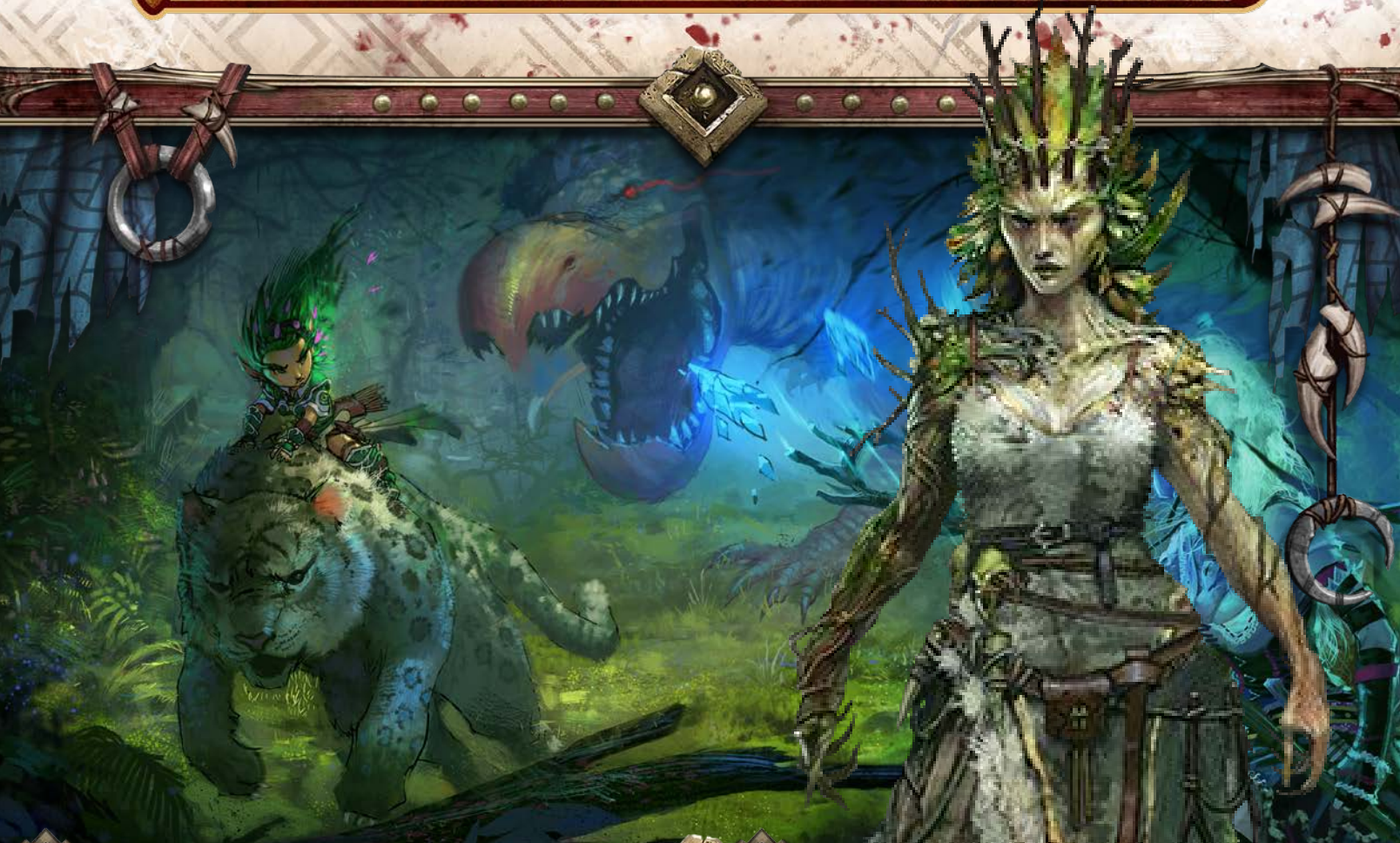


PATHFINDER[®]

ADVENTURE PATH[™]



IRONFANG  INVASION

PRISONERS OF THE BLIGHT

by Amanda Hamon Kunz

SOUTHERN NIRMATHAS AND IRONFANG TERRITORIES



Radya's Hollow

Redburrow

LONGSHADOW

Ecrú

Valley of Aloi

MARIDETH RIVER

PHAENDAR

Cavlinor

DEEPCUT RIVER

Emberville

INKWATER RIVER

Platter Township

Kraggodan

Gillet

Bluestone

MOLTHUNE

Buttermilk Creek

Oxbow

Valor

■ = Ironfang Legion Territory

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ON THE COVER



Despite its adorable name and plump body, the jubjub bird is a bloodthirsty and deadly opponent, as Feiya, Lini, and Droogami discover in this month's cover art by Remko Troost.



IRONFANG INVASION

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REFERENCE

This book refers to several other Pathfinder Roleplaying Game products using the following abbreviations, yet these additional supplements are not required to make use of this book. Readers interested in references to Pathfinder RPG hardcovers can find the complete rules of these books available online for free at paizo.com/prd.

<i>Advanced Class Guide</i>	ACG	<i>Ultimate Combat</i>	UC
<i>Advanced Player's Guide</i>	APG	<i>Ultimate Equipment</i>	UE
<i>Mythic Adventures</i>	MA	<i>Ultimate Intrigue</i>	UI
<i>Occult Adventures</i>	OA	<i>Ultimate Magic</i>	UM



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CURIOUSER AND CURIOUSER

Perhaps what most sets fey creatures apart from other antagonists are their gregarious natures and their curious, emotional outlooks on life. They are creatures of passion and impulse, and they come into conflict with mortals most often when their obsessions run afoul of the human need to survive. While fey need to breathe, eat, and sleep, they also often wield magic that makes sating such needs trivial, and so have little patience for those for whom basic survival is not so effortless. Rather than starvation or exposure, a fey's worst enemy is boredom, as made manifest in the horrific process of the Bleaching in the First World's own native race, the gnomes.

Visitors offer fey a welcome break from their daily routine, and so long as guests aren't a direct threat and the fey isn't a simple creature of pain and violence (such as ankous, bogeymen, or this volume's blightguards), even the most vile fey might pause to eagerly discuss the weather. "Prisoners of the Blight" contains much more dialogue than an average adventure, both to explain the fey's motivations during the rich and storied history

of the region, and to help emphasize the flavor of this adventure. The fey of the Darkblight aren't simply monsters to slay. They are warped children looking for understanding—or at least entertainment. To them, the Darkblight is the way all things should be, and the reluctance of the rest of the world to accept this is both endlessly frustrating and morbidly curious. What sort of confused mind would reject the Darkblight? What childhood trauma must have stunted a stranger's development so much that they refuse to embrace Princess Arlantia's love? Tell them. Tell them now!

The dialogue sections of this adventure are entirely optional, but if your players enjoy roleplaying, consider setting aside skill checks for this adventure, and instead let Bluff, Diplomacy, and Intimidation be handled by the players' ability to engage, confuse, impress, or weave logic traps to persuade or confound their opponents. In "Prisoners of the Blight," table talk is encouraged. The goal is to have fun and memorable adventures, which can come from many sources. If nothing else, consider rewarding clever players by

restricting or penalizing fey opponents after they've been distracted or outwitted. A good conversation might impose a -4 penalty on a dryad's initiative check, while fooling a redcap into admitting her tools are too large might briefly convince her to fight with only her devastating boots.

You should feel free to include more dialogue for other fey the PCs encounter, and always be willing to pause before a fight as a fey argues morality or makes a monologue about her motivations. Some fey may even be talked down from their guard duties, though philosophical discussions and questioning a fey's dearest beliefs will more likely spark combat.

Game Masters should leaf through the classic works of literature and poetry by J. M. Barrie, L. Frank Baum, Lewis Carroll, and Christina Rossetti to find inspiration for the fey mindset. You may even be able to get away with borrowing a few lines from these sources (provided your players aren't English majors). Here are a few of my favorites to get you started.

*"Better by far you should forget and smile
Than that you should remember and be sad."*
—Christina Rossetti, "Remember"

*"Good folk, I have no coin;
To take were to purloin:
I have no copper in my purse,
I have no silver either,
And all my gold is on the furze,
That shakes in windy weather
Above the rusty heather."*
—Christina Rossetti, "Goblin Market"

*"Well, now that we have seen each other,' said the Unicorn,
'if you'll believe in me, I'll believe in you.'"*
—Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass,
and What Alice Found There*

*"A baby has brains, but it doesn't know much. Experience is
the only thing that brings knowledge, and the longer you are
on earth the more experience you are sure to get."*
—L. Frank Baum, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*

*"You'll be sorry for treating me in this way,' whined the
Wheeler. 'I'm a terribly fierce person.'"*
—L. Frank Baum, *Ozma of Oz*

*"...the moment you doubt whether you can fly, you cease for
ever to be able to do it."*
—J. M. Barrie, *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*

*"The life of every man is a diary in which he means to write
one story, and writes another."*
—J. M. Barrie, *The Little Minister*

MEANWHILE, ON THE FRONT...

With the PCs spending so much time exploring the Ironfang Legion's history and secrets, they've spent remarkably little time directly confronting the hobgoblins' expansion. While their various agents, such as the Chernasardo Rangers, may continue to harry the invading army, the PCs seem to have withdrawn from the actual conflict. Their absence leads some Ironfang soldiers to hope that the infamous "Fugitives of Phaendar" have finally met their end, but it inspires bogeyman-like horror stories among others. General Azaersi has correctly surmised that the PCs are investigating her background and will uncover enough details to make them a thorn in her side eventually, but for now she focuses on running her newborn empire and stomping out real threats rather than obsessing over potential ones.

With their territory in Nirmathas under tight control, the Ironfang Legion has begun the second phase of their invasion: the Plains of Molthune. Much as they did in Phaendar, hobgoblin forces emerge from seemingly nowhere, conquering entire towns with little warning or resistance and reinforcing their position long before word can reach Canorate of this betrayal. Years of cautious negotiations have convinced dozens of Molthune's "monster legions" to turn on their masters, creating an instant front line dividing the Plains of Molthune roughly in half, and leaving the Molthuni army massively understaffed on this western front. With the summer campaign season already in full swing and much of Molthune's forces tied up in hostilities in and around Fort Ramgate, the Legion has established itself in Molthune with almost no bloodshed and little chance of a military response for months.

Just as dialogue makes for great fantastical literature, so too can it make encounters in your game more engaging and memorable. Don't be afraid to play with dialogue like you would background music or miniatures to help set the tone of the story you and your group will most enjoy. Everyone can have a little more fun with the game, and you can sneakily introduce your gaming group to your favorite authors in the process!



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PRISONERS OF THE BLIGHT

PART 1: INTO THE BLIGHTED WOOD PAGE 6

Searching for legendary fey allies, the heroes venture deep into the blighted Fangwood in search of the tree-lair of Arlantia—the corrupt dryad who caused the Darkblight—ultimately confronting her dragon guardian, Naphexi.

PART 2: THE PESTILENT PALACE PAGE 27

An evil fey court and powerful blighted minions rise against the heroes as they push their way into the depths of the rotting “palace” that sprawls beneath Arlantia’s tree.

PART 3: PRINCESS OF THE BLASTED HEATH PAGE 38

After reassembling an ancient but warped fey artifact, the heroes scramble to defeat Arlantia and free the glaistig Gendowyn—before the Darkblight consumes them forever.

ADVANCEMENT TRACK

“Prisoners of the Blight” is designed for four characters and uses the medium XP track.

14

The PCs begin this adventure at 14th level.

15

The PCs should be 15th level before descending to the Deeper Reaches of the Pestilent Palace.

16

The PCs should reach 16th level by the adventure’s conclusion.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

More than 700 years ago, magma spewed from Droskar's Crag and decimated the dwarven enclaves of the Five Kings Mountains. Though this devastating event, known as the Rending, did not reach the Sky Citadel of Kraggodan in distant Nirmathas, the dwarves of that noble settlement still suffered from deeply scarred spirits. Fearing an imminent eruption, Kraggodan's dwarves sought insight: would another explosion come to destroy them too? Dwarven legend told of a powerful fey woman—a glaistig named Gendowyn—who dwelled deep in the nearby Fangwood and ruled over a community called the Accessiel Court. Desperate for any support, the dwarves sent emissaries into the forest to contact this earth princess and beseech her aid.

As they traveled through the Fangwood, the emissaries took care to remember that they were guests in this alien, verdant world. They recompensed any fey they inconvenienced, hunted game only as needed to survive, and protected a dryad grove against interloping loggers. Finally, they reached the regal Gendowyn's court. Falling prostrate before her, the dwarves honored her wisdom and asked a single question—would the earth again erupt and send them all to Torag's side?

The dwarves' thoughtfulness and respect touched Gendowyn deeply. After offering them a comforting embrace, Gendowyn communed with the earth and was happy to report that the Mindspin Mountains had no inclination toward eruption. Enamored by the strange men and women who visited with such courtesy, Gendowyn decided to broker a true alliance with them. After consulting with her various fey courtiers, Gendowyn crafted a powerful artifact called *Dryad's Song*—a golden rod that could call the fey of the Fangwood to the bearer's aid. Gendowyn gave this gift to the dwarves along with her assurance that as long as she held dominion over the Fangwood, they were welcome to visit. In the following decades, the dwarves frequently took her up on that offer, offering gifts of the earth's bounty in exchange for the fey queen's insight and magic.

Eighty years later, the dwarves lost all contact with Gendowyn and the Fangwood's fey. Confused and concerned, Kraggodan sent a delegation into the forest and equipped its leader with *Dryad's Song* in case they needed the fey's help. Deep within the woods, they discovered that Gendowyn's handmaiden, Arlantia, had betrayed the Accessiel Court and aligned herself with Cyth-V'sug, the demon lord of fungus, parasites, and fecund hunger. Arlantia had opened a rift into Jeharlru, her demon lord patron's infernal realm, letting the infestation of his realm mingle with her fey magic and creating a noxious supernatural plague—the Darkblight. Arlantia then overpowered and imprisoned Gendowyn. When the dwarven envoys found Arlantia and her corrupted minions perched atop Gendowyn's throne, the debased

dryad laughed at the dwarves' pitiful alliance and slew them mercilessly, claiming *Dryad's Song* to solidify her control over the forest's fey population.

Hearing no word from their contingent, Kraggodan eventually sent a fully armed war party into the forest. That party similarly disappeared. They sent another, and it, too, vanished when Arlantia captured, tormented, and murdered the brave dwarven souls. After the final group, she sent a single dwarven survivor back to Kraggodan, infected with a virulent fungal disease and carrying a brief message: Gendowyn and the Fangwood belong to Arlantia, the Princess of the Blasted Heath. To defy her is to invite death.

The subsequent dwarven rescuers Kraggodan dispatched met only slaughter, and the Darkblight continued to spread. Heartbroken, the dwarves conceded that Gendowyn was lost. With typical dwarven practicality, they set about creating runestones, great monoliths studded with gold and gems, to channel powerful ritual magic that would keep the Darkblight at bay.

Some 400 years ago, greedy Chelish explorers came across these stones and pilfered the inlaid valuables, gradually weakening the stones' power and allowing the Darkblight to again spread through the Fangwood. In recent years, the dwarves have noticed this phenomenon with growing alarm, but Gendowyn and the Accessiel Court have long faded from living dwarven memory, and their tale is recounted only in ancient records. Although the dwarves have now rediscovered this portion of their legacy (thanks in part to the heroes' effort to reclaim lost knowledge stored in the Reliquary of Ascension), given the immediate threats the Sky Citadel faces, they lack the resources to combat Arlantia's Darkblight. The dwarves now look to these same heroes to help end the Darkblight's hold on the Fangwood and, in the process, rescue the glaistig Gendowyn. The fey ruler could prove a powerful ally against the Ironfang Legion, and her rescue would also restore the great alliance between Kraggodan and the Fangwood's fey, eventually freeing the dwarves to help fight the Ironfang Legion as well.

But the dwarves are not the only ones interested in the Darkblight and its dryad mistress. Increasingly desperate for allies as the fugitives of Phaendar nip at her heels, General Azaersi of the Ironfang Legion has done the unthinkable: extended an offer of alliance to Arlantia and her blighted fey. Though hobgoblins normally shun "elf magic" and the fey creatures they see as embodying it, Azaersi desires unconventional allies of convenience—enemies her human opponents would not expect. She recently dispatched Taurgreth, her spymaster, to promise that the Ironfang Legion will leave the Fangwood in peace upon its inevitable conquest of Nirmathas if Arlantia dispatches agents to destroy the PCs.

This plan backfired on the cocky hobgoblins. Arlantia felt no fear of the Ironfang Legion and its superstitious

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hobgoblins, and she found their offer toothless and disrespectful. The dryad enslaved Taurgreth and his hobgoblin bodyguards with dangerous, mind-altering parasites. She stole the *sardonyx shard* that he carried—which the hobgoblin had secreted away from the Onyx Citadel as a quick getaway plan in case the encounter turned against him—and now holds Taurgreth deep underground in her Pestilent Palace, trying to decide if she will retain the formidable warrior as a pet or send him back to slay his former mistress. Now more than ever, Arlantia believes she is free to spread her Darkblight throughout the Fangwood unchecked, eventually claiming Golarion for herself and her demonic patron, the terrible Prince of the Blasted Heath, Cyth-V'sug.

PART 1: INTO THE BLIGHTED WOOD

During “Siege of Stone,” the PCs learned much of the lore surrounding the *Onyx Key*, proved their trustworthiness to the dwarves of Kraggodan, and connected the theft of the *Onyx Key* to the Ironfang Legion. Now convinced that the Sky Citadel and Molthune might eventually come to a shaky peace, the dwarves are deeply grateful for the PCs’ aid, and increasingly concerned about the true threat: the Ironfang Legion. The dwarves, however, freely admit that so long as the Molthuni siege persists, they do not have the resources to provide the PCs with the army needed to battle the hobgoblin hordes.

However, the royal archivist Karburtin offers a possible alternative. The dwarves were once allied with a powerful fey—a glaistieg named Gendowyn—who has languished in captivity since the Darkblight first gripped the Fangwood more than 650 years ago. If the PCs can rescue Gendowyn from Arlantia, the evil dryad at the center of the Darkblight, the glaistieg would certainly prove a powerful ally against the Ironfang Legion.

This adventure can take place days or weeks after the PCs finish their adventures in the dwarven Reliquary of Ascension (see *Pathfinder Adventure Path #118: Siege of Stone*), having made the vast archives contained within available for their ally Karburtin Lightbrand to study. Allow the PCs whatever time they need to heal, shop, sell treasure, create magic items, or pursue side-quests in case they lag behind in XP. Once they are ready, a messenger arrives from Karburtin, and the dwarven wizard summons them to his home. The matter is

complicated, the missive states, and the dwarf would prefer to meet with the PCs to discuss it in person.

Once the PCs rendezvous with Karburtin Lightbrand, he offers them seats around his roaring hearth, as well as finely crafted chalices filled with wine or ale, before he carefully clears his throat and gets down to business.

“Kind friends,” Lightbrand says, rubbing the curls of his short beard with concern. “You have done us such a great service in past weeks that I wish I could bring you better tidings. Prince Gorm has dispatched not insignificant material aid—weapons and armor—to your allies, but alas, I must be frank. Our beloved Sky Citadel does not have the numbers to provide you with any military assistance. The prince considers you friends for life, but we cannot jeopardize our homeland by sending our small defensive forces on an offensive mission. Surely you understand.

“That does not mean we are unwilling to help, however. I have just finished extensive research on the *Onyx Key*, the artifact stolen from our vault, and it is indeed the weapon your enemies now use to move their troops unseen. The device creates a network of extradimensional tunnels—it’s a fascinating process, truly. My ancestors suspected the artifact relies on some great power source or hub positioned outside reality, and once opened a gate to it using the red *sardonyx shard* from the artifact’s base. But in the process, they unleashed terrible monsters that ravaged our city. I believe the Ironfang Legion has succeeded where my ancestors failed, conquering this hub and now using it as a central stronghold from which they direct their invasion.

“I’ve been divining, trying to locate the *sardonyx shard* for you, so you too can open a gate to the hub. My most recent spells found it deep within the heart of Fangwood Forest, but soon thereafter a powerful magic began shielding it from my spells. To me this implies only one culprit: the Blight.”

Karburtin pauses here to refill his guests’ drinks and answer any questions they may have regarding the *Onyx Key* and its history with the dwarves (many of which are found in the Adventure Background of “Siege of Stone”). Once the PCs seem ready, he continues.

“You surely know of the legends of the Fangwood’s diseased heart: tales of cruel, corrupted fey and trees that shift and trails that change once travelers pass. This is the work of the Blight, or more precisely, the Darkblight, which is both a disease and a place—the realm of a corrupted fey ruler called Arlantia. But it was not always this way.

“Not so long ago, the Fangwood was dominated by a collective of fey called the Accessiel Court, ruled by a powerful earth goddess named Gendowyn. Of course, ‘goddess’ is something of an honorific. She was powerful, but hardly divine. I think. Regardless, my ancestors sought



KARBURTIN

her council in the past on matters of the earth and seasons. Arlantia once sat at Gendowyn's right hand, and it was the earth goddess's Accessiel Court that was overthrown and perverted into the Darkblight.

"The *sardonyx shard* is somewhere within this cursed realm—I don't know why, precisely—and cloaked by the region's powerful corruption. But if you're willing to brave this terrible place, then this may be a blessing in disguise. I believe that Gendowyn is too powerful to have been simply slain, and Arlantia too vain to kill her rather than keep her captive and gloat. Arlantia was a dryad once, and so must be bound to a tree somewhere in that foul forest. Your *sardonyx shard* and Gendowyn are both likely held there, if you can find them.

"Freeing our esteemed Gendowyn would put her in your debt, and as we dwarves can attest, Gendowyn's kindness knows no bounds for those whom she favors. Rescue her, friends, and you may very well secure the might you need to wipe this Ironfang Legion from the face of Golarion."

Before they embark upon their mission to end the Darkblight and free Gendowyn, the PCs likely have questions for Karbutin. He does his best to answer them, as indicated below.

Additionally, before the PCs leave Kraggodan, Karbutin conveys his personal support for the adventurers and their mission by allowing each PC to choose a wondrous item from his personal collection. Each PC may choose a single wondrous item that costs up to 10,800 gp.

What can you tell us about Gendowyn? "Ah yes, of course, you wouldn't know. Gendowyn is a glaistig, a mighty fey creature, ancient beyond even my ken. Our clan's first documented contact with her was more than 700 years ago, when our revered ancestors heard of the great eruption of Droskar's Crag in Andoran and worried for our own city's safety. We'd heard tell of this earth princess who held sway over the fractious fey of the Fangwood. Gendowyn communed with the land, and whether she tamed it or simply confirmed its stable intentions, I can't say. But she gave us invaluable peace of mind during a trying time, and what's more, she cemented a real alliance between my kin and the Fangwood's fey. The princess even crafted a gift for my people: a golden rod they could use to part the trees and call the forest's fey to our aid, should we find ourselves in need. For eighty years did Kraggodan and Gendowyn's fey bask in friendship, until—well, until that evil dryad, that Arlantia, loosed her corruption on the world. It is a source of terrible, inexcusable shame that we have failed our ally for all these years since."

Why have the dwarves never tried to rescue Gendowyn yourselves? "Oh we have, and at terrible price. None of the champions we dispatched ever returned from that accursed place save one, and she returned so twisted and hobbled that she survived only three agonizing days.

DARKBLIGHT

At its core, the Darkblight is a supernatural infection infused with the energies of both the First World and Jeharlu. It slowly transforms the land it infests into a planar seep, allowing both fey and demons to cross through into the Material Plane. The taint spreads primarily through plant life, making it as much a place as a disease. The Darkblight can infest creatures as well as plants, though this often requires extended physical or supernatural contact with infected plants. Dryads, with their spiritual connection to specific trees, are especially vulnerable to the Darkblight.

Humanoids and fey not bound to a tree are generally at risk of infection with the Darkblight only after prolonged contact with infected plants (24 hours or more), or when magically occupying the same space as a plant with spells such as *transport via plants*, *tree shape*, and *tree stride*.

Immunity to disease does not render a creature immune to the Darkblight's effects. Removing the infestation requires successful castings of both *remove curse* and *remove disease*, or else a *limited wish*, *miracle*, or *wish* spell.

DARKBLIGHT

Type infestation, special (see above); **Save** Fortitude DC 15 negates infection, Fortitude DC 21 to avoid effects once infected

Onset 1 day; **Frequency** 1/day

Effect initial effect 1d4 Charisma damage and nauseated; **Cure** 3 saves

Special Plant creatures reduced to 0 Charisma by Darkblight immediately gain the fungal creature template and remove all Charisma damage. Fey creatures take 2d4 points of Charisma damage on a failed save, and if reduced to 0 Charisma by the Darkblight, they fall comatose and rise at the next sunset, gaining the blighted fey template and removing all Charisma damage.

Eventually, we settled for containing Arlantia's corruption with a network of runestones, but even these have failed, thanks to... human tampering."

What do you know about Gendowyn's current state? Are you certain that she is still alive? "We know only that we cannot contact her, nor can we find her. The Darkblight twists magic, especially divinations and conjurations. The only dwarven warrior to return from the Darkblight crawled back bearing a lock of the earth goddess's hair, and with powerful divinations through that we learned she was alive and somewhere beneath the earth. But we have long since run out of hair to use as a focus for our divinations."

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What is the blighted region of the Fangwood like? Karburtin fixes each member of the party with a serious stare. “I won’t lie; its terrible nature almost defies words. The single dwarf who has returned to Kraggodan alive from those depths described a place of horror, nightmares, and rot before she died an excruciatingly painful death.

“It’s said that in the Blighted Depths, the living bodies of fey and careless travelers grow into the sickly trees’ trunks; mushrooms and fungus spew spores that gnaw your brain; and hideous, maddening laughter echoes from every direction. Magic often malfunctions or doesn’t work at all there, and almost everything is warped in ways that defy logic. The blighted forest will test your very soul—and I believe that you, my friends, might be the only ones strong enough to fight it.”

Is the Darkblight contagious? “I’m sorry to say it is, and quite deadly once contracted. The bright side is that while fey are quite vulnerable to it, mortals seem far more difficult to infect. Dwarves, humans, and the like seem able to catch it directly only from infected trees, either moving through them magically—mingling your essence with the Darkblight’s own—or else being in contact for long periods. Rumors say the fey lash their victims to infected trees for days at a time to infest them with the rot.”

Who is Arlantia and how can we find her tree? “Arlantia is the evil creature who brought the Darkblight to the forest. She was once a handmaiden to Gendowyn, and my own great-grandfather wrote fondly of her passion and creativity. But for whatever reason, she turned from Gendowyn and embraced Cyth-V’sug, demon lord of fungus and parasites. We suspect that she does all of her wickedness in his name, and we believe that she operates from a tree located somewhere in the heart of the Darkblight.”

How would freeing Gendowyn help in our fight against the Ironfang Legion? “Once Gendowyn was a powerful fey in her own right, but she also once commanded the Fangwood’s thousands of fey creatures. If even a fraction of them remain loyal to her after these centuries, then they could form an army she might place at your disposal. Surely that could help you stand toe-to-toe with this Ironfang Legion.”

How can the sardonix shard help in our fight against the Ironfang Legion? “The shard is literally the key to their front gates. They’re winning this war because they can appear anywhere through those damned black towers they grow, and retreat to a stronghold you can’t reach. With the *sardonix shard*, you can hit them in their home.”

LOCATING THE BLIGHTED DEPTHS

One of the most maddening aspects of the Darkblight is how the lands infested with it constantly twist and warp, shifting landmarks and trails without warning

and trapping anyone passing through it. This same effect renders the very heart of the realm—referred to by outsiders and fey alike as the Blighted Depths—almost impossible to locate. Further confounding this effect, areas overtaken by the Darkblight become infused with energies of both the First World and Cyth-V’sug’s infernal realm of Jeharlu, confusing divination spells like *find the path*, *locate creature*, *locate object*, and others that require their targets to be on the same plane.

Karburtin believes he can overcome this problem using the runestones the dwarves once erected to contain the Darkblight. By linking a runestone’s powerful earth magic to the overwhelming aura of earth magic contained within the *sardonix shard*, Karburtin believe he can create a locator that will guide the PCs to the Blighted Depths.

Karburtin writes up all his notes for the ritual, as well as a map to the nearest runestone, before dispatching the party on the challenge before them. With the dwarf’s extensive notes, conducting the ritual is a simple matter that requires only an hour. Afterwards, the PCs can chip off a piece of the runestone, which will gently tug in the direction of the *sardonix shard* like a compass.

Karburtin’s solution is meant to be only one of many possible solutions to finding the Blighted Depths. If the PCs have their own plan, simply ignore this section.

THE DARKBLIGHT

Fangwood Forest is located about 80 miles northeast of Kraggodan. To get there, the PCs will likely need to cross grasslands, the Nesmian Plains, and the Deepcut and Marideth Rivers—all of which are occupied by Ironfang forces (though teleporting back to any of the Chernasardo Ranger fortresses they previously reclaimed circumvents the Legion). Many pockets of the Darkblight have sprung up throughout the woods, but its densest concentration is a dark, primeval clot of trees, hills, and swamps roughly 50 miles across and ringed by dwarven runestones. Here and there, the PCs begin to see strange indications that they are wandering into the deepening Darkblight. These might include an occasional 6-foot-tall mushroom with eyelike, fungal growths covering its stalk, a primeval tree covered in thick, slimy, ropelike fungus, or even a recognizably humanoid body caught in the web of a fungus-covered log.

At this point, the PCs likely have access to magical means of transportation, such as *greater teleport* or *overland flight*. Such magic functions normally until the PCs enter a pocket of the forest infested by the Darkblight, where the infusion of planar energies plays havoc with travel. A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Knowledge (geography) or DC 30 Knowledge (nature) check knows all the details about the Darkblight listed below. Alternatively, with a successful DC 26 Knowledge (arcana) check, a character understands how magic is affected in the blighted woods (but not the other details).

Divination: Divination spells function only if they either rely on close proximity (such as *detect evil* or *detect secret doors*) or else function even if the subject is on another plane. Spells such as *legend lore* and *vision* can help the PCs locate the Blighted Depths, but Arlantia's tree and the Pestilent Palace below it are shielded by a powerful *nondetection* effect (CL 20). After casting such a spell in the depths, regardless of the result of any caster level checks, the caster hears the terrible echoes of a woman's voice laughing maniacally.

If the PCs use Karburtin's runestone ritual, its magic can lead them only to the edge of the Blighted Depths, after which the place's corruption finally eats away at the connection between the runestone and the *sardonyx shard*.

Flight: The terrible Darkblight afflicting the Fangwood has permeated the skies over the forest, and massive clouds of cursed spores float across the sky. For every minute spent in flight above the blighted portion of the Fangwood, whether via magical or mundane means, living creatures must succeed at a DC 18 Fortitude save or roll on the table below to determine what curse the spores inflict. The DC increases by 1 for every minute spent in flight. Multiple failed saving throws result in additional random effects (reroll any previously suffered effects, and all effects are cumulative). This affects flying mounts (including animal companions and eidolons), but not mounts that are wholly magical (such as an *ebony fly figurine of wondrous power*). These are curse effects and can be removed with *break enchantment*, *limited wish*, *miracle*, *remove curse*, or *wish* (CL 15th), but each individual effect must be removed separately.

d6 Effect

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | The creature is permanently deafened. |
| 2 | The creature loses any fly speed it has for 24 hours. If it is the target of spells that would allow it to fly magically, those spells instead have no effect on it during this time. |
| 3 | The creature is rendered mute and cannot speak or use verbal spell components for 24 hours. |
| 4 | The creature is sickened for the next 24 hours. |
| 5 | The creature is permanently blinded. |
| 6 | The creature suffers the effects of the <i>insanity</i> spell (unlike the spell, <i>remove curse</i> can cure the creature [DC 30], as can <i>greater restoration</i> and <i>heal</i>). |

Overland Movement: In regions infested by the Darkblight, areas of thick undergrowth (including the forested areas of the Blighted Depths map on page 14) are considered heavy undergrowth (see page 440 of the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*). Additionally, when a living creature ends its turn in such a square, it must succeed at a DC 18 Fortitude saving throw or be nauseated for 10 minutes (the duration stacks with multiple failed saves). If a creature is nauseated in this way for 30 concurrent minutes, it must succeed at a DC 25 Fortitude saving

DESCRIBING THE DARKBLIGHT

In the most blighted reaches of the Fangwood, the influence of the Abyss is strong. At the GM's discretion, the following table can help build a properly creepy, tainted atmosphere in the blighted Fangwood. Every hour the PCs travel through the blighted forest without encountering any of the creatures, hazards, or other content from Part 1, roll a d6 to determine a random event that happens.

RANDOM DARKBLIGHT EVENTS

d6 Random Effect

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | A random PC brushes against a tree and feels it shudder. Upon closer inspection, an enormous crack opens in the tree's trunk, revealing a yellow, bloodshot eye. |
| 2 | The PCs come across a large blackberry patch, but the once-healthy berries are covered in sticky green-and-black slime. Any PC who touches the slime must succeed at a DC 20 Fortitude saving throw or be sickened for 1 hour. |
| 3 | Suddenly, all ambient noise in the forest stops. For a full round, the sound of a woman's laughter echoes throughout the trees. The PCs must succeed at a DC 18 Will saving throw or be shaken for 1 minute. This is a fear effect. |
| 4 | The PCs encounter a small hillock with deep scabbling marks carved into the soil, leading to an enormous tree. A large section of the tree's bark has been stripped, and on the wood are these Sylvan words, written in long-dried blood: "SAVE US! SHE'S KILLING US ALL!" |
| 5 | Arranged neatly between bushes is a pyramid of skulls with mushrooms blooming from their mouths and eye sockets. With a successful DC 20 Knowledge (nature) check, a character identifies these as dryad skulls. |
| 6 | The PCs come across the half-eaten, mushroom-riddled body of a dire bear. A PC can determine with a successful DC 17 Knowledge (nature) check that the corpse was riddled with a terrible, fungal infection before some larger predator unknowingly stopped the process. |

throw or risk contracting the Darkblight (see the sidebar on page 7). This undergrowth qualifies as magically manipulated, and interferes with effects that would normally allow easy movement, like a druid's woodland stride. Creatures with the fungal creature or blighted fey template can move through this undergrowth as if it were regular terrain.

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Plant-Manipulating Magic: The trees and other vegetation that make up the blighted Fangwood are still living, and therefore can be manipulated with spells and effects such as *entangle* and *animate plants*. However, the powerful Darkblight negates spells and effects that would diminish or destroy the forest, such as *diminish plants* or *blight*. Such spells and effects simply fizzle with no effect.

Teleportation: Magic from the teleportation subschool also functions oddly in the Fangwood's blighted areas. Such spells can't cross the barrier between blighted and non-blighted regions of the forest, but function normally within a blighted area, allowing those trapped within the twisting trails to teleport to other areas of the Darkblight-infested forest, but not to escape the Darkblight entirely. Other, less powerful teleportation spells, such as *dimension door*, work normally. Any creature using teleportation that relies upon plant life as a medium, such as *transport via plants* or *tree stride*, is immediately exposed to the Darkblight disease and nauseated for 1 minute after arrival (or for 1 round on a successful DC 18 Fortitude save). Creatures with the fungal creature or blighted fey template are immune to this effect.

A. THE RUNESTONE (CR 15)

Whether the PCs are deliberately seeking a dwarven runestone to follow Karburtin's tracking ritual (see page 8) or simply traveling through the Fangwood, they reach a dwarven runestone at the edge of the blighted forest. Read or paraphrase the following.

Suddenly, the gnarled trees part and a lush, green clearing stretches for fifty feet. In the center stands a twenty-foot slab of bluestone etched with blocky runes and inlaid with gold and gems. The cankers and blotches that mar so many of the local trees are absent from the trees and plants that border this clearing.

This is one of the few remaining runestones erected by Kraggodan's dwarves to escape notice by Chelish and Nirmathi scavengers, and it retains enough magic to keep the Darkblight at bay within its very short reach. The stele radiates a moderate aura of abjuration.

Creatures: Kusana, a powerful blood hag, arrived in the Fangwood several weeks earlier, staying ahead of the Ironfang Legion for fear of being pressed into service. She attempted to collect her changeling daughter, Navah, before leaving, leading to a battle of magic that left ugly scars on the blood hag's right arm and leg before Navah finally drove her off. She has since sulked in the forest, studying the runestone in hopes that she can replicate its magic to keep the Darkblight at bay.

The blood hag views any newcomers as potential meals—a welcome break from animal and fey blood. During the day, when shrouded by her mask evil ability, she pretends to be a lost refugee and feigns confusion

long enough to take the measure of the newcomers. Afterward, or at night, she attacks.

Kusana is joined by two massive, hairy brutes: Cherk and Dvanga, fen maulers who attempted to ambush her as she passed through their swamp. The pair suffered greatly for their impudence, and now serve her like whipped animals. They watch quietly from the trees above, ready to pounce should anyone threaten their mistress, and stalk travelers once they leave the glen. The fen maulers each carry totems imparting the evasion ability and a +4 bonus on Stealth checks.

KUSANA

CR 13

XP 25,600

Female blood hag witch 9 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 19, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 65)

NE Medium monstrous humanoid (shapechanger)

Init +11; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., *detect good*, *detect magic*; Perception +28

DEFENSE

AC 28, touch 18, flat-footed 20 (+4 armor, +7 Dex, +1 dodge, +6 natural)

hp 190 (21 HD; 9d6+12d10+93)

Fort +13, **Ref** +18, **Will** +17

DR 5/cold iron and magic; **Immune** charm, disease, fear, fire, sleep; **SR** 24

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee spear +23 (1d8+7/×3) or

bite +23 (2d4+5), 2 claws +23 (1d6+5 plus grab)

Special Attacks blood drain (1d2 Con), detonate, hexes (cauldron, disguise, evil eye, flight, fortune)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 12th; concentration +16)

Constant—*detect good*, *detect magic*

At will—*inflict moderate wounds* (DC 17), *scorching ray*, *spider climb* (self only)

3/day—quicken *deep slumber* (DC 17)

Witch Spells Prepared (CL 9th; concentration +13)

5th—*suffocation*^{APG} (DC 20)

4th—*confusion* (DC 18), *divination*, *poison* (DC 19)

3rd—*bestow curse* (DC 18), *major image* (DC 17), *remove curse*, *remove disease*

2nd—*augury*, *burning gaze*^{APG} (DC 16), *death knell* (DC 17), *mirror image*, *see invisibility*

1st—*beguiling gift*^{APG} (DC 15), *burning hands* (DC 15), *identify*, *mage armor*, *obscuring mist*

0 (at will)—*bleed* (DC 15), *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *read magic*

Patron trickery

TACTICS

Before Combat In this strange wilderness, Kusana casts *mage armor* on herself each day.

During Combat Kusana takes to the air using her flight hex and unleashes spells like *bestow curse*, *poison*, *suffocation*, and her quickened *deep slumber* spell-like

ability, while her minions close to melee. Once those are expended, she closes again to fight with her claws and drain enemies' blood.

Morale Kusana is vicious but practical. If her fen maulers are slain and she is reduced below half 90, she begs for mercy and apologizes for her rudeness, promising the PCs use of her magic if they let her live (see Development below).

STATISTICS

Str 20, **Dex** 25, **Con** 19, **Int** 18, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +16; **CMB** +23 (+27 grapple); **CMD** 39

Feats Agile Maneuvers, Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Eldritch Claws^{APG}, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*deep slumber*), Spell Focus (necromancy), Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +19, Bluff +22, Disguise +16, Fly +15, Intimidate +25, Knowledge (arcana, nature) +25, Perception +28, Sense Motive +5, Stealth +28, Use Magic Device +25

Languages Abyssal, Common, Elven, Giant, Infernal, Sylvan
SQ fiery form (DC 20), mask evil, witch's familiar (rat named Juniper)

Gear spear

ADVANCED FEN MAULERS (2)

CR 11

XP 12,800 each

hp 162 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 127)

Treasure: Kusana wears a *bracelet of friends* she intended to attune to her daughter once Navah was transformed into a hag.

Development: If the PCs spare Kusana, she sullenly agrees to cast spells on their behalf. Her various schemes and deceptions rely on a number of divination and curative spells in addition to her harmful ones, and among other things, she provides the PCs with access to *remove curse* and *remove disease* to cure themselves of the Darkblight, should they contract it (though Kusana can cure only one afflicted creature each day). Once she has had the opportunity to rest and heal, Kusana's tune changes: while she is reluctant to attack the PCs again, she demands normal payment for her spellcasting services. She can also brew potions if given time and a proper cauldron to work with. In addition to her prepared spells, her familiar, Juniper, knows the following spells suitable for potion-making: *cure serious wounds*, *reduce person*, and *tongues*. Though duplicitous and greedy, the hag nonetheless remains a potentially valuable resource in the wilderness, and maintains her camp by the runestone for several more weeks.

If the PCs use Karbutin's ritual to attune the runestone to the *sardonyx shard's* magic, the entire process takes an hour of chanting and burning rare minerals. Once completed, they can chip off a small piece of the runestone (a finger-sized piece shears off from the block if struck by a weapon or sturdy tool), which tugs

gently toward the Blighted Depths. This charm allows the PCs to locate the mysterious heart of the Darkblight, but loses its magic once they enter area D.

B. VILLAGE RUINS

As the PCs begin to explore the region of the forest tainted by the Darkblight, read or paraphrase the following.

Amid the sickly trees stand the smoldering ruins of a miniature village built along a muddy creek.

This is all that remains of a small quickling village on the periphery of the blighted woods. The fey camouflaged their tiny settlement in hopes that they'd remain unnoticed as Arlantia's Darkblight overtook them, and they enjoyed relative peace for many decades. But then Arlantia's lesser bandersnatch tromped through the village on a hunt, scattering the residents into the woods, where her troops easily captured them to transform them into additional blightguards (see area G4).

Searching the ruins, the PCs can easily identify that the settlement belonged to Small creatures; a successful DC 18 Knowledge (nature) check is required to identify them as quicklings. A PC who succeeds at a DC 21 Perception or Survival check also uncovers a massive, clawed animal print in the creek's mud, which a character who succeeds at a DC 27 Knowledge (arcana) check can tell was left behind by a bandersnatch, a devastatingly powerful First World predator.

Creature: Although the PCs likely do not realize it yet, they pick up a follower while investigating the village. Wendel, the sole survivor of the attack, remains cautious but curious, and begins following the PCs through the forest, relying on his natural invisibility and high Stealth bonus to remain hidden until he confirms that he and the PCs share an enemy in Arlantia (see area D1).

Many of the Fangwood's quicklings—troublesome and often violent fey—served Arlantia willingly until she began butchering them for spare parts to build her grotesque blightguards. After centuries of living in hiding, most of the covert enclaves like Wendel's are less aggressive than common quicklings. Unlike the forest's goodly fey, though, the quicklings had never done anything to combat the Darkblight or help fellow forest-dwellers in need; the Darkblight hadn't significantly impacted them, so the quicklings saw no need to go out of their way. When the bandersnatch senselessly murdered his family, however, Wendel saw the terrible error of this outlook. He carries immense guilt about his family's deaths, and has vowed to claim his vengeance. However, the deeper he has traveled into the blighted forest, the more he realizes that he's in over his head. Wendel ultimately hopes to find allies to help him rescue his sister, Meril, whom he watched blightguards drag off, but he is now more wary of strangers than ever.

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WENDEL**CR 11****XP 12,800**Male quickling rogue 10 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 227)

CN Small fey

Init +13; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +19**DEFENSE****AC** 25, touch 23, flat-footed 15 (+2 deflection, +9 Dex, +1 dodge, +2 natural, +1 size)**hp** 125 (14 HD; 4d6+10d8+66)**Fort** +10, **Ref** +20, **Will** +9**Defensive Abilities** evasion, improved uncanny dodge, natural invisibility, supernatural speed, trap sense +3; **DR** 5/cold iron**Weaknesses** slow susceptibility**OFFENSE****Speed** 120 ft.**Melee** +1 silver short sword +21/+16 (1d4/19–20)**WENDEL****Ranged** +1 hand crossbow +20 (1d3+1/19–20)**Special Attacks** sneak attack +6d6**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 4th; concentration +7)1/day—*dancing lights*, *flare* (DC 13), *levitate*, *shatter* (DC 15), *ventriloquism* (DC 14)**TACTICS****Before Combat** Wendel prefers to hide whenever possible.**During Combat** Though once a bravado, Wendel has been badly shaken by watching most of his village die gruesome deaths in the maw of Arlantia's bandersnatch. He attacks almost exclusively from hiding, and relies on his fast getaway and fast stealth rogue powers to keep away from enemies.**Morale** Wendel flees if reduced below 50 hit points.**STATISTICS****Str** 10, **Dex** 28, **Con** 18, **Int** 15, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 16**Base Atk** +9; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 30**Feats** Combat Reflexes, Deceitful, Dodge, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Mobility^B, Spring Attack^B, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (short sword)**Skills** Acrobatics +26 (+62 when jumping), Bluff +24, Craft (clothing) +7, Disable Device +31, Disguise +5, Escape Artist +26, Perception +19, Sleight of Hand +26, Spellcraft +6, Stealth +30 (+70 while still), Survival +14, Use Magic Device +20**Languages** Aklo, Common, Sylvan**SQ** poison use, rogue talents (resiliency, fast stealth, redirect attack^{APG}, slow reactions, trap spotter), trapfinding +5**Combat Gear** *potions of cure serious wounds* (4), *potions of gaseous form* (2), *potion of heroism*, *potion of remove blindness/deafness*; **Other Gear** +1 hand crossbow, +1 silver short sword, *amulet of natural armor* +1, *ring of protection* +2, bag containing 32 tourmalines (worth 100 gp each)**Treasure:** The village was poor in resources, but rich in magic. A PC who succeeds at a DC 27 Perception check discovers four *potions of cure serious wounds*, three *potions of good hope*, and seven *potions of haste* dropped in the creek during the chaos.**C. FALSE REFUGE (CR 14)**

After another period of travel through the woods, the PCs happen across a small swath of greenery and bubbling springs passed over by the Darkblight—an apparent safe haven in otherwise hostile lands.

