges at dawn.

AREA 15. MOONLIT CHAMBER

Pale light, as though produced by a full moon, fills this chamber, which also provides a sensation of serenity.

Three **moon knights** lair in this chamber, which contains a shadow version of a *gem of brightness* that sheds moonlight rather than sunlight. The gem dissipates in a puff of black smoke if removed from the Blot. The moon knights, erroneously convinced by a moon entity to aid the Weft of Shadows and bring eternal darkness and moonlight to the Summer Lands, oversee the shadow fey in **Area 12**, functioning as the group's commanders and the lieutenants for the Weft's burgeoning army. Sometimes they roam the Blot or check in on the night hags, whom the knights deeply distrust as agents against the moon, in **Area 24**. If the PCs don't attack the moon knights and don't reveal their intentions to stop or destroy the Weft, they can converse with the fey about the Blot, starting with the night hags and the Cauldron of Souls. The PCs may convince the fey to aid them in attacking the night hags with a successful DC 16 CHA (Deception or Persuasion) check, but the moon knights attack the PCs if they learn the PCs intend to stop the Weft of Shadows.

Hidden Sensor. The night hags in **Area 24** created a magical sensor to monitor the area for intruders and to spy on the moon knights. A hag can use an action to see or hear through the sensor as if using the *clairvoyance* spell. A successful DC 20 WIS (Perception) check notices the sensor as a tiny, slit pupil in the shadowstuff on the wall. A successful DC 15 INT (Arcana) check disperses the magic used to create the sensor, destroying it. If the check fails by 5 or more, the hags are immediately alerted to the PCs' presence.

AREA 16. FALSE DRAGON HOARD

A mound of glittering coins of all description, interspersed with sparkling gems, sits in the northern portion of this chamber.

As a gift from the Weft, the black dragon that lairs on the balcony in **Area 9** can cast the *creation* ritual. The nature of the Blot makes the spell more powerful, increasing the duration for the material created to the next higher category (gems have a 1-hour duration, for example). It uses this gift to create a fake hoard, mostly comprised of coins and semiprecious stones, twice each day. Within the hoard, it hides the shadowy imitation of the Belt of Draconic Ruination. A success on a DC 15 INT (Arcana)



or DC 20 INT (Investigation) check discovers the short-term nature of the treasure while also recognizing the belt's more permanent nature.

Creature. The **young black dragon** in **Area 9** flies down from the balcony into this room after a PC puts on or holds the belt, and it attacks.

Belt of Draconic Ruination. The hoard contains a shadow version of an artifact known as the Belt of Draconic Ruination. A creature that touches the belt must succeed on a DC 18 CON save or have disadvantage on saves against the black dragon's Acidic Vapors and Breath Weapon for 10 minutes. A creature wearing the belt automatically has disadvantage on these saves and becomes vulnerable to acid damage; the creature can't benefit from resistance or immunity to acid damage. To destroy the belt, a creature wearing the shadow belt must damage to the dragon during a combat where the dragon is slain, causing the belt to evaporate into mist after the dragon dies. If the dragon has already been slain by the time the PCs find the belt, destroying the belt requires a successful casting of *dispel magic* (DC 15).

AREA 17. SPIDERS AND MIRRORS

Webs cling to leafless trees filling this large forest. Light glints from mirror shards suspended within the webs, among which hundreds of spiders roam.

A **wickerbeast** and three **giant spiders** subservient to the wickerbeast hide among the trees. Mirror shards plaster the creatures' surfaces, increasing the wickerbeast's Stealth to 19 and the spiders' Stealth to 22. If they remain unnoticed until at least one PC reaches the center of this chamber, they attack. The creatures fight to the death.

The Shard. If the PCs never destroyed the Shard in the *Gall of the Spider Crone* adventure, its shadow version ratchets up the threat posed by their opponents. A creature restrained by a giant spider's web takes 3 (1d6) slashing damage at the start of its turn from dozens of mirror shards woven into the web. In addition, when a creature the wickerbeast can see casts a spell that targets only the wickerbeast, it can use its reaction to reflect the spell back at the spellcasters, using the spellcaster's same attack roll or save DC. Destroying the wickerbeast causes the shard to shatter into millions of shadowy motes.

AREA 18. BONE FIELD

Bony fingers belonging to enormous creatures sprout from the ground and sway in a non-existent breeze. Many fingers stand upright, while the remainder are curled up.

Six rows of bones protect a "king" finger bone at the chamber's west end. When the PCs arrive, roll a d6 for each row. On a 1, all the fingers are upright; on a 2–4, one of the fingers is in the curled position; on a 5, two of the fingers are in the curled position; and on a 6, all fingers are in the curled position. At initiative count 0, roll another d6 for each row. On a 1–3, none of the fingers change position; on a 4–5, one upright finger curls up; and on a 6, two upright fingers curl up.

Creatures. The **bone devil** from **Area 21** sometimes visits this chamber, especially if it becomes aware of trespassers moving into the area. The flicking bones don't target the devil.

Flicking Rows. When a creature moves within 5 feet of a curled-up finger, the finger immediately "flicks" the creature, by making an attack roll, then moves into the upright position. The finger has a +8 bonus on its attack roll, and if the attack hits, it deals 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage and 3 (1d6) piercing damage and knocks the target prone. If the finger scores a critical hit, the target is also flung 10 feet east on a failed save. This movement doesn't trigger any other finger bone.

The "king" finger bone at the west end of the room can always flick a creature that moves within 5 feet of it, regardless of its position. It has a +9 bonus on its attack roll, and if the attack hits, it deals 4 (1d8) bludgeoning damage and 4 (1d8) piercing damage and pushes the target up to 5 feet away and knocks it prone. If the king finger scores a critical hit, the target is instead pushed up to 15 feet.

Uprooting Fingers. A creature can use an action to uproot one of the fingers by succeeding on a DC 15 STR check (for standard fingers) or DC 17 STR check (for the king finger). Once a finger has been uprooted, it becomes dormant for 1 hour, at which time it re-roots itself.

Bone of the Giant King. If the PCs never destroyed the Bone of the Giant King in the *Challenge of the Fang* adventure, the king finger is the shadow copy of that bone. Successfully uprooting the king finger causes it to dissolve into bone dust.

Boon. Uprooting the king finger, even if it doesn't destroy the shadow version of the bone, causes the field to go dormant for 1 hour. In addition, the PC that uproots the king finger has advantage on checks and saves to shove or resist a shove for the next 24 hours. For the duration, the PC can also shove a creature two sizes larger than the PC but without this advantage.

AREA 19. MAKESHIFT MORGUE

At least one corpse rests on each obsidian slab crammed into this room, leaving little space to maneuver.

The corpses are the remains of other groups summoned by Daesanderena to investigate the Blot. Though their souls are more of a valuable commodity, the **chain devil** in **Area 20** has decided to minister to the dead bodies and has learned the rudiments of surgical procedures to enhance its fear-inducing capabilities. It dissected the bodies and arrayed them in disturbing positions to unsettle visitors and trespassers alike. If the chain devil is aware of the PCs' presence and was able to read their minds with *detect thoughts*, it hastily reconfigures one of the corpses into a person at least one of the PCs knows. A creature that recognizes the corpse must succeed on a DC 16 WIS save or be frightened for 1 minute.

AREA 20. WALLS OF TERROR

In contrast to the rest of this complex, where wisps of shadow drift away from its walls, this chamber's walls see the visages of screaming humanoids apparently trying to press their way through.

The **chain devil** in this chamber serves the **bone devil** (see **Area 21**) at the behest of the devils they both serve. The Weft of Shadows thought the chain devil would make the most out of a warped version of a relic meant to mollify fears—the first artifact to receive a shadowy duplicate from the Weft's power. The shadow version of the Mask of Unmitigated Terror helps carve out new territory for the Blot and fills the indistinct terrain it creates with horrified screams that echo back on each other.

The Mask of Unmitigated Terror. The devil carries a shadow version of an artifact known as the Mask of Unmitigated Terror. If the chain devil dies, the mask dissipates in a puff of black smoke. While the devil carries this item, it can cast *detect thoughts* three times per day, and it can use an action once each day to create a pulse of darkness that extends outward from it to all creatures within 20 feet of it. Each creature in that area must succeed on a DC 17 WIS save or have disadvantage on its first attack roll each turn when in dim light or darkness for the next 24 hours as it fears the unknown things that might lurk unseen nearby. A *remove curse* spell cures the creature of this fear.

Treasure. A successful DC 18 INT (Investigation) or WIS (Perception) check finds a *helm of brilliance* (with 1 diamond, 3 rubies, 4 fire opals, and 6 opals) hidden in the nearby shadowstuff. This helm was gifted to one of the slain adventurers by Daesanderena, who hoped it would help them defeat the Weft of Shadows.

AREA 21. BONY OVERSEER

Mounds of bones fill this area. One pile of bones has a large indentation at the top, reflecting the presence of a creature resting on the pile.

A **bone devil** rests here but often spends its time away from this area to alleviate its boredom. Like the shadow fey, the devil was sent by its superiors to aid the Weft of Shadows, as its infernal superiors hope the corruption of the Summer Lands will lead to an abundance of souls for consuming or corrupting with offers of salvation. Protected by the Weft's power, the bone devil is immune to necrotic damage and has the run of the Blot, except for the Shadow Dome (**Area 25**).

The Weft plays the devil against the night hags (**Area 24**) to ensure compliance from both parties. The devil has been making its own plans to destroy the night hags and claim the captured souls they possess in their Cauldron of Souls, hoping to earn favor with its superiors. Still, the bone devil likes to amuse itself and on rare occasions “borrows” a soul from the Cauldron to safely exit the Blot and harass the bright fey in the territories surrounding the Blot. The hags put on a show of reluctance to release a valuable commodity from their stash, but, truthfully, they are happiest when the devil departs and hopeful the loss of one soul is worth the potentiality of the devil's destruction by the bright fey. When reduced to 36 HP or fewer, the bone devil attempts to flee to the bone field in **Area 18** where it attempts to hide and recuperate. If the chain devil in **Area 20** is still alive and can hear the sounds of combat, it arrives in 1d4 rounds.



AREA 22. THE BLOT'S HEART

A cold dark waterway flanks the southern portion of this chamber, leaving little room to maneuver past it. The edge of a dome made of shadow touches ground to the west of the waterway. A gray obelisk towers to the north and emits an intense gray light in a beam that pierces the dark ceiling.

Bounded by the Shadow River (**Area 5**) and the Shadow Dome (**Area 25**), this chamber contains an ancient obelisk from which the Blot draws power. The obelisk was built by fey when the Summer Lands was young and is infused with the land's magic. The Weft pulled on a shadow road not far from the obelisk, creating the Shadow River that ultimately allowed the Weft to gain control of the obelisk's magic and use it to create the Blot. The corruption of bright fey artifacts by making shadow versions of them mirrors the shadow-cloaked bright fey magic now emanating from the obelisk, allowing the Weft and its allies to expand the Blot.

Creatures. When a creature moves within 10 feet of the obelisk, the light dims, and a **death knight** named Ferreddin the Mirthless wearing a **cloak** emerges from the object. Ferreddin allied with Qeldar before the bright fey became the Weft of Shadows, a transformation that changed them both. Ferreddin now serves with steadfast loyalty as the Weft's protector. The Weft promised the cloak a wealth of prey when shadow descends upon the Summer Lands, and the cloak enjoys the ruse of pretending to be the death knight's cape. Before the cloak attacks, a success on a DC 17 WIS (Perception) check realizes the cloak moves on its own, while a success on a DC 19 INT (Arcana or Nature) check identifies the creature.

AREA 23. A GLIMPSE INTO THE VOID

A shadowy dome forms most of this area's eastern wall. The western wall has a dark patch that seems to absorb the complex's meager light. A sense of dread pervades the area nearest the wall.

This chamber once held captives the Weft of Shadows used for feeding the black dragon in **Area 9**. However, an unexpected visitor in the form of a **voidling** was drawn to the Blot's darkness and ate the smaller creatures in this room. Accidentally summoned here, the voidling presents a problem and a potential opportunity for the Weft of Shadows, who is unfamiliar with the Void and uncertain of what to do with the creature. To keep the voidling contained, the Weft feeds it lesser creatures not necessary for the Weft's schemes, and the voidling gleefully feeds on creatures who don't enjoy the Weft's explicit protection, such as intruding PCs. The voidling maintains its pathway back to the Void and retreats there when reduced to 55 HP



or fewer. If the PCs take a long rest after the voidling flees but before destroying the Blot, the voidling returns fully healed to avenge itself on them.

AREA 24. CAULDRON OF SOULS

A massive cauldron stands atop a pile of blackened logs from which black flames lick.

One of the Weft of Shadow's negotiations involved obtaining the services of a coven of three **night hags**. The Weft needed their assistance to operate and protect a soul-harvesting device known as the Cauldron of Souls. The Cauldron is tied to the Blot, imposing its terrible cost of entry and fueling the Blot's expansion. The Weft's appeals for the night hags, as former fey beings, to join it in getting revenge against fey who bask in the light failed to sway the hags. The Weft then discovered that the souls the Cauldron collected were valueless to the Weft beyond fueling the expansion of its lair. Upon this realization, the Weft changed tactics and offered the hags their choice of souls with the stipulation they could take only one per week. Confident that the Blot's expansion will soon become self-sustaining once all the bright fey artifacts have been duplicated and no longer require the Cauldron's magic, he

magnanimously offered the remainder of the souls to the hags once the Cauldron was no longer needed. The night hags readily agreed.

Disguised Enemies. The hags created a magical sensor in **Area 15**. If the PCs didn't find or destroy the sensor in that area, the hags are aware of the PCs and use their magic to look like elven adventurers searching the room and the cauldron for a way to get back their stolen souls. In this guise, the hags attempt to convince the PCs to destroy the moon knights in **Area 15**, or if the PCs already destroyed the moon knights, use their disguises to catch the PCs by surprise. The hags, unable to leave the Blot without a soul from the cauldron, fight to the death to defend it.

Cauldron of Souls. The cauldron weighs 500 pounds and can be removed from its shallow pit with a successful DC 15 STR (Athletics) check. A successful DC 12 INT (Arcana) check while studying the cauldron discovers the following information about it:

- Removing the Cauldron of Souls from the Blot breaks its link to the Blot and releases the souls trapped within it.
- Destroying the Cauldron of Souls while it is within the Blot destroys the souls trapped within it—including the PCs' souls.

If the souls are freed, the bright fey who seemingly disintegrated when they attempted to enter the Blot return to life with no memories of the intervening time. If the Cauldron of Souls is removed from the Blot, it shrinks down to the size of a traveling cauldron and becomes an *ogre's pot* (see **Magic Items** in **Chapter 2**).

AREA 25. SHADOW DOME

This hemisphere of solid shadow is seamless save for multiple indentations in the shapes of an axe, crown, amulet, sash, giant fingerbone, wand, scepter, glass shard, cap, ring, belt, and mask. A low hum emanates from within the dome.

The only resident of the Blot that can enter the Weft's chamber without the Weft's permission is the Weft's herald, who typically lairs in **Area 3**. The Queen of Night and Magic and her immediate lieutenants are allowed entry if the Weft is aware of their presence in the Blot. To gain entry, the PCs must defeat the creatures possessing, or resolve the tricks and traps guarding, the shadow versions of the bright fey artifacts. A success on a DC 15 INT (Arcana) check is enough to realize these indentations are connected to powerful magic items. If a PC has seen one of the items or has defeated one of the creatures that holds one of the items, the PC has advantage on this check. When a shadow item is destroyed, the corresponding indentation on the dome illuminates. For PCs who



have completed Daesanderena's Missions in previous adventures (see the **Daesanderena's Handiwork** sidebar earlier in this adventure), the appropriate indentation is already illuminated.

When all shadow artifacts have been destroyed and its associated indentation illuminated, an illuminated door appears on the eastern side of the dome, allowing any creature access to the Weft's chamber. The Weft of Shadows is instantly aware of this fact and prepares itself for battle.

