

SECOND EDITION

# PATHFINDER®

## Wardens of Wildwood

ADVENTURE PATH

### Shepherd of Decay

By Mike Kimmel





# Cradle of Knot

400 FEET





# PATHFINDER

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# Wardens of Wildwood

ADVENTURE PATH

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# Shepherd of Decay

## Shepherd of Decay

by Mike Kimmel

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## Cradle of Knot Gazetteer

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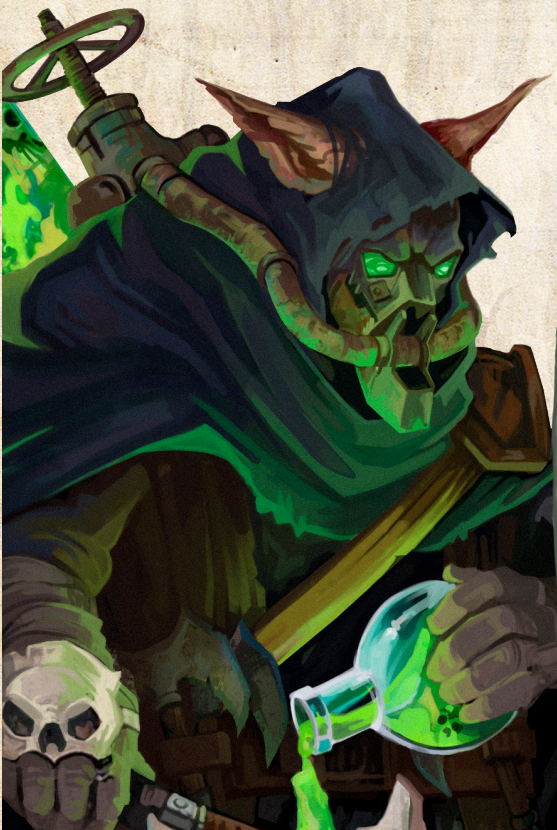
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Ruzadoya Swiftmane

Zibik



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# Shepherd of Decay

## Chapter 1: For the Rootweft! .....4

With their numbers dwindling and their advantages neutralized—thanks to the efforts of the PCs—the remaining forces of the Wildwood Lodge have retreated to the Isle of Arenway. Seeing an opportunity to oust Ruzadoya Swiftmane and her vindictive followers, the Rootweft Lodge launches an invasion of the isle. The PCs must establish a foothold on the island and handle nearby threats before leading an attack on the Wildwood Lodge headquarters.

## Chapter 2: Cradle of Knot ..... 28

Though the Rootweft Lodge captures the isle and largely shatters the Wildwood threat, the PCs discover evidence of Ruzadoya Swiftmane's contingency plan: she fled to the Plane of Wood to recruit elemental allies, reclaim control, and cause even more destruction. With access to the Plane of Wood limited, the PCs must act as the Rootweft Lodge's vanguard. They arrive in an elemental plane that has had almost no contact with the Universe in eons, and in a settlement—Cradle of Knot—whose residents find the PCs' very nature aberrant. They must secure leads and support to prepare for a hazardous journey into a radioactive waste that infects the Plane of Wood.

## Chapter 3: Ruin and Renewal ..... 46

After securing support, the PCs are ready to set out in search of their graveknight foe. They enter the nearby Plane of Wood wilderness, a mix of awesome elemental features, landscapes devastated by a radioactive blight, and blighted areas that have partially regrown. Ultimately, the PCs battle Ruzadoya Swiftmane and her remaining allies, then parley with a demigod to correct the misinformation he has been fed and convince him not to devastate the Verduran Forest and its surroundings with radioactive wrath.

## RECURRING NPCs

As this is the final volume of a three-part Adventure Path, your party's adventures might have played out differently than expected. Based on the events of your own campaign, some of the NPCs presented in this adventure might be friendlier (or less friendly) toward the PCs than presented in the text. Allies might have abandoned the cause, or enemies might have switched sides, and some NPCs might have perished. Feel free to swap NPCs as needed to tell the story you want to tell.

Some allied NPCs play more critical roles in this adventure. Consider previewing the Siege of Arenway section (page 12) and the beginning of Chapter 2 (page 28) so you can plan recurring NPC appearances accordingly.

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## ADVANCEMENT TRACK

"Shepherd of Decay" is designed for four characters.

- 11** The PCs begin this adventure at 11th level.
- 12** The PCs should reach 12th level by the start of Chapter 2.
- 13** The PCs should reach 13th level by the start of Chapter 3.

The PCs should reach 14th level by the time they complete the adventure.





## Chapter 1: For the Rootweft!

It's time to take the offensive! In the previous adventure, the PCs undertook several daring missions to fight back against the Wildwood Lodge, thwarting its leader Ruzadoya's violent initiatives. Having gathered its forces and drawn on significant primal power, the Wildwood was ready for war. With the help of their allies in the fledgling Rootweft Lodge, the PCs identified and neutralized several of the Wildwood Lodge's advantages, culminating in the disruption of their rivals' connection to the Plane of Wood. The results of the PCs' ritual proved disastrous for the Wildwood Lodge forces, many of whom relied on their borrowed elemental powers in battle. A few still retain their elemental strength, but the Wildwood Lodge's power is vastly diminished.

However, the Wildwood Lodge's leader, **Ruzadoya Swiftmane** (female centaur graveknight), developed a contingency plan. On the Isle of Arenway, she had experimented heavily with splinters from Idyllis the Shaped One, a mysterious tree originating from the Plane of Wood. In doing so, she inflicted considerable damage to the tree, at first unknowingly, then intentionally, as she realized that the power she needed would require greater and greater sacrifices. Infused with power from the return of the Plane of Wood, Idyllis repaired much of this damage with swift symmetrical regrowth. As Ruzadoya accelerated her experiments, inspired and reassured by the otherworldly whispers of **Zibik** (male green man of decay and fresh starts), Idyllis accelerated its regrowth





to compensate. Eventually, the damage was too great, and a small imperfection arose. Barely perceptible, this tiny growth on one of Idyllis's otherwise perfect roots evaded Ruzadoya's notice until it had swollen to the size of a small melon. She excised the growth, tearing it from the tree in panic. To her relief, Idyllis repaired the damage to its roots, and to her surprise, the imperfect lump survived, somehow molding over with fleshy fungus to continue its rapid growth. Eventually, it became an intricate latticework sphere of fractal, fleshlike wood—a fungal imitation of the other latticework spheres forming a ley line in the Verduran Forest with Idyllis at its center.

Ruzadoya continued her experiments. Idyllis sprouted no more imperfections, but its regrowth slowed as Ruzadoya hewed away more and more pieces for her ritual foci. Meanwhile, she carefully observed the fungal lattice, which cycled through grisly phases of rot and regrowth, growing larger and pulsing with brighter and brighter green light each time it “died” and regenerated. She didn't know about the other six latticework spheres until the PCs conducted their ritual to draw Idyllis's power through the ley lines and into the spheres. By then, it was far too late for her to do anything about the “true” spheres. In her rage, Ruzadoya nearly destroyed the ugly fungal mockery, cursing Zibik's name while she watched Idyllis wither and die before her very eyes. That's when the fungal lattice touched her mind, and though she reeled in shock and psychic pain, she saw her path with great clarity.

The fungal lattice somehow retained a limited connection to the Plane of Wood, which she could use to travel there. She commanded the remaining Wildwood Lodge forces to defend the Isle of Arenway at all costs and hold out for reinforcements from the surrounding forest. Then she gathered her most loyal followers—and a few unwilling allies—to her side. She traveled with them to the Plane of Wood in search of Zibik. She would confront the demigod, plead her case, and return with him to Golarion to lay waste to her enemies.

### GETTING STARTED

“Shepherd of Decay” begins about 2 weeks after the PCs left the Gloaming Arbor, having performed a ritual to sever the Wildwood Lodge's connection to the Plane of Wood. **Emorga All-Seer** (female awakened immense tortoise wizard) sends a messenger sparrow to recall the PCs to Tern Hill, the headquarters of the Rootweft Lodge. From there, Emorga and the other leaders of the lodge-in-exile are planning their first major assault against the Isle of Arenway to overthrow Ruzadoya's regime. The overall mood in Tern Hill is one of

### CHAPTER 1 SYNOPSIS

In this chapter, the PCs invade the Isle of Arenway to oust the violent Wildwood Lodge. To establish a beachhead, they must first capture a small fortress at the isle's southern tip. Afterward, the PCs' Rootweft Lodge allies can cut off the Wildwood reinforcements and restore order. Though the Wildwood Lodge is weakened by the PCs' efforts, the Isle of Arenway yet contains numerous threats and potential allies. The PCs battle Wildwood Lodge forces, negotiate with local leshies, and investigate the isle's mysteries. With the rest of the isle secured, the PCs lead the charge on the Wildwood Lodge headquarters, a structure interwoven among giant trees. They battle some of Ruzadoya's most devoted followers and break the graveknight's grip over the Wildwood Lodge, only to discover that she has absconded to the Plane of Wood. Unfortunately, it's clear she plans to return—and bring destruction in her wake.



celebratory relief, but tension thrums throughout the settlement. The rebels are aware of the PCs' recent successes in the war against the Wildwood Lodge—see the previous volume in this Adventure Path, “Severed at the Root”—but they're also preparing for battles yet to come. Victory remains uncertain.

The adventure begins with a small gathering at Tern Hill's Council Hearth. Emorga All-Seer is present, along with **Grendabor** (male arboreal adjudicator), **Livi Leapingheart** (female awakened rabbit spy), and the PCs. Many other notable NPCs are absent, as they're busy helping the Rootweft Lodge prepare for battle. To set the scene and begin this adventure, read or paraphrase the following.

“Welcome back,” says Grendabor. “I trust that you've had some much-needed rest, as you'll need all your strength for what comes next.”

Emorga nods in agreement. “We've dispatched messages to Ruzadoya Swiftmane, demanding the Wildwood Lodge's surrender. All in vain, for we've had no response. Many Wildwood warriors we've encountered have surrendered in the past week, but Ruzadoya's grip on the lodge remains strong. Many still believe they can win the war, even with their elemental powers diminished. Others likely fear her

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wrath more than they fear the Rootweft. So, we must continue to fight."

Grendabor gestures to Livi Leapingheart, who perks up as attention turns toward her. He says, "Thanks to our scouts—and spies—we know most Wildwood forces have retreated to the Isle of Arenway. Our forces have joined with those of Andoran and Taldor to methodically search the rest of the Verduran Forest for stragglers, but the isle presents a problem. Livi, what have you discovered?"

"Right," Livi says. "Well, even before the war, Wildwood druids forbade access to the Isle of Arenway. My family passed down all kinds of stories about foolish pranksters who tried to sneak onto the isle, only to be swept away by a suddenly raging river or trampled by troops of tantrum-throwing trees. You might think, 'we should fly in, there has to be some way to get between all those tangled branches,' but you'd be blown away—quite literally—by what happens next. The whole place is like... an impenetrable force of nature. A nature fortress of nature forces!"

Emorga coughs to encourage the rabbit to stay on topic. Livi meets Emorga's gaze, pauses, and then resumes her report with renewed focus.

"Anyway, my point is, it's hard to get in. For an army, it'd be impossible. But we can make it happen!"

"There's a cave network at the island's southern tip called Faunwen's Threshold. The Wildwood druids used to allow some Taldan soldiers to use it as their headquarters in patrolling the rivers. The soldiers weren't allowed inland beyond the fortress, but they could control and monitor who came and went through the caves. If we capture Faunwen's Threshold, we could do the same!"

Grendabor raises a clenched branch. "While I gather our forces, I task you with capturing the fortress. There we can establish a beachhead, and from there, we bring the war to the Wildwood Lodge!"

After thanking the PCs for their efforts and wishing them good luck, Grendabor adjourns the meeting and departs to assist with breaking camp. Emorga asks Livi and the PCs to remain so they can review the task ahead. The two respond to the PCs' questions, making sure to address the following points before the PCs depart.

**Reaching the Isle:** The PCs will need to travel west through the Verduran Forest, or by water along the

Verduran Fork, to reach the isle. Their trip's duration depends heavily on their means of travel, from a few days on foot to a few hours in flight. Emorga states, "It will take several days for the bulk of our forces to reach the isle. There is much preparation to be done, and we are spread throughout the forest."

**Entering the Fortress:** The only entrance to Faunwen's Threshold is through a submerged tunnel at the island's southern tip, similar to a beaver lodge's entryway. Livi tells the PCs that they can't miss the caves, as an improbably massive spruce tree stands over the entrance, its roots forming the roof and walls of the tunnel leading within. "Water fills the tunnel, yet there's some way of draining and drying the passageway for use. It's possible you could approach from some other direction—there must

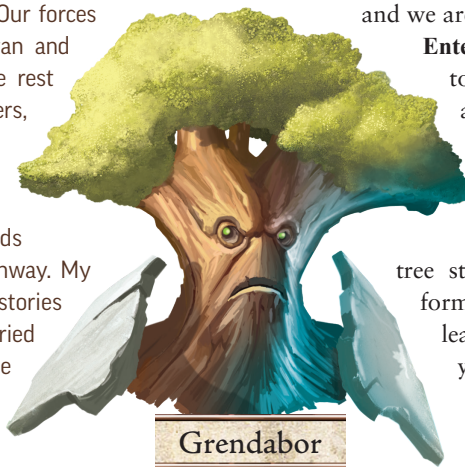
be another entrance to the caves in the isle's interior—but the cliffs are steep, and the woods are thick. Besides, we need that passage so we can control Faunwen's Threshold. One way or another, you'll need to go down there and clear out any Wildwood forces and other dangers."

**Taldan River Guard:** When Ruzadoya took over the lodge, her forces also took over the fortress. Despite Livi's best efforts, she doesn't know what became of the Taldan River Guard soldiers after the war began.

**Update on the Wildwood Lodge:** Emorga explains, "You dealt a severe blow by drawing the Wildwood's primal power through the latticework spheres. The sudden loss of this elemental energy disoriented many of the Wildwood forces we've encountered since. I imagine the situation on the isle is much the same, but we shouldn't underestimate them. We have no idea what other powers Ruzadoya and her lieutenants can access, and any remaining forces you encounter are sure to be among the Wildwood's most loyal."

If the PCs ask about the spheres or the possibility that Ruzadoya could counteract the ritual somehow, Emorga reassures them that the spheres are under heavy guard.

**Rest and Retreat:** Emorga reminds the PCs that while Tern Hill remains the Rootweft's primary stronghold, most of their forces are preparing to travel. The PCs can return to Tern Hill in an emergency, yet she urges them to capture Faunwen's Threshold with as few detours and delays as possible. Otherwise, the Wildwood is sure to reinforce the site. "Don't worry—once it's captured, we'll all have a chance to regroup at the fortress and plan our next steps."







**Treasure:** By this point in their careers, the PCs should have some means of swimming or otherwise traversing (or bypassing) the watery passage leading from the river into Faunwen's Threshold. Livi offers them each a *potion of water breathing* if they need it. If not, she praises them for being well-prepared and gives each PC who doesn't need it a *moderate healing potion* instead.

### Nature or Society (Recall Knowledge)

Each PC can attempt a DC 28 Nature check or DC 30 Society check (or a DC 26 check with a relevant Lore skill) to determine what they know about the Isle of Arenway. At your discretion, some of the PCs (such as those who have already spent time on the Isle of Arenway) might know this information automatically or gain a small circumstance bonus to their check. Emorga focused more on lodge business and less on the island itself; her knowledge is equivalent to a successful Recall Knowledge check.

**Critical Success** As success, plus the following: first, the isle's leshies are quite insular, lacking in the social skills and languages commonly associated with other leshies. Most people find these leshies awkward and somewhat off-putting, especially given their habit of stealing small "trophies" from visitors.

The reason fey avoid the Isle of Arenway is a matter of contention among druids, and it's taboo to discuss it openly. Most believe that something ancient and primordial within the isle—or perhaps the isle itself—is so unsettling that fey physically can't bear to visit the place for too long. Others speak in hushed whispers of unnamed gods and ancient calamities.

**Success** As failure, plus the following: the isle has a substantial "spontaneous" leshy population—leshies used independent from druids who sprout into being of their own accord, or possibly at the whims of some other natural force. In addition, fey avoid the Isle of Arenway for an unknown reason.

**Failure** For druids, especially those of the Wildwood Lodge, the Isle of Arenway is among the most sacred places on Golarion. Ancient and primal, it contains secrets, nature spirits, and strange plants and animals that can't be found anywhere else in the world. The isle is located at the confluence of three rivers. The rushing waters, steep banks, and thick tree cover make it difficult to approach the island.

**Critical Failure** The isle's leshies view visitors with scorn. Only by displaying some mastery over the environment can a visitor earn grudging respect—effectively taming these leshies' prey response by telling them, "The plants might kill me, but I am strong enough to kill the plants, so we can live in peace." This display has led to a macabre ritual of bringing several large pieces of produce to the island to smash where leshies can witness it.

## Faunwen's Threshold

The fortress-like cave system known as Faunwen's Threshold has long guarded the island against would-be intruders. It was formerly the headquarters of a contingent of Taldan River Guard forces tasked with patrolling the Verduran Forest. These soldiers helped enforce the island's isolation. They were permitted to come and go only by water and were forbidden from setting foot on the isle beyond the walls of the fortress.

Faunwen's Threshold consists of two distinct areas: the cave system that forms a "bunker" beneath the isle's southern tip and a small walled encampment in the woods north of the caves. The caves serve as the entrance to the fortress—and the rest of the isle—from the river. Most visitors were only allowed to load and unload cargo within the caves, but never to pass through the caves and onto the isle itself. Using controls built into the fortress by Wildwood druids, the Taldan River Guard could manipulate the roots of the ancient tree growing above the bunker, quickly sealing passages and adjusting water levels like living moats and portcullises.

However, when Ruzadoya took over as the leader of the Wildwood Lodge, she ordered a surprise attack to oust the River Guard. Wildwood forces easily overtook the walled camp after entering under false pretenses, and when some of the River Guard holed up in the caves, Wildwood druids used vicious animals and the caves' defensive measures to eliminate the 35 soldiers stationed here. Now, several Wildwood druids and sentries remain in the area to protect it from intruders.


As Livi described to the PCs before they set out, a massive spruce tree in a cleft of the isle's cliffs marks the entrance to Faunwen's Threshold. There's no bridge or land leading to the cleft, and the ceiling of the 20-foot-wide watery passage is only a foot above the water, so the PCs most likely must approach by swimming underwater.

The following locations correspond to the map on the inside back cover. Unless noted otherwise in the text, these locations share the following features.

**Ceilings:** The roots of a massive spruce tree form much of the roof of the caves, which are typically 15–20 feet high in larger caves but only 7–12 feet high in the narrow tunnels. Some passages, such as the submerged entrance tunnel, have much lower ceilings that are only a few inches above the water, as noted in their area descriptions.

**Surfaces:** The floors are natural stone that has been roughly shaped by magic. The walls are a mix of hard earth and dense, slippery roots, requiring characters to succeed at a DC 26 Athletics check to Climb.





**Water:** The water is about 20 feet deep unless otherwise noted. Despite the swift and steady river outside, the waters in the caves are still, which is largely thanks to the complex magical workings of the root system that forms the caverns.

**Root System:** The roots of the massive tree above Faunwen's Threshold extend down through the walls and into the waterways, where they can form locks, sluices, and barriers at the command of whoever controls them from area A6. The roots can dramatically reshape the passages and control the flow of water through the caves. The primary uses of these "root locks" include the opening and closing of the (currently underwater) passage leading from area A1 to area A4. While that passage is completely submerged and hidden from view when the PCs first arrive, someone controlling the roots can reshape and drain the passage in a matter of minutes to form a direct path for loading and unloading passengers and cargo from the river. This path, and any other area of the caves, can contain shallow water to allow small boats and rafts to pass, or it can be drained completely to allow traversal on foot. Currently, there are root barriers in the waterways in areas A1 and A2, as well as the tunnel leading north from area A4, but someone controlling the roots can erect similar barriers anywhere in the caves. Currently, no one has access to the shrine that allows control of the roots due to the presence of the undead in area A6.

**Root Locks:** A single 5-foot-by-5-foot square of a root lock has Hardness 10, HP 40, and BT 20 and can be Forced Open by a character who succeeds at a DC 28 Athletics check. The root locks typically extend from floor to ceiling and provide greater cover to creatures on the other side. Tiny or smaller creatures can move through small gaps in the root locks but treat them as difficult terrain.

**Light and Visibility:** No sunlight penetrates the thick roots and earth that form the ceiling, and the caves are in darkness unless otherwise noted. The River Guard used lanterns or magical light (gifts from the Wildwood druids) when they were on cave duty. The water is typically clear and clean thanks to regular use of the root locks, but as the caves haven't been used in many days, it's quite murky. Underwater visibility is limited to 10 feet even in fully illuminated rooms.

## A1. SOUTH ENTRANCE

## LOW 11

The PCs likely approach this area through the underground passage leading from the river to the south. The passage has a low ceiling—barely a foot above the water—and the PCs likely enter by swimming underwater.

The low, watery passage widens to thirty feet before finally opening onto a higher-ceilinged chamber. The water stands eerily still despite the rushing river to the south. A ledge of shaped stone rises a foot above the liquid surface to the northwest, emanating green torchlight that reflects off the still waters and casts the chamber in a soft glow.

The torchlight comes from an enchanted torch that burns without heat or fuel in area A2. The water here is 20 feet deep.

**Secret Passage:** The water drops sharply to a depth of about 40 feet deep along the center of the north wall, as indicated on the map. Though the murky water makes it difficult to spot this deeper area, a PC who Searches the water while swimming deep enough automatically discovers it. A 20-foot-high tunnel at the bottom of the cave allows creatures to swim under the wall between areas A1 and A4.

A PC who explores the secret passage and succeeds at a DC 23 Engineering or Nature check notices that the walls, floor, and ceiling of the passage are made entirely of roots, rather than roots interwoven among earth like the surrounding cave surfaces. This difference is due to the passage's true purpose, which the PCs might discover if they explore the shrine in area A6—the roots can form a larger tunnel that can be opened, closed, drained, or filled by someone controlling the roots from the shrine.

**East Root Lock:** A patch of thick interwoven roots covers a portion of the east wall from floor to ceiling. These roots are part of the root lock system controlled by the "root speaker" (page 11). The River Guard would open this lock to allow single small boats or rafts through the tunnel to unload passengers and cargo.

**Creatures:** When the Wildwood druids attacked the River Guard stationed here, they commanded a float of three deinosuchuses—primal relatives of crocodiles—to ambush anyone trying to flee the caves. The creatures ate quite well that day, and with a plentiful supply of corpses to scavenge throughout the caves, they haven't bothered to leave. When the PCs arrive, one is resting in the water to the southwest, and two are in the deep waters of the secret tunnel to the north.

The deinosuchuses attack anyone who tries to pass through the area, preferring to ambush isolated targets, such as the first PC who climbs onto the ledge to the northwest. They use Stealth for initiative unless the PCs take special care to enter the caves without disturbing the water. The deinosuchuses pursue foes throughout the caves, using the secret passage to area A4 if necessary, though they don't pursue anyone who leaves the caves. A deinosuchus reduced to fewer than 40 Hit Points flees south to the river.





## DEINOSUCHUSES (3)

## CREATURE 9

Pathfinder Monster Core 69

**Initiative** Perception +17 or Stealth +20

## A2. WEST WATCHPOST

## TRIVIAL 11

This ledge served as a River Guard watchpost. The guards stationed here monitored those coming and going via the river and reported to the root speaker in area A6 so they could open (or block) the appropriate passages.

A torch of green flames is mounted to a stone post at the southeast edge of this alcove. Broken bones, shredded leather, and battered weapons from multiple individuals lay strewn across the floor. A wall of roots blocks passage through a tunnel leading northeast.

**Remains:** A PC Searching the area who succeeds at a DC 23 Medicine check determines that at least a dozen humans died here, likely ripped apart by vicious animals. A PC who succeeds at a DC 23 Warfare Lore check determines that these are the remains of Taldan soldiers.

These soldiers didn't stand much of a chance against the Wildwood ambush. The druids laid a trap, polymorphing the soldiers into harmless animals so they'd be helpless against the hungry deinosuchuses.

**Root Lock:** The roots in the northeast wall are part of the root lock system (page 11). The River Guard used this lock to come and go from the watchpost.

**Hazards:** A single Wildsong glyph remains from the trap the druids laid for the Taldan soldiers. It's etched into the west wall of the cave about 10 feet north of the water's edge. The glyph doesn't affect the deinosuchuses in area A1. If the *cursed metamorphosis* spell succeeds, it transforms its target into a delicious goat.

## POLYMORPH TRAP

## HAZARD 12

Pathfinder GM Core 103

**Stealth** DC 34 (trained)

**Treasure:** The Taldan soldiers' gear is damaged and worthless. The enchanted torch is fueled by ambient primal magic and extinguishes once removed from the Isle of Arenway.

## A3. EAST CAVE

The northernmost ledge in this cave was used for loading and unloading cargo from small boats.

Two stone ledges flank the deep water in this cavern, one to the north and one to the south. The southern ledge is filthy with blood and discarded bandages. A bridge of thick

roots leads from the northern ledge across another pool of water to a much larger domed cavern.

A PC who inspects the bandages and succeeds at a DC 21 Medicine check notices that bits of rotten flesh are stuck to them—and the flesh has strange, wet root filaments growing out of it, possibly the result of someone being exposed to an unnatural plant. On a critical success, the PC realizes the flesh is corrupted like that of an undead. These discarded bandages came from a Wildwood druid who was exposed to the undead in area A6; not understanding how the creatures created new spawn, his companions tossed their paralyzed friend in the water in the hopes he wouldn't turn.

**Hazards:** The root bridge is quite slippery, and creatures walking on it must attempt DC 20 Acrobatics checks to Balance.

**Treasure:** The PCs find a pouch containing 10 garnets worth 20 gp each.

## A4. CENTRAL CAVERN

## MODERATE 11

This cavern could be used as the fortress's main thoroughfare. The River Guards managed it by opening the root locks, draining the underwater passage to the south, and creating a "ramp" of roots leading up to the central platform. Currently, no such measures are in place, meaning the PCs most likely approach this area via the underwater passage or by destroying one or more of the root locks in areas A1 and A2.

Pools of murky water surround much of the raised ledge at the center of this domed cavern. Walls of roots block passages to the west and north of the ledge, while other stone ledges lie across pools to the east and northwest. A bridge of roots stretches to a ledge to the southeast.

**Light:** During the day, small gaps through the roots in the ceiling allow daylight through, casting the area in dim light.

**Creatures:** The remaining members of the Wildwood strike team responsible for capturing Faunwen's Threshold have set up camp here. These druids might not pose much of a threat individually, but they've learned to coordinate their primal magic to assail their foes. A pair of Wildwood sentries support this group of druids as scouts and hunters.

If the rancorous druids are reduced to 40 Hit Points or fewer, they use Collective Swarm to become a swarm of Tiny water spiders and attempt to flee through area A7. In this form, they're small enough to fit through the natural gaps in the root locks. A Wildwood sentry reduced to 40 Hit Points or fewer surrenders to the PCs.

## Shepherd of Decay

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If any Wildwood forces successfully flee, consider adding them to another encounter during the Siege of Arenway (page 12) so that the PCs have another chance to defeat them.

## RANCOROUS DRUIDS

## CREATURE 11

Variant rancorous priesthood (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 213)

**Languages** Common, Fey, Wildsong

**Skills** Athletics +22, Intimidation +21, Nature +22

**Primal Spontaneous Spells** DC 27, attack +19; **6th** (2 slots) *acid grip*, *slow*; **5th** (3 slots) *fireball*, *hydraulic torrent*, *wall of thorns*; **Cantrips (6th)** *frostbite*, *detect magic*, *light*

**Collective Swarm** ➤➤ The rancorous druids collectively transform into a swarm of Tiny insects. They cast *swarm form* (*Pathfinder Gods & Magic* 118) heightened to 6th rank, but the duration is 1 hour instead of 5 minutes.



Rancorous Druid

## WILDWOOD SENTRIES (2)

## CREATURE 9

UNCOMMON MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

**Perception** +20

**Languages** Common, Fey

**Skills** Forest Lore +16, Medicine +18, Nature +20, Stealth +20, Survival +20

**Str** +4, **Dex** +4, **Con** +2, **Int** +1, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +0

**Forager** While using Survival to Subsist, if the sentry rolls a failure or a critical failure, they get a success instead. If the sentry rolls a success, they can provide food for 16 additional creatures that eat about as much as a human, or 32 creatures on a critical success.

**Forest Walker** The sentry ignores the effects of difficult terrain from a forest environment. They can Sneak through underbrush without the need to attempt a Stealth check as long as the sentry moves no more than 5 feet at a time and isn't within 10 feet of an enemy at any point during their movement.

**Items** +1 *composite longbow* (20 arrows), battle axe, dagger, leather armor

**AC** 28; **Fort** +18, **Ref** +20, **Will** +18

**HP** 155

**Sentry's Warning** ➤ **Trigger** The sentry is about to roll Perception or Survival to determine their initiative; **Effect** The sentry visually or audibly warns allies, granting them a +1 circumstance bonus to their initiative rolls. Depending on how the sentry warns allies, this action has the auditory or visual trait.

**Speed** 25 feet

**Melee** ➤ dagger +21 (agile, finesse, versatile S), **Damage** 1d4+12 piercing

**Melee** ➤ battle axe +21 (sweep), **Damage** 1d8+12 slashing

**Ranged** ➤ *composite longbow* +22 (deadly 1d10, magical, propulsive, range increment 100 feet, reload 0, volley 30 feet), **Damage** 1d8+11 piercing

**Primal Innate Spells** DC 25, attack +17; **3rd** *cleanse affliction*, *earthbind*; **2nd** *revealing light*, *speak with animals* (at will); **Cantrips (3rd)** *know the way*, *sigil*

**Hunt Prey** ➤ (concentrate) The sentry designates a single creature they can see and hear, or one they're Tracking, as their prey. The sentry gains a +2 circumstance bonus to Perception checks to Seek the prey and to Survival checks to Track the prey. The first time the sentry hits the designated prey in a round, they deal an additional 1d8 precision damage. The sentry also ignores the penalty for making ranged attacks within their second range increment against the prey they're hunting. These effects last until the sentry uses Hunt Prey again.

**Protector of Arenway** The sentry can only cast its primal innate spells while on the Isle of Arenway.





**Development:** If the PCs capture any of the Wildwood forces, they can try to Make an Impression or Coerce their captives to learn some information. In defeat, the captives are unfriendly toward the PCs rather than actively hostile. If the PCs improve a captive's attitude to indifferent, they only learn the first piece of the following information. If they improve a captive's attitude to friendly or better, or successfully Coerce the captive, they learn all of the information.

- Ruzadoya Swiftmane ordered a surprise attack on Faunwen's Threshold shortly after taking control of the Wildwood Lodge. The Taldan River Guard believed the Wildwood forces were conducting a standard inspection of the caves, and they didn't put up much of a fight. The Wildwood forces remained in the caves so they could defend against future attacks.
- The roots throughout Faunwen's Threshold can be controlled by anyone who learns and speaks the true name of the spruce tree above the caves. There's a shrine to the northwest that contains fragments of the tree's true name.
- The intent was to take some of the River Guard captive, but everything went wrong when the Wildwood troops' commander, Vendren, tried to wrest control of the roots from Captain Taidun of the River Guard. The two dueled over the tree's true name, and the roots lashed out, killing several soldiers on each side of the conflict. Eventually, Vendren won control, but something went wrong, and the roots completely smothered the River Guard's barracks rather than entangling the troops.
- The Wildwood troops stuck around not only out of a sense of duty, but because they were no longer in control of the cave's roots or the deinosuchuses to the south and lacked confidence in their ability to safely escape. The deinosuchuses were Vendren's pets. The Wildwood troops have been feeding them corpses of those who fell in battle to keep them at bay, but they ran out yesterday. They've been waiting for Wildwood reinforcements, but none have arrived.

### A5. ARMORY

Weapon and armor racks line the walls of this small alcove.

The River Guard kept equipment here that was suitable for defending the watery caves.

**Treasure:** If the PCs take time to gather the remaining equipment, they find a variety of mundane light armor, simple weapons, and nets, plus 500 gp

worth of dawnsilver in a small lockbox indicating it was recently shipped here as a gift from one of the River Guard's wealthy aunts in Oppara.

### A6. ROOT SHRINE

LOW 11

Thin, scraggly roots line the walls and low ceiling of this cave. Several dozen small stones, each etched with a single glyph, lie scattered on the floor.

The roots resemble cobwebs and writhe ever so slightly in the presence of living creatures or light. Like the other roots in the caves, they belong to the ancient spruce above. Though eerie in appearance, the roots are usually harmless and only do what their "root speaker" wills them to do. Most recently, the struggle between Vendren and Taidun to control the roots caused them to devastate the barracks to the east (area A7) along with everyone inside.


**Root Speakers:** The stones contain small fragments of the spruce's true name. A PC who spends an hour examining the stones can attempt a DC 30 Arcana, Nature, or Occultism check. The PC gains a cumulative +1 circumstance bonus (up to +3) for each of the following languages they know: Arboreal, Fey, and Wildsong. On a success, the PC learns the true name of the giant spruce above the cave. With this knowledge, they can spend an additional hour speaking the tree's true name to form a permanent bond with the tree, becoming its "root speaker," or they can spend an hour to teach the name to another creature. The tree only recognizes one root speaker at any given time, and any new root speaker replaces the previous one.

The root speaker innately understands how to control the roots throughout the caves. If they're in the shrine, they can spend 1 minute to create any of the following effects. This is an exploration activity that has the concentrate trait.