Creatures: This swath of ponds and fields has thus far remained untouched by the Darkblight because it is aggressively guarded by a ravenous giant sundew plant, which feeds on any blighted creatures that venture into its territory and has—thus far—proven resistant to infection. The slow agony it inflicts while digesting its victims has attracted a particularly vicious string of will-o-wisps, who have learned to lure in fresh prey at night,

and assist the plant in keeping the Darkblight at bay and maintaining the appearance of a paradise.

When strangers approach the glade, the invisible will-o-wisps imitate voices they've heard, coaxing newcomers into the sundew's reach. Once combat begins, they focus on attacking creatures that evade the giant plant's grasp.

GIANT SUNDEW **CR 12**

XP 19,200

hp 153 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 258)

ADVANCED WILL-O-WISPS (6) **CR 7**

XP 3,200 each

hp 58 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 294, 277)

D. THE BLIGHTED DEPTHS

As the PCs move closer to the Blighted Depths, the forest's terrain becomes more stable even as it grows more odd, alien, and diseased. This deepest heart of the Darkblight was once the seat of power for Gendowyn's Accessiel Court, and the ruins of her palace are still infused with enough magic to enforce some stability on the otherwise chaotic landscape. The residents and plant life remain diseased and dangerous in the extreme, but the trees and trails cannot shift as they do elsewhere in the forest, allowing the PCs to more easily navigate.

D1. BLIGHTED CLEARING (CR 15)

Fully in the grips of the Darkblight, this clearing is surrounded by looming trees covered in withered bark, viscous slime, and crisscrossing ropes of sickly, green fungus. Between the trees stand enormous mold infestations spattered with black mushrooms. Furred fungus and filth carpets the clearing's floor, and the scent of vegetative decay and rot permeates the air.

This clearing serves as the primary entrance to the most blighted part of the Fangwood. Few creatures in this region know how to access Arlantia's tree, and only one of them is remotely friendly (see area D8).

As the PCs pass through this area, an unsettling feeling comes over them, as if they were being watched.

Creatures: A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Perception check notices that one of the trees near the northwest corner of the clearing has several small eyes embedded into its trunk, and that those eyes are carefully following the party's movements. This is a heartrot tree, and once one or more PCs move within range, it attacks. If no PCs come within range, the heartrot tree stealthily moves up behind the PC bringing up the rear of the party and then attacks.

A PC who succeeds at this Perception check by 5 or more also notices the fungal shambler hiding across the clearing from the tree. These fungal cousins of shambling mounds are considerably more powerful and

toxic than their lesser kin, and bear four fungal arms with which to attack.

Although he's hiding among the trees at the clearing's eastern edge, staying invisible using his natural invisibility and keeping quiet, Wendel the quickling is observing this fight and finally accepts that the PCs could be valuable allies. He watches the combat that ensues and does not make himself known until afterward (see the Development section). If the PCs seem especially endangered during the fight, he braves a single sneak attack using his hand crossbow, but immediately slips back into hiding.

FUNGAL SHAMBLER **CR 13**

XP 25,600

Variant fungal shambling mound (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 116, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 246)

NE Large plant (augmented)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +14

DEFENSE

AC 26, touch 8, flat-footed 26 (-1 Dex, +18 natural, -1 size)

hp 195 (17d8+119)

Fort +17, **Ref** +6, **Will** +7

Immune disease, electricity, plant traits; **Resist** fire 10

OFFENSE

Speed 10 ft.

Melee 4 slams +19 (2d6+7/19-20 plus grab)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks create spawn, poison spore cloud (DC 25), poisonous blood, constrict (2d6+10)

TACTICS

Before Combat Fungal shamblers are slow and therefore they rely on the element of surprise, concealing themselves among the leaf litter and fungal growths of the blighted Fangwood.

During Combat A fungal shambler launches ambushes with its slam attacks. If prey attempts to flee, it uses its spore cloud to slow escaping enemies.

Morale A fungal shambler fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 25, **Dex** 8, **Con** 25, **Int** 7, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 9

Base Atk +12; **CMB** +20; **CMD** 29

Feats Cleave, Critical Focus, Great Cleave, Improved Critical (slam), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (slam)

Skills Perception +11, Stealth +11 (+19 in swamps and forests); **Racial Modifiers** +4 Perception, +8 Stealth in swamps and forests

Languages Common, Sylvan (can't speak)

SQ electric fortitude, fungal metabolism, rejuvenation

HEARTROT TREE **CR 13**

XP 25,600

hp 184 (see page 86)

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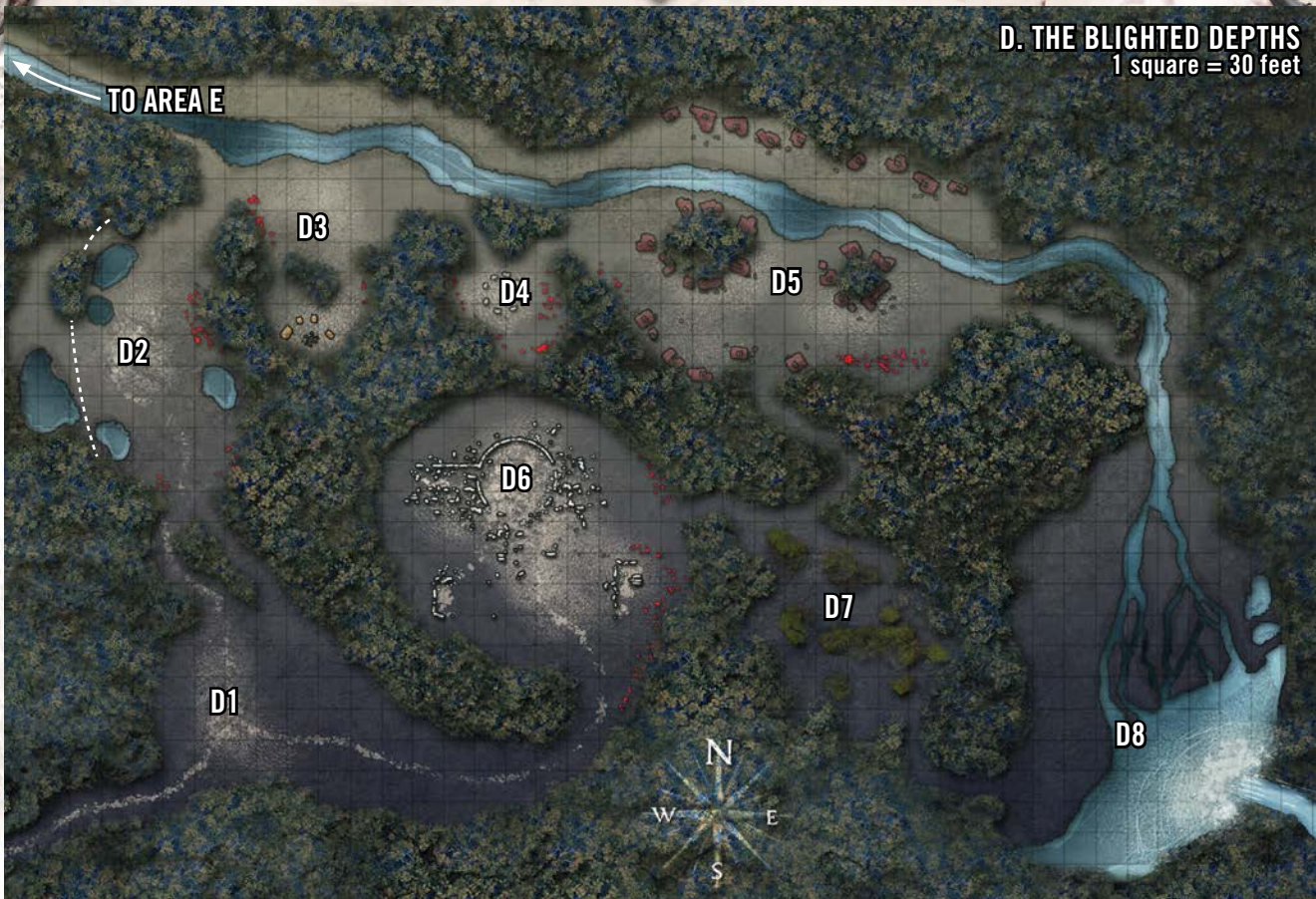
CYTH-V'SUG

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1 square = 30 feet



Development: Once the PCs defeat the fungal shambler and the heartrot tree, they hear a frightened, high-pitched voice speaking rapidly in Sylvan from just behind the tree line. A successful DC 22 Perception check allows the PCs to parse the actual words spoken.

"Not the evil one's minions? No-no-no, Wendel thinks not. Allies, then? Maybe. Oh, maybe-maybe. Wendel needs help, he thinks. Cannot stand against the evil one alone. Blight-death-pain-doom! Oh! But Wendel cannot trust! Should Wendel kill?"

At this point, Wendel doesn't fully realize that he is thinking out loud, and remains immobile and invisible. If the PCs try to seek him out, he immediately quiets. The PCs may wish to convince him that they mean him no harm (a successful DC 22 Diplomacy check is required to shift his attitude to indifferent), or otherwise try to lower his guard. He might be intimidated into coming out, but doing so is difficult thanks to his general cowardice (Intimidate DC 45). The best way to convince Wendel to show himself is to expound upon the party's intent to end the Darkblight, or to decry the terrible harm Arlantia has done to the Fangwood (Perform [oratory] DC 20).

If Wendel becomes convinced that the party might make good allies, he emerges from hiding to converse

with the PCs, who see that he is a rail-thin creature in ragged leathers, with ashy-blue skin, elegantly pointed ears, long antennae, and a long shock of unruly hair. If he emerges and the PCs make any hostile movements toward him, he fights them only long enough to slip away into the woods. If the PCs don't bother to convince him of their intentions or fail to do so, Wendel similarly flees, though he follows the PCs' exploits and eventually reveals himself again once he determines that the party is his best shot at finding his sister.

Wendel's answers to the PCs' likely questions are detailed below. If the PCs end up killing Wendel or chasing him away for good, he drops his journal, which details the same information. However, it is written in a tiny, flighty hand in rather confusing Sylvan, so deciphering each section of the journal (which provides an answer to one of the questions below) requires a successful DC 30 Linguistics check (the ability to read Sylvan grants a character a +5 bonus on this check).

If Wendel allies with the party, he mostly remains in hiding during combat encounters, though he occasionally works up the courage to sneakily feed one of his *cure serious wounds* potions to a fallen ally or cast *shatter* on an unsuspecting enemy's weapon. He flees if it seems like the PCs might all die. Although he claims that he may help them fight the forest's horrors (see his other answers

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below), Wendel is really a very self-interested creature. He emerges when indicated in subsequent areas of the forest and might offer help during non-combat encounters, but he is largely out for his own ends. His highest priority is finding out whether his sister still lives, though only the gentlest coaxing (Diplomacy DC 40) will get him to reveal that at this point. (More details about Wendel's sister appear on page 32.)

Who are you? "Name's Wendel," the quickling says, fidgeting incessantly while he speaks in a buzzing voice. "Wendel is alone—all-all alone—but Wendel knows many things, and Wendel is good with knives, and Wendel needs allies to stop the Darkblight. Evil, evil Darkblight. Maybe you are those allies. Should you be Wendel's allies?"

Where did you come from?/Why do you want to end the Darkblight? "Wendel lived with his family in the woods. They were many quicklings, and the other fey left them alone, and they were happy together. They were smart and avoided the Darkblight for a long time. A long-long-long time. But then a terrible beast found Wendel's family. It killed Wendel's family. Wendel survived, but Wendel could do nothing." The quickling's voice slows uncharacteristically, but then picks up speed again. "It was Wendel's fault, but Wendel will have his revenge. Wendel will find the evil one's tree or die trying."

You don't seem much like other quicklings. Why is that? "Picking fights with bigger meanies is very, very, very dumb. Quicklings learn that long-long ago. And Wendel has learned many things since Wendel's family died. Wendel will not be foolish any longer. No-no-no. Wendel wants to help the forest now. Help, help, and get revenge against the evil one."

Do you know where to find Arlantia's tree? Wendel recoils at the mention of Arlantia. "Ugh, the evil one! No-no-no, none of the fey in Fangwood know where she lives—not those who haven't taken up her stick-icky fungus love. But Wendel is smart. Wendel listens. Wendel knows that the serpent Naphexi is the evil one's closest ally. Naphexi controls this part of the blighted forest, and Wendel cannot explore it without help. But Wendel knows where the great wurm lairs. Oh, yes-yes-yes, he knows; he heard. It's east of here. Go east, and Wendel will follow. The black serpent is the evil one's lapdog, and a dog always knows where her mistress rests her head."

Note that Wendel's information is many decades out of date; Naphexi moved on from her swamp lair in area D8 long ago as she grew larger and needed additional room to begin her transformation rituals. Regardless, Wendel eagerly directs his allies to that eastern swamp, never doubting his own omniscience.

What else do you know about Naphexi? "She is a dragon. She is strong, and smart, and black like spoiled blood. What else can Wendel say? She knows where the evil one lives, and when Wendel is done with her, she

will tell Wendel. Yes-yes-yes, she will tell. Wendel is not afraid of big things, not even dragons." He pauses before adding, "Well, maybe Wendel is afraid. But only a little, yes? Very sensible, Wendel is."

Do you know anything about an imprisoned earth queen named Gendowyn? "Wendel has heard of this earth princess! She is legend to the Fangwood's fey—oh, but she lived here many years ago, many-many-many years ago. She was a nice princess—terrible and wonderful, depending on who asked—the stories said, but then she was gone. Vanished-left-disappeared! Is she in prison? Maybe the evil one has her? Is possible, very-very-very possible!"

Story Award: If the PCs ally with Wendel, award them 12,800 XP as if they had defeated the quickling in combat.

D2. STAGNANT FEN (CR 15)

The line of vegetation to the west here looks healthy and symmetrical—it has somehow been spared from the blight. The trees' bark is robust and their leaves lush, and vibrant undergrowth sprouts between them. The sounds of chirping songbirds and croaking frogs echo normally and earthy smells waft through the air, in stark contrast to the algae-choked pools filling the rest of the area.

Rather than an actual refuge from the Darkblight that grips this portion of the Fangwood, the seemingly normal, peaceful scene here is an illusion. Before Arlantia's revolt, the area was home to an enclave of pixies and grigs who used powerful magic to conceal their lairs from everyone. This illusion cloaked them from Arlantia, but not from the army of thick-minded frogheaths that lumbered through the illusions and devoured their creators.

The particular illusion creating the false tree line is a permanent *major image* spell (CL 13th). A PC interacting with the illusion can see through it with a successful DC 14 Will saving throw, revealing that the woods here are just as blighted as the surroundings, and that the tree line obscures a steep ridge that drops 10 feet into a large, marshy fen below.

Creatures: A pair of frogheaths—descended from the terrible beasts that claimed this fen centuries ago—remain blissfully unaware of the Darkblight and happily lair amid this strange illusion and the festering, supernatural rot. Although frogheaths don't normally collaborate, these siblings tolerate each other's company. As soon as one or more PCs disbelieve the *major image*, the frogheaths attack.

FROGHEATHS (2)

CR 13

XP 25,600 each

hp 184 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 136)

Treasure: The froghemoths have devoured much of the treasure the fey kept on them and despoiled the rest. However, in the area's northwest corner, near the real tree line, lies a powerful magic rod hidden underneath an array of mossy detritus. This is a *greater metamagic rod of extend*. The fey used this rod to stabilize the illusion that exists here; they intended for it to be temporary until they could work out a more permanent way to hide their homes. Removing the rod from its current location immediately dispels the forest illusion.

D3. BLIGHTGUARD CAMP (CR 14)

Although it's sluggish and scummy, the small stream that trickles across the Blighted Depths here takes on an entirely different, more menacing character. Further west, pink froth turns into deep crimson ribbons until the entire stream runs red. Paths lead south and southeast, while a muddied trail runs alongside the bloodied stream east and west.

Once a vibrant watering hole where forest creatures of all stripes could find refuge as well as a cool drink, this area has now become the lair of a gang of blightguards, led by a particularly large and vicious redcap named Carthrel. The guards here ostensibly patrol the Blighted Depths for intruders, but in truth monitor Naphexi in her nearby lair (area E) for Arlantia.

Additionally, the Darkblight has combined with the blood the redcap and blightguards have introduced into the stream here to make it particularly putrid. A creature that steps into the stream must succeed at a DC 18 Fortitude saving throw or be sickened for 1 minute. A creature that drinks the water must succeed at a DC 22 Fortitude saving throw or be nauseated for 30 minutes. The fey in this area are immune to this effect.

The trail running west leads to Naphexi's mire (area E), but the skulls of many large, fanged creatures line the way, issuing a grim warning to the curious.

Creatures: Tucked south of the bushes along the stream is a small camp the guardians have erected. Most of the blightguard enforcers are on patrol in the forest, but two remain on duty here along with their commander, Carthrel. The blightguards are unholy amalgamations of redcap and quickling, glued together with shreds of fungal gore. With quickling speed and redcap brutality, they are merciless enforcers of Arlantia's will.

The blighted redcap leader enters melee immediately. If the gang hears the PCs coming, the blightguards use Stealth to hide behind the bushes until the PCs come within range of their thorn throw ability. They then use their parasitic bond ability on any PC struck with a thorn before joining their leader in combat. The layout of the Blighted Depths is such that the blighted fey's fungal rejuvenation, which grants them fast healing 5, is always in effect.

CARTHREL

CR 11

XP 12,800

Male blighted redcap ranger 3 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 46, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 233)

CE Small fey

Init +10 (+12 in forests); **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +17 (+19 in forests)

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 20, flat-footed 18 (+2 deflection, +6 Dex, +1 dodge, +5 natural, +1 size)

hp 154 (11 HD; 8d8+3d10+102); fast healing 5

BLIGHTGUARD

Fort +14, **Ref** +16, **Will** +10

Defensive Abilities fungal rejuvenation; **DR** 10/cold iron and good; **Immune** disease, paralysis, poison, polymorph; **Resist** cold 10, electricity 10; **SR** 22

Weaknesses irreligious

OFFENSE

Speed 60 ft.

Melee Medium +2 *cold iron scythe* +18/+13 (2d4+16/×4), kick +10 (1d4+7)

Ranged thorn throw +14 (1d3+7)

Special Attacks combat style (two-handed weapon^{APG}), favored enemy (fey +2), parasitic bond

TACTICS

During Combat Carthrel is uncomplicated, simply lashing out with whatever weapons he has available until his enemies fall.

Morale Carthrel fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 24, **Dex** 23, **Con** 26, **Int** 16, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +7; **CMB** +13; **CMD** 32

Feats Cleave, Dodge, Endurance, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Toughness^B, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (scythe)

Skills Acrobatics +19 (+31 when jumping), Bluff +15, Climb +20, Escape Artist +19, Intimidate +15, Knowledge (nature) +17, Perception +17, Sense Motive +15, Stealth +25, Survival +15; **Racial Modifiers** +2 Knowledge (nature), +2 Perception, +2 Stealth

Languages Aklo, Common, Giant, Sylvan

SQ blighted unity, boot stomp, favored terrain (forest +2), heavy weapons, red cap, tainted blood, track +1, wild empathy +5

Gear Medium +2 *cold iron scythe*, *cloak of resistance* +1, *ring of protection* +2, copper dragon-hide gloves (worth 500 gp), set of platinum cutlery (worth 1,000 gp)

BLIGHTGUARDS (2)

CR 11

XP 12,800 each

Variant blighted redcap fighter 3 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 46, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 233)

CE Medium fey

Init +10; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +16

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 17, flat-footed 18 (+3 armor, +6 Dex, +1 dodge, +5 natural)

hp 154 each (11 HD; 8d8+3d10+102); fast healing 5

Fort +13, **Ref** +13, **Will** +11 (+1 vs. fear)

Defensive Abilities evasion, fungal rejuvenation; **DR** 10/cold iron and good; **Immune** disease, paralysis, poison, polymorph; **Resist** cold 10, electricity 10; **SR** 22

Weaknesses chimeric anatomy, irreligious

OFFENSE

Speed 80 ft.

Melee Large +1 *cold iron sickle* +16/+11 (1d8+12), kick +9 (1d6+11)

Ranged thorn throw +13 (1d6+11)

Special Attacks parasitic bond

TACTICS

Before Combat Blightguards neither sleep nor eat, standing guard at their posts until dispatched to a new duty.

During Combat In combat, blightguards prefer to remain mobile, relying on their unnatural speed and oversized weapons to whittle away at foes.

Morale Blightguards fight until slain.

STATISTICS

Str 24, **Dex** 23, **Con** 26, **Int** 14, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 17

Base Atk +7; **CMB** +14; **CMD** 31

Feats Dodge, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Mobility, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Toughness^B, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (sickle)

Skills Acrobatics +17 (+37 when jumping), Bluff +14, Climb +19, Escape Artist +18, Intimidate +14, Knowledge (nature) +15, Perception +16, Sense Motive +14, Stealth +19;

Racial Modifiers +2 Knowledge (nature), +2 Perception, +2 Stealth

Languages Aklo, Common, Sylvan

SQ armor training 1, blighted unity, boot stomp, heavy weapons, quickling speed, red cap, tainted blood

Gear +1 *leather armor*, *Large* +1 *cold iron sickle*

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Chimeric Anatomy (Ex) A blightguard gains the weaknesses of both its component fey types—quickling and redcap. If subject to a *slow* spell or effect, a blightguard loses access to its quickling speed ability and its fast healing, and is sickened for the effect's duration. If it fails a save for the redcap irreligious weakness, it loses access to its quickling speed in addition to gaining the frightened condition.

Quickling Speed (Su) Thanks to its quickling components, a blightguard moves with unnatural speed and grace that makes it difficult to target, increasing its base speed by 20 feet. Any time a blightguard moves at least 10 feet in a round, it gains concealment (20% miss chance) until the beginning of its next turn. This ability also grants the blightguard evasion (as per the rogue ability).

Treasure: Carthrel stashed the spoils from his latest raid in a burlap sack stuffed under some rocks near the stream's fork (Perception DC 22). The sack contains a pair of *dryad's sandals*^{UE} and 10 amber gemstones with leafy motifs carved into them (worth 200 gp each).

D4. NAPHEXI'S SHRINE

The enormous stone slabs arranged in a circular pattern here are covered in choking vines, creeping moss, and patches of slick, black fungus. Embedded into this foliage, as if deliberately lashed to each stone, are the scarred skeletons of humanoid creatures, some of which bear cloven feet. In the middle of the circle is a smaller, squat stone with a spidery rune carved on it.

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Once a sacred circle of standing stones where the Fangwood's fey held infrequent gatherings, this place is now a gruesome graveyard for the dozens of creatures Naphexi killed as part of her transformation ritual.

If the PCs inspect the shrine more closely and succeed at a DC 15 Heal check, they find that the skeletal creatures have been dead for at least several months—some for years. A character who succeeds at a DC 14 Knowledge (nature) check can identify them as satyrs and dryads, and with a successful DC 27 Knowledge (arcana) check, a PC determines that the scarring visible on the bones is the work of black dragon acid—likely from a very old black dragon. The symbol on the center stone can be identified as the unholy symbol of Cyth-V'sug, demon lord of fungus and parasites, with a successful DC 25 Knowledge (religion) check.

Creature: For 2 decades, this clearing has been home to Groger, a caterpillar-like fey creature called a remacera. Obsessed with transformation and metamorphosis, Groger journeyed to the blighted regions of the Fangwood to observe the spread and effects of the Darkblight, but the experience proved too disturbing for even his mind to appreciate. Thoroughly traumatized and overcome by guilt and anxiety, he mostly hides in the trees above sleeping or chewing numbly on leaves. He observes the actions of any newcomers out loud, sounding initially like and unseen narrator. If spotted or questioned, he continues to pretend he doesn't exist within the story, and simply narrates that the PCs "asked to the sky and the winds and the world itself." Despite his quirks, Groger likes having unblighted visitors, and answers questions as if they were asides in a novel, prefacing his answers with phrases like "Little did these strangers realize..."

Groger has largely escaped death and forceful conversion because Naphexi finds him amusing, and his vast knowledge of metamorphosis has helped guide her own rituals of transformation. The remacera knows little about the details of her transformation, only that she "sought painful journey of self-discovery, and found her destination."

Groger poses little challenge to the PCs (or to most of the Blighted Depths' denizens), and he hides or cowers if attacked. So long as the PCs deal with Groger peacefully, he eventually offers to sell them "immortality," insisting that the Blighted Depths are very dangerous and death is too abrupt an end to change and growth. For every 3,000 gp in magical treasures or unusual artifacts the PCs offer him (the caterpillar-beast has little care for coins or gems), he agrees to bite one person, promising that "so long as some trace of my wound remains, you will be able to shake off the burden of death" (see the Reincarnation supernatural ability in Groger's stat block below). He refrains from mentioning that his gift also transforms the recipient.

GROGER

CR 6

XP 2,400

Male remacera (*Pathfinder Campaign Setting: The First World, Realm of the Fey* 63)

CN Large fey

Init +5; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +14

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 15 (+1 Dex, +1 dodge, +7 natural, -1 size)

hp 85 (10d6+50)

Fort +8, **Ref** +8, **Will** +8

DR 10/cold iron; **Resist** acid 10, cold 10, fire 10

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee bite +13 (1d8+12 plus 2d6 sonic)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks new growth, reincarnation

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th; concentration +6)

3/day—*plant growth*

STATISTICS

Str 26, **Dex** 13, **Con** 20, **Int** 10, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 13

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +14; **CMD** 26 (can't be tripped)

Feats Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Acrobatics +14 (+18 when jumping), Climb +21, Diplomacy +9, Knowledge (history) +7, Linguistics +2, Perception +14, Perform (sing) +7, Stealth +10

Languages Common, First Speech, Draconic

SPECIAL ABILITIES

New Growth (Su) As a standard action, a remacera can force any creature within 400 feet to attempt a DC 16 Fortitude saving throw. If the target fails, it takes 5d6 points of damage and is sickened for 1d4 rounds as several tiny, larval remaceras suddenly burrow out of its skin. Once outside their host, the newborn remaceras are harmless, and attempt only to escape. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Reincarnation (Su) Any creature that dies prior to fully recovering from wounds inflicted by a remacera is immediately subject to the effects of the spell *reincarnate*, except that it does not matter whether the soul is willing and the effect is instantaneous rather than taking 1 hour. A slain remacera is subject to the same effect, save that it reappears 1d20 miles from where it died.

Treasure: With a careful examination of the bodies and a successful DC 25 Perception check, a PC finds a silver crown still affixed to one skull by overgrown roots. This is a *cat's eye crown*^{UE}. Groger has grown bored with these old baubles, and offers no protest if outsiders plunder this treasure from his home.

Development: If Wendel is allied with the PCs, he pops out of hiding and examines the shrine frantically, as if looking for any creatures he recognizes. Seeing none, he backs away from the formation slowly—for a quickling,

anyway—and shakes his head. “The evil one’s dragon—this is her doing, Wendel guesses. Wendel and his allies must be headed in the right direction, yes-yes-yes.”

D5. SLAUGHTERED SPRITE VILLAGE (CR 14)

Tiny dwellings made of latticed twigs and connecting vine bridges weave expertly through the trees here, but this sheltered alcove stands eerily still and silent. Slick, greasy fungus blooms on the trees’ trunks, and the miniature buildings are brittle and dilapidated, as if nothing had touched them in years. A few small, bleached bones and elongated skulls are visible through the detritus of the forest floor.

This was once Tanagrak, a large village of capricious sprites who served as attendants to Gendowyn and her palace, but immediately after Arlantia claimed the Fangwood, the evil dryad personally slaughtered every creature here with foul magic and wicked glee. Most of the sprites died in the first blast of Arlantia’s negative energy, but a few lingered. Those she tormented endlessly, trying to exact their conversion to the faith of her patron before they expired. Arlantia failed in this task, but the horrors she visited on the village infused it with haunting energy that remains today.

Finding all of the intact sprite bones here requires 30 minutes of searching, followed by a successful DC 28 Perception check (see the Destruction entry of the haunt below).

Creature: The aura of suffering here has drawn a nachzehrer named Gert, an undead commonly known as a fey vampire. He lurks behind the main structures of the haunted village, watching to see how newcomers confront the haunt (see below). If they seem weak, he simply attacks, but if they resolve the threat easily, he assumes his preferred guise as a willowy satyr and begs the PCs for protection in the dangerous forest, offering to tell them about dangers deeper in the Blighted Depths. He knows of the viper vines to the south (area D7), and the satyrs in the swamp (area D8), as well as the regular blightguard patrols (area D3), but has never visited the palace. He ultimately hopes to draw away a single victim and drain its blood in peace.

NACHZEHRER

CR 12

XP 19,200

hp 161 (see page 90)

Haunt: The sprites’ unquiet spirits are enraged by their torturous deaths. They blame all living creatures for their terrible demise at the hands of the evil dryad, and fly into a whirling rage when disturbed.



SPRITES OF TANAGRAK

WRATH OF FALLEN LIGHTS

CR 12

XP 19,200

CE persistent haunt (area D5)

Caster Level 12th

Notice Perception DC 30 (to hear the sounds of a thousand enraged, buzzing voices whispering “Murderer!” in Sylvan) **hp** 54; **Trigger** proximity; **Reset** 1 hour

Effect When intruders enter the village of slaughtered sprites, their angry spirits writhe and lash out, animating their bones into a slashing maelstrom. This maelstrom forms a ring large enough to encircle intruders (up to a 30-foot radius), and remains for 12 rounds. Creatures attempting to pass through the ring take 12d6 points of damage (Reflex DC 19 half); half of this is slashing damage, while the other half is negative energy damage.

The maelstrom also creates enchanting lights. Every round, creatures within the ring must succeed at a DC 13 Will saving throw or become fascinated and walk into the deadly maelstrom. A creature that takes any damage is immediately freed from the fascination effect.

Destruction All of the sprites’ bones in the area must be collected and buried in a mound free from any fungus, moss, or other blighted material. Alternatively, Arlantia’s defeat quiets the spirits here.

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Treasure: The wooden structures here are primarily built 10 to 20 feet above the ground. They are sized for Diminutive creatures, but many of the floors have fallen out, so accessing them to search their contents is relatively easy. Although the sprites' dwellings are dilapidated, the trinkets they used to decorate the inside of their homes while they lived are still intact. Climbing the trees to reach the dwellings through mundane means requires a successful DC 26 Climb check.

After 15 minutes searching the dwellings and a successful DC 30 Perception check, the PCs find the following: three *potions of cure serious wounds*; an *ebony fly figurine of wondrous power*; and assorted gems, jewelry, and statuettes worth a total of 2,750 gp.



ACCRESSIEL CREST

D6. ACCRESSIEL PALACE (CR 14)

Spongy black tendrils grow up and over the tumbledown marble walls of a building that once stood in this clearing. Here and there through the greasy fungus, bits of former glory shine through in broken mosaics and gilded decorations.

Gendowyn's palace once stood here—a glorious structure raised and outfitted courtesy of her powerful earth magic, and refined in its final days by dwarven artisans. Here, members of the Accessiel Court gathered to curry favor with the powerful glaistig. Comfortable accommodations, many of them sculpted from living plants, housed her various handmaidens, guards, and messengers, but now nothing stands beyond crumbling walls and her throne of living ash wood.

Arlantia crafted this throne from a cutting of her own tree long ago in an attempt to please her queen, and the glorious, peacock-like fan of branches and leaves still retains a powerful connection to Arlantia's now-corrupted tree. Creatures that use the *tree stride* spell to pass through the throne are automatically shunted to Arlantia's glen (area F). The throne is thoroughly infested with the Darkblight, however, and creatures using *tree stride* or similar effects to journey to Arlantia's glen are automatically exposed to the disease (see the sidebar on page 7). If the PCs manage to recover one of the rings of *Dryad's Song* from Naphexi, they can render themselves briefly immune to the Darkblight, allowing them to pass through the throne without danger.

If the PCs don't investigate the throne themselves, even after speaking with Mireena (see area D8), Wendel approaches it warily and says, "Look-look-look. The seat of our former queen, where the evil one stepped over her to seize power. The plant-chair is strange. Infested, yes,

but not like the rest. Oh, but Wendel can't put his finger on it. Wendel's allies should examine, yes-yes-yes, they should examine."

Creature: The palace ruins are guarded by Gendowyn's former enforcer, a nameless ankou who vastly prefers serving his newer, more bloodthirsty mistress. The cold-blooded assassin lurks in the tree branches high above, watching trespassers and preparing to report their presence to Arlantia. He attacks only if intruders investigate the throne, casting *deeper darkness* before conjuring enough shadow duplicates to confront each PC one-on-one.

ANKOU

CR 14

XP 38,400

hp 133 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 4 10*)

D7. CANOPIED PATH (CR 15)

Blighted foliage—greasy vines, tree branches dripping with black moss, and mushrooms blooming from rotted trunks of a dying orchard—closes in around the narrow pathways here. An ominous hush fills in the gloom.

The Darkblight choked this ancient orchard long ago, creating a maze of narrow paths, and thanks to the density of the diseased foliage on all sides, the lighting here is dim even in the middle of the day. The fruit is half-rotten, but edible.

Creatures: Two viper vines lurk among the foliage here. They are descended from plants in Arlantia's own vineyard; she specially cultivated resistance to her Darkblight in these guardians and transformed the formerly life-giving plants into vicious predators with a combination of fey and infernal magic. The creatures prey on anything traveling to area D8—the only nearby potable water source. The viper vines regularly preyed on the creatures that traveled to see Naphexi. Since the dragon has moved on, however, traffic has been lighter, and the vines are hungry indeed.

VIPER VINES (2)

CR 13

XP 25,600 each

hp 190 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2 279*)

Treasure: The viper vines recently ambushed and devoured a pair of satyr heroes from the Northern Fangwood who intended to end the Darkblight. Each vine contains a partially decomposed corpse with some surviving magic items which, while dirty, still function normally. One vine contains a corpse wearing a *cloak of resistance +3*, and one contains an *unfettered shirt*^{UE}.

D8. NEREID'S REFUGE (CR 14)

A murky swamp dotted with sharp, moss-covered rocks stagnates in the southeast corner of this sprawling clearing. To the southeast, a waterfall tumbles over a tall outcropping, filling the pool that immediately surrounds it and feeding the swamp beyond. The surrounding swamp and foliage are covered in greasy blight-growths, but the deep pool is a healthy blue-green and seems to have avoided significant contamination.

This swamp served as Naphexi's lair for many years until she outgrew it, about a century ago. Now, because the waterfall and small surrounding pool are free from any serious infection, they shelter a paranoid nereid.

As the PCs approach this area, they hear a low-pitched chorus of voices singing an odd, repetitive melody in Abyssal. Those who can understand the song can attempt DC 25 Perception checks to hear the repeated lyrics: "Our lady in the lake/Mistress of the mired marsh/May our swords to her be true/In this life and far, far beyond."

If Wendel is allied with the party, he pops out of hiding, listens carefully to the singing, and scratches his ears in confusion. "This dedication surprises Wendel, yes-yes-yes," he says. "Wendel did not hear that Naphexi called herself the lady in the lake, and Wendel asked many creatures about that evil dragon. This seems odd—yes it does—odd indeed. Wendel recommends caution."

Creatures: The Abyssal singing is coming from four blighted satyrs who ring the area's waterfall and seem to be serenading it. In reality, the nereid Mireena is standing within the waterfall, using her transparency ability to remain invisible, although the PCs likely can't see her (and Wendel certainly can't).

Mireena once laired downstream, close to Naphexi's new lair. The dragon's arrival brought additional troops and new scrutiny to her hidden hollow, so the fey journeyed upstream, ironically settling in the former lair of the dragon who'd just exiled her from her own home. She has survived uninfected for so long only because the Darkblight merely pollutes water, and Mireena herself, already a little paranoid when Arlantia's takeover began, has since grown much better at hiding and manipulating others. Much closer to Arlantia's seat of power, she has now grown far more paranoid, and even beguiled the four satyrs here into believing she is Arlantia's agent, compelling them to protect her from other blighted fey.

As soon as the satyrs see the PCs, they assume that the PCs are threats to the nereid and go into a rage and attack. For her part, Mireena stays invisible within the waterfall, emerging only after the PCs defeat the satyrs.

BLIGHTED SATYRS (4)

CR 10

XP 9,600 each

Male blighted satyr barbarian 4 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 46, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 241)

CE Medium fey

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +30

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 12, flat-footed 18 (+3 armor, +3 Dex, +1 dodge, +7 natural, -2 rage)

hp 186 each (12 HD; 8d8+4d12+124); fast healing 5

Fort +15, **Ref** +10, **Will** +12

Defensive Abilities fungal rejuvenation, trap sense +1, uncanny dodge; **DR** 10/cold iron and good; **Immune** disease, paralysis, poison, polymorph; **Resist** cold 10, electricity 10; **SR** 21

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft.

Melee +1 *greatsword* +18/+13 (2d6+13/19-20), horns +11 (1d6+4)

Ranged thorn throw +11 (1d4+8)

Special Attacks parasitic bond, pipes, rage (17 rounds/day), rage powers (knockback, powerful blow +2)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th; concentration +12)

At will—*charm person* (DC 15), *dancing lights*, *ghost sound* (DC 14), *sleep* (DC 15), *suggestion* (DC 17)
1/day—*fear* (DC 18), *summon nature's ally III*

TACTICS

During Combat The blighted satyrs use their superior speed to keep out of reach and hurl thorns until they form a parasitic bond with a creature, then charge into melee against that creature, which now takes a portion of the damage it deals to blighted satyrs with which it shares the bond.

Morale Blighted satyrs are fanatics and fight to the death.

Base Statistics When not raging, the blighted satyr's statistics are **AC** 24, touch 14, flat-footed 20; **hp** 162; **Fort** +13, **Will** +10; **Melee** +1 *greatsword* +16/+11 (2d6+11/19-20), horns +9 (1d6+3); **Ranged** thorn throw +11 (1d4+6); **Str** 22, **Con** 24; **CMB** +14; **CMD** 27.

STATISTICS

Str 26, **Dex** 17, **Con** 28, **Int** 12, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 19

Base Atk +8; **CMB** +16; **CMD** 29

Feats Dodge, Mobility, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Perception), Toughness, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (greatsword)

Skills Acrobatics +7 (+15 when jumping), Bluff +15, Diplomacy +15, Disguise +9, Intimidate +19, Knowledge (nature) +12, Perception +30, Perform (wind instruments) +19, Stealth +20, Survival +17; **Racial Modifiers** +2 Knowledge (nature), +6 Perception, +4 Perform, +6 Stealth

Languages Common, Sylvan

SQ blighted unity, fast movement, tainted blood

Combat Gear *potion of blur*, *potion of cure serious wounds*;

Other Gear +1 *greatsword*, *bracers of armor* +3, necklace of opals and black dragon scales (worth 1,000 gp)

MIREENA

CR 10

XP 9,600

Nereid (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 198)

hp 126

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BESTIARY

Treasure: Mireena gives the PCs a *woodlands' ingress* token (see the sidebar on page 23); or, if they frighten her away, they can locate the abandoned token behind her waterfall.

Mireena also keeps a stash of potions that she might be convinced to give the PCs; if she is friendly, a PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Diplomacy check convinces the nereid to give them a single potion. If the check's result exceeds the DC by 10 or more, Mireena gives the PCs as many potions as they wish. Mireena has the following potions: a *potion of barkskin* (CL 12), three *potions of cure serious wounds*, a *potion of remove blindness/deafness*, a *potion of remove curse*, a *potion of remove disease*, and a *potion of shield of faith* (CL 12).

The potions are in a small satchel behind her waterfall, but if she flees the area, she takes the potions with her.

Development: Once the PCs defeat the satyrs, Mireena cautiously emerges from the waterfall, her hands held up nonthreateningly. If the PCs make no move to attack her, she addresses them. She maintains her beguiling aura—partially out of paranoia, but as much because she prefers the blunt answers given by enchanted onlookers.

"You are outsiders to this terrible realm, I see," the watery fey says, her assessing gaze sweeping up and down. "Do you know the horror upon which you've stumbled? You are strong—perhaps it's the horror you seek to defeat. Or perhaps you are agents of the Darkblight. Tell me, which is it?"

At this point, Mireena holds a shred of hope that the PCs might wish to help the blighted forest (or at least help her personally), even though they defeated the blighted satyrs who were protecting her. She is unsure of the PCs' motivations, however, and so her starting attitude is indifferent. The PCs can explain their mission to her, assure her that they mean her no harm, or make any other reasonably ingratiating argument to her to improve her attitude to friendly, though Mireena's paranoia makes this a difficult challenge (Diplomacy DC 30). If Wendel travels with the party, he vouches for the PCs; this provides a +3 bonus on any Diplomacy checks made to influence Mireena. Alternatively, the PCs can play to Mireena's gentle but substantial ego with flattery (Bluff DC 30), or by serenading her with songs about their devotion to her safety, their dedication to slaying Naphexi and ending the Darkblight, or any other relevant subject (Perform DC 20).



MIREENA

If the PCs fail to sway Mireena with words, she still agrees to speak with them, but demands some payment in the form of protections—either the equipment carried by two of her "guards" or else a magic item worth at least 20,000 gp that she could reasonably use to protect herself. If the PCs threaten Mireena or attack her, she fights back, but tries to escape into the woods at her earliest opportunity.

Unlike with Wendel, if the PCs chase Mireena away, she will not return, though she leaves her *woodlands' ingress* hidden behind her waterfall (see the Treasure section above). In this case, the PCs can learn much of the information that follows from interrogating a satyr,

albeit from that creature's perspective.

Once the PCs have either improved Mireena's attitude or fed her ego, they can ask her questions. If the PCs ask no questions, Mireena simply offers them her token, as detailed on page 22.

Why were you allied with those blighted satyrs? "I was never *allied* with those things," she says, lounging languidly. "Ghastly creatures, and that was before the Darkblight stole their minds. No, they were useful lackeys. It was fortuitous, really—the dragon left her lair, I was fleeing for my life, and here were those satyrs, bored and playing obnoxious little tunes on their pipes. I simply took advantage of their Darkblight-addled brains and convinced them to protect me. It was all I could think to do to keep myself safe, and for a time, it worked." She sighs, almost wistful for a moment.

"Ah, well, I knew I couldn't keep them under my thumb forever. I'm only glad it was you who bested them instead of some other blighted beast—there are so many in these depths who'd gladly see a nereid dead. Or worse: infested."

Isn't this supposed to be Naphexi's lair? "It's a temporary solution. I simply had nowhere else to flee, and this swamp was newly vacated. Tell me you'd do it differently, were you me. It doesn't mean I support Naphexi or Arlantia. Far from it; I want them and their terrible Darkblight out of the Fangwood as much as anyone."

Do you know where Naphexi is now? "Those satyrs' brains were nothing but crude jokes and bad songs, but they did crow about the dragon embracing the Darkblight to please her mistress. I've no idea how, though, since the Darkblight only transforms fey. Everyone else, it just makes them curl up and die. All I knew for certain is that Naphexi claimed my former hiding place—a lovely, wet canyon a few miles downstream from here—as her new home decades ago, so I fled to her former nest, since no one wants to wander into a dragon's lair, even an abandoned one."

Have you heard anything about the whereabouts or status of Gendowyn? Mireena's brow wrinkles in confusion for a moment until realization hits her. "Oh my... Yes, Gendowyn had the most magnificent parties once upon a time. Gendowyn, the Fangwood's earth goddess." Mireena sighs, practically overcome with sadness. "No, I don't know anything about what might have become of her. She disappeared long ago, and though many fey have cried out to her for her help, it has never come. I assume this Darkblight has taken her from us for good."

If the PCs mention that they're on a mission to find and free Gendowyn, Mireena rues that she cannot be optimistic for such hopes, but a bit of a sparkle dances in her eyes. In this case, she explains how difficult it will be to find Arlantia's tree and offers the PCs her personal token, as detailed below.