The **Weft of Shadows** (see the **Appendix**) experiments with the pool of shadow fed by the Shadow River in this chamber to increase its power and figure out a way to accelerate the Blot's growth. While it resents any intrusion into its sanctum, it calmly asks the trespassers to leave. If the PCs decide to parlay with it and don't threaten it, it patiently answers questions for a minute before demanding they leave. If the PCs refuse to leave, it attacks to force them to leave. The Weft can't afford to let the Blot fall and defends its home to the death. If reduced to fewer than 60 HP, it realizes the PCs pose a real threat, and it sends out a mental distress call to summon any surviving direct allies (the herald from **Area 3**, black dragon from **Area 9**, moon knights from **Area 15**, and death knight from **Area 22**) to its aid.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If the PCs can't defeat the Weft of Shadows, the Blot continues to grow until the Birch Queen and Oak and Holly Kings decide to act, launching an assault on the Blot that results in the deaths of hundreds of bright fey and allies from outside the Summer Lands. Over the course of a century, the bright fey manage to get the Blot to slowly shrink in size to the dimensions it has at the start of the adventure. They are eventually able to recover some of the lost artifacts and use those to break into the Blot and destroy the objects holding it together, removing the Blot from the Summer Lands—though many scars of the Blot remain.

If the PCs defeat the Weft of Shadows, the Blot stops growing without the Weft to guide it. The shadow copies of the artifacts must be destroyed, and the Cauldron of Souls must be removed from the Blot or destroyed to cause the Blot to fully collapse. The destruction of each device (or the device's wielder depending on the artifact) reduces the Blot's diameter by 5 percent. When all shadow items and the Weft of Shadows have been destroyed and the cauldron removed, the Blot implodes, and a bright radiance flashes for a moment immediately afterward. Each non-shadow creature in the Blot when it implodes is harmlessly ejected outside its entrance. Each shadow creature in the Blot when it implodes must succeed on a DC 18 CON save or take 55 (10d10) radiant damage. If the devils survived, they immediately flee to the Lower Planes, not willing to face the PCs and the gathering of angry bright fey. If the voidling survived, it is pulled back to the Void, its connection to this world snapping as the Blot falls.

If the PCs defeat the Weft of Shadows, they earn their choice of 50,000 gp, a *ring of shooting stars*, or a *scimitar of speed* from the bright fey. They receive one additional reward for restoring the bright fey taken by the Cauldron of Souls and another for collapsing the Blot. If they achieve all three goals, they become celebrated among the bright fey, who invite them

for a feast in the nearest bright fey court. Daesanderena becomes an ally to the PCs and gives them a silver pin in the shape of a sunflower (worth 10,000 gp), which they can use as a bonus action once per day to ask for her aid. This aid comes in a form of the GM's choosing, though it is usually in the form of advice on otherworldly topics or similar assistance that doesn't require the bright fey to physically manifest on the Material Plane (a taxing and dangerous task for her).



Appendix



MONSTERS AND NPCs

This appendix contains the various monsters and NPCs that appear within this book as well as many monsters that commonly inhabit forests and the lakes and streams within them. If a monster is referenced in this book and isn't in

this appendix, it can be found in *Monster Vault*. Many of the creature entries here detail which adventures (with names in *italics*), if any, contain that creature. Those adventures can be found in **Chapter 3**.

ALLIGATOR

Fierce aquatic predators, alligators snap at unsuspecting prey with their gaping maws, grabbing and dragging victims to a watery doom.

Alligator

CR 1/4

Medium Beast

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 14

Speed 20 ft., swim 30 ft.

Perception 10

Stealth 12

Resistant grappled

Senses —

Languages —

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+2	+0	+1	-4	+0	-5

Hold Breath. The alligator can hold its breath for 15 minutes.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 12). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the alligator can't bite another target.

BONUS ACTIONS

High Walk. The alligator takes the Dash action. It can't use this bonus action while swimming.

ALLIGATOR TURTLE

Alligator turtles are ornery reptiles, noted for their combative disposition while on land. Their necks are deceptively long and flexible, allowing them to strike a startlingly far distance with their beak-like jaws.

Alligator Turtle

CR 1/4

Medium Beast

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 12

Speed 20 ft., swim 30 ft.

Perception 11

Stealth 13

Resistant prone

Senses —

Languages —

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+2	+1	+1	-4	+1	-2

False Appearance. While the alligator turtle remains motionless underwater with its mouth open, it is indistinguishable from a rock with a worm (the turtle's tongue) rising out of the rock.

Hold Breath. The turtle can hold its breath for 1 hour.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target.

Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 12). Until this grapple ends, the turtle can't bite another target.

REACTIONS

Spiky Shell. When a creature the alligator turtle can see hits it with an attack while within 5 feet of it, the turtle can twist so that its shell takes the brunt of the blow. The damage from the attack is reduced by 5 (2d4), and the attacker takes 2 (1d4) piercing damage.

ALSEID

Found in the *Tome of Beasts I*, alseids are deer-like centaurs that live in nomadic tribes within deep forests, working alongside fey and protecting the forests. In *The Honey Queen*, the PCs can rescue an alseid from a hungry ogre and win her aid on their quest. In *Gall of the Spider Crone*, the PCs can befriend an exiled alseid, who knows the Old Ways and can help them on their journey.

Alseid skeletons are alseids with the skeleton template (see *Game Master's Guide*) applied to them. In *Gall of the Spider Crone*, alseid skeletons protect an alseid graveyard near Mavra's house.

Alseid

CR 1/2

Medium Monstrosity

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 23

Speed 40 ft.

Perception 15

Stealth 15

Resistant charmed | Monstrosity Resilience

Senses —

Languages Common, Elvish, Sylvan

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+1	+3	+1	-1	+3	-1

Forest Sight. The alseid can see through lightly obscured areas normally and areas of dim light as if it were bright light.

Heightened Sight. The alseid's Perception is 20 when perceiving by sight.

Monstrosity Resilience. The alseid is resistant to exhaustion and to the frightened condition.

Woodfriend. When in a forest, the alseid leaves no tracks and automatically discerns true north. In addition, difficult terrain composed of nonmagical plants doesn't cost the alseid extra movement, and the alseid can pass through nonmagical plants without being slowed by them and without taking damage from them if they have thorns, spines, or a similar hazard.

ACTIONS

Moon Spear. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) radiant damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Moon Step. The alseid magically teleports, along with any equipment it is wearing or carrying, up to 30 feet to an unoccupied space it can see. The origin and destination locations must be in bright or dim light.



Alseid Skeleton

CR 1/2

Medium Undead

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 23

Speed 40 ft.

Perception 15

Stealth 15

Vulnerable bludgeoning

Resistant piercing | charmed

Immune Undead Resilience

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Languages understands all languages it knew in life but can't speak

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+1	+3	+1	-2	-1	-3

False Appearance. While the alseid remains motionless and prone, it is indistinguishable from the inanimate skeleton of an alseid.

Forest Sight. The alseid can see through lightly obscured areas normally and areas of dim light as if it were bright light.

Heightened Sight. The alseid's Perception is 20 when perceiving by sight.

Undead Nature. The alseid doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

Undead Resilience. The alseid is immune to poison damage, exhaustion, and the poisoned condition.

Woodfriend. When in a forest, the alseid leaves no tracks and automatically discerns true north. In addition, difficult terrain composed of nonmagical plants doesn't cost the alseid extra movement, and the alseid can pass through nonmagical plants without being slowed by them and without taking damage from them if they have thorns, spines, or a similar hazard.

ACTIONS

Moon Spear. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) radiant damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Moon Step. The alseid magically teleports, along with any equipment it is wearing or carrying, up to 30 feet to an unoccupied space it can see. The origin and destination locations must be in bright or dim light.

REACTIONS

Counterattack (Recharge 6). When a creature the alseid can see hits it with an attack, the alseid can make one melee or ranged attack against the attacker.

BRAMBLE BEAST

Bramble beasts are plants shaped like animals with many of the capabilities of those animals. In *Wrath of the Bramble King*, bramble beasts protect the King, assault the town of Cambervale, and act under the power of several children of the briar. In *Blood and Thorns*, a bramble beast patrols the area outside the King of Thorns' palace. Bramble beast is a template that can be applied to Beasts and Monstrosities.

BRAMBLE BEAST TEMPLATE

Bramble beasts are formed from thorny vines and plants, typically by powerful fey or strong primordial magic. They look and act like animals but are made entirely of plant material, and they are often tasked as guardians of wild places. Though the most common bramble beasts are made of living vines found in forests, they can be found in any environment where thorny vines or brambles naturally occur, including badlands, grasslands, and deserts. Some coral reefs are even protected by bramble beasts made of a blend of coral and kelp.

This template can be applied to any Beast or Monstrosity. When a creature becomes a bramble beast, it retains its statistics, except as described here. The creature loses all traits and actions that assume it has a fleshy body, such as Heightened Hearing and Smell, or assumes it possesses complex knowledge, such as Spellcasting. It retains traits related to breathing, such as Amphibious, though the method of breathing is more akin to plant breathing than animal breathing. The creature loses any lair actions it had, and a creature that could change its shape loses that capability when it becomes a bramble beast.

Common Characteristics. Bramble beasts are as varied in appearance as their native plants and the animals whose shape they take, but all bramble beasts have thorn-covered bodies made of interwoven vines.

STATISTICS

Make the following adjustments to the creature's statistics.

Type. The creature's type changes to Plant. Spells and abilities that affect Plants now affect the creature.

Hit Points. The creature's hit points are reduced by 10 percent (rounded up).

Vulnerable. The bramble beast is vulnerable to fire damage.

Resistant. The bramble beast is resistant to piercing damage from nonmagical attacks.

Immune. The bramble beast is immune to poison damage and to the poisoned condition.

Senses. The bramble beast has tremorsense out to 30 feet.

Languages. The bramble beast understands Sylvan but can't speak.

TRAITS

The creature gains the following traits.

Plant Resilience. The bramble beast is resistant to exhaustion and to the paralyzed, petrified, and unconscious conditions.

Thorn Body. A creature that touches the bramble beast or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes piercing damage equal half to the bramble beast's PB.

EXAMPLE BRAMBLE BEASTS

Here are example bramble beasts that appear in the adventures in this book.

Bramble Giant Ape

CR 7

Huge Plant

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 158

Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft.

Perception 14

Stealth 12

Vulnerable fire

Resistant piercing damage from nonmagical attacks | stunned | Plant Resilience

Immune poison | poisoned

Senses tremorsense 30 ft.

Languages understands Sylvan but can't speak

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+8	+2	+4	-2	+1	-2

Plant Resilience. The ape is resistant to exhaustion and to the paralyzed, petrified, and unconscious conditions.

Thorn Body. A creature that touches the ape or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 1 piercing damage.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The ape makes two Fist or Rock attacks. If both Fist attacks hit one large or smaller creature, the target is grappled (escape DC 16). The ape has two fists, each of which can grapple only one target.

Fist. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 27 (4d10 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Rock. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, range 50/100 ft., one target. *Hit:* 23 (4d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Throw. One Large or smaller creature grappled by the ape is thrown up to 50 feet in a random direction and knocked prone. If a thrown target strikes a solid surface, the target takes 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage for every 10 feet it was thrown. If the target is thrown at another creature, that creature must succeed on a DC 16 DEX save or take the same damage and be knocked prone.

Bramble Giant Badger**CR 1/4***Medium Plant***Armor Class** 10**Hit Points** 13**Speed** 30 ft., burrow 15 ft.**Perception** 11**Stealth** 10**Vulnerable** fire**Resistant** piercing damage from nonmagical attacks | frightened | Plant Resilience**Immune** poison | poisoned**Senses** darkvision 30 ft., tremorsense 30 ft.**Languages** understands Sylvan but can't speak

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+1	+0	+2	-4	+1	-3

Grumpy. When in combat, the badger attacks the creature that most recently dealt damage to it, provided that creature is within range or moving to it doesn't cause the badger to provoke opportunity attacks. The badger otherwise attacks the nearest hostile creature.

Plant Resilience. The badger is resistant to exhaustion and to the paralyzed, petrified, and unconscious conditions.

Thorn Body. A creature that touches the badger or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 2 piercing damage.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The badger makes one Bite attack and one Claws attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) slashing damage.

Bramble Giant Wolf Spider**CR 1/4***Medium Plant***Armor Class** 13 (natural armor)**Hit Points** 12**Speed** 40 ft., climb 40 ft.**Perception** 13**Stealth** 16**Vulnerable** fire**Resistant** piercing damage from nonmagical attacks | Plant Resilience**Immune** poison | poisoned**Senses** keensense 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 30 ft.**Languages** understands Sylvan but can't speak

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+2	+2	+1	-4	+1	-3

Plant Resilience. The spider is resistant to exhaustion and to the paralyzed, petrified, and unconscious conditions.

Spider Climb. The spider can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Standing Leap. The spider's long jump is up to 20 feet and its high jump is up to 10 feet, with or without a running start.

Thorn Body. A creature that touches the spider or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 2 piercing damage.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 12 CON save or take 5 (2d4) poison damage. If the poison damage reduces the target to 0 HP, the target is stable but poisoned for 1 hour, even after regaining HP, and is paralyzed while poisoned in this way.

BONUS ACTIONS

Hunter's Leap. The spider jumps up to 20 feet horizontally or up to 10 feet vertically toward a hostile creature that it can see. This movement doesn't provoke opportunity attacks.

BULBOUS VIOLET

Found in *Tome of Beasts 2*, bulbous violets are carnivorous plants that dissolve prey with acid-producing vines. They can be found all across the Margreve Forest and are often a hazard to travelers along the Great Northern Road.

Bulbous Violet**CR 1***Medium Plant***Armor Class** 12**Hit Points** 40**Speed** 20 ft., climb 20 ft.**Perception** 10**Stealth** 12**Resistant** Plant Resilience**Immune** acid**Senses** —**Languages** —

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+3	+2	+1	-2	+0	-4

Acid Sacs. When the violet takes bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage, each creature within 5 feet of the violet must succeed on a DC 12 DEX save or take 2 (1d4) acid damage.

False Appearance. While the violet remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from other large flowering plants.

Flesh Sense. The violet can pinpoint, by scent, the location of creatures with skin and muscles, such as humans, wolves, flesh golems, or zombies, within 60 feet of it.



Plant Resilience. The bulbous violet is resistant to exhaustion and to the paralyzed, petrified, and unconscious conditions.

Slurp Gore. If a creature within 5 feet of the bulbous violet is reduced to 0 HP and took acid damage from the violet since the start of the violet's last turn, the violet regains 7 (2d6) HP.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The bulbous violet makes two Acid-Coated Tendril attacks.

Acid-Coated Tendril. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) bludgeoning damage plus 2 (1d4) acid damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 13). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained and takes 2 (1d4) acid damage at the start of each of its turns. The violet has two tendrils strong enough to grapple creatures, each of which can grapple only one target.

BONUS ACTIONS

Perfumed Placation. The bulbous violet sprays sweet pollen at one creature it is grappling. The target must succeed on a DC 13 CHA save or have disadvantage on the next check it makes to escape the grapple before the start of the violet's next turn.



BULL

Bulky quadrupeds with vicious horns, bulls are territorial beasts known to charge creatures that they perceive as challenges. In *Hollow*, a prized bull is driven into a frenzy by a magical song and kills its owner, kicking off the events of the adventure.

Bull

CR 1/2

Large Beast

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 25

Speed 40 ft.

Perception 9

Stealth 11

Senses —

Languages —

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+3	+1	+3	-4	-1	-2

Charge. If the bull moves at least 20 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with a Gore attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 3 (1d6) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 STR save or be knocked prone.

ACTIONS

Gore. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Hooves. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d4 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

CATCHWEED, KING OF THORNS

Once a child of the briar, Catchweed dreamed of a day when the children of the briar would rule the Margreve Forest. As rulers, they would no longer have to serve as the forest's eyes and ears nor would they feel the need to find work as spies for petty fey nobles seeking to discover each other's secret scandals. Fed up with it all after a job for a fey noble in the Shadow Realm went poorly, Catchweed gathered plant allies and eventually caught a traveling vampire. Immobilizing her with a magic stake, he began experimenting with and drinking her blood, which became the catalyst for transformation into the King of Thorns. Soon, he shall rule the forest and ensure all creatures of the forest bow to the plants. In *Blood and Thorns*, the PCs must find his hidden lair and stop him before he chokes the whole Margreve Forest with thorns.

Catchweed

CR 7

Medium Plant

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 131

Speed 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

Perception 13

Stealth 20

Vulnerable fire

Resistant necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks | Fey Blessing, Plant Resilience

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Languages Briarclick, Common, Sylvan

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+3	+7	+1	+1	+0	+4

Fey Blessing. Catchweed has advantage on saves against being charmed, and magic can't put him to sleep.

Plant Resilience. Catchweed is resistant to exhaustion and to the paralyzed, petrified, and unconscious conditions.

Regeneration. Catchweed regains 5 HP at the start of his turn if he has at least 1 HP. If Catchweed takes fire damage or radiant damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of his next turn.