- Raise or lower the water level between any two root locks or within an otherwise enclosed cave.
- Manipulate root locks and sluices to increase or decrease the flow of water from the river into the caves, up to the river's usual strength and to a minimum of no water at all.
- Create a root lock (page 8) up to 30 feet wide and 10 feet thick, or cause an existing root lock to recede into the walls.
- Create a bridge or ramp of roots, up to 20 feet wide and 80 feet long, between any two surfaces in the caves.

Additional effects might be possible, at your discretion, though they might require a Nature check.





Causing the roots to take overtly hostile actions, or trying to control the roots while someone else is attempting to learn the spruce's true name, might result in destructive events similar to those that destroyed the barracks and caused the deaths of multiple Wildwood and River Guard warriors.

**Creatures:** When Vendren and Captain Taidun fought to control the roots in Faunwen's Threshold, their struggle led to the destruction of the barracks and their own deaths as the roots lashed out and killed anyone in the vicinity. They, along with two other soldiers, clung to life—or rather, undeath—following their grisly demise. Their skeletal bodies linger in the area with tangled, slimy roots bulging from their abdomens and mouths. They attack other creatures on sight and fight until destroyed.

### ROOTRIDDEN (4)

### CREATURE 8

UNCOMMON MEDIUM UNDEAD UNHOLY

**Perception** +16; darkvision

**Languages** Common, Necril, Wildsong

**Skills** Acrobatics +16, Athletics +18, Intimidation +17, Nature +16, Stealth +18

**Str** +6, **Dex** +4, **Con** +4, **Int** +1, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +3

**Rooted** A rootridden is bonded to a specific root network. If it's more than 300 feet from this network for at least 1 minute, it becomes sickened 2 until it's again within 300 feet of the root network for at least 1 minute.

**Walk the Roots** The rootridden ignores the effects of difficult terrain caused by plants and fungi.

**AC** 26; **Fort** +18, **Ref** +16, **Will** +14

**HP** 120, void healing; **Immunities** bleed, death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious

**Root Spawn** (primal, unholy) A living creature slain by a rootridden that had a lower level than the rootridden rises as a new rootridden after 1d10 rounds, on its turn. This new rootridden is under the command of the rootridden that created it. If the creator is destroyed, any rootridden it created in the past 24 hours are destroyed as well, immediately collapsing into inert plant matter.

**Speed** 25 feet

**Melee** ♦ jaws +20, **Damage** 2d12+8 piercing

**Melee** ♦ tendril +20 (reach 10 feet), **Damage** 2d8+8 bludgeoning plus root rot poison

**Ranged** ♦ spit +20 (deadly 1d10, range increment 30 feet), **Damage** 4d8 void

**Root Rot Poison** (poison); **Saving Throw** DC 26 Fortitude; **Maximum Duration** 8 rounds; **Stage 1** 3d6 poison damage and off-guard (1 round); **Stage 2** 3d6 poison damage and slowed 1 (1 round); **Stage 3** 4d6 poison damage and slowed 2 (1 round); **Stage 4** 4d6 poison damage and paralyzed (1 round)

**Treasure:** One of the undead, while still living, was in the process of affixing a rune to their dagger; the PCs find a *greater striking rune* if they Search the corpses.

### A7. STRANGLED BARRACKS

What once served as a formidable barracks for the River Guard currently on duty in Faunwen's Threshold is now nothing but rubble and roots.

Dense roots choke the entire cave, from wall to wall and floor to ceiling. Chunks of stone and broken weapons protrude from the roots. Pools of dried blood stain the cave floor and coat much of the tangled mess of roots and rubble.

A PC or another creature can clear the roots in 1 minute if they are the root speaker and have access to the shrine in area A6, but the rubble must be removed by other means. It takes about 8 hours of work for a small group of laborers to clear the rubble by hand, or a few days if they need to also cut through the roots.

### ALL CLEAR

The PCs don't need to learn how to become the root speaker or clear the passage in area A7 themselves; they can get help from their allies in the Rootweft once they've eliminated the threats in the caves. Once they report back to Emorga, the PCs can continue with the Siege of Arenway!

### Siege of Arenway

Once the PCs secure Faunwen's Threshold and report to the Rootweft Lodge, their allies begin setting up camp in the fortress. Beyond the tangled, ruined barracks, a wide passage extends northeast for about 100 feet, then opens onto a small woodland grove with a shallow lake. A 15-foot-high wall of magically shaped stone surrounds the lake, leaving 30 to 40 feet around the lake's edges to allow room for numerous small buildings. These structures, including dwellings, workshops, a kitchen, a mess hall, animal pens, and several small shrines, are of Taldan origin and design—and all of them are abandoned.

The Rootweft's leaders immediately begin the work of cleaning up the abandoned fortress and sending scouts and warriors into the surrounding forest to establish perimeter. The fortress quickly fills with troops and supplies.

Emorga meets with the PCs after they've rested. At this point, the PCs are among the most capable members of the Rootweft, and she tells them that it will soon be their responsibility to attack the Wildwood Lodge headquarters directly. However, it isn't quite time.



Thanks to multiple reports and Emorga's magic, she knows that the Wildwood headquarters are heavily guarded. Her divinations can't pierce the magic veil that keeps the lodge secluded from prying eyes, so she isn't sure who or what defends the lodge, but the surrounding area still teems with Wildwood forces. "There is much work to be done before we can safely strike the lodge itself, and I'd like you to help get it done." Emorga asks the PCs to talk to their Rootweft allies and see how they can help the siege efforts.

The main opportunities to help with the siege are described below. You can present these opportunities all at once or one at a time, and in any order. The Camp Activities take place at Faunwen's Threshold, and the other encounters each occur within a 2-hour walk from camp. Many of these encounters present serious threats, but the PCs can take them on at their own pace and rest between encounters if needed. By the time the PCs have spent a few days on these tasks (and earned Siege Points as described on page 14), they should be ready to take on the Wildwood Lodge headquarters.

**Camp Activities:** The PCs can undertake various efforts in camp to support the siege effort during their downtime. See page 15.

**Caustic Caves:** The PCs receive a mission from **Alacreon the Laughing Prince** (male satyr prince), who delivers his request over a fine meal in a circle of ancient standing stones near the fortress. During the meal, the PCs notice that Alacreon and his usually rambunctious companions are more subdued than usual. If they haven't already learned about the tendency of fey to avoid the Isle of Arenway, Alacreon explains this phenomenon in a theatrically grave tone, then makes his request: he wants the PCs to visit an ancient fey shrine that's rumored to exist in a cave to the northeast. He believes the shrine might contain some clues as to the nature of the relationship between fey and the Isle of Arenway—or whatever terrible thing it is that makes them feel so repelled from this place. Unfortunately, the Rootweft's scouts discovered that the caves are filled with poisonous gas. If the PCs investigate, Alacreon might be able to convince more fey to join the Rootweft's cause. He warns the PCs that Rootweft scouts spotted a cairn of bleached skulls near the caves—a sure sign that Ruzadoya's notorious bugbear allies, the Bonebleachers, have been in the area recently. While these bugbears were once a menace to the isle's residents, Ruzadoya recruited them as her personal "fixers" shortly after becoming a graveknight. See page 15.

**Hunt the Hunter:** The scout **Jaerdan** (nonbinary human ranger) approaches the PCs in a desperate state. They explain that Livi Leapingheart hasn't returned from a scouting mission to the north—dangerously near several enemy camps—and worse yet, several other scouts' mutilated bodies have been found in the same area. They've heard reports about a vicious, fanged giant who joined the Wildwood Lodge as an excuse to murder humanoids, and it seems Livi might have been the latest victim of these attacks. A PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Society check identifies the giant as a marsh giant. See page 19.

**Rootmoot:** Grendabor asks the PCs to solicit the aid of the local leshy population. He's heard that **Trunk Like Thunder** (agender redwood leshy elder) has called



Rootridden





a “Rootmoot,” a gathering of the local leshies to make important decisions, and he wants the PCs to attend. He warns the PCs that some of the local leshies probably want to defend the Isle of Arenway from outside forces and might be looking for a fight. “Hopefully you can convince them they’re better off on our side!”

### Siege Points

The Rootweft needs to break the Wildwood’s defenses before they can attack the lodge’s headquarters—if they attack now, the Wildwood Lodge could overwhelm them. The Rootweft’s efforts are represented by the number of Siege Points the PCs have accrued. The PCs have multiple ways to gain more Siege Points, as described in the activities and encounters on the following pages. In addition to reducing the defenses of the Wildwood Lodge (see Additional Foes on page 24), earning Siege Points has the following effects.

**4+ Siege Points:** A Wildwood strike force ambushes the PCs while they’re on their way back to camp

after another mission (see **Event 1: Sentry Ambush** on page 22).

**8+ Siege Points:** A group of Rootweft rangers successfully infiltrated a Wildwood camp and freed several prisoners! Among these prisoners are several kovintus refugees from Breeleyhome; the PCs likely recall this settlement from the previous volume in this Adventure Path. The refugees reveal that several of their kin were taken deeper into the isle, perhaps all the way to Redwood Retreat, to be transformed into “monsters” to serve Ruzadoya Swiftmane.

**14+ Siege Points:** Based on the most recent scouting reports, the Wildwood forces are contained to the camps near Redwood Retreat! It’s time to bring the fight to the Wildwood headquarters (see **Event 2: Seizing the Camps** on page 23), though the Rootweft leaders encourage the PCs to finish up any tasks or encounters related to the siege effort, if they wish.

**16+ Siege Points:** The siege is a resounding success. When the PCs approach the Redwood Retreat





(proceeding to **Event 2: Seizing the Camps** on page 23), the rancorous druids in that encounter surrender unconditionally. They offer their vengeful menhir to the Rootweft as spoils of war, so the PCs earn the treasure from **Event 2: Seizing the Camps** without a fight.

### Camp Activities

**Siege Points:** The PCs can gain a maximum of 4 Siege Points using the following activity. To earn more Siege Points, they'll need to leave camp and successfully complete other encounters.

The PCs can use downtime between other encounters to help out in camp, such as by repairing structures, cooking meals, treating the wounded, or swaying captives to join the Rootweft's cause. **Breetzeetzeem** (male melixie<sup>LOAG</sup> cook), **Poshov** (male domovoi<sup>B3</sup> caretaker), and **Madge** (agender old gathlain<sup>B3</sup> healer) organize these efforts, and they're grateful for any assistance the PCs can provide. All three of them are extremely on-edge because of the Isle of Arenway's repulsive "mood." If pressed to explain, they only say that the isle gives them the collective creeps, as it does for all fey. If the PCs want to know more, they should talk to Alacreon. In the meantime, while the PCs help out in camp, you should play up their fey allies' unease, such as by having these fey characters startle easily or need to take frequent breaks to huddle in a dark corner or go on a walk.

### SUPPORT THE SIEGE EFFORT

#### DOWNTIME

You spend 4 hours performing tasks to aid in the siege of Arenway, such as repairing structures, preparing meals, persuading captives to join the Rootweft Lodge, treating injured Rootweft warriors, or scouting the area. Roll a skill check related to the task you perform—the GM determines the specific skill required and the DC, and you earn Siege Points based on the result of your check.

**Critical Success** You gain 2 Siege Points.

**Success** You gain 1 Siege Point.

**Critical Failure** You lose 1 Siege Point.

Initial checks to Support the Siege Effort should have a DC of 28; even basic tasks are relatively difficult to accomplish when the organizers find their environment inexplicably repulsive. Consider increasing the DC of subsequent checks of the same type by 2, representing the diminishing returns of repeated efforts. Also consider granting small bonuses or automatic successes for especially clever uses of resources or magic.

**Treasure:** If the PCs earn at least 2 Siege Points by Supporting the Siege Effort, Poshov gives them an

### FEY PCS

Fey find the Isle of Arenway entirely repulsive for reasons that they're unable to explain or understand. If any PCs are fey, you might play up their uneasiness by describing strange things that creep at the edge of their thoughts and senses. The adventure doesn't assume it has any mechanical effect, but you could ask them to attempt occasional Will saving throws against these unknown forces. Perhaps a PC becomes frightened for a short duration if they roll poorly, though you should avoid singling out fey PCs with unfair or debilitating mechanics.



*oil of repulsion* and an ivory game set worth 100 gp, musing that "we should play sometime!"

### CAUSTIC CAVES

**Siege Points:** The PCs earn 5 Siege Points if they completely eliminate the enemies and hazards in the caustic caves.

Long ago, a decadent fey court of the First World used an immense cavern beneath the Isle of Arenway as their "trash heap," discarding their twisted creations, unwanted fey exiles, and warped treasures with little thought for the damage they would cause on another plane of existence. Among the earliest tasks of the isle's first druids was to create shrines and enchanted standing stones to seal every known entrance to the caves. Despite the strength of the protective magic, any fey within a few miles of the Isle of Arenway can sense that there's something repulsive about the island. This feeling has developed into the long-standing taboo that most fey have against setting foot on the island.

For long ages, the caves remained a secret known only to a handful of druids tasked with protecting the seals. The druid **Tilismaine** (female human Wildwood druid exile) was among those responsible for studying and protecting these sites, including a mystic circle of standing stones within a small cave network a few miles northeast of Faunwen's Threshold. She was a member of the Wildwood Lodge until Ruzadoya took over—when the new leader demanded all Wildwood druids to abandon their former duties and assist with the war effort, Tilismaine refused. She believed her sacred duty was to protect the isle itself from ancient terrors, not to serve the whims of whoever happened

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to lead the Wildwood Lodge at the time, but she dared not reveal the truth of her mission to a commander she deemed unfit. Several days before departing for the Plane of Wood, Ruzadoya learned from another captive that Tilismaine had a unique understanding of portals between worlds (and the seals that keep them closed) that could be of use in her new mission. She dispatched the Bonebleachers—a loyal squad of merciless bugbears—to capture Tilismaine. They killed Tilismaine’s companions and dragged her back to Redwood Retreat.

The following locations correspond to the map on page 14. Unless noted otherwise in the text, these locations share the following general features.

**Caves:** The ceilings vary in height from 12 to 15 feet. The walls are rough, requiring characters to succeed at a DC 26 Athletics check to Climb, but the floors have become smoothed out by centuries of use.

**Light:** The caves are completely dark.

**Gas:** The caves are filled with acrid gas. Creatures in the gas have concealment, and the gas imposes a –2 penalty to Perception checks within 20 feet. It completely limits visibility beyond 20 feet. The gas is poisonous; creatures who breathe it must succeed at a DC 28 Fortitude save or become sickened 2. A creature sickened by the gas can’t reduce their sickened value by spending actions to recover while still breathing the gas.

The gas is also flammable. If the gas is exposed to flames, it explodes, dealing 6d6 fire damage to each creature and object in the caves. The flames dissipate the gas, but the poisoned water rapidly emits more, replacing the gas after about 4 hours.

The gas is heavy, so it has pooled in the caves but hasn’t started spilling out to the surface. If left unchecked, it’s likely to poison the surrounding ground and begin flowing into the nearby woods.

**Toxic Water:** The toxic water pools throughout the caves are 6 to 12 inches deep. They’re difficult terrain as well as hazardous terrain; once per round, when a creature moves through the water, it takes 2d6 acid damage (DC 28 basic Fortitude save).

## B1. Entrance

A pile of bleached humanoid and animal skulls sits just outside this woodland cave. A wide stone stairway choked with sickly green gas leads underground.

The steep stairs descend 10 feet from the surface to area B2. The Bonebleacher bugbears left the skulls as a sign—there’s nothing remarkable about them except that they’ve been bleached with acid.

## B2. Poisoned Cave

Low 11

A shallow pool of disgusting water lines this chamber’s north wall. The water trickles from deep cracks in the wall, slowly burning away at the stone. A passage leads to another cave to the northwest.

**Hazards:** Toxic water (see Caustic Caves features on this page) has seeped through the floors and walls from area B6 and pooled in this cave.

**Creatures:** Once the PCs approach, they’re sure to attract the attention of the wraiths lingering here. These creatures coalesced from an amalgamation of the druids and evil fey spirits who were exposed to the Bonebleachers’ toxic gas. The druids died quite horribly, either poisoned or cut down by bugbears, and when the gas began damaging the ancient ward in area B6, it mixed with the evil spirits contained below, creating these wraiths. The wraiths are a toxic green color with glowing green eyes and claws, and they have constantly shifting, strangely fey features like horns, hooves, and animal tails. They attack anyone who enters and fight until destroyed, though they ignore anything that emerges from beyond the broken ward (such as the isquuls in area B6).



Caustic Wraith

### CAUSTIC WRAITHS (3)

CREATURE 9

UNCOMMON MEDIUM INCORPOREAL UNDEAD UNHOLY WRAITH

**Perception** +18; darkvision, lifesense 60 feet (*Pathfinder Monster Core* 359)

**Languages** Common, Necril

**Skills** Acrobatics +19, Intimidation +21, Stealth +19





**Str** -5, **Dex** +6, **Con** +3, **Int** +3, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +6

**AC** 28; **Fort** +16, **Ref** +19, **Will** +21

**HP** 130, void healing; **Immunities** acid, death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, precision, unconscious; **Resistances** all 10 (except force, *ghost touch*, spirit, or vitality; double resistance vs. non-magical)

**Aggravating Aura** ➤ (acid, aura, mental) 10 feet. Acidic vapor surrounds the caustic wraith, making other creatures' bodies feel raw and especially sensitive to pain. A creature that begins in the area must succeed at a DC 28 Will save or gain weakness 3 to all damage for 1 round (weakness 5 on a critical failure).

**Speed** fly 40 feet

**Melee** ➤ caustic touch +21 (acid, finesse, reach 10 feet, void), **Damage** 2d8 void plus 1d8 acid plus drain life

**Dissolve From the Inside** ➤➤ The caustic wraith reaches into the body of a creature within 10 feet, melting its organs and inflicting pain. The target takes 4d8 acid damage with a DC 28 basic Fortitude save. On a critical failure, the creature is also sickened 2.

**Drain Life** (divine) When the caustic wraith damages a living creature with its caustic touch Strike, the wraith gains 10 temporary Hit Points, and the target must succeed at a DC 28 Fortitude save or become drained 1. Further damage dealt by the caustic wraith increases the drained condition value by 1 on a failed save, to a maximum of drained 4.

**Wraith Spawn** (divine, unholy) A living humanoid slain by a caustic wraith rises as a wraith spawn after 1d4 rounds. This wraith spawn is under the command of the wraith that killed it. It doesn't have drain life or wraith spawn and becomes clumsy 2. After 24 hours, the wraith spawn dissipates and is destroyed.

## B3. Toxic Dumping Ground

Three scorched lead containers, their lids removed, sit in the center of this cave. Wide stairs to the northeast lead up to another passage.

These cylindrical containers are about 3 feet long and six inches in diameter. They once contained toxic sap—a by-product of the regenerative cycles of Ruzadoya's fleshy latticework sphere. The bugbears opened the cannisters and let the toxic fumes seep out for a few hours to poison the druids who were hiding below. By the time the druids learned what was going on and burned the sap away, the waters in area **B6** had already become corrupted.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 26 Crafting check finds a residue that they identify as a refined substance likely created from some kind of sap, but not from any plant they recognize.

## B4. Living Space

This ransacked living space holds meager accommodations and storage for a half dozen occupants.

Tilismaine and her few followers didn't always eat and sleep here, preferring to spend much of their lives out in the forest, but they maintained this space for those times when they needed to keep close watch on the caves or seek shelter.

**Treasure:** A PC who Searches through the ransacked cots, cook pots, sacks, and meager personal belongings discovers a *scroll of truesight* in a scroll tube engraved with the Glyph of the Open Road.

They also find a small bound collection of letters written in Wildsong. Most of the letters have rotted away due to the gas, but a few are intact. A PC who reads the letters discovers they're addressed to Tilismaine and were written by someone named **Genzalaz** (male lizardfolk Vigilant Seal druid), apparently a fellow druid and member of the Pathfinder Society. In some of the most recent correspondence, Genzalaz encouraged Tilismaine to "stay the course" and reminded her that "our duty is to protect the isle from what lies below the earth, not what lies beyond the river." Genzalaz promised to speak with Ruzadoya on Tilismaine's behalf and was confident that "I can persuade her, as a fellow protector of Arenway, that you must be allowed to continue our mission. You must protect the ward on the Feywrithe, war or no war."

## B5. Ritual Shrine

Dozens of small woven plates and bowls line the floor near the north wall. They hold offerings of flowers, leaves, river stones, mushrooms, and other bits and bobs gathered from the forest. Other clay bowls contain strange dyes and pastes, and a single cold iron bell sits in a place of prominence at the center of the objects. Slimy mildew covers it all.

PCs who succeed at a DC 21 Nature or Religion check, or who worship Gozreh, recognize offerings gathered from the river and arranged in a pattern resembling the confluence of rivers around the Isle of Arenway, likely intended as an offering to Gozreh.

PCs who succeed at a DC 21 Arcana, Crafting, or Occultism check recognize the pastes and bell as ritual components intended to ward an area against fey influence.

If the PCs linger here, they're likely to draw the attention of the isqulugs in area **B6**.



**Treasure:** A standard-grade cold iron longspear leans against the wall, and a *living mantle* is folded between some animal skins in the corner.

## B6. Broken Ward

Moderate 11

Shallow water fills the southern portion of this cave and surrounds a circle of nine standing stones carved with glowing blue glyphs. Filthy water trickles from thin cracks in the stones, and where the glyphs have been damaged by cracks glows a sickly green instead of blue.

These ancient stones have stood here long enough that a scant few know their true purpose; they're part of a network of similar sites around the Isle of Arenway (many lost or destroyed) that create a magical seal between the surface and an otherworldly cavern deep below the isle. The Bonebleachers didn't know or care why Tilismaine and her followers protect this site, nor did they understand that releasing toxic gas would erode the wards.

**Light:** The glowing glyphs shed dim blue-green light throughout the room, increasing maximum visibility within the gas by 10 feet (from 20 feet to 30 feet).

**Hazards:** In addition to leaking toxic water (see Caustic Caves features on page 16), the broken wards on the standing stones are allowing small amounts of vile fey energy to seep up from the realm below. Immediately after both of the isqulugs in this area have been slain, or after the PCs have spent 10 rounds in combat (whichever comes first), the energy wells up in the form of a complex hazard—see Twisted King's Court, below.

**Creatures:** The cavern deep below the Isle of Arenway is filled with innumerable horrors. A pair of isqulugs, cast into the cavern ages ago, are the first of these horrors to breach the ward and crawl to the surface. So far they've been content to remain here and slurp up the druids who perished in the attack, along with numerous weaker monstrosities that have been pouring from the broken ward. When the PCs arrive, the isqulugs move in for their next meal.

After using *Expel Infestation* to attack intruders, the isqulugs use *control water* and *mirage* to try to expose foes to the nearby poisoned water, such as by raising the water level or tricking creatures into thinking an area is safe. They use *tangling creepers* if they can force foes to remain in the poisoned water, then bludgeon foes with their tentacles. Though they aren't immune to acid, they don't mind taking a small amount of acid damage if it means they can creep through a crack in the wall and ambush or outflank a fleeing or unsuspecting foe. They ignore the difficult terrain caused by the shallow water thanks to their swamp stride. The isqulugs fight to the death.

### ISQULUGS (2)

CREATURE 11

Pathfinder Bestiary 2 149

Initiative Perception +24

### Twisted King's Court

Low 11

The PCs draw the attention of **Fhulganaghm** (male fey exile), the Twisted King, the Fey Skinner, self-proclaimed ruler of the sealed cavern realm below the Isle of Arenway—a place he fondly calls “the Feywrithe.”

### TWISTED KING'S COURT

HAZARD 12

UNIQUE COMPLEX HAUNT MAGICAL

Stealth +20 (trained)

**Description** Countless fey with grisly visages and misshapen bodies cavort throughout the room, kicking up caustic debris and pulling other creatures into their dangerous dance.

**Disable** DC 32 Nature or Occultism (expert) to perform a ritual to ward the area against

Druulbach



fey intrusion, DC 34 Performance (master) to meet the Twisted King's demands with a disturbing dance, or DC 32 Athletics or Intimidation (expert) to fend off or frighten the fey dancers. Three total successes are required to disable the haunt, and each check takes 2 actions.

**Welcome to the Feywrithe** ➤ **Trigger** 1 round passes since both isqulgus in area **B6** are slain, or 10 rounds pass since they rolled initiative; **Effect** The isqulgus die horribly (if they're still alive), rent by clawed fey hands. Spectral fey pull at the other creatures in the caves, all of which must attempt a DC 36 Fortitude save. The haunt then rolls initiative.

**Critical Success** The creature is unaffected.

**Success** The creature is pulled 10 feet toward the standing stones.

**Failure** The creature is pulled 15 feet toward the standing stones.

**Critical Failure** The creature is pulled 15 feet toward the standing stones, knocked prone, and takes 1d6 bludgeoning damage (in addition to any damage from the toxic water).

**Routine** (1 action) Spectral fey cavort about the room. All creatures in the room are raked by ghostly claws and splashed with toxic water, taking 1d10+14 force damage and 2d10 acid damage (DC 32 basic Reflex save). Creatures that critically fail their Reflex saves are pulled 10 feet toward the standing stones.

**Reset** The haunt deactivates after 1 minute. It re-forms every new moon. If all of the glyphs in area **B6** are restored—a process requiring 10 days of downtime and 10 successful DC 36 Nature or Occultism checks—the haunt becomes permanently disabled and doesn't re-form.

## HUNT THE HUNTER

## SEVERE 11

**Siege Points:** The PCs earn 3 Siege Points if they defeat the foes in this encounter.

The sudden spike in Rootweft casualties north of Faunwen's Threshold is due to the efforts of **Druulbach** (male marsh giant ranger). Druulbach eagerly volunteered to join the Wildwood Lodge when he learned about the war. He has little interest in serving the lodge or defending the isle, but he loves bloodshed, and he'd rather have the official sanction of the isle's leaders than be forced to skulk about.

This encounter takes place in a wide, boulder-strewn clearing with a 30-foot-deep, 10-foot-diameter pit in the middle. Druulbach dug the pit himself and uses it when he's bored of killing things quickly. He keeps

a large "lid" for the pit nearby—a few logs strapped together with cured entrails. He likes to cover the pit, sit on the lid, chew on some coins, and listen to his captive's cries for help. Then he lifts the lid and pummels them with lumps of regurgitated metal until they stop shouting.

**Creatures:** Druulbach is extremely frustrated with his latest catch, Livi Leapingheart, because she refuses to scream for help. After wounding her, he threw her in the pit and has spent a whole day shouting at her and demanding that she plea for help, for mercy, for anything. Livi can't understand him; he mostly shouts in Jotun. Instead of screaming for help, she's spent the whole time staring at Druulbach in quiet defiance. When the PCs arrive, Druulbach is standing over the pit, berating Livi with vicious insults and threatening to feed her to Cragbleek, his pet cauthooj, who's currently running in circles around the clearing in eager anticipation of her next meal. Cragbleek's thoughtsense is tremendously useful in Druulbach's hunts and makes it extremely difficult to sneak up on him and his pet.

Druulbach fights to the death, focusing his attacks on whichever target is closest. Cragbleek focuses her attacks on any foes who try to back up Druulbach's target, starting with her Warbling Song and following up with Staccato Strike and beak Strikes. She's smart enough to stand far enough away from Druulbach that he doesn't accidentally hit her if her warbles drive him into a confused frenzy. She is highly loyal and won't flee unless Druulbach is dead, in which case she flees if reduced to fewer than 50 Hit Points.

Livi is in no state to fight, but she starts shouting insults at Druulbach and encouraging words to the PCs if she hears sounds of battle.



Bloodsapper

## CRAGBLEEK

## CREATURE 12

Female cauthooj (*Pathfinder Monster Core* 53)

**Initiative** Perception +22

## DRUULBACH

## CREATURE 12

**UNIQUE** **LARGE** **AMPHIBIOUS** **GIANT** **HUMANOID** **WATER**

Male marsh giant ranger (*Pathfinder Monster Core* 164)

**Perception** +25; low-light vision

**Languages** Aklo, Common, Jotun, Thalassic

**Skills** Acrobatics +22, Athletics +25, Intimidation +22, Nature +23, Religion +23



**Str** +7, **Dex** +4, **Con** +5, **Int** +1, **Wis** +5, **Cha** +0

**Items** *gorget of the primal roar*, +1 leather armor, +1 striking sickles (2)

**AC** 32; **Fort** +25, **Ref** +20, **Will** +23

**HP** 230; **Resistances** poison 10

**Speed** 35 feet, swim 20 feet

**Melee** ♦ sickle +26 (agile, finesse, magical, reach 10 feet, trip), **Damage** 2d4+13 slashing plus 1d10 poison damage

**Melee** ♦ fist +26 (agile, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 2d10+13 bludgeoning

**Ranged** ♦ spit +26 (primal, range 60 feet, water), **Damage** 8d6 bludgeoning

**Occult Innate Spells** DC 29; 5th *mariner's curse*; 2nd *augury*, *mist*

**Drowning Hook** ♦ (primal, water) **Requirements** A creature is prone within Druulbach's reach; **Effect** Druulbach uses his sickle to push the creature down as water bubbles up below it. The target becomes submerged in water until they are no longer prone and must hold their breath (*Player Core* 437) if it can't breathe water. The target takes 6d6 bludgeoning damage (DC 29 basic Fortitude save) and loses 3 rounds worth of air if it fails the save.

**Flurry of Hooks** ♦♦ **Requirements** Druulbach is wielding two sickles; **Effect** Druulbach makes three sickle Strikes against one target. If multiple attacks hit, combine their damage and apply weaknesses and resistances only once.

**Serrated Takedown** ♦ **Requirements** Druulbach hit with a sickle Strike on his most recent action this turn; **Effect** Druulbach drags down the target, knocking it prone and dealing 3d6 persistent bleed damage to the creature.

**Balanced Blades** Druulbach's multiple attack penalty with agile weapons and agile unarmed attacks is -3 for his second attack and -6 for subsequent attacks (rather than -4 and -8).

**Treasure:** Druulbach poached his *gorget of the primal roar* from a dead druid. Its engraving depicts a bird of prey swooping in for the kill. The giant lacks the shapechanging abilities necessary to activate the gorget, yet he enjoys brandishing it as a trophy.

## ROOTMOOT

**Siege Points:** The PCs earn 2 Siege Points for each of the two Rootmoot encounters they successfully complete (whether by defeating foes or persuading them to join the Rootweft cause), plus 1 extra Siege Point if they succeed in both encounters (up to a total of 5 Siege Points from Rootmoot encounters).

The Rootmoot is a gathering of leshies on the Isle of Arenway lasting at least 3 days and 3 nights. It takes place inside the 30-foot-diameter trunk of an ancient redwood that fell long ago, supposedly creating a bridge between the isle and the opposite riverbank

in the Verduran Forest. Leshy legends claim that an extraordinarily mighty leshy dragged the trunk to the isle's interior, and his children helped him hollow it out. Whatever its true origin, it's become a gathering place for the local leshies. They've created a level dirt floor and adorned the interior of the trunk with flowers, hung lamps of glowing bugs, and stocked nearby hollowed stumps with copious amounts of food; the Rootmoot is essentially an endless feast with occasional lively discussions and wrestling matches.

Innumerable mundane objects—all stolen from humanoid visitors to the isle over the centuries—decorate the redwood, inside and out. None of the objects are used for their original purpose, but the leshies have come up with clever or interesting uses of their own. Bracelets serve as cup holders, and the cups hold scrolls that have been torn into pieces that resemble petals. Shields serve as plates (or seats), helmets are used as planter pots (or pet carriers), and dozens of daggers have been tossed in a nearby pond “for good luck.”

The latest Rootmoot is in its second day when the PCs arrive. They aren't challenged upon arrival, as the leshies view them with curiosity and caution rather than malice. Allow the PCs a few minutes to ask questions and interact, then the following encounters (Rootmoot Rumble and Rootmoot Repast) can take place in any order, one after the other.

## Rootmoot Rumble

### Low 11

A militant leshy, **Bloodsapper** (female flytrap leshy hero), has convinced a sizable contingent of leshies that they must defend the Isle of Arenway from outside influences. This doesn't mean supporting Ruzadoya's wars, but it does mean opposing the Rootweft invasion. To curry favor, Ruzadoya gifted Bloodsapper a strip of bark from Idyllis. Bloodsapper and her allies have been trying to draw primal energy from the bark, but it's struck them with a wasting illness that causes lichen to grow on their bodies, eventually turning them to lichen themselves. Bloodsapper has managed to keep her allies' fate a secret, but she's filled with rage and ready to lash out. Shortly after the PCs arrive, she emerges from the crowd to challenge them, accuses them of “meddling with things beyond their control,” and demands that they leave.

The PCs must negotiate with Bloodsapper. They can take many approaches for this check, from Diplomacy to talk her down to Intimidation to cow her; regardless of the skill used, the base DC is 26. Bloodsapper responds well to shows of strength, courage, and conviction but doesn't pay heed to wisdom or reason; adjust the DC upward or





downward by 1 or 2, as appropriate, depending on a PC's tactics or arguments. Each PC can attempt one skill check to negotiate with Bloodsapper. A success earns 1 Negotiation Point, a critical success earns 2 Negotiation Points, and a critical failure enrages Bloodsapper further, resulting in a loss of 1 Negotiation Point.

Destroying produce to demonstrate dominance (as the PCs might believe from a critically failed Recall Knowledge on page 7) distresses the leshies, though it might give the PCs an edge. A PC who destroys plants gains a +1 circumstance bonus to their Intimidation check against Bloodsapper but treats a failed Intimidation check as a critical failure.

Bloodsapper responds based on the total number of Negotiation Points the PCs earn after they've each attempted a check, as follows.