Why aren't you infected with the Darkblight? "The Darkblight lives in the trees and plants," she smiles smugly. "I am a spirit of water. The only way they could infect me would be to find me and lash me to one of their twisted trees, and I am very, very good at hiding. The only other way would be to teleport through the trees as a dryad does, but I'm not fool enough to use my little trinket and damn myself to a slow death."

How can we find Arlantia's tree? Mireena chuckles darkly and shivers a little, pulling her dripping shawl tightly around her arms. "Dearests, only fools go hunting for their own deaths. The dryad has locked it away behind miles of twisting, hungry briar and layers of protective magic. You'll not find it simply walking the forest's paths. But I remember her as a sapling, vain and excited, and ever eager to please her queen. She grew Gendowyn's throne from a cutting of her own tree, and the two still remain bonded—tree and throne. Arlantia's supplicants still reach her by striding through the throne. Of course, it's as infested with the Darkblight as anything in these woods; stepping through it infests you with that corruption. If you aren't one of Arlantia's servants before you approach her tree, you will be when you arrive."

Mireena quiets, and a flash of realization crosses her face. With a polite gesture, she excuses herself and steps behind the waterfall. After a brief moment, she reemerges with a small, smooth stone of polished larimar in her hand (see the Treasure section on page 22).

"This is my personal token—an heirloom handed down to me from my mother's ancestors. When touched, it allows several creatures to enter a tree, as a dryad does, and move into other trees of its kind with just a thought. It is dangerous to use in these blighted woods, and I have little use for it now beyond sentimentality. I don't know how to protect you from the Darkblight itself, but I do know Naphexi traveled to Arlantia's side frequently without hardship. If you can find out how the dragon

NEW MAGIC ITEM

Below are details of *woodlands' ingress*, a magic item that Mireena has can help the PCs access Arlantia's tree. Very few of these items exist. Most are the creation of fey creatures and serve as matrilineal heirlooms, helping fey who lack the ability to traverse long distances remain in contact with their allies.

WOODLANDS' INGRESS

PRICE
18,000 GP

SLOT none

CL 10th

WEIGHT —

AURA moderate conjuration

This small, smooth stone is made of a delicate, light blue larimar polished to a sheen. It glows very faintly, and its edges are rimmed with delicate Sylvan script of couplets that exalt life in a primeval forest. Once per day, the bearer can say the command word and designate up to 10 creatures (including herself) to be affected by a *tree stride* spell, allowing each creature affected to enter a tree at some point in the next 10 hours and teleport as per the spell. Each affected creature can teleport only once, after which it no longer gains the benefit of *tree stride* until targeted by a *woodlands' ingress* again.

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS

COST 9,000 GP

Craft Wondrous Item, *tree stride*

did so, then you may be able to reach Arlantia's Pestilent Palace. If those hobgoblins could manage it, certainly you can as well."

What hobgoblins? "Curious visitors, they. Hobgoblins normally hate our kind, but a half-dozen arrived just a few days ago, begging an audience with Arlantia. They tromped through the woods like lost children until Naphexi secreted them away underground, and I haven't seen the poor beasts since. Likely eaten by a jubjub bird, I imagine."

As the PCs prepare to depart, the smallest hint of desperation creeps across Mireena's face as she bids them farewell. "I don't allow myself the luxury of hope any longer. I doubt very much I will see any of you alive again. But perhaps your deaths will be mercifully quick and painless."

If the PCs try to coax Mireena into helping them find the tree, she refuses their request, stating that she believes the waterfall is the safest place for her. If the PCs are allied with Wendel, who has studied this portion of the woods extensively, he can point them toward area D6, where the ruins of Arlantia's palace—and her throne—stand.

Story Award: If Mireena is persuaded that the PCs are on her side and gives them her *woodlands' ingress*, award the party 38,400 XP.

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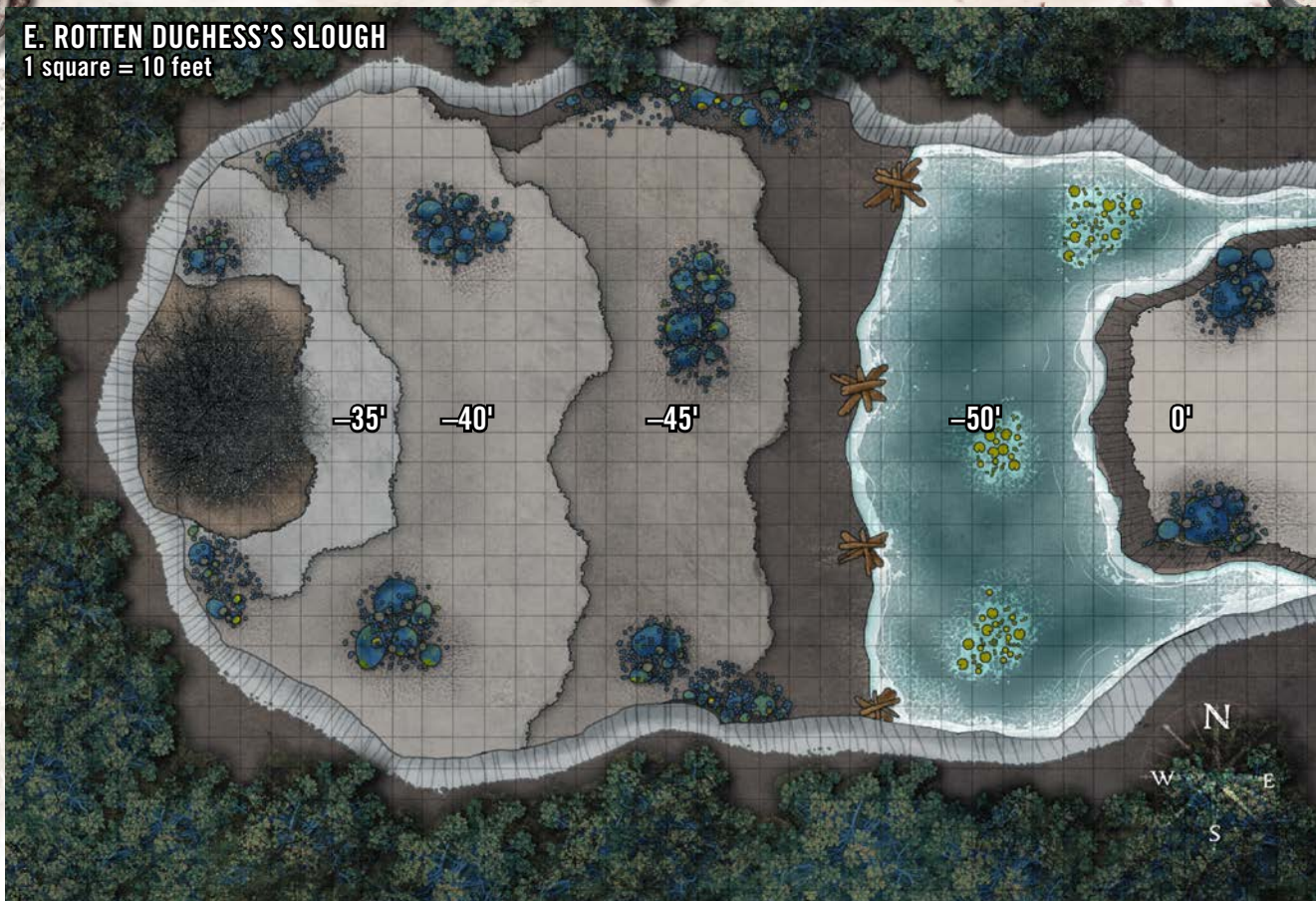
CYTH-V'SUG

FEY BOONS
AND BANES

BESTIARY

E. ROTTEN DUCHESS'S SLOUGH

1 square = 10 feet



E. ROTTEN DUCHESS'S SLOUGH (CR 17)

The stream here cascades into a wide, marshy canyon choked with ferns and fungus. The hanging stench of stagnation and rot makes breathing a chore. Beyond the jagged outcropping at the canyon's eastern entrance is a thick, swampy pool of greenish-black morass that gives way to a muddy shore covered in slick algae and slime. Past this foul slough, a rising, rocky shore is dotted with patches of mushrooms the size of trees. Beyond it all, a faux cave of woven wicker stands draped in unearthly growths and fungal strands. Along the canyon's sides, lashed to the walls with rotten vines and vegetation, are a variety of corpses, some skeletal and others still dripping with fluids.

Any PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Knowledge (nature) check recognizes the more recently deceased bodies as those of a variety of fey creatures. With a successful DC 20 Knowledge (local) check, a PC recognizes many of the older skeletons as those of dwarves, and notices that several of the remains still bear amulets with the seal of Kraggodan (this jewelry is mundane and so damaged that it is effectively valueless).

The terrain in the Rotten Duchess's slough is varied. For the GM's convenience, the following subsections detail the slough's different regions in the order the PCs

are likely to encounter them for purposes of the combat that takes place here (see Creature on page 25).

Outcropping: PCs entering the slough from the Blighted Depths do so from a cliff-like outcropping of pockmarked limestone at the slough's east end, just south of where the river flows into the slough. The outcropping's surface is flat, and it stands 50 feet above the swamp below. The outcropping's northern and southern edges are each home to a cluster of mushrooms, with the fungi's size ranging from a few feet to almost 10 feet tall. The middle of each cluster contains a shrieker mushroom (*Core Rulebook* 416). A PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Knowledge (nature) check recognizes the shrieker mushrooms and their tendency to alert other creatures if disturbed. If a shrieker mushroom detects the PCs, its cries alert Naphexi, who begins to stalk toward them (see Creature on page 25). Climbing up or down the outcropping requires a successful DC 20 Climb check.

Swamp: The water in the slough is treated either as normal, as a deep bog, or as a shallow bog (*Core Rulebook* 427), depending on where a character is standing. At the base of the outcropping, the water is about 45 feet deep, but it quickly becomes shallower; 20 feet from the outcropping, the water is only about 4 feet deep and counts as a deep bog. Floating on top of this bog are three large patches of lily pads, which are slick but otherwise

considered normal terrain. Along the swamp's western edge, the water gives way to a 30-foot-wide shoreline covered in a 1-foot-deep slurry of mud and decaying plant matter, which functions as a shallow bog. Along the border between the deep bog and the shoreline are several large piles of driftwood about 4 feet tall that can serve as partial cover.

Platforms: To the west of the swamp, the ground rises in three ascending stone platforms. The platforms' sheer edges are 5 feet tall and slick with damp moss and slime; they require a successful DC 15 Climb check to traverse or a successful

DC 20 Acrobatics check to leap up. The platforms otherwise function as normal terrain, and each has multiple large clusters of mushrooms similar to the clusters described in Outcropping on page 24 (though these clusters do not contain shrieker mushrooms).

Warren: The wicker warren in the slough's western end is Naphexi's den. It's 30 feet high and about 70 feet wide with a 40-foot opening. Its walls are about 2 feet thick (hardness 5, hp 240, break DC 26). Naphexi keeps her hoard here (see the Treasure section on page 26).

Creature: The black dragon Naphexi has made herself quite comfortable in this swampy canyon. She used the large pool here as an enormous cauldron to immerse herself in as part of her long transformation into a fungal creature. Shortly after her transformation, the dragon met with Arlantia, who gifted her dominion over the fey of the surface forests, even if the dryad didn't quite bestow the respect upon the dragon that Naphexi felt she had earned.

When the PCs arrive, Naphexi is churning disdainfully in her warren, but if she detects the approaching adventurers (either thanks to her shrieker mushroom guardians or her own prodigious Perception skill), she emerges to lord over the lesser creatures that would dare impose upon her home.

"Reeking flesh bags! What manner of base intruders wander here uninvited, tainting the glorious home of Naphexi, Rotting Duchess of the Fangwood? You are not borne of Darkblight—the blighted share a mind and good sense alongside it. Present tribute to your duchess or your filthy flesh I will flense from your bones, and your miserable carcasses will be next to adorn my walls!"

Naphexi's mortal flesh is half rotted away, revealing fungal growths and mycelia quivering and pulsing underneath. Her demand for tribute is disingenuous, as she already plans to devour the interloping PCs to sate her anger and frustration over the disrespect she perceives



NAPHEXI

from the Pestilent Palace's hierarchy. However, if the PCs offer her one or more magic items worth at least 15,000 gp in total, she indulges in a few minutes of distraction before launching an all-out attack on them. If the PCs do not offer tribute, or if they insult her at any point, Naphexi simply attacks.

Answers to some questions the PCs might ask Naphexi are below.

Duchess? Why do you say you're a duchess?

Naphexi's upper lip curls as she roars in anger. "It is my rightful title! My gift from Her Wretchedness, the Princess Arlantia! It is less than I have

earned—I, who should be my lady's herald. I, who will see the day when I alight from Arlantia's side with orders to visit the Darkblight upon all life on this world!"

What happened to your skin? Naphexi glances lovingly down at her body and grins maniacally at the PCs. "Glorious, is it not? The very expression of our lord's favor! Flesh, even that of a dragon, is impermanent. I have become so much more thanks to our Prince of the Blasted Heath—and his princess, Her Wretchedness Arlantia, ruler of the Darkblight."

Where is Arlantia? "You are not worthy of Her Wretchedness's presence. She is far below in her Pestilent Palace, in her sanctuary Arhlantu—the very heart of the Darkblight. There she communes with our lord, preparing to draw the veil of Darkblight over all the world. You are small and impermanent things. You cannot stop her."

How did you visit Arlantia without succumbing to the Darkblight? "When I was less than I am now, my glorious princess gifted me a token so her Darkblight would not dull my fangs. But now I can come and go as I see fit, and those who seek to prostrate themselves before Her Wretchedness must first beg my favor." Her maw parts into a jagged smile. "Not that I am merciful enough to grant it."

Where is Gendowyn? "Gendowyn? You mean that pretender to the Fangwood's throne? That caged moth, who once had all the gnats of this land bowing at her feet? She is Arlantia's greatest trophy, held deep in the tunnels below. She yet lives, if only because the dead are gifted respite from suffering."

After she humors the PCs, Naphexi screams, "And now your lives are mine—to the princess's glory!" before attacking.

NAPHEXI

CR 17

XP 76,800

Female fungal very old black dragon (see page 56)

hp 250

THE CORRUPTED ARTIFACT

Channeling powerful magic from Cyth-V'sug, Arlantia infused tainting necromancy into the legendary *Dryad's Song*—once the symbol of Gendowyn's authority—vastly weakening the glaistieg and locking her in a deathlike slumber. The stat block below represents how the artifact functions when the PCs first come across it. The PCs must find the artifact's missing rings to access its full power and eventually free Gendowyn. For the uncorrupted version of this artifact, see the *Dryad's Song* section on page 49.

DRYAD'S SONG (CORRUPTED)

MAJOR
ARTIFACT

SLOT none

CL 20th

WEIGHT 2 lbs.

AURA strong transmutation and necromancy

This tarnished gold scepter's ends are shaped into sickly, withered-looking leaves. The scepter's rod has four slots, into which four large rings can be placed. Each ring is engraved with a phrase in Abyssal, and can be placed upon or removed from the scepter as a standard action.

Ring 1: "Princess of the Blasted Heath."

Ring 2: "Shall stand proud to station earned."

Ring 3: "Moss and rot shall grow unchecked."

Ring 4: "'Til all hands bear the sin they've earned."

The corrupted *Dryad's Song* grants some limited control over the Darkblight. With a single ring, the bearer can cast *entangle* and *wood shape* each 3/day. With two rings, the bearer can also cast *blight*, *diminish plants*, *plant growth*, and *tree stride* each 1/day. With three rings, the bearer can also cast *black tentacles* 1/day, animating the fungal matter in the area in lieu of creating extradimensional tendrils. With all four rings, the bearer can recite the full poem on the scepter as a full-round action to purge a single creature within 60 feet of the Darkblight's taint, as if she had successfully cast *remove curse* and *remove disease*—even removing the blighted fey template from a target creature (unwilling fey can resist this effect with a successful DC 28 Will save). All of these spell-like abilities affect only fungus and plants infected with the Darkblight.

A single ring on its own maintains some control over the Darkblight—reading a ring's phrase as a standard action grants the creature holding it and up to nine other creatures she can see immunity to Darkblight infestation for 1 hour. A single ring does nothing to reverse the effects of Darkblight already infesting a creature.

DESTRUCTION

If the blighted dryad Arlantia is killed, *Dryad's Song* slowly reverts to its original state.

Treasure: Naphexi's warren holds her vast hoard, scattered among the heaped fungus and moss that serve as her bedding. The following magic items make up the bulk of her hoard: a *belt of physical perfection* +2, a suit of *celestial armor*, a *dagger of venom*, and a *dragonslayer's shield*^{UE} (all leftover from a would-be dragonslayer from Lastwall); two greasy vials that each contain a dose of *dust of disappearance*; a suit of dwarven plate; a *holy staff* topped with a cloudy emerald; a *luckblade* (Naphexi expanded the last remaining *wish* spell as part of her transformation, but it still imparts a luck bonus to its master); a set of *marvelous pigments*; and a bag of what appear to be bloodstained gold amulets of house sigils. There are 10 sigils in total, and a PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Knowledge (local) check can tell that some are clearly of dwarven make, and represent families from Kraggodan, while several others are from human houses, likely from families in Molthune and Nirmathas. The sigils are worth 2,000 gp total, or 2,500 gp in Kraggodan. The hoard also contains 5,812 sp, 8,408 gp, and 126 pp.

With a successful DC 28 Perception check, a PC finds a large, polished mahogany box shoved underneath all of the coins and a thin layer of sticky moss. The locked box (Disable Device DC 35) contains a *scroll of ablativ barrier*^{UC}, three *scrolls of darkvision*, two *scrolls of gaseous form*, two *scrolls of heroism*, and a *scroll of hold monster* (all CL 11th); plus a *scroll of force cage*, a *scroll of foresight*, and a *scroll of power word stun* (all CL 17th).

Finally, a tarnished, gold ring hangs from a simple tin chain, high above her bed. This ring comes from the corrupted *Dryad's Song* (see the Development section).

Development: In addition to her vast hoard, Naphexi once kept the four rings of *Dryad's Song* (see the sidebar), allowing her to escort messengers and supplicants to Arlantia without sentencing them to a slow, painful death via the Darkblight. Over the years, three have ended up in others' hands—the quickling Meril (area G4), the pech Orellie (area H4), and Taurgreth's hobgoblin commandos (area H5)—but a single ring remains here, inscribed with the words "Princess of the Blasted Heath." While this ring isn't as powerful a weapon over the Darkblight as the full *Dryad's Song*, when the script on it is read aloud, it is enough to render up to 10 creatures immune to potential Darkblight infection for 1 hour.

If the quickling Wendel notices the PCs examining the oversized ring, he crowds into their personal space to examine it himself, quickly chattering in delight "Oh, pretty-pretty-pretty! Yes indeed! It's just like the one grandmother took long-long ago! Said it can protect us, yes she did! Keep us safe-safe-safe. But this one has a different lyric than grandma's ever did. Different magic? Same? Why did serpent have grandma's bracelet? Meril is supposed to wear it!"

Story Award: If the PCs discover the first ring from *Dryad's Song*, award them 9,600 XP.

F. ARLANTIA'S GLEN (CR 16)

The overwhelming centerpiece of this eerie clearing is an enormous, ancient, terribly blighted ash tree so tall it blots out the sun and wide enough to dwarf the girth of any other nearby trees. With withered, strangely marked bark that looks more akin to rotting skin and drooping branches that weep putrid mold, this tree casts an ominous pall over the entire sickly meadow. Beyond this 100-foot-wide clearing, as far as the eye can see, grotesque blooms of fungus spring up amid an angry briar.

This clearing is located about a mile northwest of the Accessiel Palace (area D6), whose throne is the only reliable way to travel here. The enormous tree at the center marks the entrance to Arlantia's Pestilent Palace. Once the dryad's bonded tree, it still grows unnaturally tall and strong by virtue of its connection to the realm's princess, but Arlantia herself has long since shed her dependence on that single tree. Although the towering tree casts a dark pall over the area, the light here is normal.

The markings on the tree's bark are actually runes written vertically in Abyssal. The runes spell out the same repeated phrase: "The Princess of the Blasted Heath—long may she reign."

At the tree's western base, two gnarled roots form a thumb-sized opening that reveals an inky blackness beyond (Perception DC 20; see the Development section). Above the opening is carved the same rune that appeared on the center stone in area D4. Anyone who recognized that rune or who succeeds at a DC 20 Knowledge (religion) check knows that this is the Cyth-V'sug's unholy symbol. If the PCs fail to discover this opening, Wendel may point it out to them—getting his fingers stuck in the hole in the process.

Creature: Standing guard in front of this tree is Quenzal, an ancient jubjub bird—a titanic predator from the First World—that served as Gendowyn's pet and guardian for eons. The Darkblight has long since warped its mind, and Arlantia has coaxed the titan into becoming her abused watchdog. Quenzal's adaptive defense has otherwise protected it from the Darkblight, but it remains easily cowed by any blighted fey, as well as by Naphexi. It eagerly attacks any other creatures that approach Arlantia's tree.

QUENZAL

CR 16

XP 76,800

Advanced jubjub bird (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 290, 157)

hp 270

Development: Quenzal wears the corrupted artifact *Dryad's Song* (see the sidebar for more details about this artifact) on a collar-like chain around its neck. While the artifact normally has four golden rings on it, now only four

empty grooves remain. The PCs likely detect the artifact's strong aura of transmutation and necromancy and can determine its properties (including its tainted nature, its original nature, and the fact that its rings are missing) with a successful DC 30 Spellcraft check. The artifact has some control over the Darkblight and plants infused with the creeping rot, and Arlantia originally entrusted the artifact to the stewardship of the dragon Naphexi, who used the rod and its rings to protect herself from the otherworldly infection and escort petitioners to meet with Arlantia. After the dragon's transformation into a fungal creature, she lost interest in the bauble and lashed it to Quenzal's neck for safekeeping in much the same way a careless homeowner might hide her key under a rock.

Dryad's Song is also the same size and shape as the concealed hole in Arlantia's tree. Inserting it like a key causes the opening to grow into a 10-foot-wide entryway leading underground.

Regardless of whether the PCs determine its properties, when Wendel sees anyone examining *Dryad's Song*, he stares at the scepter in slack-jawed amazement. "That-that-that rod! That scepter-thing! It can't be, but somehow it is. That's *Dryad's Song*. It's an ancient artifact of the Fangwood. All of the forest's fey know it by sight; yes-yes-yes, it is of Gendowyn's panoply. It can call all of the Fangwood's dryads to arms, and turn the trees upon trespassers like savage dogs! Oh, but its rings are missing! And what's this? It smells foul! Foul-wrong-blasphemous!" If Wendel doesn't accompany the PCs, the party members can learn the gist of the history given below with a successful DC 30 Knowledge (history) or Knowledge (local) check.

A PC can attempt a DC 15 Intelligence check to realize that the artifact—a focus for Gendowyn's power—is likely related to whatever Arlantia has done to imprison the powerful fey. If the PCs have difficulty realizing the artifact's importance in freeing Gendowyn, Wendel might extrapolate aloud that if *Dryad's Song* was once used to extend Gendowyn's control over the Fangwood, this corrupted version might have some influence over the Darkblight (though the party will need to locate the artifact's rings before it can serve this function).

Story Award: Award the party 25,600 XP for discovering Arlantia's tree and eventually gaining entry.

PART 2: THE PESTILENT PALACE

As a dryad, Arlantia began her life bound to a tree of the Fangwood, and even now that she is freed from this connection—instead being bound to the Darkblight itself—she still views this gnarled ash as her home. After tearing down much of the Accessiel Palace, Arlantia turned her magic and her new slaves toward digging her a sprawling realm among the roots of her tree, and in the centuries since, the Pestilent Palace has evolved into a

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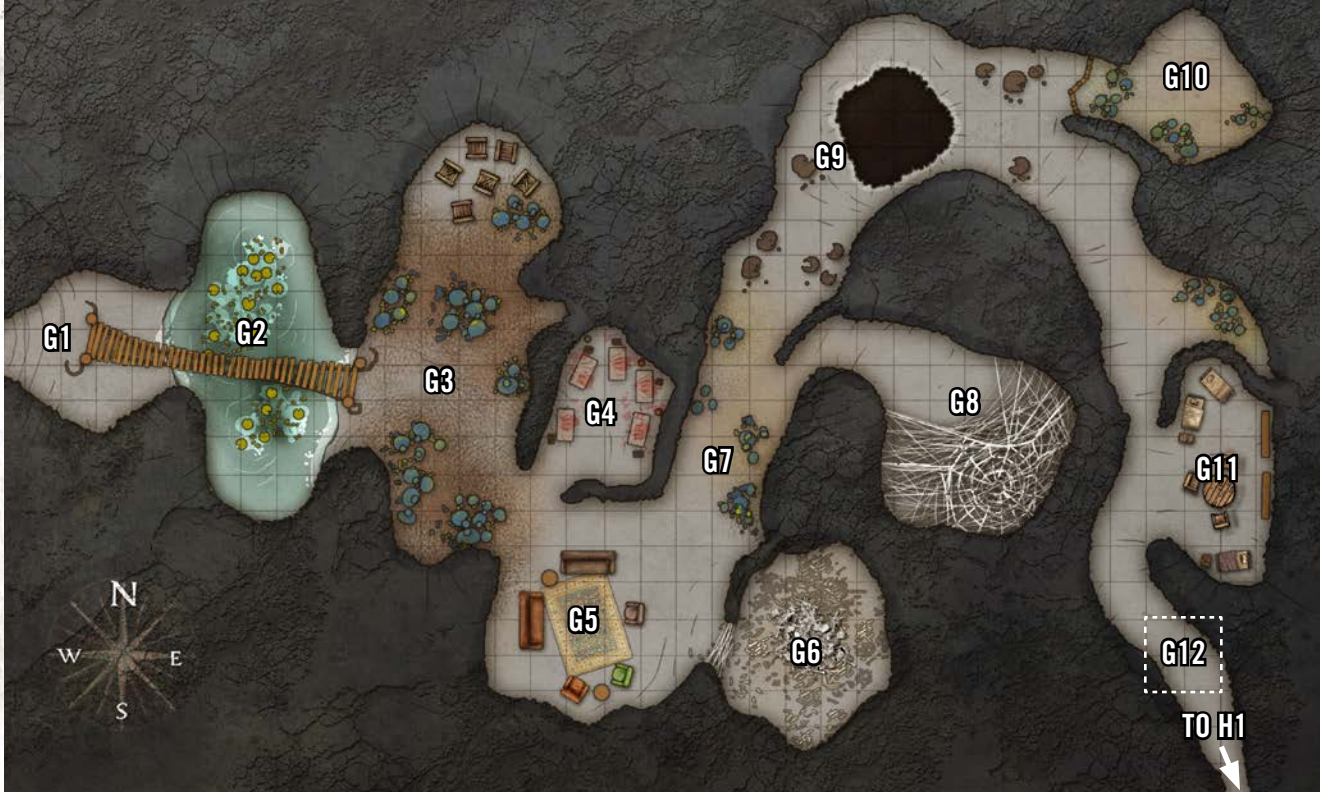
CYTH-V'SUG

FEY BOONS AND BANES

BESTIARY

G. UPPER REACHES

1 square = 10 feet



grim parody of a noble estate. The Pestilent Palace winds its way underground in a network of moist tunnels and tangled, fungal filaments until reaching the heart of the Darkblight and Arlantia's throne room: Arhlantu.

Once the PCs access the inside of Arlantia's tree, they can descend into her Pestilent Palace. With a few exceptions, which are specifically called out in the relevant sections, the Pestilent Palace's general features are detailed below.

The Darkblight in Play: Because the Darkblight makes up the walls and passages of the Pestilent Palace, the same restrictions mentioned in The Darkblight on pages 8–9 still apply.

Ceilings: The Pestilent Palace is a massive underground structure, and though it can be quite narrow in some places, its ceilings rise to an impressive 60 feet in most areas, with fungal growths hanging from above like stalactites.

Floors and Walls: The palace's infrastructure is made from intertwined, threadlike mycelia that form floors, walls, and interior structures. The palace's floors may have some ripples or small changes in elevation, but unless otherwise noted, this variation doesn't affect movement. The palace's walls are about 5 feet thick and difficult to break through, functioning as magically treated masonry (hardness 16, 180 hp). The fungal Darkblight growth does

not count as vegetation or plant matter for the purposes of spells and effects that would diminish, see through, speak with, or otherwise manipulate it, except for the magic effects of the corrupted *Dryad's Song*.

Lighting: Many of the creatures that serve Arlantia in the Upper Reaches need some modicum of light to perform their duties. Unless otherwise noted, the Upper Reaches have dim lighting thanks to phosphorescent moss or lanterns. However, the Deeper Reaches (see area H) are areas of darkness unless otherwise noted.

G. UPPER REACHES

The Upper Reaches of the Pestilent Palace are the busiest and most crowded. Built as a mockery of the Accessiel Palace—even stealing many of the former's furnishings—the Upper Reaches are the courts where Arlantia's petitioners jockey with one another for her favor and her guards convert captives into loyal serfs. For their part, Arlantia's minions mostly consider themselves an evil court, with Naphexi at its head, and they serve Arlantia through pleasing the dragon. Arlantia actually pays little attention to what happens in this upper part of her palace, though—to the frustration of Naphexi, who desperately wants to curry more favor with the dryad but hates journeying through the claustrophobic tunnels to Arhlantu below.

G1. FUNGAL ANTECHAMBER (CR 15)

The steep passage that leads below Arlantia's tree widens here, and the ground—a strange thatching made up of stringy, moldy, tightly intertwined roots—levels out. The smell of rot hangs heavy in the moist air, and the thick vines and roots that run along the ceiling and walls pulse with foul energy. Here and there, slimy moss clings to the thatching. Dozens of tiny, bloodshot eyes watch from all directions.

This is the chamber that leads into the Pestilent Palace proper. The light during the day here is dim, providing a hint of the horrific place that lies beyond. Rings of toadstools sprout from the ground, but the true danger here grows above.

Creatures: About 30 feet beyond the entrance to the palace, the roots that sprout from the ceiling and spill along the walls take on a much more sinewy appearance. A PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Perception check notices the roots twitching in anticipation; these are the roots of heartrot trees growing from the antechamber's ceiling.

HEARTROT TREES (2)

CR 13

XP 25,600 each

hp 184 each (see page 86)

Development: After the PCs defeat or bypass the heartrot trees, Wendel darts forward into the gloom (provided he is traveling with them). After a minute, he returns to the PCs' sides, bouncing back and forth on his slight legs and cradling a quickling-sized shoe. After a few moments, or if the PCs inquire, Wendel stutters the following explanation.

"Well—well, well, well—Wendel may not have shared every detail of his quest with his allies. How was Wendel to know the allies were so strong? You cannot blame Wendel. It's about Wendel's big sister. It is about poor Meril."

Wendel grows very reticent to talk about this subject, but some gentle coaxing prompts him to reveal the following in a soft, surprisingly slow voice.

"It was after the frumious beast murdered Wendel's family. Wendel woke up, and there were bodies of Wendel's family—so many bodies, terrible-blight-death-doom-oh! All bodies but Meril! Wendel was hazy—much time must have passed, much-much-much—but he saw fauns leaving the camp, yes he did. Over one of the faun's shoulders, Wendel saw his sister's shiny-bark shoes. The fauns kidnapped Meril! Wendel knows she must live! That is why Wendel was desperate to find Naphexi. The dragon must know where his sister is. Knows where the evil one keeps her! Wendel will help Meril. Then Wendel and Meril can help their allies, yes!"

REPOPULATING THE PESTILENT PALACE

Positions within the Pestilent Palace are honors rewarded sparingly to Arlantia's servants, accounting for the light defenses within the dryad's stronghold. Arlantia has little care for minions slain by the PCs—in truth, her servants often bicker and murder one another—but she quickly replaces guards killed by the PCs should the adventurers leave the palace to regroup, rest, or resupply. Arlantia commands hundreds of blightguards (page 17) and dozens of blighted handmaidens (page 33), and can replace those slain within 24 hours. Her infernal forces (such as the baregaras in area G9) and non-blighted fey minions require 1d6 days to replace, and she may find alternate beasts to defend these areas. She can't easily replace her blighted faun surgeons (area G4), her jubjub bird (area F), or her beloved bandersnatch (area G10); once defeated, these guardians remain absent (barring resurrection magic, at your discretion).

Ultimately, Arlantia commands hundreds of bizarre creatures, and given time to regroup, she can reinforce her defenses in whatever creative ways you see fit, pulling particularly from strange fey, plants, and magical beasts.

If the PCs are sympathetic to Wendel's story, he makes them promise to help him find his sister. Wendel then swears that once they find Meril and help her to health and freedom, he will provide the PCs with four favors as they push toward Arlantia, rather than simply hiding. His plan, despite his boasts, was originally to simply sneak into the Pestilent Palace, rescue Meril, and then flee, but emboldened by these strange, new heroes, he has decided it may be possible to end Arlantia's tyranny.

If the PCs express apathy about Wendel's family or sister, or refuse to help him find Meril, he disappears angrily, screeching that he will help Meril on his own. Unless the PCs go to great lengths to find him and convince him otherwise, Wendel attempts to infiltrate the deeper palace on his own. As a result, he eventually ends up a captive of the mindslaver mold in area H5.

G2. STAGNANT MOAT (CR 14)

The scent of stagnant water and algae chokes this sprawling cavern, burbling from the glassy, scum-covered water filling most of the room. A beach of decaying roots, colorful mushrooms, and clay lines the pond's banks, and all around it grow willows pockmarked with greasy, black splotches. Across the pond stretches a sturdy bridge made from entwined roots and moss.

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This area is a warped garden of sorts for the palace's evil fey and is the place through which most creatures enter and exit the palace. The pond is 20 feet deep at its center, shallowing to about 3 feet at the banks. Owing to the fey's cautiousness of late, it at first appears abandoned. The only opening into the larger caverns beyond is on the other side of the fetid pond.

Creatures: Two rusalkas live in the pond, lurking just below the surface of the water and watching for intruders. Arlantia has spared the sisters from the Darkblight so long as they continue their deplorable fun, drowning intruders and occasionally battling those beasts ensnared by the bored dryad. The murky waters grant the fey a +5 circumstance bonus on their Stealth checks.

Once the PCs step onto the bridge to area G3, the rusalkas summon a pair of huge water elementals

and watch how the PCs react. They then attack, using *control water* to flood the entire chamber, then drag the adventurers down until they drown.

RUSALKAS (2) CR 12

XP 19,200 each

hp 150 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3* 232)

Treasure: At the bottom of the pond is a bloated hobgoblin corpse clutching a sword. The corpse is barely visible under the water's grimy surface (Perception DC 30). The sword is a *ten-ring sword*^{UE} with a *ring of jumping* in its slot. The hobgoblin also wears a *decoy ring*^{UE}.

G3. FUNGUS FARM (CR 13)

Thick fans of sickeningly colored mushrooms, some as tall as a human, sprout in the muddy soil of this sprawling cavern. Some of the larger stalks are missing caps and bear clean cuts. In the cavern's north end are several large crates filled with fleshy fungus.

A thick layer of soil coats the floor of this room, whose surface counts as soft ground for the purposes of tracking. This thick mulch counts as difficult terrain. The mushrooms growing in this area are carefully cultivated and serve as a farm that feeds most of the creatures in the Upper Reaches. The large crates to the north have been repurposed to house the farm workers.

Creatures: A dozen farm slaves—all captive pixies—tend the farm and harvest mushroom caps. Thoroughly broken, the pixies require only a pair of blightguards to keep them in line. If the PCs made an undue ruckus in area G2, the blightguards are positioned for an ambush near the cavern's center.

BLIGHTGUARDS (2) CR 11

XP 12,800 each

hp 154 each (see page 17)

Treasure: The mushrooms in the crates sustain the blighted fey in the Pestilent Palace, but they can potentially have strange effects on humanoids. If a PC eats one, there is a 50% chance that she will be affected by a mad hallucination effect for 1 hour (Fortitude DC 22 negates), a 25% chance she is invigorated as per the spell *heroes' feast*, and a 25% chance she is affected as if she had eaten a nourishing meal that affects her as per *restoration*. There are 16 mushrooms among all the crates.

Development: Even if freed, the pixies here don't know what to do and simply continue their work. If the PCs approach them or try to talk them into fleeing, the pixies retreat to their humble bunks to the north and hide until help arrives.

FAUN CHIRURGEON



G4. STITCHING LAB (CR 15)

Glowing, candle-shaped clumps of green fungus dimly illuminate this eerie laboratory. Throughout the chamber, small wicker tables support the restrained bodies of fey creatures that have been viciously vivisected. The largest table in the center of the room holds a body alongside instruments of torture. Two hanging cages fill the north end of the room.

The sadistic fey use this area as a lab for cruel experimentations, and to create Arlantia's abominable blightguards. The experimenters are trying to determine ways to more quickly and efficiently transform those few fey in the forest who aren't already tainted. Naphexi also bullied the fey here into assisting her transformation into a fungal creature. Though Naphexi's phenomenal constitution allowed her to survive the transition, all efforts to repeat the transformation have resulted only in the subjects' horrible deaths.

The deceased creatures on each of the smaller tables are a mix of sprites and pixies. With a successful DC 20 Heal check, a PC can tell that some died only several days ago, while others have been dead for weeks, with signs of severe fungal infection and out-of-place organs—the result of the lab's alchemists trying to graft quickling parts into other fey to replicate their success in creating their latest blightguard.

Creatures: Two blighted faun churgeons conduct experiments here, while a third finishes assembling a new blightguard from a redcap “volunteer” and the fresh batch of quickling parts captured over the past few days. Thoroughly broken by their infection, these normally compassionate fey now happily butcher others with dull, black knives and stitch them back together into functioning abominations. As soon as they notice the intruders, all three fauns and the blightguard attack.

Most of the previous experimental subjects have died; however, five captives still survive and have been crammed into a large birdcage hanging in the back of the room. The short, ashy-blue creatures are all quicklings kidnapped from Wendel's village, including his older sister Meril.

BLIGHTGUARD CR 11

XP 12,800

hp 154 (see page 17)

FAUN CHIRURGEONS (3) CR 11

XP 12,800 each

Blighted faun alchemist 9 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 46, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 114, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 26)

CE Medium fey

Init +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +19

DEFENSE

AC 26, touch 18, flat-footed 20 (+3 armor, +2 deflection, +5 Dex, +1 dodge, +5 natural)

hp 158 each (12d8+105); fast healing 5

Fort +16, **Ref** +14, **Will** +8; +6 bonus vs. poison

Defensive Abilities fungal rejuvenation; **DR** 10/cold iron and good; **Immune** disease, paralysis, poison, polymorph;

Resist cold 10, electricity 10; **SR** 22

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +2 *cold iron dagger* +14/+9 (1d4+7/19–20)

Ranged acid bomb +13 (5d6+2 acid) or thorn throw +7 (1d4+2)

Special Attacks bomb 11/day (5d6+2 acid or fire, DC 16), panpipes, parasitic bond

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 3rd; concentration +7)

At will—*ghost sound* (DC 14)

1/day—*hideous laughter* (DC 15), *sleep* (DC 15)

Alchemist Extracts Prepared (CL 9th; concentration +11)

3rd—*amplify elixir*^{APG}, *cure serious wounds*, *thorn body*^{APG}

2nd—*bear's endurance*, *blur*, *cure moderate wounds* (2), *fire breath*^{APG} (DC 14)

1st—*bomber's eye*^{APG}, *cure light wounds*, *enlarge person* (DC 13), *jump*, *shield*, *true strike*

TACTICS

Before Combat If the PCs fought the blightguards in area G3, the fauns here are already aware of the incoming danger via their blighted unity ability. They drink their *bear's endurance* and *thorn body* extracts, then prepare an ambush by hiding underneath the tables—leaving only the lone, newborn blightguard visible to tempt the PCs into the room.

During Combat The churgeons begin by drinking extracts of *amplify elixir* while they have the element of surprise, to enhance their *fire breath* and curative extracts, then attack. They prefer fighting from range and fall back if approached.

Morale The churgeons are fanatics and fight to the death.

Base Statistics Without their extracts of *bear's endurance*, faun churgeons' statistics are **hp** 134; **Fort** +14; **Con** 21.

STATISTICS

Str 20, **Dex** 20, **Con** 25, **Int** 14, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +7; **CMB** +12; **CMD** 30

Feats Brew Potion, Craft Construct, Dodge, Great Fortitude, Improved Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Point-Blank Shot, Throw Anything, Toughness^B, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +20, Bluff +10, Craft (alchemy) +17 (+26 to create alchemical items), Knowledge (nature) +19, Perception +19, Perform (wind instruments) +10, Sense Motive +7, Spellcraft +17, Stealth +18, Survival +7; **Racial Modifiers** +2 Knowledge (nature), +2 Perception, +2 Stealth

Languages Aklo, Common, Infernal, Sylvan

SQ alchemy (alchemy crafting +9), blighted unity, discoveries (acid bomb, delayed bomb, infusion, promethean disciple^{OA}), mutagen (+4/–2, +2 natural armor, 90 minutes), poison use, swift alchemy, tainted blood

Combat Gear *boro bead*^{UE} (1st level), *potions of cure serious*

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QUICKLING FAVORS

Wendel and Meril can perform the following favors for the PCs. Though the quicklings are quite capable, they are not particularly selfless or brave, and so will not travel to a different layer of the palace than the one the PCs are on. The quicklings also won't follow the PCs into Arhlantu (area I). Once the quicklings have performed all four favors, they continue following the party, but only to advise (and heckle).

Create a Distraction: The quicklings can create a ruckus that distracts the creatures in a single area for up to 1 minute. This provides the PCs each a +10 circumstance bonus on Stealth checks in that area while its residents are distracted.

Fight Alongside the PCs: One or both of the quicklings may join the party in combat if the PCs ask, and the PCs can even yell for help mid-fight to gain backup.

Scout Ahead: The quicklings can use their considerable stealth to sneak into a room, take stock of the creatures there, and report back to the PCs. They automatically succeed when doing this and do not need to attempt any skill checks. This reveals all creatures present in the area and general details about them, including their creature type and their CR.

Steal Something: The quicklings can steal a single unattended object and give it to the PCs. They can do this only if no creatures are looking at the object they wish to steal, however. If the object they're stealing is one of the rings from *Dryad's Song* (see page 26), both quicklings must succeed at DC 40 Stealth checks or any creatures in the area become aware of the thieves and attack immediately.

This option can be chosen only twice; afterward, the quicklings refuse to perform this favor again.

wounds (2), *potions of delay poison* (4), *potions of lesser restoration* (2); **Other Gear** mwk studded leather, +2 cold iron dagger, ring of protection +2, vial of ghost orchid essence perfume (worth 500 gp), teak snuffbox (worth 250 gp)

QUICKLINGS (4) CR 3

XP 800 each

hp 18 (currently 4 each; *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 227)

MERIL CR 11

XP 12,800

Female quickling rogue 10 (use the statistics for Wendel on page 12)

hp 125 (currently 5)

Treasure: In addition to the equipment and potions carried by the surgeons, the lab contains a *wand of*

polymorph (14 charges), an *admixture vial*^{UE}, a *boro bead*^{UE} (3rd level), and jar of *restorative ointment*. The alchemical equipment here functions as a masterwork alchemist's lab.

Development: After combat dies down, Meril calls out for help in a harsh voice. If he has survived thus far, Wendel zips from the shadows toward his sister and frantically tries to free her from her cage while trying to reassure her. Regardless of the PCs' previous interactions with Wendel, he has followed the PCs here in hopes of finding and helping Meril. The fauns found Meril's resistance to the Darkblight fascinating, and experimented thoroughly on samples of her flesh, never suspecting that her resistance hailed from the anklet she wore (see below) rather than any inborn immunity.

Meril is missing one of her eyes and several large patches of skin, though the fauns have carefully dressed her wounds. She remains sullen even after being freed, mumbling only vague responses to Wendel after she is freed. Once half of her hit points or more are restored, she begins to open up, saying the following.

"Oh—oh-oh-oh! Is it over? Is it well and truly over? Meril thought she was doomed! Her family was gone, and the evil one's minions dragged her to this hell-place, and that was it! They took Meril's skin and Gorvin's eye and Petulia's hand and they made a man who danced and stank of rot. But new friends have rescued her—yes, shiny and so new—and now Meril must tell her friends the horrible things she's heard. The minions experimenting on Meril were vile! Bragged about mocking the earth queen as they visited the evil one far below!"

Meril wears one of the keys to Arlantia's lair around her ankle: a ring from *Dryad's Song* that her grandmother stole centuries ago and passed along to protect her son, and later her granddaughter, from the Darkblight. If rescued, she eventually offers it, being the only thing she has as a reward aside from her now-bloodstained clothing. An inscription in Abyssal on the golden ring reads, "Moss and rot shall grow unchecked."