Spider Climb. Catchweed can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Catchweed makes three Claw or Spitdart Tongue attacks. He can replace one Claw attack with Feast. If two Claw attacks hit a Large or smaller creature, the target is grappled (escape DC 15). Catchweed can have only one target grappled at a time.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) necrotic damage.

Spitdart Tongue. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) necrotic damage.

Feast. Catchweed drinks the blood of a creature he is grappling. The target must make a DC 15 CON save, taking 18 (4d8) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Catchweed then regains HP equal to that amount.

BONUS ACTIONS

Thirsting Thorns. Catchweed commands thorny vines to wrap around one creature that doesn't have all its HP and that he can see within 30 feet of him. The target must make a DC 15 DEX save. On a failure, thorny vines wrap around the target's limbs, halving its speed until the end of its next turn, and cause the target's wounds to expel a burst of fresh blood. On a success, vines catch at the target's limbs, reducing its speed by 10 feet until the end of its next turn, but the target suffers no other effects of Thirsting Thorns. Catchweed has advantage on the next attack roll he makes before the start of his next turn against a target that failed this save.

CHILD OF THE BRIAR

Found in the *Tome of Beasts 1*, children of the briar are thorny, sentient, humanoid-shaped plants with a penchant for mischief. They are often found in service to powerful fey as spies and scouts. Greater children of the briar grow poisonous thorns on their bodies, making them coveted by fey as minor assassins. In *Wrath of the Bramble King*, children of the briar steal the King's crown and attempt to use it to create bramble beasts (see **Bramble Beast** earlier in this appendix). In *Challenge of the Fang*, children of the briar inhabit the labyrinthine forest paths between the various tests the PCs must complete. In *Blood and Thorns*, children of the briar serve Catchweed, their king, enacting his will, protecting his palace, and even undergoing a vampiric transformation in service to him.

Child of the Briar

CR 1

Tiny Plant

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 44

Speed 20 ft., climb 10 ft.

Perception 12

Stealth 17

Vulnerable fire

Resistant Fey Blessing, Plant Resilience

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Languages Briarclick, Common, Sylvan

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
-2	+3	+0	+1	+0	+2



Fey Blessing. The child of the briar has advantage on saves against being charmed, and magic can't put it to sleep.

Plant Resilience. The child of the briar is resistant to exhaustion and to the paralyzed, petrified, and unconscious conditions.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The child of the briar makes two Claw or Spitdart Tongue attacks. If both Claw attacks hit a Medium or smaller creature, the target is grappled (escape DC 13). At the start of each of the grappled creature's turns, it takes 2 (1d4) piercing damage. The child of the briar can have only one target grappled at a time.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Spitdart Tongue. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Entangle (Recharge 6). While within 10 feet of at least one other child of the briar, this child can cast the *entangle* spell (spell save DC 13). Each friendly child of the briar within 30 feet of this child can use its reaction to join the casting. For each child beyond the first participating in the casting, the save DC increases by 1, to a maximum of DC 17, and the size increases by 5 feet, to a maximum of a 40-foot square. The entangled area must include at least one of the children involved in the casting. All participating children of the briar are immune to the spell's effects and can't use their own Entangle bonus actions while this Entangle is active.

Child of the Briar, Greater CR 3

Small Plant

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 76

Speed 30 ft., climb 10 ft.

Perception 12 **Stealth** 17

Vulnerable fire

Resistant piercing, poison | poisoned | Fey Blessing, Plant Resilience

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Languages Briarclick, Common, Sylvan

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+1	+3	+1	+1	+0	+2

Fey Blessing. The child of the briar has advantage on saves against being charmed, and magic can't put it to sleep.

Plant Resilience. The child of the briar is resistant to exhaustion and to the paralyzed, petrified, and unconscious conditions.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The child of the briar makes two Claw or Spitdart Tongue attacks. If both Claw attacks hit a Large or smaller creature, the target is grappled (escape DC 13). At the start of each of the grappled creature's turns, it takes 2 (1d4)

piercing damage and 2 (1d4) poison damage. The child of the briar can have only one target grappled at a time.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage plus 5 (2d4) poison damage.

Spitdart Tongue. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage plus 5 (2d4) poison damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Entangle (Recharge 6). While within 10 feet of at least one other child of the briar, this child can cast the *entangle* spell (spell save DC 13). Each friendly child of the briar within 30 feet of this child can use its reaction to join the casting. For each child beyond the first participating in the casting, the save DC increases by 1, to a maximum of DC 17, and the size increases by 5 feet, to a maximum of a 40-foot square. The entangled area must include at least one of the children involved in the casting. All participating children of the briar are immune to the spell's effects and can't use their own Entangle bonus actions while this Entangle is active.

REACTIONS

Thorn Burst. When a creature the child can see hits it with a melee attack while within 10 feet of the child, the child of the briar can fire some of the poison-coated thorns covering its body at the creature. The attacker must succeed on a DC 13 DEX save or take 5 (2d4) poison damage.

Child of the Briar, Vampiric CR 5

Small Plant

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 111

Speed 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

Perception 13 **Stealth** 20

Vulnerable fire

Resistant necrotic | Fey Blessing, Plant Resilience

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Languages Briarclick, Common, Sylvan

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+2	+7	+1	+1	+0	+3

Fey Blessing. The child of the briar has advantage on saves against being charmed, and magic can't put him to sleep.

Plant Resilience. The child of the briar is resistant to exhaustion and to the paralyzed, petrified, and unconscious conditions.

Regeneration. The child of the briar regains 2 HP at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 HP. If the child of the briar takes fire damage or radiant damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of its next turn.

Spider Climb. The child of the briar can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The child of the briar makes three Claw or Spitdart Tongue attacks. It can replace one Claw attack with Feast. If two Claw attacks hit a Large or smaller creature, the target is grappled (escape DC 15). The child of the briar can have only one target grappled at a time.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) necrotic damage.

Spitdart Tongue. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) necrotic damage.

Feast. The child of the briar drinks the blood of a creature he is grappling. The target must make a DC 15 CON save, taking 18 (4d8) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The child of the briar then regains HP equal to that amount.

BONUS ACTIONS

Cry for Blood. The child of the briar hungers for blood and releases a magical shriek toward one creature that doesn't have all its HP and that is within 30 feet of the child of the briar, calling for that creature's blood to flow for the child of the briar. The target must succeed on a DC 14 CON save or the child of the briar has advantage on the next attack roll it makes against the target before the start of the child of the briar's next turn.

Swarm of Children of the Briar

CR 3

Large Swarm of Tiny Plants

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 80

Speed 20 ft., climb 10 ft.

Perception 12

Stealth 17

Vulnerable fire

Resistant Fey Blessing, Plant Resilience, Swarm Resilience

Immune Swarm Resilience

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Languages Briarclick, Common, Sylvan

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
-2	+3	+0	+1	+0	+2

Fey Blessing. The child of the briar has advantage on saves against being charmed, and magic can't put it to sleep.

Plant Resilience. The child of the briar is resistant to exhaustion and to the paralyzed, petrified, and unconscious conditions.

Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Tiny plant. The swarm can't regain HP or gain temporary HP.

Swarm Resilience. The swarm is resistant to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage, and it is immune to the charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, and stunned conditions.

Thorny Swarm. The children of the briar comprising the swarm are covered in dozens of little thorns. A creature that starts its turn in the swarm must succeed on a DC 13 DEX save or take 2 (1d4) piercing damage.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The swarm of children of the briar makes two Claws attacks, or it uses Hail of Thorns twice.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 0 ft., one creature in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 15 (6d4) piercing damage, or 7 (3d4) piercing damage if the swarm has half its HP or fewer.

Hail of Thorns. The swarm releases an arcing hail of thorns at one creature it can see within 20 feet of it. The target must make a DC 13 DEX save. On a failure, the target takes 15 (6d4) piercing damage, or 7 (3d4) piercing damage if the swarm has half its HP or fewer. On a success, the target takes half the damage.

COLLAÍS

Found in *Tome of Beasts 2*, colláís are called protectors of the peoples of the forest. When a village faces a great threat, they might call on the Old Margreve for a protector, and if the village has followed the Old Ways, the forest might send a colláís. It remains long enough to vanquish the threat and ensure the threat won't return, then the colláís returns to the forest.

Colláís

CR 10

Large Monstrosity

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 199

Speed 40 ft.

Perception 17

Stealth 12

Vulnerable necrotic

Resistant bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks | Monstrosity Resilience

Immune charmed, frightened

Senses darkvision 120 ft.

Languages understands Common and Sylvan but can't speak

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+8	+2	+2	+0	+3	+5

Magic Resistance. The colláís has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Monstrosity Resilience. The colláís is resistant to exhaustion and to the frightened condition.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The colláis makes one Gore attack and two Hoof attacks.

Gore. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 26 (4d10 + 4) piercing damage.

Hoof. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 22 (4d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Cry of the Forest (Recharge 6). The colláis sounds a dreadful and reverberating call of primeval animals. Each creature within 30 feet of the colláis that can hear the cry must make a DC 16 CHA save. On a failure, a creature takes 35 (10d6) psychic damage and is frightened for 1 minute. On a success, a creature takes half the damage and isn't frightened. A frightened creature can repeat the save at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. Beasts and creatures with the Animal tag that have an INT of -3 or lower either automatically fail this save or are immune to this effect, the colláis's choice.

BONUS ACTIONS

Toss. The colláis uses its horns to scoop up and toss a Medium or smaller creature within 5 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 16 STR save or be thrown up to 20 feet away from the colláis in a random direction and knocked prone.

DUXT

Duxt is a portly, four-legged, insectoid fey that acts as fey ambassador and guardian for the Honey Queen in *The Honey Queen*, proudly wearing a self-made sash and badge of office. He serves her loyally and is often the first non-bee that visitors speak with in the hive.

Duxt

CR 1

Small Fey

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 40

Speed 30 ft., climb 20 ft.

Perception 12

Stealth 14

Vulnerable charmed

Resistant poison | poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., keensense 10 ft.

Languages Common, Sylvan

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+0	+2	+1	+0	+2	-1

Speak with Beasts. Duxt can communicate with Beasts as if they shared a language.



ACTIONS

Multiattack. Duxt makes two Shortsword or Throw Stinger attacks.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Throw Stinger. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d4 + 2) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 12 CON save or be poisoned until the end of its next turn.

BONUS ACTIONS

Command Bee (Recharge 4–6). Duxt commands one friendly giant honey bee or swarm of bees he can see within 30 feet of him to move up to half its speed toward one creature Duxt can see and make one attack against that creature. This movement doesn't provoke opportunity attacks.

ELF, SHADOW FEY

Found in the *Tome of Beasts 1*, shadow fey primarily reside in the Shadow Realm, and many regularly visit the Margreve Forest on trips for the fey courts or on the way to trade in Zobeck. In *The Vengeful Heart*, a group of shadow fey seek game for a feast and plants for their court's alchemist, putting them at odds with others seeking the same plant. In *Shadow's Envy*, some shadow fey serve the Weft of Shadows to aid his schemes or as envoys of the fey courts.

Shadow Fey

CR 1/4

Medium Humanoid

Armor Class 15 (chain shirt)

Hit Points 12

Speed 30 ft.

Perception 12

Stealth 14

Resistant Fey Ancestry

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Languages Common, Elvish, Umbral

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+0	+2	+0	+0	+0	+1

Fey Ancestry. The shadow fey is resistant to the charmed condition, and magic can't put the shadow fey to sleep.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the shadow fey has disadvantage on attack rolls, and its Perception is 7 when perceiving by sight.

ACTIONS

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Shadow Traveler (2/Day). While in shadows, dim light, or darkness, the shadow fey disappears into the darkness and reappears in an unoccupied space it can see within 30 feet. A tendril of inky smoke appears at the origin and destination when it uses this bonus action.

Shadow Fey Duelist

CR 6

Medium Humanoid

Armor Class 17 (studded leather)

Hit Points 119

Speed 30 ft.

Perception 14

Stealth 18

Resistant Fey Ancestry

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Languages Common, Elvish, Umbral

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+1	+5	+2	+1	+4	+3

Duelist's Mobility. Opportunity attacks made against the duelist have disadvantage. If the duelist is prone at the start of its turn, it can immediately stand without costing movement.

Fey Ancestry. The shadow fey is resistant to the charmed condition, and magic can't put the shadow fey to sleep.

Poisoned Weapons. The duelist's weapons are coated with a magical poison harvested from the Shadow Realm. When the duelist hits with any weapon, the weapon deals an extra 2d6 poison damage (included in the attack).

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the shadow fey has disadvantage on attack rolls, and its Perception is 9 when perceiving by sight.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The shadow fey duelist makes two Rapier attacks and one Dagger attack. If two attacks hit one creature, the target must succeed on a DC 16 CON save or be poisoned for 1 minute. A poisoned creature can repeat the save at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d4 + 5) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) poison damage.

Rapier. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) poison damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Shadow Traveler (3/Day). While in shadows, dim light, or darkness, the shadow fey disappears into the darkness and reappears in an unoccupied space it can see within 30 feet. A tendril of inky smoke appears at the origin and destination when it uses this bonus action.

REACTIONS

Parry. The shadow fey duelist adds 3 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the duelist must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

Shadow Fey Enchantress

CR 7

Medium Humanoid

Armor Class 16 (breastplate)

Hit Points 152

Speed 30 ft.

Perception 16

Stealth 16

Resistant force | Fey Ancestry

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Languages Common, Elvish, Umbral

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+0	+6	+2	+1	+3	+7

Fey Ancestry. The shadow fey is resistant to the charmed condition, and magic can't put the shadow fey to sleep.

Phrenic Weapons. The enchantress's weapon attacks are magical. When she hits with any weapon, the weapon deals an extra 4d8 psychic damage (included in the attack).

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the shadow fey has disadvantage on attack rolls, and her Perception is 11 when perceiving by sight.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The shadow fey enchantress makes two Rapier or Shadow Bolt attacks. She can replace one attack with a use of Spellcasting.

Rapier. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage plus 18 (4d8) psychic damage.

Shadow Bolt. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +7 to hit, range 120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) cold damage plus 14 (4d6) necrotic damage.

Beguiling Whispers (Recharge 5–6). The enchantress speaks sweet words to up to two creatures she can see within 60 feet of her and that can hear her. Each target must make a DC 15 CHA save. On a failure, the target takes 36 (8d8) psychic damage and is charmed for 1 minute. On a success, the target takes half the damage and isn't charmed. While charmed in this way, a creature has disadvantage on WIS and CHA saves against spells cast by the enchantress.

Spellcasting. The enchantress casts one of the following spells, requiring no material components and using Charisma as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 15):

At will: *command, message*

3/day: *charm, enthrall, fear, hold, hypnotic pattern*

1/day: *confusion, dominate, greater invisibility, greater hold, phantasmal killer*

BONUS ACTIONS

Shadow Traveler (3/Day). While in shadows, dim light, or darkness, the shadow fey disappears into the darkness and reappears in an unoccupied space it can see within 30 feet. A tendril of inky smoke appears at the origin and destination when it uses this bonus action.



REACTIONS

Inspiring Command. When a friendly creature the enchantress can see within 30 feet of her makes an attack roll or a save, she can utter a special command or warning to it. The creature can add a d4 to its roll, provided it can hear and understand the enchantress.

Shadow Fey Guardian

CR 4

Large Humanoid

Armor Class 15 (chain shirt)

Hit Points 95

Speed 30 ft.

Perception 14

Stealth 12

Immune charmed, frightened, unconscious

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Languages Common, Elvish, Umbral

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+3	+2	+5	-2	+2	-1

Shadow-Infused Weapons. The guardian's weapon attacks are magical. When it hits with any weapon, the weapon deals an extra 1d8 cold damage (included in the attack).

Shadow's Vigil. The guardian's Perception is 19 when perceiving by hearing or sight, and magical darkness doesn't impede the guardian's darkvision.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the shadow fey has disadvantage on attack rolls, and its Perception is 9 when perceiving by sight.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The shadow fey guardian makes two Pike or Javelin attacks.

Pike. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d10 + 3) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) cold damage.

Javelin. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) cold damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Shadow Traveler (2/Day). While in shadows, dim light, or darkness, the shadow fey disappears into the darkness and reappears in an unoccupied space it can see within 30 feet. A tendril of inky smoke appears at the origin and destination when it uses this bonus action.

REACTIONS

Protective Interference. When a friendly creature the shadow fey guardian can see within 5 feet of it is the target of an attack, the guardian can impose disadvantage on the attack roll. To do so, the guardian must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

FOREST FALCON

A forest falcon is a large, swift raptor adapted to agile flight through dense canopy rather than bursts of speed in open air. It prefers a high perch, watching for movement from prey on the forest floor. The falcon strikes in a diving ambush and can even run down prey on foot.