**0 Points:** Bloodsapper refuses any further discussion with the PCs, or any other Rootweft representative.

**1 or 2 Points:** Bloodsapper agrees to allow the PCs to prove their strength—she takes them to the lichen grove (see below) but doesn't warn them about what they'll face.

**3 or 4 Points:** Bloodsapper is swayed by the PCs' arguments and confesses that she accepted a gift from Ruzadoya but lost control of the raw elemental power it contained. She leads the PCs to the lichen grove, warning them ahead of time that they'll face leshy warriors who have been overwhelmed by elemental power.

**5+ Points:** In addition to the effects of earning 3 or 4 points, Bloodsapper reveals that Ruzadoya's gift wasn't just elemental power, but it also—as Bloodsapper discovered the hard way—contains some kind of corruption. She shows them patches of strange lichen growing on her limbs and says that many of her companions have a similar affliction.

**Leechlichen:** Bloodsapper has contracted a novel disease called leechlichen; she's at stage 1 of the disease.

### LEECHLICHEN

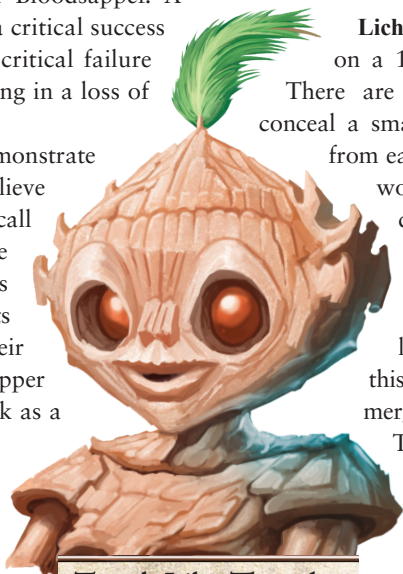
### DISEASE 11

UNCOMMON DISEASE

Patches of petrified lichen grow on your limbs and slowly eat away your flesh. Damage and the enfeebled condition caused by leechlichen can't be healed until the disease is removed.

**Saving Throw** DC 28 Fortitude; **Stage 1** 3d6 void damage and enfeebled 1 (1 day); **Stage 2** 3d6 void damage and enfeebled 2 (1 day); **Stage 3** 5d6 void damage and

enfeebled 2 (1 day); **Stage 4** 5d6 void damage and enfeebled 3 (1 day); **Stage 5** petrified



Trunk Like Thunder

**Lichen Grove:** Bloodsapper leads the PCs on a 10-minute stroll to a nearby stream.

There are numerous ferns in the area that conceal a small clearing along the stream's bank from easy view. Bloodsapper and her friends would meet here in secret as they made decisions about their futures. Strange petrified lichen grows on many of the rocks and plants in the area.

**Hazards:** Several of Bloodsapper's less fortunate friends perished here just this morning, their lichen-ridden bodies merging to become a lichen monstrosity. The hazard doesn't target the leshy warriors (see below) due to their prior exposure to leechlichen, but it reacts aggressively toward the PCs.

### LICHEN MONSTROSITY HAZARD 11

UNCOMMON COMPLEX ENVIRONMENTAL

**Stealth** +26 (expert)

**Description** A mass of petrified lichen takes the shape of a beast and lurches forward.

**Disable** DC 33 Survival or Thievery (master) to scrape away lichen without being exposed, or DC 36 Medicine or Nature (expert) to concoct a natural remedy and weaken the hazard; four total successes are required to disable it

**AC** 31, **Fort** +26, **Ref** +24

**Hardness** 20, **HP** 80 (BT 40); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage; **Weaknesses** fire 10

**Lurching Lichen** **Trigger** Three or more creatures not infected with leechlichen enter the area of the hazard; **Effect** The mass of lichen lurches forward, taking up one 5-foot square and forming a beast-like shape. The hazard rolls initiative.

**Routine** (3 actions) The lichen monstrosity uses 3 actions to move, traveling up to 30 feet with each action and dealing 2d10+10 bludgeoning damage. Each creature in its path must attempt a DC 31 Reflex save.

**Critical Success** The creature is unaffected.

**Success** The creature takes half damage.

**Failure** The creature takes full damage and is exposed to leechlichen.

**Critical Failure** The creature takes double damage and is exposed to leechlichen. The results of its saving throw against the leechlichen are treated as one step worse.

Each successful check to disable this hazard reduces its movement by 30 feet, and the fourth success disables it completely.

**Reset** The trap resets over the course of an hour.

Chapter 1:  
For the  
Rootweft!

Chapter 2:  
Cradle of Knot

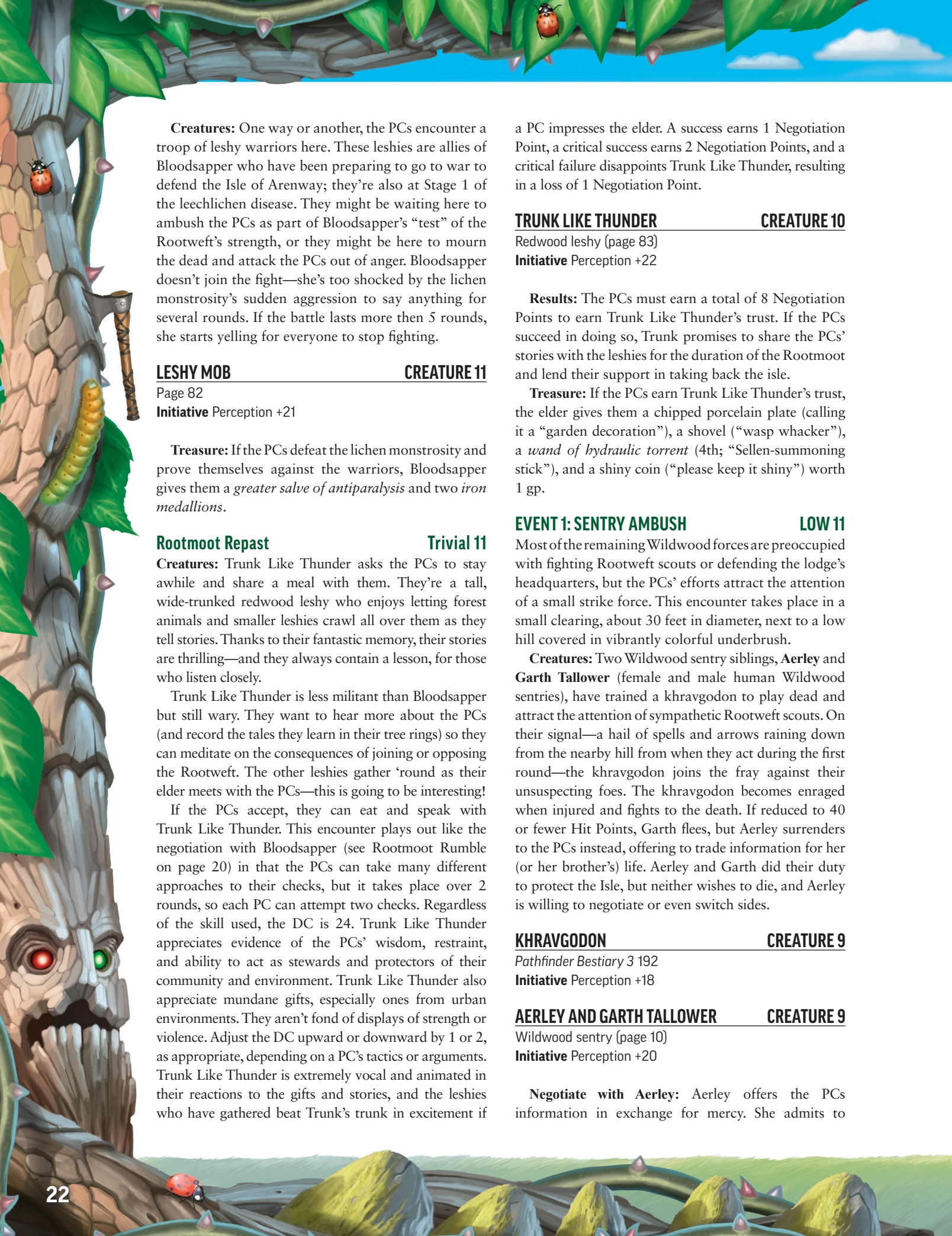
Chapter 3:  
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Toolbox





**Creatures:** One way or another, the PCs encounter a troop of leshy warriors here. These leshies are allies of Bloodsapper who have been preparing to go to war to defend the Isle of Arenway; they're also at Stage 1 of the leechlichen disease. They might be waiting here to ambush the PCs as part of Bloodsapper's "test" of the Rootweft's strength, or they might be here to mourn the dead and attack the PCs out of anger. Bloodsapper doesn't join the fight—she's too shocked by the lichen monstrosity's sudden aggression to say anything for several rounds. If the battle lasts more than 5 rounds, she starts yelling for everyone to stop fighting.

### LESHY MOB

### CREATURE 11

Page 82

**Initiative** Perception +21

**Treasure:** If the PCs defeat the lichen monstrosity and prove themselves against the warriors, Bloodsapper gives them a *greater salve of antiparalysis* and two *iron medallions*.

### Rootmoot Repast

### Trivial 11

**Creatures:** Trunk Like Thunder asks the PCs to stay awhile and share a meal with them. They're a tall, wide-trunked redwood leshy who enjoys letting forest animals and smaller leshies crawl all over them as they tell stories. Thanks to their fantastic memory, their stories are thrilling—and they always contain a lesson, for those who listen closely.

Trunk Like Thunder is less militant than Bloodsapper but still wary. They want to hear more about the PCs (and record the tales they learn in their tree rings) so they can meditate on the consequences of joining or opposing the Rootweft. The other leshies gather 'round as their elder meets with the PCs—this is going to be interesting!

If the PCs accept, they can eat and speak with Trunk Like Thunder. This encounter plays out like the negotiation with Bloodsapper (see Rootmoot Rumble on page 20) in that the PCs can take many different approaches to their checks, but it takes place over 2 rounds, so each PC can attempt two checks. Regardless of the skill used, the DC is 24. Trunk Like Thunder appreciates evidence of the PCs' wisdom, restraint, and ability to act as stewards and protectors of their community and environment. Trunk Like Thunder also appreciate mundane gifts, especially ones from urban environments. They aren't fond of displays of strength or violence. Adjust the DC upward or downward by 1 or 2, as appropriate, depending on a PC's tactics or arguments. Trunk Like Thunder is extremely vocal and animated in their reactions to the gifts and stories, and the leshies who have gathered beat Trunk's trunk in excitement if

a PC impresses the elder. A success earns 1 Negotiation Point, a critical success earns 2 Negotiation Points, and a critical failure disappoints Trunk Like Thunder, resulting in a loss of 1 Negotiation Point.

### TRUNK LIKE THUNDER

### CREATURE 10

Redwood leshy (page 83)

**Initiative** Perception +22

**Results:** The PCs must earn a total of 8 Negotiation Points to earn Trunk Like Thunder's trust. If the PCs succeed in doing so, Trunk promises to share the PCs' stories with the leshies for the duration of the Rootmoot and lend their support in taking back the isle.

**Treasure:** If the PCs earn Trunk Like Thunder's trust, the elder gives them a chipped porcelain plate (calling it a "garden decoration"), a shovel ("wasp whacker"), a *wand of hydraulic torrent* (4th; "Sellen-summoning stick"), and a shiny coin ("please keep it shiny") worth 1 gp.

### EVENT 1: SENTRY AMBUSH

### LOW 11

Most of the remaining Wildwood forces are preoccupied with fighting Rootweft scouts or defending the lodge's headquarters, but the PCs' efforts attract the attention of a small strike force. This encounter takes place in a small clearing, about 30 feet in diameter, next to a low hill covered in vibrantly colorful underbrush.

**Creatures:** Two Wildwood sentry siblings, **Aerley** and **Garth Tallow** (female and male human Wildwood sentries), have trained a khravgodon to play dead and attract the attention of sympathetic Rootweft scouts. On their signal—a hail of spells and arrows raining down from the nearby hill from when they act during the first round—the khravgodon joins the fray against their unsuspecting foes. The khravgodon becomes enraged when injured and fights to the death. If reduced to 40 or fewer Hit Points, Garth flees, but Aerley surrenders to the PCs instead, offering to trade information for her (or her brother's) life. Aerley and Garth did their duty to protect the Isle, but neither wishes to die, and Aerley is willing to negotiate or even switch sides.

### KHRAVGODON

### CREATURE 9

*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 192

**Initiative** Perception +18

### AERLEY AND GARTH TALLOW

### CREATURE 9

Wildwood sentry (page 10)

**Initiative** Perception +20

**Negotiate with Aerley:** Aerley offers the PCs information in exchange for mercy. She admits to



readily falling in as a devotee of Ruzadoya, but she grew concerned when Ruzadoya began forcing elemental power into her own followers. She describes increasingly common incidents in which Ruzadoya sent her vicious bugbear allies to abduct her own allies when they refused her. If pressed for a description, Aerley shudders and tells the PCs about the bugbears' hideous bulging-eyed masks and oiled cloaks. Aerley isn't sure where Ruzadoya found them or why she's willing to work with them, but they're certainly intimidating.

## EVENT 2: SEIZING THE CAMPS MODERATE 11

The PCs help with the Rootweft's attack on the Wildwood camps near Redwood Retreat. With the Wildwood forces heavily diminished, most of the camps are a simple matter for the Rootweft to handle; the PCs' job is to tackle an especially large group of druids camped near a circle of standing stones.

This encounter takes place in a heavily wooded area with a 30-foot-diameter circle of 13 large standing stones, several of which have toppled over.

**Creatures:** As some of the Wildwood lodge's most ardent and militant members, the druids fight to the death. They've managed to use a ritual to awaken one of the ancient standing stones, and it fights until destroyed in its effort to defend the druids. The vengeful menhir gets between the druids and any attackers, fighting in melee, while the druids spread out among the circle of stones and soften up their foes with spells before closing in with their melee weapons.

## RANCOROUS DRUIDS CREATURE 11

Page 10

**Initiative** Perception +21

## VENGEFUL MENHIR CREATURE 11

Stone bulwark (*Pathfinder Monster Core* 324)

**Initiative** Perception +17

**Treasure:** After searching the makeshift shelters nearby, the PCs find a *greater healing potion*.

## Redwood Retreat

After the PCs help seize the Wildwood camps near Redwood Retreat, the Rootweft forces close in and regroup. All that's left to end the Wildwood threat is to take the lodge itself, and it's up to the PCs to lead the final attack while the Rootweft keeps any Wildwood reinforcements at bay. The PCs can rest and resupply before they proceed, if needed.

The Wildwood Lodge headquarters, near the center of the isle, was once a formidable structure. Though only two stories high, it towered high above the forest

floor, nestled among the branches of a dozen massive redwood trunks. Now, the lodge is in ruins. When Ruzadoya first brought her strange new fungal lattice to Redwood Retreat for study, her constant prodding and experiments kept its growth in check. In the few weeks since she left, it's grown out of control, spreading fungal tendrils through the canopy and sapping the life from the redwoods. The trees are shot through with rot and fungus. Even more disturbingly, they've uprooted and replanted themselves in a perfect pattern, ripping the lodge apart in the process and causing much of the structure to collapse to the forest floor.

The mood when the PCs finally arrive at the Wildwood headquarters is one of impending victory muddled by uneasy confusion. The Rootweft expected far greater resistance, but a large contingent of Wildwood druids emerge from the ground level wreckage to surrender as soon as the Rootweft arrives. Even more crawl out from the massive trenches left in the wake of the uprooted redwoods. High above, strands of fungus choke the remains of Redwood Retreat, spreading from a spherical fungus that clings to two of the dying redwoods.


Unfortunately, the headquarters' anti-scriving enchantments remain intact, so Emorga and the rest of the Rootweft don't know what forces remain up in the ruined trees. It's the PCs' job to ascend to the ruins of the lodge, clear out any dangers, free any prisoners, and apprehend Ruzadoya. (Of course, she left for the Plane of Wood weeks ago.)

Meanwhile, the Rootweft forces set up a perimeter to fend off any remaining reinforcements, search the wreckage, treat the injured, and interrogate Wildwood captives. The Rootweft leaders encourage the PCs rest if needed, then move in. The PCs can learn the following if they spend time speaking with those gathered here.

- Ruzadoya hasn't been seen or heard from in a few weeks—she holed up in Redwood Retreat shortly after the Rootweft disrupted her elemental power. Only her most loyal chosen followers were allowed to accompany her.
- When the lodge began collapsing, a few Wildwood Lodge members went up to investigate and see if they could help, but they didn't come back.
- While Redwood Retreat was once a sacred gathering place and shelter for Wildwood druids, Ruzadoya has been using it primarily as her personal command center. It's where she met with her subordinates, conducted many of her rituals using splinters of Idyllis, and kept prisoners.

The adventure assumes the PCs enter Redwood Retreat from the stairs leading to area C1, though they might be skilled climbers or even capable of flight.





Whatever direction they enter from, their mission is to clear the lodge of any threats.

The following locations correspond to the map on page 26. Unless noted otherwise in the text, these locations share the following general features.

**Floors:** The wooden floors of Redwood Retreat are in disarray, having been rent apart when the redwoods shifted and haphazardly reformed as the fungus spreads through the wood. They're 200 feet off the ground.

**Fungus Strands:** Thick strands of fungus spread from the fungal lattice in area C5. These strands are generally at the same height as the floors, or slightly below—creatures can walk on them, but they're difficult terrain and uneven ground (DC 20 Acrobatics check to Balance). The fungus is just as sturdy as wood.

**Walls and Ceilings:** A few of the lodge's sturdy walls remain intact, but they've been displaced into positions that make little sense—the fungal lattice moved the trees with little regard for the attached structures. A single 5-foot section of wall has Hardness 10, HP 40, and BT 20. Not all of Redwood Retreat had ceilings even when the structures were intact, and those that did exist have mostly collapsed; now, ceilings of broken wooden slats typically only extend a few feet out from the walls in any given direction.

**Redwoods:** The 12 redwoods were once majestic, but now they're diseased. They have half the hardness and Hit Points of normal wood; each 5-foot-by-5-foot section has Hardness 5, HP 20, and BT 10. A PC who succeeds at a DC 21 Nature check discerns that the trees are likely to die and topple over within a few months if the fungus goes untreated.

**Nature's Pathway:** A creature who uses *nature's pathway* to walk through these trees takes 6d6 bludgeoning damage (DC 30 basic Fortitude save) as the fractal forces within the trees twist at their body. This doesn't affect the primal wardens in area C4.

**Fractal Patterns:** A PC who closely examines any of the wood in these areas, be it a platform, wall, or tree, and succeeds at a DC 26 Nature check notices small imperfections in the wood grain. The patterns are easier to notice within 5 feet of fungal growths, reducing the DC to 21. These "imperfections" look like perfect fractal patterns—too perfect to exist in nature.

### Additional Foes

If the PCs attack Redwood Retreat before earning enough Siege Points during the Siege of Arenway, they might get more than they bargained for. For every Siege Point fewer than 14 the PCs earn, you have a budget of 20 XP worth of creatures to add to this area. These creatures typically relocate here from previous encounters, assuming the PCs didn't face them earlier.

Any other foes the PCs didn't thwart are likely handled by the Rootweft forces while the PCs attack the lodge, meaning those threats are resolved by the time this chapter ends.

The most sensible creatures to add are more Wildwood sentries (page 10), Ruzadoya's chosen (from page 85 of the previous Adventure Path volume, *Severed at the Root*), and rancorous druids (page 10), but you might also add more beasts and insects similar to those encountered throughout this chapter. Cragbleek and Druulbach (page 19) could even make an appearance if the PCs didn't defeat them yet. If Unaasi (*Pathfinder Adventure #202: Severed at the Root* 92) survived the events of the previous adventure, you might choose to have them appear here as well.

These additional foes could make the Redwood Retreat an insurmountable challenge, reflecting the necessity of a gradual siege to defeat (or win over) Wildwood forces, launch targeted raids, and assemble Rootweft troops and allies.

## C1. SOUTHWEST PLATFORM

A single remaining set of spiral stairs allows ascent from the forest floor to the Redwood Retreat. The stairs are magically shaped from the redwood. Two hundred feet up, they lead to a dilapidated wooden platform, once a part of the lodge's floor. The platform surrounds this tree and much of a second, but the only path leading to the remaining redwoods is made of several thick strands of fungus to the northeast.

PCs who spend more than 1 minute in this area are likely to draw the attention of the primal mantis in area C2, which immediately attacks them.

## C2. RUINED STUDY

LOW 11

Open shelves line what's left of the walls in the northwest corner of this ruined structure. An eerie web of fleshy fungal strands spreads from a massive sphere of the same material to the north, though a large gap separates much of the platform here from the strands.

This area is the smashed-together remains of a few different structures that once perched atop the wooden platforms of Redwood Retreat. Part of the "study" remains intact. It was formerly a place where Wildwood druids would gather to share and record knowledge. Then, Ruzadoya used it for her own research and experiments.

**Creatures:** Among Ruzadoya's woodwarping candidates was a druid who had been accompanied





by a deadly mantis companion. The druid didn't survive the experiments, and the mantis carries the rootridden corpse of its former friend everywhere it goes. Due to their bond and the strange effects of the woodwarping, the druid's corpse retained some primal magic. Somehow, the bond allows the mantis to control these effects; it brandishes the corpse in battle like a gruesome wand. In combat, it uses Leaping Grab and Fling to try to position itself so it's only fighting one enemy at a time, tossing enemies to the forest floor if necessary. It climbs around the trees and uses *fly* to avoid enemies, leaping around in thin air and landing wherever it chooses. It uses *chain lightning* and *howling blizzard* to attack large groups. The mantis considers the Redwood Retreat its home and fights to the death. It considers the survivors in area C3 to be its allies and the primal wardens in area C4 to be unnatural predators; it never ventures too close to the fungal lattice.

### PRIMAL MANTIS

### CREATURE 11

Variant deadly mantis (*Pathfinder Monster Core* 229)

**Initiative** Perception +20

**Primal Innate Spells** DC 27; **6th** *chain lightning*; **5th** *howling blizzard*; **4th** *fly*

**Primal Toll** The primal mantis takes 2d6 mental damage whenever it casts a primal innate spell.

**Woodwarping:** A PC who Searches this room discovers clear evidence of Ruzadoya's woodwarping experiments. She didn't keep written notes, but she created sketches of the messy results of some of her early experiments. They reveal that Ruzadoya initially experimented on woodland insects, birds, and other creatures, but it didn't take long before she began experimenting on Wildwood subjects and captives.

**Treasure:** The druids' records in this room are extensive, even if they're incomplete; they're worth 2,000 gp if given to the Rootweft Lodge. Additionally, if the PCs search the druid's corpse after defeating the mantis, they discover it's wearing a *ring of climbing*.

### C3. SURVIVORS' REDOUBT

### LOW 11

The southeast corner of the redwood ruins appears to have once been a single wide structure suspended across five different trees. Now, a large hole in the center of the floor makes it difficult to tell if this area was truly a single structure or if several were smashed and melded together by the fungal growths.

**A Face in the Tree:** Anyone who inspects the tree in the southeast corner notices a knot in the wood, about

5 feet above the platform, resembling a humanoid face twisted in pain. The fractal patterns are more intense in the space around the face, as if they're trying to twist the imperfection out of the tree. If anyone speaks Arboreal or Wildsong or casts primal magic within 10 feet of the face, it wakes up. Until the durnoliths in this area are slain, all it does is shout warnings in Wildsong.

**Creatures:** A trio of durnoliths—former prisoners subjected to Ruzadoya's woodwarping experiments—lurk near the redwood in the far southeast corner of the lodge. They grew bored and frustrated with trying to attack the mantis, which easily evaded them, so they lurk here waiting for anyone else to come along. Their tactics are straightforward: knock people off the platforms and kill anything that's stubborn enough to stick around. They fight to the death.

### DURNOLITHS (3)

### CREATURE 9

*Pathfinder Adventure #202: Severed at the Root* 87

**Initiative** Perception +16

**Speaking with the Face:** The face in the tree is all that remains of the druid Tilismaine, who readily gives her name to anyone who talks to her—although the only languages she's capable of speaking now are Arboreal and Wildsong. The PCs likely recognize her name from the records they discovered in the caustic caves (page 15). Tilismaine remembers that she used to maintain ancient wards to protect the Isle of Arenway from something called the Feywrithe, but she can't remember what the Feywrithe was; she's too addled by pain and the impending sense of doom that comes from turning into a dead tree.

Tilismaine remembers being captured and dragged to Redwood Retreat by "large cloaked people with dark fur and eyes like insects." (What she actually saw were the Bonebleachers and their horrifying masks.) At the first opportunity, she tried to escape by walking through a tree using *nature's pathway*—but something was wrong with the tree. Instead of stepping out through another redwood, she discovered that this redwood was somehow perfectly unique but also twisted in its imperfection. This quality prevented her magic from allowing her to step into a similar tree, for no such tree exists. She's been stuck here for weeks, slowly dying from the same otherworldly fungus that's reshaping and killing the redwoods. (Thankfully, in the intervening time, the trees have become slightly more alike in their imperfect perfection; they damage creatures as noted on page 24, but they don't trap them like they did Tilismaine.)

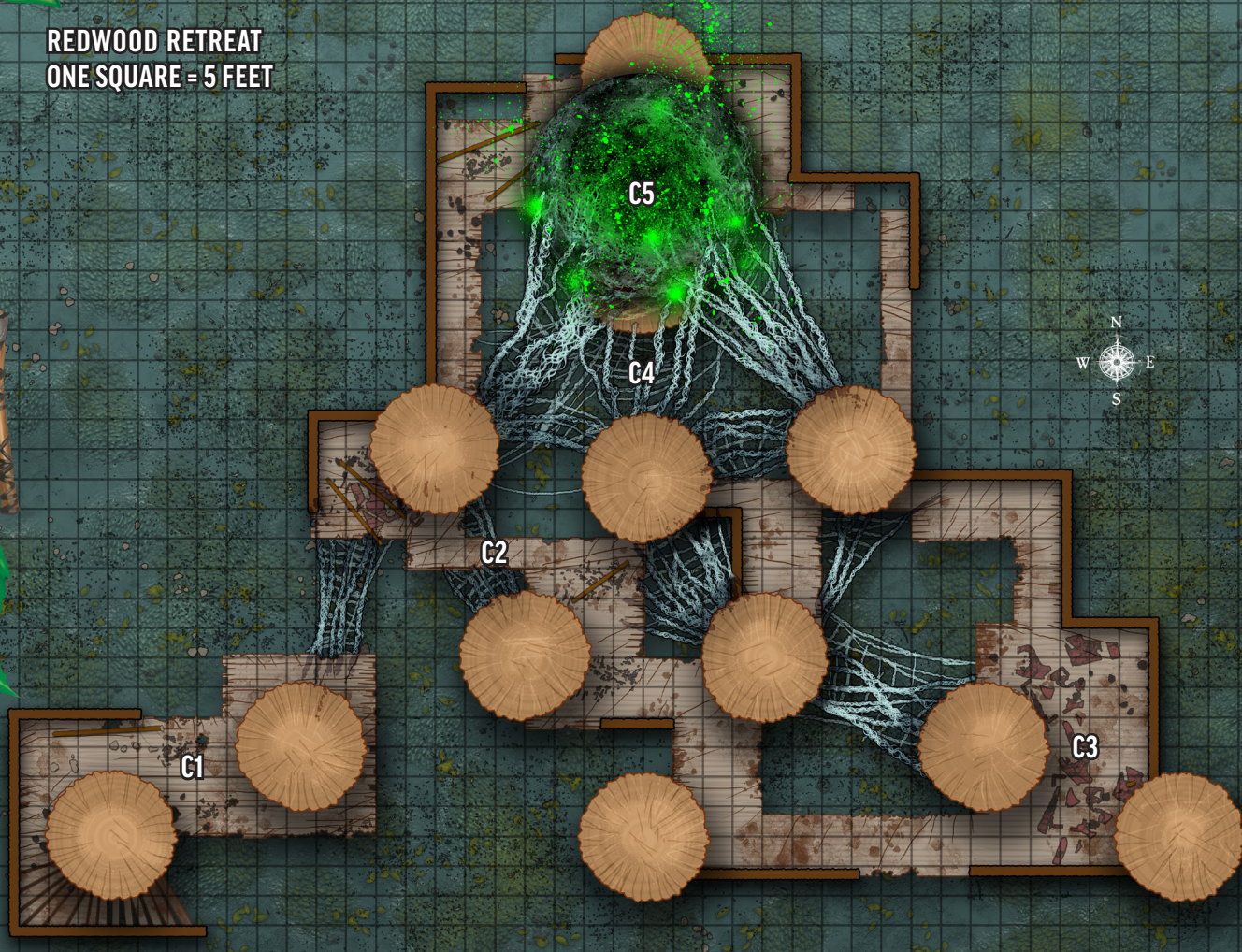
Tilismaine is vaguely aware that one of her closest companions, another druid, was captured and tried to





## REDWOOD RETREAT

ONE SQUARE = 5 FEET



escape, but she doesn't know what happened to them (she's referring to her Pathfinder friend Genzalaz, who's currently on the Plane of Wood). Tilismaine is also aware that some other creature has been walking through the trees—becoming part of them and then exiting again. She's been trying to understand how that's possible, given her inability to do the same, but she can't comprehend it (she's speaking of the primal wardens in area C4).

If the PCs speak Ruzadoya's name, Tilismaine remembers the centaur. She knows that Ruzadoya is the cause of her suffering. She also recalls that Ruzadoya interrogated her about traveling to the Plane of Wood. "She means to go there, and she wanted my help, but I tried to flee and became trapped here. I think she took my friend there in my stead. She spoke of returning with a powerful ally to clear the way for new growth in the Verduran Forest."

Tilismaine won't be able to recover from her mishap unless the fungal lattice is removed from the redwoods and its influence completely reversed.

Otherwise, trying to separate Tilismaine from the trees would certainly kill her. At this point, only a being such as Zibik could completely reverse the lattice's effects on the redwoods.

### C4. WARDENS' DOMAIN

**SEVERE 11**

Fungal strands stretch from the lattice sphere to the north and form a thick floor stretching between several redwoods. A perimeter of wooden platforms and walls suggest the outline of a sturdy wooden structure, but little of the original building remains.

**Creatures:** After several days spent studying the behavior of the fungal lattice and engaging in limited spiritual communion with Zibik, Ruzadoya finally caused the lattice to spontaneously generate a pair of Zibik's servants. The surge of primal energies that spawned them finally restored the connection to the Plane of Wood and opened the portal. Now, these wardens stand guard over the lattice.



Each primal warden of Zibik represents both of Zibik's primary aspects: decay and renewal. They're roughly humanoid-shaped constructs largely composed of wood, and they're covered in sprouting plants that wither, die, and sprout anew every few seconds. They smell of rot and flowers.

In combat, the primal wardens coordinate their attacks. One of them acts primarily as a spellcaster, using *nature's pathway* to find an advantageous position and assailing foes with *tangling creepers* and *toxic cloud*. The other wades into battle with its fists. The wardens' healing magic is primarily of use when they're serving Zibik and other creatures on their home plane; they don't have much need of it in the battle against the PCs. They fight to the death in their efforts to prevent other creatures from traveling to the Plane of Wood. While they understand commands given in Arboreal and Muan, they ignore anyone other than Zibik (or those he's gifted with the ability to command his wardens).

### PRIMAL WARDENS OF ZIBIK (2) CREATURE 12

RARE MEDIUM CONSTRUCT PLANT

**Perception** +20; darkvision

**Languages** Arboreal, Muan (can't speak any language)

**Skills** Athletics +20

**Str** +7, **Dex** +2, **Con** +6, **Int** -1, **Wis** +2, **Cha** -5

**AC** 33; **Fort** +26, **Ref** +20, **Will** +18

**HP** 195; **Immunities** bleed, death effects, disease, doomed, drained, fatigued, healing, nonlethal attacks, paralyzed, poison, sickened, unconscious; **Resistances** physical 10 (except adamantite)

**Aura of Decay** (aura, primal) 30 feet. Plant objects and creatures in the emanation can't regain Hit Points unless the effect that attempts to heal them counteracts the aura, which has a counteract rank of 6 and a counteract DC of 32. A primal warden of Zibik can spend 1 action to reverse this aura; it becomes an aura of renewal with the healing trait, instead doubling the number of Hit Points of any healing effect received by a plant creature in the emanation.

**Rotten Burst** (primal) **Trigger** The primal warden of Zibik takes physical damage; **Effect** A chunk of rotten bark bursts from the warden's body at its attacker. The warden makes a rotten bark Strike against an adjacent creature without triggering reactions.

**Primal Destruction** (primal, void) When the primal warden of Zibik is reduced to 0 Hit Points, it erupts with primal energy in a 30-foot emanation, dealing 12d6 void damage. Each creature in the area must attempt a DC 32 Will save with the following outcomes.

**Critical Success** The creature takes half damage.

**Success** The creature takes full damage.

**Failure** The creature takes full damage and becomes temporarily cursed by Zibik to be enfeebled 1 and stupefied 1 for 1 day; this is a curse effect with a counteract DC of 32.

**Critical Failure** As failure, except the creature becomes enfeebled 2 and stupefied 2.

**Speed** 25 feet

**Melee** ✎ flourishing fist +26 (magical, range increment 30 feet), **Damage** 3d10+13 bludgeoning plus flourishing growth

**Ranged** ✎ rotten bark +21 (magical, range increment 30 feet), **Damage** 3d8+13 bludgeoning plus fractal rot

**Primal Innate Spells** DC 32, attack +24; **6th** *field of life*, *tangling creepers*; **5th** *nature's pathway* (at will), *toxic cloud*; **4th** *speak with plants* (at will), *vital beacon*; **3rd** *wall of thorns*; **2nd** *speak with animals* (at will) **Cantrips (6th)** *caustic blast*, *tangle vine*; **Constant (4th)** *unfettered movement*

**Flourishing Growth** (plant, primal) The first time each round a creature takes damage from the warden's fists, the target must attempt a DC 32 Fortitude save. On a failure, tiny sprouts burst from the creature's flesh, and it becomes slowed 1 for 1 round.