If Meril and Wendel are reunited, the two quicklings spend a moment comforting each other. With his sister safe, Wendel's confidence wavers, and neither fey really wants to risk life and limb pressing forward. Regardless, Meril and Wendel (or Meril on her own) remain invested in finding revenge for their family's slaughter, and Wendel feels bound by his earlier promises to assist (if the party accepted his help). So long as the PCs agreed earlier to help Wendel free his sister, the quicklings offer to provide help on four separate occasions of the PCs' choosing as they push through the Pestilent Palace. If the PCs refused to aid Wendel, or if only Meril survives, then she's willing to part with her anklet to thank her rescuers, but afterward they flee the palace and the Darkblight. The quicklings' favors can come in any of the forms listed in the Quickling Favors sidebar.

Story Award: If the PCs gain the missing ring from *Dryad's Song*, award the party 12,800 XP.

65. INFESTED PARLOR (CR 16)

The wild roots growing from the floor here grow thick in several places, folding upon each other to form simple chairs and benches. This faux furniture circles a massive tree smelling of sickly sweet fruit. Various sundries of high society—engraved flatware, needle lace doilies, and delicate porcelain—rest upon finely carved real tables and sideboards, which are hopelessly stained with mildew and rot.

Arlantia crafted this parlor as a space where her courtiers could relax.

Creatures: The tree that grows in the chamber's center is a jinmenju—a sentient, flesh-eating tree gifted to Arlantia by her baregara minions (see area G9) when they petitioned to join her service several centuries ago. The tree has grown strong thanks to the ample victims provided by Arlantia and her blighted fey. Many of the area's dark fey consider a fruit from Arlantia's "tree of skulls" to be a precious gift.

Three of Arlantia's handmaidens—Halia, Kleo, and Melbomene—recline in this chamber at any given time, politicking, gossiping, and breathing in the jinmenju's intoxicating fumes. Though immune to poison, the blighted fey still experience pleasant hallucinations and tranquility from the tree's enchanting scent and fruit. These blighted dryads are some of the court's oldest residents, and are powerful spellcasters who are long practiced at combining their might as a single coven. The corruption of the Darkblight allows the handmaidens to treat other blighted dryads as hags for the purpose of their coven hex.

ADVANCED JINMENJU CR 12

XP 19,200

hp 175 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 288, 161)

BLIGHTED HANDMAIDENS (3) CR 12

XP 19,200 each

Female blighted dryad witch 9 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 45, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 116, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player's Guide* 65)

CE Medium fey

Init +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +19

DEFENSE

AC 28, touch 15, flat-footed 23 (+4 armor, +5 Dex, +9 natural)



MERIL

hp 188 each (15 HD; 9d6+6d8+129); fast healing 5
Fort +14, **Ref** +13, **Will** +15

Defensive Abilities fungal rejuvenation; **DR** 10/cold iron and good; **Immune** disease, paralysis, poison, polymorph; **Resist** cold 10, electricity 10; **SR** 23

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk dagger +13/+8 (1d4+1/19-20)

Ranged thorn throw +12 (1d4+1)

Special Attacks hexes (blight, coven, evil eye, healing, misfortune), parasitic bond

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th; concentration +12)

Constant—*Speak with plants*

At will—*entangle* (DC 17), *tree shape, wood shape* (1 lb. only, DC 18)

3/day—*charm person* (DC 17), *deep slumber* (DC 19), *tree stride*

1/day—*suggestion* (DC 19)

Witch Spells Prepared (CL 9th; concentration +13)

5th—*mass pain strike*^{APG} (DC 19)

4th—*beast shape II, cure serious wounds, enervation*

3rd—*arcane sight, dispel magic* (2), *twilight knife*^{APG}

2nd—*augury, bear's endurance, blindness/deafness* (DC 17), *death knell* (DC 17), *glitterdust* (DC 16)

1st—*beguiling gift*^{APG} (DC 15), *chill touch* (DC 16), *mage armor, ray of enfeeblement* (DC 16), *unseen servant*

0 (at will)—*bleed* (DC 15), *dancing lights, detect magic, message*

Patron transformation

TACTICS

Before Combat If the PCs engage any other blighted fey on this floor, the handmaidens are aware of the intruders thanks to their blighted unity; they cast *bear's endurance* and *mage armor* but aren't immediately aggressive.

During Combat The handmaidens trust the intoxicating stench and enticing head-fruit of the jinmenju to deal with most trespassers, and reinforce the attraction by casting *beguiling gift*. If the PCs resist these efforts or attack immediately, the three use their coven hex to support individuals unleashing *mass pain strike* and *enervation*. If one member of the coven dies, the remaining two cast *twilight knife* and *beast shape II* to become tigers, then leap to attack.

Morale If two dryads are slain, the remaining one uses *tree stride* to flee to Arlantia's side and warn her of the intruders, eventually fighting by her mistress's side when the PCs arrive.

Base Statistics Without their spells, the dryads' statistics are **AC** 24, flat-footed 19; **hp** 158; **Fort** +12; **Con** 21.

STATISTICS

Str 12, **Dex** 20, **Con** 25, **Int** 18, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 22

Base Atk +7; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 23

Feats Combat Casting, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative,

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IMPRISONED BY THE BLIGHT

The Pestilent Palace has many strange amenities, but one of the things it truly lacks is a dungeon or other long-term holding facilities for prisoners. Gifted from birth with the ability to twist others' wills, Arlantia believes in making allies out of enemies. To that end, she rarely has a need to imprison anyone for long. Upstart fey are infected with the Darkblight and transformed into grotesque servants, while the princess cultivates a stock of mindslaver mold (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3* 194) to ensure the obedience of other captives. She used this plant to indoctrinate Taugreth and his Ironfang commandos when they arrived to negotiate, and will deliver the same fate to any other prisoners who seem powerful or amusing.

Should your players fall captive while prowling Arlantia's stronghold, the Princess of the Blasted Heath inflicts a similar fate upon them, restraining the PCs in area **H5** and laying a mindslaver mold on each one, until they finally succumb to the plant's control. This provides a very different version of a "prison escape" than usual, as the PCs are imprisoned within their own minds as their bodies are dispatched to commit horrors in Cyth-V'sug's name. Remember that each order that runs afoul of a PC's alignment or values allows for a new saving throw, likely allowing one or two PCs to escape Arlantia's control and free their allies. Ironically, capture may even allow them more freedom and opportunity to explore the Pestilent Palace unmolested, if they pretend to remain controlled after breaking the mold's domination over them.

Improved Natural Armor, Persuasive, Spell Focus (necromancy), Stealthy, Toughness⁸, Weapon Finesse
Skills Bluff +19, Climb +10, Craft (sculpture) +13 (+19 with wood), Diplomacy +8, Escape Artist +22, Handle Animal +12, Intimidate +23, Knowledge (nature) +19, Knowledge (nobility) +14, Perception +19, Sleight of Hand +18, Stealth +24, Survival +10, Use Magic Device +19;
Racial Modifiers +2 Knowledge (nature), +2 Perception, +2 Stealth

Languages Aklo, Common, Elven, Infernal, Sylvan; *speaks with plants*

SQ blighted unity, daughter of the blight, tainted blood, tree meld, wild empathy +18, witch's familiar (rat), woodcraft

Gear mwk dagger, *amulet of natural armor* +3

Treasure: A lacquered box (worth 150 gp) resting on one table contains a *wand of expeditious excavation* (32 charges), which the handmaidens use to escort non-fey captives down to Arlantia's garden and Arhlantu without triggering the trap in area **G12**. One handmaiden also wears a single *ring gate* as a torc (it is paired to the ring in

area **H5**, but the planar energies affecting the area render the *ring gates* useless as anything but decoration while Arlantia lives).

G6. SEALED DEN (CR 16)

Choking vines and ropy fungi haphazardly seal this chamber's only entrance, in addition to a thick chain and padlock. A single, horned skull hangs from a sloppily written wooden sign on this barricade.

This was once the abode of a powerful creature that the fey were hoping to turn into a fungal creature, but now hope only to contain. The barricade here is not as sturdy as the palace's walls and has hardness 4, 10 hit points, and a break DC of 20. The padlock is a superior lock (Disable Device DC 40). A casual examination of the skull identifies that it has no teeth, and with a successful DC 14 Knowledge (nature) check, a PC can identify the unfortunate donor as a satyr.

The sign on the barricade says "Danger! Do not release!" in Sylvan.

The chamber interior was once a well-appointed drug parlor, with reclining couches, low tables, and cabinets filled with all manner of liquors in crystal decanters. All these fine furnishings have been shredded and shattered by the chamber's vicious prisoners, however, and now line the floor as rubble alongside the dismembered remains of several redcaps and an ankou.

Creature: Several months ago, Arlantia's blightguards uncovered an enormous nest—several hundred strong—of vicious tooth fairies hidden in her territory. They captured several to bring to the stitching lab (area **G4**) so the fauns there could experiment with ways to make use of the mobile, mischievous little beasts. The remainder of the nest soon tracked their captive fellows to the Pestilent Palace and slipped in through the miniaturized entrance, where they freed the captives and went on a rampage. Arlantia's blighted forces realized the pests were far more trouble than they were worth, and eventually managed to seal the tooth fairies in the drug den once the tiny monsters discovered the liquor and cakes within and gorged themselves into a temporary stupor (after killing several resting guards).

The courtiers originally planned to simply starve the little creatures, but the process is taking far longer than anyone expected, as the tooth fairies eventually began eating the bodies of the other fey they killed, then one another, leaving a far smaller and infinitely more vicious swarm of the creatures inside. Opening the chamber releases the tooth fairies, who immediately descend on anyone nearby to devour—teeth first.

RAVENOUS TOOTH FAIRY SWARM

CR 16

XP 76,800

Unique tooth fairy (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 4 262*)
CE Diminutive fey (swarm)
Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision;
Perception +31

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 17, flat-footed 15 (+2 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 natural, +4 size)

hp 117 (26d6+26)

Fort +10, **Ref** +19, **Will** +19

Defensive Abilities swarm traits, **DR** 5/cold iron; **Immune** weapon damage

OFFENSE

Speed 15 ft., fly 60 ft. (perfect)

Melee swarm (5d6 plus paralysis)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

Special Attacks death throes, distraction (DC 23), extraction, paralysis (1d3 rounds, DC 23)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 26th; concentration +22)

At will—*mage hand*, *open/close*

1/day—*invisibility* (swarm only), *sleep* (DC 25)

TACTICS

During Combat The tooth fairies hide as long as they can stand using their invisibility, but swarm over anyone who opens the barricade.

Morale The swarm fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 5, **Dex** 14, **Con** 11, **Int** 8, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +13; **CMB** — (+15 steal); **CMD** — (21 vs. steal)

Feats Agile Maneuvers, Dodge, Endurance, Great Fortitude, Greater Steal^{APG, B}, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Armor, Improved Steal^{APG, B}, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Skill Focus (Perception, Stealth), Toughness, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +25 (+21 when jumping), Escape Artist +25, Fly +29, Perception +31, Sense Motive +25, Stealth +43, Survival +22; **Racial Modifiers** -4 Acrobatics when jumping

Languages Sylvan

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Death Throes (Su) Anytime a tooth fairy swarm takes 5 or more points of damage from any source, several component fairies die in foul-smelling clouds of sparkling fairy dust. Any creature within 5 feet of the swarm must succeed at a DC 23 Fortitude save or be sickened by the stench for 1d4 rounds. This is a poison effect. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Extraction (Su) At the end of its turn every round, the tooth fairy swarm attempts a single steal combat maneuver check. All creatures with a CMD equal to or lower than the result of this check suffer the forcible extraction of 1d6 teeth, taking a number of points of Charisma damage and bleed damage equal to the number of teeth extracted. If the stolen teeth are returned within 10 minutes and the character receives any amount of magical healing, the teeth reattach, the bleed damage ends, and the Charisma damage is cured.

Treasure: If a PC searches the enclosure and succeeds at a DC 25 Perception check, she finds that one of the redcap bodies still wears an ill-fitting Medium suit of +3 *staunching*^{UE} *studded leather armor*.

G7. HALL OF TREES (CR 14)

Rampant, woody growths fill this passage, climbing upward from the floor like stalagmites. Drab paintings of scarred fey in various acts of debauchery line the walls.

This corridor replicates the forest paths above, and hosts several of the fungal “trees” that Arlantia’s handmaidens have bonded to. The stalagmites here rise anywhere from 5 to 10 feet, and any square with stalagmites in it is difficult terrain.

The paintings are colored with various strains of mold and mildew, and have no resale value.

Creatures: A PC who succeeds at a DC 36 Perception check notices that two of the stalagmites here have a solid, almost fleshlike quality; these are actually ropers that protect the infested grove (the rootlike composition of the Pestilent Palace counts as a stony area for the purpose of the ropers’ racial modifier to Stealth). The ropers attack very judiciously; most of the palace’s fey residents remain unaware of their presence.

If undetected, the ropers wait for the PCs to come within range of their strand attack.

ROPERS (2)

CR 12**XP 19,200 each****hp** 162 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 237*)

G8. SPIDERS’ NEST (CR 16)

Thick webbing crisscrosses this wide chamber, settling heavily in its irregular corners. Here and there, fluorescent mushrooms peek out of the web, casting a sickly pall over the entire room.

Arlantia set aside this relatively isolated chamber as guest quarters for the disciples she assumed Cyth-V’sug would regularly send as she grew in power. Thus far, the Prince of the Blasted Heath has dispatched no agents, and instead the room currently serves as home to a pair of conniving Leng spiders. The fey have largely abandoned this room, leaving it to the creatures that have co-opted it. Although much of this room’s floor and walls are covered in a layer of webbing, the strands aren’t coated in adhesive and creatures can climb them without becoming stuck.

Because the blighted fey avoid this chamber and its hungry residents, it makes a safe place for adventurers to rest. For now.

Creatures: The Leng spiders Remiya and Rhulya nest here, serving Arlantia as spies, couriers, and assassins. Their mistress doesn’t trust the shiftless spiders, however,

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and justifiably so—neither bears Arlantia any true loyalty beyond the shelter she offers them. They think that they should be the masters of the palace, and often debate how to eliminate the creatures here who would oppose them and co-opt the service of the others.

The pair are out when the PCs arrive, delivering Arlantia's ransom demand for the return of the *sardonix shard* and, possibly, Taurgreth (though she's growing quite fond of her new plaything). Each 24 hours thereafter, there is a cumulative 10% chance the spiders return to their nest. The pair see no reason to travel invisibly within the palace, and they bicker as they return, providing PCs within some warning to hide. Remiya and Rhulya attack any intruders they discover in their lair.

In combat, the Leng spiders use their web special attack before wading into melee with their flail and bite attacks.

REMIYA AND RHULYA

CR 14

XP 38,400 each

Female Leng spiders (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 176)

hp 202 each

Treasure: Tucked into the webbing near the ceiling (Perception DC 30), a desiccated human body still wears a noble's outfit, as well as a *cloak of arachnida*, two ruby rings (worth 1,000 gp each), a silk-and-pearl choker (worth 500 gp) and a *bag of holding* (type I) containing 658 pp and a small oil painting of a well-dressed, elderly couple (worth 100 gp). If the corpse is disturbed in their absence, Remiya and Rhulya are incensed upon their return, and immediately begin searching the palace for the thieves.

G9. DESTROYED CORRIDOR (CR 14)

As the central corridor winds on, its woody stalagmites give way to sharp, broken growths. As it curves around a bend, most of the passage falls away into a massive pit.

In addition to serving as a passageway between different areas of the Upper Reaches, this area and its pit (see Hazards below) are often used as a holding facility for captured creatures the fey are trying to infect with the Darkblight or turn fungal.

Creatures: This area is home to two baregaras that journeyed from Jeharlru many centuries ago to serve as Arlantia's enforcers. They once served as her attack dogs, tearing their way through champions and powerful good fey who sought to bring an end to the Darkblight, but have seen their role usurped by Naphexi and more recently by Arlantia's newly enslaved hobgoblin pets. These days, the baregaras patrol this area, keeping any captives from escaping the pit.

Although the baregaras serve Arlantia, they are unpredictably dangerous. They go on regular rampages through this area, scattering all of their nearby allies

and creating the broken stalagmites here. When the PCs enter this area, the baregaras are positioned on the side of the pit closest to the party. As soon as the baregaras see the PCs, they attack, incensed that intruders have gotten this far into the Upper Reaches—a mistake they assume would never have happened were they still Arlantia's preferred guardians.

BAREGARAS (2)

CR 12

XP 19,200 each

hp 168 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 34)

Hazards: The broken growths marked on the map are the victims of the rampaging baregaras (see the Creatures section). Treat squares with broken stalagmites as if they were squares with caltrops, except due to the magical and especially sharp nature of this hazard, the jagged spines bypass DR of 5 or less. Additionally, because the broken growths are so dense, even creatures moving at half speed or slower through these squares cannot avoid them.

In addition to these shards, there is a 50-foot-deep pit in the center of this area. Any creature ending its turn on a square adjacent to the pit must succeed at a DC 22 Reflex saving throw to avoid falling in. Climbing the pit's walls requires successful DC 20 Climb checks. Creatures that fall into the pit take 5d6 points of falling damage as well as 5d6 points of piercing damage from the foot-long thorns lining the bottom.

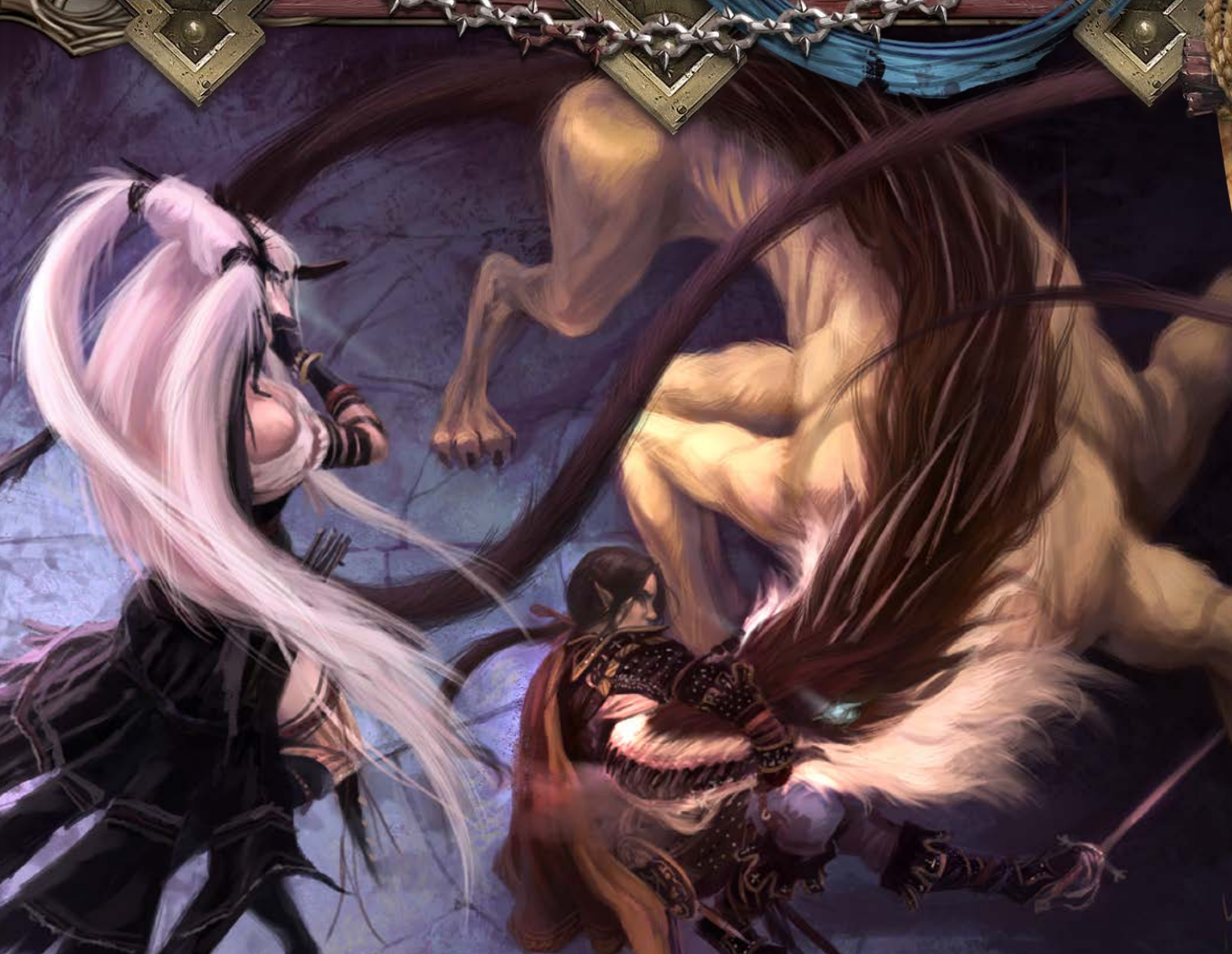
Treasure: At the bottom of the pit, two humanoid corpses are propped up against the wall, their legs clearly broken. Any dwarves—or PCs who succeed at a DC 15 Knowledge (local) check—recognize these corpses as dwarven. On one, shoved deep under tarnished armor, is a *hunter's band*^{UE}.

G10. FRUMIOUS DEN (CR 16)

Red-and-brown mushrooms that stand fully ten feet tall and nearly half as wide clutter much of the chamber, but wide terraces littered with bone are carved into the walls above. Footprints the size of dinner plates dot the floor.

This area serves as the abode of one of Arlantia's most vicious minions, and the chamber within is so thick with foliage that creatures within 10 feet have concealment, while creatures further away have total concealment. This penalty does not affect creatures with blindsense, blindsight, or scent (such as the bandersnatch). This limited visibility increases the Challenge Rating of encounters here by 1. The foliage reaches a height of 10 feet.

Creature: Long ago, Arlantia plucked a terrifying First World predator from its home and unleashed it upon the Fangwood for her own amusement. The bandersnatch terrorized local communities for decades before bold



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adventurers felled it. Before they delivered the killing blow, however, Arlantia reappeared and dispatched the hunters. In saving the beast, removing the magical afflictions the adventurers had imposed, and nursing it back to health, Arlantia earned the terrible beast's undying loyalty. It has since served as her attack dog, sniffing out hidden fey communities within Arlantia's domain and rampaging through them before her blightguards arrive to take captives.

Though technically a lesser bandersnatch, Arlantia's pet is an extremely powerful specimen of its kind. It naps on the upper terraces of its den for days at a time, but at the GM's discretion, may be found anywhere in the palace or the Blighted Depths above. If the PCs have relied on hit-and-run techniques to whittle away Arlantia's forces, she happily unleashes her pet to hunt them.

FANGWOOD BANDERSNATCH

CR 15

XP 51,200

Unique lesser bandersnatch (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3* 32)
NE Huge magical beast

Init +9; **Senses** blindsense 120 ft., darkvision 120 ft., low-light vision, scent; **Perception** +19

DEFENSE

AC 31, touch 13, flat-footed 26 (+5 Dex, +18 natural, -2 size)
hp 230 (20d10+120); fast healing 10

Fort +18, **Ref** +17, **Will** +9

Defensive Abilities quill defense; **Immune** fear, paralysis, poison, sleep

OFFENSE

Speed 60 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee bite +29 (2d6+11 plus grab), 2 claws +29 (1d8+11/19-20), tail slap +24 (2d6+5/×3 plus pain)

Ranged 4 quills +23 (1d8+11/19-20)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (15 ft. with tail slap)

Special Attacks bounding charge, brutal tail, gaze (DC 26), lash out, pain (DC 25), pounce, rake (4 claws, +29, 1d8+11/19-20), rend (2 claws, 1d8+16)

TACTICS

Before Combat The bandersnatch hides if it hears strangers approach, taking advantage of the thick foliage of its den.

During Combat In dense foliage like that in this den and the forest above, the bandersnatch relies on its bounding charge, pounce, and rake abilities to attack quickly, then fall back out of sight. In more open terrain (such as the rest of the palace) it instead harries prey with its quills.

Morale If reduced below 60 hit points, the bandersnatch flees to let its fast healing restore its strength. Afterward, it stalks the PCs once again, attacking when they seem distracted.

STATISTICS

Str 32, **Dex** 21, **Con** 23, **Int** 2, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +20; **CMB** +33 (+37 grapple); **CMD** 48 (54 vs. trip)

Feats Bleeding Critical, Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus, Improved Critical (claw, quill), Improved Initiative, Improved Iron Will, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Stealth), Tiring Critical

Skills Acrobatics +21 (+33 when jumping), Climb +19, Perception +19, Stealth +20 (+32 in forests), Survival +1 (+21 when tracking); **Racial Modifiers** +8 Acrobatics, +10 Perception, +4 Stealth (+12 in forests), +20 Survival when tracking

SQ planar acclimation, relentless tracker

G11. BLIGHTGUARD BARRACKS (CR 15)

The scent of must and decay permeates this room, overlaid by the reek of decaying flesh. Wicker frames support ratty bedrolls along its northern and eastern walls, and a large cauldron in the center bubbles with foul liquid. A rack along the southern wall holds an array of vicious weapons.

This is a main respite for the mutilated soldiers known as blightguards. The cauldron in the center of the room is filled with a gray, foul-smelling liquid, in which dozens of greasy mushrooms and tiny, pointed ears bob. A PC can identify these as sprite and pixie ears with a successful DC 14 Knowledge (nature) check.

Any PC who moves into a square adjacent to the cauldron must succeed at a DC 24 Fortitude saving throw or be nauseated for 1 minute due to the concoction's terrible smell. Any creature that tastes the brew is nauseated for 1 minute (no saving throw).

Creatures: There are four off-duty blightguards here. They take a standard action to grab their weapons from their beds or the rack to the south before attacking.

BLIGHTGUARDS (4) CR 11
XP 12,800 each
hp 154 each (see page 17)

Treasure: In addition to the gear carried by the blightguards, the weapons rack in the room's southern corner holds additional weapons for the soldiers and weapons confiscated from captives. It holds a +1 cold iron wounding greatsword, a +2 shocking burst scimitar, a gloom blade^{UE}, a Large masterwork scythe, a Medium masterwork scythe, and two or three mundane examples of most weapons in the *Core Rulebook* in varying states of disrepair.

G12. PATHWAY INTO DARKNESS (CR 15)

The cavern here narrows and begins a steep decline. The walls' woody growths plunge into total gloom ahead, but the lengths that are visible bear hideous, blackened scars, as if stained or burned.

The light is dim to the north, but total darkness enrobes the southern portion of this hall, which leads

down to Arlantia's garden of filth below. Because it leads deeper into the palace, the whole area declines steeply, making it difficult terrain.

Any PC who succeeds at a DC 20 Craft (alchemy) or Knowledge (arcana) check recognizes that the scorch marks on the cavern's wicker walls were left by acid. The scorch marks stop abruptly approximately 6 feet above the ground.

Trap: A magical trap here guards the lower levels of the Pestilent Palace. Infused with the chaotic, lively energy of the First World, the floor of this passageway literally springs to life when living creatures walk past the center of its area of effect—the soil swells and churns to a depth of 6 feet and quickly digests anything trapped in its acidic sludge. The trap creates rich, fertile soil that lesser servants can later shove down the tunnel to fertilize Arlantia's garden in area H5.

The trap does not trigger against fey (though fey present when other creatures pass through are still affected). A spell such as *expeditious excavation*^{APG}, *move earth*, *soften earth and stone*, *stone shape*, or *transmute mud to rock* cast on any part of this area renders the trap inactive for a number of rounds equal to the spell's level.

MALEVOLENT EARTH TRAP CR 15

XP 51,200

Type magic; Perception DC 31; Disable Device DC 31

EFFECTS

Trigger proximity (*alarm*); **Reset** none

Effect spell-like effect (variant widened *acid pit*, 10d6 points of bludgeoning damage; Large or smaller creatures are imprisoned and pinned for 5 rounds; Reflex DC 19 halves damage and avoids imprisonment; trapped creatures can attempt a DC 30 combat maneuver or Escape Artist check to escape as a full-round action); spell-like effect (1d6 points of acid damage each round for 5 rounds; 2d6 points of acid damage each round for trapped creatures); multiple targets (all targets in a 20-ft.-by-30-ft. area)

PART 3: PRINCESS OF THE BLASTED HEATH

The final portion of this adventure takes place in the deepest recess of the Pestilent Palace—the sections known as the Deeper Reaches, which include Arhlantu, the lair of Arlantia herself. Unless stated otherwise, these areas are pitch black and grow thick with alien molds and fungus, creating a junglelike environment deep below ground.

H. DEEPER REACHES

The tunnel leading down from the Upper Reaches twists for several hundred feet at a steep, downward angle before finally opening up in the Pestilent Palace's Deeper Reaches. All areas here are completely dark unless otherwise specified. Unlike the Upper Reaches, which

has an evil but strangely organized societal structure, the Deeper Reaches are almost entirely a wilderness, with treelike clusters of fungus, odd caustic pools, natural tunnels, and horrific beasts lurking in the pitch-black depths. In all, the Deeper Reaches' environment should feel much more like an untamed jungle than anything in the forest above.

H1. MUSHROOM FOREST (CR 16)

Massively tall mushrooms spiral up toward the ceiling above, their fanlike gills stirring gently on an unfelt breeze and nearly reaching the loamy soil coating the floor. The air here is moist, claustrophobic, and cloying.

The foliage of this miniature forest is thick enough to blot out the sight beyond its borders. The mushrooms here rise anywhere from 10 to 45 feet into the air, and any square with a small mushroom in it is difficult terrain. Squares with large mushrooms are not traversable. Smaller fungi and mildew carpet the floor.

Creatures: A variety of alien insects and animals prowl the fungal forest—mostly transplants from the Abyss—but the majority skitter away from intruders. Only three residents actively hunt: these are mandragloires. These powerful, variant mandragoras grow in the corrupted soil of Jeharlu, and while they don't serve Cyth-V'sug directly, they frequently nest in and around his cults and see to the cults' wellbeing. This particular grove of the creatures has hunted in the Pestilent Palace's Deeper Reaches for centuries and once numbered a dozen. Most have fallen to Arlantia's ravenous bandersnatch, and the survivors have grown increasingly cautious and clever, but no less hungry themselves.

MANDRAGLOIRES (3) CR 13

XP 25,600 each

Variant half-fiend mandragora (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 171, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 185)

CE Small outsider (plant)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +23

DEFENSE

AC 31, touch 16, flat-footed 26 (+5 Dex, +15 natural, +1 size)

hp 126 each (11d8+77)

Fort +13, **Ref** +10, **Will** +6

DR 5/magic; **Immune** plant traits; Resist acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10; **SR** 24

Weaknesses vulnerable to supernatural darkness

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., burrow 10 ft., climb 40 ft., fly 80 ft. (good)

Melee bite +15 (1d6+4 plus grab), 2 slams +14 (1d4+4 plus poison)

Special Attacks blood drain (1d2 con), poison, shriek, smite good

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th; concentration +6)

3/day—*darkness*, *quicken poison* (DC 17)

1/day—*blasphemy* (DC 20), *contagion* (DC 16), *desecrate*, *unholy blight* (DC 17)

TACTICS

During Combat The mandragloires know all too well they are small and fragile compared to many denizens of the Pestilent Palace, and rely on cunning and patience to win the day. They soften up prey with hit-and-run tactics, combing their flight and *quicken poison* spell-like ability, then follow in hiding, giggling eerily. Only once their opponents are weakened or panicked do they finally attack, unleashing their shriek and *blasphemy* to further scatter enemies.

Morale The mandragloires flee back into hiding if reduced below 20 hit points, and avoid such dangerous enemies in the future.

STATISTICS

Str 19, **Dex** 20, **Con** 22, **Int** 10, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +8; **CMB** +11 (+15 grapple); **CMD** 26

Feats Lightning Reflexes, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (poison), Skill Focus (Perception), Toughness, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Acrobatics +5 (+9 to jump), Climb +23, Fly +25, Perception +23, Stealth +23 (+31 in vegetation), Survival +14, Swim +15; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Stealth in vegetation

Languages Abyssal, Common

Treasure: A moderate transmutation aura emanates from the gut of one of the mandragloires. If the PCs go to the gruesome task of slicing it open (doing so requires a magical weapon), they find an *elemental earth belt*^{UE}. The belt belonged to one of Taurgreth's commandos, who looted it from the Onyx Citadel when the Ironfang Legion first took control there, and is the only piece of the unfortunate hobgoblin's equipment to survive after the mandragloires ambushed the visitors.

H2. RANCID OASIS (CR 15)

A hill of twisted wicker and gore rises above the canopy here, presenting an oasis-like pool surrounded by fetid plant life. A stream of greenish liquid rhythmically drips from the ceiling into the roiling pool at the center, releasing a caustic smell. Beside the pool, patches of ridge-like mushrooms tower ten feet tall. The flickering glow of phosphorescent insects occasionally illuminates ominous shapes.

Formed over top of a massive granite shelf, this hill provides an overlook across most of the subterranean valley—at least for those who can see in total darkness. The slopes leading to and from this area are steep and uneven and count as difficult terrain. Squares with mushrooms are likewise rough terrain, though the mushrooms are all edible varieties grown for Arlantia's

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1 square = 10 feet



dinner table. The pool in the center is filled with acid—the product of natural water seeping through the palace’s mineral-laced ceiling and mixing with the tainted magic that created it (see Hazard below).

Creatures: A pair of omox demons loyal to Cyth-V’sug have taken up residence in the caustic, polluted pool, keeping watch over the jungle. One of Arlantia’s blighted handmaidens—Erado—has developed a twisted affection for the effluent demons and now spends much of her time here as well, lounging by their pool as if it were a true oasis.

Erado feigns helplessness if strangers catch her “alone” by the shore, and spins lies about the rest of the palace to tell the PCs whatever she believes they want to hear. As she draws these strangers closer, the omox demons move into position for a surprise attack from the pool.

BLIGHTED HANDMAIDEN CR 12

XP 19,200

hp 188 (see page 33)

OMOXES (2) CR 12

XP 19,200 each

hp 162 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 79)

Hazard: The acid in the pool is particularly caustic, and anyone who ends a turn adjacent to it must make a

successful DC 23 Fortitude saving throw or take 1 point of Constitution damage from the fumes (all of the creatures in the Deeper Reaches are immune to the fumes, but not to the acid itself.) Total immersion in the pool deals 10d6 points of damage each round.

Treasure: In a large, spiral shell by the pool, the demons store spoils taken from their victims, including a few treasures from long before they came to the Pestilent Palace. Stuffed into a large dirty sack are an *amulet of spell mastery*^{UE}, *grinding*^{UE} *bracers of armor +4*, *vampiric gloves*^{UE}, and 2,445 gp in loose coins and trinkets.

Development: In addition to its beauty, the rancid oasis is also the passage to Arlantia’s throne room below (see the sidebar on page 41).

H3. CLAUSTROPHOBIC CORRIDOR (CR 14)

The tangled filaments and roots of the wall here lend this otherwise broad hallway a claustrophobic feeling.

Creature: Clinging to the northern wall is a *vemerak*—a cruel aberration native to the Darklands far below—that worked its way up to the Pestilent Palace after a series of nightmares brought the infested, abyssal seep to its attention. Arlantia found the hideous creature adorable, and has since allowed it to roam freely in her garden so long as it occasionally visits the surface to terrorize humanoids at the edges of her realm. The *vemerak* tries

to take the party by surprise with its breath weapon before dropping to the ground and attacking. If it uses its earthquake supernatural ability, the cavern's roof collapses, potentially trapping creatures under the debris, but this doesn't affect the structural integrity of the rest of the palace.

ADVANCED VEMERAK

CR 14

XP 38,400

hp 229 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 292, 278)

Treasure: Several pockmarked cubbies carved by the vemerak's acidic breath line the northern wall, with various treasure—mostly sharpened bones and rotting, unidentifiable lumps—crammed deep into the holes. Two cubbies contain genuine valuables in addition to their rotting masses (Perception DC 25 to notice each): the first holds a *portable hole*, and the other holds 542 gp and a platinum idol of twisting teeth and tendrils (worth 9,000 gp). In a third cubby, which requires a successful DC 32 Perception check to notice beneath its curtain of filth, is a *manual of bodily health +2*.

H4. HOTOUSE (CR 13 AND 15)

Blooms of bright red, yellow, and purple mushrooms line the walls of this swelteringly hot chamber, intermixed with vibrant, healthy stands of snow flowers, sugar stick, and various orchids. To the north lies a disarrayed campsite, with a bedroll, a pot positioned over a smoldering fire, and other supplies strewn about. Pages of yellowed parchment are scattered messily across the loamy floor.

This side cavern is magically enchanted to maintain a sweltering temperature akin to that of a jungle. The heat and humidity help to maintain a number of exotic fungi not normally found anywhere near the Fangwood—many of them gifts from visiting faithful of Cyth-V'sug. A PC who succeeds at a DC 18 Knowledge (nature) check recognizes that the plants also growing here are parasites—species of plants that grow only from living fungus. Carved multiple times on the walls in Abyssal is a line engraved on one of *Dryad's Song's* rings: "Shall stand proud to station earned."

The chamber's only entrance is protected by a simple trap (see page 43) constructed by its petulant occupant.

Creatures: The blighted pech Orellie has made this space her refuge. An ardent devotee of Arlantia and Cyth-V'sug, Orellie has spent years trying to convince Arlantia that she is a powerful cleric who deserves a place of power and honor in the palace. She is irate at the recent ascension of the black dragon Naphexi into a fungal creature, seeing the dragon as an outsider, a corrupter of Arlantia's twisted fey paradise, and a threat to her own power. Naphexi's maturation into a powerful, living plant

OPENING THE WAY DOWN

Arlantia's throne room—a massive cavern she calls Arhlantu—is concealed from the rest of the palace just as her tree is from the rest of the Fangwood high above. Reaching Arhlantu is simply a matter of knowing the rhyme that honors Arlantia and her goals, as inscribed on the four rings of *Dryad's Song*, and repeating it aloud anywhere within the Deeper Reaches. Once this is done, an audible rumbling and gurgling sounds throughout the level as the Rancid Oasis at the cavern's center drains and shifts, revealing a stairwell leading further down.

The passage automatically closes and the pool refills with acid after 5 minutes.

has only heightened Orellie's fears of losing her tenuous position of respect.

Orellie stole a ring from *Dryad's Song* years ago from Naphexi's lair, and has spent years researching how to create fungal creatures of her own using its magic. While she hasn't been successful, she has learned to influence a variety of creatures of rot, such as the vermin that flock to her side.

When the PCs approach the area, whether or not they fall victim to the trap at its entrance (see Trap on page 43), Orellie is cautious but not immediately hostile toward them (though if the pech catches the quickklings trying to scout or steal something in her lair, or if the PCs immediately attack her, she responds with violence). Otherwise, Orellie hails the PCs with the following.

"Travelers? Hmph! What could you possibly want? Don't seem like the type to come sniffing my pretty flowers. I'm very busy—very busy, indeed, though that blasted dragon scoffs at my work for our mistress's schemes. I assume you aren't here on that scabbly pretender's behalf. You here to mock me, is that it? Or maybe someone finally appreciates my brilliant plans and important work?"

Orellie recognizes that she is in a desperate spot at the moment, as Arlantia has basically ignored her for years, aside from demanding use of her magic on occasion. Her initial attitude toward the PCs is unfriendly, though if the PCs tell her they slew Naphexi, her attitude improves by one step. So long as the PCs don't reveal that they've come to steal from or kill Arlantia, Orellie is a willing (if cantankerous) host, offering foul-smelling tea and tiny cakes made from pounded mushrooms and bitter wine. Orellie is lonely and wants someone to brag about her research to, and doesn't give pause to consider her visitors' motivations. If the PCs ask where to find Arlantia, Orellie simply says that the blighted dryad is

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“in Arhlantu, deep below beyond the pool, communing with our prince.” If pressed, Orellie gloats that visitors can reach blessed Arhlantu from the pool at the cavern’s center “by simply calling Arlantia’s accolades, as inscribed on her greatest trophy,” but refuses to comment further (see the Opening the Way Down sidebar on page 41).

Orellie wears her *Dryad’s Song* ring on a silver chain around her neck, and while she no longer needs it for her research, she adores it as a symbol of Naphexi’s incompetence. Convincing Orellie to part with her treasure first requires shifting her attitude to friendly or helpful, and then requires a successful DC 35 Bluff or Diplomacy check. Even after a successful check, the PCs must offer the pech a magic item to help her protect herself in the Deeper Reaches before she will give them the ring—any magic weapon or protective device worth 15,000 gp or more.

If the PCs can’t manage a trade or let slip that they plan to kill Arlantia or free Gendowyn, Orellie immediately denounces them as “traitors to the glorious and fecund throne” and attacks, hoping that slaying these insurgents will finally win her Arlantia’s precious attention.

In addition to Orellie, three massive deadfall scorpions nest in the tangled ceiling high above. Content to rest unless their pech mistress becomes agitated, they fall upon any intruders at Orellie’s command.

ADVANCED DEADFALL SCORPIONS (3) CR 9
6,400 each
 hp 115 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 3* 290, 237)

ORELLIE CR 14
XP 38,400

Female blighted pech
 inquisitor of Cyth-V’sug
 11 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 6* 46, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 206, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Player’s Guide* 38)
 CE Small fey (earth)
Init +10; **Senses**
 darkvision 90 ft.,
 low-light vision;
 Perception +24

DEFENSE

AC 32, touch 13, flat-footed 30 (+8 armor, +2 Dex, +7 natural, +4 shield, +1 size)
hp 206 (17d8+130); fast healing 5
Fort +17, **Ref** +10, **Will** +18



ORELLIE

Defensive Abilities bramble armor (1d6+5, 11 rounds/day), fungal rejuvenation, stalwart; **DR** 10/cold iron and good; **Immune** disease, paralysis, petrification, poison, polymorph; **Resist** cold 10, electricity 10; **SR** 25

Weaknesses light blindness

OFFENSE

Speed 15 ft.
Melee +1 icy burst heavy pick +19/+14/+9 (1d4+6/×4 plus 1d6 cold)
Ranged thorn throw +9 (1d3+2)
Special Attacks bane (11 rounds/day), earth mastery, judgment 4/day (2 simultaneous), parasitic bond, pech magic, stone knowledge
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th; concentration +12)
 3/day—stone shape, stone tell
Inquisitor Spell-Like Abilities (CL 11th; concentration +15)
 At will—detect alignment
 11 rounds/day—discern lies
Inquisitor Spells Known (CL 11th; concentration +15)
 4th (3/day)—chaos hammer (DC 18), hold monster (DC 19), shared wrath^{APG}
 3rd (5/day)—cure serious wounds, fester^{APG} (DC 17), inflict serious wounds (DC 17), retribution^{APG} (DC 17)
 2nd (5/day)—aid, castigate^{APG} (DC 17), flames of the faithful^{APG}, hold person (DC 17), spiritual weapon
 1st (6/day)—bless, detect good, protection from good, shield of faith, true strike, wrath^{APG}

0 (at will)—brand^{APG} (DC 14), create water, detect magic, read magic, resistance, virtue

Domain Plant (Growth subdomain)

TACTICS

During Combat Orellie begins combat by activating her judgments of piercing and purity, then augmenting herself and her scorpion minions by casting *shared wrath* (she picks a target who has blasphemed against Arlantia or Cyth-V’sug, or simply the most goodhearted opponent). She trusts her scorpions to keep opponents busy while she casts *retribution*, *hold monster*, and *chaos hammer*, before finally activating her bane ability and engaging in combat herself. If all her scorpions fall, she casts *spiritual weapon* as well.

Morale Orellie is a fanatic and fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 21, **Dex** 14, **Con** 22, **Int** 14, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 14
Base Atk +11; **CMB** +15; **CMD** 27
Feats Cleave, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Armor, Iron Will, Outflank^{APG}, Power Attack, Precise Strike^{APG},

Shield Focus, Spell Focus (enchantment), Swap Places^{APG}, Toughness^S, Weapon Focus (heavy pick)

Skills Acrobatics -1 (-9 when jumping), Climb +12, Craft (stonemasonry) +15, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (arcana, religion) +20, Knowledge (dungeoneering, engineering) +11, Linguistics +4, Perception +24, Profession (miner) +17, Sense Motive +9, Spellcraft +18, Stealth +23, Survival +22, Use Magic Device +20; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Craft (stonemasonry), +2 Perception, +4 Profession (miner), +2 Stealth

Languages Abyssal, Common, Sylvan, Terran, Undercommon
SQ blighted unity, enlarge, monster lore +4, solo tactics, stern gaze +5, tainted blood, track +5, verminous insights

Combat Gear *potions of barkskin* (2, CL 9th), *potions of cure serious wounds* (2), *potion of remove paralysis*, *strand of prayer beads* (lesser), *wand of giant vermin* (13 charges); **Other Gear** +2 *breastplate*, +2 *buckler*, +1 *icy burst heavy pick*, unholy symbol of Cyth-V'sug, 127 gp

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Verminous Insights (Su) Orellie's extensive studies and contact with both the Darkblight and *Dryad's Song* have granted her insights into the behavior of vermin. She benefits from a permanent *control vermin* effect. Any vermin she controls counts as an ally for the purpose of her solo tactics class ability, and any vermin she controls can benefit from morale bonuses from spells she casts, such as *bless*.