Forest Falcon

CR 1/2

Medium Beast

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 25

Speed 20 ft., fly 60 ft.

Perception 14

Stealth 13

Vulnerable blinded

Senses —

Languages —

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
-2	+3	+1	-4	+2	-3

Falcon Dive. If the falcon is flying and dives at least 20 feet straight toward a target, it has advantage on the next Beak attack it makes against that target before the end of its turn. If the attack hits, the Beak deals an extra 2 (1d4) piercing damage to the target.

Heightened Sight. The forest falcon's Perception is 19 when perceiving by sight.

ACTIONS

Beak. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d4 + 3) piercing damage.

GIANT BOMBARDIER BEETLE

Giant bombardier beetles lurk on the forest floor. A placid herbivore content to go about its business, the beetle has a powerful defense mechanism in the form of a boiling liquid it can spray to scald would-be predators as it makes its escape.

Bombardier Beetle

CR 1/4

Medium Beast

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 12

Speed 30 ft.

Perception 10

Stealth 12

Vulnerable frightened

Resistant fire

Senses keensense 30 ft.

Languages —

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+0	+2	+2	-4	+0	-4

Forest Camouflage. The bombardier beetle's Stealth is 17 while in forest terrain.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage.

Spray (Recharge 5–6). The bombardier beetle releases a spray of boiling liquid at one creature it can see within 15 feet of it. The target must make a DC 12 DEX save, taking 5 (2d4) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

REACTIONS

Defensive Spray (7 HP or Fewer). When the bombardier beetle takes damage, Spray recharges, and the beetle can immediately use Spray.

GIANT FRILLED LIZARD

Found in the *Tome of Beasts 2*, frilled lizards are large reptiles that adore warm, humid climates. They often lie motionless for hours, sunning themselves. They can be very aggressive and territorial, hissing and protruding the large, jagged frill that surrounds their necks in intimidating displays. In *Gall of the Spider Crone*, two giant frilled lizards challenge the PCs while they are driving the spider-like home of a Spider Crone.

Giant Frilled Lizard

CR 5

Large Beast

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 114

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

Perception 14

Stealth 14

Resistant poison | poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Languages —

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+2	+4	+2	-4	+1	+0

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The giant frilled lizard makes one Bite attack and one Tail attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage plus 10 (4d4) poison damage.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target.

Hit: 15 (2d10 + 4) bludgeoning damage, and if the target is a Large or smaller creature, it must succeed on a DC 15 STR save or be knocked prone.

BONUS ACTIONS

Intimidating Dash. The lizard expands its frill, rises to stand on its hind legs, and quickly moves up to 20 feet toward one creature it can see within 60 feet of it without provoking opportunity attacks. If this movement puts the lizard within 30 feet of the target, the target must succeed on a DC 15 CHA save or be frightened until the start of the lizard's next turn. If this movement puts the lizard within 5 feet of the target, the target has disadvantage on the save.

REACTIONS

Detach Tail (63 HP or Fewer, Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). When the lizard takes damage, it can detach its tail, reducing the damage by 9 (2d8), and immediately move up to its speed without provoking opportunity attacks. Once the lizard uses this reaction, it can't make Tail attacks until this reaction recharges.

GIANT LEECH

Giant leeches lurk in placid ponds, babbling creeks, and mighty rivers. They slink through the dark forest waters with their distinctive vertical undulation, following any movement they sense toward fresh blood. Some varieties have adapted to life in the oceans. A rare few dwell on land, though land-dwelling leeches prefer humid, moist climates.

Giant Leech

CR 1/4

Small Beast

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 14

Speed 15 ft., swim 30 ft.

Perception 10

Stealth 15

Senses tremorsense 30 ft.

Languages —

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
-2	+3	+0	-5	+0	-4

Amphibious. The leech can breathe air and water.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage, and the leech attaches to the target. While attached, the leech can't attack, and at the start of each of the leech's turns, the target loses 5 (1d4 + 3) HP due to blood loss. The attached leech moves with the target whenever the target moves, requiring none of the leech's movement. It can detach itself by spending 5 feet of its movement on its turn. It does so after it drains 10 HP of blood from the target or the target dies. A creature, including the target, can use its action to detach the leech.

GIANT MONGOOSE

The giant mongoose slinks through the woods, searching out rodents and other small animals to prey upon. Like their smaller cousins, giant mongooses are notoriously resistant to venoms, and their distinctive "dance" in battle helps them avoid deadly strikes.

Giant Mongoose

CR 1/4

Medium Beast

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 12

Speed 30 ft.

Perception 12

Stealth 15

Resistant poison | poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Languages —

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+0	+3	+2	-4	+2	-2

Heightened Hearing and Smell. The mongoose's Perception is 17 when perceiving by hearing or smell.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.
Hit: 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

REACTIONS

Evasive Roll. The giant mongoose adds 2 to its AC against one attack that would hit it. To do so, the mongoose must see the attacker.

GOLEM, VINE

Found in the *Tome of Beasts 2*, vine golems are constructs created by druids out of local plant life to guard sacred areas or to operate as scouts for druid enclaves. In *Pride of the Mushroom Queen*, a vine golem made of fungi guards the entryway to the Mushroom Queen's throne room, her last line of defense against intruding PCs.

Vine Golem

CR 3

Medium Construct

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 72

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

Perception 12

Stealth 14

Vulnerable fire

Resistant Lesser Golem Resilience

Immune Lesser Golem Resilience

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Languages understands the languages of its creator but can't speak

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+1	+4	+3	-2	+0	-3

Construct Nature. The golem doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

Immutable Form. The golem is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Lesser Golem Resilience. The golem is immune to poison and psychic damage, and it is resistant to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks. In addition, it is immune to exhaustion and to the charmed, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, and poisoned conditions.

Magic Resistance. The golem has advantage on saves against spells and other magical effects.



Magic Weapons. The golem's weapon attacks are magical.

Plant Camouflage. The vine golem's Stealth is 19 while in any terrain with ample, obscuring plant life.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The vine golem makes two Vine Whip attacks or three Fling Thorn attacks. It can replace one Vine Whip attack with a Thorned Embrace attack.

Vine Whip. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 14 STR save or be pulled up to 10 feet toward the vine golem. If the target was within 5 feet of the vine golem when the golem attacked, and it is a Medium or smaller creature, the golem can grapple the target (escape DC 14) instead. Until the grapple ends, the target is restrained. The vine golem can have only one creature grappled in this way at a time.

Fling Thorn. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d4 + 4) piercing damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Entangling Roots. The vine golem plants its feet in the ground and sends roots outward. Each creature within 10 feet of it must succeed on a DC 14 STR save or be grappled (escape DC 14) by vines until the creature escapes or until the vine golem uses this bonus action again.

GREAT GRAY OWL

Great gray owls are stealthy predators, and the largest of the non-giant varieties of owls. Unlike other owls, great grays aren't territorial—with the exception of females raising young—and don't flush or spook when other creatures approach. Rather, they remain still on their low perches, often going overlooked.

Great Gray Owl

CR 1

Small Beast

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 36

Speed 5 ft., fly 60 ft.

Perception 14

Stealth 16

Senses darkvision 120 ft.

Languages —

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
-3	+4	+0	-4	+2	-2

Flyby. The owl doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when it flies out of an enemy's reach.

Heightened Hearing and Sight. The owl's Perception is 19 when perceiving by hearing or sight.

Quiet Wings. The owl's Stealth is 21 while flying.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The great gray owl makes two Talon attacks.

Talon. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) slashing damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Intense Gaze. The owl turns its piercing, intense gaze toward one creature it can see within 30 feet of it, unnerving the creature. The target must succeed on a DC 14 WIS save or the owl has advantage on the next attack roll it makes against the target before the start of the owl's next turn.

GROVE BEAR

Grove bears resemble black bears with blond snouts, but they are slightly smaller and noticeably quicker. When grove bears clash to defend territory or compete for mates, they engage in brutal wrestling matches, each attempting to pin the other until one bear loses its nerve and flees.

Grove Bear

CR 1/4

Medium Beast

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 14

Speed 40 ft., climb 30 ft.

Perception 13

Stealth 11

Resistant grappled

Senses —

Languages —

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+3	+1	+2	-4	+1	-2

Grappler. The bear has advantage on attack rolls against any creature grappled by it.

Heightened Smell. The bear's Perception is 18 when perceiving by smell.

ACTIONS

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) slashing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 13). Until this grapple ends, the bear can't use its Claws on another target.

BONUS ACTIONS

Pin. The bear attempts to pin down one creature it is grappling. The target must succeed on a DC 13 STR save or be restrained until the grapple ends.

HOLLOW MAN

The Hollow Man is a creature of wood and bone that serves a powerful entity within the Margreve Forest. Many Hollow Men have been created over the course of the forest's life and can be found in the service of hags, Spider Crones, or even Baba Yaga and her daughters. In *Hollow*, a Hollow Man serves the Singing Tree and torments the village of Levoča. That Hollow Man has a unique connection with the village and its wood wards, allowing it to call them as allies while within the village, and it wields *Harvester*, a magic scythe.

Hollow Man

CR 2

Medium Construct

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 57

Speed 20 ft.

Perception 10

Stealth 10

Vulnerable fire

Immune Construct Resilience

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Languages the languages of its creator but can't speak

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+3	+0	+3	-4	+1	-5

Construct Nature. The Hollow Man doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

Construct Resilience. The Hollow Man is immune to poison and psychic damage, and it is immune to exhaustion and the charmed, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, and poisoned conditions.

Fiery Confusion. The Hollow Man is inherently wary of fire, which disorients it. It will not choose to move toward any fiery or burning materials. If presented with a flame or burning object, or if it is dealt fire damage, the Hollow Man must succeed on a DC 11 WIS save or be incapacitated until the end of its next turn. After it has been incapacitated by a specific flame or burning object or a specific instance of fire damage, such as from a torch, it can't be incapacitated by that same source again for 24 hours.

Magic Resistance. The Hollow Man has advantage on saves against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Hollow Man makes one Scythe attack and one Slam attack, or it makes three Hollow Creak attacks. If two Hollow Creak attacks hit one creature, the target must succeed on a DC 13 WIS save or be frightened until the end of its next turn.

Scythe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d4 + 3) slashing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 13 STR save or be knocked prone.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Hollow Creak. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +3 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (2d4 + 1) psychic damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Pursue Quarry. The Hollow Man points at a creature it can see within 30 feet of it and marks the creature as its quarry. The target must succeed on a DC 13 WIS save or be frightened and have its speed reduced by 10 feet until the end of its next turn. If the target fails, the Hollow Man can move an additional 10 feet on its turn, provided that movement is in the direction of the target.

HONEY BEE

Found in *Tome of Beasts* 2, honey bees are pollinating insects that live in hives where they create honey. A few bees here and there rarely pose much of a threat, but when a cloud of the insects form an angry swarm, it can spell trouble for any unsuspecting creatures nearby. Giant honey bees fill hollows in rocky or forested hillsides with their massive wax and honey hives. Unlike a normal honey bee, a giant honey bee who stings a creature doesn't lose its stinger.

Honey bees are rarely idle, often moving in elaborate, wagging dances of spirals and loops. This "dance" is actually a complex language the bees use to share staggeringly accurate directions and information about nearby threats and food sources with the rest of their hive.

In *Hollow*, a swarm of bees, driven to a frenzy by the Singing Tree's song, attacks some villagers. In *The Honey Queen*, bees of all kinds protect and serve the Honey Queen in her Honey Cave, and a swarm serves as a physical manifestation of Lyla's sleeping spirit.

Giant Honey Bee

CR 1/2

Small Beast

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 23

Speed 10 ft., fly 40 ft.

Perception 11

Stealth 12

Resistant poison | poisoned

Senses keensense 30 ft.

Languages Bee Dance

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
-1	+2	+1	-3	+1	-1

ACTIONS

Sting. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 12 CON save, taking 7 (2d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If the poison damage reduces the target to 0 HP, the target is stable but poisoned for 1 hour, even after regaining HP, and is paralyzed while poisoned in this way.

REACTIONS

Distressed Dance. When the giant honey bee is attacked by a creature it can see, it can perform a distressed dance. The attacker has disadvantage on the attack roll.

Swarm of Bees

CR 1

Medium Swarm of Tiny Beasts

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 34

Speed 5 ft., fly 30 ft.

Perception 10

Stealth 14

Resistant poison | poisoned | Swarm Resilience

Immune Swarm Resilience

Senses keensense 10 ft.

Languages —

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
-1	+4	+0	-5	+0	-4

Droning Swarm. A creature in the swarm's space is surrounded by buzzing insects that disrupt the creature's ability to hear and speak. The creature has disadvantage on WIS (Perception) checks that rely on hearing. If the creature casts a spell with a verbal component, it must succeed on



a DC 14 CON save or the spell fails to cast, expending the action required to cast it but not the spell slot or daily use.

Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Tiny bee. The swarm can't regain HP or gain temporary HP.

Swarm Resilience. The swarm is resistant to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage, and it is immune to the charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, and stunned conditions.

ACTIONS

Sting. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 0 ft., one target in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 10 (4d4) piercing damage, or 5 (2d4) piercing damage if the swarm is at half its hit points or fewer. The target must make a DC 14 CON save, taking 7 (2d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

HONEY QUEEN

Honey Queen is the title of a dynasty of awakened queen bees. How these creatures first came to self-awareness remains a mystery, but when one Honey Queen dies, another always rises to take her place. In *The Honey Queen*, the PCs must meet with the Honey Queen and obtain a vial of her magical honey.

Honey Queen

CR 3

Large Beast

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 72

Speed 10 ft., fly 40 ft.

Perception 14

Stealth 13

Resistant charmed, frightened

Immune poison | poisoned

Senses keensense 30 ft.

Languages Bee Dance, Common, Sylvan

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+0	+3	+2	+2	+0	+6

Queen of Bees. The Honey Queen exudes pheromones that other bees recognize as a symbol of authority. No bees or bee-like creatures can willingly attack the Honey Queen, though they can be forced to do so through magical means. In addition, the Honey Queen can communicate with bees as if they shared a language, and all bees obey her commands, which are typically given non-verbally via pheromones. Bees with an INT of -2 or higher can resist her commands for 1 hour with a successful DC 14 CHA save.

Sedating Smoke. When the Honey Queen starts her turn in an area obscured by smoke, such as from a fire, she must make a DC 12 CON save. On a failure, her speed is halved and she can't take reactions until the start of her next turn.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Honey Queen makes two Sting or Honey Bolt attacks.

Sting. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 14 CON save. On a failure, the target takes 10 (3d6) poison damage and is poisoned until the end of its next turn. On a success, the target takes half the damage and isn't poisoned.

Honey Bolt. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +6 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Infused Honey. The Honey Queen infuses her honey with magic. The next Honey Bolt attack she makes before the end of her turn has one of the following additional features:

- **Poisonous.** The bolt deals poison damage instead of bludgeoning damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 14 CON save or be poisoned until the end of its next turn.
- **Pungent.** The target is coated in honey that smells so strongly it drives the target to distraction. The target has disadvantage on the next attack roll it makes before the start of the Honey Queen's next turn.
- **Sweet.** The bolt deals no damage and instead gives the target temporary hit points equal to the damage it would have dealt. The temporary hit points last 1 minute.
- **Viscous.** The target's speed is reduced by 10 feet until the end of its turn.

REACTIONS

Charming Dance. When the Honey Queen is attacked by a creature she can see within 30 feet of her, she can perform a twirling dance and buzz her wings at a soothing frequency. The attacker must succeed on a DC 14 CHA save or be charmed until the start of the Honey Queen's next turn, preventing the attack from connecting.



BEE DANCE LANGUAGE

A character who has established peaceful contact with giant honey bees can learn Bee Dance as a language as outlined in the Training downtime (see *Player's Guide*). While any character who learns it can understand Bee Dance, a creature other than a giant honey bee can only convey basic concepts. A character who assumes the shape of a giant honey bee can communicate fully using the language.

HOWLER BABOON

Howler baboons are territorial primates that claim stretches of forest and hills in large troops. Their presence is usually heard before it's seen, thanks to the whooping calls they use to communicate danger and call for their troop mates. When angered, they attack in ferocious packs, hurling rocks and pummeling threats en masse.

Howler Baboon

CR 1/4

Medium Beast

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 15

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

Perception 13

Stealth 12

Resistant deafened

Senses —

Languages —

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+2	+2	+2	-2	+1	-2

Pack Tactics. The baboon has advantage on attack rolls against a creature if at least one of the baboon's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Fist. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

Rock. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 20/60 ft., one target.

Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Challenging Howl. The howler baboon howls at one creature it can see within 30 feet of it, challenging the target. The target must make a DC 12 CHA save. On a failure, the target suffers one of the following effects of the baboon's choice:

- The target has disadvantage on the next attack roll it makes before the start of the baboon's next turn.
- The next attack the target makes before the start of the baboon's next turn must be against the baboon.

LICH HOUND

Found in the *Tome of Beasts 1*, lich hounds are undead canines with necromantic energy flowing off them in colorful, flame-like flickers. They serve powerful undead as exceptional hunters, able to detect living creatures across great distances. In *Grandmother's Fire*, lich hounds are part of a hunting party of ghost knights from Doresh.

Lich Hound

CR 4

Medium Undead

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 100

Speed 30 ft., fly 50 ft.

Perception 14

Stealth 14

Vulnerable bludgeoning

Resistant piercing, slashing

Immune Undead Resilience

Senses darkvision 120 ft., keensense 60 ft.

Languages understands Common and Darakhul but can't speak

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+0	+4	+4	-2	+0	+3

Blood Sense. The lich hound can pinpoint the location of creatures that aren't Constructs or Undead within 60 feet of it and can sense the general direction of such creatures within 1 mile of it.



Heightened Hearing and Smell. The lich hound's Perception is 19 when perceiving by hearing or smell.

Undead Nature. The lich hound doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

Undead Resilience. The lich hound is immune to poison damage, to exhaustion, and to the poisoned condition.

ACTIONS

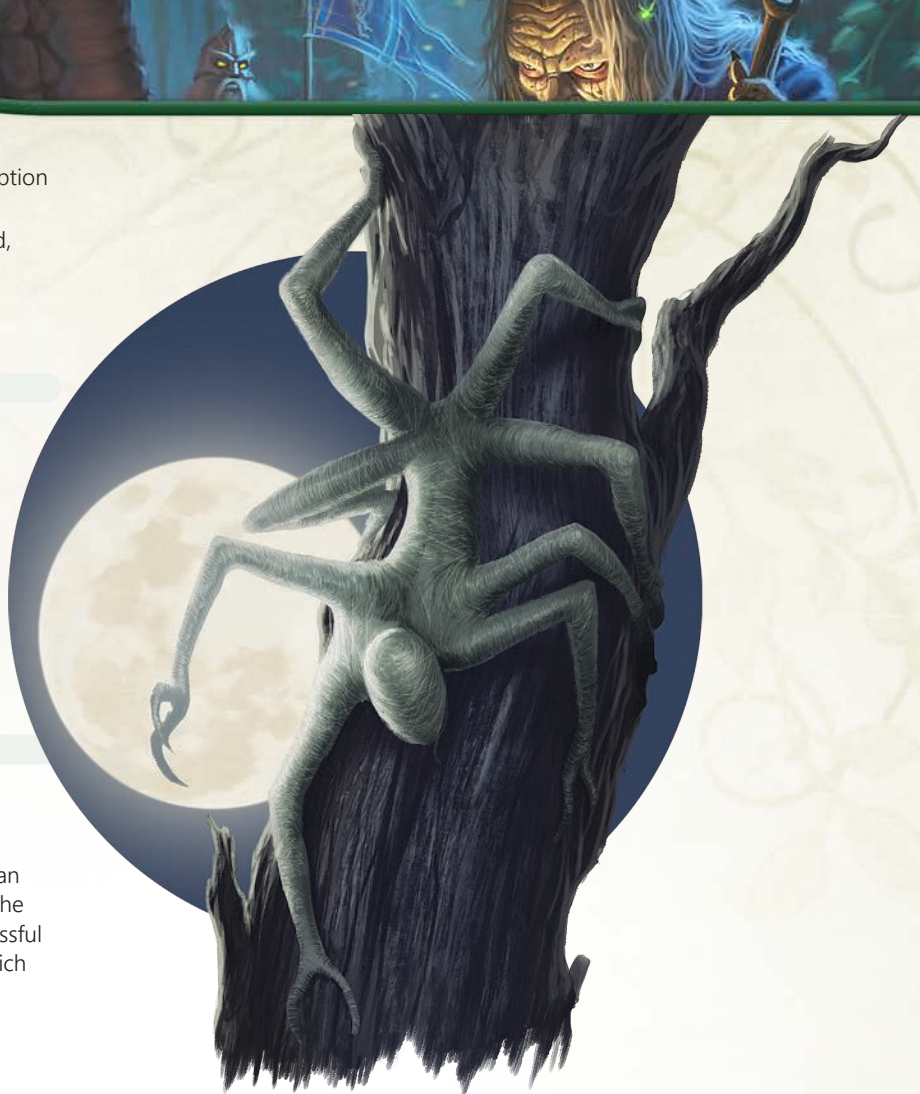
Multiattack. The lich hound makes two Bite attacks. If both attacks hit one creature, the target must succeed on a DC 14 CON save or take 7 (2d6) slashing damage and be incapacitated until the end of its next turn.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) necrotic damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 14 STR save or be knocked prone.

BONUS ACTIONS

Eerie Howl. The lich hound releases an eerie howl that fades in and out and echoes strangely. Each creature within 30 feet of the lich hound must succeed on a DC 14 WIS save or be frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the save at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's save is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the lich hound's Eerie Howl for the next 24 hours.

Ethereal Jaunt. The lich hound magically shifts from the Material Plane to the Ethereal Plane, or vice versa.



LUNARCHIDNA

Found in the *Tome of Beasts 2*, lunarchidnas are beings of moonlight and spider silk that are spontaneously created when residual magic coalesces on a spider web touched by the light of a full moon. Lunarchidnas are spider-like, vaguely human-shaped aberrant creatures that take pleasure in disrupting humanoid life within the forest, poisoning water sources, attacking travelers, and baiting larger creatures to stampede through villages. A lunarchidna's power is tied to the moon, waxing and waning as the moon does. The Margreve Forest holds a handful of lunarchidna at any given time with the largest concentrations near the Central Heart.

LUNARCHIDNA MOON PHASE

MOON PHASE	STATISTICS
Daytime, new, or crescent moon	Lesser lunarchidna
Quarter or half moon	Greater lunarchidna
Gibbous or full moon	Transcendent lunarchidna

Lesser Lunarchidna

CR 2

Medium Aberration

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 58

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

Perception 11

Stealth 16

Vulnerable fire

Resistant Aberrant Resilience

Immune poison | poisoned, restrained

Senses darkvision 60 ft., keensense 10 ft.

Languages Deep Speech, Sylvan

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+0	+2	+2	-2	+1	+1

Aberrant Resilience. The lunarchidna is resistant to the charmed, frightened, paralyzed, and stunned conditions, and it has advantage on saves against spells or effects that would alter its form.

Spider Climb. The lunarchidna can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the lunarchidna has disadvantage on attack rolls, and its Perception is 6 when perceiving by sight.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The lunarchidna makes one Bite attack and two Claw attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.
Hit: 11 (2d8 + 2) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 12 CON save or its HP maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its HP maximum to 0.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.
Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Shadow Stealth. The lunarchidna takes the Hide action. It can use this bonus action only while in dim light or darkness.

Greater Lunarchidna

CR 4

Medium Aberration

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 93

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

Perception 11

Stealth 17

Vulnerable fire

Resistant Aberrant Resilience

Immune poison | poisoned, restrained

Senses darkvision 60 ft., keensense 10 ft.

Languages Deep Speech, Sylvan

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+0	+3	+2	+1	+1	+2

Aberrant Resilience. The lunarchidna is resistant to the charmed, frightened, paralyzed, and stunned conditions, and it has advantage on saves against spells or effects that would alter its form.

Spider Climb. The lunarchidna can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the lunarchidna has disadvantage on attack rolls, and its Perception is 6 when perceiving by sight.

Web Walker. The lunarchidna ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The lunarchidna makes one Bite attack and two Claw attacks. If both Claw attacks hit one Medium or smaller creature, the lunarchidna can use Wrap Up on the target.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.
Hit: 12 (2d8 + 3) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 13 CON save or its HP maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its HP maximum to 0.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.
Hit: 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Wrap Up. The lunarchidna wraps up a Medium or smaller creature within 5 feet of it in webbing. The target must make a DC 13 STR save or be wrapped. The target has disadvantage on the save if it is restrained by webbing. The wrapped target is blinded, restrained, and unable to breathe until freed from the webbing, and it must succeed on a DC 13 CON save at the start of each of the lunarchidna's turns or take 5 (1d4 + 3) bludgeoning damage. The webbing can be attacked and destroyed (AC 13; HP 15; vulnerability to fire damage; immunity to bludgeoning, poison, and psychic damage). The lunarchidna can have only one creature wrapped at a time.

BONUS ACTIONS

Web (Recharge 4–6). The lunarchidna launches a gob of webbing at one creature it can see within 30 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 13 STR save or be restrained. A creature, including the restrained target, can take its action to free the target from the webbing by succeeding on a DC 13 STR check. The webbing can also be attacked and destroyed (AC 13; HP 15; vulnerability to fire damage; immunity to bludgeoning, poison, and psychic damage).

Shadow Stealth. The lunarchidna takes the Hide action. It can use this bonus action only while in dim light or darkness.

Transcendent Lunarchidna

CR 6

Medium Aberration

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 137

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

Perception 11

Stealth 20

Vulnerable fire

Resistant Aberrant Resilience

Immune poison | poisoned, restrained

Senses darkvision 60 ft., keensense 10 ft.

Languages Deep Speech, Sylvan

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+0	+7	+2	+1	+1	+2

Aberrant Resilience. The lunarchidna is resistant to the charmed, frightened, paralyzed, and stunned conditions, and it has advantage on saves against spells or effects that would alter its form.

Light Invisibility. The lunarchidna is invisible while in bright or dim light.

Spider Climb. The lunarchidna can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Sunlight Sensitivity. While in sunlight, the lunarchidna has disadvantage on attack rolls, and its Perception is 6 when perceiving by sight.

Web Walker. The lunarchidna ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.



ACTIONS

Multiattack. The lunarchidna makes one Bite attack and two Claw attacks. If both Claw attacks hit one Medium or smaller creature, the lunarchidna can use Wrap Up on the target.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 13 (2d8 + 4) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a DC 15 CON save or its HP maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its HP maximum to 0.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage.

Wrap Up. The lunarchidna wraps up a Medium or smaller creature within 5 feet of it in webbing. The target must make a DC 15 STR save or be wrapped. The target has disadvantage on the save if it is restrained by webbing. The wrapped target is blinded, restrained, and unable to breathe until freed from the webbing, and it must succeed on a DC 15 CON save at the start of each of the lunarchidna's turns or take 7 (1d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage. The webbing can be attacked and destroyed (AC 15; HP 20; vulnerability to fire damage; immunity to bludgeoning, poison, and psychic damage). The lunarchidna can have only one creature wrapped at a time.

Lunar Beam (Recharge 5–6). The lunarchidna flashes a beam of moonlight in a 30-foot line that is 5 feet wide. Each creature in that line must make a DC 15 DEX save, taking 28 (8d6) radiant damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

BONUS ACTIONS

Web (Recharge 4–6). The lunarchidna launches a gob of webbing at one creature it can see within 30 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 15 STR save or be restrained. A creature, including the restrained target, can take its action to free the target from the webbing by succeeding on a DC 15 STR check. The webbing can also be attacked and destroyed (AC 15; HP 20; vulnerability to fire damage; immunity to bludgeoning, poison, and psychic damage).

MARGREVE HOUND

Margreve hounds are muscular, loyal beasts touched by the forest's magic. Bred and raised by humanoids that live in the Margreve Forest, Margreve hounds retrieve downed game or immobilize more nimble animals for their masters, all while fending off the charms and subtle magic of the forest's denizens. Minor fey are typically wary of the hounds, making the hounds highly prized as guards for the caravans that regularly traverse the Margreve Forest.

Margreve Hound

CR 1/4

Medium Beast

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 14

Speed 40 ft.

Perception 13

Stealth 13

Resistant charmed, frightened

Senses —

Languages —

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+2	+1	+1	-4	+1	-2

Fearsome Mien. A Fey that attacks the hound must succeed on a DC 12 WIS save or have disadvantage on the attack roll.

Heightened Hearing and Smell. The hound's Perception is 18 when perceiving by smell.

Magic Resistance. The hound has advantage on saves against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 12). Until this grapple ends, the hound can't Bite another target.

BONUS ACTIONS

Warning Bark. The hound releases a magical bark at one creature it can see within 30 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 12 WIS save or be unable to move closer to the hound until the start of the hound's next turn. Fey have disadvantage on the save.

MARGREVE STAG

Margreve stags are a type of deer unique to the Margreve Forest. They are larger and more resilient than the average deer, but they remain just as skittish.

Margreve Stag

CR 1/2

Large Beast

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 25

Speed 50 ft.

Perception 10

Stealth 12

Vulnerable frightened

Resistant exhaustion

Senses —

Languages understands Sylvan but can't speak

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+2	+2	+1	-3	+0	-1

Charge. If the stag moves at least 20 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with a Ram attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 2 (1d4) damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 12 STR save or be knocked prone.

Heightened Hearing. The stag's Perception is 15 when perceiving by hearing.

Standing Leap. The stag's long jump is up to 20 feet and its high jump is 10 feet, with or without a running start.

ACTIONS

Ram. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Kick. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Skittish. The stag takes the Dash or Disengage action.

REACTIONS

Will of the Margreve. When the stag fails a save, it can choose to reroll the save and must take the new result.

MUSHROOM QUEEN

Once known as the Elela Argaria Sheoloss, the Mushroom Queen is a druid obsessed with fungi and decay, and a few years ago, she was forever changed by a magic item known as the Enoki Scepter. She used the power of the scepter to erect her own mushroom paradise and hopes to one day be a great ruler within the Margreve Forest, spreading tainted spores and fungal blight across the land. In *Pride of the Mushroom Queen*, the PCs are tasked with taking her down to save the forest and its people from a deadly disease she is slowly spreading.

The Mushroom Queen

CR 8

Medium Fey

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 138

Speed 30 ft.

Perception 15

Stealth 14

Resistant necrotic, psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks | exhaustion, paralyzed, petrified | Fey Resilience

Immune poison | poisoned

Senses keensense 60 ft.

Languages Common, Elven, Sylvan

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+0	+4	+4	+1	+5	+4

Fey Resilience. The Mushroom Queen is resistant to the charmed and unconscious conditions.

Heightened Hearing. The Mushroom Queen's Perception is 20 when perceiving by hearing.

Spore Telepathy. The Mushroom Queen has a limited form of telepathy that allows her to connect with the minds of fungal creatures. She can communicate telepathically with any fungi

and any creature made at least partially of fungus within 60 feet of her. She can use this telepathy to communicate with fungi that don't understand any languages and non-sentient fungi, but when she does so, she can communicate only simple ideas and images with the fungi.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Mushroom Queen makes two Fungal Dagger or Spore Bolt attacks. She can replace one attack with a use of Spellcasting. If both Fungal Dagger or Spore Bolt attacks hit one creature, the target must succeed on a DC 15 CON save or be infected with the apocalyptic fungus disease (see *Monster Vault*).

Fungal Blade. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d4 + 4) piercing damage plus 18 (4d8) poison damage, and if the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 15 CON save or be poisoned for 1 minute. A poisoned creature can repeat the save at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Necrotic Spore Bolt. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +7 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) poison damage plus 14 (4d6) necrotic damage.

Spellcasting. The Mushroom Queen casts one of the following spells, requiring no material components and using CHA as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 15).

At will: *entangle*, *grease*

3/day each: *plant growth*, *restoration*, *suggestion*

1/day each: *blight*, *putrescent faerie circle* (see **Chapter 2**)

BONUS ACTIONS

Fungal Spores (76 HP or Fewer). The Mushroom Queen releases a burst of poisonous and highly infectious spores. Each creature within 10 feet of the Mushroom Queen must succeed on a DC 15 CON save or take 9 (2d8) poison damage. A creature poisoned by her Fungal Blade attack that fails this save is infected with the apocalyptic fungus disease.

PINEYS

Pineys are humanoids so connected to the Margreve Forest that its magic has given them plant-like features over dozens of generations. Rootwalkers are the eldest pineys, whose ancient bodies have slowly transformed throughout their lifetimes into tree-like forms, giving them many characteristics in common with treants.

Piney

CR 1

Medium Humanoid

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 38

Speed 30 ft.