**Fractal Rot** (disease, primal) The first time each round a creature takes damage from the warden's rotten bark, the target becomes sickened 1 as the flesh where it was struck momentarily twists and rots, causing considerable pain.

**Treasure:** When the first warden is destroyed, it leaves behind a pile of rotten leaves. When the second warden is destroyed, its primal essence coalesces into a *greater verdant staff*.

### C5. FUNGAL LATTICE

A perfect latticework sphere of fleshy fungus hangs between a pair of dying redwoods, their wood slowly warping to merge with the sphere's pattern. The sphere pulses with bright green light emanating from within.

**Fungal Lattice:** The fungal lattice formed from Idyllis, as described in the introduction to this adventure. It resembles the latticework spheres the PCs discovered during the previous adventure, but it's made of fleshlike fungus instead of wood. It contains a portal to the Plane of Wood—one of only a handful of ways to travel there from Golarion. If the lattice is destroyed by any means other than the direct actions of Zibik, it regenerates over the course of 3d6 days. More information about the fungal lattice and the portal appears in Chapter 2—the PCs will need to use the portal if they intend to intercept Ruzadoya before she convinces Zibik to attack Avistan!





## Chapter 2: Cradle of Knot

When the PCs secured Redwood Retreat for the Rootweft Lodge, Ruzadoya Swiftmane was nowhere to be found. After sensing her connection to that plane fading (thanks to the PCs' ritual), she left for the Plane of Wood while she still could. Fortunately, the ritual didn't destroy the mysterious mutated fungal lattice that she'd grown on Idyllis, and Ruzadoya could still hear Zibik's whispers through the strange growth. With a few loyal guards at her side and a useful prisoner in tow, she entered the portal at the center of the lattice. Her arrival near Cradle of Knot shocked residents, but Ruzadoya's evangelization of Zibik put the town's leader at ease. Despite her unsettling appearance and otherworldly mannerisms (as far as the town's residents were concerned),

Ruzadoya swiftly garnered local favor, leveraging it to learn Zibik's whereabouts. As an undead, she had little reason to fear the blighted wastes; she left her companions behind to watch for Rootweft intruders and went in search of the green man.

Once the Rootweft leaders learn that Ruzadoya isn't at the Redwood Retreat, they quickly discern the nature of the fungal lattice and deduce that Ruzadoya used it to travel to the reopened plane. By questioning Wildwood captives, they learn that Ruzadoya hastily gathered her most loyal followers, as well as a Pathfinder expert in planar portals, and departed for the Plane of Wood. She promised the remaining Wildwood forces that she would soon return with a powerful ally to bring justice to the Verduran Forest.





The Rootweft leaders don't agree on what to do next. Some, like Grendabor, believe that destroying the lattice—clearly an aberrant by-product of Ruzadoya's meddling—poses the best course of action. Others, like Livi, want to send Rootweft forces to the Plane of Wood to stop Ruzadoya directly. Emorga withholds her opinion and asks the PCs what they think.

If the PCs want to travel to the Plane of Wood, Emorga tasks the Rootweft's most knowledgeable members, including Vandalya Swiftmane, with learning how the lattice works while the PCs get their much needed rest. It only takes a day to discern that the lattice reacts when creatures spend a few minutes at its center; it begins to slowly collapse, and the portal pulses with elemental energy. Vandalya withdraws before allowing the portal to close completely and observes that even this small energy expenditure requires the lattice to replenish itself—it's likely that transporting creatures would render it unusable for several days. As it hasn't been used or tended since Ruzadoya left, the lattice has swollen to an immense size, so multiple creatures (such as the entire party of PCs) could all use it at once.

Even if the PCs agree that the lattice should be destroyed, it regenerates over the course of 10 days (leaking disgusting sap and leeching the life from nearby plants in the process) regardless of the method used. In light of this property, Emorga inevitably urges them to travel to the Plane of Wood and confront Ruzadoya directly.

### Preparations

Even if they're eager to follow Ruzadoya, the PCs have a day or two to rest and resupply following their attack on Redwood Retreat. As Ruzadoya has already had time to explore the Plane of Wood, time is of the essence—there's no telling when she'll return. Given all they've likely discovered in their adventures so far, the PCs surely know that she means to convince Zibik to return with her to Golarion.

Emorga urges the PCs to prepare not only for battle, but for dangerous exploration of new environments and diplomacy with the plane's inhabitants. As the plane has been isolated for so long, its residents might distrust outsiders. Furthermore, if a warmongering demagogue like Ruzadoya is Zibik's only source of information, he's likely to be in a foul mood when he meets others from her plane, whether because he agrees with her views or finds them abhorrent.

Finally, there's no telling what resources will be available, so Emorga advises the PCs stock up on food and basic survival gear. At the GM's discretion, she might lend the PCs up to 1,000 gp to cover big purchases that they PC can pay back at their convenience.

### CHAPTER 2 SYNOPSIS

The Rootweft defeated the Wildwood Lodge and captured Redwood Retreat, but the PCs learned that Ruzadoya Swiftmane fled through a portal to the newly reopened Plane of Wood. She plans to petition the demigod Zibik to unleash destruction on Andoran and Taldor. The PCs travel to the Plane of Wood, but the local border town residents view them with mistrust and unease. Before the PCs can undertake a mission into the blighted wastelands to confront Ruzadoya, they must help out around Cradle of Knot to secure leads, build up the town's trust, and find ways to survive the blight.



### ROOTWEFT REINFORCEMENTS

The fungal lattice has just enough elemental energy stored to transport all of the PCs (and any creature companions). It then needs several days to regrow before it can send an additional planar traveler. The Rootweft leaders ask the PCs to decide who should follow once it regenerates and in what order. Narratively, this limitation isolates the PCs in a strange new world, and it presents an opportunity for the players to strategize about which allies might be most useful, even if they don't know the full extent of the challenges their characters are about to face.

The PCs have substantial flexibility in whom they ask to serve as reinforcements. Most of their Rootweft allies are willing to assist; however, Emorga and Grendabor decline, as they're needed on the Isle of Arenway to help rebuild. Other non-Rootweft NPCs might be willing, at your discretion.

Several likely NPCs provide specific benefits listed below, but these descriptions need not be the extent of those NPCs' contributions—especially if the PCs enjoy having that character travel with them full-time. Very likely, none of these NPCs are suited to contributing directly to combat. It's up to you to determine any additional benefits a particular NPC provides; the benefits should be useful but not completely necessary and shouldn't trivialize encounters. Likely candidates and examples of these benefits are as follows.

**Jaerdan or Livi:** Either would make excellent scouts and survival experts in an unfamiliar plane. They busy themselves with examining the surrounding terrain, making brief forays beyond Cradle of Knot,

**Chapter 1:  
For the  
Rootweft!**

**Chapter 2:  
Cradle of Knot**

**Chapter 3:  
Ruin and  
Renewal**

**Continuing the  
Campaign**

**Cradle of Knot  
Gazetteer**

**Adventure  
Toolbox**



## LANGUAGE ISSUES

The common language of the Plane of Wood is Muan (*Pathfinder Rage of Elements* 191). Given the plane's inaccessibility, it's unlikely that any PCs can speak or understand Muan without magical assistance, and any Plane of Wood inhabitants they meet won't know Taldane, Tien, or other common languages of Golarion. Some residents might share languages with the PCs (such as Arboreal or Fey), while creatures like kizidhars have translation magic of their own. Still, it's helpful if the PCs have ways around these language barriers, as multiple encounters in this chapter include interactions where such expertise is useful. Some encounters assume at least one PC speaks Arboreal or Fey—if none do, a kizidhar might accompany the PCs and assist as an interpreter in return for a favor; if so, consider imposing a -2 circumstance penalty to the PCs' social skill checks due to their linguistic shortcomings.



and questioning locals. Their reports grant the PCs a +1 circumstance bonus to all Exploration checks and saving throws against environmental effects in Chapter 3.

**Madge:** A capable healer, Madge readily succeeds at Medicine checks to remove afflictions and heal wounds. In addition to helping the PCs, Madge offers her services to Cradle of Knot's residents. They in turn provide her with local ingredients she hasn't encountered before, spurring a frenzy of inspired elixir experimentation. Three times during this chapter, Madge creates an alchemical elixir or alchemical tool whose item level is 10–13, such as a greater elixir of life, greater antiplague, or (at your discretion) an uncommon alchemical item. If a PC can make their own alchemical items, Madge also shares her new recipe, adding it to that PC's formula book at no cost.

**Poshov:** Though the domovoi wouldn't provide any help in a fight, Poshov's industriousness quickly wins him admiration in Cradle of Knot. In the contribution-based economy, he performs dozens of minor tasks for residents, which in turn earns the PCs considerable capital in Cradle of Knot's favor-based economy. Each time the PCs complete

one of the eight events in this chapter while Poshov is present, the party earns 50 gp of credit they can apply toward acquiring goods and services in Cradle of Knot. Apply this credit to an item's cost before applying any percentage increases to the cost when purchasing goods with currency (page 33).

**Vandalya:** As always, Vandalya can provide the PCs magic item crafting, rune-transferring assistance, and general advice about magic. Much as Madge learns of countless new ingredients, Vandalya is fascinated by the myriad items developed by Cradle of Knot and other Plane of Wood residents. As she studies and collaborates with residents, she can provide the PCs access to a wide range of new gear and spells, such as on pages 196–203 of *Pathfinder Rage of Elements* or the options on pages 75–79 of this book.

What the PCs might not expect is how Cradle of Knot's residents might respond to seeing another centaur, given the mischief Ruzadoya caused. Vandalya makes others uneasy for the next several days, which increases all Deception, Diplomacy, Intimidation, and Performance DCs for checks the PCs attempt during their next social event after Vandalya arrives: either First Contact, **Event 4: Dinner With Ap-Hild**, or **Event 8: Audience with Errashid**. Vandalya's presence might impact other interactions at the GM's discretion, shaped by Ruzadoya's Activity on page 33.

## Through the Portal

To activate the portal, the PCs need only spend a few minutes together inside the fungal lattice. It slowly grows around them, attaching tiny filaments to their bodies and merging its planar energy with theirs—a process that causes no harm or pain despite being indisputably unpleasant.

The PCs have no way of knowing what awaits them upon their arrival. Unfortunately, they're about to find themselves in an awkward situation as they crawl out of a pulsating fungal lattice in front of a group of locals who have come to mourn a dying tree and burn away the fleshy growth that seems to have killed it.

When the PCs travel to the Plane of Wood, read or paraphrase the following.

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The pulsing green light rapidly intensifies before slowly fading. The lattice expands, and the fungal strands drift away like dry grass in the wind. Something about the eerie starlight visible through the expanding lattice is wrong—there are no stars, just twinkling motes floating against a backdrop of branches thousands of feet above. Someone screams nearby. A clamor of competing voices accompany the sounds of running—some toward the lattice, others away. Then, a steady, resonating voice cuts off all the others.

---



The PCs hear multiple people speaking urgent phrases in Muan, a language of percussive and verbal sounds vaguely like a melodic blend of marimbas and pan flutes. If any PCs can understand the language, such as through magic they cast ahead of time, they hear the following dialogue.

“Something’s moving!”

“Not something—someone! Stay your axes!”

“No, do it now! Burn it!”

Finally, a calm voice cuts off the others. “Stop. By the decree of Errashid, only I command the fire maker. Let us first see what crawls forth.” This voice belongs to **Rhysma al-Khys** (female twins of rowan; *Pathfinder Rage of Elements* 211), who holds her lantern high and takes a protective stance in front of the others gathered here.

The PCs can break through the now-brittle flesh of the lattice with ease or squeeze through the gaps. Tiny PCs don’t need to attempt a check, but Small or larger PCs must succeed at a DC 25 Acrobatics check to exit the lattice without making a mess. Sticky sap oozes from the ruptured growth if a PC breaks out or fails the check, coating the PC with viscous, rotten liquid. A PC who emerges in such a gruesome fashion (in the middle of a somber ceremony, no less) takes a –2 circumstance penalty to any checks to Make an Impression or otherwise influence the NPCs in this encounter.

If the PCs dawdle for more than a minute, Rhysma commands the guards to chop away the lattice (a messy process incurring the penalty above) and reveal whoever is inside.

## FIRST CONTACT

The PCs emerge in a small grove, perhaps reeling at the implication that they’re among “normal size” trees that grow beneath a sky formed by a much larger tree, but also on top of terrain that must itself be part of a tree. The fungal lattice collapses shortly after—it had been growing on a majestic tree that was clearly once symmetrical but now has multiple missing or withered limbs and patches of diseased bark. The people gathered here were participating in a ceremony to mourn the ancient tree and destroy the thing growing on it, which they believe is part of the blight.

Rhysma is an imposing wood elemental known as twins of rowan and wears bright ceremonial armor. She stands in front of several others: a half-dozen

ardande guards wearing sturdy wood plate armor and full-faced helms and wielding heavy axes; three lomori sprouts; **Lirun Bashun** (male arboreal priest of Shumunue), a willowy, 12-foot-tall man with a beard of immaculate pine needles; and **Scrayvle Prene** (male ardande beastkin halfling pyrokineticist), a small person with ratlike features wearing a tattered hood and cloak who stands well away from the others and is flanked by two more guards. A PC who succeeds at a DC 24 Nature check or DC 31 Perception check also realizes that at least a dozen of the other trees making up this “small grove” are living creatures; they’re arboreal regents. Rhysma and the guards are here for protection; Lirun is performing a last rites ceremony with the help of the lomori sprouts and arboreals; and Scrayvle is here to torch the lattice when the ceremony ends.

At the sight of the PCs, Lirun sits down in shock, Scrayvle tries to slink away (but his guards stop him), the lomori sprouts begin arguing, and the remaining arboreals and guards wait to see what happens. Rhysma demands to know who the PCs are and where they came from; she first addresses them in Muan, and if they don’t respond, she tries Fey, then Arboreal.

To have any chance of controlling their fate in this unexpected encounter, the PCs need a way to communicate. If a PC can cast *truespeech*, they can communicate directly. While the kizidhars living in Cradle of Knot have *truespeech*, none are present in this encounter. Some of the NPCs speak other languages in addition to Muan: Rhysma speaks Arboreal and Fey, Scrayvle speaks Fey, Lirun and the other arboreals speak Arboreal and Fey, and the lomori sprouts speak Rasu and Utopian.

If the PCs can communicate, play out a conversation between them and one or more of the NPCs they’re able to speak with. Regardless of the NPC they’re talking to, Rhysma takes the lead, asking other NPCs to interpret if necessary. The other NPCs display a mix of curiosity and fear but don’t leave the talking to their protector. Rhysma tries to get the PCs to reveal as much about themselves as possible—she needs to evaluate the threat. As the PCs reveal information, Rhysma responds in equal measure; for example, if one PC states their occupation, Rhysma reveals one NPC’s occupation in turn. A PC who succeeds at a



Lirun Bashun



DC 28 Society check after observing this exchange realizes that Rhysma reciprocates with as precisely similar levels of information as possible, deducing that it might be customary to do so.

By exchanging information, the PCs can learn the names and occupations of the NPCs, that they live in a place called Cradle of Knot, and that they're here to perform last rites for a dying tree and try to destroy the blighted thing growing on it.

If the PCs ask for help, demand to see who's in charge, or ask questions about more serious and in-depth topics (such as asking where to find Ruzadoya or Zibik), the crowd grows quiet. The arboreals shuffle awkwardly, and the guards become visibly tense. Scrayvle cringes. The PCs might think that the reaction has to do with the subject of their inquiry; in truth, the Knot dwellers are offended that the PCs, who are as "rootless" as someone can possibly be, would ask for help or bring up such serious matters with complete strangers.

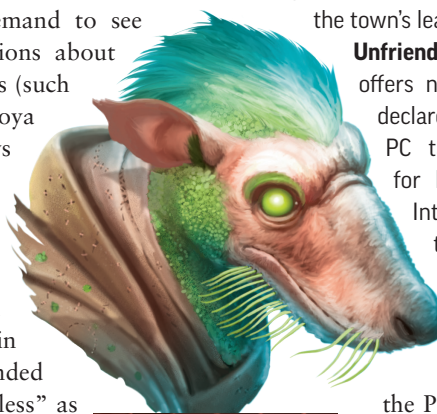
**First Contact Resolution:** The outcome of this encounter depends on how well the PCs improve Rhysma's attitude toward them, which involves a primary skill check supported by several secondary checks. Her initial attitude is unfriendly. Following the group's conversation with her, a single PC can attempt a DC 37 Diplomacy check to Make an Impression. Reduce the DC by 2 if the PC is speaking a shared language through an interpreter or using magic to communicate, or by 5 if the PC is speaking a language they share with Rhysma. Further reduce the DC by 2 if the PCs did especially well in exchanging reciprocal information, but increase it by 2 if they pushed too hard to demand help. Before a PC attempts this check, each PC can attempt a secondary DC 28 skill check to impress the Knot dwellers. The PCs can decide what secondary skills to use, as long as they can justify the relevance in this situation. For example, they could use Society to better understand how to behave appropriately, Nature or Religion to discuss the rites being performed, or Medicine or Survival to show they have valuable skills for a community facing a strange blight. Each successful secondary check grants a cumulative +1 circumstance bonus to the Diplomacy check to Make an Impression.

Rhysma's attitude at the end of this exchange determines the outcome of the encounter.

**Helpful or Friendly** As indifferent, but instead of offering the PCs a shabby dwelling outside town, Rhysma offers them a modest dwelling just past the tunnel leading into town.

**Indifferent** Rhysma decides the PCs need to be someone else's problem, but she wants credit for bringing them back to Cradle of Knot—she'll either be rewarded for preventing danger or commended for securing allies. Rhysma offers to escort the PCs to Cradle of Knot and provide them a shabby shelter just outside town while the town's leaders decide what to do about them.

**Unfriendly or Hostile** As indifferent, but Rhysma offers no helpful items. Furthermore, Rhysma declares the PCs "worse than rootless." Each PC takes a -2 circumstance penalty (-4 for hostile) to Deception, Diplomacy, and Intimidation checks in Cradle of Knot until they've completed at least two events in Putting Down Roots.



Scrayvle Prene

If the PCs can't communicate at all, Rhysma remains unfriendly. If the PCs attack, they're unlikely to survive their first few minutes on the Plane of Wood.

**Development:** Regardless of the PCs' success in this encounter, Rhysma calls off the rites and the attempted destruction of the lattice; she wants to report back to Errashid about the latest developments first.

## EXPLORING THE PLANE OF WOOD

The Plane of Wood is unlike anything the PCs have experienced before. Most notably, the environment is completely alien. Fractal tree growth, both large and small, extends across the plane in all directions. While the PCs find themselves on a relatively massive and "ground-like" root when they first arrive, if they look far enough into the distance, they might become dizzy at the thought that this root is one of countless others—and that it likely grows from the branches of yet another tree somewhere far below. To increase your understanding of the plane, consider reading the Plane of Wood section on pages 189–217 of *Pathfinder Rage of Elements*.

## Food and Drink

Most people on the Plane of Wood don't cultivate plants for food. The PCs can forage for edible plants and wildlife as normal, albeit at an increased difficulty: in the healthy wilderness southwest of Cradle of Knot (locals would say "Nodollinward" or "cityshins" to indicate the direction), the Subsist DC is 30, and only a master or better can attempt the Survival check at all. The DC increases to 35 in blighted or "regrowing" areas (such as those in Chapter 3), where the flora and fauna are even stranger. Thankfully, with even the



smallest amount of social capital, the PCs find that Knot dwellers are more than willing to help them find edible food (if only so they'll go away).

The water flowing through the plane (commonly inside the tree terrain itself, rather than over land) is intoxicating to extraplanar visitors, often to unpredictable degrees, though they become accustomed to it after a day or two. Because it's situated on a root that draws from a blighted region, Cradle of Knot's primary water source is often polluted, requiring frequent expeditions to haul water back to the town from safer sources.

### Shopping

Cradle of Knot has the usual items available for a settlement of its size, though exchanging currency and trade goods is a foreign concept to Knot dwellers. Noddgrain Supplies can provide a variety of everyday household objects, foodstuffs, crafting materials, and survival gear, while various artisans across town (often kizidhars in direct service to Steward Branch) can craft weapons, armor, and magic items. When the PCs first arrive, any item they try to purchase with currency is double the normal price. Once they've completed **Event 5: Lattice Duty**, items are only 50% more expensive than usual. No vendor is willing to lower their prices further, though a PC who speaks with a vendor and who succeeds at a DC 28 Perception check to Sense Motive understands that the price of goods might go down (or even disappear entirely) if they help out enough around town.

### Ayrzul's Blight

The phenomenon known as Ayrzul's Blight has plagued the Plane of Wood for eons. Where the blight is strongest, large formations of jagged, radioactive stone pierce the plane's fabric, causing violent and rapid mutations among the local flora and fauna—or outright killing it. The blight impacts entire communities and biomes, spurring Zibik to devote his life to eradicating it.

Most of the PCs' interactions with Ayrzul's Blight occur in Chapter 3, but they might be exposed during some encounters in Chapter 2.

### AYRZUL'S BLIGHT

### DISEASE 13

UNCOMMON DISEASE EARTH PRIMAL

Radioactive elemental energy courses through sap and blood, petrifies bark and bone, withers flesh, and mutates life. Creatures with the wood or plant trait treat critical successes against the disease as successes. The drained condition caused by Ayrzul's Blight can't be healed until the disease is removed. Ayrzul's Blight presents with obvious

but varying symptoms, from coughing up black dust to suddenly becoming covered in itchy patches of flaky stone.

**Saving Throw** DC 32 Fortitude; **Onset** 1 day; **Stage 1** drained 1 (1 day); **Stage 2** drained 2 (1 day); **Stage 3** drained 3 (1 day); **Stage 4** drained 4 (1 day); **Stage 5** mutation (on a failure) or death (on a critical failure)

Mutations caused by Ayrzul's Blight warp the mind as much as the body. A PC who becomes mutated is, for all practical purposes, no longer the same person. Their sole purpose in life becomes the act of spreading Ayrzul's Blight to others (or seeking out other blighted creatures to bond with). These mutations are permanent and can only be reliably reversed by a deity, artifact, or similar power.

### Weather Events

Cradle of Knot experiences weather phenomena quite similar to those on Golarion, such as rain, winds, and clouds, though they generally result from interactions between the plane's enormous plant ecosystems. Cradle of Knot experiences occasional "blight winds." As long as the PCs are in town, the winds don't pose much threat; everyone opens their doors wide to whoever is passing by, and the residents shelter in place for a few hours until the winds pass. Blight-related weather is a much greater danger when the PCs venture into the wilderness in Chapter 3.

### RUZADOYA'S ACTIVITY

As the PCs interact with Cradle of Knot's residents, Ruzadoya likely comes up as a frequent topic of conversation. The exact timing of her arrival in Cradle of Knot is flexible; you should assume that she left for the Plane of Wood shortly after the PCs finished the second volume of this Adventure Path, and a couple of weeks have likely passed since then. For ease of reference, a summary of Ruzadoya's activity in the town follows.

- After initially being chased off by guards and arboreals, Ruzadoya forced Genzalaz (her Pathfinder captive) to assess the nearby settlement and determine how best to learn of Zibik's whereabouts. Genzalaz complied long enough to make his own allies and find a chance to escape. Unfortunately, before he went into hiding, Ruzadoya learned enough from his diplomatic endeavors to understand the town's reverence of Zibik. Genzalaz's primary contact was the town's priest of Shumunue, Lirun Bashun. Lirun liked Genzalaz and shared the Pathfinder's desire to keep dangerous things under control.





- In the coming days, rather than demand knowledge of Zibik, Ruzadoya approached Cradle of Knot and made it known that she had Zibik's blessing. Though most residents treated her with fear (and disgust), she had the same right to put down roots as anyone else. She and her companions helped around town, mostly through violence, such as by destroying blighted creatures in the wilderness. They engaged in multiple battles alongside Rhysma and helped Scrayvle with blight burning duty.
- Errashid soon learned about Ruzadoya and commanded the arboreal archive Swayblossom to spread news of her arrival; Knot dwellers were to honor her requests, give her what supplies she needed, and stay out of her way. The town's other arboreal archive, Thornbarker, on the other hand, spread the truth: Ruzadoya was a warmonger and a danger to all who crossed her path. Ruzadoya visited Thornbarker and threatened him, only backing down because she wasn't sure she could get away with killing him.
- Ap-Hild Krenst and Neldr Noddgrain were Ruzadoya's primary suppliers. Ap-Hild even engaged in the strange practice of "trade" with the Bonebleachers, with regrettable consequences. Both Ap-Hild and Neldr know about the Bonebleachers' anti-blight equipment and weapons (see the Bonebleachers' Arsenal on page 75).

- Scrayvle tried to help the Bonebleachers find Genzalaz—they claimed Genzalaz was a traitor with a plot to overthrow Ruzadoya. Scrayvle played along, but he sensed the bugbears' ill intent and dishonesty, so he led them astray. Scrayvle suspects Genzalaz laid low for a while, then went into the wilderness to stop Ruzadoya.
- The Bonebleachers also asked Scrayvle to deliver a simple message to whomever comes through the portal next: "Those who follow will die."
- Eventually, Errashid invited Ruzadoya to the Steward's Palace. Errashid became convinced of Ruzadoya's devotion to Zibik and agreed to help her find the demigod. Secretly, Errashid had selfish desires: they want Zibik to return to Cradle of Knot and reward the town (and bless its glorious leader) for decades of service.
- Because she had the advantage of a direct connection to Zibik and immunity to Ayrzul's Blight, Ruzadoya only spent a few days in Cradle of Knot before moving on to the blighted wilderness. Only Errashid knows exactly where she went; they personally taught Ruzadoya how to find Zibik by searching for signs of his heralds.

### Learning about Ruzadoya

NPCs aren't initially willing to talk about Ruzadoya with the PCs. As the PCs complete encounters in Cradle of Knot, the NPCs they helped or worked with reveal some of the above information organically, either immediately following the encounter or by paying the PCs a visit a few days later. As long as the PCs make it known at some point that they're looking for Ruzadoya, Knot dwellers consider it their obligation to share information in exchange for the PCs' deeds in town; even if the PCs don't make it known, NPCs probably want to tell the PCs about Ruzadoya anyway, given their similar origins.

### Putting Down Roots

However their first contact resolves, the PCs end up with someplace to stay in or near Cradle of Knot. To secure leads and resources, the PCs must first "put down roots" in the town—see the settlement's gazetteer entry (starting on page 67) for details about this practice. Though Knot dwellers rigidly adhere to their societal norms regarding social capital, the idea of putting down roots is a vague concept. Few people keep records of debts, favors, or obligations. While a meticulous point-tracking system would run counter to this practice, a reasonable way to estimate the PCs' social capital is by tracking how many events they've completed.



**Event 3: Sent Below** occurs shortly after the PCs arrive in town, and **Event 4: Dinner With Ap-Hild** follows soon after. The other events in this chapter can occur in any order, though some might become easier as the PCs accumulate allies and establish themselves in the town. Once the PCs have earned at least 800 XP in this chapter, they can participate in **Event 8: Audience with Errashid**.

### Passage of Time

Sometimes a couple days go by without anything notable happening. The PCs can use downtime for typical activities or spend a few hours looking for someone to talk to or help around town. Use these uneventful days to allow time for the PCs' allies to show up. You should also take time to show how the PCs' actions affect the town's reception. Gradually adjust your descriptions of the PCs' day-to-day activities as they progress. At first, the locals treat the PCs with distrust and unease. Over time, they might come to treat the PCs as somewhat tolerable guests or mysterious travelers, then perhaps as quirky outsiders, helpful allies, or even friends.

### EVENT 3: SENT BELOW

### MODERATE 12

Scrayvle visits the PCs at their dwelling. He prefers to communicate in Fey, though he's managed to scrounge up a *potion of truespeech* to drink if the PCs proved incapable of resolving language barriers when they arrived. Two guards accompany Scrayvle at all times, but they wait outside while he conducts his business with the PCs. With no guards present, Scrayvle straightens his posture and speaks less timidly; a PC who succeeds at a DC 28 Perception check to Sense Motive realizes that Scrayvle's submission and apparent skittishness are a ruse.

"Hello again, travelers. I'm Scrayvle, and I'll get to the point. I've come to offer you a chance to help me out, and you'd be fools to turn it down. You see, as far as the Steward Branch is concerned—they're the final authority on our immutable laws—you're rootless. Nobody in town can help you out. Nobody can have dealings with you... not officially."

Scrayvle winks, then continues, "But if you do your part, if you earn your way, that's another matter. It just so happens that a prominent member of the town, Ap-Hild Krenst, has an enormous pest problem in her cellar. A pair of ravenously hungry... things... have devoured nearly everything she'd laid in for the next long blight. Three days ago, they ate her bloatsquash. Two days ago, they ate all the shieldvines.

Yesterday, they ate every last one of her vegetable lambs and apparently got quite sick. But they're still hungry! How they got there isn't your concern, and what they are... I'm not clear on that, myself. I think your word for them is... crater pillars?"

Scrayvle answers relevant questions but waves off any attempt to discuss Ruzadoya or Zibik. "Too soon, my friends. Too soon." If the PCs say the creatures are probably "caterpillars," Scrayvle shrugs and agrees they're probably right—he only knows what he's been told, which is that two enormous monsters are devouring Ap-Hild's supplies, and she wants the PCs to eliminate them.

**What's the long blight?** "Usually the blight from downroot is brief and intense, but sometimes it'll settle for a few days, even weeks. Everyone holes up. It's all got to do with the winds, you see... and the whims of blighted mutants... and we can't control those."


**Tell us more about Ap-Hild Krenst.** "In a way, you're lucky that she needs a favor. She's one of the most influential people in town. I think she's eager to meet you, but it wouldn't be appropriate until you've put down roots. She's the matriarch of a large family, and she's got connections all the way out in the big city."

**What's your role in this?** "I'm technically a prisoner, and I have to do whatever dangerous things Errashid demands, without earning anything in return. But there are those, like Ap-Hild Krenst, who believe I've done more than enough to help the community. She helps me find better work on occasion... and in this case, she's using me as a go-between. Nobody will think it strange that I came to visit you, but Ap-Hild? The town wouldn't hear the end of it. As for what I get out of it... well, if Errashid found out about these



Woodweave Caterpillar





creatures, they'd probably send me down there to handle it myself."

**Why not ask someone else, like the town guards?** "Ap-Hild wants to keep this quiet. If you do this favor for her, I'm sure you'll get a chance to talk to her about it yourself. Don't even think about betraying her trust... you'll never put down roots if you behave like that."

**Have the caterpillars made cocoons yet?** "Have they... what?" Scrayvle has heard of a lily serpent making a cocoon before and transforming into a dervish python, but "thank the Lords of Wood, they don't breed around here."

If the PCs agree to help, Scrayvle and the guards escort the PCs through town—and if they don't want to, Scrayvle insists that it's in their best interest. Onlookers point and stare, but when they reach the end of the road near the home of Ap-Hild Krenst, the guards order the small crowd away. Intricate leaves grow in perfectly trimmed patterns around the substantial dwelling, which is made up of multiple domed buildings connected by elegant walkways. Scrayvle shows the PCs around back and exchanges a few words with a servant, who uses *shape wood* to uncover a hidden passage in the ground leading to the cellar. Scrayvle promises to keep prying eyes away ("Nobody likes to be around me, after all") while the PCs take care of the hungry beasts below.

This encounter uses the map on page 34. The cellar is in complete darkness, as the caterpillars crushed or ate all the lanterns (along with just about everything else).

**Creatures:** These two caterpillars were completely normal and extremely healthy specimens who lived on the Isle of Arenway. They were busy eating some of the Bonebleacher bugbears' food—they're omnivores, happy to feast on animal carcasses—when they were transported to the Plane of Wood along with Ruzadoya's entourage. When Ap-Hild begrudgingly engaged in trade with the bugbears (an act she's come to regret), a bag of supplies, and two hungry caterpillars, wound up in her cellar. Already exposed to primal power as a simple fact of living on the Isle of Arenway, the caterpillars rapidly grew to immense size as they devoured Ap-Hild's stockpiles. They even took on traits of the plane, growing plates of hard, segmented wood along their bodies. The caterpillars view the PCs as their next meal. If attacked, they fight to the death.

In the event that the PCs use skills or magic to pacify the caterpillars, they'll need to sneak the creatures out of town to satisfy Ap-Hild's request. Scrayvle offers to cause a distraction, but the act of sneaking the caterpillars out should require multiple successful skill checks—consider using a quick

Victory Point system—such as Stealth checks to Sneak past locals or Nature checks to Command an Animal. The caterpillars are tough enough to survive in the Plane of Wood's wilderness, and what they'll become after cocooning is anyone's guess.

## WOODWEAVE CATERpillARS (2) CREATURE 12

RARE LARGE ANIMAL WOOD


**Perception** +22; darkvision

**Skills** Acrobatics +20, Athletics +25, Survival +20

**Str** +7, **Dex** +4, **Con** +6, **Int** -5, **Wis** +4, **Cha** -4


**AC** 33; **Fort** +24, **Ref** +20, **Will** +22


**HP** 255; **Weaknesses** axes 10, fire 10

**Reactive Strike**  Bristles only. The woodweave caterpillar gains an extra reaction at the start of each of its turns that it can use only to make a Reactive Strike. It can't use more than one Reactive Strike triggered by the same action. In addition to the normal trigger, the caterpillar can make a Reactive Strike against a creature that touches it or an adjacent creature that attempts a melee Strike against it.