Trap: Orellie defends her solitude with a simple but painful pendulum trap, weaving living, thorny vines into a spike-covered sphere containing a half-ton of the chamber's heavy, moist earth. Disturbing a few ground-crawling vines on the cave entrance's floor releases the pendulum. While not likely to be fatal to any of the inhabitants of the Deeper Reaches, the trap leaves painful thorns embedded in the flesh of its victims for days, deterring the curious.

SWINGING THORN TRAP

CR 13

XP 25,600

Type mechanical; **Perception** DC 25; **Disable Device** DC 32

EFFECTS

Trigger location; **Reset** automatic

Effect Atk +15 melee (8d6 points of bludgeoning and piercing damage); special (a hit leaves 1d4 barbed thorns embedded in a creature's skin; each thorn imposes a cumulative -1 penalty on attack rolls and skill checks for 24 hours; removing a thorn requires a successful DC 20 Heal check); multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft.-by-20-ft. area)

Development: Orellie's ring has the words "Shall stand proud to station earned" engraved on it in Abyssal. It is one of four rings required to complete *Dryad's Song*, which can free Gendowyn.

Story Award: If the PCs recover the ring from *Dryad's Song* that Orellie carries and place it on the artifact, award them 9,600 XP.

H5. WESTERN FASTNESS (CR 17)

The acrid scent of organic decay hangs over this dead-end expanse like a thick fog. To the north, twisted wicker chairs and dirty bedrolls tumble haphazardly in front of a field of oversized mushrooms. To the south languish enormous rotting corpses with horns and pincer-tipped arms. The ceiling feels strangely low, though the midnight void above seems to stretch upward indefinitely.

The passage narrows before opening into this large cavern. A light but steady "rain" falls, in fact moisture filtering from the surface swamp (area D8) several hundred feet above. Similar in appearance to Fangwood Forest, this cave has long made a comfortable refuge for demons of Jeharlru who exploit the weaker planar boundaries created by the Darkblight to cross over into the material world. Arlantia tolerates their presence so long as they arrive bearing gifts, or else submit to a period of service. The mushroom field to the north is difficult terrain.

Beginning about 50 feet above the ground is a series of four shelves—enormous mushrooms growing from the cavern's walls—each directly across from and about 10 feet above the last. Arlantia uses these terraces to grow a rich crop of mindslaver mold, a First World plant that enslaves the will of mortal creatures, infested with her Darkblight to increase its power. She expended most of her mature stock enslaving Taurgreth and his commandos, and the specimens growing now are too young to move about freely, let alone be augmented with the Darkblight infection.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 23 Knowledge (planes) check knows that the fallen creatures to the south are glabrezus, the most recent Abyssal visitors to court Naphexi's favor. When Taurgreth and his commandos entered the Pestilent Palace, the demons refused to allow the hobgoblins passage unless the mortals made a deal, trading their souls for the secret to enter Arhlantu. Taurgreth responded by gutting the pair and leaving their corpses to rot.

Creatures: If Wendel was not traveling with the PCs, he was captured in the Upper Reaches and taken here, where he can be found on the topmost platform, injured but alive.

Four Ironfang Legion commandos—Afet, Dontat, Emnas, and Hadar—spar in the chamber's center. Arlantia infested the delegation with mindslaver mold to convert the hobgoblin warriors into her eager agents, and now debates the merits of retaining them as bodyguards versus dispatching them to assassinate

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their former leader, General Azaersi (though this course of action is anathema to the soldiers and thus runs the risk of breaking the mold's control over them). The commandos were hand-selected by Taurgreth as his personal operations team, and remain deadly warriors and cunning spies despite their mind-controlled state. The molds that control them nest underneath their armor, enjoying the warmth and safety, and noticing any strange behavior requires a successful DC 20 Sense Motive check (rather than the usual DC 15 for recognizing domination spells).

If they spy the intruders, the commandos pause their sparring and watch silently, their mindslaver molds quietly communicating with Taurgreth's. After a few moments, they shout a greeting to the newcomers and offer to parley. Afet speaks for the group.

"It is good to see any face not infested with fungus, even if it has to be as soft as yours. I am Afet, of the Ironfang Legion, and offer parley. We are trapped in this cursed place, unable to find an exit or confront its ruler. I'll send my soldiers away if you'll join me for a time and discuss some chance of alliance. I can probably stand the sight of you until we leave this wretched hole."

Provided the PCs agree, Afet sends her allies into the mushroom forest and invites the PCs to join her for a meal of stewed onions and mushrooms while she trades intelligence on the palace. She pauses occasionally for several seconds to reflect on anything the PCs reveal to her—silently sending information to Taurgreth via their mindslaver molds. She has little useful information to offer, but tells the PCs whatever she thinks might catch their interest, implying she's learned some secret weakness of the dryad's. Her ultimate goal is to gather whatever intelligence she can about the intruders and funnel it to Taurgreth below. She reveals only the following about reaching Arlantia: "The entrance to her throne room is hidden. There's some damnable nursery rhyme to reveal it, but Hadregash knows what sing-song fey nonsense it may be."

If the PCs don't have any worthwhile intelligence or are reluctant to parley, she hurls a vial of azure lily pollen (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Equipment* 111) and attacks. While the mindslaver mold incubating above is too young to move about on its own, the commandos hope to apply it to any unconscious or paralyzed intruders to teach them the value of obedience to the Princess of the Blasted Heath.

The four mindslaver molds controlling the hobgoblins are symbiotically infested with Darkblight, making them more powerful than normal and granting them DR 10/cold iron and good. Despite this, the plants are generally noncombatants, and engage only if their hobgoblin servants are incapacitated—they launch spore pods at enemies, but do not detach.

HOBGOBLIN COMMANDOS (4)

CR 13

XP 25,600 each

Hobgoblin assassin 7/fighter (cad) 7 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 175, *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Combat* 45)
LE Medium humanoid (goblinoid)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +13

DEFENSE

AC 27, touch 15, flat-footed 25 (+8 armor, +3 deflection, +2 Dex, +2 natural, +2 shield)

hp 179 each (14 HD; 7d8+7d10+105)

Fort +15, **Ref** +10, **Will** +8; +3 vs. poison

Defensive Abilities improved uncanny dodge

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee +1 *shocking burst longsword* +19/+14/+9
(1d8+6/17–20 plus 1d6 electricity)

Ranged mwk cold iron dagger +15 (1d4+5/19–20)

Special Attacks death attack (DC 18), payback, quiet death, sneak attack +4d6, true death (DC 22)

TACTICS

Before Combat The commandos ready for a fight by chugging their *potions of bear's endurance* and *bull's strength*.

During Combat Afet and her team rely heavily on feinting in combat, denying opponents their Dexterity bonuses to AC in order to exploit their sneak attack, and deadly surprise abilities; they especially love blinding warriors and deafening spellcasters with dirty trick combat maneuvers. They hope to capture intruders alive for conversion, and refrain from using their death attacks.

Morale The mind-controlled hobgoblins fight to the death. If the PCs manage to remove the mindslaver molds controlling them, they instead immediately attempt to flee.

Base Statistics Without their potions, the commandos' statistics are **hp** 151; **Fort** +13; **Melee** +1 *shocking burst longsword* +17/+12/+7 (1d8+4/17–20 plus 1d6 electricity); **Ranged** mwk cold iron dagger +15 (1d4+3/19–20); **Str** 16, **Con** 18; **CMB** +15 (+21 dirty trick, +17 disarm, steal); **CMD** 30 (34 vs. dirty trick, 32 vs. disarm or steal).

STATISTICS

Str 20, **Dex** 14, **Con** 22, **Int** 13, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +12; **CMB** +17 (+23 dirty trick, +19 disarm, steal); **CMD** 32 (36 vs. dirty trick, 34 vs. disarm or steal)

Feats Catch Off-Guard, Combat Expertise, Greater Dirty Trick^{APG}, Improved Critical (longsword), Improved Dirty Trick^{APG}, Improved Feint, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Medium Armor Proficiency, Skill Focus (Bluff), Toughness, Weapon Focus (longsword)

Skills Acrobatics –1 (–5 when jumping), Bluff +18, Disable Device +12, Disguise +8, Perception +13, Sense Motive +8, Stealth +16, Survival +8; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Stealth

Languages Common, Dwarven, Goblin

SQ deadly surprise, hidden weapons, poison use

Combat Gear *oil of darkness*, *potions of bear's endurance* (2), *potion of bull's strength*, *potions of cure serious wounds* (2),

azure lily pollen^{UE}, **Other Gear** +2 breastplate, +1 light steel shield, +1 shocking burst longsword, mwk cold iron daggers (3), amulet of natural armor +2, cloak of resistance +2, ring of protection +3

DARKBLIGHT MINDSLAVERS (4) CR 4

1,200 each

Advanced mindslaver mold (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 4 288, 194)

hp 38 each

DR 10/cold iron and good

Treasure: Anyone who succeeds at a DC 30 Perception check while searching the lowest platform notices a metallic glint coming from a carefully arranged bed of moss. Under the moss is a sturdy bronze lockbox holding some of the hobgoblins' gear, as well as offerings they were to present to Arlantia. The box still contains a *bag of holding* (type IV), a *gem of seeing*, and a single *ring gate* (paired with the *ring gate* in area G5, but still mere decoration until Arlantia is slain).

Development: Afet keeps a ring from *Dryad's Song* tucked in her belt pouch, left in her keeping after Taurgreth originally led their group into the palace to speak with Arlantia. Inscribed around the ring are the words "Til all hands bear the sin they've earned."

Story Award: If the PCs recover the ring from *Dryad's Song* that the hobgoblins protect, award them 9,600 XP.

I. ARHLANTU, SEAT OF THE DARKBLIGHT

Arhlantu is Arlantia's throne room. This massive, natural cavern a thousand feet below her tree is where she first began working her foul prayers and rituals to honor Cyth-V'sug, and the place where he first breached the walls of reality to deliver the Darkblight to his eager servant. Today, a massive knot of fungal tissue fills most of the chamber, suspended by massive tendrils of fungal matter that connect it to the web of rot and disease far overhead. Arhlantu is the figurative "heart" of the Darkblight, and while destroying Arlantia here won't stop the Darkblight entirely, it sunders the realm's connection to Cyth-V'sug's Abyssal realm and prevents new horrors from creeping into the Material Plane from Jeharlu.

This area is also the final stronghold of the blighted dryad Arlantia, engineer of the Darkblight. The Princess of the Blasted Heath rarely leaves the comforting presence of the Darkblight's heart, and can use her spiritual connection to scry through the

massive fungal clot, viewing and even delivering edicts to any portion of the blighted Fangwood connected by the mycelia snaking out from the cursed tissue. While this does not allow her to view or influence those new outgrowths of the Darkblight emerging in other corners of the Fangwood—often carried unwittingly by greedy humans or fleeing fey—that limitation lasts only until the core infection spreads out to encompass those new growths.

Arhlantu's ceiling is about 150 feet above the cavern floor in most places, and dimly lit by glowing nodules in the fungal matter lining its walls; for more information about the cavern's terrain, see area I1.

THE QUICKLINGS DEPART

Once the PCs are ready to descend into area I, their quickling allies grab their attention with a low, grave hail. Sounding more serious than they ever have, Meril



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I. ARHLANTU

1 square = 5 feet



and Wendel tell the PCs that they cannot follow any farther. Wendel begins to panic as his daydreams of confronting “the evil one” suddenly become all too real, and Meril was never completely sold on confronting the powerful leader to begin with. Both quicklings are truly terrified of Arlantia, though they futilely try to hide the extent of their fear. Frequently and in unison they declare, “The evil-evil-evil one must die! But she is powerful like a goddess! We are no gods, no-no-no!”

If the PCs have any favors remaining, they might take this opportunity to ask the quicklings to scout any areas of the Deeper Reaches or Upper Reaches that they haven’t yet explored (but remember that the quicklings will not travel to a different layer of the palace than the one the PCs are on). If the quicklings scout any place with treasure the PCs haven’t acquired, they recover the valuables, but with a 50% chance for each item that they present it to the PCs or keep it for themselves (though they can later surrender items they initially keep; see Concluding the Adventure on page 50).

11. THE BLASTED THRONE (CR 19)

An enormous clot of green, black, and white fungus—pulsing as if a thousand hearts beat beneath its fleshy surface—dominates this massive cavern. Innumerable thick, fibrous

strands sprout from the cavern walls, suspending the massive growth fifty feet in the air. At the very pinnacle of the mighty fungal bulb is a throne made from wilted yellow flowers braided into twining wicker. Large ledges perch at the cavern’s east and west ends, overlooking a cavern floor dotted with stands of mushrooms and rancid, bubbling pools of goo.

Dubbed Arhlantu (in the style of Jeharlu—Abyssal home of the demon lord Cyth-V’sug), Arlantia’s home is the grotesque, living heart of the disease she brings to the world. The entrance to Arhlantu from above leaves visitors on a large ledge at the western edge of the cavern, and bridge-like strands of fungal matter run from this ledge to the mass itself, as shown on the map above. The bridges also connect the fungal mass to the cavern’s eastern wall, and they run from the mass to the edge of area 12. Each bridge is considered normal terrain along its 5-foot-wide traversable surface, but they have no railings to prevent bull rush, reposition, and similar combat maneuvers from throwing a creature over the side (see Hazard on page 48). As organic matter, the rope bridges are flammable. Each 5-foot square of bridge has a hardness of 5 and 30 hit points. Two-dozen additional ropy strands, each as thick a dwarf’s torso, help support the massive clot at the chamber’s center.

Arlantia has warded the entrance to her lair with a permanent *alarm* spell (CL 15th), which sounds an audible gong whenever someone approaches. Additionally, the entire cavern is under the effects of a permanent *dimensional anchor* spell, a side effect of the cavern's close ties to Jeharlu.

The fungal mass itself is made of three flat tiers, and each count as normal terrain. Each tier is 10 feet higher than the previous tier; the tiers' edges are slippery and require successful DC 20 Climb checks to traverse.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Perception check notices a recessed, prisonlike cave at the eastern end of the area. This is area **I2**, where Gendowyn is being held prisoner.

Creatures: Seated upon her throne atop her fungal home is Arlantia, the self-styled Princess of the Blasted Heath. She is aware of the PCs' presence, both from reports fed through her mental connection to blighted fey minions and from her alarm *spells*. Despite the pech Orellie's displeasure with her apparently overlooked status (see area **H4**), Arlantia maintains a strong mental connection to the disgruntled fey, and relies heavily on Orellie's experience—as well as reports from Taugreth's commandos in area **H5**—to plan her defenses against these interlopers. Take any defensive countermeasures or spells that make sense into consideration as combat with the dryad begins.

The hobgoblin Taugreth, spymaster for the Ironfang Legion, also lurks in hiding here. Thoroughly indoctrinated to Arlantia's cause by the mindslaver mold growing on him, he watches from the shadows for any sign of violence from these intruders, but does not attack unless ordered.

When the PCs enter her lair proper, Arlantia cackles in a voice that reverberates deafeningly around the cavern.

"At last, my pitiful admirers have found me! I did worry you'd gotten lost along the way. Welcome to a rather summary end! I admit, I'm impressed at your passion. Perhaps I should recruit you to my lovely prince's cause—the First World knows I'm missing enough minions all of a sudden. Shall I turn you into my latest pets? Make you obedient as I did my precious little hobgoblins? Or maybe you'll choose to sacrifice yourselves to my lord, the Prince of the Blasted Heath, who shall soon frolic in the festering playground that is the Fangwood?"

Like most of her minions, Arlantia loves to talk—both to alleviate her boredom and boast of her greatness—and canny PCs may be able to keep her focused on discussion rather than violence, granting the PCs a few turns to quietly prepare themselves for the fight.

Where is Gendowyn? "It's the precious earth pretender you seek, is it?" Arlantia points toward a mass of twisting vines and massive, yellow cysts at the eastern end of the cavern. "I have taught the once-proud 'goddess' her place. Once so superior. Once so oblivious to the talents

EVENING THE ODDS

At CR 18, Arlantia presents an overwhelming challenge for the PCs even on her own. With Taugreth as her obedient defender, the Challenge Rating for this encounter rises to 19, easily overwhelming 15th-level characters. Arlantia does have several noteworthy weaknesses the PCs can exploit, however.

Dryad's Song: While the artifact rod provides the PCs with access to several valuable spells useful in this encounter, its most devastating power is the ability to purge fey of the Darkblight. Arlantia can attempt to resist this purge with a Will saving throw. If cleansed, she immediately loses her connection to her realm, losing her fast healing; parasitic bond; thorn throw; and immunity to disease, paralysis, poison, and polymorph. This also reduces her damage reduction to 5/cold iron and removes her Queen of the Blight special ability. The reduction of her ability scores imposes a -2 penalty on attack and damage rolls, on Fortitude saves, and to AC, and immediately reduces her current and maximum hit points by 63.

Taugreth: Taugreth's obedience is maintained only through the mindslaver mold growing on his back. The PCs may deduce as much after their encounter with the hobgoblin commandos in area **H5**, or with a successful DC 20 Sense Motive check. The PCs can remove the parasite by first restraining Taugreth, and then succeeding at a DC 17 Strength check to tear it free. Taugreth's armor and body provide cover to the mold, but some plant-specific spells like *blight*, *command plants*, *control plants*, and *horrid wilting* can easily destroy the fragile mold. While Taugreth hates the defeats the PCs have handed the Legion, he hates Arlantia far more after his enslavement, and he switches sides to fight the fey.

of those around her. And now she's oblivious to all as my favorite trophy! If you like, I'll kill her in front of you, and then I'll drown you in your own pitiful tears as you mourn the loss of your poor, wretched impostor!"

Where is the sardonyx shard? "Is that what my newest bauble is called? Like so many gaudy bits of tribute my slaves once owned, I had no use for it, and fashioned it into a lovely tiara for my little doll."

Why are Ironfang hobgoblins working for you? "The one calling herself Azaersi proposed an alliance—to kill you, I believe. You must be as annoying to her as you have been to me. I found her offerings of tinsel too pitiful to forgive the insult of a filthy hobgoblin imagining herself my equal, so I selected offerings of flesh I liked. They objected at first, but I am a woman of glory and agony, and no one refuses my will for long."

Why "Princess of the Blasted Heath?" "For centuries I have fostered the Darkblight, a gift given to me by my

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lovely prince, Cyth-V'sug. When he sees how successful I've been—how successful I will be—he will grant me a place at his side in the Abyss. Am I not his bride, raising this adorable child we bore together? I am his princess, and together we'll pull all the world into ravenous Jeharlu. You cannot stop us. Nothing can stop us."

End the Darkblight! "Ah yes, end my life's work, the ultimate union between a bride and her distant husband. Halt this glorious gift of life and growth, which shall make all of this world as one. No, I don't believe I shall."

Can we leave quietly with the artifact we need? Arlantia responds to any requests for peaceful negotiation, trade, or mercy with uncontrollable laughter.

ARLANTIA CR 18
XP 153,600
hp 277 (see page 52)

TAURGRETH CR 15
XP 51,200
hp 164 (see page 58)

Hazard: The stagnant fluid pooling on the cavern's floor is a dangerous blend of caustic secretions and blighted runoff from the forest above. Creatures wading in the 2-foot-deep pool take 2d6 points of acid damage each round and must succeed at a DC 15 Fortitude save or contract the Darkblight (see the sidebar on page 7). Full immersion (if a creature is tripped or falls in from above) deals 10d6 points of acid damage, and imposes a -5 circumstance penalty on the character's Fortitude saving throw to resist contracting the Darkblight. The pool's space counts as difficult terrain.

Development: If Taurgreth still lives when Arlantia dies, the mindslaver mold infesting him attempts to break free and slither into the plant matter making up the cavern's walls. Even freed, Taurgreth holds no love for the PCs—blaming them for the recent stumbles in the Ironfang Legion's conquest—but he has no desire to die. Whether freed intentionally by the PCs during the fight or by Arlantia's death, the hobgoblin curtly asks to leave before throwing a smoke bomb and attempting to escape in the confusion. If he succeeds, the PCs will encounter him during the Adventure Path's climax, "Vault of the Onyx Citadel."

The enormous fungal ball in the chamber's heart continues to beat like a diseased heart regardless of Arlantia's presence, slowly digesting the planar barriers separating the Fangwood Forest from Jeharlu. While slaying Arlantia doesn't end the Darkblight (see

Concluding the Adventure on page 50), it leaves this stronghold of infection vulnerable. Five castings of *diminish plants* or *horrid wilting* targeting the heart within the span of 1 hour causes it to shrivel and eventually die, ending the planar erosion tying the Fangwood to the Abyss. This immediately ends the restriction on teleportation and planar travel magic in the Fangwood's blighted regions and prevents demons and other Abyssal creatures from crossing through as readily.

After Arlantia is destroyed, the taint she inflicted upon *Dryad's Song* visibly begins to lift. The artifact's tarnished gold becomes progressively brighter, the leaves carved into its ends look fresher, and the engravings on its rings begin to waver, as if the runes themselves were changing. The rod can be used to free Gendowyn from her

prison whether in its corrupted state or its fully restored state, but while in its corrupted state, *Dryad's Song* can be used only to wither the diseased knot of fungus that serves as the Darkblight's heart. See page 49 for more on the artifact's abilities once it's restored.

For more information about freeing Gendowyn, see area I2.

Story Award: If Taurgreth still lives, award the PCs XP as if they defeated him in combat.

12. TROPHY HALL

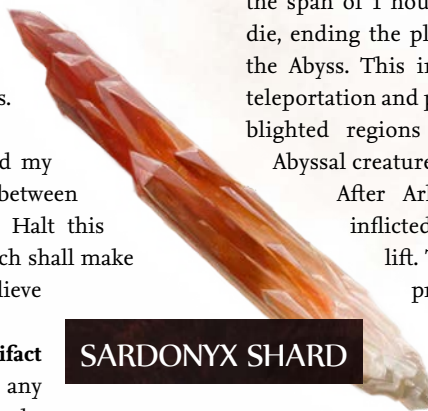
A gloomy recess in the cavern's eastern edge holds a grotesque tangle of slimy vines and human-sized cysts. Vaguely humanoid forms float within some thick, bubbly syrup within the occluded cells.

The closest thing Arlantia maintains to a dungeon is her beloved collection of "trophies"—fey of the Accessiel Court who refused to bow to her rule and were consequently entombed within fungal cysts, comatose and preserved as if by a *binding* spell. Each cyst is incredibly sturdy (hardness 10, 120 hp, break DC 40), but opens with a touch from *Dryad's Song*. Without Arlantia's magic to maintain the prison, the fey entombed within will awaken on their own in 15 months.

Creatures: All told, nearby five dozen fey—mostly atomies, dryads, nymphs, pixies, and satyrs—are imprisoned here, and all has class levels, experience, or unique talents that made them important figures in the now-defunct Accessiel Court. Released fey are exhausted, and most suffer diminished abilities thanks to their years of confinement by Arlantia's dark magic—an effect that requires months or even years to fully recover from.

The glaistig Gendowyn has languished in her cell longer than any of her servants, and has suffered

SARDONYX SHARD



extensively from Arlantia's cruel tortures and experiments in the centuries of her imprisonment. If freed, Gendwyn is tired and disoriented, but vaguely aware of all that has transpired thanks to her enduring mental link with Arlantia from long before the dryad's fall.

GENDOWYN

CR 15

XP 51,200

hp 210 (see page 54)

Development: When the PCs free Gendwyn, she looks at her surroundings in a disoriented furor. She then looks to the PCs and a combination of relief and anguish blooms on her face as she begins to realize what has happened. She addresses the PCs as follows (unless she is freed to help battle Arlantia, in which case she addresses the PCs once melee has ended).

"Free? Am I... free? How long I have languished in the dark. How much suffering my forest has endured... My vain little child resented standing shoulder-to-shoulder with my other servants, so she sought to grind us all beneath her heel. Pity such wit and potential could putrefy in the boundless font of entitlement. It seems I owe you some enmity over slaying my favorite handmaiden, but also gratitude for freeing me from an intolerable confinement. I wonder which should carry more weight?"

Gendwyn is an immortal creature of incredible power—chaotic and whimsical, but also wise from countless millennia of experience. Though said in jest, her comments about thanking or slaying the PCs reflect her first instincts accurately. After a moment to reflect, she settles on embracing her liberators and extending her immortal gratitude. She summons the restored *Dryad's Song* to her hand as a standard action, then uses its magic to teleport herself, the PCs, and select servants to the ruins of her palace on the surface.

For more information about how Gendwyn and the *sardonyx shard* factor into the adventure's ending, see *Concluding the Adventure* on page 50.

On Gendwyn's head is a crown woven from thorny vines with a blood-red gem set in the center. This is the *sardonyx shard* that Taurgreth borrowed from General Azaersi's treasure as an escape plan should his parley with Arlantia sour. He never realized that Arlantia's magic rendered planar travel inert, and so Arlantia easily overpowered him and stole the shard. After a few hours of bored examination, the princess placed the shard in a crown on Gendwyn's head. Arlantia thought it hilarious that the glaistig should wear a powerful artifact that, were it not for the blighted dryad's wicked might, would easily allow Gendwyn to escape her confinement.

THE SPITEFUL SCIMITAR

Arlantia wields the *Spiteful Scimitar*, a powerful magical item stolen from Treerazer millennia ago, when Gendwyn led her fey armies against the nascent demon lord's invasion. Arlantia believes Cyth-V'sug guided her to the weapon, and ever since, the blade has inspired nightmares in her sleeping mind. These visions have helped guide Arlantia as a cruel and twisted ruler.

SPITEFUL SCIMITAR

PRICE
75,315 GP

SLOT none

CL 11th

WEIGHT 4 lbs.

AURA moderate abjuration, transmutation, and necromancy

This +2 *crueful^{UE} furyborn^{UE} scimitar* was created accidentally by Treerazer when the demon lord plunged the glaistig Hephloma's scimitar through her own chest. Images of shriveled vines and wilted flowers decorate its blade. Three times per day as an immediate action after dealing damage to a creature, the wielder can cause the blighted plant life depicted on the blade to animate, embedding thorny vines in the creature's wounds. The creeping, twisting vines cause the creature to become entangled for 1d4 rounds, and it is nauseated by the pain while the entangled condition persists. A successful DC 22 Fortitude saving throw negates the nauseated condition.

CONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS

COST 37,815 GP

Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *cause fear, death knell, rage, sickening entanglement^{TACG}*

Story Awards: If the PCs use *Dryad's Song* to free Gendwyn or recover the *sardonyx shard*, award them 51,200 XP.

DRYAD'S SONG

The scepter known as *Dryad's Song* is a major artifact crafted by the glaistig Gendwyn in her youth. Said to be forged from a thousand and one pledges of loyalty from the Fangwood's fey, the scepter solidified the powerful fey's control over much of the massive forest and forms the foundation of power for her Accessiel Court. While Gendwyn rarely allows the artifact to leave her sight, she occasionally gifts its rings to allies—such as the dwarves of Kraggodan—so they can call upon her for aid.

The following represents *Dryad's Song* before Arlantia tainted it with her evil magic.

DRYAD'S SONG

MAJOR
ARTIFACT

SLOT none

CL 20th

WEIGHT 2 lbs.

AURA strong conjuration and transmutation

The gleaming, gold scepter bears elegant boughs and leaves,

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USING THE MILITIA SYSTEM

Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Lands of Conflict introduces an optional militia system for managing large groups of NPCs and developing them from relative nobodies into a military force to be reckoned with. In this volume, militia teams make invaluable guards, aides de camp, and scouts as the PCs explore a hostile wilderness, though most of the primary conflicts in this adventure are too dangerous for even a well-equipped militia to handle. Depending on the PCs' actions throughout this adventure, they have the opportunity to recruit some unique assets.

Kusana (unique ally): If the PCs spare the blood hag Kusana, she shows a mercenary bent and offers her services in exchange for 5,000 gp. Her cunning and spellcasting grant a +2 bonus on all Secrecy and Security organization checks, but her unsettling nature imposes a -5 penalty on all Loyalty organization checks. If the PCs recruited the wizard Navah during "Assault on Longshadow," the transmuter angrily quits the militia, dealing 3d6×100 gp worth of damage as she leaves.

Wendel and Meril (unique team): If the quickling siblings Wendel and Meril both survived this adventure and the PCs treated them with some measure of kindness, they ask to join the PCs' efforts to repay their debt of honor. Unfortunately, the quicklings' ideals of honor far outstrip their capacity; though they are talented warriors, they are disruptive and prone to petty theft. While they remain, the two act as a team of saboteurs that doesn't count against the militia's maximum number of teams. If they perform sabotage, they grant a +2 bonus to negate an event, but their reckless style increases the PCs' Notoriety score by double the normal amount for the action.

blooming into a miniature, flowered treetop at one end. The scepter's rod has four slots, onto which four large rings can be slotted. Each ring is engraved with a phrase in Sylvan, and can be placed upon or removed from the scepter as a standard action.

Ring 1: "Daughters of the Fangwood green."

Ring 2: "Hear my ardent call."

Ring 3: "Discharge now to oaths long sworn."

Ring 4: "For Accessiel glory, live or fall."

Dryad's Song grants anyone holding it a +5 morale bonus on all Diplomacy and Intimidate skill checks against fey that live within Fangwood Forest. *Dryad's Song* allows its wielder to cast *diminish plants*, *entangle*, *plant growth*, and *wood shape* at will, though these spells affect plants only within Fangwood Forest. Up to three times each day, by reciting the poem on its rings as a full-round action, *Dryad's Song* allows its wielder to either summon 40 HD worth of

dryads, nymphs, and satyrs, or allows its wielder and up to 19 additional Medium or smaller creatures to teleport anywhere within the Fangwood Forest as if they were very familiar with the destination. Summoned fey remain for 20 hours, can be dismissed at will, and are not obligated to obey the wielder's command; dryads summoned by *Dryad's Song* lose their tree dependence weakness while they serve on the wielder's behalf. Unlike the corrupted version of the artifact, the fully restored *Dryad's Song* grants access to its magic whether its various rings are slotted into the scepter or not. Just like the corrupted version, *Dryad's Song* can purge the Darkblight from a living creature within 60 feet as a full-round action.

A ring from the scepter may be gifted to another person. The ring can be worn as a bracelet or on a necklace (occupying the appropriate magic item slot), and grants a +3 resistance bonus on its wearer's saving throws. Once per day, the ring can be used to contact the wielder of *Dryad's Song* via *sending*.

The glaistig Gendwyn maintains a powerful connection to the artifact, and can summon *Dryad's Song* to her hand as a standard action.

DESTRUCTION

Dryad's Song crumbles into ash if it is wholly submerged in a mixture of glaistig blood and a traitor's tears of regret.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If the PCs free Gendwyn, they earn her loyalty and gratitude so long as they show the self-styled goddess some measure of respect and deference. Though her centuries of imprisonment have weakened her abilities, Gendwyn still commands considerable magic—both her own and the magic wielded by those Fangwood Forest fey who escaped the Darkblight. Many members of the Accessiel Court imprisoned alongside Gendwyn are clerics and inquisitors who worship the glaistig as their goddess and command potent divine spellcasting, enough to resurrect any characters slain in the process of freeing Gendwyn. Regaining the full extent of her power will take many years of rest and work, and may present future adventures for the PCs, but for now Gendwyn is powerful enough to make a mighty ally. She is happy to answer the PCs' questions as best as she is able, though her knowledge of current events comes only from her fractured mental link with Arlantia. Gendwyn knows what the *sardonyx shard* is and how it is used, but she has little understanding of who or what the Ironfang Legion is, or where the Onyx Citadel may lie. Gendwyn gladly gifts the PCs the *sardonyx shard* for their service to her, and promises them aid in the future, saying, "Today you freed a legacy and earned the gratitude of a goddess—far more in a day than most of your kind accomplish in the momentary glimpse of life granted to them."



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After this, she focuses her attention on restoring her palace, pushing back the Darkblight, and dispatching messengers to the far corners of the Fangwood to sing of her return, leaving the PCs as guests in the care of an exhausted atomie named Gossamer (for more information on Gossamer, see her entry in *Pathfinder Adventure Path #120: Vault of the Onyx Citadel*). The PCs are welcome to stay in the Accessiel Palace for up to a week and a day before Gossamer politely but firmly asks them to move on.

Like Gendwyn herself, the Accessiel Court will require time and work to rebuild. Beyond the five dozen fey imprisoned alongside her, likewise weakened from their extended sleep, most of the fey of the Fangwood know of Gendwyn only as a legend. The good fey of the Fangwood will join her in hopes that the lost goddess will push back the Darkblight and restore order to their world, while the neutral and even many evil fey are cowed into obedience by legends of her power and terrible temper—once said to be as unexpected and devastating as an earthquake. Despite this trickle of followers, she will not command even a small army of fey for many months yet.

Slaying Arlantia and withering the Darkblight's heart do not instantly destroy the Darkblight, though both of these greatly reduce the supernatural disease's potency and slow its spread. If the Darkblight maintains a hold

in even a single blighted fey, it can continue to spread and infect the world. Eradicating it will require years of deliberate effort as the dwindling numbers of blighted fey gather into hidden cults and hide away in concealed glades of rot. Without the fungal heart, however, the planar boundaries within the Fangwood begin to grow strong once again, allowing creatures to teleport and barring demons from crossing into the Material Plane without aid. With *Dryad's Song* in hand, Gendwyn can banish the Darkblight from infected plants as if using *diminish plants*, allowing her to restore much of the area around her ruined palace to its former glory in a matter of days, though infected fey must still be cured one by one.

If the PCs traveled with Meril or Wendel and treated them with some kindness, respect, or care, the fey give the party any valuables they found during last-minute scouting efforts. The quicklings are deeply moved by what the PCs accomplished—it has brought them a measure of closure over the loss of their family members, helped them feel like they made amends for their earlier indifference toward the Darkblight, and brought healing to their forest home. They plan to ask Gendwyn for a role in her newly reborn court, but before they leave, they promise their swords to the PCs should the mortals ever need help. One or both may join the PCs as cohorts or agents of their militia (see the sidebar on page 50).

ARLANTIA

A self-styled bride of the demon lord Cyth-V'sug, Arlantia wields incredible power, but lacks her patron's direct attention. The demon lord's disregard drives the dryad to ever-greater acts of cruelty to win her idol's favor.

ARLANTIA

CR 18

XP 153,600

Female blighted dryad cleric of Cyth-V'sug 15 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 46, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 116)

CE Medium fey

Init +9; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +26

Aura aura of decay

DEFENSE

AC 36, touch 19, flat-footed 31 (+6 armor, +4 deflection, +4 Dex, +1 dodge, +11 natural)

hp 277 (21d8+183)

Fort +25, **Ref** +22, **Will** +25

Defensive Abilities evasion, fungal rejuvenation; **DR** 10/cold iron, 10/good; **Immune** disease, paralysis, poison, polymorph; **Resist** cold 10, electricity 10; **SR** 29

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 40 ft. (perfect)

Melee *spiteful scimitar* +21/+16/+11 (1d6+7/15-20)

Ranged thorn throw +14 (1d4+2)

Special Attacks channel negative energy 9/day (DC 24, 8d6), parasitic bond, scythe of evil (7 rounds, 2/day), wooden fists (+7, 9 rounds/day)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 6th; concentration +13)

Constant—*speak with plants*

At will—quicken *dominate monster* (blighted fey only; DC 26), *entangle* (DC 15), *scrying* (DC 21), *sending*, *tree shape*, *wood shape* (1 lb. only)

3/day—*charm person* (DC 15), *deep slumber* (DC 17), *tree stride*

1/day—*suggestion* (DC 17)

Domain Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15th; concentration +21)

9/day—*touch of evil* (7 rounds)

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 15th; concentration +21)

8th—*control plants*^o, *mass inflict critical wounds* (DC 24)

7th—*blasphemy*^o (DC 23), *bouncing harm* (DC 22), *word of chaos* (DC 23)

6th—*blade barrier* (DC 22), *greater dispel magic*, *harm*^o (DC 22), *heal* (2)

5th—*greater command* (DC 21), *flame strike* (DC 21), *true seeing*, *wall of stone*, *wall of thorns*^o (2)

4th—*cure critical wounds* (2), *dismissal* (DC 20), *poison*^o (DC 20), *sending*, *unholy blight* (DC 20)

3rd—*contagion*^o (DC 19), *dispel magic*, *bouncing hold person* (DC 18), *invisibility purge*, *protection from energy* (2)

2nd—*barkskin*^o, *calm emotions* (DC 18), *darkness*, *bouncing doom* (2, DC 17), *hold person* (DC 18), *silence* (DC 18)

1st—*bane* (DC 17), *cause fear* (DC 17), *command* (DC 17), *entangle*^o (DC 17), *obscuring mist*, *protection from good*, *shield of faith*

0 (at will)—*detect magic*, *detect poison*, *guidance*, *read magic*

D domain spell; **Domains** Evil, Plant (Decay subdomain)

TACTICS

Before Combat Arlantia watches the PCs' approach through her hive mind and *scrying*, and casts *protection from energy* on herself to resist their preferred spells. She casts *shield of faith* once the PCs enter her domain.

During Combat Arlantia attacks without mercy, casting *greater dispel magic* to shut down any preparations, then *mass inflict critical wounds*, *blasphemy*, and *harm*. If her enemies manage to engage her in melee as she flies throughout Arhlantu, she uses her scythe of evil ability to add the *unholy* special ability to her scimitar before attacking. She casts *heal* on herself whenever she drops below 150 hit points. Arlantia knows her aura of decay will destroy the mindslaver mold controlling Taugreth, so she activates it only if he dies or is freed from her control.

Morale Arlantia fights to the death.

Base Statistics Without *shield of faith*, Arlantia's statistics are **AC** 32, touch 15, flat-footed 27.

STATISTICS

Str 20, **Dex** 21, **Con** 25, **Int** 14, **Wis** 22, **Cha** 24

Base Atk +14; **CMB** +19; **CMD** 35

Feats Bouncing Spell^{APG}, Channel Smite, Combat Casting, Craft Wondrous Item, Dodge, Extra Channel, Great Fortitude,

Improved Critical (scimitar), Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Armor, Lightning Reflexes, Quicken Spell (*dominate monster*), Toughness⁹

Skills Acrobatics +22, Diplomacy +20, Escape Artist +17, Fly +17, Intimidate +22, Knowledge (nature) +17, Knowledge (religion) +15, Linguistics +8, Perception +26, Sense Motive +19, Stealth +6; **Racial Modifiers** +2 Knowledge (nature), +2 Perception, +2 Stealth

Languages Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Infernal, Sylvan; *speaks with plants*

SQ blighted unity, child of the blight, tainted blood, thorn throw, tree meld, wild empathy +16, woodcraft

Combat Gear *potions of cure serious wounds* (3); **Other Gear** +2 *light fortification glamered chain shirt*, *spiteful scimitar*, *amulet of natural armor* +3, *belt of mighty constitution* +6, *cloak of resistance* +5, *headband of inspired wisdom* +2, *ring of evasion*, onyx unholy symbol of Cyth-V'sug (worth 500 gp)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Glaistig Pretender (Su) Arlantia has performed numerous rituals on herself using Gendowyn's blood, trying to invest her with the glaistig's godlike nature. While her efforts have yet to grant her mythic power, she has gained a permanent +6 bonus to Charisma and a +2 natural armor bonus to her AC.

Harbinger of the Blight (Su) The Darkblight came to Golarion through Arlantia's infected body, and she retains a near-divine mastery over the fungal matter. She can cast quickened *dominate monster*, but only on creatures with the blighted fey template. She can also use *scry* and *sending* at will as spell-like abilities, but only in landscapes infested with the Darkblight. In any area infused with the Darkblight, she can command the fungus to carry her aloft, granting her a fly speed of 40 feet (perfect).

Arlantia was born as an exceptionally talented—and yet equally conceited—dryad, eager to serve but also yearning to be acknowledged. She grew in skill and status quickly, eventually becoming a handmaiden in the Accessiel Court, part of a privileged few allowed to serve Gendowyn personally and act as her agents across the forest.

But even being among the elites somehow felt like a slight to her. Arlantia yearned to be recognized above all others, and her impetuous and overeager nature led to frequent mistakes and alienated her fellow dryads. And despite Arlantia's best efforts, Gendowyn considered her on par with her sisters, rather than as a treasured daughter.

As jealousy and frustration darkened her heart, strange whispers came to Arlantia—unintelligible murmurs that guided her deep down below the Accessiel Palace. Here, she found a forbidden grotto that imprisoned the cursed *Spiteful Scimitar*, along with other trophies Gendowyn had claimed in her campaign against Treerazer centuries ago. Arlantia took the blade that so clearly beckoned her, and spent months reading the teachings of Cyth-V'sug to learn the truth of the world that Gendowyn selfishly hid away. As she studied and prayed, a sickness took hold in the dryad, blooming a pox across her flesh, and from the fluids that fell from her weeping sores, the first Darkblight took root.

Arlantia then infected her fellow dryads, twisting their adoring faith, and with Gendowyn's most powerful servants by her side, overthrew the glaistig. She now rules as a cruel and fickle queen, sometimes cunning and aggressive, and other times retreating into the sanctuary of Arhlantu to brood for weeks at a time.

Though Cyth-V'sug has offered her tantalizing tastes of his favor—the *Spiteful Scimitar* and the Darkblight—Arlantia is frustrated that he doesn't invest her with mythic power. No matter how deeply the Darkblight grips the Fangwood, Arlantia's pleas to the demon lord go unanswered.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Arlantia's presence has been felt from time to time throughout the Ironfang Invasion, in the form of blighted fey and corrupted plants and animals that roam Fangwood Forest. Ever egotistical, Arlantia will not back down from a confrontation with the PCs, and her fate is to either kill these heroes or perish trying. Should she or the PCs somehow escape, she collects whatever minions remain to hunt the PCs without mercy.

Arlantia's presence should feel constantly oppressive and looming; she is able to scry on and even taunt the PCs on a whim—long before they enter her Pestilent Palace.

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GENDOWYN

Ancient and powerful, Gendowyn once ruled most of the fey of the Fangwood, and even the dwarves of nearby Kraggodan considered the powerful fey a protective spirit.

GENDOWYN

CR 15/MR 7

XP 51,200

Unique glaistig (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 5* 124)

CN Medium fey (earth, mythic)

Init +21; **Senses** low-light vision, tremorsense 120 ft.; Perception +30

Aura reveler's rapture (30 ft., DC 26)

DEFENSE

AC 35, touch 27, flat-footed 25 (+7 deflection, +10 Dex, +8 natural)

hp 278 (19d6+194); regeneration 10 (air)

Fort +14, **Ref** +21, **Will** +19; second save

DR 10/cold iron and epic; **Immune** daze, mind-affecting effects, stagger, stun; **Resist** acid 30, cold 20, electricity 20, fire 20, sonic 20; **SR** 26

Weaknesses airbane

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., burrow 40 ft., climb 40 ft.; earth glide

Ranged earth blast +29 (8d6+16/19–20 bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing plus hex) or

leaf blast +29 (16d6+24/19–20 slashing plus hex)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with earth whip or leaf whip)

Special Attacks mythic power (7/day, surge +1d10), witch of the fey

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 19th; concentration +26)

Constant—*pass without trace*

At will—*create water*, *know direction*, *purify food and drink* (DC 17), *transport via plants*

1/day—*clashing rocks*^{APG} (DC 26), *confusion* (DC 21), *flesh to stone* (DC 23), *move earth*, *summon nature's ally VIII*

Kineticist Wild Talents Known

Infusions—bowling infusion, entangling infusion (DC 22), extended range, impale, kinetic blade, kinetic whip, pushing infusion, wall

Kinetic blasts—earth blast (8d6+16 bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing), leaf blast (16d6+24 slashing)

Utility—basic geokinesis, earth glide, earth walk, enduring earth, elemental grip, ride the blast, shift earth, stone sculptor

TACTICS

During Combat Gendowyn enters combat with the artifact *Dryad's Song*, unleashing its power to summon fey minions to her side. She prefers toppling or imprisoning her foes so she can dispose of them at her leisure.

Morale Gendowyn has been bested twice in combat and now has some fear of death. She retreats if reduced below 100 hit points.

STATISTICS

Str 24, **Dex** 31, **Con** 26, **Int** 27, **Wis** 26, **Cha** 25

Base Atk +9; **CMB** +16; **CMD** 43

Feats Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes^M, Improved Initiative^M, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Skill Focus (Bluff, Sense Motive), Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (kinetic blast)^M

Skills Acrobatics +28 (+32 when jumping), Bluff +35, Climb +15, Diplomacy +29, Disguise +29, Escape Artist +32, Intimidate +29, Knowledge (geography) +21, Knowledge (local, nature) +30, Perception +30, Perform (dance) +29, Sense Motive +36, Sleight of Hand +28, Stealth +30, Use Magic Device +29

Languages Azlanti, Common, Dwarven, Elven, Gnome, Hallit, Sylvan, Terran, Varisian

SQ divine source^{MA}, sylvan grace, terrakinesis

Gear *Dryad's Song* (see page 49)

Gendowyn claims to have transplanted the first seedling of the Fangwood Forest when she journeyed to the shores of Lake Encarthan from the First World. Given the fey tendency for outlandish claims, her account remains suspect, but originator of the forest or not, Gendowyn has ruled the fey within for millennia, even appearing in Kellid writings long predating the founding of Sarkoris.