Perception 14

Stealth 10

Resistant charmed | Plant Body

Senses —

Languages Common, Piney



Piney Rootwalker CR 3

Large Plant
Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 68
Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.
Perception 15 **Stealth** 10
Vulnerable fire
Resistant bludgeoning | charmed | Plant Resilience
Senses tremorsense 15 ft.
Languages Common, Piney

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+4	+0	+2	-1	+3	-1

Forest Sight. The rootwalker can see through lightly obscured areas normally and areas of dim light as if it were bright light.
One with the Woods. While in forest terrain, the rootwalker can't be tracked, and its Stealth is 15.
Plant Resilience. The rootwalker is resistant to exhaustion and to the paralyzed, petrified, and unconscious conditions.



STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+3	+0	+1	-1	+2	+0

Forest Sight. The piney can see through lightly obscured areas normally and areas of dim light as if it were bright light.
Plant Body. The piney's plant-like body makes it resistant to exhaustion and to the paralyzed, petrified, and unconscious conditions.
Verdant Infusion. At the start of each of its turns, the piney can choose one of the following ways for the forest to physically manifest through it:

- **Oaken Flesh.** The piney's Armor Class increases by 2, and it is resistant to bludgeoning damage until the start of its next turn.
- **Strong Roots.** The piney is immune to the prone condition, and it has advantage on ability checks made to grapple until the start of its next turn.
- **Sun Feaster.** The piney regains 3 HP if it starts its turn in sunlight.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The piney makes two Slam attacks.
Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.
Hit: 7 (1d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Sun Feast. The rootwalker regains 3 HP if it starts its turn in sunlight.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The piney rootwalker makes two Slam or Rock attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Rock. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 60/240 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d10 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Anchor Roots. The rootwalker extends short roots from its legs into the ground around it, anchoring it. Until the start of its next turn, it can't move, it can't be moved or knocked prone, and the area within 10 feet of it is difficult terrain.

SINGING TREE

The Singing Tree is an ancient, corrupted treant that has been trapped in a magical slumber for hundreds of years. She suddenly awakens and creates a Hollow Man (see the **Appendix**) to bring her the heads of humanoids, which will restore her lost power and which give her voices to sing her baleful song. She is the cause of the events in *Hollow* and must be defeated to save the town of Levoča.

Singing Tree

CR 1

Huge Plant

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 33

Speed 15 ft.

Perception 15

Stealth 9

Vulnerable fire

Resistant bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks | Plant Resilience

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Languages Common, Sylvan, telepathy 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+2	-1	+3	+2	+3	+2

Infuriating Melody. The Singing Tree's heads constantly emit a barely audible song that rings loudly through the minds of nearby creatures. The song is an aura that extends from the Singing Tree 10 feet for each head she has. A creature that starts its turn in the aura and that isn't immune to psychic damage must succeed on a DC 13 WIS save or be overcome with a fit of rage until the start of its next turn. While in a fit of rage, it is unable to distinguish friend from foe and must attack the nearest creature other than the Singing Tree. If no other creature is near enough to move to and attack, the victim stalks off in a random direction, seeking a target for its rage. The Singing Tree doesn't emit this aura if she has no heads.

Plant Resilience. The Singing Tree is resistant to exhaustion and to the paralyzed, petrified, and unconscious conditions.

Singing Heads. The Singing Tree has singing Humanoid heads attached to her branches. She can gain a head through an 8-hour ritual performed on a severed head, and she can have up to 13 heads. Some of her features require her to have at least one head or change how they work based on how many heads she has. Each head can be attacked and destroyed (AC 13; HP 5; immunity to poison, psychic, and thunder damage). If a head is destroyed, the Singing Tree has advantage on the next attack roll it makes before the end of its next turn.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Singing Tree makes two Wailing Slam or Screeching Bolt attacks.

Wailing Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage plus 2 (1d4) thunder damage. This attack deals this extra thunder damage only if the Singing Tree has at least one head.

Screeching Bolt. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +5 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) thunder damage plus 1 thunder damage for each head the Singing Tree has beyond one. The Singing Tree can't use this attack if she has no heads.

REACTIONS

Jarring Shriek. When a creature the Singing Tree can see attacks her, she can release a sudden shriek from her heads. The attacker must succeed on a DC 13 WIS save or miss the attack. The DC increases by 1 for each head the Singing Tree has. She can't use this reaction if she has no heads.

STORMBOAR

Found in the *Tome of Beasts 2*, stormboars are lightning-infused boars that embody the fury of a storm. They are aggressive and find metal delicious, frequently putting them at odds with many humanoids. Stormboars are invasive to the Margreve Forest, and most predators in the forest either can't take down a stormboar or don't find them tasty enough to be worth the effort. Many druid circles and crones in the forest pay adventurers for each stormboar they kill to help control the population.

Stormboar

CR 6

Large Monstrosity

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 128

Speed 40 ft.

Perception 10

Stealth 11

Resistant Monstrosity Resilience

Immune lightning, thunder

Senses —

Languages —

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+4	+1	+7	-4	+0	-2

Iron Scent. The stormboar can pinpoint, by scent, the location of ferrous metal within 60 feet of it.

Lightning Hide. A creature that touches the stormboar or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 2 (1d4) lightning damage.

Monstrosity Resilience. The stormboar is resistant to exhaustion and to the frightened condition.

Relentless (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). If the stormboar takes 15 damage or less that would reduce it to 0 HP, it is reduced to 1 HP instead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The stormboar makes two Tusk attacks. If both attacks hit one creature wearing nonmagical metal armor, the armor is partially devoured and takes a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to the AC it offers. The armor is destroyed if the penalty reduces its AC to 10.

Tusk. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage plus 9 (2d8) lightning damage.

Lightning Run (Recharge 6). The stormboar becomes a bolt of living lightning and moves up to its speed without provoking opportunity attacks. It can move through creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage and is pushed to the closest unoccupied space if it ends its turn inside an object. Each creature in the stormboar's path must make a DC 15 DEX save, taking 22 (5d8) lightning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

BONUS ACTIONS

Thunderous Leap (71 HP or Fewer). The stormboar moves up to 20 feet, jumping over obstacles in its way. Difficult terrain doesn't cost it extra movement when it leaps. Each creature within 10 feet of the stormboar when it leaps and each creature within 10 feet of where it lands must succeed on a DC 15 CON save or take 9 (2d8) thunder damage and be pushed up to 10 feet away from the stormboar.

STROSSEN BAT

Strossen bats are an aggressive breed of vampire bat that was first discovered in the vicinity of Castle Shadowcrag. They have since spread throughout the Margreve Forest and beyond. Strossen bats can be identified by their midnight black fur with its distinctive white streak across the bats' eyes.

Strossen Bat

CR 1/4

Small Beast

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 14

Speed 5 ft., fly 40 ft.



Perception 12

Stealth 15

Vulnerable deafened

Resistant blinded

Senses keensense 60 ft.

Languages —

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
-2	+3	+0	-5	+0	-4

Echolocation. The bat can't use its keensense while deafened.

Heightened Hearing. The bat's Perception is 17 when perceiving by hearing.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage, and the bat attaches to the target. While attached, the bat can't attack, and at the start of each of the bat's turns, the target loses 5 (1d4 + 3) HP due to blood loss. The attached bat moves with the target whenever the target moves, requiring none of the bat's movement. It can detach itself by spending 5 feet of its movement on its turn. It does so after it drains 15 HP from the target or the target dies. A creature, including the target, can use its action to detach the bat.

BONUS ACTIONS

Haunting Screech. The bat releases an echoing, haunting screech like the wail of a ghost at one creature within 10 feet of it. If the target can hear the screech, it must succeed on a DC 13 WIS save or be frightened until the end of its next turn.

TREE SKINNER

Found in the *Tome of Beasts 2*, tree skimmers were once dryads that lost their trees. Night hags promise the dryads a chance to connect with trees again but corrupt the dryads in the process. These corrupted dryads can indeed connect with trees again, inhabiting trees and using them as weapons, but their presence slowly rots the tree from the inside out. Tree skimmers regularly attack humanoid communities, often acting on the corrupting night hag's whims or lashing out in a rage of their corrupted, pained existence. Night hags regularly prowl the edge of the forest to corrupt dryads grieving from humanoid logging and encourage the tree skimmers to spread their corruption deeper into the forest. The Old Margreve doesn't take kindly to this practice and favors those who purge such corruption from its trees.



Tree Skinner

CR 2

Medium Fiend

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 52

Speed 30 ft.

Perception 14

Stealth 16

Vulnerable radiant

Resistant cold, fire, lightning, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks

Immune charmed

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Languages Abyssal, Elvish, Infernal, Sylvan

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+0	+4	+1	+2	+2	+4

False Appearance (Tree Form Only). While the skinner remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a normal tree.

Magic Resistance. The skinner has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The tree skinner makes two Claw or Vine Whip attacks. If both Claw attacks hit one creature, the target must make a DC 14 CON save. On a failure, the target takes 7 (2d6) poison damage and is poisoned. On a success, it takes half the damage and isn't poisoned.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d4 + 4) slashing damage.

Vine Whip (Tree Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage, and if the target is a Large or smaller creature, it is grappled (escape DC 14). The skinner can grapple up to two creatures at one time.

BONUS ACTIONS

Inhabit Tree. The tree skinner touches a Medium or larger tree that is not a creature and disappears inside it. While inside the tree, the skinner has tremorsense to a range of 30 feet, has an AC of 15, has a speed of 0, and has vulnerability to fire damage. When the skinner is reduced to 15 HP, the tree dies and the skinner appears within 5 feet of the dead tree or in the nearest unoccupied space. The skinner can exit the tree as a bonus action, appearing within 5 feet of the tree in the nearest unoccupied space, and the tree reverts to being an object. The skinner can inhabit a tree for only 3 days at most before the tree dies, requiring the skinner to seek another vessel.

Squeeze (Tree Form Only). The tree skinner squeezes one creature grappled by it. The target must succeed on a DC 14 CON save or be unable to breathe or cast spells with verbal components until the grapple ends.

TSUCHINOKO

Tsuchinokos are venomous snakes with a taste for alcohol and the ability to roll themselves like a wheel. They live in forests and grasslands and use their excellent sense of smell to hunt birds and rodents and to find their favorite delicacy: alcohol. They rely on their camouflage when hunting, but when that fails, they leap at their prey or curl into a hoop and overtake fleeing prey. Tsuchinokos are a known pest among the coaching inns that line the Great Northern Road. Some coaching inns tolerate losing a few mugs of ale a week to the snakes, as they also keep rodents out of food stores.



Tsuchinoko

CR 1/2

Tiny Beast

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 22

Speed 30 ft.

Perception 13

Stealth 16

Immune poison | poisoned

Senses keensense 10 ft.

Languages —

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
-3	+4	+1	-4	+1	-3

Heightened Smell. The tsuchinoko's Perception is 18 when perceiving by smell.

Plant Camouflage. The tsuchinoko's Stealth is 21 while in any terrain with ample obscuring plant life.

Standing Leap. The tsuchinoko's long jump is up to 15 feet and its high jump is up to 5 feet, with or without a running start.

ACTIONS

Leaping Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage plus 2 (1d4) poison damage. The tsuchinoko has advantage on this attack if it moves at least 10 feet before attacking.

BONUS ACTIONS

Hoop Dash. The tsuchinoko bites its tail, forming a hoop with its body, and takes the Dash action. It has disadvantage on the next attack roll it makes before the start of its next turn.

VALLOWEX

Found in the *Tome of Beasts 2*, vallowexes are aberrant predators that fell into the Material Plane long ago from a dying world covered in rainforests. They haunt woodland ponds and rivers, like those found throughout the Margreve Forest, luring in prey with a magical aura that invokes thirst in creatures. When creatures stop to drink, they either fill the water with their eggs for the creature to unknowingly consume or ambush and kill the drinking creature, feasting on the remains.

Vallowex

CR 7

Large Aberration

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 144

Speed 20 ft., swim 40 ft.

Perception 14

Stealth 16

Resistant poison | poisoned, prone

Immune blinded, exhaustion

Senses keensense 60 ft. (can't sense beyond this radius)

Languages —

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+8	+0	+7	-3	+1	-3

Amphibious. The vallowex can breathe air and water.

Aura of Thirst. At the start of each of the vallowex's turns, each creature within 30 feet of it must succeed on a DC 15 CON save or have disadvantage on the next attack roll.

or ability check that creature makes before the start of the vallowex's next turn, as a gnawing thirst distracts the creature. For each minute a creature stays in the vallowex's aura, it suffers one level of exhaustion from dehydration. A level of exhaustion is removed if the creature uses an action to drink 1 pint of water. A creature immune to exhaustion is immune to the vallowex's Aura of Thirst.

Infested Water. Every 7 days the vallowex spends in an enclosed body of water with a radius no larger than 100 feet, it deposits miniscule, transparent eggs in the water. The eggs remain viable for 24 hours before dying. A successful DC 15 INT (Nature) check while inspecting the water determines if it is contaminated with the eggs. Any Beast or Humanoid that drinks this contaminated water must succeed on a DC 15 CON save or be infected with a disease—a vallowex tadpole. A host can carry only one vallowex tadpole to term at a time. While diseased, the host must make a DC 15 CON save at the end of each long rest. On a failure, the host's STR score is reduced by 1d4. This reduction lasts until the host finishes a long rest after the disease is cured. If the host's STR score is reduced to 0, the host dies, and a vallowex emerges from the corpse. If the host succeeds on three saves or the disease is magically cured, the unborn tadpole disintegrates.

Underwater Camouflage. The vallowex's Stealth is 21 while underwater.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The vallowex makes one Spiked Tongue attack and two Tail attacks. It can replace its Spiked Tongue attack with Swallow.

Spiked Tongue. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (2d8 + 5) piercing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 15). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the vallowex can't use its Spiked Tongue against another target.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d10 + 5) bludgeoning damage.

Swallow. The vallowex makes one spiked tongue attack against a Medium or smaller target it is grappling. If the attack hits, the target is also swallowed, and the grapple ends. While swallowed, the target is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the vallowex, and it takes 10 (3d6) acid damage at the start of each of the vallowex's turns. The vallowex can have only one creature swallowed at a time.

If the vallowex takes 15 damage or more on a single turn from the swallowed creature, the vallowex must succeed on a DC 15 CON save at the end of that turn or regurgitate the creature, which falls prone in a space within 5 feet of the vallowex. If the vallowex dies, the swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse using 10 feet of movement, exiting prone.



VILA

Found in the *Tome of Beasts I*, the vila are fey that protect deep forests with bow and song. Cousins to dryads, they are typically more aggressive protectors, and they are often seen in the company of deer, wolves, badgers, or a myriad of other forest animals. Many crones of the Margreve Forest, including some of the Spider Crones, are said to have once been vila who gave up their power or ascended to higher powers with a deeper connection to the Old Margreve. In *Challenge of the Fang*, two vila test the PCs' resolve to complete their quest.

Vila

CR 5

Medium Fey

Armor Class 15

Hit Points 102

Speed 30 ft.

Perception 15

Stealth 18

Resistant bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks | Fey Resilience

Senses —

Languages Common, Sylvan

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+1	+5	+1	+0	+2	+6

Fey Resilience. The vila is resistant to the charmed and unconscious conditions.

Forest's Defender. Difficult terrain composed of nonmagical plants doesn't cost the vila extra movement, and it can pass through nonmagical plants without being slowed by them and without taking damage from them if they have thorns, spines, or a similar hazard. In addition, while in forested terrain, the vila has advantage on initiative rolls.

Forest Sight. The vila can see through lightly obscured areas normally and areas of dim light as if it were bright light.

Heightened Hearing and Sight. The vila's Perception is 20 when perceiving by hearing or sight.

Poisoned Weapons. The vila's weapons are coated with a magical poison harvested from the forest. When the vila hits with any weapon, the weapon deals an extra 3d6 poison damage (included in the attack).

Speak with Beasts. The vila can communicate with Beasts as if they shared a language.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The vila makes two Shortsword or Shortbow attacks.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d6 + 5) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) poison damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d6 + 5) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) poison damage.

Denizens of the Wilds (1/Day). The vila magically calls 1d4 **wolves**, 1 **brown bear**, or 1 **flinderbeast**. The called creatures arrive in 1d4 rounds, acting as allies of the vila and obeying its spoken commands. The creatures remain for 1 hour, until the vila dies, or until the vila dismisses them as a bonus action.

BONUS ACTIONS

Song of the Forest. The vila sings one of the following songs at up to two creatures it can see within 30 feet of it. Each target that can hear the song must succeed on a DC 14 WIS save or suffer the song's effect.