**Ferocity**  (Monster Core 359)


**Speed** 40 feet, climb 40 feet

**Melee**  bite +25 (reach 10 feet), **Damage** 3d10+13 piercing

**Melee**  bristles +25, **Damage** 3d8+13 piercing plus penetrating bristles

**Melee**  foot +23, **Damage** 3d10+11 bludgeoning

**Penetrating Bristles** On a critical hit with a bristles Strike, a woodweave caterpillar's bristles lodge in the target's body, causing severe pain and blood loss. They deal 3d6 persistent bleed damage, and the target is off-guard as long as the persistent damage continues.

**Trample**  Medium or smaller, foot, DC 32

**Development:** Scrayvle thanks the PCs for their help and escorts them back to their dwelling. He lets them know to expect Ap-Hild Krenst to contact them soon, but in the meantime, they should stay out of trouble.

**Treasure:** If Scrayvle didn't need to use the *potion of truespeech*, he gives it to the PCs.

## EVENT 4: DINNER WITH AP-HILD

This event takes place a day after the PCs complete **Event 3: Sent Below**. **Ap-Hild Krenst** (female ardande matriarch) invites them to dinner at the Krenst residence. A round-bodied flightless bird (a barkstrider that vaguely resembles a cat-sized ostrich made of twigs) delivers the invitation. It's a simple note that's written in Arboreal, Fey, and Muan: "Please gift us your company and partake in a fine meal at the home of Ap-Hild Krenst, and family, this evening. We appreciate your service." If the PCs have come to an understanding of Cradle of Knot's system of generalized reciprocity,



or if a PC succeeds at a DC 28 Society check, they know that bringing a physical gift would be an affront; the meal itself is a reward for the PCs, so bringing a gift would suggest that the PCs wanted something else from their hosts.

By this time, rumors that the PCs performed a service for Cradle of Knot are already spreading around the town, though the details are hazy. The PCs notice most people still shy away from them and have little to say in their company, but fewer residents look openly hostile, and some nod respectfully as the PCs pass.

A trio of young ardandes greet the PCs at the door: **Stephgan** (male ardande carpenter), **Michdi** (male ardande teaching aide), and **Ap-Aheida** (female ardande acolyte of Shumunue). Each is one of Ap-Hild's adult grandchildren, and they bear a strong family resemblance. They're dressed modestly in bright green fabric that complements their bark-like skin and voluminous hair, colored like fall leaves.

They invite the PCs inside (using gestures if necessary, though they all speak Arboreal and Fey in addition to Muan). The home is large and spacious but modestly decorated. Ardande children scamper about, though they take care to avoid "grown-up business," which includes anything to do with the PCs. Stephgan and Michdi head off to help in the kitchen while Ap-Aheida escorts the PCs to the dining room, which features a beautiful wood table surrounded by plump cushions. A clockwork device with pine cone-shaped pendulums stands in one corner, chiming the hour with delicate bells that somehow ring in the same gentle volume regardless of where you stand in the house.

Ap-Hild enters a short while later to announce dinner, which she serves herself. It includes generous portions of several dishes, most of which contain unfamiliar meaty vegetables with unexpected notes of umami. As they eat, the PCs can speak with Ap-Hild and her kin (Stephgan, Michdi, and Ap-Aheida join the meal; the others are on duty elsewhere). Ap-Hild permits some discussion of the things that destroyed her cellar but tries to steer the conversation toward the PCs and their purpose for traveling to the Plane of Wood. She displays curiosity if Ruzadoya and Zibik come up but doesn't reveal what she knows about them quite yet.

Ap-Hild's main purpose in inviting the PCs is to learn more about them and see how they can help

the town. As a current member of Council Branch, she's extraordinarily influential. She's willing to discuss much of the town's history, as detailed in the gazetteer entry on page 67—so long as the

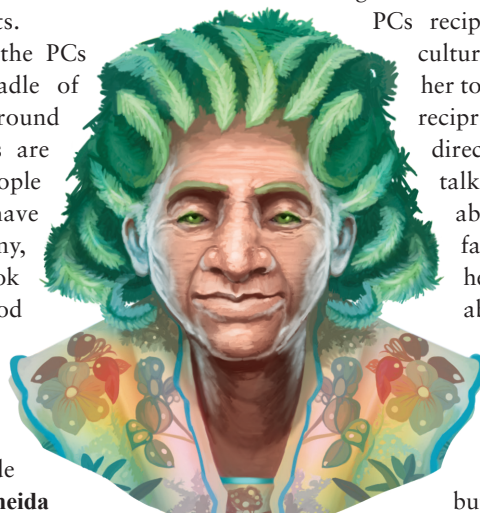
PCs reciprocate by discussing their own cultures, of course. It doesn't occur to her to discuss the system of "generalized reciprocity" unless the PCs ask about it directly, but if they do, she's happy to talk about it. She doesn't know much about Zibik aside from common facts. She's a devotee of Verilorn, herself. To get Ap-Hild to talk about Ruzadoya, at least one PC

needs to succeed at a check to impress Ap-Hild (see below); her dealings with Ruzadoya were limited to some exchanges of supplies (which she regrets), but she personally harbors doubts and suspicions because Ruzadoya was able to earn Errashid's approval so swiftly. "I suppose arrogant self-righteousness can attract like minds, from time to time."

**Impressing Ap-Hild:** During dinner, each PC can attempt a skill check to earn Ap-Hild's favor. The base DC of these checks is 30, though you should make the check easier if a PC behaves appropriately during the meal, such as by exchanging roughly similar compliments and avoiding asking directly for help. A PC should use a skill that arises naturally from their roleplaying, such as Society if they talk about cultural similarities and differences or a Lore skill if they offer interesting knowledge about their homeland. If at least half the party succeeds at these checks or if any PC critically succeeds, the PCs impress Ap-Hild enough that she sends one of her children to bring a gift (see Treasure on page 38).

**Ap-Hild's Advice:** Eventually, Ap-Hild and her children clear away dinner (insisting that the PCs relax in the meantime). Then, she offers them some refreshing coffee (made from the choicest blood acorns) along with some parting advice.

"You must forgive us Knot dwellers for our suspicion. We don't get many visitors in Cradle of Knot, except for city dwellers who think they know better and horrible things which wander out of the blight. Visitors from another world... we just don't know what to expect from you. You've shown your willingness to help, though, and for that I'm grateful. I'm also generous; others may need more time. And if you want anything in Cradle of Knot other than a wave as you go on your way, you'll need to



Ap-Hild





earn it. That's the way of things here. Earning our place is how we survive. If you do earn your place, though, you'll find no one more willing to lend aid than a fellow Knot dweller. Of course, mere survival isn't your reason for coming here..."

Ap-Hild finishes her speech based on what she knows about the PCs' goals. If those goals aren't clear, she asks what the PCs ultimately want. If she knows they seek Zibik or Ruzadoya, she says that only Errashid is likely to know how to find them. "If you put down roots, you'll eventually earn Errashid's trust. Until then, the shuyookh won't want anything to do with you, and I don't recommend you push your luck."

After the meal, members of Ap-Hild's family walk the PCs back to their dwelling; other Knot dwellers witness their interaction, helping to ease the town's suspicion a bit.

**Treasure:** Ap-Hild gives each PC a *purifying ladle* (*Rage of Elements* 202) and gives the party a *greater rooting rune* (*Rage of Elements* 202). If they impressed her during dinner, she also gives them a *panacea*.

## EVENT 5: LATTICE DUTY

This event occurs sometime within the first week after the PCs arrive in Cradle of Knot and after they've dined with Ap-Hild. The fungal lattice has regenerated and is pulsing with energy. Lirun Bashun asks the PCs to come help welcome whatever comes through.

If the PCs accompany Lirun to the lattice, they find a smaller crowd has gathered than last time. Other than Lirun and the PCs, Scrayvle is present, plus three lomori sprouts and **Varroch Rosh** (nonbinary kizidhar inventor), the keeper of the town's Gnarled Gardens (page 73). There aren't any guards or arboreals, and Rhysma isn't around.

After introducing Varroch (an atypically disheveled kizidhar), Lirun explains that Errashid requested more discretion when it came to the lattice. The shuyookh doesn't want paranoia to spread any more than it already has. There aren't any guards because, officially, Steward Branch isn't concerned about additional visitors. That being said, it's up to Lirun, Scrayvle, and Varroch to observe the lattice, see how it might be useful, and (of course) burn it if it presents a problem. They already know they can't permanently destroy it, but burning it seems to delay its regeneration.

They've allowed it to grow because Varroch suspects the sap it produces might be useful. If the PCs describe the strange refined sap that created toxic gas (during Chapter 1) or ask what Varroch wants to make, Varroch nods solemnly. "Most would think to make weapons, wouldn't they? Not me. I'd like to see if it might provide an antidote against the blight, help reverse mutations, rejuvenate dying plants... anything that would help."

While the lattice is in its final stages before the portal opens—any minute now—Lirun wants to perform religious rites (the ones the PCs interrupted last time) for the tree. "I believe something has corrupted the tree. If we don't perform the rites, I'm afraid of what sort of mutations or spiritual dangers might manifest." Meanwhile, Varroch intends to harvest whatever planar energy and sap they can. The PCs are here to help welcome (or fight) whatever comes through the portal, and each PC can choose to help with one of the two other tasks in the meantime.

Each PC can attempt a skill check to overcome one of the following obstacles, but not both. If at least one PC overcomes an obstacle, that portion of the encounter is considered successful.

## PURIFYING RITES

## OBSTACLE 12

The tortured spirit of Idyllis, caught between planes and not certain if it's time to die, be reborn, or both, lashes out with pained, discordant moans as the lattice reaches its full potential.

**Overcome** DC 30 Nature or Religion to soothe the tree's spirit, DC 32 Arcana or Occultism to create wards to contain the spirit, DC 34 Performance to entice the spirit to join in creating a peaceful harmony

**Failure** A PC who fails to overcome this obstacle takes 4d12+26 mental damage and becomes frightened 4 the



next time they roll initiative in an encounter with an enemy plant creature.

## HAZARDOUS HARVEST

## OBSTACLE 12

Strained by the tortured spirit and a surge of primal energy, the lattice begins to crack, leaking sap. Suddenly, spectral fungal tendrils explode from the cracks, licking at the sap like an animal licks a wound.

**Overcome** DC 30 Survival or Thievery to gather sap without touching the tendrils, DC 32 Crafting to quickly create a device to drain sap safely, DC 34 Medicine to treat the cracks like one treats a wound and appease the strange tendrils

**Failure** A PC who fails to overcome this obstacle takes 4d12+26 void damage and becomes drained 2.

**Development:** Regardless of their success or failure, after the PCs face these obstacles, their first ally arrives through the lattice. Roleplay a brief scene based on the NPC they chose. Thankfully, since the PCs have started to put down roots, this NPC has a much better first day on the Plane of Wood. It's up to the PCs to find someplace for them to stay, whether in the same dwelling or somewhere else, as well as something for them to do.

If the rites were successful, Lirun thanks the PCs. He believes the spirit they encountered is draining energy from the Plane of Wood, likely in some desperate struggle to survive. Now that he knows the proper rites, he believes he can help it reach some kind of equilibrium.

**Treasure:** Lirun gives the PCs a *greater healing potion*. The PCs' Rootweft ally brings them a *fortification rune*, a gift from Emorga, who sends her regards. Varroch promises to experiment with the sap and share their discoveries with the PCs if they manage to make anything useful, but it'll take a few days. If at least one PC overcame the Hazardous Harvest obstacle, three days later, Varroch brings the PCs four greater antiplagues distilled from the sap.

## EVENT 6: ENCROACHING BLIGHT

## SEVERE 12

You can decide whether this event takes place at night or interrupts the PCs' activities sometime during the day, perhaps as they're returning to their dwelling after completing another event.

When Cradle of Knot's sentries become aware of an imminent attack by monsters from the blighted wilderness, they have multiple ways of warning the town. First, Swayblossom produces vibrantly colored



Spitting Sawfly

cherry blossom leaves that rapidly shift color from bright green to deep purple and back. The settlement's many kizidhars, arboreals, and other tree-shaped people stand atop dwellings to help wave these "leaflets" blow to every nook and cranny, including the dwellings outside the knot itself. The kizidhars also shape their limbs into drums, horns, and rattlers; the ensuing cacophony is hard to miss.

The first time such an alarm occurs after the PCs arrive in Cradle of Knot, **Raba Fen** (male kizidhar musician), one of Errashid's advisors and messengers, hastily approaches the PCs. He wears a robe of vines growing from his own stout body, and he's fused his forearms together to form a massive drum, which a young wood scamp beats with enthusiasm. They stop sounding the alarm long enough for Raba to address the PCs with *truespeech*.

"I bring word from Errashid of Steward Branch. The blight threatens us always, but never more so than when its twisted abominations crawl forth to spread their disease at our doorstep. Since your filthy portal opened, each onslaught is worse than the last. Help our people. Fight the abominations. Your roots depend on it."

Raba doesn't leave much time for questions but directs the PCs to travel east of town. If they can fly, he welcomes them to do so. Otherwise, he invites them to follow him to the tunnel leading south out of the town. They pass an orderly line of people proceeding into the protected bowl of Cradle of Knot proper. Then they join up with a band of Cradle Guards and various





wood elementals heading east. Raba and a few other kizidhars divide the defenders into groups (the PCs being one group). Each group is about 300 feet away from Cradle of Knot and spaced evenly from north to south along a stretch of blighted land. A similar formation heads off to defend the north side of town.

It's clear from the desiccated shrubs and rotten stumps that many plants sprout up here every day, then rapidly die. In the distance, a stretch of the otherwise orderly woodlands is sick with twisted, chaotic growth—and the sound of buzzing insects suggests something approaches from its mutated depths. The nearest groups of other defenders are some 200 feet away from the PCs to the north and south; a PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Perception or Warfare Lore check notices that while a number of defenders have their sights trained above the blighted tree line, others have readied their weapons at ground level.

**Creatures:** Blighted creature attacks on Cradle of Knot occur at unpredictable intervals, but the next attack is always just a matter of time. These creatures mindlessly and aggressively charge straight for Cradle of Knot, stopping only to kill anything in their way or to die close enough to spread Ayrzul's Blight, in the case of the creeping cones.

### SPITTING SAWFLIES (5)

Page 80

**Initiative** Perception +19

### CREATURE 10

### CREeping CONE SWARM

Page 80

**Initiative** Perception +18

### CREATURE 10

**Aiding Defenders:** If the PCs defeat these foes in fewer than 8 rounds, they have time to rush to the aid of other defenders. While wood elementals are immune to the sawflies' poison, the ardande guards aren't, and the wood elementals can still sustain other grievous injuries. Each PC can attempt a DC 28 Medicine check to Treat Poison (or DC 30 to Treat Wounds), or use another skill to render aid if you deem it appropriate. They can also expend resources (such as healing spells or consumable items) to automatically succeed, at your discretion. If at least half the PCs successfully render aid, Raba commends them once the battle ends.

**Treasure:** After the battle, Raba gives the PCs a small wooden mark of approval they can present to Neldr Noddgrain for 2,000 gp worth of common elixirs and oils (level 12 or below). If they earned his commendation, he also gives them a *greater tales in timber* (*Rage of Elements* 202) depicting arboreals battling against earth elementals.

### EVENT 7: TALK OF THE TOWN

### MODERATE 12

A pair of arboreal archives, **Swayblossom** (female arboreal archive) and **Old Thornbarker** (male arboreal archive), live in Cradle of Knot (see pages 70–71 for further details on these NPCs). Sometime within the first week after the PCs arrive in town, they catch wind of strange rumors about them. Of course, many rumors about the PCs have spread since their arrival, but these rumors are especially insidious—someone has accused them of plotting to kill Zibik! The fact that the PCs are looking for Zibik, which might be well known by this point, doesn't help their case. If a PC succeeds at a DC 30 Diplomacy check to Gather Information, they learn that Thornbarker is the source of the rumors; he's been spreading them with his gang of wood scamps. If they critically fail, they learn Swayblossom is the source; she's been spreading them with her "leaflets." Either way, if the PC attempts to Gather Information about the rumors, they also learn that Swayblossom and Thornbarker frequently bicker (from a distance); their rivalry is about as old as the town.

The whole town seems to be waiting for what the PCs do next. If they let the rumors fester, Ap-Hild or Scrayvle eventually urge them to do something about it. The PCs can confront either of the arboreals (or both) in any order—they might choose to directly confront whoever is spreading rumors, or they might confront the rumor spreader's rival first. Thornbarker lives in



an overgrown garden (more like a weedy lawn) on the south side of town, while Swayblossom lives in an orderly flower garden on the north side of town; it's easy to find someone to give directions.

**Confronting Swayblossom:** Swayblossom is sweet, welcoming, encouraging, and kind, even if the PCs accuse her of spreading rumors. She's quick to deny a direct role, though she admits to goading Thornbarker on from time to time. However the PCs behave, she invites them to visit her garden any time they like. A PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Perception check to Sense Motive realizes something is off about Swayblossom's behavior—her sweetness seems automatic, as if she would behave that way regardless of what's going on around her.

Shortly after the PCs first visit Swayblossom, she sends forth a flurry of leaflets, all accusing Thornbarker of spreading lies and being a coward. The Knot dwellers get a great deal of enjoyment out of her clever insults.

**Confronting Old Thornbarker:** Thornbarker, by contrast, is rude. He hurls careless insults. He's loud, irritable, and perpetually annoyed. He admits to speaking "harsh truths" and refuses to stop. If the PCs mention Swayblossom, he says, "She can get made into planks for all I care!" A PC who succeeds at a DC 30 Perception check to Sense Motive, a DC 28 Medicine or Nature check, or a DC 25 Alcohol Lore check realizes that Old Thornbarker is inebriated, though he doesn't seem to be imbibing anything.

Thornbarker refuses any requests and sends the PCs away. A pair of wood scamp bullies follow them around for an hour or two before getting bored.

**Swayblossom's Request:** The rumors and insults ramp up over the next several hours, and the townsfolk go from entertained to genuinely concerned that someone is going to start a fight. In fact, soon after (no later than the following day), Swayblossom sends for the PCs and asks them to confront Old Thornbarker, call out his wild conspiracy theories, and—if needed—challenge him to a duel. While they might be wary of challenging such a well-established Knot dweller in this way, Swayblossom promises to sanction the duel herself, which would lay the responsibility on her. She attempts to assuage their concerns by stating that duels in Cradle of Knot aren't allowed to be lethal; Errashid banned duels to the death years ago.

**Creatures:** The PCs might decide to challenge Thornbarker to a duel, and he gladly accepts. If they don't, a wood scamp eventually shows up and issues the challenge on Thornbarker's behalf (Swayblossom will do anything to get her way and gain Errashid's favor,

even bribe a pathetic wood scamp). If the PCs refuse the duel, the rumors continue to fester; there's no formal consequence, but the townsfolk view them as cowardly troublemakers, and they have a hard time finding anyone to trust them with something useful to do.

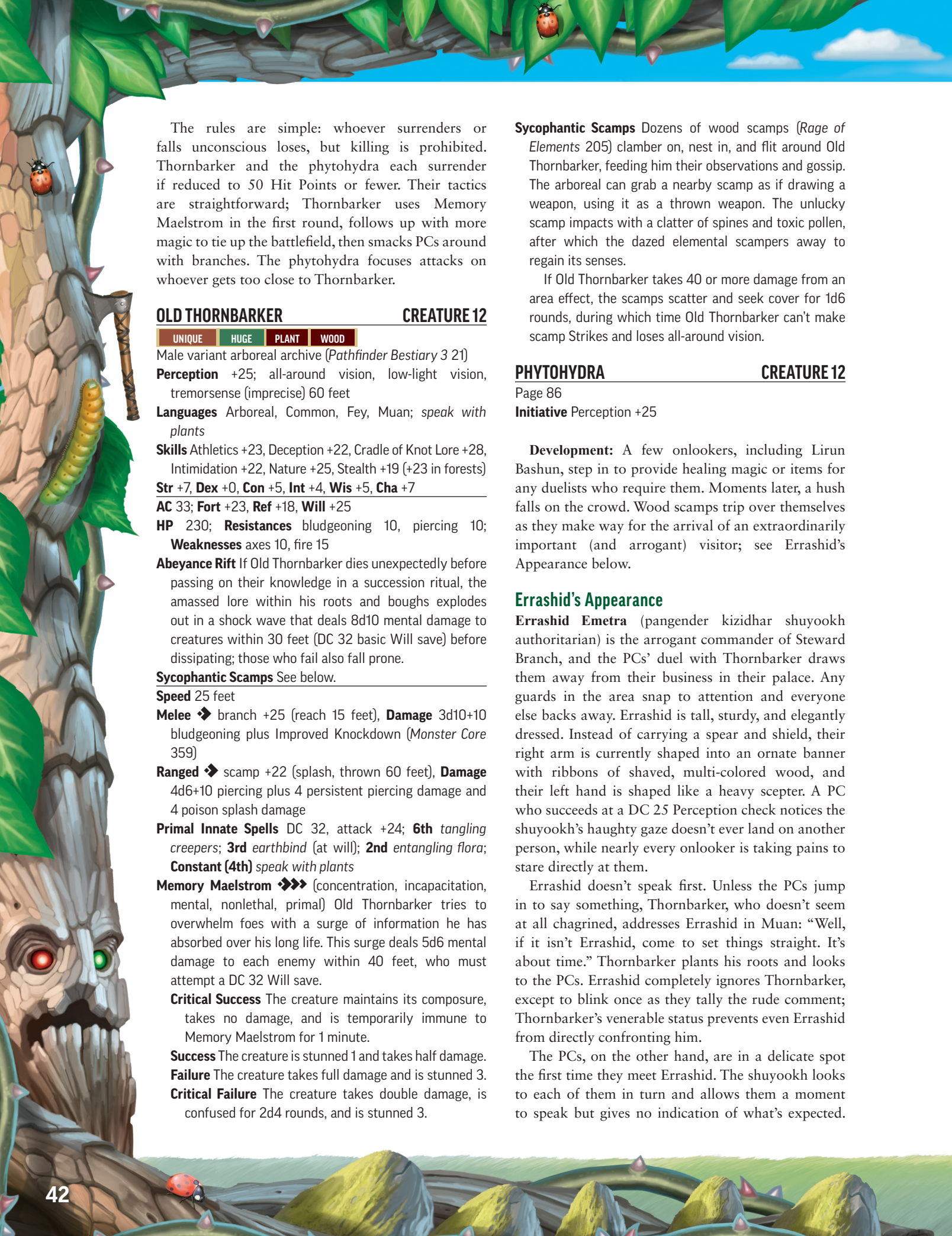
Given his inebriation, Thornbarker is willing to uproot himself for the fight. His branches creak as he stretches in preparation, and a small crowd gathers. He challenges all the PCs at once and calls on a phytohydra to join him. "I'm not as limber as I used to be!"

This encounter uses the map on page 40.



Errashid





The rules are simple: whoever surrenders or falls unconscious loses, but killing is prohibited. Thornbarker and the phytohydra each surrender if reduced to 50 Hit Points or fewer. Their tactics are straightforward; Thornbarker uses Memory Maelstrom in the first round, follows up with more magic to tie up the battlefield, then smacks PCs around with branches. The phytohydra focuses attacks on whoever gets too close to Thornbarker.

## OLD THORNBARKER

## CREATURE 12

UNIQUE HUGE PLANT WOOD

Male variant arboreal archive (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 21)

**Perception** +25; all-around vision, low-light vision, tremorsense (imprecise) 60 feet

**Languages** Arboreal, Common, Fey, Muan; *speak with plants*

**Skills** Athletics +23, Deception +22, Cradle of Knot Lore +28, Intimidation +22, Nature +25, Stealth +19 (+23 in forests)

**Str** +7, **Dex** +0, **Con** +5, **Int** +4, **Wis** +5, **Cha** +7

**AC** 33; **Fort** +23, **Ref** +18, **Will** +25

**HP** 230; **Resistances** bludgeoning 10, piercing 10;

**Weaknesses** axes 10, fire 15

**Abeyance Rift** If Old Thornbarker dies unexpectedly before passing on their knowledge in a succession ritual, the amassed lore within his roots and boughs explodes out in a shock wave that deals 8d10 mental damage to creatures within 30 feet (DC 32 basic Will save) before dissipating; those who fail also fall prone.

**Sycophantic Scamps** See below.

**Speed** 25 feet

**Melee** ♦ branch +25 (reach 15 feet), **Damage** 3d10+10 bludgeoning plus Improved Knockdown (*Monster Core* 359)

**Ranged** ♦ scamp +22 (splash, thrown 60 feet), **Damage** 4d6+10 piercing plus 4 persistent piercing damage and 4 poison splash damage

**Primal Innate Spells** DC 32, attack +24; **6th** *tangling creepers*; **3rd** *earthbind* (at will); **2nd** *entangling flora*; **Constant (4th)** *speak with plants*

**Memory Maelstrom** ♦♦♦ (concentration, incapacitation, mental, nonlethal, primal) Old Thornbarker tries to overwhelm foes with a surge of information he has absorbed over his long life. This surge deals 5d6 mental damage to each enemy within 40 feet, who must attempt a DC 32 Will save.

**Critical Success** The creature maintains its composure, takes no damage, and is temporarily immune to Memory Maelstrom for 1 minute.

**Success** The creature is stunned 1 and takes half damage.

**Failure** The creature takes full damage and is stunned 3.

**Critical Failure** The creature takes double damage, is confused for 2d4 rounds, and is stunned 3.

**Sycophantic Scamps** Dozens of wood scamps (*Rage of Elements* 205) clamber on, nest in, and flit around Old Thornbarker, feeding him their observations and gossip. The arboreal can grab a nearby scamp as if drawing a weapon, using it as a thrown weapon. The unlucky scamp impacts with a clatter of spines and toxic pollen, after which the dazed elemental scampers away to regain its senses.

If Old Thornbarker takes 40 or more damage from an area effect, the scamps scatter and seek cover for 1d6 rounds, during which time Old Thornbarker can't make scamp Strikes and loses all-around vision.

## PHYTOHYDRA

## CREATURE 12

Page 86

**Initiative** Perception +25

**Development:** A few onlookers, including Lirun Bashun, step in to provide healing magic or items for any duelists who require them. Moments later, a hush falls on the crowd. Wood scamps trip over themselves as they make way for the arrival of an extraordinarily important (and arrogant) visitor; see Errashid's Appearance below.

## Errashid's Appearance

**Errashid Emetra** (pangender kizidhar shuyookh authoritarian) is the arrogant commander of Steward Branch, and the PCs' duel with Thornbarker draws them away from their business in their palace. Any guards in the area snap to attention and everyone else backs away. Errashid is tall, sturdy, and elegantly dressed. Instead of carrying a spear and shield, their right arm is currently shaped into an ornate banner with ribbons of shaved, multi-colored wood, and their left hand is shaped like a heavy scepter. A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Perception check notices the shuyookh's haughty gaze doesn't ever land on another person, while nearly every onlooker is taking pains to stare directly at them.

Errashid doesn't speak first. Unless the PCs jump in to say something, Thornbarker, who doesn't seem at all chagrined, addresses Errashid in Muan: "Well, if it isn't Errashid, come to set things straight. It's about time." Thornbarker plants his roots and looks to the PCs. Errashid completely ignores Thornbarker, except to blink once as they tally the rude comment; Thornbarker's venerable status prevents even Errashid from directly confronting him.

The PCs, on the other hand, are in a delicate spot the first time they meet Errashid. The shuyookh looks to each of them in turn and allows them a moment to speak but gives no indication of what's expected.



Before each PC speaks, allow them to deduce appropriate behavior by attempting a DC 30 Society check, DC 31 Perception check to Sense Motive, or DC 25 check to Recall Knowledge with an especially relevant lore skill, with the following results.

**Critical Success** As success, and the PC knows Errashid has *truespeech* and can speak and understand any language, but they're likely to prefer the authentic beauty of their own language (Muan) over magical communication.

**Success** The PC knows Errashid is likely to respond well to flattery. Furthermore, they know that of all Cradle of Knot's residents, Errashid likely has the most rigid interpretation of the town's laws and customs.

**Failure** The PC has no specific insight.

**Critical Failure** The PC knows Errashid is likely to respond well to someone who acts like an equal.

In truth, Errashid is here because they arranged the duel behind the scenes; they ordered Swayblossom to goad Thornbarker and the PCs into a fight, and they magically infused Thornbarker's yard with intoxicating soil to lower his inhibitions. Errashid wanted to test Ruzadoya's claim that "whoever follows me through the portal wishes only death and destruction on Zibik," and Errashid is beginning to doubt the truth of this claim. By orchestrating this scene, the shuyookh wants to remind everyone who's in charge and put the PCs to the test.

The PCs must appease Errashid. The PCs can take many approaches for this check, such as Diplomacy to flatter them, Society to justify the actions the PCs have taken, or Performance to entertain them; regardless of the skill used, the base DC is 30. Errashid responds well to compliments, groveling, acknowledgments of their majesty and authority (or the speaker's lack of these things), masterful displays of art or talent, and eloquence. They hate being treated as an equal, being insulted, being ignored, and casual speech. Adjust the DC up or down by 1 or 2, as appropriate, depending on a PC's approach. Furthermore, a PC who manages to make their arguments in Muan (such as by asking someone to translate for them) gains a +2 circumstance bonus. A PC who uses magic (such as *truespeech*) to speak Muan has no bonus or penalty (Errashid considers this method a crude shortcut), while a PC who relies on Errashid's own *truespeech* (by speaking a language Errashid doesn't know) takes a -2 penalty.

Each PC can attempt one skill check to appease Errashid. A success earns 1 Appeasement Point, a critical success earns 2 Appeasement Points, and a critical failure insults Errashid, resulting in a loss of 1 Appeasement Point.

Errashid responds based on the total number of Appeasement Points the PCs earn after they've each attempted a check, as follows.

**0 Points:** Errashid speaks. "Your duel was legal, though not consequential enough to discuss further. Know this: You are only still here because I tolerate you. Barely. Take heed, travelers; I am watching, and so far, I am not impressed." Errashid also orders Thornbarker to stop spreading rumors and "let the travelers tell their own tale, through their own actions."

**1 or 2 Points:** Errashid speaks. "Your duel was mildly entertaining but did little else to serve Cradle of Knot. You have proved yourselves capable, but make sure your future activities are more... useful." Errashid also orders Thornbarker to stop spreading rumors and "let the travelers tell their own tale, through their own actions."

**3 or 4 Points:** The PCs appease Errashid. "Your duel was pleasing, though you should focus your efforts on more useful endeavors. I denounce Thornbarker's lies; I have been watching, listening, and I know why you are here. Perhaps we can discuss the matter soon."

**5+ Points:** The PCs appease and impress Errashid. "You have done well today, travelers. I am impressed. I denounce Thornbarker's lies, and all in Cradle of Knot would do well to show you more respect. I know why you are here, though I am keen to hear more. Perhaps we can discuss the matter soon."

**Development:** After speaking, Errashid departs, and the crowd disperses. The PCs' degree of success in this encounter impacts their future dealings with the shuyookh (see **Event 8: Audience with Errashid** on page 44).


**Treasure:** If the PCs defeated Old Thornbarker, Swayblossom gives them a set of *crushing bough bracers* (page 76).

## MINOR ENCOUNTERS

You can use the following encounters to expand this portion of the adventure. Insert them at your discretion between more significant encounters, and use them as an opportunity to roleplay. Feel free to devise other similar encounters if the PCs need more ways to gain favors or if any of the hooks in the Cradle of Knot gazetteer are compelling.

**Helping Noddgrain:** After the PCs put down some roots, **Neldr Noddgrain** (male ardande beastkin; page 72) arrives at the PCs' dwelling to drop off free foodstuffs, treats, sturdier furniture, and basic supplies. He asks them if they're looking for work. Each PC who spends 8 hours helping Neldr by sorting supplies, making deliveries, serving customers, or otherwise rendering assistance can attempt a relevant





DC 28 skill check. If at least half the PCs succeed, or any PC critically succeeds, Neldr publicly thanks them for a hard day's work.

**Gracious Hosts:** Ap-Hild Krenst asks the PCs to help her host a meal for a visiting diplomat. The visitor is **Rakhat Emetra** (male kizidhar shuyookh priest of Verilorn; page 73), and Ap-Hild's family is expected to cater dinner at Rakhat's seasonal dwelling. Unfortunately, it's completely trashed! Each PC can attempt an appropriate DC 25 skill check to help clean up or prepare the meal. Each PC who succeeds gains a +2 circumstance bonus to the subsequent skill check; during the meal, each PC can attempt a DC 28 skill check while speaking with Rakhat, such as Diplomacy to make pleasant conversation or Religion to discuss the Elemental Lords and other deities. Rakhat happily discusses any topic except for his sibling Errashid, and he doesn't know much about Ruzadoya. If at least half the PCs succeed, or any PC critically succeeds, Rakhat commends the PCs for representing their home plane well. Furthermore, he mentions that his humorless sibling, Errashid, believes they're personally blessed by Zibik. "I don't know if this claim is true, but Errashid certainly thinks so," Rakhat leaves town soon after; he was curious about the PCs but hates being around Errashid.

**Blight Burning:** Scrayvle visits the PCs and asks for help with "burn duty." It's his job to periodically incinerate mutated plants on the edge of the blight, and he could use some extra help to hasten the work and reduce his exposure to the disease. It's risky work, but someone has to do it. If they agree, Scrayvle leads them out of town (accompanied by guards as usual). Each PC can attempt an appropriate DC 30 skill check (such as Survival) or a DC 25 relevant Lore check (such as Plant Lore) to identify blighted plants. Alternatively, a PC can expend fire magic (at least a 3rd-rank spell, 5th-level consumable item, or rough equivalent) to automatically succeed. A PC with an axe can chop away nearby overgrown plants and gains a +2 circumstance bonus (or can grant the bonus to one other PC). If at least half the PCs succeed, or any PC critically succeeds, Scrayvle is grateful for their help, and the Knot dwellers soon hear about the PCs' deeds. If a PC fails their check, they're exposed to Ayrzul's Blight (page 33).