Proud and possessed of strong emotions, Gendowyn considered all the glaistigs of Golarion to be her sisters, and so when the tyrant Treerazer slew Hephloima, guardian of the Fierani Forest, in 2506 AR, Gendowyn gathered her Accessiel Court into a fey army and marched against the nascent demon lord. Though their

battles slew many in Treerazer's cults—even capturing a legendary weapon, the *Spiteful Scimitar*—Gendwyn was eventually turned back, bearing several festering wounds from Treerazer that took the self-proclaimed earth goddess decades to fully heal.

Her taste for war blunted and her distrust of outsiders reinforced, Gendwyn ignored the requests for aid when local Kellid tribes came before her centuries later. As the Whispering Tyrant marched across the land, Gendwyn insisted on the Fangwood's neutrality, but in the end, her ancient soul felt some pang of guilt over the untold thousands who perished.

Seven centuries ago, Gendwyn's guilt was eased when the dwarves of Kraggodan ventured into the Fangwood to seek out her advice. Watching the dwarven visitors through the eyes and ears of the forest's denizens, Gendwyn saw the respect and deference these outsiders showed her realm (largely because they feared the alien environment, though she didn't realize this at the time). When the dwarves arrived and begged for Gendwyn's insight into the safety on their mountain home after the nearby eruption in the Five Kings Mountains, Gendwyn was uncharacteristically charitable and offered her wisdom freely. More than that, she offered the dwarves an alliance, sealed by her scepter, *Dryad's Song*. The dwarves happily accepted, and the unlikely friendship between the dwarves and fey grew until the citizens of Kraggodan began to think of Gendwyn as a guardian spirit.

The apparent favoritism that Gendwyn showed toward these humanoid intruders was enough to push her handmaiden Arlantia—already a jealous woman—to treason. Wielding the *Spiteful Scimitar* Gendwyn once claimed as a trophy, and schooled on the very cultist tomes plundered from Treerazer's demesne, Arlantia turned on her mistress, backed by a small army of fey infested with the Abyssal disease known as the Darkblight. Gendwyn demanded that the dryad renounce her evil intentions and lift the pall that had befallen the Fangwood. To punctuate her point, Gendwyn conjured a terrible storm over Arlantia's tree in an incredible display of her might.

Arlantia wavered for a moment in the face of her mistress's power, but the dryad's treachery ran deeper than Gendwyn ever imagined. Arlantia had used her unfettered access to Gendwyn's chambers to taint *Dryad's Song* with the Darkblight. When Gendwyn activated the rod, the magical backlash tore a swath through her flesh and magical essence. The blast weakened Gendwyn, and her last waking memory was the feel of her former servant's hands around her immortal throat.

Gendwyn is an ancient and capricious nature spirit, nearly divine in her power, but she has been thoroughly humbled twice now, and thus she is more inclined to negotiate than most glaistigs. She has little patience for disrespect, however, and her promises are only as secure as her memory of why she made them in the first place. While kind by fey standards, she views the world from an immortal perspective and often mistakes fear of mortality as rudeness or impatience.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

The PCs must free Gendwyn to gain both the *sardonyx shard* and a fey army. She offers her friendship to the PCs for the remainder of their natural lives (barring any grave insults) and welcomes them like old friends whenever they visit. She must dedicate much time to rebuilding her court after centuries of brutal oppression, however, and her aid for a time is handled through proxies, such as the atomie Gossamer. The Fangwood's fey are also grateful to the PCs, automatically improving the starting attitude of Fangwood fey they encounter by one step.

The backlash of the corrupted *Dryad's Song* drained a measure of Gendwyn's mythic power, and recovering it will require both time and adventures beyond the scope of this Adventure Path. Despite her weakened state, Gendwyn still possesses the ability to invest her faithful with divine spellcasting (up to 7th-level spells, until she recovers lost mythic ranks), and though she normally reserves this gift for her handmaidens, she is willing to make an exception in light of the PCs' service to her. Gendwyn grants access to the Chaos, Community, and Plant domains, and the Growth and Home subdomains.



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BESTIARY

NAPHEXI

Raised for the last thousand years at Arlantia's right hand, the black dragon Naphexi is utterly devoted to the inevitability of Cyth-V'sug's vision. Now a creature of decay herself, she serves as Arlantia's herald and virtual daughter.

NAPHEXI

CR 17

XP 102,400

Fungal ancient black dragon (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 4* 116, *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 93*)

CE Huge plant (augmented dragon, water)

Init +3; **Senses** dragon senses; Perception +23

Aura frightful presence (300 ft., DC 25)

DEFENSE

AC 39, touch 7, flat-footed 39 (–1 Dex, +32 natural, –2 size)

hp 297 (22d8+198)

Fort +22, **Ref** +12, **Will** +18

Defensive Abilities poisonous blood; **DR** 15/magic;

Immune acid, disease, mind-affecting effects, paralysis, poison, polymorph, sleep, stunning; **SR** 28

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft., fly 190 ft. (poor), swim 50 ft.

Melee bite +34 (2d8+19 plus 4d6 acid), 2 claws +33 (2d6+13), tail slap +31 (2d6+19), 2 wings +31 (1d8+6)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (15 ft. with bite)

Special Attacks acid pool (50-ft. radius, 20d6 acid), acidic bite, breath weapon (100-ft. line, DC 30, 20d6 acid), create spawn, crush (Small creatures, DC 30, 2d8+19), poison spore cloud

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 22nd; concentration +26)

Constant—*Speak with animals* (reptiles only)

At will—*darkness*, *insect plague*, *plant growth*

1/day—*corrupt water*

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 11th; concentration +15)

5th (4/day)—*cloudkill* (DC 19), *hold monster* (DC 19)

4th (7/day)—*black tentacles* (2), *contagion* (DC 18)

3rd (7/day)—*dispel magic*, *hold person* (DC 17), *nondetection*, *stinking cloud* (DC 17)

2nd (7/day)—*blur*, *detect thoughts* (DC 16), *invisibility*, *summon swarm*, *web* (DC 16)

1st (7/day)—*alarm*, *endure elements*, *grease*, *magic missile*, *obscuring mist*

0 (at will)—*dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 14), *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *open/close* (DC 14), *prestidigitation*, *read magic*

TACTICS

During Combat Naphexi is as cruel as she is lazy, and prefers to kill with as little effort as possible on her part. She loves holding victims helpless with *hold monster* or *black tentacles*, and then subjecting them to *cloudkill* or her breath weapon's acid pool. If forced to engage, she alternates between using Flyby Attack with her bite and crashing among her foes to deliver full attacks.

Morale Naphexi is a fanatic, but not eager to sacrifice the body she has just finished transmuting into a beautiful reflection of her god. She attempts to flee to the Pestilent Palace if reduced below 50 hit points, and harries the PCs once they enter the Deeper Reaches. She does not retreat a second time, however.

STATISTICS

Str 37, **Dex** 8, **Con** 29, **Int** 18, **Wis** 21, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +22; **CMB** +37; **CMD** 46 (50 vs. trip)

Feats Alertness, Combat Expertise, Flyby Attack, Greater Vital Strike, Improved Initiative, Improved Vital Strike, Multiattack, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Stealth), Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (bite)

Skills Acrobatics –1 (+7 when jumping), Bluff +18, Climb +27, Fly +16, Intimidate +29, Knowledge (arcana, nature) +29, Perception +23, Sense Motive +23, Spellcraft +29, Stealth +22, Swim +46, Use Magic Device +29

Languages Common, Draconic, Giant, Goblin, Orc, Sylvan
SQ fungal metabolism, rejuvenation, speak with reptiles, swamp stride, water breathing

Naphexi still recalls her first memories: hearing her fey neighbors whisper about a massacre in a hidden palace. Perpetrated by one of the forest's own dryad daughters, the event was a legendary tragedy among the forest's fey—but not to Naphexi, who was intrigued that a dull, goodly dryad could be so delightfully wicked. Years passed and the dragon grew in both size and cunning. As she learned the forest paths, she made the long journey to the sight of that massacre and discovered a growing plague the forest residents named only in hushed whispers: Darkblight.

Rot and disease inspire little fear in a black dragon, and even less in a child. Within the shattered Accessiel Palace, Naphexi first met Arlantia. Arlantia looked upon this small, awestruck intruder and saw value that would mature in time. The dryad adopted Naphexi, first as a pet and later as a student. Naphexi learned the savagery of the jubjub bird and the cunning of the bandersnatch, and, most importantly, she learned of Cyth-V'sug. The exultations to the Prince of the Blasted Heath shaped Naphexi's growing mind, and the religion's dark power and apocalyptic fixations appealed to her on a primal level. The black dragon became an adherent of Cyth-V'sug, and her devotion to him was equaled only by her adulation for Arlantia.

As the Darkblight spread, Naphexi became increasingly jealous of Arlantia's seeming perfection and resentful of her own draconic flesh. Fey of the Fangwood could so effortlessly embrace Cyth-V'sug's beauty—whether they wanted to or not—yet her own frequent attempts to embrace the Darkblight left nothing but weakness and scars. But her long nights of research eventually revealed a ritual scrawled in the margins of a dead pastor's journal, which would allow a mortal beast to transcend flesh and become a creature of fungus and rot in Cyth-V'sug's image. The same ritual killed its author, but Naphexi's keen intellect and phenomenal constitution allowed her to succeed where the frail human had failed. She spent decades experimenting and gathering rare ingredients, eventually even recruiting a younger, arrogant black dragon named Ibzairiak as her errand boy. Her final transformation was slow and agonizing, allowing her flesh to rot from within while she imbibed potions and elixirs to maintain a tenuous grip on life, until a new, greater Naphexi burst from the putrid shell of her old body, powerful beyond reckoning and finally worthy of her adopted mother's love.

Naphexi is ancient, powerful, and arrogant, but slavishly devoted to Arlantia and Cyth-V'sug, whom she views as the true inheritors of Golarion. She sees her recent transformation into a fungal creature as divine apotheosis, proof that she is worthy of Arlantia's respect and Cyth-V'sug's favor, and that she is stronger and cleverer than any other mortal creature. Arlantia has rewarded Naphexi's cunning and endurance

by granting her dominion over the Fangwood Forest—dubbing her the Rotten Duchess—though the dragon's reach effectively extends only to those corners infested with the Darkblight... for now.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Naphexi serves as Arlantia's herald, and wishes to spread the Darkblight through the Fangwood and beyond. She believes Arlantia is destined to ascend and become a goddess at Cyth-V'sug's side, that she herself will become Arlantia's divine herald. She guards the blighted depths of the Fangwood, though in practice she spends much of her time resting since her arduous transformation.

It's likely the PCs dispatch Naphexi in her lair. However, if the dragon survives, she is embarrassed and incensed at her own failure. Should she survive and Arlantia be slain, Naphexi sees it as both her privilege and responsibility to fulfill her idol's vision of tainting all the Fangwood with the Darkblight, though maintaining control of the fractious and evil blighted fey within her domain proves far more difficult without

Arlantia's magic. Naphexi becomes a cruel tyrant—far more so than Arlantia—but must devote more of her time to stopping the many backstabbing schemes of her underlings and cowing soldiers into obedience.



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BESTIARY

TAURGRETH

As quiet and patient as he is ruthless, Commander Taurgreth is a blunt but effective spymaster for the Ironfang Legion, successor to the now-deceased Elacnida. Now controlled by Arlantia, he remains a cruel and silent enforcer.

TAURGRETH

CR 16

XP 76,800

Hobgoblin slayer 16 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 175, *Pathfinder RPG Advanced Class Guide* 53)

LE Medium humanoid (goblinoid)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +13

DEFENSE

AC 32, touch 20, flat-footed 25 (+7 armor, +3 deflection, +6 Dex, +1 dodge, +4 natural, +1 shield)

hp 204 (16d10+112)

Fort +17, **Ref** +16, **Will** +7

Resist negative energy 10, positive energy 10

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee Obedience +24/+19/+14/+9 (1d6+6/19–20), Retribution +23/+18 (1d6+5/19–20 plus 2d6 vs. chaotic)

Special Attacks quarry, slayer's advance 1/day, sneak attack +5d6 plus 5 bleed, studied target +4 (4th, swift action)

TACTICS

Before Combat Taurgreth watches intruders from hiding, marking four of them as studied targets.

During Combat Taurgreth becomes a whirl of flashing blades when roused to combat. He single-mindedly attacks a single target at a time, relying on his *cloak of displacement* and the defense bonuses his sword Obedience provides to protect him from his target's allies.

Morale So long as he is enchanted by the mindslaver mold, Taurgreth fights to the death. If freed, however, he turns his rage against Arlantia, and flees if the PCs continue to attack him or he is reduced below 40 hit points.

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 22, **Con** 20, **Int** 8, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +16; **CMB** +19; **CMD** 39

Feats Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Double Slice, Great Fortitude, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Iron Will, Quick Draw, Skill Focus (Bluff), Toughness, Two-Weapon Defense, Two-Weapon Fighting, Two-Weapon Rend, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (short sword)

Skills Acrobatics +19, Bluff +14, Disguise +14,

Knowledge (local) +12, Perception +13, Sense Motive +18, Stealth +28; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Stealth

Languages Common, Goblin

SQ combat style (two-weapon combat), slayer talents (bleeding attack +5, combat trick, fast stealth, finesse rogue, ranger combat style [3], weapon training), stalker, swift tracker, track +8

Combat Gear *elixirs of truth* (2), liquid blades (2), smoke pellets^{UE} (10) smokesticks (5), tindertwigs (20); **Other Gear** +3 *deathless mithral chain shirt*, Obedience (+3 *defending short sword*), Retribution (+2 *axiomatic short sword*), *amulet of natural armor* +4, *belt of physical might* +4 (Dex, Con), *minor cloak of displacement*, *hat of disguise*, *ring of freedom of movement*, *ring of protection* +3, deck of cards illustrated with risqué goblinoid men and women (worth 5 gp)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Wealthy (Ex) As a commander in the Ironfang Legion, Taurgreth has access to the hobgoblin army's deepest pockets. Therefore, he has gear and equipment equivalent to that of a 15th-level PC. This increases Taurgreth's Challenge Rating by 1.

Always lankier than his peers, the hobgoblin Taurgreth grew up scrapping among the vicious tribes of his kin in Molthune. Not a bright boy, Taurgreth lost many, many fights early on, but he learned much by carefully watching others as they battled. As he learned how his enemies moved and thought, those opponents soon came to lie in the dirt. Soon, though, drunken brawls around the campfire weren't enough for Taurgreth. Joining one of Molthune's unofficial monster units, he eventually he developed a reputation as a great warrior—famed for the cruel finishing blows he visited on his opponents—but in him, Azaersai and her spymaster Elacnida saw something more.

Both women saw a hobgoblin who understood patience and observation and the nature of people—a hobgoblin who could read others and their weaknesses.

Elacnida wooed the young man into the Ironfang Legion and groomed him as one of her spies and assassins, and soon the boy everyone dismissed as “too slow” to learn the art of war was helping steer the course of great battles.

One cold day 2 years ago, General Azaersi returned from a secret mission and threw her bloodstained sword, Obedience, at Taurgreth’s feet. She spoke only enough to inform the lanky hobgoblin that he was her spymaster now. Wise beyond his years, Taurgreth asked no questions and dutifully accepted the role.

Although relatively inexperienced, Taurgreth is the picture dedication and drive. He lacks his former mentor’s cunning and charm, but far exceeds her in combat prowess. Unlike Elacnida, he is happy to stay far from the center of attention, spending much of his time lurking in camps posing as a lowly private or even in human settlements disguised as a traveler or beggar. Taurgreth received permission from Arlantia to assemble his own ring of elite warriors to serve outside the regular chain of command. Azaersi was skeptical at first, and presented Taurgreth with a challenge: seize a Molthuni town without assistance from the Legion and without drawing the wrath of Molthune. Expecting a campaign of blackmail or subversion, Azaersi was shocked when Taurgreth’s forces slipped into the tiny farming town of Gillet one night and simply slit the throats of every resident without waking a soul. Humbled by the skill and bluntness Taurgreth and his soldiers displayed, the general has since embraced his agents.

Since then, Taurgreth and his team have undertaken the Legion’s most dangerous missions. Their last task, however, proved to be too much even for their elite unit. Dispatched to secure an alliance with the fey Arlantia—a job most hobgoblins would consider too appalling to even imagine—they instead fell afoul of the cruel dryad and the alien plants at her command. Now controlled by Arlantia’s mindslaver mold, Taurgreth serves as a silent sentinel at the fey princess’s side—still watching and waiting for enemies to show him their weakness.

CAMPAIGN ROLE

Despite being a very minor presence in the adventure itself, Taurgreth is very much a motivating force in “Prisoners of the Blight.” Sharing most hobgoblins’ superstitious fear and hatred for the “elf magic” wielded by fey, he prowled into General Azaersi’s chamber before leaving on this ill-fated mission, stealing the *sardonix shard* from the *Onyx Key*—an assurance of swift retreat should negotiations go badly. Taurgreth had no way of knowing that Arlantia and the Darkblight blocked dimensional travel within the accursed domain, and so the *sardonix shard* proved useless and fell into Arlantia’s hands.

It is very likely that the PCs destroy Taurgreth during their final confrontation with Arlantia. However, if the PCs immediately set upon and destroy Arlantia, or somehow destroy the mindslaver mold without killing Taurgreth, the hobgoblin is freed from his servitude. In this event, Taurgreth is filled with rage over the violation of his mind, and joins the PCs in battling Arlantia—possibly helping to turn the tide against the powerful opponent. While grateful for his freedom, Taurgreth is all too aware of the PCs’ identities and holds no loyalty toward or pity for them. Once Arlantia is defeated, he asks once—politely—to leave without incident. If attacked instead, he throws a smoke pellet as a distraction to slip away. For now, the hobgoblin’s goal is to rescue any of his commandos who survived and report back to Azaersi. If Taurgreth escapes, the PCs should encounter him again when they finally take their fight to the Ironfang Legion in *Pathfinder Adventure Path #120: Vault of the Onyx Citadel*.



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BLIGHTED LANDS

We spent three days slashing through barbed vegetation, and it seemed with the passing of each day, the skies darkened. It's funny now, when I look back upon that trek, that the journey into that bleak realm was far easier than our escape from it. Make no mistake: though no perceivable menace showed itself, we knew danger lurked. It was as if the very land sought our demise, wracking our expedition with sickness, madness, and far worse. I know you have asked me to expand upon these things, but I fear—no, I am thankful—that my psyche has erased most memories from that foul expedition. It is with tepid satisfaction that I thank the board for my release to a life of normalcy. I bid the institution farewell.

—Last known communication of Farynn Harafin, Royal Explorer (ret.)
upon her release from Havenguard Lunatic Asylum

Dark places exist, hidden from the pristine valleys and proud mountain ranges that bask under the purifying sun. These regions mar the land like festering scars and plague travelers who penetrate their murky borders. Whether these foul terrains are tangled woods, miasma-filled swamps, or pungent cesspools, such lands rebel against trespassers. What perverts nature into these shrouded places is not entirely known, nor is it the same for each region.

The following article provides GMs quick tools for creating blighted lands for use in any adventure, new feats for player characters or NPCs who hail from or adventure in blighted lands, and details on four iconic regions of the Inner Sea known for their blights.

CREATING A BLIGHTED LAND

Application of the following simple rules can turn any environment into a blighted land. Game Masters are encouraged to introduce these slowly over the course of a party's exploration of a region to increase the players' sense of something being wrong with the land. In such a way, PCs may learn too late that they've gone past the point of no return in a region where the very environment is hostile toward them.

Difficult Terrain: Whether overgrown plants, strange fungal formations, craters from ancient disasters, or sucking mud, introducing difficult terrain into otherwise normal landscapes is an easy means of creating environmental obstacles without much work on the GM's part. In regions where the blight is magical in nature, this difficult terrain may even hinder the movement of characters with class features like woodland stride, which normally allow them to ignore such obstacles.

Light Levels: Even in otherwise unobstructed areas like plains, mountaintops, or open bodies of water, light can be supernaturally suppressed to indicate the presence of a blight. This might be as simple as reducing the level of illumination by one step, utilizing existing shadows to provide larger bonuses and penalties, or even introducing unnaturally bright light where it wouldn't be expected. Light affects more than just the PCs' tactical movements and perception, but also the local flora and fauna; crops are less likely to flourish in fields that sit under a constant cloud of gloom.

Poisoned Resources: Blighted lands make Survival checks to find food, water, or shelter more difficult. Depending on the severity of the blight or how deep within the affected territory the PCs are, this could increase the DC by any number from 2 to 10. If the PCs are unaware of the blight, they may not even notice the increased difficulty in finding potable water or edible food, or that they're being exposed to radiation (see *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Numeria, Land of Fallen Stars*), disease, or poison when they believe they have succeeded on their skill checks to safely live off the land.

Unnatural Temperature: Extreme cold or heat present more of a nuisance to parties capable of casting *endure elements* than they do actual threats, but changing the temperature in an environment is a simple alteration to indicate that things are not normal. This might take the form of unnaturally cold days in a desert or jungle, or scorchingly hot nights in northern regions where such temperatures are not the norm. Alternatively, ordinarily extreme temperatures may be increased to heightened levels, making chilled air frigid and hot air sweltering.

FEATS

The following feats are appropriate for player characters or NPCs whose character theme deals heavily with blighted lands.

BLIGHT GUIDE

Your confidence in exploring dangerous regions inspires the same in your companions.

Prerequisites: Blight Survivalist, Skill Focus (Survival).

Benefit: Your bonus on saving throws gained from the Blight Survivalist feat extends to your allies within 30 feet. Furthermore, once per day, if you would fail a saving throw against an environmental hazard or weather effect, you can reroll that save, but you must use the second result, even if it is lower.

BLIGHT SURVIVALIST

You have learned to survive in dangerous environments.

Prerequisite: Skill Focus (Survival).

Benefit: You gain a +3 bonus on saving throws against environmental hazards and weather effects.

Special: If you have the favored terrain class feature and the blighted land being explored matches one of those terrains, you can choose to use your favored terrain bonus in place of the +3 bonus granted by this feat.

SUPPRESS BLIGHT

You can temporarily suppress afflictions brought on by blight, at a long-term cost.

Prerequisites: Great Fortitude, Iron Will.

Benefit: Once per day as a standard action, when you are suffering from a curse or disease effect, you can suppress the effects (as *delay poison*) for 1 hour per 3 character levels (minimum 1 hour). While the affliction is suppressed, you gain a number of temporary hit points equal to the suppressed affliction's save DC, which last as long as the affliction's effects are suppressed. At the end of this duration, the effects return and all subsequent saving throw DCs against the affliction (including the DC to permanently end the effect) are increased by 2, to a maximum increase of half your Hit Dice; you can't suppress an affliction whose save DC has already been increased to its maximum.

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BESTIARY

LAKE LOST TO THE SUN

Few have seen beneath the eerily calm surface of this large, narrow lake on the northern edge of the Worldwound beyond the large population of water orms that call the Lake Lost to the Sun home. The lake's dark, mirrorlike surface reflects the sky, but rather than a perfect image, it presents a baleful reflection—cloudy skies on clear days, harsh thunderstorms amid otherwise calm weather, or even a field of stars while the sun shines. Vegetation does not grow within 50 feet of the lake's edges, nor along its deep lake bed. The waters of the lake taste bitter and smell like a combination of bile and honey. But it isn't the water's chemical composition that makes it so inhospitable; it's the taint of a powerful being from the First World—one of the Eldest, Ragadah, lord of linnorms, oceans, and spirals. It is this connection to the Water Lord of the First World that causes both demons and the druids of the Green Faith to avoid the site, even if they are unaware of the source of the lake's unnatural properties.

The Lake Lost to the Sun plunges to preternatural depths exceeding a mile, though its true scope is unknowable, for beyond 1,500 feet beneath the glassy surface, the Material Plane and the First World begin to blend, turning the water into an extraplanar slurry. Beyond 3,000 feet, the water exists wholly in the realm of the fey, which is partly why scrying and teleportation by explorers over the millennia have failed to expose the lake's secrets. From these depths, Ragadah's fell influence permeates the Material Plane, a corruption that kept both ancient Sarkorian druids of the Green Faith and the demonic invaders of the Worldwound away from its barren shores.

In addition to a large population of intelligent, fey-tainted water orms (see below), the Lake Lost to the Sun plays host to a particularly powerful linnorm named **Ilijastehr** (CE female advanced giant fjord linnorm; *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 290, 291, 183) who serves as both ruler of the lake's orms and Ragadah's proxy in the mysterious body of water. Despite being extremely territorial, Ilijastehr is more likely to take intruders prisoner and escort them to her Eldest master on the First World than destroy interlopers outright, though nothing prevents her from doing so if she desires—Ragadah has issued no edict preventing the powerful linnorm from ruling her lake as she sees fit.

A successful DC 32 Knowledge (nature or planes) check reveals all the details about the blight listed below.

Cursed Waters: The lake's connection to Ragadah imparts its waters with a curse not unlike that bestowed upon the slayer of a linnorm. This curse, which affects all non-fey creatures that spend more than 1 hour swimming in the lake, is identical to the fjord linnorm's death curse (see page 183 of *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3). A creature that successfully saves against the cursed

waters or that removes the curse is immune to being cursed again for 24 hours or until it exits the water for more than 1 hour, whichever occurs sooner.

Extreme Depths: The Lake Lost to the Sun is among the deepest non-oceanic bodies of water on Golarion, especially when one considers its link to a different plane of reality. Those swimming in the water must contend with the effects of extreme water pressure, as detailed in Chapter 2 of *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Aquatic Adventures*. The water orms that make their homes in the gelid waters have been blessed by their Eldest master and can swim freely at any depth without complication.

Passage to the First World: Those exploring the depths of the Lake Lost to the Sun run the risk of inadvertently passing from the dark waters to other bodies of water on the First World, most notably the Cerulean Sea where Ragadah makes his home. Such unfortunates find that when they rise to the surface after swimming in the lake that they are no longer in Golarion's Worldwound, but rather the malleable, often malicious world of the fey, not realizing they have wandered into another plane until long after they made the subtle transition. Explorers hoping to intentionally travel this planar shift always fail in their endeavor, however, making the phenomenon infinitely more dangerous and frustrating than a stable portal that reliably transports creatures.

Scrying Surface: The mirrored surface of the Lake Lost to the Sun, when used as part of a scrying spell or similar ritual or spell, allows the spellcaster to see into the First World as though it were not a different plane than the Material Plane, and increases the spell's effective caster level by 2. Any creature using the mirrored surface in this way risks having its mind twisted by Ragadah's influence, and must succeed at a DC 26 Will saving throw or take 1d6 points of Wisdom drain at the end of the spell's duration. This Wisdom drain can only be restored with a *miracle* or *wish* spell, or by traveling to the First World and having the condition removed by Ragadah himself, though the Water Lord is just as likely to devour petitioners as he is to honor their requests.

Swimming: Despite its apparent stillness, the Lake Lost to the Sun is full of imperceptible currents and eddies that make swimming in its depths deceptively difficult. Increase the DC of all Swim skill checks by 5 in still water. Should the waters be disturbed in any way, either by magic or a creature's movement, increase all Swim skill DCs by 10 instead.

Water Orms: Most of the water orms (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 280) that ply the still lake are unnaturally intelligent, and have the fey creature template found on page 116 of *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3. Rather than gain a fly speed, the water orms gain an additional +2 bonus to Intelligence and don't take the -2 penalty to Strength the template normally imparts.

SPELLSCAR DESERT

Strange magical phenomena wrack this inhospitable desert located between the nations of Nex and Geb. These rare environmental and weather effects take the form of roiling storms of primal magic, ghostly windstorms, and geysers of magical eddies the tear through the usually magically devoid region. Myriad bands of wasteland mutants rove within the Mana Wastes carrying mana fever, a supernatural affliction caused by the warping of reality and magic that beset the region during the war between Nex and Geb. For more on the Mana Wastes and the Spellscar Desert, see *Pathfinder Module: Wardens of the Reborn Forge*.

A character who succeeds at a DC 26 Knowledge (nature or religion) check knows all the details about the blight listed below. With a successful DC 20 Knowledge (arcana) check, a PC understands the way magic is affected in the blasted wasteland (but not the other details).

Antimagic Pockets: While traveling in the Spellscar Desert, there is a 10% chance each hour that a character encounters a moving pocket of antimagic, which lasts for 6d6 minutes. This functions as an *antimagic field* with an area of dozens of square miles, effectively negating all sources of magic for the affected characters for the effect's duration. A party should encounter no more than three antimagic pockets in a 24-hour period.

Shardstorms: During the most violent magical windstorms, twisters of sand and razor-sharp glass tear across the desert. Treat a shardstorm as a tornado (*Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook* 439). In addition to the listed effects of the tornado, those who come in contact with the twister take 8d6 points of slashing damage per round instead of the listed amount, and for every round they are swirling within its torrent, they have a 25% chance of gaining a random minor spellblight (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Magic* 95).

Spellscar Fever: Similar to the mana fever spread by the region's wasteland mutants, spellscar fever is imparted by the environment itself to those who dally in the Spellscar Desert. Each day after 2d6 days spent within this warped expanse, a creature must succeed at a save against spellscar fever or be unnaturally mutated arcane energies.

SPELLSCAR FEVER

Type disease, ingested or inhaled; **Initial Save** Fort DC 15 + 1 per previous save; **Ongoing Save** Fort DC equal to the save DC of the failed initial saving throw

Onset 2d6+1 days; **Frequency** 1/day

Effect 1d2 Con damage, 1d2 Cha drain; **Cure** 2 consecutive saves
Anyone who lives with spellscar fever for a week straight without dying becomes immune to the disease and to mana fever, but also becomes a Mana Waste mutant (*Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Inner Sea Bestiary* 28) or a mutant (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 5 180), chosen by the GM. A Mana Waste mutant created in such a way can use the following

Spellscar Fever Deformities table in place of a deformity from the *Inner Sea Bestiary*, while a mutant resulting from spellscar fever can take one effect from the same table in place of one deformity and one mutation.

SPELLSCAR FEVER DEFORMITIES

d4	Effect
1	Echolocation (Ex): The mutant constantly emits a yipping noise, causing it to take a -4 penalty on Stealth checks. It can never cast spells with verbal components, but it gains blindsight out to a range of 15 feet.
2	Gigantism (Ex): The mutant takes a -2 penalty on all Intelligence-based skill checks, but it gains the benefit of a permanent <i>enlarge person</i> effect.
3	Proteanism (Ex): The mutant takes a -2 penalty on all Strength-based skill checks, but it gains a +2 bonus on its Disguise skill check and it gains the compression universal monster ability.
4	Reality Shift (Ex): The mutant takes a -5 penalty on initiative checks and can never act in the surprise round, but it gains the benefit of a permanent <i>blur</i> effect.



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TANGLEBRIAR

Biting nettles and poisonous thorns savage those who enter this Kyonin woodland where even the canopy threatens to crush those beneath it. Those within this verdant prison find its bristling bars near impregnable, making journeys through the Tanglebriar a concentrated effort.

A character who succeeds at a DC 28 Knowledge (nature or religion) check knows all the details about the blight listed below. A PC who succeeds at a DC 24 Knowledge (arcana) check knows how magic is affected in the briar (but not the other details).

Becoming Lost: The briar regenerates new branches, vines, and thick underbrush every hour. This shifting topography confuses travelers and increases the chance of becoming lost, increasing the DC of Survival checks

to avoid losing one's way by 5. Further penalties arise due to the illumination within these dense woods that never rises above dim light (without artificial means), causing explorers to potentially take a visibility penalty as well.

Briarblight: In the heart of the Tanglebriar is a series of Abyssal trees with hollow interiors, which the region's demons use as prison cells for the most notable of their captives, who are infused intravenously with tainted sap while held in these cells. A creature held in such a cell for more than 1 week must attempt a save once a day against a terrible curse, which Treerazer uses to increase the numbers of his infected army.

BRIARBLIGHT

Type curse; **Save** Will DC 18 negates

Effect target gains the fiendish simple template (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 294), its alignment shifts to chaotic evil, and it becomes an NPC servant of Treerazer under the GM's control. If the curse is broken within 1 year by means of *break enchantment*, *remove curse*, or similar magic, the creature's alignment is restored and it loses the fiendish simple template. If not, the creature instead gains the half-fiend template (*Bestiary* 171) and is permanently under the GM's control, unless it is restored to normal with a *miracle* or *wish* spell.

Overland Movement: Traversing the densest areas of Tanglebriar takes four times the normal amount of time, and for every 1 hour spent exploring the woodland, a creature must succeed at a DC 14 Fortitude saving throw or take 1d4 points of Strength damage from the region's hostile vegetation. Immunity to poison or disease reduces the ability damage dealt by 2, and immunity to both completely negates the ability damage.

Plant-Based Magic: Any spell that affects plants and deals damage to its target, such as *burst of nettles* (*Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Magic* 210), *thorny entanglement* (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Class Guide* 196), or *wall of thorns* deals twice the listed damage. Any spell or ability that attempts to bypass or damage the Tanglebriar such as *antiplant shell*, *transport via plants*, *tree stride*, or other similar magic simply fizzles with no effect.

The Witchbole: The mobile, sentient tree where Treerazer makes his home is more than a living dungeon, destined to perplex and destroy any who enter without the nascent demon lord's blessing. It also poses a significant threat to those who don't venture into its Abyss-tainted body. The entire structure emits an aura of unsettling fear out to a distance of 250 feet. A creature entering this aura must succeed at a DC 20 Will saving throw or become shaken as long as it remains in the aura. A creature that remains in the aura for extended periods of time must attempt an additional saving throw each hour, with a cumulative -1 penalty on each saving throw after the first.

USKWOOD

The shadowy boughs of this dark, Nidalese forest interweave in an effort to blot out the sun's brilliant rays, blanketing the woodland under a constant gloom. While light occasionally penetrates the forest's peripheries, its mulch-encrusted floor is increasingly spared direct sunlight closer to its murky core—the Uskheart. While within the Uskwood, natural light levels can never reach the bright level of illumination without magical augmentation (such as a *daylight* spell), and even then, the foul taint that clings to this land resists this alteration. Those adventuring within the shrouded Uskheart find that the level of light during daylight hours never surpasses dim light due to the dense canopy above. For more information on the Uskwood and the Uskheart, see *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Horror Realms*.

At night, the Uskwood is bleak and dark, and the scarce light cast from the moon and stars does nothing to aid those struggling to navigate within its inky depths, thus negating the benefits of low-light vision.

On a successful DC 28 Knowledge (nature or religion) check, a PC learns all the details about the blight listed below. On a successful DC 24 Knowledge (arcana) check, a PC knows how magic is affected in the Uskwood (but not the other details).

Light-Manipulating Magic: The vegetation sprawling within the blighted Uskwood is infused with a foul taint that dampens any magical light assaulting its foliage. Spellcasters within the Uskwood must overcome SR 21 to cast spells with the light descriptor, and this spell resistance increases to 26 within the Uskheart's darker gloom. Any effect that overcomes spell resistance, such as elven magic and Spell Penetration, can be used to overcome this effect as well.

Polymorph Magic: Magic from the polymorph subschool also functions unpredictably within the Uskwood. A creature subjected to such a transmutation effect suffers a further transformation if it maintains its altered form for extended periods of time. A creature who spends more than 1 cumulative minute under a polymorph effect within the Uskwood must roll on the Random Transformation Effects table below to determine the detrimental effects. For every additional cumulative minute a creature spends polymorphed within the Uskwood, it must roll again on the table (rerolling any previously suffered effects; all effects are cumulative). A druid using her wild shape ability is immune to this altering effect, as it is a supernatural ability rather than a spell-like ability. These random transformations persist even when the caster ends the polymorph spell effect. These are curse effects with a caster level of 19th and can be removed with *break enchantment*, *limited wish*, *miracle*, *remove curse*, or *wish*, but each individual effect must be removed separately.

RANDOM TRANSFORMATION EFFECTS

d6	Effect
1	The creature grows harmless spines that make it difficult to move. The armor check penalty of any armor it wears increases by 2. Even when not wearing armor, it takes a -2 armor check penalty.
2	The creature exudes caustic secretions that damage its equipment. After the creature uses or wears a nonmagical item for 8 hours total, that item gains the broken condition.
3	The creature is harassed by the hive's telepathy (see below), taking a -2 penalty on concentration checks and Intelligence- and Wisdom-based ability checks and skill checks, and losing the ability to take a 10 on such checks as the cacophonous, discordant voices beckon to it.
4	The creature grows chitinous patches over its skin, taking a -2 penalty to Charisma.
5	The creature grows a vestigial appendage that constantly interferes with its dominant limb, causing it to take a -2 penalty on attack rolls and Dexterity- and Strength-based ability and skill checks.
6	The creature grows appositional eyes and experiences waves of vertigo as it fails to adjust to the incoming visual stimulation. The creature gains the sickened condition until its normal sight is restored.

Unconsciousness: Whether merely sleeping or through trauma, becoming unconscious while exploring the Uskheart (not the Uskwood alone) is a dangerous affair. On the first instance of drifting into unconsciousness while within this forest's blighted core, a creature has a 20% chance of being visited by the ramblings of an alien culture referred to as the "hive". This chance increases by a cumulative 5 percent on each additional instance of becoming unconscious. If so visited, the creature experiences a multitude of indiscernible whispers from a collective consciousness during its slumber. Once the hive establishes contact with an individual, it continues to visit that target at every opportunity until the victim heeds the hive's call. While experiencing these whispers, the target must succeed at a DC 19 Will saving throw (with a cumulative -2 penalty on its saving throw on each subsequent instance) or succumb to the influence of the spell *sleepwalking suggestion* (*Pathfinder RPG Horror Adventures* 127; Will DC 19 negates). A victim of this effect travels to within 500 feet of the nearest hive colony, where it is subjected to a hive larva swarm (*Horror Adventures* 236) looking to infect the sleeping victim. If infected, the target suffers a hive infestation at corruption stage 0, and must attempt the first Fortitude save to stave off progressing the infestation the next time it gains a character level. See *Horror Adventures* for more information about the hive and its corresponding infestation.

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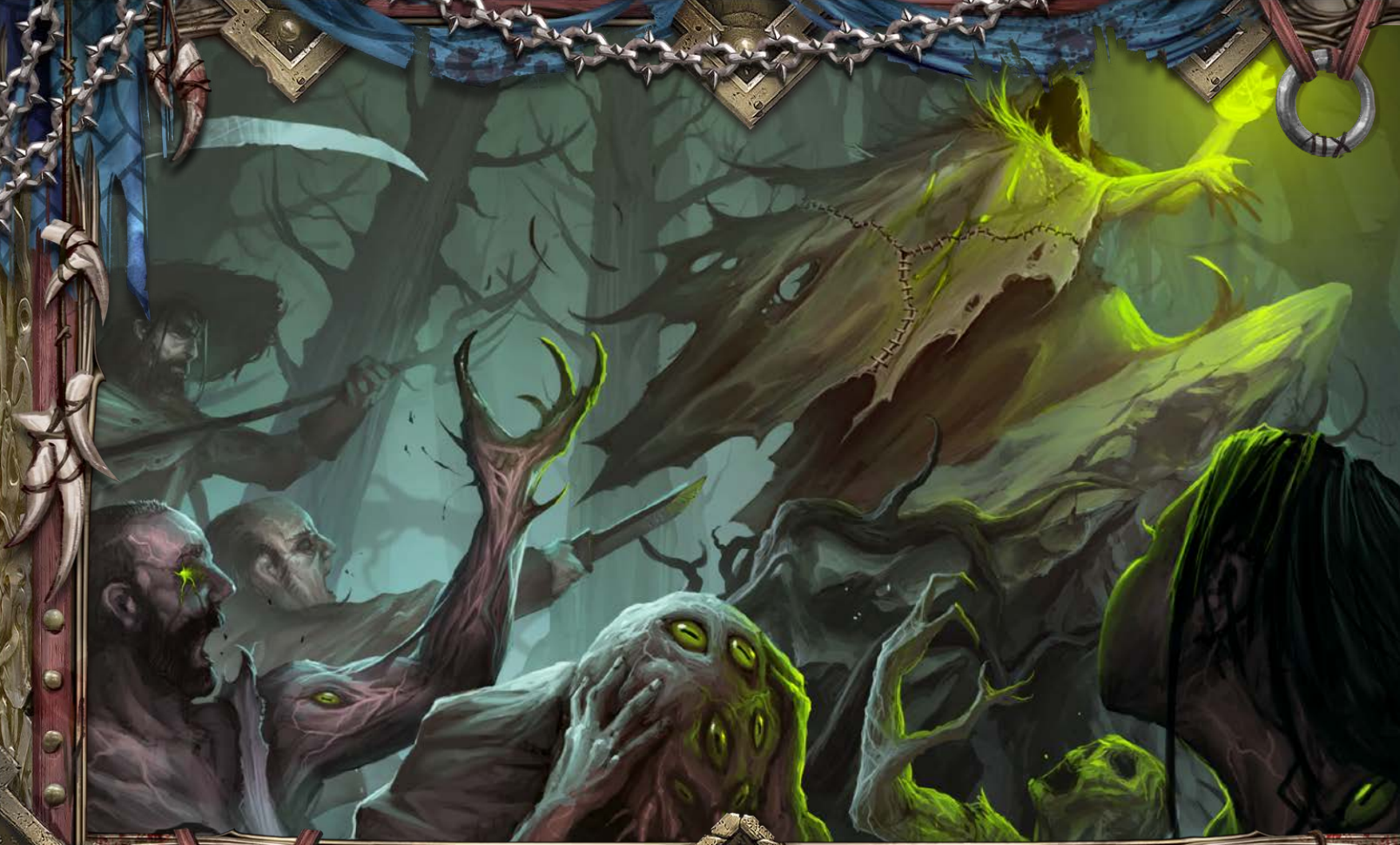
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CYTH-V'SUG

Prince of the Blasted Heath

Long before mortals began to walk the Material Plane, long before even demons wandered the foul landscapes of the Abyss, the qliphoth held dominion over large sections of the Outer Sphere. One of the greatest of these squirming entities of evil and entropy, the qliphoth lord Oaur-Ooung, floated through a great, fetid sea within the expanse of the Abyss. Her pale, fungoid tentacles stretched for miles, thirsting for sustenance, filtering the quintessence of the multiverse and turning it into nourishment for the many spawn she grew within her countless, undulating blisterwombs. Cyth-V'sug, a twisted amalgam of mushrooms, fungus, and rotting plants, burst forth from one of these pulsating sacs, fully formed and hungry for rot, desecration, and decay. Insatiable and relentless, he quickly rose to become a qliphoth lord in his own right, rivaling the twisted mother from whose flesh he arose.

Eventually, mortal life and all of its associated sins came to be. And as those sinning souls passed into the afterlife, the Abyss transformed some of them into demons. The realm created legions of demons, thanks to the fertility of mortals and their boundless potential for cruelty. The belligerent demons clashed with the qliphoth for control over the plane, and though they were younger, the demons had the advantage of numbers. They triumphed again and again, and in doing so, increased their strength, some becoming demon lords to rival the most powerful of the qliphoth.

Cyth-V'sug wanted no part in this endless war, and so stayed within his realm. He slew those demons that attempted to invade his sanctuary, but the constant onslaught soon began to wear him down. After careful observation, he realized that his more potent foes were worshiped by self-destructive mortals. He sent tendrils of his consciousness onto the Material Plane and found desperate creatures that longed for someone (or something) to answer their prayers. He heard these monsters' pleas and responded to them. However, while this succeeded in helping to increase his strength, Cyth-V'sug was still ultimately forced deep into the Abyss's deepest, most remote areas with the other qliphoth.

As Cyth-V'sug lurked in these dark domains, he continued to hear the entreaties of his worshipers. They constantly wanted more—more divine gifts, more responses from their deity. This greed had a strange effect on the qliphoth lord: he began to experience this mortal emotion himself. In particular, he wanted his original home back, and then some. He wanted to taste more demon blood. He wanted vengeance for being driven out. In time, the other qliphoth lords—Oaur-Ooung in particular—noticed this change and were not pleased. They threatened Cyth-V'sug with destruction, forcing him to flee to the upper reaches of the Abyss.

Cyth-V'sug soon realized that he had become like the very demons he hated, but this revelation did nothing to quell his expanding hunger. He continued to demand sacrifices from his followers, and in doing so, he slowly transformed into a full demon lord. Though he is now one of their kind, his hatred for demons burns no less hot. His ultimate goal is to consume those worlds of the Material Plane that contain mortal life, thereby cutting off demons from their source of souls and allowing the qliphoth to return from exile. That this plan will also

result in his own destruction does not matter to Cyth-V'sug. For him, at least, it will mean his appetite will finally be sated.