- **Ancient Lullaby.** Each creature that fails the save falls unconscious for 1 minute. The unconscious creature wakes up if it takes damage or if another creature takes an action to shake it awake.
- **Fascinating Melody.** Each creature that fails the save is stunned until the end of its next turn.
- **Luckless Tune.** Each creature that fails the save has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks until the end of its next turn.

VODYANOI

Vodyanoi are shapechanging, frog-like, aquatic fey that delight in causing mayhem, especially if they are bored. They are driven by their impulses, experience bursts of emotions easily, grow bored frequently, and can be impossibly stubborn when focused on a goal. They are most often found in ponds and streams within forests, pretending to be helpless victims trapped in water or watery sages perched on rocks near rapids—whatever they think will cause travelers to alleviate their boredom. Most aren't inherently malicious, but their ideas of playful fun are often dangerous to mortal creatures. The few vodyanoi that appear in the fey courts are typically valued as spies or escorts through watery domains, though allies must be careful to keep them entertained or missions short to avoid the vodyanoi growing bored.

Vodyanoi

CR 5

Medium Fey

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 114

Speed 20 ft., swim 40 ft.

Perception 15

Stealth 17

Vulnerable lightning

Resistant cold

Immune poison | poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Languages Common, Primordial, Sylvan

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+2	+4	+6	+1	+6	+2

Amphibious. The vodyanoi can breathe air and water.

Fey Resilience. The vodyanoi is resistant to the charmed and unconscious conditions.

Shared Breath. Each friendly creature of the vodyanoi's choice within 30 feet of it can breathe air and water.

Water Mastery. The vodyanoi has advantage on attack rolls if both it and its opponent are in contact with the same body of water. If the opponent and the vodyanoi are both on dry ground, the vodyanoi has disadvantage on attack rolls.

Water Walker. The vodyanoi can move across the surface of water as if it were harmless, solid ground. This trait otherwise works like the *water walk* spell.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The vodyanoi makes two Claw or Water Bolt attacks. If both Water Bolt attacks hit one creature, the target must succeed on a DC 15 STR save or be pushed up to 10 feet away from the vodyanoi and knocked prone.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage plus 9 (2d8) poison damage. If the vodyanoi is in a Humanoid form without claws, this attack deals bludgeoning damage instead of slashing damage.

Water Bolt. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +6 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage plus 7 (2d6) cold damage.

Crashing Wave (Recharge 5–6). The vodyanoi conjures a wave of water in a 30-foot cone. Each creature in the area must make a DC 15 STR save. On a failure, a creature takes 13 (3d8) bludgeoning damage and 10 (3d6) cold damage and is knocked prone if on land or pushed up to 10 feet away from the vodyanoi if submerged in water. On a success, a creature takes half as much damage and isn't knocked prone or pushed.

BONUS ACTIONS

Change Shape. The vodyanoi magically transforms into a Small or Medium Humanoid or back into its true form, which is Fey. Its statistics, other than its size, are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying transforms with it. If the vodyanoi dies, it reverts to its true form.

WEFT OF SHADOWS

The Weft of Shadows gave up the elven form of Qeldar when it transformed into its current shape. Despite the creature's brutish appearance, it has a surprising amount of cunning, and its force of personality has drawn disparate allies to it. In *Shadow's Envy*, the Weft works to grow a Blot that is attempting to turn the golden, light-filled Summer Lands into the sunless twilight of the Shadow Realm. If using the Daesanderena's Mission story arc (see **Chapter 3**), the Weft of Shadows is the ultimate villain behind many of the troubles that have been plaguing the Margreve Forest of late.

Weft of Shadows

CR 12

Large Monstrosity

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 180

Speed 40 ft., fly 60 ft.

Perception 16

Stealth 19

Immune cold, necrotic | charmed, exhaustion, frightened, stunned, unconscious

Senses darkvision 120 ft.

Languages Common, Elven, Umbral

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+4	+1	+8	+5	+2	+8

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the Weft of Shadows fails a save, it can choose to succeed instead.

Shadow Blend. In areas of dim light or darkness, the Weft of Shadows is invisible.

Shadow Sight. Magical darkness doesn't impede the Weft's darkvision.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Weft of Shadows makes three Tentacle attacks.

Tentacle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage plus 14 (4d6) necrotic damage. If the target is a Large or smaller creature, it is grappled (escape DC 16). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained and takes 3 (1d6) necrotic damage at the start of each of its turns. The Weft can only have two creatures grappled at a time.

BONUS ACTIONS

Shadow Step. While in shadows, dim light, or darkness, the Weft of Shadows disappears into the darkness and reappears in an unoccupied space it can see within 30 feet. A tendrill of inky smoke appears at the origin and destination when it uses this trait. If the Weft is in the Blot, it can use this bonus action to teleport to any unoccupied space within the Blot, but when it does so, it can't use this bonus action to do so again until it finishes a short or long rest.

REACTIONS

Disrupting Shadows. When a creature the Weft of Shadows can see targets it with a melee attack, it can command the shadows near the attacker to disrupt the attack. The attacker has disadvantage on the attack roll, and if the attack hits, the attack's damage is halved.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The Weft of Shadows can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The Weft of Shadows regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Dismiss Light. The Weft of Shadows dispels a single source of magical or nonmagical light. This effect works like a *dispel magic* spell.

Move. The Weft of Shadows moves up to its speed without provoking opportunity attacks.

Strength Drain (Costs 2 Actions). The Weft of Shadows drains energy from all creatures grappled by it. Each target must succeed on a DC 16 CON save or its STR score is reduced by 1d4. A creature dies if this reduces its STR to 0. Otherwise, the reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. A humanoid that dies from this legendary action rises as a **shadow** under the Weft of Shadows' control at the start of the Weft's next turn.

WOOD WARD

Found in the *Tome of Beasts 2*, wood wards are animated protectors in remote forest villages. Each wood ward is typically created via a special folk ritual then placed somewhere within the village or its outskirts. Wood wards animate only when the village is in danger, coming to life long enough to see the populace safe then returning to their dormant, silent watch. In *Hollow*, the Hollow Man takes control of the town's wood wards and turns them against the townsfolk in its service to the Singing Tree.

Wood Ward

CR 1

Medium Construct

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 36

Speed 30 ft.

Perception 13

Stealth 10

Vulnerable fire | prone

Immune Construct Resilience

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Languages understand the languages of its creator but can't speak

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+2	+0	+3	-4	+1	-5

Construct Nature. The wood ward doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

Construct Resilience. The wood ward is immune to poison and psychic damage, and it is immune to exhaustion and the charmed, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, and poisoned conditions.

Immutable Form. The wood ward is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Magic Resistance. The wood ward has advantage on saves against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The wood ward makes two Slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. one target.
Hit: 6 (1d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Horror Gaze. The wood ward's eye sockets release an eerie glow toward one creature the wood ward can see within 30 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 13 CHA save or be frightened until the end of its next turn.



WOULD-BE-KING OF WOLVES

The Would-Be-King of Wolves is the mantle taken up by the lupine creature intent on becoming the Wolf King during the Margreve Forest's Challenge of the Fang, which occurs approximately every 100 years. In *Challenge of the Fang*, the Would-Be-King of Wolves was a cunning, awakened wolf who was growing his pack and influence in the forest. When the Challenge became active, he ascended into a blended Humanoid and Beast form similar to the hybrid form of werewolves, and he found he had new powers, including illusory magic and greater command over wolves and werewolves.

Would-Be-King of Wolves

CR 5

Large Monstrosity

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 108

Speed 40 ft.

Perception 13

Stealth 16

Vulnerable poisoned, unconscious

Resistant bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks | Monstrosity Resilience

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Languages Common, Sylvan

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+4	+3	+3	+1	+0	+6

Heightened Hearing and Smell. The Would-Be-King's Perception is 18 when perceiving by hearing or smell.

Monstrosity Resilience. The Would-Be-King is resistant to exhaustion and to the frightened condition.

Pack Tactics. The Would-Be-King has advantage on attack rolls against a creature if at least one of the King's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Wolf King. The Would-Be-King exudes an aura of power that wolves, canines, and werewolves recognize as a sign of the Would-Be-King's authority within the Margreve Forest. No such creature can willingly attack the Would-Be-King, though they can be forced to do so through magical means. In addition, the Would-Be-King can communicate with wolves and canines as if they shared a language.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Would-Be-King of Wolves makes three Claw attacks, or it makes three Reverberating Growl attacks. If both Claw attacks hit one creature, and the King doesn't already have a creature swallowed, it can use Swallow on that creature.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) slashing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 15). The Would-Be-King has two claws, each of which can grapple only one target.

Reverberating Growl. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +6 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (3d6 + 3) psychic damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 15 WIS save or be frightened until the end of its next turn.

Swallow. One Medium or smaller creature the Would-Be-King is grappling must succeed on a DC 15 STR save or be swallowed, ending the grapple. While swallowed, the target is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the King, and it takes 10 (3d6) acid damage at the start of each of the King's turns. The King can have only one creature swallowed at a time.

If the King takes 20 damage or more on a single turn from the swallowed creature, the King must succeed on a DC 13 CON save at the end of that turn or regurgitate the creature, which falls prone in a space within 5 feet of the King. If the King dies, a swallowed creature is no longer restrained by it and can escape from the corpse by using 10 feet of movement, exiting prone.

BONUS ACTIONS

Illusory Appearance. The Would-Be-King covers himself and anything he is wearing or carrying with a magical illusion that makes him look like another creature of his general size and Humanoid shape. The illusion ends if the King takes a bonus action to end it or if the King dies.

The changes wrought by this effect fail to hold up to physical inspection. For example, the King could appear to have smooth skin, but someone touching him would feel his fur. Otherwise, a creature must take an action to visually inspect the illusion and succeed on a DC 20 INT (Investigation) check to discern that the King is disguised.

WRAITH BEAR

Found in the *Tome of Beasts 2*, wraith bears are bear spirits corrupted by necromancers and other spellcasters using tainted magic. Bear spirits are the spirits of ancestral warriors and guardians that take on the forms of bears to protect their descendants. The corrupted spirits instead hunt and murder their descendants then retreat to forests where their hatred of life, especially humanoid life, drives them to violence. Only the touch of a fey lord or fey lady can cure the corruption from a wraith bear, but few powerful fey can be convinced to take on such a dangerous task out of pure altruism. Wraith bears are relatively rare in the Margreve Forest, but some Spider Crones and other hags have created them as punishment when their aid is taken for granted or not repaid.

Wraith Bear

CR 9

Large Undead

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 142

Speed 0 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

Perception 17

Stealth 13

Vulnerable radiant

Resistant acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks

Immune necrotic | grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained | Undead Resilience

Senses darkvision 60 ft.

Languages the languages it knew in life

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+4	+3	+4	+0	+3	+2

Detect Relatives. The wraith bear knows the direction to its nearest living relative on the same plane, but not the relative's exact location.

Draining Regeneration. The wraith bear regains 10 HP at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 HP and there are living plants within 5 feet of it. When the wraith bear regains HP from this trait, all plant life within 5 feet of it dies, and it can't regain HP from this trait while in one of those spaces.

Incorporeal Movement. The wraith bear can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Undead Nature. The wraith bear doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

Undead Resilience. The wraith bear is immune to poison damage, to exhaustion, and to the poisoned condition.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The wraith bear makes two Draining Claw attacks. If both attacks hit one creature that isn't a Construct or Undead, the target's HP maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the total necrotic damage dealt by both attacks. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its HP maximum to 0.

Draining Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) slashing damage plus 18 (4d8) necrotic damage.

BONUS ACTIONS

Baleful Roar. The wraith bear lets out a supernatural roar toward up to two creatures it can see within 30 feet of it. Each target that can hear the bear must succeed on a DC 16 WIS save or be incapacitated until the end of its next turn. If the wraith bear is below 79 HP, the echoes of raging ancestors fill the roar, and a creature that succeeds on this save is still frightened until the end of its next turn.



ENCOUNTER TABLES

While PCs adventure in the Margreve Forest, it is recommended that you check for random encounters three times a day: morning, midday, and night. Roll a d20 at those times, and on an 18 or higher, an encounter occurs. The time of day, party level, and general location will guide you to the correct table; then roll a d12 to determine the

encounter. Alternatively, you can choose entries from the tables based on pacing, thematic appropriateness, and personal preference.

Some of the encounters listed in these tables reference *Creature Codex* or books in the *Tome of Beasts* series. If your roll results in such an encounter and you don't have the appropriate book, roll again or choose a different encounter in that table.

ENCOUNTERS ON THE GREAT NORTHERN ROAD (CR 1 TO 4)

d12	ENCOUNTER
1	Trees have fallen into the road, blocking it. For travelers on foot, the obstacle presents little challenge, but it would be problematic for a caravan. The trees show signs that something or someone caused them to fall into the path.
2	The faint sound of bells precedes a caravan of brightly colored, covered wagons. The band of Kariv greet the PCs warily. A successful DC 12 CHA (Persuasion) check puts the Kariv at ease and convinces them to share a camp or trade basic goods.
3	Six mendicant travelers (acolytes) are heading away from Zobeck into the forest. Their robes are nondescript, and they proselytize to all they meet.
4	A party of supplicants traveling to Zobeck passes the PCs. The leader, a stern woman (fanatic cultist) in muted red robes, appraises the group with a wary eye. A successful DC 12 INT (Religion) check identifies her as a Blood Sister.
5	The PCs get the feeling that they are being watched from (or by) the forest. The forest is too thick to see much else without further investigation. A pack of awakened wolves are shadowing the party.
6	The sound of powerful wings precedes the appearance of a flight of Griffon Knights as they speed across the sky toward the interior of the forest. Are they descending?
7	A traveler sits on the side of the road, letting their horse rest and idly graze. The traveler is friendly but asks pointed questions about the PCs and their destination. The traveler is secretly a spy working for someone opposed to the PCs.
8	A large puddle in the middle of the road has an odd shape. A successful DC 12 INT (Nature) or WIS (Survival) check indicates the puddle is in fact the footprint of a gargantuan beast—and it's less than a day old.
9	The sounds of a struggle come from over the next rise. A gearforged cleric of Rava (priest) is being dragged into the forest by a vine golem (see the Appendix).
10	The road slopes gradually downward. Near the bottom of the slope, the forest turns boggy and the sounds of frogs, dragonflies, and other swamp denizens get louder. A clutch of giant frogs make their home near the edge of the road.
11	A trail of muddy, partially overgrown wagon tracks leads off the road. The trail leads to the wreck of a small merchant caravan. A Margreve hound (see the Appendix) stands guard over the rubble and broken wood, half-starved but refusing to stray far from the caravan.
12	A tiny figure in gem-studded armor flies quickly along the road and almost runs into the PCs. He demands the PCs move out of his way, despite the fact he could easily fly above or around them. His name is Pexl, a sprite , and he is traveling to Zobeck on behalf of his village.



DAYTIME ENCOUNTERS: CR 1 TO 4

d12 ENCOUNTER

- 1 A dejected and sullen **alp** (see *Creature Codex*) walks boldly up to the party, at first demanding and then begging them desperately to help it find its missing cap.
- 2 Several **deer** run swiftly across the PCs' path and disappear into the bush. The smell of smoke comes quickly afterward, as the fingers of a forest fire spread toward the PCs.
- 3 The tracks of an animal cross the PCs' path and continue a mile before abruptly stopping at a **bulbous violet** (see the **Appendix**). The tracks are too ill-defined to determine the creature that left them, but a successful DC 13 WIS (Survival) check indicates they are days old.
- 4 An **awakened tree** looms over a fallen man, its branches raised to pummel him. The tree has two gashes in its trunk, clearly from the axe that is just out of the man's reach.
- 5 A **pseudodragon** is searching the Margreve Forest for a master and hasn't found anyone that meets its standards. It confronts a random PC spellcaster and begins to interview the PC for the role.
- 6 An old, but well maintained, bridge spans a brook. A trio of **satyrs** stands on the bridge, one playing an instrument for the entertainment of the others. They demand a toll if the PCs seek to cross the bridge.
- 7 A beautiful, haunting melody echoes from deep in the forest. If investigated, the song leads to the **ghost**, singing to a bundle cradled in her arms in a darkened corner of the forest. She wears clothing from an era long past.
- 8 **Sutureflies** (see *Tome of Beasts 1*) suddenly appear. They are so thick that they obscure all vision beyond 10 feet. The sutureflies disperse after 1d4 rounds.
- 9 The silence of the forest is broken by yells in Dwarvish. Four **dwarves** and two **dogmoles** (see *Tome of Beasts 1*) are working to open the mouth of a collapsed cave. They're having a hard time of it.
- 10 A **pinney** (see the **Appendix**) emerges from the shadows and walks carefully forward. His skin is covered in toadstools and moss, and it looks as if he hasn't eaten in a very long time. He politely introduces himself as Grayzvuld and offers his services as a guide.
- 11 A pristine meadow fills a clearing. A handful of large mounds sit in the center of the meadow. Each mound holds a small entrance that leads into the homes of a small clan of erina.
- 12 A figure travels from tree to tree, diving into them then back out, cackling with glee as the bark blackens at the figure's touch. The **tree skinner** (see the **Appendix**) ignores the PCs unless they attack it.