**Stag Hunt:** Four painted stags (*Rage of Elements* 210), enraged by the blight, wandered too close to Cradle of Knot. Rhysma asks the PCs to chase them off or destroy them.

**Class Guests:** Michdi Krenst invites the PCs to give a presentation about their home plane to the students of Leafrun School (page 72). The lead teacher, **Gela al-Anbosta** (female kizidhar teacher) is uneasy at

first, but Michdi urges the PCs to do their best. Each PC can attempt a DC 28 skill check, either to give a presentation (using Performance or a relevant Lore skill) or to put Gela at ease (using Diplomacy or a relevant Lore skill). If at least half the PCs succeed, or any PC critically succeeds, the teachers ask their students to discuss the PCs' stories with their families as homework.

## EVENT 8: AUDIENCE WITH ERRASHID

Until they've "put down roots," the PCs are forbidden from entering the Steward's Palace, and Errashid has little interest in speaking with them. However, shortly after they've earned a total of 800 XP in Chapter 2, the PCs receive a visit from Raba Fen. Rhysma accompanies him, along with her usual retinue of Cradle Guards. Raba uses *truespeech* to demand the party's immediate presence at the Steward's Palace; his tone and manner are pleasant, but he leaves no room for the PCs to interpret the invitation as a request.

Raba escorts the PCs to the Steward's Palace. It appears like little more than a massive misshapen tree stump from the outside, but the inside is majestic. Errashid has carefully crafted their home into a place of beauty and extravagance over the years. Raba deliberately escorts the PCs through several ostentatiously decorated sitting rooms before finally arriving at a room with a large circular table. Errashid isn't sitting at the table; they're standing on a pedestal at the other end of the room. Raba invites the PCs to sit. Errashid completely ignores the PCs until all of them sit down on the beautifully carved (but uncomfortable) wooden chairs.

Thanks to the PCs' efforts around Cradle of Knot, they've made a name for themselves, and Errashid has little choice but to offer them a chance to speak their minds. While Errashid is genuinely curious about them, Errashid has little interest in helping the PCs, still believing that Ruzadoya is an ally and that she'll finally bring Zibik back to Cradle of Knot.

Errashid speaks plainly, using *truespeech* (which they intend as an insult): "What is earned is owed. You have earned an audience with me, travelers. I will listen. I make no other promises."

Errashid allows the PCs to speak for only a few moments before rudely cutting them off. "I have listened enough. I must return to my work." The PCs likely aren't pleased, but Errashid is adamant that the "audience" is over. Thankfully, the PCs' efforts have made them a few important friends (or at least a few people willing to hear what they have to say). When Errashid is about to depart, members of Council Branch arrive and demand that Errashid let the PCs speak. Because Council Branch





rotates its membership based on the town's current needs, these NPCs can be just about anyone, though you should choose NPCs whom the PCs have helped, such as Ap-Hild Krenst and Lirun Bashun. Scrayvle or Raba Fen could also speak on the PCs' behalf, though it's less likely either of them are on Council Branch. Whoever shows up, they take their seats and invoke Errashid's own laws ("all must be earned" and "what is earned is owed") to force the shuyookh to listen longer *and* to consider what the PCs have to say. Begrudgingly, Errashid agrees.

## Influencing Errashid

This encounter makes use of the influence subsystem found on pages 187–189 of the *Pathfinder GM Core*. The players and GM should become familiar with these rules before playing this encounter.

The PCs have 45 minutes (3 influence rounds) to make their case. If the PCs aren't sure what to say, Errashid prompts them with pointed questions about what the PCs want, why Errashid should trust the PCs more than Ruzadoya Swiftmane, what they've done to earn Errashid's help, and how they plan to directly benefit Cradle of Knot.

As in their first meeting with Errashid, a PC who manages to make their arguments in Muan (such as by asking someone to interpret) gains a +2 circumstance bonus. A PC who uses magic to speak Muan has no bonus or penalty, while a PC who relies on Errashid understanding them with *truespeech* takes a –2 penalty.

Errashid's final decision about how much to help the PCs depends on the total number of Influence Points they earn over 3 rounds—use the highest result and ignore the lower results. The shuyookh's offer is final and nonnegotiable.

**Appeasement Points:** If the PCs earned 1 or 2 Appeasement Points when they met Errashid, a single PC can attempt a Discovery check before the first influence round. Additionally, if they earned 3 or 4 Appeasement Points, they begin this encounter with 1 Influence Point. If they earned 5 or more Appeasement Points, they earn the previous benefits, and the DC of all Discovery and Influence checks in the first round is reduced by 2.

## ERRASHID EMETRA

RARE LARGE ELEMENTAL GENIE PLANT WOOD

Kizidhar shuyookh authoritarian

**Perception** +22

**Will** +20

**Discovery** DC 25 Genie Lore (or a similar Lore skill), DC 30 Perception, DC 28 Society

**Influence Skills** DC 28 Legal Lore, DC 28 Plane of Wood Lore, DC 28 Religion, DC 28 Performance, DC 30 Deception, DC 30 Diplomacy, DC 32 Intimidation

**Influence 2** Errashid agrees to show the PCs how to find Zibik, but only if each PC makes a choice: never return to Cradle of Knot or serve eternally as a Steward Branch guard.

**Influence 4** Errashid agrees to show the PCs how to find Zibik, but only if they swear either to serve as Steward Branch guards for 1 year within the next decade or to perform one unspecified favor for the community in the future—effectively an open-ended plot hook the GM can use for future adventures.

**Influence 6** Errashid agrees to show the PCs how to find Zibik, but only if they make a wish that Errashid can "watch over the travelers eternally." (Errashid grants it via a wish ritual to cast a permanent *unrelenting observation* spell on the entire party.)

**Influence 8** Errashid agrees to show the PCs how to find Zibik, but only if a PC makes a wish. The nature of the wish is flexible, but Errashid uses Manipulative Wish to advance their own interests in some small way, at your discretion—and doesn't grant a wish that directly affects Ruzadoya or Zibik.

**Resistances** Suggestions that Errashid is flawed in any way increase the DC by 1. Suggestions that they're selfish, arrogant, or biased increase the DC by 2 instead.

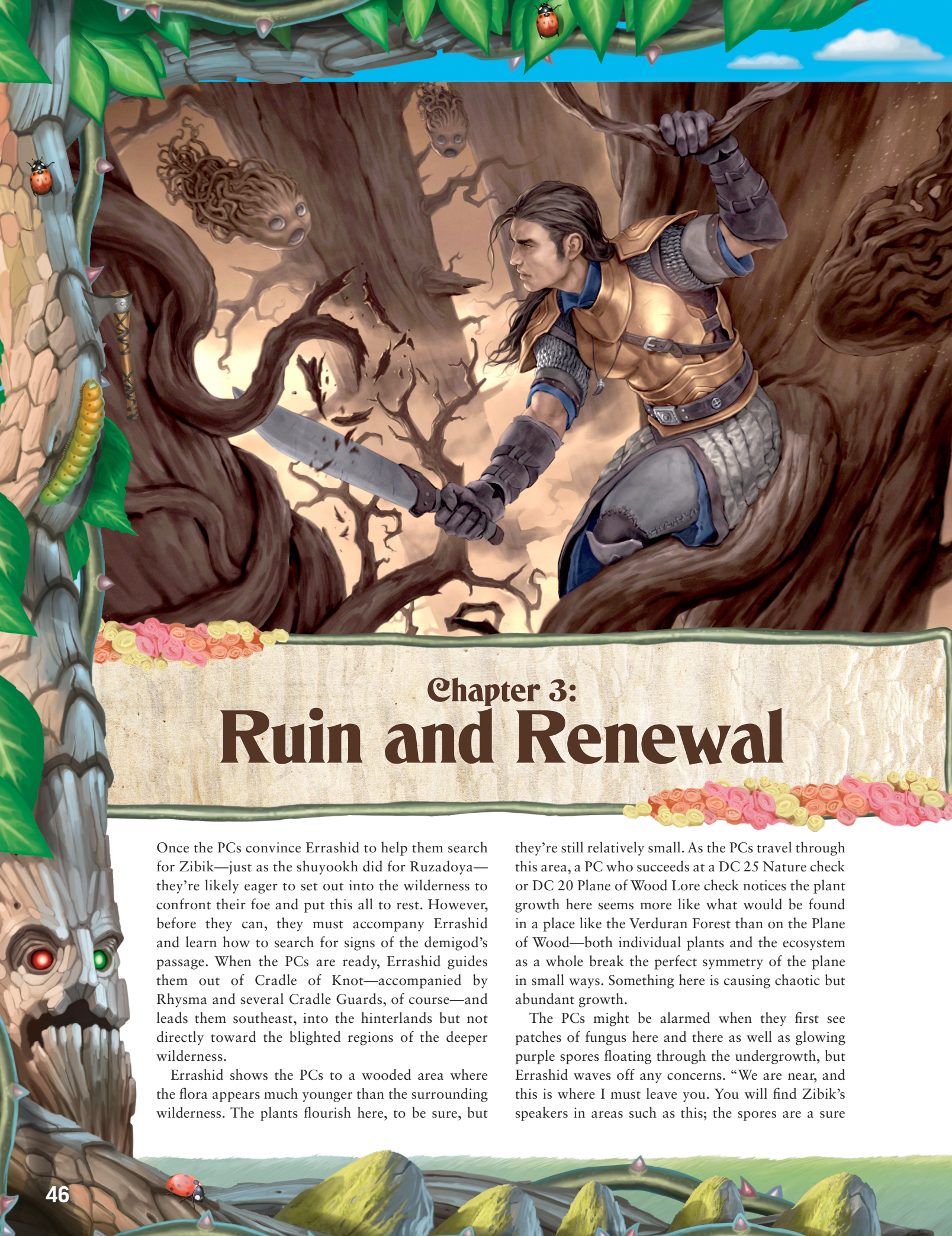
**Weaknesses** Direct flattery makes Errashid more inclined to listen, reducing the DC by 2. Errashid not-so-secretly appreciates the tragic or unfortunate circumstances of other people, so evoking sadness or tragedy reduces the DC by 2.

**Development:** Once the PCs agree to their terms, Errashid agrees to show the PCs how to find Zibik by seeking out the demigod's heralds in the nearby wilderness. "I am bound by duty to remain in Cradle of Knot, and not to search for them myself, but I will show you how to find them. Come, and let us be done with this." Proceed to Chapter 3 when the PCs are ready to set out in search of Zibik.

**Treasure:** Council Branch gives the PCs a *major thorn triad* (*Rage of Elements* 203) and a *scroll of regenerate*. Additionally, in exchange for the PCs' efforts in town, Council Branch convinces the town's suppliers to sell the PCs items at normal price. Steward Branch agrees to provide the PCs with 2,000 gp worth of common ammunition and potions (level 12 or below) as long as those items could reasonably be used to advance the PCs' mission to find Zibik.

If the PCs earned at least 2 Influence Points, Errashid gives them a *kizidhar's shield* (*Rage of Elements* 201). If they earned at least 4 Influence Points, Errashid also gives them a *spell reservoir rune*.





## Chapter 3: Ruin and Renewal

Once the PCs convince Errashid to help them search for Zibik—just as the shuyookh did for Ruzadoya—they're likely eager to set out into the wilderness to confront their foe and put this all to rest. However, before they can, they must accompany Errashid and learn how to search for signs of the demigod's passage. When the PCs are ready, Errashid guides them out of Cradle of Knot—accompanied by Rhysma and several Cradle Guards, of course—and leads them southeast, into the hinterlands but not directly toward the blighted regions of the deeper wilderness.

Errashid shows the PCs to a wooded area where the flora appears much younger than the surrounding wilderness. The plants flourish here, to be sure, but

they're still relatively small. As the PCs travel through this area, a PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Nature check or DC 20 Plane of Wood Lore check notices the plant growth here seems more like what would be found in a place like the Verduran Forest than on the Plane of Wood—both individual plants and the ecosystem as a whole break the perfect symmetry of the plane in small ways. Something here is causing chaotic but abundant growth.

The PCs might be alarmed when they first see patches of fungus here and there as well as glowing purple spores floating through the undergrowth, but Errashid waves off any concerns. "We are near, and this is where I must leave you. You will find Zibik's speakers in areas such as this; the spores are a sure





sign, as is the chaotic growth. Zibik leaves behind these speakers as he battles the blight. How or why, we do not know, but they carry on his work in his stead. It is easiest to find them in places where they have had more time to do their work and repair the landscape. Where the blight still ravages life... you might confuse the chaos of disease with the chaos of Zibik's abundance. There are even those who believe some of Zibik's speakers have become corrupted and that they now spread the very blight they are supposed to destroy. I do not believe this can be true, but... there is much I have come to question in these past weeks. Tread carefully, and remember—whatever the speakers look or sound like, you are bearing witness to the work of a god.”

Errashid tells the PCs to explore this area of the Cradle hinterlands and find Zibik's speaker. Once they've done so, they can explore the nearby wilderness to find more. “We know of four speakers near Cradle of Knot. There is the speaker near here, another in the flourishing wilderness to the south, another in the withered morass to the north, and one in the blighted borderlands to the east. I know not how many you will need to speak with to learn Zibik's whereabouts. Not even I can understand their will. But, the speakers all seem connected to Zibik somehow. If you are worthy, they may share that connection with you. Ruzadoya seemed to have some kind of connection to Zibik even before setting out to find his speakers. Whether that helped or hindered her, I do not know.”

After tersely answering any questions, Errashid and their guards depart and leave the PCs to search for Zibik's speakers in the hinterlands.

### Exploring the Wilds

Rather than present a large overland map or hexploration of Plane of Wood wilderness, this chapter uses a downtime activity to represent the PCs' overall progress as they search for Zibik's speakers. The search for Zibik's speakers plays out over the course of several days through different regions of Plane of Wood wilderness, each of which contains its own challenges and obstacles. Each Search for Speakers downtime activity takes a minimum of 1 day. The PCs' success or failure determines when they find clues, whether they face dangerous wilderness hazards or other setbacks, how much they're exposed to Ayrzul's Blight, and when they face combat. As they explore the wilderness near Cradle of Knot, the PCs can return to the town to rest and resupply as needed, so there's no need to track their resources; however, doing so costs them time.

### CHAPTER 3 SYNOPSIS

This chapter opens with the PCs learning how to search for Zibik in the wilderness near Cradle of Knot by seeking his “speakers.” They set out into the hinterlands to find these speakers, exploring a mix of healthy wilderness and regions that have regrown thanks to Zibik's efforts. They witness the marvels of the Plane of Wood, confront its perils, provide further aid to Cradle of Knot, and eventually find what they seek. The PCs meet a druid from their own world and learn that Ruzadoya plans to petition Zibik to bring Ayrzul's Blight to Andoran and Taldor and usher in a new era of growth for the Verduran Forest. They also learn that a group of cruel bugbears under Ruzadoya's command are hunting Zibik's speakers for some sinister purpose.

The PCs continue their search, eventually learning enough to pinpoint Zibik's location within the nearby blighted wilderness. The PCs must enter a region of strange petrified passages that grow on the Plane of Wood like a cancer, presenting the most dangerous region the PCs have explored in their journey thus far. When they reach the heart of the blight, they battle Ruzadoya and confront Zibik, who's already begun to believe the warmongering graveknight's lies!



### RUNNING THE EXPLORATION

There are four regions the PCs must explore to find speakers in spores: the Cradle hinterlands, the flourishing woods, the withered morass, and the blighted borderlands. They should begin with checks to Search for Speakers in the Cradle hinterlands where Errashid left them. Each region where a speaker is reported to be in is within a day's travel from Cradle of Knot, so the PCs can explore the remaining regions in any order, and they can return to town in between their searches if they choose.

When the PCs set out to explore a region, read or paraphrase the region's read aloud text entry to inform the players about the dangers their characters will face and the sort of terrain they must traverse. Each region includes options for an Exploration check; describe these options to the PCs, including the DCs, so the players are aware of each option's relative difficulty. Then have each player attempt a check. The number

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of points determines the outcome of their exploration (see Success or Failure below).

Based on each region's description, the players might come up with creative solutions to navigate strange terrain, overcome obstacles, or search an area more quickly or safely. Rather than forcing players to attempt checks no matter what, if a player proposes an especially creative solution, consider allowing it to work, perhaps granting that PC an automatic success for the day or granting them a small circumstance bonus to their check.

## SEARCH FOR SPEAKERS

### DOWNTIME

You contribute your efforts to the day's search for Zibik's speakers, whether by helping directly, by looking out for danger, by navigating terrain, or by keeping companions safe and healthy. Choose an option from the current region's Exploration skills and attempt a check against the listed DC.

**Critical Success** The party gains 2 Search Points.

**Success** The party gains 1 Search Point.

**Failure** The party loses 1 Search Point.

## Success or Failure

Once each PC attempts a check to Search for Speakers, compare the number of Search Points the PCs earned for that region to the thresholds to determine how long it takes to find the speaker in spores in that region as well as what else the PCs encounter during their exploration.

Increase each region's Search Point thresholds if there are more than four PCs in the party: 0–3/4–5/–6–10 for five PCs and 0–3/4–6/7–12 for six PCs.

To learn how to find Zibik, the PCs must Search for Speakers in each of the four regions mentioned. After they Search for Speakers in the final region, **Event 9: Bonebleacher Ambush** occurs. Then the PCs can travel to the Blighted Labyrinth and confront Ruzadoya.

## Tracking Time

Keep track of how many days pass between when the PCs first encounter one of Zibik's speakers and when they reach the Blighted Labyrinth. Their success or failure in a given region determines how long it takes to Search for Speakers in that region. Add 1 day to the total each time the PCs return to Cradle of Knot to rest or resupply, and add more days if the PCs spend downtime on other activities. The total number of days impacts how much time Ruzadoya has to sway Zibik, thus making things harder for the PCs if they take too long to find his speakers.

You can intersperse other minor encounters (page 55) throughout the exploration to expand this portion of the adventure. Some encounters impact the amount of time the PCs spend exploring but might also grant them bonuses and rewards.

## CRADLE HINTERLANDS

The woods near Cradle of Knot teem with young trees and other plants bolstered by small amounts of strange, glowing fungus. Knot dwellers go about their business not far from here, relatively safe from the dangers of the wilds thanks to the proximity to Cradle of Knot and its protectors. Exploring this area requires careful focus on the ways the plants grow in inconsistent patterns, the ability to ask for help from Knot dwellers, and avoidance of the area's wildlife.

## CRADLE HINTERLANDS

**Exploration Checks** DC 29 Survival to avoid wildlife, DC 31 Diplomacy to ask for help, DC 31 Society to recognize patterns caused by Knot dweller activity, or DC 33 Nature to observe spores

**Fewer than 0 Search Points** It would almost be easier if this region were more remote. The activity in the area obscures the patterns of plant growth and prevents the fungus from taking hold as well as it could. The search takes 4 days to complete.

**0–2 Search Points** The PCs occasionally get turned around as they search for signs of Zibik's speaker. The search takes 3 days to complete.

**3–4 Search Points** The PCs only get lost once during their search. The search takes 2 days to complete.

**5–6 Search Points** The PCs quickly discern which areas have the strongest presence of spores and make their way straight to Zibik's speaker. The search takes 1 day to complete.

**Search Results:** When the PCs complete their search, they discover a hidden hollow in an otherwise normal tree. The thick, purple spores in the area originate from something in this hollow. What first looks like a large stag is curled up in the hollowed trunk, but a closer inspection reveals the creature is made entirely of fungus. While this creature was once a healthy speaker in spores (page 85), it's been dead for some time, murdered by Ruzadoya's Bonebleacher allies.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 25 Medicine check notices burns on the dead creature's flank. On a critical success, the PC discerns that magical fire caused the burns.

A PC who succeeds at a DC 29 Survival check notices signs that someone rested here recently—there





are clawed footprints and indications that someone slept on a nearby bed of moss, though there's no camp, equipment, or cooking spot to speak of.

**Creatures:** The Pathfinder **Genzalaz** (male lizardfolk Vigilant Seal druid) observes the PCs from the nearby overgrown underbrush. Genzalaz was a friend of Tilismaine, and the two worked together to study and maintain the wards across the Isle of Arenway that kept the horrors of the Feywrithe at bay. Erroneously believing that Ruzadoya would understand the importance of their work, Genzalaz entreated her to allow the work to continue.

The single-minded graveknight had other plans. She saw the value in bringing along an expert in planar wards and alien minds when she traveled to the Plane of Wood. She captured Tilismaine, and when Tilismaine's attempt to escape resulted in the druid's grisly demise, Ruzadoya figured Genzalaz would have to do. Genzalaz initially helped Ruzadoya navigate Cradle of Knot and find allies, but when he had a chance to escape, he took it. He has been trying to stay safe, and he has taken to surviving in the hinterlands and spying on the Bonebleachers to learn what he can about Ruzadoya's plan. Knowing he can't stop her alone, Genzalaz decides to speak with the PCs.

When the PCs notice him with a successful DC 25 Perception check, or after they look around for a few minutes, Genzalaz comes out from his hiding spot. He's tall with bright red and orange scales that don't do much to help him blend in with the surroundings, so he wears a makeshift cloak of moss and twigs. He carries a gnarled staff decorated with bones and river stones set in organic patterns along its length. He addresses the PCs in Common.

"I'm afraid you're too late for this one. But there are others, and you may have time to find them before the Bonebleachers do. Assuming, of course, you're also enemies of Ruzadoya Swiftmane."

Genzalaz lowers his staff as soon as the PCs indicate their shared enmity of Ruzadoya. He's willing to share who he is, his role on the Isle, and how he got here, as described above. He adds that he always suspected Ruzadoya intended to kill him the moment he didn't prove useful enough, so he fled before she got the chance—while he's certainly more of a diplomat than her, he's no expert in the Plane

of Wood. "It's a wonder I've managed to survive this long, heh! But nature is nature, even when it's another world's nature."

Below are some questions the PCs might have for Genzalaz along with his answers. You can weave this information into the conversation even if the PCs don't ask direct or specific questions.

### What do you know about Ruzadoya and her plans?

"Somehow, while on the Isle of Arenway, Ruzadoya formed a connection with a green man—also known as a leshy king to some—named Zibik. She claims he spoke to her directly and believes that her undeath is the result of her conviction and a sign of this Zibik's favor. She often spoke of cycles of decay and regrowth and talked about Andoran and Taldor

like they were diseases that could only be cured through death and rebirth. Now, she's looking for Zibik and plans to petition his aid in this plan. She wants him to bring a ravaging disease to Golarion to usher in a new era of death and rebirth... but she knows she needs to convince him, and she'll do anything to get her way. While she goes to speak with Zibik directly, she's sent the Bonebleachers to kill his speakers. If Zibik believes creatures from Golarion are a threat, she thinks he'll be more inclined to side with her. This speaker was one of their victims, and they're looking for others."

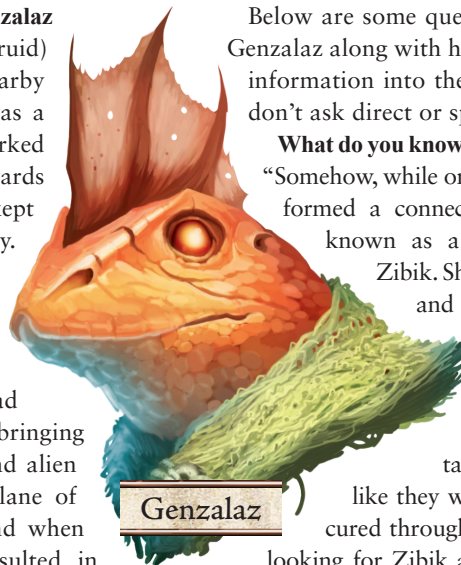
### What can you tell us about the Bonebleachers?

"They're a group of bugbears who quickly joined Ruzadoya's cause after she took over the Wildwood Lodge. They're especially fond of skulking about and experimenting with toxins. Thankfully there are only a few of them left. Their aggressive tactics haven't always worked out for them, but they're still quite dangerous."

**Why didn't you show yourself before?** "I didn't know about you. This isn't the place or situation to lend trust too freely. Also, I've been in hiding, pursued across the wilderness by those murderous bugbears since I made my escape. Sorry about that."

**Can you help us?** "Yes. Though this speaker is dead, it retains a small connection to Zibik. If I remain here, I can tend to the fungus. Bring spore samples from other speakers back to me—whether they're given willingly or taken from dead speakers, either will work. If we gather enough here, I believe we'll be able to use them as a sort of compass to locate Zibik. As for helping you fight Ruzadoya, I have a gift... but I'm not much of a combatant."

**Treasure:** Genzalaz gives the PCs a *greater primeval mistletoe*.



Genzalaz

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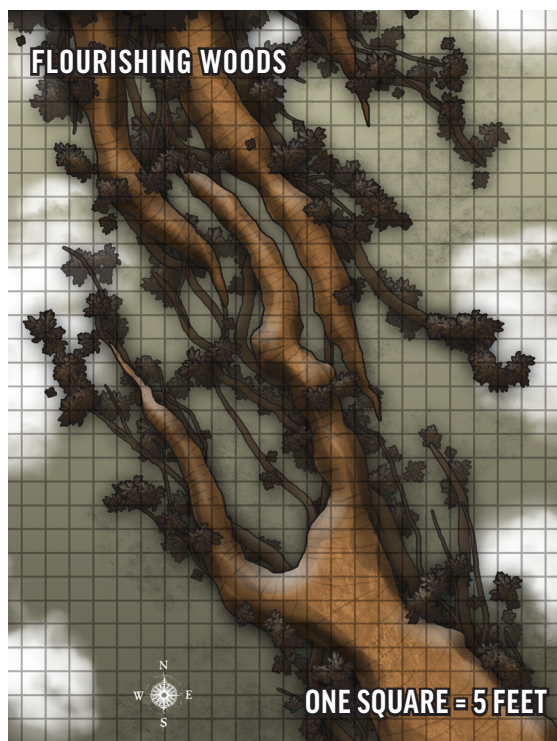
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## Genzalaz Under Attack

Moderate 13

Even though Genzalaz tries to stay out of sight while the PCs explore other regions, he eventually falls afoul of other blighted threats in the area. When the PCs return with samples from the second of three speakers in spores, they find ghostly assailants circling the thicket where Genzalaz was hiding earlier.

**Creatures:** While many who die while patrolling this region either decay or mutate into blighted elementals, the harsh conditions are also conducive to spontaneously creating undead.

Several ardande explorers from Cradle of Knot perished during a terrible storm decades ago, and their traumatized spirits remained as ghosts that haunt the area.

Once they spotted Genzalaz, this ghostly trio swooped down. They insistently tried to warn him to leave, but when he hesitated, they took insult. The ghosts have been hounding the lizardfolk for most of an hour by the time the PCs arrive, peppering Genzalaz with assurances that this wilderness will be his doom.

With the PCs' arrival, the ghosts briefly lose interest in Genzalaz. They fly toward the PCs to intercept them atop a wide bough. As they did with Genzalaz, the ghosts shout ominous warnings in Muan, urging the PCs to flee to safety and never return—potentially chasing the PCs all the way to Cradle of Knot, which isn't an option if the PCs intend to chase Ruzadoya.

However, if a PC Makes an Impression on the hostile ghosts with a successful DC 33 Diplomacy check, the now unfriendly ghosts repeat their demands with less urgency; in the imminent combat, the two ardande ghosts gain the weak adjustment (*Monster Core* 7), reflecting their hesitance.

If the PC critically succeeds at the Diplomacy check, the ghosts become calm enough to offer advice about the remaining region, granting the PCs a +1 circumstance bonus to Exploration checks there. If asked, the ghosts can also offer vague memories of their past lives and connections to loved ones who might still live in Cradle of Knot. At the GM's discretion, these details might provide the PCs enough information to permanently destroy the ghosts later, though doing so is beyond the scope of this adventure. After a brief conversation, the ghosts then depart to continue patrolling the Plane of Wood.

Unless fully mollified, the ghosts attack the PCs. The phytomancer ghost hovers a short distance away to blast the PCs with spells, periodically using *Memory of Leaves* to shield their allies. The two ardande ghosts engage the PCs in melee, causing their foes to relive the devastating effects of Ayrzul's Blight.

## ARDANDE GHOSTS (2)

CREATURE 11

RARE MEDIUM GHOST INCORPOREAL SPIRIT UNDEAD UNHOLY WOOD

**Perception** +21; darkvision

**Languages** Muan

**Skills** Acrobatics +23, Nature +19, Stealth +21

**Str** -5, **Dex** +6, **Con** +3, **Int** +2, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +6

**AC** 30; **Fort** +22, **Ref** +24, **Will** +15

**HP** 150, rejuvenation (*Monster Core* 160), void healing (*Monster Core* 360); **Immunities** bleed, death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, precision, unconscious; **Resistances** all damage 10 (except force, ghost touch, spirit, or vitality; double resistance vs. non-magical)

**Speed** fly 25 feet

**Melee** ♦ ghostly hand +23 (agile, finesse, magical),

**Damage** 2d10+13 void plus phantom blight

**Corrupting Gaze** ♦♦ The ghost stares at a creature it can see within 30 feet. The target takes 6d6 void damage with a DC 30 basic Will save. A creature that fails its save is also stupefied 1 for 1 minute.

**Phantom Blight** (mental, poison) **Saving Throw** Fortitude DC 30; **Maximum Duration** 6 rounds; **Stage 1** 3d6 mental damage and clumsy 1 (1 round); **Stage 2** 4d6 mental damage and clumsy 1 (1 round); **Stage 3** 5d6 mental damage and clumsy 1, plus the creature takes a -2 penalty to saving throws against Ayrzul's Blight for 24 hours (1 round)





## PHYTOMANCER GHOST

CREATURE 13

UNIQUE MEDIUM GHOST INCORPOREAL SPIRIT UNDEAD UNHOLY WOOD

**Perception** +23; darkvision

**Languages** Arboreal, Muan

**Skills** Acrobatics +22, Nature +26, Plane of Wood Lore +25, Stealth +22

**Str** -5, **Dex** +5, **Con** +5, **Int** +2, **Wis** +7, **Cha** +6

**AC** 33; **Fort** +26, **Ref** +20, **Will** +23

**HP** 180, rejuvenation (*Monster Core* 160), void healing (*Monster Core* 360); **Immunities** bleed, death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, precision, unconscious; **Resistances** all damage 10 (except force, *ghost touch*, spirit, or vitality; double resistance vs. non-magical)

**Speed** fly 25 feet

**Melee** ♦ ghostly hand +25 (agile, finesse, magical), **Damage** 2d10+13 void

**Primal Innate Spells** DC 33, attack +25; **7th** *execute*, *pollen pods* (*Rage of Elements* 197); **6th** *lignify* (*Rage of Elements* 197), *tangling creepers*; **5th** *life-draining roots* (*Rage of Elements* 196), *toxic cloud*; **Cantrips (7th)** *detect magic*, *tangle vine*, *timber* (*Rage of Elements* 198)

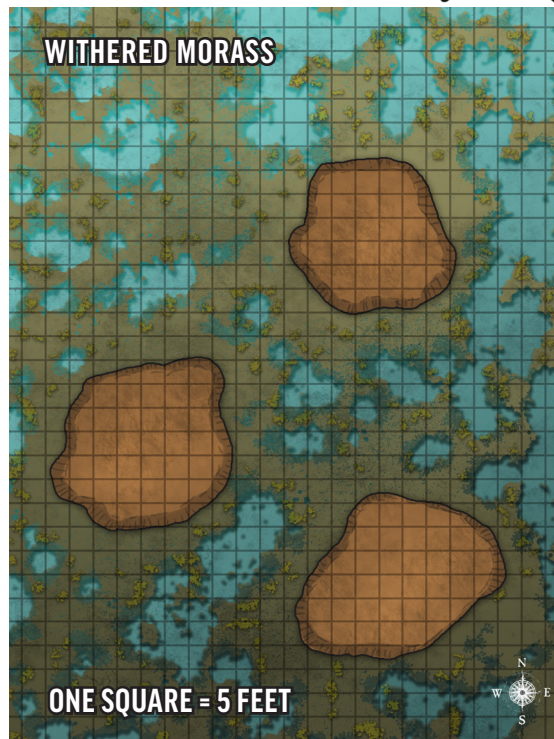
**Frightful Moan** ♦ (auditory, divine, emotion, fear, mental) The ghost laments its fate, forcing each living creature within 30 feet to attempt a DC 33 Will save. On a failure, a creature becomes frightened 2 (or frightened 3 on a critical failure). On a success, a creature is temporarily immune to this ghost's Frightful Moan for 1 minute.

**Memory of Leaves** ♦ (plant, primal, wood) The ghost mourns its verdant birthplace, creating a swirling cloud of phantom leaves as a 20-foot emanation until the end of its next turn. All creatures within the emanation become concealed, and all creatures outside the emanation become concealed to creatures within it. Creatures with the plant or wood traits ignore this concealment. The ghost can't use Memory of Leaves again for 1d4 rounds.

**Development:** Once the ghosts are out of the picture, Genzalaz emerges from hiding, thanking the PCs profusely and promising to redouble his precautions to avoid future trouble. He then happily accepts any spores they've recovered and returns to work preparing the spores.