PERSONIFICATION AND REALM

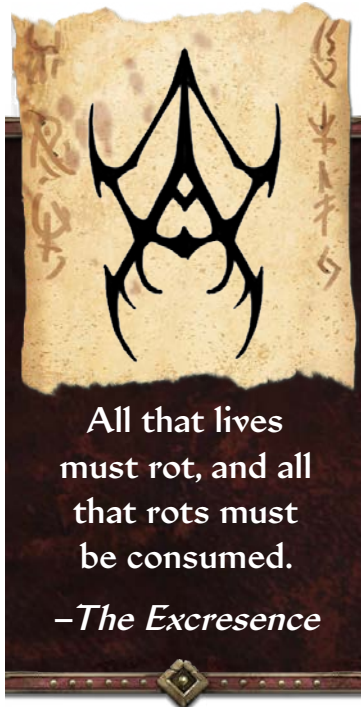
Though his form is somewhat malleable, Cyth-V'sug is most often depicted as a massive, draconic creature made of a snarled collection of tentacles tipped with razor-sharp claws, elongated fungal growths, and rotting vines. A pair of puffball mushrooms serves as his eyes, and his maw contains a riot of pointy, uneven fangs. The few who have encountered the demon lord and lived to tell the tale report that when Cyth-V'sug speaks, his voice sounds like that of a mortal creature wetly choking to death on a swollen and distended tongue. They also note the foul stench that constantly surrounds him, an almost palpable aura of decay. Befitting this form, Cyth-V'sug's holy symbol is a moldy, spiraling tentacle, and his favored animal is a centipede.

The Prince of the Blasted Heath's realm is unusual in that it is a living thing. Called the Jeharlu, this quivering, planet-sized mass of fungal matter lies at the center of an immense cavern in the Abyss, held aloft by ropy white strands attached to the distant stone. The Jeharlu is able to extend probing tendrils into other planes in order to lap up the waste left behind when Cyth-V'sug and his cultists completely infest and consume a world. In this way, the Jeharlu grows ever larger, and sane scholars fear the possibility of the giant fungus becoming too large to fit within its Abyssal cave, even if that eventuality occurs in the far distant future.

DOGMA AND WORSHIPERS

Cyth-V'sug cares only to pollute and mortify all that exists, turning mortal worlds into foul slurries that he can feast on from his Abyssal realm. His hunger is insatiable, however, and once he is done with one place, he sets his eyes on another. The entire process is slow, sometimes taking millennia, but the demon lord has the utmost patience.

On the surface of a world (such as Golarion), Cyth-V'sug's worshipers tend to be recluses, often driven by a touch of madness to strive toward the destruction of their homes. These people have usually been hurt by society or believe they have been wronged, and are seeking to remedy the injustice. In addition, the occasional black



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dragon venerates the Prince of the Blasted Heath to discover forbidden lore about diseases and fungi. The frigid Worldwound marshland known as Frostmire Fen is home to a Cyth-V'sug cult of evil plant creatures called fungus queens, led by the cleric Enivuni, one of the first of their kind.

The worship of Cyth-V'sug is slightly more common within the Darklands, where the drow of House Urdrinor grow mushrooms infused with the power of their demonic patron in various fungus gardens for the citizens of Zirnakaynin. There are also a few instances of derros, looking for inspiration for their terrible cytillesh-fueled experiments, turning to veneration of the demon lord to augment the strange fungi that gives the derro their racial madness in the first place. Occasionally, Cyth-V'sug grants divine gifts to vegepygmy shamans who want their tribes to multiply and conquer more and more underground areas.

TEMPLES AND SHRINES

As he wants to consume the world, Cyth-V'sug doesn't require his followers to build grand structures in his name—new construction and mortal-made edifices are antithesis to the Prince of the Blasted Heath. Even House Urdrinor, which could arguably contain the highest concentration of worshipers of the demon lord, hasn't constructed a temple. His faithful usually pay him homage at small shrines that could easily be mistaken for something found within a sickly forest: a stump covered with dripping fungus, a rotting log infested with grubs, or a pile of moldering compost with a fetid odor. Worshipers see these altars as two-way connections to their deity, placing offerings of soil or decaying flesh to sustain the living parts of the shrine and Cyth-V'sug allowing strange growths to develop there for worshipers to eat or use in foul concoctions.

A PRIEST'S ROLE

Most priests of Cyth-V'sug are often not recognizable as such. They don't have a similar look or wear a common type of vestment. They hide their unholy symbols under loose, filthy wrappings, which might also conceal obvious signs of disease or parasitic infestation. To many, they can appear to be unkempt beggars or unfortunate transients. In general, a priest will cultivate that image in order to spread her god's pollution.

The drow priests and sacred mushroom tenders of House Urdrinor tell a different story. They are much more respected, as their knowledge of fungi affords them an important position in the chain of commerce with other drow houses. These clerics are typically women and wear finely tailored robes emblazoned with Cyth-V'sug's unholy icon. Any diseases they contract during their duties are considered to be signs of the demon lord's favor and are celebrated—to a certain degree.

Drow understandably don't wish to be wiped out by a plague, so they keep these illnesses under control with politic quarantining, where the infected are given every luxury until their health returns.

Priests of Cyth-V'sug are usually clerics, druids, or oracles with the wood mystery. The occasional alchemist or witch also venerates the Prince of the Blasted Heath. Inquisitors and warpriests are usually more direct in their actions than Cyth-V'sug would prefer, but he ultimately doesn't care who worships him. The majority of his priests are skilled in Knowledge (nature) and Survival, and they typically have several ranks in Heal—not to be able to treat diseases, but to able to diagnose and help them flourish.

HOLIDAYS

Nothing about the faith of Cyth-V'sug is held to be particularly holy, but some fanatic worshipers ascribe special significance to the ends of their lives—so long as it comes at the hand of their patron's befouling power.

Virulence: Unsurprisingly, many of Cyth-V'sug's cultists are riddled with diseases and infested with parasites, often intentionally. These unfortunate souls are aware of their illnesses and have a kind of sixth sense as to when they will finally succumb to them. When that time draws near, these infected beings seek to spread their ailments to as many as possible in a profane sacrament called Virulence. Some simply wander into a crowded city and attempt to touch or cough on anyone who comes near. Others make sure they expire within a town's source of water, infecting the citizens in that fashion. Several epidemics throughout history can be traced back to a worshiper of Cyth-V'sug performing this death rite.

APHORISMS

Though many of Cyth-V'sug's worshipers are hermetic druids or lone lunatics, the occasional organized cult—especially among drow—uses the following aphorisms among its members.

Fester and Spread: A common benediction spoken by the faithful as they part ways, this phrase emphasizes that the filth of Cyth-V'sug must continue to be spread in order for him to consume the world. It also acts as a description of how some worshipers should conduct themselves—lurk just under the surface and proliferate in secret.

The Infection Cannot Remain Hidden: These cautionary words remind those devoted who hide their twisted worship that inward signs of rot will always eventually show on the surface. Of course, such decay is Cyth-V'sug's ultimate goal, but as many societies prefer life to destruction, the demon lord's worshipers usually need to keep their faith hidden until the deterioration can't be stopped.

HOLY TEXT

Much like his realm, a true copy of Cyth-V'sug's holy text—known as *The Excrescence*—is a living thing, a massive fungal parasite that constantly whispers the demon lord's dogma in a thin, weedy voice. To cultivate a “copy” of this sentient tome, a member of Cyth-V'sug's faith must smear a foul concoction of filth and chemicals—the demon lord grants the exact recipe only to those he considers most worthy—into an open wound on her body. Once her wound becomes infected, the worshiper struggles to keep herself alive without curing the sickness, all while the fungus grows, eventually to the size of a cat. At that point, the whisperings begin, and the worshiper can safely remove the parasite if she wishes, though if she does, she must find another (often unwilling) host to keep the book alive. Many followers choose to keep their copies of *The Excrescence* on their bodies, usually hidden from public view and muffled so as not to betray their presence.

No one is sure whether or not each version of *The Excrescence* is an individual entity or a fragment of some larger sentience. Nevertheless, each speaks with the same voice, and if two copies are ever brought into close proximity, they begin intoning in a creepy, harmonic unity. At some point long ago, an enterprising cultist who gained access to one of these living tomes spent hours upon hours listening to its murmurs, copying it all down onto actual paper. Copies of this transcription have circulated among Cyth-V'sug's worshipers ever since, but due to the demon lord's influence, the pages molder and rot far quicker than they should. As such, these copies are imperfect, and none but those who accept the Prince of the Blasted Heath's fungal blessing have access to all the wisdom *The Excrescence* has to offer.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER RELIGIONS

Most worshipers of Cyth-V'sug have little to do with members of other religions. Those who venerate other demon lords wish to sow mayhem and destruction through other means, so there is actually little common ground between them. The faithful of the Prince of the Blasted Heath sometimes team up with the worshipers of Ghlauder or Urgathoa to spread disease and infection, but such alliances rarely last long. Precisely because they share similar goals for different masters, cultists of Cyth-V'sug try to kill those who worship the Great Old One Xhamen-Dor as soon as they recognize them, and vice versa. This animosity extends to worshipers of other demon lords, as Cyth-V'sug despises them.

The nascent demon lord Treerazer, scourge of Tanglebriar in Kyonin, was spawned in the Abyss, possibly by Cyth-V'sug. Even if Treerazer isn't the Prince of the Blasted Heath's offspring, he served the demon lord until his ascension, after which the demonic,

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winged dinosaur grew too ambitious and attempted to usurp his master's power. Cyth-V'sug banished Treerazer to Golarion for his audacity sometime during the Age of Darkness, but that has remained the extent of the nascent demon lord's punishment; it seems as though Cyth-V'sug either forgives or no longer cares about Treerazer. However, Cyth-V'sug's worshipers sometimes come into conflict with the small elven cabals that venerate Treerazer, as if avenging some perceived slight on behalf of their god. To date, no such conflict has escalated into more than a mildly violent rivalry that lasts but a generation or two, though the potential for a full-scale war between the faiths ever looms on the horizon.

SPELLCASTING

Clerics of Cyth-V'sug can cast *absorb toxicity*^{UC} as a 4th-level spell and *withdraw affliction*^{OA} as a 6th-level spell. In addition, worshipers of the Prince of the Blasted Heath have access to the following spells.

FUNGAL BLISTERS

School transmutation; **Level** alchemist 2, druid 2, sorcerer/wizard 2, witch 2

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S

Range personal

Target you

Duration 1 minute/level or until discharged (see text)

When you cast this spell, horrible, fungal growths sprout forth all over your body. You develop 1d2+1 of these blisters per 2 caster levels. Each time you are dealt more than 5 points of bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage from a single attack, one of these blisters bursts, releasing a cloud of harmful spores in a 5-foot-radius burst centered on you. These spores enter the lungs of all living creatures within the cloud that need to breathe and deal 1d6+1 points of damage for every 2 caster levels you have (Fortitude negates). This is a disease effect, and you and plants aren't affected by the spores. It is possible for more than one blister to burst in a single round. If you are reduced to 0 or fewer hit points, all remaining blisters burst, and the resulting spores deal the cumulative amount of damage.

You are not able to cast this spell while wearing heavy armor. If you don heavy armor during the spell's duration, all remaining blisters burst as if you had been reduced to 0 or fewer hit points.

SEBACEOUS TWIN

School transmutation; **Level** cleric 3, druid 3, sorcerer/wizard 3, witch 3

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S

Range touch

Target living creature touched

Duration 1 round/level (see text)

Saving Throw none (see text); **Spell Resistance** yes

By touching a living target, you cause a half-formed, parasitic clone of the target to burst from its midsection. The twin dangles from the target's body, making it difficult for the target to move easily and imparting a -2 penalty on Acrobatics and Climb checks. In addition, for the spell's duration, the target must succeed at a Fortitude saving throw at the start of its turn each round, or else it takes 1 point of Constitution damage and is sickened for that round as the twin siphons off its blood. Each time the target receives any healing (magical or otherwise), the duration of this spell is extended by 1 round. Each attack that deals damage to the target reduces the duration of this spell by 1 round. If the duration reaches 0 rounds in this

manner, the twin is violently excised from the body, and the target takes 1d6 points of bleed damage (which can be healed as normal).

The effect of *sebaceous twin* counts as a disease effect with a DC equal to the spell's saving throw DC.

OBEDIENCE

The following describes the daily rite Cyth-V'sug's followers must perform to take full advantage of the Deific Obedience feat, as well as the boons for the prestige classes found in *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Inner Sea Gods*.

OBEDIENCE (CYTH-V'SUG)

Eat moldering flesh rife with parasitic worms and drink putrid alcohol distilled from strange fungi during a 1-hour feast. You gain a +4 profane bonus on saving throws against diseases and effects that cause the nauseated condition.

EVANGELIST BOONS

- 1: Contamination (Sp)** *ray of sickening*^{UM} 3/day, *pox pustules*^{APG} 2/day, or *fungal infestation*^{UM} 1/day
- 2: Cloud of Toxicity (Su)** As a standard action, you can exhale a 20-foot cone of a disgusting miasma that exacerbates disease. Any diseased creature in the cone must succeed at a Fortitude saving throw (DC = 10 + half your total Hit Dice + your Charisma modifier) or immediately take damage as though it had failed its Fortitude save against its disease, and any remaining onset time for the disease ends. You can use this ability a number of times per day equal to your Charisma modifier.
- 3: Ravaging Harm (Su)** Three times per day with a successful touch attack, you can weaken a living creature's immune system unless the target succeeds at a Fortitude saving throw (DC = 10 + half your total Hit Dice + your Charisma modifier). For the next 24 hours when a creature that failed its save takes ability damage, 1 point of that damage becomes permanent ability drain instead. This is a curse effect, and can be removed with a *remove curse* spell (treat your total Hit Dice as the caster level).

EXALTED BOONS

- 1: Sickness Within (Sp)** *ray of enfeeblement* 3/day, *warp wood* 2/day, or *contagion* 1/day
- 2: Parasitic Link (Su)** Once per day with a successful touch attack, you can infest a living creature with tiny worms and gnawing mites unless the target succeeds at a Fortitude save (DC = 10 + half your total Hit Dice + your Constitution modifier). These parasites retain an unholy link to you, draining the target creature's energy and transferring it to you. This infestation persists for 10 rounds, during which you act as if under the effects of a *haste* spell and the infested victim is staggered. As a swift action, you can quicken the parasitic infestation—this reduces the remaining duration by 1 round, but

CUSTOMIZED SUMMON LIST

Cyth-V'sug's priests can use *summon monster* spells to summon the following creatures in addition to the normal creatures listed in the spell.

Summon Monster IV

Mandradora (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 185)

Summon Monster V

Tendriculos (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 2 259)

causes the parasites to feed at an accelerated rate, dealing 1d2 points of Constitution damage to the target. You can maintain a parasitic link with one creature at a time. These parasites count as a disease effect.

- 3: Fungal Ruin (Sp)** Once per day, you can target a creature with a *destruction* spell. A creature slain by this effect crumbles into a mound of russet mold (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 273) that immediately releases a cloud of spores in a 20-foot-radius burst. This ability functions as a 9th-level spell.

SENTINEL BOONS

- 1: Deadly Nature (Sp)** *thorn javelin*^{ACG} 3/day, *sickening entanglement*^{ACG} 2/day, or *command plants* 1/day
- 2: Vicious Thorns (Su)** As a standard action, you can cause the ground in a 5-foot-radius burst centered on you to sprout twisting, thorny vines. Any creature moving through the area must travel at half speed or take bleed damage equal to half your character level; if you activate this ability in an area with numerous plants (grass, weeds, trees, etc.), the area also becomes difficult terrain. These effects last for 1 minute, after which the vines crumble to dust. Creatures able to move through natural undergrowth unhindered ignore the effects of this ability. You can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 3 + your Charisma modifier.
- 3: Shambling Form (Su)** Once per day as a move action, you can assume the form of a Huge shambling mound. You gain a +8 size bonus to Strength, a -2 penalty to Dexterity, a +4 size bonus to Constitution, and a +6 natural armor bonus. You gain darkvision out to 60 feet and two slam attacks that each deal 2d8 points of damage plus your Strength modifier and have the grab special attack. You also gain the constrict special attack. You gain fire resistance 20 and electricity resistance 20. In addition, if you are struck with an attack that deals an amount of electricity damage less than your resistance, you gain temporary hit points equal to your level. You lose these temporary hit points after 1 hour. You return to your true form after 10 minutes or when you take a free action to dismiss this ability, whichever comes first.

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“Do I regret it? I cannot say. I can barely recall my life before our meeting. I can hardly think of anything but her face, her gentle touch, her passionate kisses. My ears yet echo with the music of her laughter, and my skin burns remembering the heat of her embrace. I wake breathlessly each morning, desperate to feel her near. Wine has no taste; gold, no shine; glory, no pleasure. What is life without her? What beauty is there in this world but her?”

“I am resolved to this quest. I will travel back into those winding forest paths, and seek out her glade once more. Either I will know her love for all time, or perish in its pursuit. Her absence is a torment more cruel than any imagined in the depths of Hell itself.”

—Baroness Kara Vidella (presumed deceased),
Taldan knight and former lover of the nymph Yelesaira

From Varisia to Sargava to distant Tian Xia, folklore of every land speaks of the wondrous gifts and terrible curses wielded by the fey of the First World. It is said that every race of fey has its own prized secrets—a boon and a bane, laid upon those who please them or cause offense. This article contains boons and banes for 11 fey races, along with information about what might motivate a fey to grant them. GMs should feel free to use the fey boons and banes presented here as a guide for creating effects for other types of fey.

Fey boons and banes are granted by the new spells *fey boon* and *fey blight*. These spells do not appear on any class spell list, and magic items (such as wands and scrolls) cannot contain them; these spells are exclusively the domain of the fey. Any fey creature other than 0-HD races, such as gathlains (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 122) and naiads (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 6 200), can cast *fey boon* and *fey blight* as spell-like abilities three times per day each. The spell level of *fey boon* and *fey blight* is equal to half the fey creature's HD (maximum 9th level), and the caster level is equal to the fey's HD or the caster level of the fey's other spell-like abilities, whichever is higher. As fey are beings of supernatural whimsy, freedom is essential to this magic; summoned or mentally influenced fey can't use these spell-like abilities, and called fey never agree to use these spell-like abilities as part of bargains with their caller.

For GMs who want a less powerful alternative to these boons, *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Fey Revisited* contains information on fey tokens, which have temporary short-term effects.

FEY BOON

School transmutation; **Level** special

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V

Range touch

Target one living non-fey creature

Duration see below (D)

Saving Throw Will negates (harmless); **Spell Resistance** yes (harmless)

The target gains the boon of the caster's fey race (see below for details on each specific fey race's boon and duration).

FEY BLIGHT

School transmutation [curse, ruse^{ul}]; **Level** special

Casting Time 1 minute

Components V

Range touch or close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target one living non-fey, non-plant creature

Duration see below (D)

Saving Throw Will negates (harmless); **Spell Resistance** yes (harmless)

The target is cursed, gaining the bane of the caster's fey race (see below for details on each specific fey race's bane and duration). A creature that succeeds at its saving throw is

immune to further castings of *fey blight* from the same type of fey for 24 hours. *Fey blight* cannot be dispelled, but effects that remove curses function against it.

Attempts to identify *fey blight* with a skill check incorrectly identify it as *fey boon* (see the ruse descriptor on page 192 of *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Intrigue*).

ATOMIE

Among the smallest fey, atomies (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 28) are nevertheless obsessed with martial deeds. They often follow adventuring parties traveling through their lands, listening in on campfire tales and occasionally challenging proud warriors to duels. A warrior who claims victory with honor (while enduring the little fey's attempts to even the odds) might earn the atomie's boon. In other cases, a storyteller who enraptures the atomie with tales of glory might be granted this gift, especially if she strokes the little warrior's ego in the process.

Atomies liberally use their bane in order to gain an edge in their duels or to hinder attackers. Fortunately for their targets, the curse is as short-lived as the atomie's attention span.

Boon: You treat any weapon you wield as though it were masterwork, gaining a +1 enhancement bonus on attack rolls. If you wield a weapon that is already masterwork, you instead gain a +1 enhancement bonus on damage rolls. This boon has a duration of 1 hour per caster level (6 hours for a typical atomie).

Bane: You treat any weapon you wield as though it were sized for a wielder one size category smaller than you. This reduces the weapon's damage die type appropriately and causes you to take a –2 penalty on attack rolls. The weapon's actual size and amount of effort required to use it (light, one-handed, or two-handed) do not change. This bane has a duration of 24 hours.

DRYAD

When a dryad's tree comes under threat from lumber-hungry settlements or bands of evil humanoids, the tree-bound fey might seek aid from kindly heroes. A dryad might offer her boon as an incentive, as it allows these protectors to retreat to her side to regroup if necessary. Even when no threat is present, a dryad might become infatuated with a comely humanoid who stumbles upon her isolated grove, granting her boon to her lover so that they can reunite with ease.

The fastest way to rouse a dryad's anger is to threaten her tree or the trees of her forest (although some dryads permit limited woodcutting of nearby trees, if performed respectfully), yet the good-hearted fey rarely curse those who are not obviously malicious. On occasion, those transformed into trees by the dryad's bane are reborn as dryads themselves; such fey combine most of their former skills with a dryad's heart, making them fierce protectors of their tree's domain.

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Boon: You gain the druid's woodland stride ability. If you already have that ability, you instead move normally through magically manipulated terrain effects and gain a +10-foot bonus to your land speed while in forest terrain. This boon has a duration of 1 day per caster level (6 days for a typical dryad). You can step into any tree with a girth at least equal to yours and transport yourself to the dryad's tree, as per *tree stride*, but doing so immediately ends the boon's effects.

Bane: You take 1d2 points of Dexterity drain each morning as your flesh slowly transforms into wood. If this bane is removed, all Dexterity drain you have accumulated from this bane immediately disappears. If this bane reduces your Dexterity score to 0, you transform into a full-grown, mundane oak tree, taking root in your present location and potentially damaging structures or floors in the process. This bane is permanent.

HULDRA

Fox-tailed huldras (*Bestiary* 4 151) are wild and impulsive, but their boon is not lightly granted. Aiding a huldra against hostile foes might earn her favor, but opportunities to do so are uncommon; the deceptively strong fey are no damsels in distress. An amorous huldra might offer her boon to her lover while her passions are high, but woe betide the paramour who behaves as though entitled to her gifts. More thoughtful huldras, aware of the transformation their boon causes and their own shyness regarding their tails, consult with potential recipients before granting a boon; most, though, grant it without a second thought.

The easiest way to anger a huldra is to draw attention to her tail or mention her race's rumored links to trollkind—most huldras consider their bane perfect for punishing such impropriety. Huldras are capricious, however, and a heartfelt apology might persuade a huldra

to undo her fey curse. A huldra resents attempts made to constrain her travels, and may bestow her bane upon any who impinge upon her inviolable right to wander the land. Huldras rarely curse foes during combat, save as a final act of vengeance when the battle is lost.

Boon: You grow a foxlike tail like that which a huldra has. This tail is infused with supernatural strength and you can use it as a primary natural weapon that deals 1d6 points of bludgeoning damage (1d4 for a Small creature). This boon has a duration of 1 day per caster level (4 days for a typical huldra).

Bane: Your body warps into a troll-like appearance, becoming rangy, potbellied, and profoundly ugly. At the same time, your personality becomes oafish and dull. Your Charisma score is reduced by an amount equal to the bane's caster level (to a minimum of 6). This bane is permanent.

LAMPAD

Due to their sullen, moody demeanors and their general perception of surface races as greed-driven strip miners, lampads (*Bestiary* 4 178) rarely grant their gifts to others. A lampad's boon is most often granted to those miners who graciously ask the cave-maid's permission to mine the earth, and who further promise to honor the stone by leaving carvings and artful designs in exchange for its bounty of jewels and metal. Additionally, those who defend the sanctity of the lampad's caves might earn

her boon. In any case, though, demanding a reward from the lampad elicits only a sulky refusal.

A lampad does not hesitate to use her bane in combat against those undeterred by her insane beauty or supernatural weeping. Those who flagrantly disrespect the cave-maid or her home might suffer her curse as well. Lampads rarely inflict their bane upon otherwise-innocent miners or adventurers, but the fickle fey have little patience for those who insist on outstaying their welcome. When a lampad has acted hastily in cursing an interloper due to some misunderstanding, she can be convinced to revoke her bane, although respect and diplomacy are key.

Boon: You gain darkvision with a range of 60 feet and the dwarf's stonecunning racial trait. In addition, when you're underground in unworked caverns, the stone around you speaks to you, warning you of danger and granting you a +1 insight bonus to AC and on Reflex saving throws. This boon has a duration of 1 day per caster level (7 days for a typical lampad).

Bane: You constantly weep streams of thick tears, impairing your vision. You treat all other creatures as if they had concealment, and spells you cast that require line of sight have a 20% spell failure chance. This bane is permanent.

LEPRECHAUN

Leprechauns (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2 177*) love mischief in all its forms. A leprechaun who crosses paths with a fellow trickster may grant his boon, hoping to spread mischief without having to do the legwork or put his own neck on the line. In such cases, the leprechaun often follows the boon's recipient invisibly for a time, hoping for a demonstration of tomfoolery; failure to provide a good show might force the leprechaun to make his own fun at the recipient's expense. While rumor suggests that capturing a leprechaun might earn its boon, the fey is more likely to secretly curse his captor instead.

Much like atomies, leprechauns make liberal use of their bane to embarrass or frustrate their targets. A leprechaun might even offer a "solution" to remove the curse it inflicted, usually something embarrassing, such as bathing naked in the town fountain at noon. Of course, the supposed solution does nothing about the curse unless the leprechaun is sufficiently amused to remove it.

Boon: The First World's illusions are at your command. You can use the following spell-like abilities three times each: *dancing lights*, *disguise self*, *ghost sound*, *major image* (visual and auditory elements only), and *ventriloquism*. Their caster level is equal to your Hit Dice. This boon lasts until you have expended all the spell-like abilities or after 1 week, whichever is sooner.

Bane: Your mundane possessions crumble in times of stress or need. Whenever you roll initiative, you must

succeed at a Fortitude save (with a DC equal to the DC of the *fey blight* spell-like ability) or one of your nonmagical possessions degrades, gaining the broken condition. A broken item affected this way is destroyed. The affected item is chosen by the GM, but the curse tends to affect items that are particularly precious to the victim. All mundane clothing is considered to be a single item for this bane, as are all carried coins. This bane has a duration of 1 week.

NEREID

Sailors and other seafarers prize the favor of a nereid (*Bestiary 2 198*), though nereids are unpredictable creatures and what earns a specific nereid's boon may vary wildly. A lustful nereid might grant her boon to attractive humanoids, encouraging them to keep her company in her watery home. Such lovers must be careful not to anger their fey host, or risk being stripped of this gift at an inopportune time. Performing a great service for the nereid, such as reclaiming her stolen shawl, is likely to earn her favor. While some thieves have stolen a nereid's shawl in hopes of demanding her boon, the cunning fey usually inflicts her bane upon the thief as soon as her shawl is safely back in her possession.

A nereid often uses her bane to complement her beguiling aura, especially against lone foes. The nereid may also curse creatures on a whim, delighting in stupefied fools obeying everything they hear. In cases where an nereid's shawl has fallen into enemy hands, she may attempt to surreptitiously curse whoever has it, hoping to force him to return the precious item.

Boon: You grow gills, allowing you to breathe water as well as air. This boon is permanent.

Bane: Whenever someone speaks to you, you must succeed at a Will save (with a DC equal to the DC of the *fey blight* spell-like ability) or treat their words as a *suggestion* (as per the spell). This effect only applies if the words could logically be obeyed, at the GM's discretion. This bane is permanent.

NORN

Norns (*Bestiary 3 202*) are among the most powerful fey creatures, with potent knowledge of the future and supernatural control over the fate of mortals. As norns are able to peer into futures yet unwoven, the actions to earn their gifts can seem incomprehensible to all but the norns themselves. On rare occasions, a norn appears before heroes or adventurers—even those that may be lacking in experience or power—and imparts her boon; often, the recipients then become enmeshed in world-shaking events, driven by the supernatural foresight of the fey gift.

A norn's bane is similarly employed in service of her enigmatic goals. A norn might linger on the edge of a great and portentous battle, imparting her bane to those

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whose death is decreed by fate, or cursing a leader to ensure that an assassin's blade finds its mark.

Boon: You gain a +2 insight bonus to AC and on saving throws. In addition, you occasionally (at the GM's discretion) gain cryptic flashes of insight into the future, or even visions of events to come. This boon has a duration of 9 months.

Bane: The norn exposes the thread of your fate for others to cut. Melee and ranged attacks against you have their critical threat ranges and multipliers increased to 16–20/x3. In addition, you take a –5 penalty on saving throws against spells. This bane is permanent and much more tenacious than most curses; it can be removed by only a *miracle* or *wish* spell, or by the norn herself.

NYMPH

While not bound to locations as literally as dryads, nymphs protect their pure and unspoiled homes to the end. Heroes who defend the nymph's abode—or any other site of natural beauty—might earn the nymph's boon. Additionally, nymphs are more willing to interact with mortals than most other fey, and those who perform a great service for a region's reclusive fey might receive a nymph's boon. This boon always enhances the recipient's physical attractiveness in such a way that reflects the nymph's own appearance, such as changes to match the nymph's skin or hair color, enlarged or almond-shaped eyes, or pointed ears. This manifestation might be due to the nymph's infusion of her own essence into the recipient, or might simply reflect the fey maiden's intense narcissism.

Nymphs are easily angered, and consider their bane to be yet another tool for punishing interlopers. A nymph most often inflicts her bane upon those who rudely disrespect her beauty. Nymphs can inadvertently curse

their lovers in the throes of passion without realizing that they have done so, leading to rumors that sharing a nymph's bed brings madness.

Boon: Your appearance changes to become more physically attractive for your race and gender; this change always causes you to partly resemble the nymph who granted it. In addition, you are beloved by nature itself; animals and plants have a starting attitude of friendly toward you, and such creatures never attack you unless provoked, compelled, or directed by a bonded master (such as a druid directing her animal companion). This boon has a duration of 1 day per caster level (8 days for a typical nymph), although the enhancements to the recipient's appearance are usually permanent.

Bane: You are haunted by the nymph's loveliness, before which all other beauty is dross. You no longer benefit from morale bonuses or bardic performances. In addition, memories of the nymph's beauty slowly drive you mad. Once per month, you must succeed at a Will save (with a DC equal to the DC of the *fey blight* spell-like ability) or take 1d4 points of Wisdom drain. This bane is permanent.

OCEANID

Vain and unpredictable, oceanids (*Bestiary* 4 208) grant their boon most often to those seafarers who honor them as the beautiful queens of the sea that they believe themselves to be. Heroes who dispatch mighty threats

to the oceanid's realm, such as aboleths or scrag tribes, might also earn the fey's gift. What is granted can be revoked, however, and the wise recipient remains respectful to the ocean queen lest the fickle oceanid remove her favor.

Despite their quick tempers, oceanids save their bane only for those who particularly displease them. Directly insulting the oceanid, polluting her home, or refusing to acknowledge her dominion over her realm might provoke an oceanid to inflict her curse. Oceanids travel far and communicate often with sea creatures; a vengeful oceanid might easily track down despoilers and butchers that believe themselves too distant for retribution. Oceanids prefer to curse bards, sea captains, spellcasters, and others who rely on their voices.

Boon: You can summon a shroud of the oceanid's water to protect and serve you. You gain the kineticist's basic hydrokinesis wild talent and shroud of water defense wild talent, as a kineticist with a level equal to your Hit Dice (*Pathfinder RPG Occult Adventures* 23, 17). You cannot accept burn when using these talents unless you have the burn class feature. If you are a hydrokineticist (*Occult Adventures* 14), you instead gain a +2 enhancement bonus on attack and damage rolls with water-based kinetic blasts. This boon has a duration of 1 day per caster level (9 days for a typical oceanid).

Bane: Your body becomes extremely withered and dehydrated, and no amount of water can restore you. You are exhausted and cannot recover from the exhausted condition while this curse is in effect. In addition, your dry tongue and cracked lips impose a 20% spell failure chance on any spell with verbal components that you attempt to cast. This bane is permanent.

QUICKKLING

Among the cruelest fey, quickklings (*Bestiary* 2 227) rarely grant their boon. The primary exceptions are when coerced by a greater force, such as a more powerful fey or one of Irrisen's winter witches, or when they find someone as bitter and wicked as themselves. A quickling might grant its boon under direct duress, but is more likely to attempt to curse its captor instead. When a quickling grants a boon, the treacherous creature revokes it at the earliest opportunity.

Given the long-term nature of the quickling's bane, the sadistic fey save it for those targets they do not immediately kill, allowing them to savor the torment they inflict. They are quite fond of cursing children, stealing their youth and thrusting them into adulthood. A quickling with no chance of escape might spitefully curse a foe, relying on the bane to punish its killer even after its death. Under almost no circumstances will a quickling revoke its bane, even under threat of death—the hateful creatures would rather die than undo the suffering they've caused.

Boon: The quickling's boon lets you muster bursts of incredible speed. Once per minute as a swift action, you can gain the benefits of *haste* for 1 round. This boon has a duration of 1 hour per caster level (6 hours for a typical quickling).

Bane: The quickling's bane accelerates your body's aging, causing you to physically age 1 year for every week that passes. Although your physical ability scores are reduced as normal for your body's age, your mental ability scores do not improve. This bane is permanent; even if removed, any aging that occurred while this bane was in effect can be undone by only *greater restoration*, *miracle*, or *wish*.

SATYR

The easiest way to court a satyr's favor is to join in his revels, whether wild hedonism or open-minded enjoyment of new experiences. A satyr most often grants his boon to those who entertain the satyr in novel and exciting ways, whether by talented artistic performances, bold tales, or—of course—lusty demonstrations. Satyrs love freedom for themselves and others and might grant their boon to champions of liberty.

Although satyrs are famously ardent in their attempts to persuade others to join their revelry, the vast majority of satyrs will respect refusal—although they are hardly shy about their disappointment. However, merely rejecting a satyr's advances is usually insufficient to earn his bane; a satyr instead inflicts his bane on those who are particularly cruel or prideful in how they reject his advances or company. In addition, threatening a female fey provokes the wrath of any satyr who learns of such deeds.

Boon: You take on physical characteristics that the satyr believes will make you more attractive (whether or not his aesthetic preferences match your own). If you are male, you become tall and ruggedly handsome, with a sculpted physique; if you are female, you become beautiful and curvaceous, with long, luxurious hair; if you are agender or nonbinary, you become slender and androgynously beautiful. In addition, you gain powerful sexual magnetism, granting you a +4 enhancement bonus on all Charisma-based skill and ability checks against creatures that could be sexually attracted to you. This boon lasts for 1 day per caster level (8 days for a typical satyr).

Bane: Your mindset becomes coarse and brutish, and your Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores are reduced by 2 each (to a minimum of 3). In addition, whenever presented with the opportunity to indulge in hedonistic pleasures such as revelry, food and drink, or sexual pleasure, you must succeed at a Will save (with a DC equal to the DC of the *fey blight* spell-like ability) or be compelled to ecstatically indulge yourself to the fullest. This bane is permanent.

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Rumors started circulating around Daggermark of a new sort of poison about six months back, a sort of tainted fruit from corrupted trees. I have a whole shelf of recipes for poisons derived from berries, and another three on how to use ordinary food to disguise or deliver any number of deadly concoctions, but this one was new to me. “Copsewight fruit,” they called it. Said it could take the form of anything—apples from defiled apple orchards, raspberries from tainted bramble patches, and even more exotic fruits like bananas, guavas, and rootungas. It was only a matter of weeks before the city’s bakers started offering “special” pies, pastries, and preserves supposedly made from the stuff. My analysis indicated that most were simply extant poisons with a new label stuck on them, but Jolio’s Minceworks, they had the real deal near as I could tell. There’s certainly a market for this copsewight fruit, and that warrants further investigation!

—Pathfinder Niro Blessing’s annual *Poisoner’s Almanac*, 4717 AR

In this installment of the Ironfang Invasion, the PCs trek to the very heart of the blighted Fangwood, where they aim to rescue a captured fey princess who could become a powerful ally against the Ironfang Legion. This bestiary provides additional threats to augment this arboreal exploration, including animals native to the First World, two corrupted plant creatures (one undead and the other tainted by fungal blight), a shapeshifting plant creature with an insatiable hunger, a fey vampire inspired by German legend, and the hobgoblin answer to the festering goblin dog, the flammable hobbe hound.

ADDITIONAL ENCOUNTERS

The Fangwood is one of Avistan's largest forests, and it provides many more opportunities for exploration than most adventurers would ever have time to dedicate, given its dangers. While the adventure provides many encounters with corrupted fey and other blighted creatures, there are myriad possibilities for further adventure in every grove, copse, and clearing the PCs come across. The Fangwood Encounters table presented here features dangers the PCs can confront beyond those in the adventure itself. During the course of the adventure, the PCs have a 30% chance of a random encounter every hour they spend exploring the Fangwood. They should have at most three random encounters per 24-hour period.

Since the adventure spans a range of character levels, some random encounters might be too simple or too difficult for the PCs, depending on where they are in the course of the adventure. If the result rolled is outside the Challenge Rating range appropriate for the PCs, roll again on the table or choose a different encounter.

Fey Reclaimers (CR 16): Fey creatures from across Avistan fear and rage against the blight that corrupts the Fangwood. Contingents of crusading fey frequently make their way to the forest to attempt rescue of their blighted kin, fight back the forces of corruption, and learn about potential defenses should the Darkblight spread to their corners of the world. In most cases, however, these brave fey succumb to the blight themselves and bolster Naphexi's army. The PCs encounter a party of fey crusaders, led by the hamadryad (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 4 148*) Buramestia, who has brought her most noble warriors—three satyrs, three huldras (*Bestiary 4 151*), two nymphs, two pixies, and two treants—all the way from Razmiran to combat the Darkblight. She is untrusting of humanoids after a lifetime of conflict with them, and it takes strong diplomacy on the PCs' part to convince her they have good intentions. She begins with an unfriendly attitude toward the PCs, but if made helpful, she or one of the fey accompanying her can grant the PCs a boon (use the dryad boon on pages 73–74 to represent a hamadryad's boon).

Hunting Party (CR 16): The PCs are not the only humanoids venturing into the heart of the Fangwood. As they explore the blighted forest, they run across a

FANGWOOD ENCOUNTERS			
d%	Result	Avg. CR	Source
1–6	1d3 sepses	13	<i>Bestiary 4 237</i>
7–11	1 corpse lotus	13	<i>Bestiary 5 60</i>
12–17	1d4+1 copsewights	14	See page 80
18–22	1 ankou	14	<i>Bestiary 4 10</i>
23–28	1d10 leukodaemons	14	<i>Bestiary 2 68</i>
29–34	1d6 fuldrexes	14	See page 84
35–40	1 goezspall	14	<i>Bestiary 6 139</i>
41–48	1 gorynych	15	<i>Bestiary 3 137</i>
49–54	1 nemhain	15	<i>Bestiary 5 182</i>
55–60	1d6 banelights	15	<i>Bestiary 6 37</i>
61–66	Hunting Party	16	See below
67–71	1d3 plague giants	16	<i>Bestiary 6 134</i>
72–78	1d4 kamaitachis	16	<i>Bestiary 6 176</i>
79–86	Fey Reclaimers	16	See below
87–92	1d6 Leng spiders	17	<i>Bestiary 2 176</i>
93–97	2d6 bonethorns	17	<i>Bestiary 6 52</i>
98–99	Ostryllax	17	See below
100	1 forest blight	18	<i>Bestiary 6 41</i>

hunting party in search of rare trophies. The disparate band of hunters consists of the lodge leader, **Braeritt Larne** (guildmaster, *Pathfinder RPG NPC Codex 152*); famed local bard **Rayke Riskler** (tribal leader, *NPC Codex 36*); the druid **Wizzilor Gendenslick** (fey friend, *NPC Codex 72*); two green wardens (*NPC Codex 200*); and eight mounted archers (*NPC Codex 130*). The hunters are uninterested in the PCs' mission and are unfriendly toward them, seeing the PCs more as a potential obstacle to their hunt than as potential allies or even rivals.

Ostryllax (CR 17): Among Naphexi's many non-blighted minions is the ancient green dragon (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 97*) Ostryllax, who serves the fey queen reluctantly but loyally. Initially, Ostryllax fought back against Naphexi and the Darkblight as they began encroaching on her territory, but she soon found herself overwhelmed—and eventually fascinated by the strange infestation that was transforming the Fangwood into something entirely new. She now assists Naphexi in carrying out her schemes in exchange for protection from the Darkblight and permission to conduct her own research into the infestation so long as doing so does not interfere with Naphexi's operations.

While Ostryllax will not openly assist the PCs in their mission, she doesn't necessarily stand in their way either. Should the PCs take antagonistic action against the green dragon, she defends herself and her lair, of course, but she is intrigued by their ambition and the possibility of finally being free from her arrangement with Naphexi.

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COPSEWIGHT

The twisted, leafless branches of this dead tree still bear bright red fruit, each one shriveled and covered in splotches of black rot.

COPSEWIGHT

CR 11



XP 12,800

NE Huge undead

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +12

DEFENSE

AC 26, touch 12, flat-footed 26 (+14 natural, +4 profane, -2 size)

hp 136 (16d8+64); regeneration 5 (fire or positive energy)

Fort +9, **Ref** +7, **Will** +13

Defensive Abilities all-around vision, channel resistance +4;

Immune polymorph, undead traits; **Resist** cold 10

Weaknesses vulnerable to fire

OFFENSE

Speed 5 ft.

Melee 4 slams +17 (1d8+6 plus grab)

Ranged fruit bomb +11 touch (1d6 plus poison)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Special Attacks constrict (1d8+6), fruit bombs, poison, spiked branches

STATISTICS

Str 22, **Dex** 11, **Con** —, **Int** 5, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 19

Base Atk +12; **CMB** +20 (+24 grapple); **CMD** 34 (can't be tripped)

Feats Cleave, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Point-Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (slam, fruit bomb)

Skills Disguise +13 (+17 to appear as a dead tree), Perception +12, Stealth -1; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Disguise to appear as a dead tree

Languages Sylvan (can't speak)

SQ blight wrath, infectious blight

ECOLOGY

Environment any forest

Organization solitary or grove (2-10)

Treasure incidental (poison fruit)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Blight Wrath (Su) The twisted forces that animated the blighted tree as a copsewight infused it with negative energy, granting the creature channel resistance +4 and a profane bonus to AC equal to its Charisma modifier. The dead tree draws this hateful energy up from the soil, regenerating any damage that isn't caused by fire or positive energy.

Fruit Bombs (Ex) No matter what kind of tree a copsewight was before it died, the unliving plant now bears poisonous fruit, which grows continually and is rotten from the moment it forms on the branches. The tree can fling a fruit at an enemy as a ranged touch attack with a 20-foot range increment. The fruit splatters on impact, dealing 1d6 points of damage and exposing the target to the fruit's poison. A creature that consumes a fruit or its

juice is automatically exposed to 2 doses of the poison (see below).

Infectious Blight (Su) A copsewight can infect surrounding trees with its evil, putting entire forests at risk of becoming nightmare groves full of deadly, vengeful trees. For each day a copsewight remains rooted in one spot, it has a 2% cumulative chance to infect all trees within 60 feet with its blight. Infected trees wither and die over the course of a week, and mature trees turn into new copsewights after the seventh day.

Poison (Ex) Copsewight Poison: Fruit bomb—contact; save Fort DC 22; frequency 1/round for 2 rounds; effect 1d2 Con damage; cure 1 save.

Spiked Branches (Ex) A copsewight's branches are studded with thorns and the sharp ends of broken, smaller branches, causing its slam attacks to deal both bludgeoning and piercing damage.

Many cultures believe that all of nature is alive, animated by a spiritual force that flows through plants and animals alike. This leads to the concept that all things are connected, and that imbalances in nature are at the heart of the greatest environmental disasters, especially when those imbalances are caused by the carelessness or cruelty of civilized races. Whatever their source, some imbalances lead to the creation of even greater horrors, like the blighted copsewight.

Copsewights are formed from trees that died of magical or supernatural blight. They appear to be normal dead trees, except for the bright red fruits that seem to be rotting where they hang on the tree's branches. Copsewights have an instinctual intelligence and try to maintain the appearance of being nothing more than dead trees until their victims are within reach.

A copsewight is 30 feet tall and weighs 12,000 pounds.

ECOLOGY

Copsewights can form from any sort of deciduous tree. Conifers and other plants are simply killed by the creature's blight. As undead, copsewights have no further need for nourishment. Their roots tap into some otherworldly source of power, allowing them to regenerate lost limbs, heal damage, and replace the fruit they throw at enemies. As such, they gain no sustenance from the soil or from the creatures they kill. Based on their behavior, copsewights exist for the sole purpose of killing the living and spreading their blight to the rest of the forest.