DAYTIME ENCOUNTERS: CR 5 TO 9

d12 ENCOUNTER

- 1 Three **shadow fey** led by a **shadow fey duelist** (see the **Appendix**) are bored and wandering through the forest. Temporarily kicked out of their court for unruly and aggressive behavior, they seek new playthings for entertainment...and the PCs look like the right fit.

- 2 The path has gradually become more overgrown and covered with vines. The heroes have inadvertently stumbled into the lair of a **razorleaf** (see *Creature Codex*).

- 3 A trio of small ponds, each partially covered by wisps of fog, are grouped closely together. A successful DC 14 WIS (Survival) check reveals that signs of local wildlife are notably absent. The ponds are the home of a **vallowex** (see the **Appendix**).

- 4 The smell of rotten eggs surrounds a small, geothermal vent in a rocky outcropping. The boulders all around the vent are deeply covered in black soot and serve as the home to a **scorch drake**.

- 5 The PCs surprise a **child of the briar** (see the **Appendix**), and it immediately runs away, leaving behind a half-dozen acorn shells full of blood.

- 6 The air grows heavy with the promise of rain, and the PCs hear the persistent thunderous crash of lightning nearby. PCs who follow the sound come across a trio of **nimbostratus spirits** playing in the lightning.

- 7 A **young green dragon** is wandering the forest looking for just the right spot to make its home. It's not immediately hostile and is interested in hearing of other parts of the Margreve Forest.

- 8 A thunderous roar shakes the trees just before a group of three hunters (**scouts**) from Zobeck burst through the trees. They flee from an enraged **giant ape** and run straight into the PCs.

- 9 PCs' journey takes them to a dark corner of the forest. The trees are diseased and misshapen, and through the scarce foliage they can see two **vila** gathering and discussing healthy and diseased plant samples. The two seek a cure for the blight that has taken this part of the forest.

- 10 A still lake in an idyllic glen greets the characters after a long day's travel. The sun is hot, and the water is cool, clean, and inviting. A satiated **stormboar** (see the **Appendix**) sleeps on the bank.

- 11 A faint glow emanates from a small cave surrounded by trees. The cave is home to two **giant frilled lizards** (see the **Appendix**) and is filled with bioluminescent fungi.

- 12 The pervasive sounds of the forest slowly fade to nothing as the PCs approach an ancient glen. A skeleton in a druid's robes lies on the ground in a peaceful pose. Two **vine golems** (see the **Appendix**) sit dormant in the nearby trees, watching over the resting place of their fallen master. They attack any who disturb the body.

d12 ENCOUNTER	
1	The PCs look up and, as if appearing from nowhere, they see a herd of six pegasi grazing on the tree tops.
2	Bright Day, one of Baba Yaga's horsemen (see <i>Tome of Beasts 1</i>), is traveling the Margreve with a scroll from Grandmother that contains a message for a red-haired woman born during Harvest Tide twenty years past.
3	A manic kobold mage from Zobeck seeks investors for a venture to capture a pair of chimera for an upcoming circus. He has a pouch of gold and a well-rehearsed pitch.
4	Three harpies cheer and squawk from a large nest high in the trees. The nest contains three eggs, one of which is notably larger, very warm, and a deep crimson. A successful DC 18 WIS (Survival) check identifies the red egg as belonging to a pair of scorch drakes ... who are nearby and angrily searching for the lost egg.
5	A colláís was accidentally summoned by a local village and now rampages through the forest, destroying all in its path as it tries to find the threat it was summoned to vanquish.
6	A coven of four kobold witches gathers around the corpse of a giant ape . In 1d4 + 2 rounds, they turn it into a zombie and unleash it on the forest. All four witches must be stopped to prevent the ape from being animated.
7	The trail the PCs follow begins to warp in front of them as they travel. The surrounding trees drop leaves that turn into tarry drops of purple and black nothingness that fades before hitting the ground. Three selangs led by a selang void piper gather in a clearing and perform a dark rite, slowly bringing whispers of the Void into the forest.
8	A pair of feyard trees (see <i>Tome of Beasts 1</i>) surround a sinkhole just large enough to admit entry by a Medium creature.
9	The PCs' travel leads them to a small lake with an island. A solitary tree stands in the center of the island. The island is a slumbering dragon turtle that was brought to the Margreve Forest by powerful magic long ago and later revered—and regularly fed—by ancient humans that lived in the forest. It has grown dormant since its last meal and is very hungry if awoken...
10	A mound of vines contains the still-living body of a gnome master alchemist and its flesh golem companion that have run afoul of the Margreve Forest on their trip back to Zobeck. Did the vines just move?
11	Cliffs loom in the distance. A successful DC 18 WIS (Perception) check makes out the signs of a large bird nest. A successful DC 15 INT (Nature) check identifies it as a roc nest. It is currently empty.
12	A naina (see <i>Tome of Beasts 1</i>) in the form of a human crone appears suddenly from behind a tree. She's looking for a kiss from a chaste divine spellcaster. Grandmother has set her on this quest, and she can't return until it is completed.





NIGHTTIME ENCOUNTERS: CR 1 TO 4

d12 ENCOUNTER

- 1 Two **mylings** (see *Tome of Beasts 1*) are playing a game of tag in the woods, and the sounds reach the ears of the PC on watch.
- 2 A tiny ball of light, a **will-o'-wisp**, floats over the PCs' camp.
- 3 As the sun sets, an obscuring fog rolls in and limits visibility to 15 feet. Growls and shuffling sounds are amplified by the fog and come from all directions.
- 4 A curious **lunarchidna** (see the **Appendix**) has spotted the PCs from its vantage spot in the trees on this moonless night and is waiting until they drop their guard to engage them.
- 5 A PC has unknowingly offended the fey. In response, four **sprites** have been dispatched to dispense fey justice.
- 6 The wind changes, and with it, an awful stench fills the air. The stench comes from a **ghast** lurking through the woods with two **zombies**.
- 7 A faint song breaks the silence of the night. A pair of **shadhavar** (see *Tome of Beasts 1*) are following the party from a distance, consuming creatures they have defeated in battle.
- 8 All magical and nonmagical light sources are suddenly extinguished.
- 9 PCs on watch must succeed on a DC 12 WIS (Perception) check to notice a pair of eyes watching from a distance. For every 2 by which the DC is exceeded, another pair of eyes is spotted.
- 10 A bewildered young Kariv man suffering burns bursts into camp, pursued by a **hell hound**.
- 11 A **kot bayun** (see *Tome of Beasts 1*) lazes on a tree branch near the party's campsite. It remains invisible while observing the group as it decides what to do with them.
- 12 A torrential rain begins with no warning, and the PCs are soaked to the bone. If they continue traveling, they come across a trail, still dry despite the rain.

d12 ENCOUNTER

- 1 An eerie glow floats through the forest ahead of the PCs. The source of the light is a **balara** that hunts the forest, killing all Humanoids it encounters.
- 2 The PCs' dreams are invaded by visions of future battles and challenges. For 24 hours after waking, each PC gains advantage on one attack roll or ability check of their choice thanks to this foresight.
- 3 As the PCs are preparing to set up camp, they find the fresh remains of a pair of wild horses, the only evidence of the recent feast of an **elder shadow drake** (see *Tome of Beasts 1*).
- 4 Four **shadow fey** (see the **Appendix**) are canvassing the forest in search of the nest of a **wyvern**. They believe they are close and would welcome the assistance of a few adventurers.
- 5 The trail left by the PCs has inexplicably changed—they now leave behind the tracks of forest animals.
- 6 A **shadow fey enchantress** (see the **Appendix**) is trapping three **hippogriffs** for the Queen of Night and Magic's court.
- 7 The twisted, cracked face of a **weeping treant** (see *Tome of Beasts 1*) appears in the darkness. As an agent of the Old Margreve, its disposition toward the PCs is the same as the forest's.
- 8 A **feral hunter** with a pack of four **wolves** hunts in the forest near where the PCs are traveling or camping. The fey is aggressive to PCs whose noise has scared away game, but it is friendly toward PCs who have been quiet and respectful of the forest. Respectful PCs can barter with it for some of its latest catch or for information about the trail ahead.
- 9 A **night hag** is exploring the Margreve Forest, looking for a pliant soul to corrupt. She offers boons to whoever will listen in exchange for a promise of future aid.
- 10 A faded marker appears in a shadowy clearing. The ground is flat, covered lushly, and a middling-sized tree grows up from what could be the center of a grave. Two **shadow fey guardians** (see the **Appendix**) watch from a distance, ready to intervene if any approach this sacred site too closely.
- 11 A trio of **phase spiders** are getting the upper hand on the party of **shadow fey** (see the **Appendix**) that stumbled upon their nest.
- 12 The PCs come across a mushroom patch in the shape of four large concentric circles. A solitary ruby red mushroom the size of a small gnome stands at the very center.



d12 ENCOUNTER

- 1 The **Moonlit King** (see *Tome of Beasts 1*) strolls into camp with a **satyr**. He produces empty cups for each of the PCs and invites them to share a drink and tell tales.
- 2 A **wraith bear** (see the **Appendix**) bursts from the forest undergrowth and immediately attacks the PCs.
- 3 A **mavka** (see *Tome of Beasts 1*) and her **nightmare** steed have been dispatched from Morgau by order of Prince Lucan, and she comes across the characters.
- 4 A trio of **lunarchidna** spin a transparent web across the PCs' path. The webbing is harmless, getting stuck in the PCs' hair and on their clothes, but it notifies the lunarchidnas of the PCs' presence. The lunarchidnas, empowered by the full moon, attack the PCs.
- 5 The quiet murmurs of night are broken by a snoring sound so loud it wakens everyone. Following the noise is easy and leads to an elderly man, actually a shapechanged **young gold dragon**, napping in a nest of elk and deer bones.
- 6 Sleeping PCs dream of great triumphs. In their dreams, they ultimately fail at a critical moment, and the consequences unfold before them. Each PC must succeed on a DC 17 CHA save or wake up with streaks of white in their hair and suffer one level of exhaustion.
- 7 A humanoid figure in voluminous, obscuring rags greets the characters cheerfully. A **deathless** in disguise, it has heard whispers about the PCs' adventures. It seeks remarkable souls for its collection and wants to judge the PCs for itself. If it finds any of their souls worth taking, it attacks.
- 8 Black Night, one of **Baba Yaga's horsemen** (see *Tome of Beasts 1*), is traveling with a writ signed by Grandmother requesting a pint of blood from an elf or syderean. If his request is granted by a PC, he might bequeath a boon. If spurned, he leaves without a word.
- 9 An unearthly roar reverberates through the night. A huge creature can be heard crashing through the forest and it is coming closer. A rampaging **behir** is hunting in the forest for food before returning to its cliffside lair.
- 10 Whispers emanate from the forest in an incomprehensible language from the forest's past.
- 11 The emotions of the characters have drawn a **fear smith** (see *Tome of Beasts 1*) to them. He watches from the shadows before making his presence known.
- 12 A fruit-bearing bush appears in the middle of camp. If eaten, the fruit acts as the berries of a *goodberry* spell for creatures with a positive Status score with the Old Margreve (see **Character Status with the Margreve** in **Chapter 1**). For others, it is tasteless and unsatisfying.



TALES OF THE VALIANT



©2024 Open Design LLC. Kobold Press and Tales of the Valiant are registered trademarks of Open Design LLC.

BE BOLD. BE BRAVE. BE VALIANT!

Give your 5E game some very sharp teeth—with the Kobold Press take on Black Flag Roleplaying!

The Tales of the Valiant RPG adds new talents, heritages, spells, monsters, and much more to the familiar options from 5th Edition D&D.

As an independent 5E game, it is open to everyone and anyone who wants to create their own worlds and tell their own tale.



A STUNNING NEW TAKE ON 5E!

www.koboldpress.com • www.talesofthevaliant.com

A HORDE OF NEW 5TH EDITION MONSTERS!



Whether you need dungeon vermin or world-shaking villains, the *Tome of Beasts 1* has it. This book presents more than 400 foes suitable for any campaign setting—from tiny drakes and peculiar spiders to demon lords and ancient dragons.

Tome of Beasts 1 (2023) introduces new foes and upgrades monsters that originally appeared in *Tome of Beasts*, including:

- Updates to include errata and streamline mechanics
- 11 new creatures like the ashwalker, planewatcher, and the ancient cave dragon
- Expanded tables by creature type and terrain
- New monster art—and much more!

Give your players encounters they won't soon forget.
Now easier to run than ever!

www.KoboldPress.com



**KOBOLD
Press**





Ware You Tread the Twisting Paths of Shadow?

In the Shadow Realm, mysterious places abound, guarded by denizens both strange and wondrous. From woods dark and eerie to courts of noble fey, all paths lead to haunts, ruins, machinations, and subterfuge. *Tales from the Shadows* delivers fast, memorable 5th Edition adventures on the dark side!

Inside this 192-page tome, find:

- 14 new adventures, suitable for levels 1–8, playable separately or in sequence
- Heroes must defeat cunning creatures, solve enigmas, and thwart malevolent intrigues!
- A background plot thread surrounding a fabled item, the *Shadow Grimoire*, which ties these adventures together
- 28 full-color maps and dozens of illustrations
- New monsters, NPCs, magic items, and easy prep for your next game!

Gather your courage and turn a wary eye toward the gloaming!

KOBOLD
Press



GAME MASTER'S GUIDE

EPIC STORIES CALL FOR EPIC STORYTELLERS!

Take your game beyond the basics with the *Tales of the Valiant™ Game Master's Guide!*



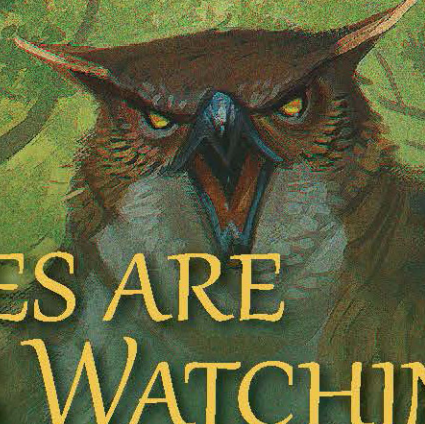
This critical addition to the library of any Game Master includes everything you need to turn any story into *your* story. Master homebrewing magic items and monsters for any occasion. Gain valuable insight into worldbuilding, setting the scene, and running the game. Learn the tips and tricks of the Game Master's art and become the ultimate tabletop storyteller.

IMPROVE YOUR 5E CAMPAIGN WITH NEW OPTIONS!

AVAILABLE NOW!

www.koboldpress.com • www.talesofthevaliant.com





THE TREES ARE ALWAYS WATCHING

For years beyond counting, the roots of the Old Margreve have grown deep and strong. Explore an ancient, magical forest rife with dangers both mundane and fantastic, deep in the shadow of its dark canopy. This deep woodland quickly claims unwary travelers who fail to follow the Old Ways.

Brace yourselves for a journey through *The Old Margreve*, a legendary forest with a mind for adventure! This setting guide and adventure path revitalizes the Margreve Forest with new adventures, new art, and new maps, all fully compatible with any Tales of the Valiant® or 5E D&D game.

Inside you'll find:

- Four lineages, including the new and powerful bearfolk!
- Five new heritages, including the Delver, Forest Bastion, and Old Ways.
- 16 subclasses, including the new Wildlife bard, Verdant druid, and more!
- Over 60 spells and magic items, including expanded rituals.
- A complete story arc and adventure path guiding players from level 1–10.

Your tale within this ancient wood begins here. But beware! Those who pass through its borders are forever changed, and sometimes the Old Margreve will not let you go easily



KOBOLD
Press

PO Box 2811 | Kirkland WA 98083
www.koboldpress.com



\$49.99 USD
\$69.99 CAD
KOB 6074

Printed in China
ISBN: 978-1-964506-07-4

ISBN 978-1-964506-07-4

US\$49.99



9 781964 506074

5 4 9 9 9 >