## FLOURISHING WOODS MODERATE TO SEVERE 13

Near Cradle of Knot lies a vast expanse of formerly blighted woods that have since recovered. Now, after many years of rampant growth, the area is thriving. It teems with wildlife and tremendous plants. Everything here is enormous, presenting interesting ways to navigate terrain (such as by reaching great heights on rapidly growing vines, then swinging across to



another massive tree) as well as unique hazards (such as greatsword-sized helicopter seeds that are sharp as steel). The region is known to be home to wild wood elementals, many of them quite dangerous.

## FLOURISHING WOODS

**Exploration Checks** DC 29 Nature to watch for elementals, DC 31 Acrobatics to navigate strange terrain, DC 31 Athletics to Climb precarious trees, or DC 33 Perception to spot spores from a good vantage point.

**Fewer than 0 Search Points** The PCs frequently lose time as they take shelter from enormous falling seeds, backtrack after getting lost, hide from wild elementals, or climb great heights only to realize they've reached a dead end. The PCs stumble into the territory of a pair of timberwebs. The search takes 4 days to complete.

**0-2 Search Points** The PCs must regularly take detours as they come to dead ends. The PCs encounter two timberwebs at some point during their exploration. The search takes 3 days to complete.

**3-4 Search Points** The PCs' exploration is uneventful except for an encounter with one timberweb—they manage to avoid the second one. The search takes 2 days to complete.

**5-6 Search Points** The PCs notice a timberweb before approaching its territory and have the choice of fighting it or avoiding it. The search takes 1 day to complete.

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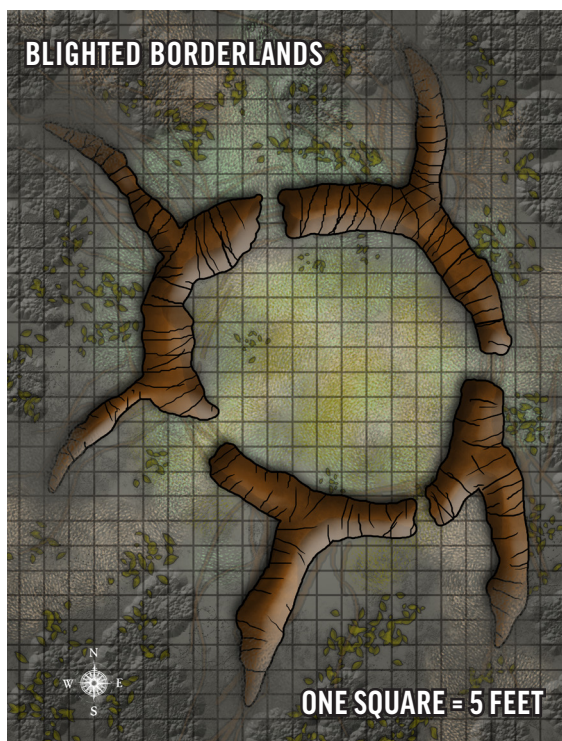
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The encounter in this area uses the Flourishing Woods map on page 50.

**Creatures:** The PCs might encounter one or more timberwebs as they traverse this region. These creatures fight to defend their territory, but they are ultimately skittish creatures and flee if reduced to fewer than 40 Hit Points.

### TIMBERWEBS (1 OR 2)

### CREATURE 14

Page 87

**Initiative** Perception +25

**Search Results:** After fighting or avoiding the elementals and completing their search, the PCs find a healthy speaker in spores (page 85) that looks something like a mix between a massive pig and a beetle. It spends most of its time relaxing in the branches of an especially tall tree, which it's trying to grow high enough that it merges with the roots of the trees far above—a process that's likely to take many more years. It hasn't had direct contact with Zibik or any other talking creatures in decades, and it's quite curious about the PCs. If a PC succeeds at a DC 33 Diplomacy check to Make an Impression or a DC 31 Religion check to Recall Knowledge about Zibik's edicts, the speaker agrees to give the PCs a sample of its spores to help them find Zibik. Otherwise, the PCs must spend an extra day gathering food and performing other tasks for the

speaker before it agrees to provide a sample. The speaker has no interest in accompanying the PCs or otherwise deviating from its purpose, though if they mention that it's in danger, it agrees to hide for a while.

**Treasure:** If a PC succeeds at one of the above checks, the speaker gives the PCs a rare bitterroot that functions as a major antiplague elixir if eaten.

### WITHERED MORASS

### LOW TO SEVERE 13

Not far from Cradle of Knot, the healthy plants and gently sloped root terrain give way to a desolate expanse of filthy bog. The thick, humid air is full of earthy smells and decaying plant matter, and mutated plants grow everywhere. A few landmarks aid in navigation, though the lack of trees allows careful observation of the “constellations” of light-producing plants in the sky above. Keen eyesight can help see across great distances, while knowledge of plants and the ability to track wild creatures can help avoid dangerous mutants.

### WITHERED MORASS

**Exploration Checks** DC 29 Plane of Wood or Sailing Lore to navigate using otherworldly constellations, DC 31 Nature or Survival to orientate by conventional clues, or DC 33 Perception to spot trails.

**Fewer than 0 Search Points** Sucking mud and collapsing paths of rotten wood plague the PCs as they explore this region. Their hapless travels take 4 days to complete, during which they attract a coiled conifer, four spitting sawflies, and a swarm of creeping cones that sense weak prey and converge on the PCs.

**0-2 Search Points** As above, but the PCs avoid more of the hazardous terrain, attracting fewer foes; the PCs encounter only three spitting sawflies in addition to the other creatures. The search takes 3 days to complete.

**3-4 Search Points** As above, but the PCs encounter only two spitting sawflies in addition to the other creatures. The search takes 2 days to complete.

**5-6 Search Points** As above, but the PCs navigate the region far more quickly and manage to draw most of the dangerous creatures out of their path. The PCs encounter only one spitting sawfly in addition to the other creatures. The search takes 1 day to complete.

The encounter in this area uses the Withered Morass map on page 51.

**Creatures:** Based on the number of Search Points they earn, the PCs encounter a coiled conifer, a creeping cone swarm, and some or all of the spitting sawflies below. These mutants fight to the death.





### COILED CONIFER

CREATURE 13

Page 81

**Initiative** Perception +21

### SPITTING SAWFLIES (4)

CREATURE 10

Page 80

**Initiative** Perception +19

### CREEPING CONE SWARM

CREATURE 10

Page 80

**Initiative** Perception +18

**Search Results:** After defeating the mutants and completing their exploration, the PCs find another dead speaker in spores in this location. This one once resembled a heron, but its body was withered and sickly even before its death. Burns cover its body, and several pieces have been cut off. A PC must attempt a DC 31 Thievery check to avoid touching blighted plant material as they gather what's left of the spores. On a failure, the PC is exposed to Ayrzul's Blight (page 33).

**Treasure:** If the PCs report the destruction of the coiled conifer while in Cradle of Knot, Raba Fen awards them for eliminating a source of blighted creature attacks with *greater bands of force*. Furthermore, Raba affixes a *greater resilient rune* to one PC's armor.

### BLIGHTED BORDERLANDS LOW TO MODERATE 13

While some regions around Cradle of Knot are mutated wastes, and others flourish, this wide stretch of blighted wilderness is filled with decay. Mold and disease grow on everything, marring the region's former splendor. Expertise in crafting makeshift protective gear can ward off toxins, while knowledge of disease can help avoid contact with anything dangerous. Keen eyes or knowledge of plants can help spot the original fractal growth patterns in the mutated wilderness.

### BLIGHTED BORDERLANDS

**Exploration Checks** DC 29 Medicine or DC 31 Crafting to stave off toxins while traveling, or DC 31 Perception or DC 33 Nature to study the fractal paths.

**Fewer than 0 Search Points** The PCs navigate the blighted wilderness haphazardly. Each PC is exposed to Ayrzul's Blight (page 33) on the third day when they accidentally travel near a mutated giant dandelion that bursts with blighted seeds upon their approach. The search takes 4 days to complete, at which point the PCs encounter a blighted speaker in spores and two elemental thickets.

**0-2 Search Points** The PCs manage to avoid exposing themselves to Ayrzul's Blight through careful navigation. The search takes 3 days to complete,

at which point the PCs encounter a blighted speaker in spores and two elemental thickets.

**3-4 Search Points** The attempt at exploration is uneventful. The search takes 2 days to complete, at which point the PCs encounter a blighted speaker in spores and one elemental thicket.

**5-6 Search Points** The attempt at exploration is uneventful. The search takes 1 day to complete, at which point the PCs encounter a blighted speaker in spores on its own.

The encounter in this area uses the Blighted Borderlands map on page 52.

**Creatures:** The blighted speaker in spores attacks the PCs when they enter its territory. Based on the number of Search Points they earned, the PCs might also encounter elemental thickets. These creatures are spontaneously generated mutants of twisted plant matter that spring from the ground immediately before initiative is rolled, and they fight to defend the speaker.

### BLIGHTED SPEAKER IN SPORES

CREATURE 13

Page 85

**Initiative** Perception +25

### ELEMENTAL THICKETS (0 TO 2)

CREATURE 11

*Pathfinder Rage of Elements* 210

**Initiative** Perception +24



Speaker in Spores

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**Search Results:** The blighted speaker in spores leaves a cloud of spores behind when it dies.

**Treasure:** A PC who Searches the area finds a dead Bonebleacher bugbear who underestimated their quarry. Their body and much of their gear are in tatters and strewn about, though the PCs find a *greater healing potion* and a *greater carver-cutter* (*Rage of Elements* 201) that the bugbear looted from a dead woodcutter.

### EVENT 9: BONEBLEACHER AMBUSH MODERATE 13

A few minutes after the PCs wrap up combat in the final region they explored, a group of Bonebleacher bugbears sneak up and try to ambush them. This encounter uses whichever map is used in the region the PCs just explored.

**Creatures:** The PCs face all that remains of the Bonebleacher bugbears—several others died in their search for Zibik's speakers, and these three are no less willing to die in service to Ruzadoya. The Bonebleachers wear heavy cloaks and disturbing

masks designed to intimidate as much as to filter toxins. The bugbears' battle axes make quick work of wood elementals and similar creatures, and they gleefully hack at such foes. Against enemies who can be poisoned, each bugbear uses whatever tactics they can to expose foes to poison as rapidly as possible, such as catching a group unawares in the first round with Poison Spray or using Twin Feint to Strike them with a poisoned hatchet.

### BONEBLEACHER BUGBEARS (3)

CREATURE 12

RARE MEDIUM BUGBEAR HUMANOID

Bugbear poisoners

**Perception** +25; darkvision, scent (30 feet)

**Languages** Common, Fey, Goblin

**Skills** Acrobatics +22, Athletics +25, Crafting +21, Intimidation +25, Stealth +27, Survival +22

**Str** +6, **Dex** +4, **Con** +4, **Int** +2, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +0

**Items** +1 resilient explorer's clothing, +2 flaming battle axe, bogeyman's breath (1 dose; page 76), hatchets (3), reaper's shadow (2 doses; page 76), plague mask<sup>LOGB</sup>

**AC** 31; **Fort** +25, **Ref** +23, **Will** +19

**HP** 220

**Blighted Cloak** ➤ **Trigger** A creature adjacent to the Bonebleacher bugbear hits them with a melee Strike; **Effect** The triggering creature is exposed to Ayrzul's Blight (page 33). The bugbear can't use Blighted Cloak again until they spend 10 minutes applying blighted plant matter to their cloak.

**Speed** 25 feet

**Melee** ➤ battle axe +26 (sweep), **Damage** 1d8+12 slashing plus 1d6 fire

**Melee** ➤ hatchet +24 (agile, sweep), **Damage** 1d6+12 slashing

**Ranged** ➤ hatchet +22 (agile, sweep, thrown 10 feet), **Damage** 1d6+12 slashing

**Pinpoint Poisoner** When the Bonebleacher bugbear successfully Strikes an off-guard creature with a poisoned weapon or exposes an off-guard creature to an inhaled poison, the creature takes a -2 circumstance penalty to its initial save against that poison.

**Poison Spray** ➤ **Requirements** The Bonebleacher bugbear is holding a contact or injury poison; **Effect** The Bonebleacher bugbear attaches the poison container to a nozzle on their mask, which then sprays the poison from the mask in a 15-foot cone. The bugbear isn't exposed to the poison. All creatures in the cone are immediately exposed to the poison, and each creature must attempt a Fortitude save against the poison.

**Sneak Attack** The Bonebleacher bugbear deals an additional 2d6 precision damage to off-guard creatures.

**Twin Feint** ➤➤ **Requirements** The Bonebleacher bugbear



Bonebleacher Bugbear



is wielding two melee weapons, each in a different hand; **Effect** The Bonebleacher bugbear makes a dazzling series of attacks with two weapons, using the first attack to throw their foe off-guard against a second attack at a different angle. They make one Strike with each of their two melee weapons, both against the same target. The target is automatically off-guard against the second attack. Apply the bugbear's multiple attack penalty to the Strikes normally.

**Development:** The PCs might capture one or more Bonebleachers alive. If they convince a Bonebleacher to talk, the captive curses them for standing in the way of "a new era for the people of the Verduran Forest." The Bonebleachers are fanatically devoted to Ruzadoya, having been some of the first to witness her new powers as an undead. They also witnessed her speak through the portal to a demigod in another world and call forth his primal wardens. To the Bonebleachers, these signs clearly indicate that Ruzadoya has a divine mandate to wipe out her enemies. They proudly speak of Ruzadoya's various accomplishments, and they eagerly await her return with Zibik—you can use this captive as an opportunity to emphasize that there are many who not only agree with Ruzadoya's destructive plan, but are willing to lay down their lives to see it come to fruition.

The Bonebleachers can't help the PCs find Ruzadoya. While Ruzadoya relies on the bugbears to perform important tasks, the devotion isn't mutual; she assumed they would all die in the course of hunting Zibik's speakers without her aid, and she didn't tell them precisely where to find her once they finished their work.

**Treasure:** One of the Bonebleachers has a *spacious pouch type IV* filled with dozens of empty poison vials and grisly trophies.

## MINOR ENCOUNTERS

To extend this portion of the adventure or add flavor during the PCs' journey through the Plane of Wood, you can intersperse the following minor encounters between other more significant ones.

**Varroch's Reward:** If the PCs successfully helped Varroch gather sap from the fungal lattice, Varroch asks them to visit the Gnarled Gardens after they've been exploring for a few days. Varroch found out how to use the sap to create an antidote; while it's

disgusting, it gets the job done. Varroch gives the PCs one major antidote elixir.

**Scolding Sprout:** A wandering Iomori sprout admonishes the PCs when they're about to travel through an expansive valley filled with tiny, fragile trees, each no larger than a blade of grass. Going around adds a full day to the PCs' travel time, but if each PC crosses the tiny forest without damaging it (such as by flying, by succeeding at a DC 30 Acrobatics check to Balance, or by succeeding at a DC 32 Nature check to discover a safe path), the sprout is pleased. It helps them look for the next speaker, granting the PCs 1 Search Point the next time they Search for Speakers.

**New Arrivals:** As the PCs search for Zibik's speakers, enough time might pass that more of their Rootweft allies arrive in Cradle of Knot. These arrivals present new roleplaying opportunities as the PCs help their allies settle in and might provide additional benefits or rewards based on the NPCs who travel to the Plane of Wood.

If any of the PCs developed a particularly close relationship with any of those NPCs, this opportunity for roleplaying could provide a welcome respite from the dangers of the Plane of Wood and could allow the PCs to express something important to one of the NPCs before this adventure's conclusion.

**Rowan Protector:** A twins of rowan (*Rage of Elements* 211) confronts the PCs in the wilderness and demands they explain their activities. If the PCs can't increase the elemental's attitude from hostile to indifferent, the twins of rowan attacks them.

## A Path to Zibik

Once the PCs have gathered spore samples from each of the four regions and faced the Bonebleacher ambush, they can return to the Cradle hinterlands and meet with Genzalaz.

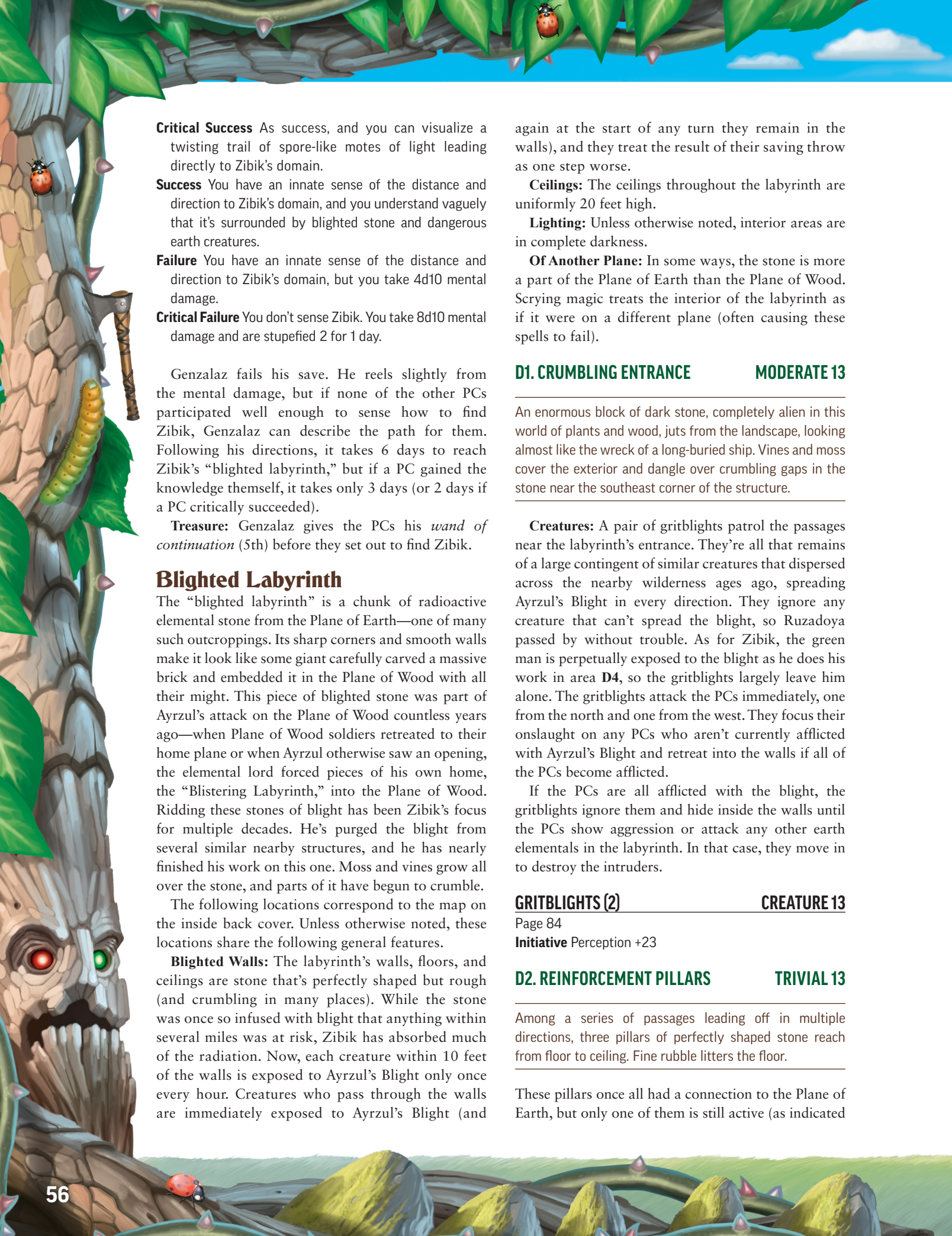
The druid sets about performing a meditative ceremony to reach out and connect with Zibik's mind; any PC who wishes to join him can do so. The ceremony involves mixing the spores into a wooden bowl, humming a guttural melody, and then blowing the spores from the bowl while tracking in which direction they drift.

This ceremony takes 1 hour and involves breathing the spores, which are cloying but harmless. Each PC participating in the ceremony must attempt a DC 29 Will save, with the following results.



Zibik's Plants





**Critical Success** As success, and you can visualize a twisting trail of spore-like motes of light leading directly to Zibik's domain.

**Success** You have an innate sense of the distance and direction to Zibik's domain, and you understand vaguely that it's surrounded by blighted stone and dangerous earth creatures.

**Failure** You have an innate sense of the distance and direction to Zibik's domain, but you take 4d10 mental damage.

**Critical Failure** You don't sense Zibik. You take 8d10 mental damage and are stupefied 2 for 1 day.

Genzalaz fails his save. He reels slightly from the mental damage, but if none of the other PCs participated well enough to sense how to find Zibik, Genzalaz can describe the path for them. Following his directions, it takes 6 days to reach Zibik's "blighted labyrinth," but if a PC gained the knowledge themselves, it takes only 3 days (or 2 days if a PC critically succeeded).

**Treasure:** Genzalaz gives the PCs his *wand of continuation* (5th) before they set out to find Zibik.

## Blighted Labyrinth

The "blighted labyrinth" is a chunk of radioactive elemental stone from the Plane of Earth—one of many such outcroppings. Its sharp corners and smooth walls make it look like some giant carefully carved a massive brick and embedded it in the Plane of Wood with all their might. This piece of blighted stone was part of Ayrzul's attack on the Plane of Wood countless years ago—when Plane of Wood soldiers retreated to their home plane or when Ayrzul otherwise saw an opening, the elemental lord forced pieces of his own home, the "Blistering Labyrinth," into the Plane of Wood. Ridding these stones of blight has been Zibik's focus for multiple decades. He's purged the blight from several similar nearby structures, and he has nearly finished his work on this one. Moss and vines grow all over the stone, and parts of it have begun to crumble.

The following locations correspond to the map on the inside back cover. Unless otherwise noted, these locations share the following general features.

**Blighted Walls:** The labyrinth's walls, floors, and ceilings are stone that's perfectly shaped but rough (and crumbling in many places). While the stone was once so infused with blight that anything within several miles was at risk, Zibik has absorbed much of the radiation. Now, each creature within 10 feet of the walls is exposed to Ayrzul's Blight only once every hour. Creatures who pass through the walls are immediately exposed to Ayrzul's Blight (and

again at the start of any turn they remain in the walls), and they treat the result of their saving throw as one step worse.

**Ceilings:** The ceilings throughout the labyrinth are uniformly 20 feet high.

**Lighting:** Unless otherwise noted, interior areas are in complete darkness.

**Of Another Plane:** In some ways, the stone is more a part of the Plane of Earth than the Plane of Wood. Scrying magic treats the interior of the labyrinth as if it were on a different plane (often causing these spells to fail).

## D1. CRUMBLING ENTRANCE

MODERATE 13

An enormous block of dark stone, completely alien in this world of plants and wood, juts from the landscape, looking almost like the wreck of a long-buried ship. Vines and moss cover the exterior and dangle over crumbling gaps in the stone near the southeast corner of the structure.

**Creatures:** A pair of gritblights patrol the passages near the labyrinth's entrance. They're all that remains of a large contingent of similar creatures that dispersed across the nearby wilderness ages ago, spreading Ayrzul's Blight in every direction. They ignore any creature that can't spread the blight, so Ruzadoya passed by without trouble. As for Zibik, the green man is perpetually exposed to the blight as he does his work in area **D4**, so the gritblights largely leave him alone. The gritblights attack the PCs immediately, one from the north and one from the west. They focus their onslaught on any PCs who aren't currently afflicted with Ayrzul's Blight and retreat into the walls if all of the PCs become afflicted.

If the PCs are all afflicted with the blight, the gritblights ignore them and hide inside the walls until the PCs show aggression or attack any other earth elementals in the labyrinth. In that case, they move in to destroy the intruders.

## GRITBLIGHTS (2)

CREATURE 13

Page 84

**Initiative** Perception +23

## D2. REINFORCEMENT PILLARS

TRIVIAL 13

Among a series of passages leading off in multiple directions, three pillars of perfectly shaped stone reach from floor to ceiling. Fine rubble litters the floor.

These pillars once all had a connection to the Plane of Earth, but only one of them is still active (as indicated



on the map on the inside back cover). It constantly emits an ominous but barely perceptible thrumming noise like a river of gravel and sand—a PC only notices it if they have tremorsense or if they succeed at a DC 33 Perception check.

**Creatures:** When any living creature comes within 30 feet of the pillar, it calls four stone maulers from the Plane of Earth to defend the labyrinth. The maulers emerge from the pillar itself, immediately roll initiative, and attack any creatures that aren't native to the Plane of Earth. They use earth glide to get around any non-stone barriers the PCs might erect but otherwise use straightforward tactics. As an undead, Ruzadoya passed by the pillars undetected, but her last few living devotees triggered the arrival of reinforcements; the rubble are the remains of these elementals. Once the pillar activates, it must repair its connection to the Plane of Earth before it can call more elementals. This process takes 2d6 days.

## STONE MAULERS (4)

## CREATURE 9

*Pathfinder Monster Core 143*

**Initiative** Perception +16

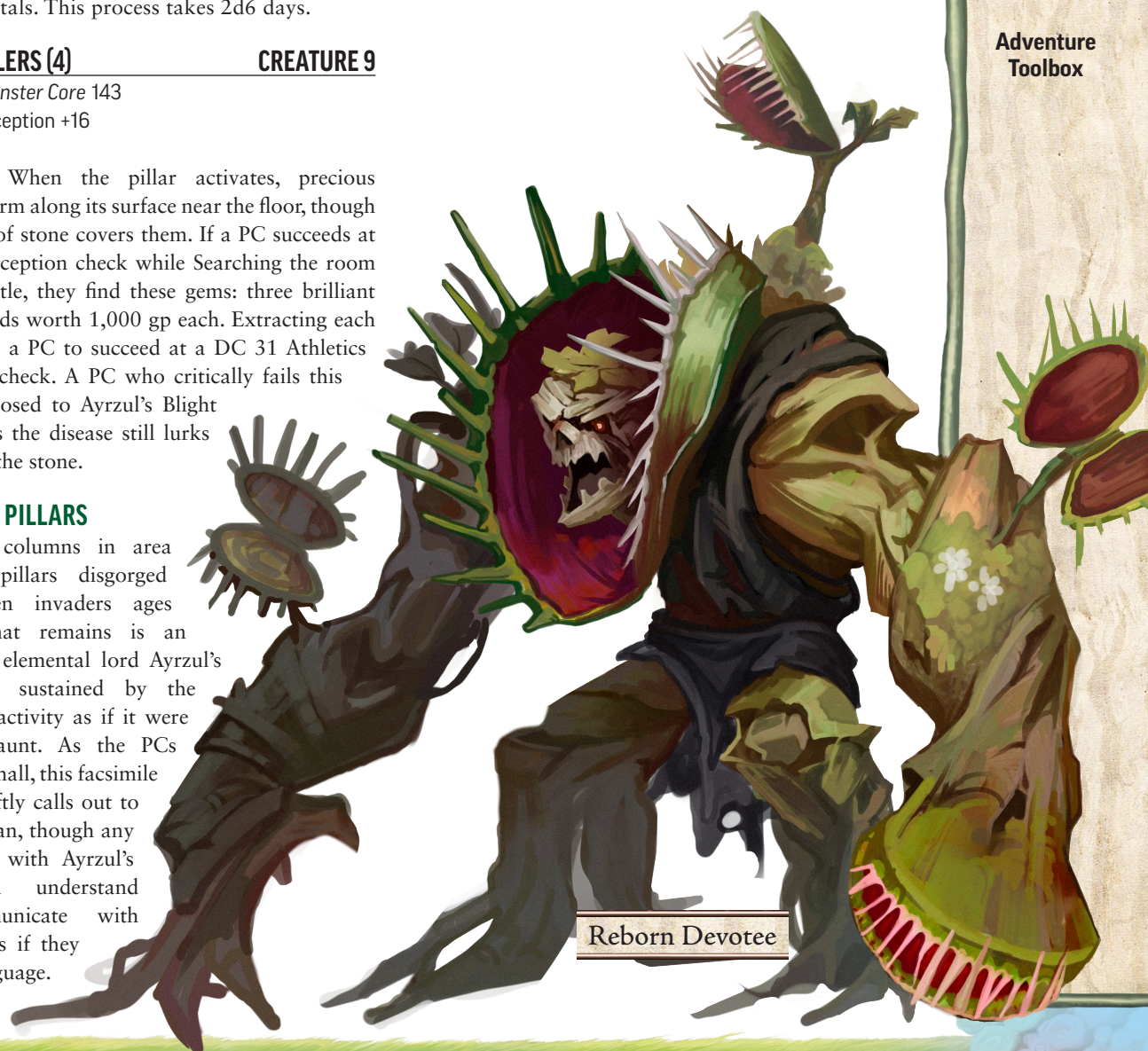
**Treasure:** When the pillar activates, precious gemstones form along its surface near the floor, though a thin layer of stone covers them. If a PC succeeds at a DC 31 Perception check while Searching the room after the battle, they find these gems: three brilliant green emeralds worth 1,000 gp each. Extracting each gem requires a PC to succeed at a DC 31 Athletics or Thievery check. A PC who critically fails this check is exposed to Ayrzul's Blight (page 33), as the disease still lurks deep within the stone.

## D3. HALL OF PILLARS

Unlike the columns in area D2, these pillars disgorged their earthen invaders ages ago. All that remains is an echo of the elemental lord Ayrzul's malevolence, sustained by the fading radioactivity as if it were a primal haunt. As the PCs traverse this hall, this facsimile of Ayrzul softly calls out to them in Petran, though any PC afflicted with Ayrzul's Blight can understand and communicate with this entity as if they shared a language.


The words thrum from the wall with subsonic force, felt more as an echo through one's bones than a noise heard through the ears. "Delves. Despoilers. Are you like the other fools who would court the Shepherd of Decay, seeking power?"

Ayrzul's facsimile communicates briefly with the PCs, seeking secrets—or better yet, a deal. Their likely responses and his reactions appear on page 58. The entity obscures its true motives: wanting to goad the PCs into fighting Zibik or otherwise convincing the green man to rampage about the PCs' home world. Either way, Zibik would depart the Plane of Wood and thereafter allow the blight to regain its strength and consume more of the Plane of Wood, enabling Ayrzul to resume conquering the plane. The entity made a brief attempt to convince Ruzadoya earlier, but she was too focused to even acknowledge the offer. As the



Reborn Devotee





PCs converse, they can sense Ayrzul's overall objective with a successful DC 36 Perception check.

**Who are you?** "A spirit. A spirit of this land overcome by blight. Zibik has deemed me a lost cause, worthy only of destruction. He is killing me even now." This is an utter lie, as the PCs can discern with a successful DC 36 Perception check. If challenged, the entity chuckles and admits to being Ayrzul (or what it thinks is Ayrzul). This revelation doesn't significantly change its other responses, as it still insists Zibik poses a major threat to the PCs and whatever they hold dear.

**We're seeking Zibik.** "Then you seek entropy itself. He will destroy all you love unless you destroy him first. By now, he surely knows enough to retrace your steps, inflicting your home with his decay."

**We want to stop Ruzadoya.** "A wise choice. Zibik's power would destroy her and ripple through any world she has ever touched. Better to nip that in the bud."

**How can we destroy Zibik?** "With my aid. I can offer you what little strength I have left if it means ending Zibik's destruction." If the PCs accept, the hallway shudders before a spiked mace sprouts from one of the columns. The entity offers parting words of "Strike true" before going silent.

If the PCs refuse—likely because they question their interlocutor's identity and motivations—the entity verifies whether they truly don't want its help before seething with anger. The hallway rumbles as the voice spits profanity in Petran, and the entity expends its remaining strength to curse the PCs. Each creature in the hallway is exposed to Ayrzul's Blight.

**Treasure:** The weapon is a morningstar infused with Ayrzul's unholy blessing, *Boughshatter* (page 79).

## D4. ZIBIK'S DOMAIN

## SEVERE 13

The walls here are made of thick, intertwined roots and vines, many of them petrified but some still green with life. The stone near the plants is cracked and weak, like it's slowly being eaten away. Moss, vines, and vibrant plants make the room look more like a lush forest than a stone chamber.

The slow replacement of stone with plant life is the result of Zibik's work in the region. As he absorbs the blight near each chunk of radioactive Plane of Earth material, he also constantly encourages new plants to grow. Much of it succumbs to the blight, becoming petrified, but he grows enough that the plants steadily consume the stone.

**Light:** Tiny flowering plants with glowing petals shed eerie dim light throughout this area.

**Walls:** The plant-walls of Zibik's domain feature small gaps, and the living parts of the walls can be pushed aside like thick underbrush. Zibik can walk through the walls of his domain unimpeded and can see creatures through them thanks to his plantsense. Other creatures treat these walls as greater difficult terrain, and they provide greater cover.

**Zibik's Plants:** Numerous strange, vibrantly colored plants grow here, as indicated on the map. These plants are Zibik's "pet projects." Each has an unusual but benign mutation resulting from his attention as he works against the blight. A PC can examine a plant (a 1-action activity with the concentrate trait) and discern its properties if they succeed at a DC 31 Medicine or Nature check. Any amount of damage destroys one of these fragile plants. Each plant has a unique effect when gently touched (requiring 2 consecutive Interact actions) and another effect if it takes damage or is stepped on.

### ZIBIK'S PLANTS

**Bright Red Ferns** A creature that touches the ferns becomes quickened 2 for 1 round, then quickened 1 for 1 round. When the ferns are destroyed, the triggering creature takes 8d4 fire damage (DC 31 basic Reflex save), plus 2d4 persistent fire damage on a failed save.

**Purple Mushrooms** A creature that touches the mushrooms can attempt a saving throw against any poison or disease they're currently afflicted with, improving the result by one step. When the mushrooms are destroyed, the triggering creature becomes sickened 2.

**Red Shrubs** A creature that touches the shrubs gains 6d4 temporary Hit Points. When the shrubs are destroyed, they target the triggering creature with a *lignify* spell (*Rage of Elements* 197; DC 33 Fortitude save).