A single copsewight can be dangerous to those fooled by its appearance. The creature especially enjoys luring in humanoids, but takes the opportunity to attack animals or other living creatures that threaten it or if there are no preferable targets within range. A copsewight does its best to disguise itself, swaying in the wind to mimic the motions of normal trees.

When multiple copsewights gather together, they are much more difficult to overcome. The trees conspire to catch victims in the cross fire of their poisonous fruits or to drive targets within reach of each other's grasping limbs. It is unclear how they communicate, but they coordinate their attacks as well as pack-hunting animals.

Scholars believe that the first copsewights may have been intentionally created by some vengeful fey who wanted to punish mortals for allowing a favorite tree or grove of trees to succumb to disease. Proponents of this theory point to the fact that copsewights understand Sylvan, although they cannot speak any languages. Others claim that they are a byproduct of the Abyssal Darkblight ravaging portions of the Fangwood, but the trees move very slowly and have been encountered in places scattered around the Inner Sea region and beyond, suggesting that the Darkblight is not the only source of these creatures. Whatever their original source, most copsewights now seem to arise spontaneously, especially when diseased trees die within an area contaminated by fell magic.

A cleric of 20th level who serves a deity with the Death, Destruction, or Plant domain can use the *create greater undead* spell to create copsewights from trees killed by blight or disease.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Copsewights are usually found in large forests. Even there, they are blessedly rare. With its ability to spread contagion and create more of its kind from the trees it kills, even one copsewight is a threat. Druids, most fey, and servants of the Green Faith are always on the lookout for signs of copsewights and strive to eliminate them.

Although these undead trees have basic instincts and are sometimes found in groups, they have no formal social structure. They have no natural life cycle and continue to exist until they are discovered and destroyed. Although their rotting fruit contains seeds, nothing grows from them. Only poisoners have any use for the fruit.

Copsewights have been discovered in many of the most infamous forests on Golarion. Rumors suggest that one of the creatures made its way from the Fangwood to the Duskskroud Forest on Molthune's border with Druma, although it seems unlikely one of the trees could travel that far, especially since it would have to cross the Nosam River. Explorers have also reported encountering

copsewights in the Whisperwood in Nidal and in the Tanglebriar in Kyonin. The creatures appear in parts of the Mwangi Expanse as well.

Recent reports from Lastwall indicate that two powerful copsewights have taken up residence in the old courtyard of the Vaishau Ruin, along the river road that runs between Vigil and Gallowspire. The ruin has a reputation as a lure for undead, who seem to be answering a call that only they can hear. The Knights of Ozem dealt with the trees during one of their monthly trips to the ruin, but the renewed undead presence remains a mystery. No one seems to know who or what calls them to the ruin or why these two copsewights were so strong.

COPSEWIGHT POISON

PRICE
500 GP

Type poison, contact; **Save** Fortitude DC 18

Onset immediate; **Frequency** 1/round for 2 rounds

Effect 1d2 Con damage; **Cure** 1 save

A skilled alchemist can collect and preserve the juices from a copsewight's fruit, distilling them into a contact poison.

The fruit from a single copsewight can produce up to 12 doses of poison.

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FIRST WORLD ANIMALS

As the planning stage for the gods' creation of the Material Plane, the First World is home to all manner of strange and fantastic beasts—including many experiments too bizarre to be found on the Material Plane.

FAERIE MOUNT

Short legs and overlarge ears make this broad-chested canine seem almost comical.

FAERIE MOUNT

CR 1



XP 400

N Medium animal

Init +0; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Perception +5

DEFENSE

AC 11, touch 10, flat-footed 11 (+1 natural)

hp 15 (2d8+6)

Fort +6, **Ref** +3, **Will** +1

Defensive Abilities stability

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee bite +2 (1d6+1)

STATISTICS

Str 13, **Dex** 10, **Con** 17, **Int** 2, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 12 (16 vs. bull rush, 20 vs. trip)

Feats Endurance, Nimble Moves⁸

Skills Perception +5, Survival +2 (+6 when tracking by scent);

Racial Modifiers +4 Survival when tracking by scent

SQ sure-footed

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate forests, hills, or plains (First World)

Organization solitary, pair, or wiggle (3–12)

Treasure none

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Stability (Ex) While standing on the ground, faerie mounts gain a +4 racial bonus to their Combat Maneuver Defense against bull rush and trip combat maneuvers.

Sure-Footed (Ex) As long as it is carrying no more than a light load, a faerie mount gains Nimble Moves as a bonus feat.

Also called the fey cur and the dwarf dog, the faerie mount is a cousin to the dog and the wolf that carries Tiny and Small riders well. The creatures' sturdy legs, low center of gravity, and muscular torsos are especially well-suited to navigating the twisting, hilly, greenery-choked landscape of the First World, making them the preferred mounts for scouts, messengers, and even knights small enough to ride the legendarily loyal creatures. While usually found in fey stables, bedecked in saddles and barding, small packs of fey curs sometimes form symbiotic relationships with herds of wild deer and goats, protecting the herbivores in exchange for milk and the first opportunity to scavenge fallen animals.

Faerie mounts grow up to 5 feet long and 3 feet tall, and weigh around 120 pounds.

Tales of the animals' legendary bravery and loyalty inspired Taldan dog breeders to create a breed of similar proportions. These canines make excellent herding dogs, and are found in the central highlands of Taldor, Isger, and Molthune. To reflect the Taldan corgi, use the statistics for a Small dog, remove its racial Acrobatics bonus to jump, and add the faerie mount's stability special ability.

Faerie Mount Companions

Starting Statistics: **Size** Small; **Speed** 30 ft.; **AC** +1 natural armor; **Attack** bite (1d4); **Ability Scores** Str 9, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 12; **Special Qualities** low-light vision, scent, stability.

4th-Level Advancement: **Size** Medium; **Speed** 40 ft.; **Attack** bite (1d6); **Ability Scores** Str +4, Dex -2, Con +2; **Special Qualities** sure-footed.

MOME RATH

Moss and lichen grow from the shaggy back of this boar-like animal. Its curving claws and prehensile tail hold it in the trees.

MOME RATH

CR 2



XP 600

N Medium animal

Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Perception +7

DEFENSE

AC 12, touch 11, flat-footed 11 (+1 Dex, +1 natural)

hp 22 (3d8+9)

Fort +8, **Ref** +4, **Will** +3

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 10 ft.

Melee 2 claws +4 (1d3+2 plus poison)

Special Attacks poison

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 12, **Con** 17, **Int** 2, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 7

Base Atk +2; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 15 (19 vs. trip)

Feats Great Fortitude, Skill Focus (Stealth)

Skills Climb +14, Perception +7, Stealth +4 (+8 in trees);

Racial Modifiers +4 Stealth in trees

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate forests (First World)

Organization solitary or pair

Treasure none

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Poison (Ex) Claws—injury; *save* Fort DC 14; *frequency* 1/round for 3 rounds; *effect* sickened for 1d4 rounds; *cure* 1 save.

Mome raths are a variety of rath that sniff through the forests of the First World, digging up roots and hiding from large predators with a variety of cunning camouflage techniques. When spotted, they are easily identified by their powerful, hunched backs and stout claws. Mature specimens cultivate a garden of moss, algae, and other plants on their backs to retain water, ward off parasites, and help them blend in to their environment, giving them

a mottled green coloration. All raths defend themselves with powerful kicks and spurs on their hind legs that are coated with burning venom.

Some Garundi scholars believe mome raths to be distant relatives of the pangolin—if only for their similar body structure. While a variety of raths have adapted to the First World's strange climates, the mome rath is the most common, climbing through trees to graze on leaves and fruit and raid the occasional bird or snark nest. A healthy mome rath is up to 6 feet long including its muscular tail, and weighs around 100 pounds.

Mome Rath Companions

Starting Statistics: **Size** Small; **Speed** 30 ft., climb 10 ft.;

AC +1 natural armor; **Attack** 2 claws (1d3 plus poison);

Ability Scores Str 12, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 14, Cha 17; **Special Attacks** poison (*frequency* 1 round [3], *effect* sickened for 1d3 rounds, *cure* 1 save, Con-based DC); **Special Qualities** low-light vision, scent.

4th-Level Advancement: **Size** Medium; **Attack** 2 claws (1d4 plus poison); **Ability Scores** Str +2, Dex -2, Con +4. **Special Attacks** poison (*frequency* 1 round [3], *effect* sickened for 1d6 rounds, *cure* 1 save, Con-based DC).

SNARK

Bright colors and patterns shine on the fur of this long-nosed, rodent-like creature, and glorious wings hold it aloft.

SNARK	CR 1/4	  
XP 100		
N Diminutive animal		
Init +1; Senses low-light vision, scent; Perception +5		
DEFENSE		
AC 15, touch 15, flat-footed 14 (+1 Dex, +4 size)		
hp 3 (1d8-1)		
Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +1		
OFFENSE		
Speed 20 ft., climb 15 ft., fly 30 ft. (poor)		
Melee 2 claws +5 (1d2-5)		
Space 1 ft.; Reach 0 ft.		
STATISTICS		
Str 1, Dex 13, Con 8, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 13		
Base Atk +0; CMB -3; CMD 2		
Feats Weapon Finesse		
Skills Acrobatics +0, Climb +13, Fly +3, Perception +5, Stealth +17; Racial Modifiers +4 Climb, +4 Stealth		
SQ bioluminescence		
ECOLOGY		
Environment any (First World)		
Organization solitary, pair, or conspiracy (3-10)		
Treasure incidental		
SPECIAL ABILITIES		
Bioluminescence (Ex) All snarks		

share the ability to glow, shedding light like a candle. This is an involuntary action, which a snark can suppress for 1d6 minutes with a successful DC 12 Will saving throw.

If the gods were hung over when they made birds, as many fey claim, they were deep in their cups when they created snarks. Some unusual step between avians and bats, snarks come in a variety of shapes and sizes—from insect-sized to large and dangerous predators—but the smaller lyre snarks are the most common. Snarks live in forests, canyons, and towns of the First World. They mark their territory with loud songs, but keep themselves well hidden—so much so that many outsiders believe they can turn invisible at will. Their wings feature dexterous little hands to pick at fruit, nuts, and the occasional shiny object. They are adept at picking parasites from larger creatures, and are one of the few smaller creatures the Tane—including the voracious bandersnatch—generally permit in close proximity.

All varieties of snarks share the ability to glow softly when happy or excited—much to their detriment, as this light attracts predators. In some parts of the First World, snarks share territory with birds, and are generally strong fliers but less adapted to running along the ground or through trees. Lyre snarks rarely weigh more than a pound. For larger and more aggressive snarks—such as the flesh-eating boojum—use the statistics for an eagle, an owl, or a vulture (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 3 284).

Smaller snarks, like the one presented here, make affectionate pets, but are known for stealing small objects and treats from their owners to line a variety of nests and secret stashes they maintain. An arcane caster who selects a snark as a familiar gains a +3 bonus on Stealth checks, though snark familiars are vanishingly rare beyond the First World.



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FULDREX

This minuscule, fleshy plant creature has mottled, green-and-black skin and tiny eyes that peer malevolently from beneath layers of dripping, fungal hair.

FULDREX

CR 11



XP 12,800

NE Small plant

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +14

DEFENSE

AC 27, touch 12, flat-footed 26 (+1 Dex, +15 natural, +1 size)

hp 168 (16d8+96)

Fort +16, **Ref** +8, **Will** +6

Immune electricity, plant traits, sonic

Weaknesses light sensitivity

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee bite +21 (2d6+8/19–20), 3 slams +21 (1d8+8 plus choking fungus)

Special Attacks choking fungus, rotten flesh

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10th; concentration +12)

Constant—*pass without trace*

3/day—*entangle* (underground only; DC 13)

STATISTICS

Str 26, **Dex** 12, **Con** 22, **Int** 7, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +12; **CMB** +19; **CMD** 30

Feats Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Diehard, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Lunge, Power Attack

Skills Perception +14, Sense Motive +3, Stealth +16 (+20 when underground); **Racial Modifiers** +4 Stealth when underground

Languages Abyssal, Sylvan

SQ change shape (Small fungus; *tree shape*)

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate forests or underground

Organization solitary, pair, or infestation (8–12)

Treasure standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Choking Fungus (Ex) When a fuldrex hits a target with its slam attack, it releases minuscule, virulent spores that seek to propagate in the victim's lungs. A creature struck by the fuldrex's slam attack takes 1d6 points of Constitution damage and is staggered for 1d4 rounds while it painfully coughs out the intrusive fungus. A victim that succeeds at a DC 24 Fortitude saving throw is staggered for only 1 round and doesn't take ability damage. A creature affected by this ability is immune to additional instances of choking fungus as long as it remains staggered from the effect. This is a disease effect that affects only creatures that breathe. The saving throw is Fortitude-based.

Rotten Flesh (Ex) The fleshy fungus that makes up a fuldrex's body is fetid and foul. Whenever a fuldrex takes damage from a slashing weapon, its flesh releases a noxious cloud of gas. Creatures within 10 feet of the

fuldrex must succeed at a DC 26 Fortitude saving throw or be nauseated for 1 round.

Fuldrexes are mean, territorial creatures that, despite naturally taking the shape of small humanoids, seem to share more physical characteristics with fungi than anything else. Layers of thin, spotted, fibrous flesh cover their bodies like skin; their chubby fingers seem more like mushroom stalks than digits; and where hair might normally grow instead drips lacy growths that would seem more at home growing along the walls of a cave. Fuldrexes crave warm, dark, isolated places, and react violently when disturbed. The exception is when a much more powerful creature—particularly a fungal creature (see pages 116–117 of the *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 4*)—enters their demesne with an overwhelming display of might. In this case, the cowardly and dull creatures are apt to prostrate themselves before their better, vowing to serve and venerate it as other creatures might worship a deity.

Fuldrexes are notorious shapechangers that can appear to be naturally occurring fungi whenever they wish. They often use this ability to blend in with their surroundings before ambushing their enemies, or simply to fade from sight when a major threat barrels their way. In its natural form, a fuldrex stands 2-1/2 feet tall and weighs 50 pounds.

ECOLOGY

The product of natural growth run evilly amok, fuldrexes spawn in remote places where mundane fungus is abundant, especially in underground caves and oases. Fuldrexes always live where moisture and spots to hide among other plant life are abundant and where the searing light of the sun is scarce. Unlike most plants, though, fuldrexes have an advanced physiology and thus crave meat—the fresher the better—to sustain their strange little bodies. They also need moisture from their diets as well as from their surroundings to keep their bodily systems running smoothly.

In a pinch, fuldrexes eat small animals native to their homes. However, fuldrexes prefer to accost larger creatures, especially humanoids, both for the large supplies of meat those victims provide as well as the liquids their bodies retain. They are most common and most comfortable as a species underground, though some fuldrexes thrive in the depths of primeval forests—especially blighted forests—where the treetop canopies keep their surroundings dark, moist, and perfectly suitable. When they do live in blighted areas, fuldrexes tend to gorge themselves on the fey that have so far escaped physical harm, and ignore those whose bodies and minds have been transformed into evil shadows of their previous selves (see the blighted fey template on pages 46–47 of the *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 6*).

Regardless of where they live, fuldrexes reproduce using spores. There is no sexual dimorphism among

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fuldrexes, but two of the creatures are required for this process to take place. One fuldrex leaves a collection of spores in a safe, fungus-filled place, such as the hollow of an enormous, rotted log, or a crevice in an underground rock formation. Then, noticing the deep and pungent smell that distinctively marks these spores, another fuldrex later adds its own spores to the mix. The parents invariably abandon their gestating spawn, and after a few weeks, a new fuldrex springs fully formed from its fibrous sac.

Fuldrexes have no concept of parenthood and often squabble with their young over the best places to hunt or gather moisture. However, they do often allow the young specimens to live in their territories, usually provided that the children help lure fresh meat to the area. On rare occasions, fuldrexes spawn outside of any of their kin's territories, and in these cases the young are left entirely to their own devices.

Although disease and blight have no hand in spawning fuldrexes, the creatures nonetheless maintain an incredible concentration of choking spores within their bodies. Mature fuldrexes know how to harness these physical characteristics into attacks that can weaken or kill their prey. Worse, though such planning and collaboration is rare among their kind, some fuldrexes even sneak unnoticed next to potential prey, releasing the noxious fumes from their rotten flesh just as a number of other fuldrexes descend upon the weakened victim. Terrifying as this sounds, though, fuldrexes almost always hunt alone or in pairs, even in territories where half a dozen or more of the creatures dwell. It is only in the most inhospitable environments that infestations of fuldrexes typically work together to kill any living creature unlucky enough to wander by.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

As fiercely territorial creatures, fuldrexes are most concerned with maintaining a home that provides a steady stream of prey upon which to feed. They are cruel but rather cowardly, and thus prefer to use their environment as camouflage before ambushing victims. A stretch of deeply forested land or an expansive underground cave might seem abandoned, but it well may be teeming with an infestation of hiding fuldrexes simply waiting to strike.

Fuldrexes typically treat each other neutrally; that is, fuldrexes occupying the same territory that aren't hunting partners tend to ignore one another—unless a fight breaks out over a kill or a prime spot to hide and ambush prey, of course. In this case, fuldrexes battle each other viciously and often to the death.

Despite their ambivalence toward one another, fuldrexes do not brook other hunters

living in or even passing through their territory. They often band together to drive out rival predators weaker than themselves, if they don't kill the offending creature outright for food. In a strange way, this behavior emulates a code of honor, though the evil creatures might turn on one another once the offending interloper is dispatched.

The exception to fuldrexes' hostility toward rival predators lies in evil creatures that are significantly more powerful than they are, such as dragons, demons, and divs. These terrors' auras of evil are like siren songs to fuldrexes. If such a powerful rival rampages through a fuldrex territory—especially if the rival makes a wanton display of sheer power or wickedness—the local fuldrexes are likely to emerge from hiding and vow to serve the creatures unfailingly. Should the rival accept the fuldrexes' offer, the plant creatures dedicate themselves to being loyal minions, following even orders that would result in their certain deaths. As they are rather thick and blatantly self-centered, fuldrexes also tend to believe that they are the chosen acolytes of powerful creatures, and that they can achieve supernatural power through serving those they deem worthy.



HEARTROT TREE

Fungus drips from this grotesque tree's ridged bark as its branches wave like boneless arms.

HEARTROT TREE

CR 13



XP 25,600

NE Huge plant

Init +4; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft., low-light vision; **Perception** +14

DEFENSE

AC 28, touch 8, flat-footed 28 (+20 natural, -2 size)

hp 184 (16d8+112)

Fort +17, **Ref** +7, **Will** +5

Defensive Abilities all-around vision; **DR** 10/slashing;

Immune plant traits, poison

OFFENSE

Speed 10 ft.

Melee 2 tendrils +20 (2d6+9/19-20), slam +20 (1d8+13/19-20 plus disease)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Special Attacks disease

STATISTICS

Str 29, **Dex** 10, **Con** 24, **Int** 2, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 3

Base Atk +12; **CMB** +23; **CMD** 33 (can't be tripped)

Feats Improved Critical (slam, tendril), Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Perception), Weapon Focus (slam, tendril)

Skills Perception +14, Stealth +3 (+11 in forests); **Racial**

Modifiers +8 Stealth in forests

SQ hardy stump, virulent roots

ECOLOGY

Environment any forest or underground

Organization solitary, pair, or festering grove (6-12)

Treasure incidental

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Disease (Ex) Unlike other diseases, heartrot disease is particularly insidious due to having an immediate effect in addition to a lasting effect.

Heartrot Disease: Slam—contact; *save* Fort DC 25; *onset* immediate; *frequency* 1/round for 5 rounds, then 1/day for 10 days; *initial effect* 1d2 Wis damage and nauseated; *secondary effect* 1d3 Con drain; *cure* 3 consecutive saves.

Hardy Stump (Ex) A heartrot tree is difficult to kill. After it sustains fatal damage, a heartrot tree begins to regenerate and can grow back to its previous size in 1d4 weeks. Dealing 50 points of fire damage to the heartrot tree's stump after it has sustained fatal damage prevents this regeneration.

Virulent Roots (Ex) A heartrot tree's roots grow deep beneath the surface. If the tree grows above a cave, cavern, or other large underground opening, its roots have the same statistics as the aboveground tree and can menace creatures underground in the same way. In this case, though they grow from the ceiling, treat a heartrot tree's roots exactly as a normal heartrot tree. A heartrot tree can't fight with its branches and roots simultaneously.

Disgusting products of blight or other magical plagues, heartrot trees represent nature warped to its most insidious. Heartrot trees typically lurk in the deepest depths of fouled forests; they are the manifestations of the very forces that poison the land. As a result, evil and disease pulse within heartrot trees, and the behemoths hunger to destroy anything good or natural still left around them.

Heartrot trees are typically 30 feet tall from the base of their trunks to the tips of their tendril-like branches. When the trees grow above a cave or another large underground space, their roots are horrifically similar to their branches and dangle just as far from the ceiling. Heartrot trees' trunks are typically 15 feet in circumference, and the plant's entire mass weighs around 15 tons.

ECOLOGY

To most lovers of nature, the existence of heartrot trees is a tragedy, because these evil plants were not always so. Before transforming into grotesque harbingers of disease, heartrot trees were invariably ancient and majestic specimens growing in the depths of primeval forests. Heartrot trees were typically once maples, oaks, elms, or other types of locally common deciduous trees. They were often once among forests' largest or most venerated trees; perhaps they marked a remote druid's circle, or were a common meeting place for forest dwellers.

However, once blight falls upon a wooded area, it particularly and irrevocably settles within the heartwood of these trees. Either due to proximity to the center of a blight, or because evil forces have perverted once-good magic that protected the plants, these trees become sentient, fungus-dripping horrors. A malevolence awakens in them akin to the same powers that caused the surrounding blight. Newly formed heartrot trees crave violence and undergo drastic changes to their biology.

The differences between a heartrot tree and its previous incarnation are manifold. In the most visually dramatic change, a heartrot tree withers and shrinks to a fraction of its former size. The water and nutrients that once circulated in its woody veins turn to a disease that rots it from the inside out—and the heartrot tree becomes a carrier of a plague that drives its victims mad before draining the life from their bodies. Heartrot trees' malevolence spreads throughout their systems of roots, trunks, and branches. As a result, they no longer feed on sunlight or water, and are instead sustained by the evil that animated them as well as the suffering they bring to good creatures that cross their paths.

The most heinous change wrought to heartrot trees, though, might be the sheer determination of the evil that lurks within them. Unlike natural trees, heartrot trees can sense creatures that move near their trunks, and even near their roots underground, when they grow above a cavern or another such opening. Heartrot trees can attack victims

aboveground or below, though they can't attack with both their branches and their roots at once. Even when it seems like heartrot trees are destroyed, they can regenerate in a matter of weeks. Heartrot trees attack and destroy any living creatures that wander into their demesnes, though they prefer to lurk in the heart of a blight and wait to destroy wandering creatures the blight hasn't yet warped.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Although heartrot trees typically originate in the center of a blight, they are restless, wandering brutes. Therefore, they can eventually be found nearly anywhere in a blighted area, from the fringes of a warped wood to its very heart.

Heartrot trees found at the edges of a blighted area are typically solitary creatures. They are invariably aggressive, as the abundance of lost wanderers and fleeing forest dwellers naturally provides them with victims. These heartrot trees are often easy for discerning adventurers to spot—a gnarled, rotting tree amid a heap of broken bodies or standing in a pool of blood is almost certainly a heartrot tree. Fortunately for potential prey, heartrot trees gorged on fresh kills are not exactly good at concealing the remnants of their prey or their presence. What's more, particularly active heartrot trees often leave the torn flesh or bloody garments of their victims hanging from their twisted branches in a grotesque display of just how much the plants crave carnage.

Heartrot trees that dwell deeper in the depths of a blighted area are typically a little harder to spot. They naturally blend in with the rest of the blighted surroundings, and so GMs may wish to grant heartrot trees an additional +8 racial modifier on Stealth checks in such areas. Such heartrot trees are also more likely to lurk in pairs. In the most blighted areas, it's common for a heartrot tree to stand on one side of an ominous, deep-forest path with another directly across the way. In this manner, the trees can simultaneously snatch multiple creatures that wander by, and they can ensure that their victims don't escape their grasping tendrils.

HEARTROT TREE GROVES

In Golarion's most deeply warped natural areas, heartrot trees sometimes stand in horrifying groves made up of six to 12 individuals. In this case, the trees tend to arrange themselves circularly, like a twisted parody of a peaceful druid's grove. The sheer concentrated evil of these groves imbues the heartrot trees with a strange magical ability that can call victims directly to the slaughter. Three times per day, the grove can cast *mass suggestion* with a range of 220 feet (Will DC 24; CL 12th). The grove uses this spell-like ability to beckon to potential victims in the vicinity, whose broken bodies afterward typically litter the forest floor around the trees. The destruction of just one heartrot tree in a grove temporarily thwarts that grove's ability to draw creatures toward it. However, if defeated trees in a grove regenerate back to full power, the grove regains its powers of suggestion.

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HOBBE HOUND

A greasy sheen coats the scarred, rippling hide of this dog-shaped beast. Beady eyes, wide ears, and jagged teeth lend rodent-like qualities to the imposing war beast.

HOBBE HOUND

CR 2



XP 600

N Medium animal

Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Perception +8

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 13 (+1 Dex, +3 natural)

hp 25 (3d8+12)

Fort +6, **Ref** +4, **Will** +1

Resist fire 3

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee bite +6 (1d6+6 plus allergic reaction)

Special Attacks allergic reaction (DC 14), flammable

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 13, **Con** 17, **Int** 2, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 7

Base Atk +2; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 17 (21 vs. trip)

Feats Skill Focus (Perception), Toughness

Skills Perception +8, Stealth +5

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate hills or underground

Organization solitary, pair, pack (3–6), or warband (2–4 with 2–12 hobgoblins)

Treasure none

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Allergic Reaction (Ex) A hobbe hound's saliva and skin produce highly irritating secretions that affect all creatures except those with the goblinoid subtype. A non-goblinoid creature that takes damage from a hobbe hound's bite, deals damage to a hobbe hound with a natural weapon or unarmed attack, or otherwise comes into contact with a hobbe hound (including attempts to grapple or ride the creature) must succeed at a DC 14 Fortitude saving throw or break out in an itchy rash. A creature affected by this rash takes a –2 penalty to Dexterity and Charisma for 24 hours (multiple allergic reactions do not stack). *Remove disease* or any form of magical healing removes the rash instantly. This is a disease effect. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Flammable (Ex) The greasy, alchemical musk that constantly coats a hobbe hound's body is highly flammable, and if ignited by an open flame or a spell that deals any amount of fire damage, it burns for 10 rounds. While burning, the hobbe hound deals an additional 1d6 points of fire damage with its natural attacks, and creatures striking it with natural weapons or unarmed strikes, or attempting to grapple the hobbe hound, take 1d6 points of fire damage. The hobbe hound takes 1d6 points of fire damage each round it remains on fire, but its energy resistance applies normally. Extinguishing a hobbe hound requires the beast to either succeed at a DC

15 Reflex saving throw as a full-round action or complete immersion in water.

A hobbe hound that has been set on fire loses its allergic reaction special ability for 24 hours while its body replenishes the irritating oils that have been burned away.

Standing 3 feet tall and weighing nearly 150 pounds each, hobbe hounds are disposable war dogs of hobgoblin armies. Cowed only by shows of violence, they are loathsome and miserable creatures that return savagery in kind. The thick, waxy musk that constantly oozes from their pockmarked skin reeks of death and urine, and is highly irritating to non-goblinoids. Far worse, their fetid coating bursts into flame with the slightest spark, and while most armies would find flammable shock troops to be a hindrance, efficient and cruel hobgoblins find burning, baying, savage beasts of war ideal for breaking enemy ranks and sowing chaos before their own regiments close to melee.

Hobbe hounds first appeared in Avistan during the Goblinblood Wars, when the beasts were unleashed against Andoren Eagle Knights along the war's southern front. The hobgoblins of the Chitterwood often intentionally set their own chargers ablaze, unleashing entire walls of flaming savagery upon the panicked soldiers. In the years since, surviving war beasts have formed feral packs in Isgar, Molthune, and Cheliox, while hobgoblin tribes across the Inner Sea region have begun breeding their own stocks of the monsters.

ECOLOGY

Hobbe hounds are the result of careful breeding and hobgoblin alchemical tinkering, and have little place in the natural world. Sharing many features with the more common goblin dogs—filthy, ratlike creatures that often dwell alongside goblins in their miserable villages—hobbe hounds boast much heavier frames and thicker hides at the expense of goblin dogs' already limited mental faculties. Generations of inbreeding have given them a dense musculature and incredible resistance to pain, while mutagens further develop their bulky bodies. This tinkering also exacerbates the species' overactive sebaceous glands, resulting in a secretion even fouler than the irritating dander of their leaner cousins. This alchemically infused body oil burns readily, producing billows of black, greasy smoke. Thanks to these same oils, hobbe hounds are somewhat resistant to fire, and a cruel training regimen destroys any fear of flame they might have once had, resulting in vicious beasts that rush into battle oblivious to the flames searing their own flesh. These glands often become infected due to heavy burn scars, and most hobbe hounds have repulsive patches of boils and blisters on their backs, necks, and heads.

Hobbe hounds have great difficulty mating. Females go into heat irregularly and are picky about which males

they allow close when they do. Their aggressive rejections leave scars or even maim potential suitors. On the rare occasion a pregnancy takes, the mother becomes listless and lazy, drained by the large and aggressive brood growing inside her. Hobgoblins feed these dazed mothers a steady diet of stimulants and mutagens to overcome this malaise; in the wild, other members of the pack become increasingly protective, given that they may see only one or two pregnancies in a year. After 3 months, the mother gives birth to a half-dozen stillborn pups and another five to 10 alert young. Born ready to eat meat, a hobbe hound pup generally makes its first meal of the littermates that didn't survive. Though the hobgoblins of Isger produced a number of variations (see Variations below), only one "true" breed has proven resilient enough to survive and flourish in new packs and environs without constant oversight and alchemical supplements.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Unsurprisingly, given their origins, hobbe hounds are aggressive in the extreme, with wild packs claiming large swathes of territory and attacking almost anything that enters, even predators many times their own size. A band of hounds hunts together out of a shared hatred for outsiders, but they lack the tactics or cooperation of most pack hunters. Once the prey is felled, individual hobbe hounds turn on one another in a fight to claim the choicest morsels.

Those packs reared by hobgoblin tribes submit to goblinoid authority—partly from an inbred deference and partly from lifetimes of cruel beatings—and organize themselves at least marginally better than their feral kin. Tribes not actively campaigning sometimes use hobbe hounds as guards, but the willful beasts rarely stay in place unless chained to their posts. In active warfare, however, they shine, proving far more ferocious and resilient than mundane war beasts, and more obedient than worgs and similar allies of convenience.

Riddled as they are with alchemical mutagens, hobbe hounds produce a number of potent by-products. Their urine repels other canines and readily kills plant life, and their feces similarly destroy most fungi. Territories claimed by packs of hobbe hounds quickly become despoiled, marked by dead trees and chewed corpses that never fully decay. As food becomes scarce, packs turn to cannibalism to sate their hunger before finally moving on to fertile grounds.

VARIATIONS

Born from mad experimentation and forced breeding, hobbe hounds are prone to mutations, and many variants have emerged. Because these variants are a result of alchemical tinkering, they almost always appear as domesticated animals, rather than in feral packs.

Bug Hound: These leaner hobbe hounds are identifiable by their dark, dappled flesh. They retain a deference to goblinoids, but shun their own kind, instead slinking in the shadows and hunting by ambush, making them suitable companions for bugbear scouts. Bug hounds gain a +4 racial bonus on Stealth checks.

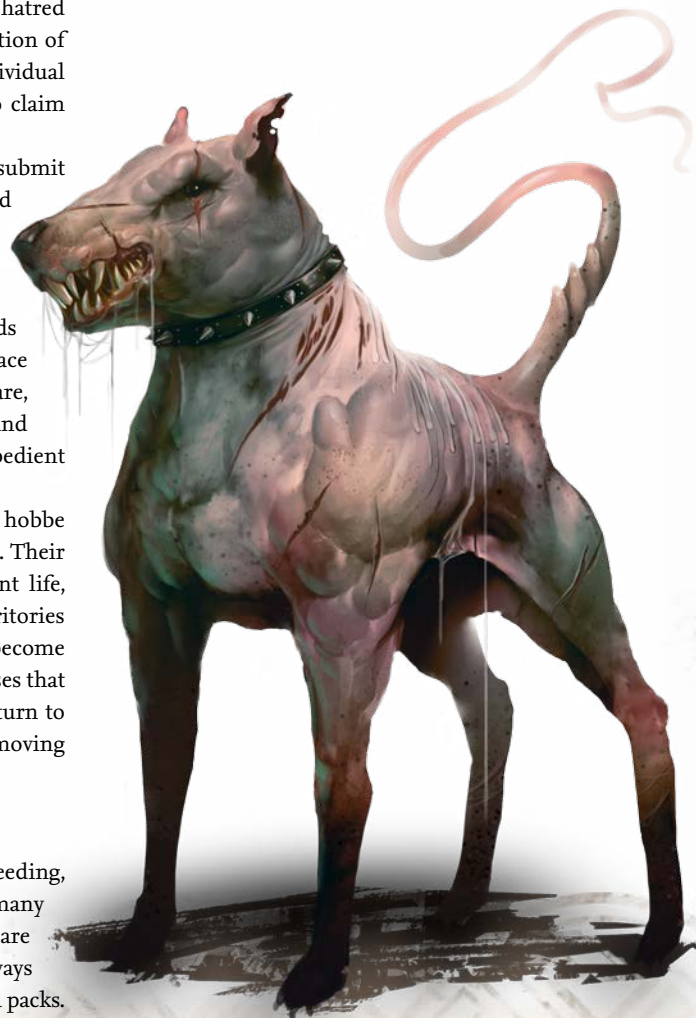
Hobbe Hulk: These tumor-riddled abominations are the result of overindulging hobbe hounds' species-wide addiction to mutagens, which causes them to grow to the size of a small horse. Hobbe hulks gain the giant creature simple template (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 295).

HOBBE HOUND COMPANIONS

Hobgoblin druids, hunters (*Pathfinder RPG Advanced Class Guide* 26), and rangers who can take an animal companion can choose a hobbe hound.

Starting Statistics: Size Medium; Speed 40 ft.; AC +1 natural armor; Attack bite (1d4 plus allergic reaction); Ability Scores Str 12, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 10, Cha 7; Special Qualities allergic reaction, low-light vision, scent.

7th-Level Advancement: AC +3 natural armor; Attack bite (1d6 plus allergic reaction); Ability Scores Str +6, Dex -2, Con +2; Special Qualities fire resistance 3.



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NACHZEHRER

This spindly-limbed horror has pale eyes, bony fingers that end in dirty claws, papery skin, and long, sharp fangs protruding from a breathless mouth.

NACHZEHRER

CR 12



XP 19,200

CE Medium undead

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +23

DEFENSE

AC 27, touch 15, flat-footed 22 (+4 Dex, +1 dodge, +12 natural)

hp 161 (14d8+98); fast healing 5

Fort +13, **Ref** +10, **Will** +13

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4; **DR** 15/cold iron and magic; **Immune** undead traits; **Resist** cold 10, electricity 10

Weaknesses bound to the grave

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee 2 claws +19 (2d6+9), slam +19 (1d8+9 plus horrifying vision)

Special Attacks blood drain, call the fallen, horrifying vision

STATISTICS

Str 28, **Dex** 19, **Con** —, **Int** 16, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 25

Base Atk +10; **CMB** +19; **CMD** 34

Feats Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes

Skills Bluff +21, Intimidate +24, Knowledge (nature) +17, Perception +23, Sense Motive +23, Stealth +21, Survival +16

Languages Common, Elven, Sylvan

SQ fey disguise

ECOLOGY

Environment any forest

Organization solitary

Treasure standard

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Blood Drain (Su) A nachzehrer can suck blood from a pinned opponent. If the nachzehrer establishes or maintains a pin, it drains blood, dealing 1d4 points of Constitution damage to its victim. The nachzehrer heals 10 hit points or gains 10 temporary hit points for 1 hour (up to a maximum number of temporary hit points equal to its full normal hit points) each round it drains blood.

Bound to the Grave (Su) Nachzehrers are susceptible to certain rituals meant to keep them bound to their graves. Forcing a single coin into the mouth of a helpless nachzehrer (a full-round action) instantly incapacitates it. However, the nachzehrer is no longer incapacitated and can act as normal if this coin is removed, unless its head is also severed from its body (with the coin still in its mouth) and anointed with holy water, and both its body and head are buried at least 6 feet underground.

Call the Fallen (Su) Once per day as a standard action while within any forest, the nachzehrer can harness the energies of the fey and humanoid creatures that have

died nearby. This effectively causes 1d4 human juju zombies (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 2* 291) to rise from the earth in random places in a 30-foot radius around the nachzehrer. These juju zombies don't provoke attacks of opportunity when they rise in this way, are under the nachzehrer's control, and act on its turn. Juju zombies can't rise in this way from any surface that isn't natural soil (such as the floor of a structure or an area paved with natural rock or stone). Juju zombies the nachzehrer creates using this ability meld back into the earth after 24 hours and are permanently destroyed.

Fey Disguise (Su) While in any forest, a nachzehrer can take on the illusory appearance of any Small or Medium fey creature. This does not affect the nachzehrer's statistics or give it any special abilities. A nachzehrer so disguised exposes its true nature through subtle mannerisms or flaws in its appearance, and anyone who interacts with the glamered nachzehrer can see through its disguise with a successful DC 25 Perception or Sense Motive check or a DC 24 Will saving throw. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Horrifying Vision (Su) A nachzehrer can channel the foul energy of the terrible fate that befell it into its slam attack. Creatures damaged by its slam attack are panicked for 1 round as their minds are assaulted with the terrible trauma the nachzehrer endured, but the target can reduce this effect to shaken with a successful DC 24 Will saving throw. A nachzehrer can choose not to inflict its horrifying vision on a creature it attacks. This is a mind-affecting fear effect. The saving throw is Charisma-based.

The inspiration of much fear and dread among forest-dwellers, nachzehrers are better known as fey vampires in the woodland regions where they typically dwell. Human locals often confuse them for true vampires, though in reality nachzehrers are a form of monstrous cousin to those hated undead. They rise from the fey victims of virulent disease; the more evil a pestilence's origin, such as from an Abyssal blight, the more likely fey who succumb are to return as nachzehrers. Unlike true vampires, nachzehrers cannot create spawn, though their aggressiveness toward and hatred of the living is just as intense as those fabled horrors.

Tragically, nachzehrers typically rise from good or neutral fey, such as dryads, huldras, nymphs, and nereids. Their appearances are sick parodies of the forms they took in life. Their graceful limbs become spindly and bony, their skin becomes thin and papery, and their delicate teeth sharpen into wicked fangs. Nachzehrers are typically 5-1/2 feet tall and weigh about 100 pounds.

ECOLOGY

Although rare no matter the location, nachzehrers are most likely to be found in blighted forests or in woodlands that have recently suffered sweeping bouts of disease. Many nachzehrers were once fey creatures

whose bodies managed to resist a polluting blight—such as the Abyssal Darkblight that infects the deepest Fangwood in Nirmathas—that might have warped their bodies and minds (see the blighted fey template on pages 46–47 of *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 6*). However, these fey nonetheless contract debilitating, wasting diseases that visit terrible suffering upon them until they finally succumb. The most unlucky of these fey find themselves returned to unlife as nachzehrers. In fact, dying from such diseases is the hallmark of all nachzehrers' rebirth.

When nachzehrers arise, they do so in a weakened state—typically, nachzehrers begin unlife with only 1 hit point. Since most find themselves risen in graves that contain other fey creatures who also succumbed to disease, nachzehrers feed off the stagnant blood in those bodies, gaining vigor even as they drain the corpses of those who once loved them. In the rare case that a nachzehrer arises near no easily obtainable source of blood, the wicked creature typically slinks back to its ancestral enclave, waiting to pick off young and weak members of its former clan to drain the blood it needs to gain strength.

Although they remember little about their lives before undeath, nachzehrers retain terrible memories of the pain and suffering they experienced during the infections that killed them. Worse, they can transmit these horrifying experiences to their enemies—and they count all living creatures as such, regarding them with equal parts hate and jealousy. Most nachzehrers wish to destroy life simply for the sake of doing so, but the oldest and most heinous of their number want to see as many creatures as possible suffer the same agony they did so long ago. Thus, because they don't need blood to survive, some nachzehrers capture victims and continually torture them with horrifying visions, without ever granting them the release of death.

HABITAT AND SOCIETY

Because they suffered so deeply before rising as undead, nachzehrers particularly hate their ancestral fey clans, whom they blame for not finding a way to cure their disease or at least mitigate their agony. As a result, most nachzehrers stalk their former comrades, terrorizing them and waiting for opportune moments to steal lone victims. In the case of nachzehrers whose clans are gone—either wiped out by disease or otherwise fled from the area—the creatures roam about the woods, looking for other groups of living creatures to torment.

Wandering nachzehrers are often drawn to places of great suffering in the hope that they might drown out some of the agonizing memories they continually relive. In fact, the most common place to find an unmoored nachzehrer is the site of a destroyed fey village in a blighted area or at the crossroads of woodland paths.



Here, nachzehrers absorb the area's latent suffering while waiting for new victims to stumble upon their new lairs.

Although their behavior is practically feral, nachzehrers are fiercely intelligent creatures. They are at least nominally aware that they're undead abominations, and that the hateful actions they commit are intensely evil. Thus, nachzehrers assume that nearby fey or benevolent humanoids will eventually seek to destroy them, and they fear nothing more than the arrival of planar allies such as angels to send them to oblivion.

Nachzehrers hate and are uncommonly terrified of creatures that bear coins, which they assume are payment for a coming planar ally. Though nachzehrers can fight against coin-bearing individuals freely, placing a coin in a nachzehrer's mouth paralyzes it as much as a stake in the heart incapacitates a true vampire. Savvy adventurers can fully destroy a nachzehrer incapacitated in this way by going through the same grisly ritual they'd use to kill a child of the night. Those clever enough to lure a nachzehrer into helplessness find that this is the easiest way to dispatch the creatures. Tragically, though, all but the most discerning adventurers and scholars tend to mistake nachzehrers for their more common vampiric kin, and attempt to destroy them as they would true vampires, without using coins—always to disastrous results.

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VAULT OF THE ONYX CITADEL

By Larry Wilhelm

With a scrappy army of their own, the heroes finally strike at the Ironfang Legion in its secret, otherworldly stronghold: the Onyx Citadel. This ancient fortress is surrounded by a hostile, alien landscape deep on the Plane of Earth. Can the heroes fight their way past the Ironfang Legion's greatest leaders and confront General Azaersi before she activates her ultimate weapon?

CONTINUING THE CAMPAIGN

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With the Ironfang Legion defeated, the PCs have a number of options to continue their adventures, from claiming the Vault of the Onyx Citadel as their own to helping the rescued fey Gendowyn restore her divinity!

ECOLOGY OF THE VAULT BUILDERS

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the Plane of Earth and formed the massive Vaults that compose the Darklands layer of Orv. Learn of their history, culture, and ecology in this comprehensive look into the enigmatic xiomorns.

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IRONFANG RECRUIT MANUAL

ENTRY 10-3: ELF MAGIC, CONT'D

Now that you know the basics of elf magic and its dangers, you need to know how to stand against it.

Always kill the caster first.

If you must take a spellcaster alive, take every precaution in forbidding her use of magic.



SIGHT AND SOUND

Spellcasters need to see where their magic will go, and they need to chant to make it happen. A proper pentagonal braid over the eyes and mouth will keep both from happening with one length of cord. Don't worry about their air. Real wizards don't need to breathe.

THE DELICATE BONES

Spellcasters rely on their hands to cast spells—a problem easily remedied by removing their hands. If you need their hands attached for some reason, break the bones instead. Ignore the arm and the back of the hand; simply prevent gestures by breaking the small bones of the fingers and wrist.



Elf magic can crush your mind, twist your body, and belch flames to snuff out an entire company. There is glory in battling a warrior to the death, but there is pragmatism in ending a spellcaster quickly. Be strategic even as you seek glory!

BREAK THE MOLD!

Strange and terrible things blossom deep within the Fangwood, twisting plant life and the fey residents into blighted monsters. Many have braved the forest, but Princess Arlantia—the cruel dryad who rules the forsaken woods—allows no trespasser to leave her realm. Yet somewhere within these cursed depths lies the key to the Ironfang Legion's hidden stronghold. Can the PCs survive wicked fey, a festering dragon, and nightmarish beasts? Or will they become prisoners of the blight?

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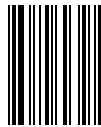
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