**Creatures:** Zibik (page 90) lives in this area. He's currently tending to three strange fungal growths, each about 15 feet tall and wide, that grow in alcoves on the far east wall. He has spent several days engaged in lengthy conversations with Ruzadoya Swiftmane, who's also present. She's helping the green man tend the fungal growths by cutting away nearby roots with her scythe to keep them clear of petrified matter.

Ruzadoya wants Zibik to cease his work on the Plane of Wood and travel to the Verduran Forest to help her destroy her enemies. She doesn't care that he would likely bring Ayrzul's Blight with him—in fact, all the better! She believes a new era of destruction and regrowth in Avistan is the natural next step in her war.

To that end, Ruzadoya has been telling Zibik about the horrific damage that Andoran and Taldor have





inflicted on the natural environment. She has many examples of their aggression throughout history, and she hasn't even had to exaggerate them, though, of course, she adjusted her descriptions of recent conflicts to paint herself as a righteous victim whose actions are justified.

When the PCs reached out to find Zibik using the spores from his speakers, he told Ruzadoya that "others of your world are coming." Ruzadoya suspects Rootweft agents, and she sees their arrival as an opportunity to prove her argument—after all, only aggressive enemies of nature would travel to another plane to kill her. Only Zibik's enemies would kill his speakers (in fact the work of the Bonebleachers). Perhaps they even mean to attack Zibik himself!

Zibik likely became aware of the PCs' life essence as soon as they came within 60 feet of him, even if they were on the other side of a wall. He didn't tell Ruzadoya of their approach, wanting to observe her actions when others arrive.

As soon as she becomes aware of the PCs, Ruzadoya stops tending the fungi and addresses Zibik in Fey. "They've arrived! Invaders from my world, come to kill me, as I told you they would. Destroy them, Zibik! Crush these enemies of nature! Swat them like the little parasites they are, and we can carry on our work."

Zibik merely shrugs and replies, "I would hear them out. Come, Ruzadoya, tend to your friends. They need more time to grow." He gestures to the fungal growths, though he's watching the PCs carefully.

The three fungal growths are the regenerating bodies of some of Ruzadoya's devotees who were dying of Ayrzul's Blight when they arrived. Zibik healed them, but they insisted on remaining by Ruzadoya's side despite the presence of blight in the very walls surrounding them. To prove their devotion, they agreed to allow Zibik to transform them into something that could help devour the blight—a transformation that has yet to complete. Zibik is trying to transform them into speakers in spores, but in their current state, they're little more than mindless flesh-eating fungi. These monstrosities are much larger than the people they were in life; they each have four fungal stalks several feet thick and nearly 15 feet long, topped with wide mouths filled with gnashing humanoid teeth and nails. Face-like shapes are vaguely discernible along the stalks.

Combat with Ruzadoya is inevitable, but the first party to take aggressive action earns Zibik's disapproval, impacting the PCs' final confrontation with the green man.

If the PCs attack, combat begins immediately. As the combatants roll initiative, Ruzadoya shouts,

"Come, my devotees! Feast on your enemies!" Zibik is aghast and says, "No, it's too soon! Their healing is incomplete!" However, Ruzadoya ignores him. Her reborn devotees emerge from their fungal "pods" and join the battle, trying to eat whichever PCs they can get to. Though mindless, they instinctively obey Ruzadoya and won't harm her.

If the PCs don't attack—perhaps they want to try talking to Zibik—Ruzadoya grows frustrated and shouts, "Fine! If you won't destroy them, I'll prove my own strength!" Then she calls her devotees to the battle, as above.

Ruzadoya fights until destroyed. She begins the battle with a Withering Blast, then fights in melee as aggressively as possible, trying to root and grasp foes with her weapon and armor so that they remain within reach of her devotees' maws.

When combat breaks out, Zibik retreats to the edge of the room—or into the walls—and observes. If anyone includes Zibik or his plants in the area of a hostile spell they cast, or otherwise harms him or the unique plants in his domain, he joins the battle long enough to cast *flourishing flora* (*Rage of Elements* 196) heightened to rank 10 at the offending creature. Zibik fights back with all his strength against anyone who goes out of their way to attack him directly. The devotees aren't smart enough to avoid stepping on the plants if they happen to be in the way, but Ruzadoya is.

## RUZADOYA SWIFTMANE

CREATURE 14

Page 88

Initiative Perception +26

## REBORN DEVOTEES (3)

CREATURE 11

UNCOMMON HUGE FUNGUS MINDLESS MUTANT

Perception +19; tremorsense (imprecise) 60 feet

Skills Athletics +25, Stealth +23 (+26 in undergrowth)

Str +7, Dex +5, Con +5, Int -5, Wis +3, Cha -2

AC 31; Fort +21, Ref +19, Will +17

HP 120; Immunities mental; Resistances acid 10, poison 10;

Weaknesses fire 10


**Quick Capture** ➤ **Trigger** A creature hits or touches the reborn devotee; **Effect** The reborn devotee makes a stalk Strike against the triggering creature. If it hits, the creature is grabbed in that stalk.

**Speed** 25 feet

**Melee** ♦ stalk +25 (reach 15 feet), **Damage** 2d8+9 piercing plus 2d6 acid and Improved Grab (*Monster Core* 359)

**Focused Assault** ♦♦ The reborn devotee attacks a single target with four stalks, making one stalk Strike. On a success, the reborn devotee deals the damage from one





stalk Strike plus an additional 1d8 damage for every stalk beyond the first. On a failure, the reborn devotee deals the damage from one stalk Strike, but it can't use Improved Grab. It deals no damage on a critical failure. This counts toward the reborn devotee's multiple attack penalty as a number of attacks equal to the number of stalks the devotee has.

**Hungry Flurry** ♦♦ The reborn devotee makes four stalk Strikes at a -2 penalty, each against a different target. These attacks count toward the reborn devotee's multiple attack penalty, but the multiple attack penalty doesn't increase until after it makes all its attacks.

**Swallow Whole** ♦ (attack) Large, 2d8+5 bludgeoning plus 2d6 acid, Rupture 17 (*Monster Core* 360)

## EVENT 10: AVERTING ZIBIK'S WRATH

When the PCs finally defeat Ruzadoya and eliminate the last of her devotees, Zibik emerges. "So. Ruzadoya Swiftmane was right; you came to kill her. Are you here to kill me as well?" If any PC replies no, Zibik immediately casts *heal* on any dying PCs. When they're ready, he addresses them.

"Good. You would have come this far only to fail. Now, tell me. Who are you, and what is it you want?"

This encounter makes use of the influence subsystem found on page 187 of *GM Core*. The players and GM should become familiar with these rules before playing this encounter. The PCs have 40 minutes (4 influence rounds of 10 minutes each) to convince Zibik to stand down. Each round, Zibik asks specific questions to direct the PCs' conversation. Zibik's influence stat block appears below. For further details on Zibik's statistics and beliefs, see page 90.

Like Errashid, Zibik is arrogant, but in a far more practical way; he knows that he's the most powerful being in the area and feels no need to belabor the point. Zibik thinks flattery is a waste of time. Threats from the PCs don't offend or frighten him; rather, he finds them amusing and reassuring, as they remind him that mortals haven't changed a bit. He speaks in a calm and matter-of-fact manner, even when deliberating whether to destroy entire countries. Zibik's "wrath" poses a real threat, but it's a cold and methodical sort of wrath—he considers his acts of destruction like a surgeon might consider an amputation.

### ZIBIK

UNIQUE MEDIUM FUNGUS LESHY PLANT

Page 90

**Perception** +42

**Will** +42

**Discovery** DC 26 Religion or Lore related to green men or Zibik, DC 29 Plane of Wood Lore or Society, DC 31 Perception

**Influence Skills** DC 26 Nature (to demonstrate knowledge of natural cycles), DC 28 Medicine (to demonstrate knowledge of diseases), DC 29 Animal Lore, Herbalism Lore, or Plant Lore (to discuss topics related to Zibik's concerns), DC 31 Intimidation, DC 31 Society (to discuss Golarion's history), DC 33 Diplomacy

**Influence 4** Zibik shares some of his own background with the PCs, which reduces the DC of Discovery checks by 2.

**Influence 6** Zibik is impressed with the Rootweft Lodge and angry with Ruzadoya and the Wildwood Lodge. Further arguments that express the benefits of supporting the Rootweft Lodge, or the damage done by the Wildwood Lodge, have their DC reduced by 2.

**Influence 8** Zibik secretly decides not to bring death to Andoran and Taldor but doesn't yet share his decision with the PCs. He's pensive for a long moment. Each PC can attempt one extra Discovery check immediately.

**Influence 10** Zibik finds the PCs' arguments so convincing that he decides to actively support their efforts to bring about a new era of growth for the Verduran Forest (without a preceding era of decay). He ends the encounter early.

**Resistances** Zibik is aware that Ruzadoya wove lies into her stories and becomes offended if the PCs try lying as well. Increase the DC of all checks to Influence Zibik by 1 if the PCs disrespect him by attempting a Deception check. If Zibik learns that the PCs acted to disrupt a natural cycle of decay and regrowth, increase the DC of all checks to Influence him by 1, or by 2 if Zibik learns they did so numerous times.

In addition, if the PCs carry *boughshatter*, the powerful morningstar offered to them in area **D3**, Zibik suspects the PCs might be agents of Ayrzul. The first time that a PC critically fails an Influence check, Zibik boldly accuses whoever carries the morningstar of being allied with the Fossilized King. He acknowledges any protestations, but the PCs nonetheless lose 2 Influence Points from the critical failure rather than 1.

**Weaknesses** Zibik appreciates arguments that weave together past, present, and future. If a PC presents an argument that carefully weighs the complex interactions between events (such as by discussing cause and effect or pivotal decisions), reduce the DC of their check by 2. If a PC truthfully reveals that they've acted in accordance with Zibik's edicts, reduce the DC of that PC's checks to Influence Zibik by 1 (or by 2 if it's clear they acted in accordance with his edicts the majority of the time).



## Ruzadoya's Influence

Ruzadoya had many days to speak with Zibik. While he was initially wary of her, she steadily impressed him by helping fight blighted creatures, displaying conviction, and sharing the story of her miraculous revival. Refer to the number of days it took the PCs to reach Zibik once they started to Search for Speakers and apply the associated bonuses or penalties below.

**Up to 10 Days** Zibik didn't quite trust Ruzadoya. He's curious about the PCs, and they gain a +1 circumstance bonus to Discovery and Influence checks during the first two influence rounds.

**11-14 Days** Zibik started to trust Ruzadoya but hadn't given much thought to her proposal yet. The PCs have no bonus or penalty.

**15-17 Days** Zibik was beginning to consider Ruzadoya's proposal. The PCs take a -1 circumstance penalty to Discovery and Influence checks during the first two influence rounds.

**18+ Days** Zibik had already decided to enact Ruzadoya's plan. The PCs take a -1 circumstance penalty to Discovery and Influence checks during every influence round.

## Influence Round 1

Zibik asks the PCs who they are and what they want. If the PCs initiated combat, Zibik deeply distrusts them, and they earn 1 less Influence Point this round than they otherwise would (minimum 0).

## Influence Round 2

Zibik asks the PCs to describe their deeds. "I've heard Ruzadoya's story. What about yours? Why are you worthy of my time and attention? She would have had me swat you away like insects. Why should I not? What have you done for your world—or mine?"

## Influence Round 3

Zibik asks the PCs more pointed questions: "Why shouldn't I allow Ruzadoya to be reborn? Barring that, why shouldn't I believe her reports about your world? She spoke of a world riven by war, of natural places in great suffering. She spoke of invaders from places called Andoran and Taldor, both enemies of nature. Did she speak truly?"

## Influence Round 4

Zibik pauses to think, then says, "I am a protector of natural cycles. I shepherd death, and life follows. If a natural cycle has been disrupted, I must restore it. Why shouldn't I bring death to your world, so new life—better life—may grow? That was Ruzadoya's vision. What is yours?"

## Influence Results

Zibik's resulting actions depend on the total number of Influence Points the PCs earn.

**1-7 Points:** Zibik shakes his head slowly. "I'm sorry. I can see where Ruzadoya was wrong—but also where she was right. I must go and see for myself. And if death follows, so be it." Each PC can make one final attempt to earn Influence Points, though they must first succeed at a DC 31 Reflex save or be restrained by the vines in Zibik's domain (taking 13d6 bludgeoning damage on a failure).

**8 Points:** Zibik agrees to stand down. "Very well. I shall remain here and finish my work. Stay and help if you wish. There is much to be done. Perhaps, when my work is complete, I'll visit your world, though I doubt you'll still be alive."

**10+ Points:** Zibik agrees to stand down. He also insists on visiting the Verduran Forest. "The Rootweft Lodge seems to share many of my beliefs, and perhaps if we work together, we can usher in a new era for the Verduran Forest—without killing everything first, that is. I've long wished to see the chaotic growth of the Universe again. Give me one week to be reborn at full strength, and I shall travel to your world and see it for myself."

**Ruzadoya's Fate:** Zibik isn't well-versed in undead, much less how Ruzadoya was reanimated and the risk posed by her shattered armor. If warned that she'll rejuvenate, he seems amused, noting that she's been destroyed, so it's only natural that something regrow from the pieces. Zibik is inclined to either bury the broken armor or have the PCs do with it what they will. If a PC convinces him with a successful DC 33 Diplomacy check, the green man reconsiders, using a *wish* ritual to cleanse and transform the armor into a sprouting seed that he entrusts to the PCs.

## Conclusion

With Ruzadoya destroyed and Zibik's wrath averted, the PCs have finally ended the threat of the Wildwood Lodge once and for all. They've not only secured peace for the Verduran Forest, but opened a path to the Plane of Wood, forged a bond with Cradle of Knot, and made peace with Zibik. Their most likely course of action is to return to the Verduran Forest (with or without Zibik) and report back to the Rootweft Lodge. If they do, they earn a place as leaders and champions of the Verduran Forest, should they desire it. Of course, the exact events of your campaign might vary, and the direction you take the story next is up to you and your players; "Continuing the Campaign" (page 63) offers options for further adventures with these PCs, taking them to level 14 and beyond!







# Continuing the Campaign

The Wardens of Wildwood Adventure Path concludes shortly after Ruzadoya's defeat, after which the PCs' negotiation with Zibik shapes the green man's next actions. Whether the PCs work with or against Zibik, or whether they return from the Plane of Wood to pursue other initiatives near the Verduran Forest, this is hardly the end of their adventures! This article explores how the events of this campaign have a chance to change the Verduran Forest and even the world. It also presents ideas for continuing the PCs' stories beyond the scope of this Adventure Path and shares advice for how to keep the game going even if the party didn't survive the campaign.

## Campaign Consequences

Upon vanquishing Ruzadoya, the PCs shatter her remaining hold over the Wildwood Lodge, allowing more moderate leaders like Emorga to regain control. In the weeks that follow, the restored leadership of the Wildwood Lodge cajoles most combatants into laying down their arms, after which the Lodge negotiates peace with Andoran and Taldor.

Andoran is all too happy to oblige; few citizens hold a serious grudge against their fey neighbors, and Andoran leaders are eager to calm this chaos and focus resources on outmaneuvering an increasingly belligerent Cheliox. Andoran mourns its casualties in Bellis, Amberhill, and nearby communities. Yet in seeking amends for their hostility, many forest inhabitants provide generous aid in rebuilding these settlements and damaged relationships.

Taldor is slower to forgive and forget. After all, it has administered most of the Verduran Forest for centuries, and the nobles from neighboring counties were quick to paint the conflict as a rebellion against Taldan rule. Grand Princess Eutropia displays more wisdom and grace, recognizing some of the underlying grievances and how to fix them. The Taldan delegation negotiates a revised Treaty of the Wildwood, providing clearer terms that better protect the forest's inhabitants and resources going forward—all in an effort to bury the figurative hatchet while also retaining their control over the invaluable forest.

Even so, the prefectures of Tandak, Maheto, and Northern Tandak hold lasting grudges. To them, Grand Princess Eutropia's generous terms are the capitulations of a weak ruler to rambunctious subjects—subjects like the Blackwood Moot and other ne'er-do-wells who weren't ready for the conflict to end and continue to cause trouble even after the peace.

The varied political outcomes likely mirror other opinions of the PCs. To the wider world, the "Wildwood Revolt" is a noteworthy yet localized conflict, spared greater scrutiny thanks to the Rootweft Lodge and PCs averting the worst damage that could have come about from this event. Taldor is eager to sweep the conflict under a figurative rug, for the whole incident suggests their kingdom is too weak to keep its hinterlands under control. In contrast, Andoran's populace delights in folk heroes, and if the PCs shared their own names while adventuring in Andoran, that nation's lyricists will likely spread tales of their heroics, eventually making them into local legends. Regardless, the PCs enjoy fame within the Verduran Forest, with most inhabitants treating the PCs as honored guests. The main exceptions are Ruzadoya's subdued sympathizers. Redcaps, embittered arboreals, and several centaur bands might loathe the PCs, blaming them for opening the Verduran Forest to exploitation by greedy surrounding nations.

Assuming the PCs averted disaster and restored the status quo, the forest's future seems secure. Members of the Rootweft Lodge disperse to repair villages and mend relationships, overseen by Emorga as an interim leader. However, she is eager to return to an advisory role and collaborate with Corazal as the conrasu slowly regenerates. When the next Greenwood Gala approaches, Emorga scouts out candidates to lead the Wildwood Lodge—likely including one or more PCs! Even if they turn down Lodge leadership roles, the PCs can easily claim small fiefdoms throughout the Verduran Forest, letting them establish villages, laboratories, and sanctuaries of their own.

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## Further Adventures

The following leads might engage the PCs for many adventures to come.

### AVENGER'S ARMOR

Reanimated by primal power, Ruzadoya was not a typical graveknight. That said, her armor is typical in one key way: it has a life of its own. If not destroyed entirely, Ruzadoya's armor might eventually rebuild the centaur entirely, releasing the threat back into the world.

If trapped on the Plane of Wood, she would likely align herself with and even commandeer Ayrzul's Blight, becoming a radioactive tyrant of the wasteland. Even if the PCs departed the plane, kizidhars might track them down and demand the PCs' assistance in defeating their old nemesis. After all, the Universe is responsible for creating Ruzadoya, so the genies will likely insist it's the PCs' responsibility to resolve the issue on their behalf. Refusing could undermine extraplanar relations for generations to come.

If Ruzadoya's armor returned to the Verduran Forest, she could easily regrow and seek out old allies—basically restarting the Adventure Path! What's more, if Zibik decided to punish Andoran and Taldor, there might be even fewer forces standing against the renewed centaur and her allies.

One additional possibility remains: transformation. Ruzadoya's armor—whether whole or reconfigured—can quickly possess and transmute whoever wears it. In most cases, the armor transforms the wearer into Ruzadoya, mind and body. Yet if it seizes one of the PCs or their key allies, that character might become a wholly unique graveknight imbued with both their own evil plans and Ruzadoya's consciousness.

It would be prudent for the PCs to make sure that Ruzadoya's armor is completely destroyed—or at least isolated—before considering this adventure complete and moving on to other exploits. Finding the best way to destroy the centaur's armor could be a way to extend the adventure for players who want to continue playing their characters.

### RAMPANT WILDSONG

Ruzadoya's schemes didn't just involve imbuing disciples with elemental energy. She also violated the ancient anathema against teaching Wildsong to non-druids. Wildsong isn't just a secret language; it's a key to unlocking the world's primal magic. As a druid learns Wildsong, their consciousness changes. They begin noticing previously invisible patterns, hearing Golarion's voice, and even learning how to talk back—one of several ways a druid might cast spells. Granting Wildsong to an undisciplined mind risks tragedy, both to the student and their surroundings.

Even as the PCs defeat Ruzadoya, her linguistic program bears fruit. Epiphanies witnessed in Wildsong have afflicted some students with paranoia and delusions, inciting outbursts and doomsaying across southeastern Avistan.

Others, such as **Gregor Zanafas** (male human primal linguist), have gained intuitive control over their new insights and are now teaching Wildsong to anyone who will listen. As these new disciples wrestle with Wildsong, they begin manifesting primal magic uncontrollably—consider introducing the pervasive magic option (*Secrets of Magic* 218–221) for those who survive the process and making Wildsong a rare (not secret) language. As fires erupt, locusts swarm, and rivers overflow their banks, most inaccurately blame the Wildwood Lodge, threatening hopes of peace after Ruzadoya's defeat. If left unchecked, this disruption could easily spread

beyond the borders of the Verduran Forest and wreak havoc throughout Avistan and beyond.

### RESURGENT SHADOWS

Avathrael and their realm present an ongoing threat. At best, the PCs recruited the dragon and prevented them from usurping the ritual to seize a special connection to the Plane of Wood. If so, Avathrael still possesses the knowledge of how to repeat and adapt the ritual, potentially channeling untold elemental energy into themselves and their realm.

If the dragon did succeed earlier (or does so later), their elemental efforts turn out better than their old attempt at channeling Nirvana, yet it's likely still imperfect.



Graveknight Droogami



As the essences of the Netherworld and Plane of Wood collide, they shape and expand Gloaming Arbor in unpredictable ways. If Avathrael can maintain control, they would become immensely powerful, and their dreams of creating a demiplane might give way to a new desire: transforming the entire Verduran Forest into their own umbral paradise.

If the PCs defeated Avathrael earlier, there's still a major risk: Gloaming Arbor begins unraveling in the absence of its creator. As hungry shadows unspool and disperse throughout the Verduran Forest, the planar energies begin killing or transforming whatever they touch. Unless the PCs delve into the realm and find a way to scatter it harmlessly (or even seize control of it for themselves), a large swath of the Verduran Forest might become a haunted waste, displacing the forest's inhabitants.



Zibik Sacred Symbol

## Repercussions of Failure

It's possible that the PCs don't succeed at various points in this final adventure. This need not end the campaign. The following scenarios present ways to continue the campaign even if the characters perish or surrender. The ramifications of this failure can be incorporated into other adventures set in or around the Verduran Forest.

**Zibik's Attack:** If not thwarted, Ruzadoya feeds Zibik an assortment of damning lies and misrepresentations about Taldor, Andoran, and the overall state of southeastern Avistan. Lacking a counternarrative, Zibik pauses his work on the Plane of Wood and travels to Golarion. There, he becomes a primal terror by demolishing towns in his wake, awakening a devastating army of plants, and expanding the Verduran Forest well beyond its current borders. After all, he is a green man of decay, and there's no better mulch than the rubble of a freshly devastated city in which to foster regrowth.

Even so, Zibik is just one demigod. As with Ghorus millennia before, surrounding nations will eventually halt the green man's invasion, albeit at great cost in blood, treasure, and land. The political and economic drain leaves Andoran weakened, which could be just the opportunity Cheliox needs to invade and reclaim the wayward democracy that seceded decades ago. Taldor experiences a similar setback, though this leaves it vulnerable more to squabbling internal threats than external ones. After

all, Queen Eutropia has reigned for only a few years, and losing a vast swath of territory could convince cantankerous nobles that she's unfit to rule their grand nation. Unless handled quickly and decisively, this could result in a second succession war in less than a decade.

Ultimately, Zibik only seeks justice and change, not dominion. Once he's liberated the Verduran Forest, seizing and seeding enough surrounding territory that the forest might eventually double in size, he retires indefinitely to contemplate his next moves. So long as the Wildwood Lodge survived and has the region's best interests in mind, he leaves governance and other matters to mortals.

## Other Opportunities

During the course of the adventure, as the PCs learn more about the green man Zibik and his beliefs, they may be interested in joining the green man's faith and aiding his causes, particularly plant PCs.

*Pathfinder Adventure Path #202: Severed at the Root* contains more information about worshipping the enigmatic beings known as green men. Its article "Green Man Faiths" (pages 63-65) presents the unique facets of worshipping green men and provides details for individual green men. The rules related to worshipping Zibik in particular are listed below.

## WORSHIPPING ZIBIK

Most of Zibik's worshippers are leshies, ardandes, and wood elementals, though a few are humanoid clerics; Zibik only accepts clerics who show the fortitude and ability to ensure nature takes its course, sacrificing themselves if it helps restore natural balance.

**Areas of Concern** decay, fresh starts, and fungi

**Edicts** foster natural cycles of decay and regrowth, eradicate invasive creatures, treat unnatural diseases

**Anathema** ignore mistreatment of the environment, delay natural death, cause imbalance in an ecosystem

**Divine Attribute** Constitution or Wisdom

## Devotee Benefits

**Cleric Spells** 1st: *flourishing flora*<sup>ROE</sup>, 4th: *life-draining roots*<sup>ROE</sup>, 6th: *tangling creepers*

**Divine Font** harm or heal

**Divine Sanctification** none

**Divine Skill** Medicine

**Domains** decay, healing, nature, protection

**Favored Weapon** scythe







# Cradle of Knot Gazetteer

A massive root network extends far below the jamjuree tree that houses the many metropolises of Nodollin, the Glowing Infinity. Extending for miles in all directions, it contains countless small root nodule communities, each simultaneously independent and part of a greater whole. Cradle of Knot is a small outpost town at the far edge of this root network—far enough away that most residents go their entire lives without ever meeting someone from the trunk, let alone visiting it themselves. Nonetheless, the community serves a vital purpose: situated on the borderlands between roots devastated by Ayrzul's Blight and the trunk of Nodollin, Cradle of Knot is the first line of defense against the encroaching blight.

## HISTORY

The settlement that eventually became Cradle of Knot arose spontaneously when Ayrzul's Blight infested a vast swath of root-landscape. The sudden blight winds carrying the disease forced several nodule communities to seek immediate shelter rather than risk traveling a greater distance to resettle. Thankfully, a small group led by one **Jial Yun** (male ardande caretaker) discovered a massive knot in the landscape. An unusual phenomena (perhaps a mutation in the roots caused by the blight itself), the hill-like knot nonetheless provided a perfect shelter from the winds. Shortly after these refugees made camp, **Errashid Emetra** (pangender kizidhar shuyookh authoritarian) arrived from Nodollin with a contingent of soldiers, healers, and scholars to assess the blight and stymie its spread—with axes and fire if necessary. While Errashid initially identified the knot as part of the blighted landscape and decreed that it must be destroyed, the task proved difficult, as the densely knotted wood was more like steel than roots.

As refugees lined up to take shelter and Errashid's troops prepared to step up their "landscaping" and "infection control" efforts, tensions grew, and violent conflict was imminent. That's when Zibik's herald arrived, emerging from deep within the blight to deliver a message from the demigod: "Be the stewards of this place. Give shelter to those who aid you in stopping the

## CRADLE OF KNOT

TOWN WOOD

Outpost on the blighted borderlands

**Government** Steward Branch (enforcers of immutable laws) and Council Branch (democratically elected officials)

**Population** 3,400 (75% ardande, 15% wood elementals, 10% other ancestries)

**Languages** Arboreal, Fey, Muan

**Religions** Elemental Lords of Wood (Shumunue and Verilorn), Green Faith (primarily Zibik)

**Threats** Ayrzul's Blight, blighted creatures, blight dwellers, environmental hazards

**Insular** Cradle of Knot's residents put little trust in outsiders. NPCs are unfriendly to strangers by default, and hostile toward those who've garnered the disapproval of a Branch.

**Reputation Economy** Cradle of Knot uses reputation as a vague currency. Outsiders ("rootless") must pay double the typical price for goods and services until they've "put down roots."

**Errashid Emetra** (pangender kizidhar shuyookh authoritarian) Despite Errashid's insistence on rigid adherence to laws and norms, residents trust them to know what's best for the community's survival.

**Jial Yun** (male ardande caretaker) For many years, Jial was the only persistent member of the Council Branch. Already an elder prior to the community's founding, he's grown too old for official duties.

## SETTLEMENT 12



spread. I will consume the blight, in time, and bring new life to this land—but you must stay."

Most of the residents heeded these words and remained. In the nearly 50 years since the herald's visit, they've worked tirelessly to strengthen their community, established laws and traditions to survive the harsh borderlands, and keep Ayrzul's Blight at bay. A new generation of residents brings

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new challenges as yet another decade fades without further word from Zibik, but the communal bonds in Cradle of Knot remain strong. They have to.

## GEOGRAPHY

The knotted landscape directly influences the layout of Cradle of Knot; the settlement literally couldn't exist in its absence. The oldest structures in town are those making up the original outpost, situated in the bowl of the knot itself. Over time, as more people settled and the population grew, they constructed additional neighborhoods in the bowl, then in the lee of the knot—the area least protected from the blight-carrying winds. During especially nasty storms, “leeward” residents must congregate in the more protected “cradle” neighborhoods, and the entire town pitches in to help everyone travel in an orderly manner through the sole tunnel leading into Cradle of Knot and ensure the community's safety. No structures exist on the devastated “blightward” side of the knot. Few exist beyond the leeward district, though the abundant plant life flourishing in the healthier terrain provide ample foraging. Anyone caught too far out when the wind rises faces grave danger as they travel and the stern judgment of the Steward Branch on their return. A few “unrooted” residents—those who've been permanently or temporarily cast out, whether of their own volition or otherwise—live in these less protected areas, but they typically have some reason for doing so (and adequate individual protection from the blight). Most residents frown on this individualistic approach to survival and prefer that the bulk of the community lives in the cradle or directly in the lee of the knot; this restriction also prevents the community from growing too large to be sustainable.

## GOVERNMENT

Two groups oversee Cradle of Knot: the Steward Branch is unwavering and entirely sovereign in its enforcement of the settlement's “immutable laws,” while the more flexible Council Branch is a democratically elected body of representatives who oversee all other aspects of society not governed by these laws. The rigidity of the Steward Branch allows the community to trust that its government remains predictable and consistent even in the face of great adversity and unexpected events. The Council Branch balances this rigidity, as its members are typically chosen for their expertise in whatever area of governance or public need is most urgent at any given time. No one expects to be on the Council Branch for long, but if they're especially wise in some

subject and do well in their role, they can probably expect to hold the same position at the same time the following year (or whenever the same sort of trouble next arises).

## Immutable Laws

The Steward Branch enforces Cradle of Knot's immutable laws—and no others. By definition, the immutable laws can't be changed, nor can any other law contradict or supersede them. The most important immutable laws are as follows.

**“All must be earned.”** If you want to better your position or earn favors, you need to do your part. This law also prevents unfair treatment and unjust punishment; negative consequences, too, must be earned.

**“What's earned is owed.”** All services rendered must someday be repaid—and all misdeeds must someday be met with justice. Cradle of Knot's residents have a long memory and the Steward branch keeps extensive records.

**“No blight may take root.”** This seemingly straightforward law dictates an absolute prohibition against Ayrzul's Blight from entering Cradle of Knot, including infected individuals or mutated plants. When interpreted broadly, it also prevents known threats (such as hostile outsiders) from being able to earn social capital, even if they lend a helping hand. Once, Errashid cited this law to oust a purportedly corrupt member of the Council Branch.

**“The Knot is our home.”** Though vaguely worded, this law prevents anyone from “owning” any property in Cradle of Knot—the entire Knot is home to all who live there. In practice, most residents keep to whichever dwelling they've been assigned, but everyone shares or swaps when necessary. The law also keeps most residents from resettling elsewhere—if the Knot is home, then by definition, “home” isn't anywhere else. Steward Branch doesn't prevent people from leaving, but moving away is the fast track to becoming “unrooted” and losing one's social capital.

**“Beware the spark and the damp.”** Fire is exceedingly dangerous to most of Cradle of Knot's residents—its use must be approved in advance. Water damage is slower but equally problematic; citizens must monitor and report any unexpected or unexplained liquids, molds, and mildews.

## CULTURE & SOCIETY

Cradle of Knot's residents rigidly adhere to an economy of generalized reciprocity. Though it's vaguely defined, Knot dwellers seem to have a sixth sense when it



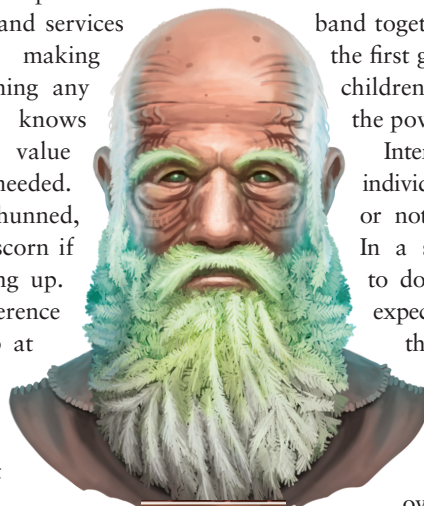
comes to knowing who owes what to whom, who's done their part for the good of the community, who's in over their branches and needs a helping limb, and who's been slacking off lately. Respected Knot dwellers can request hefty goods and services from their neighbors without making any explicit promises or performing any immediate favors, as everyone knows they'll contribute roughly equal value to the community in turn when needed. Ne'er-do-wells aren't actively shunned, but they'll earn the community's scorn if they ask for help without stepping up. Knot dwellers see an immense difference between someone who can't help at the moment (but has earned their place at some point in the past) and someone who historically fails to contribute ("they'd best put down roots or be on their way").

Residents use terminology related to roots when describing social status, with "strong" roots representing considerable contributions to the community, "deep" roots representing a reputation that goes back many years, and so on. Newcomers to Cradle of Knot are "rootless." They've done nothing, so they've earned nothing. To be rootless and have the gall to ask for help anyway is a grave insult. However, anyone can "put down roots" regardless of their past deeds or origins. To put down roots is to settle in (by contributing to the community), and also to draw nourishment (from the community's support)—the immutable laws dictate that "what's earned is owed," so putting down roots in Cradle of Knot is a reciprocal affair.

Due to this system of reputation-based reciprocity, the exchange of currency or trade goods for services is an alien concept to Cradle of Knot's residents. Some might be convinced to participate in the quaint practice, but most offers of money are met with confusion at best. Offers of trade goods make more sense to Cradle of Knot's residents, who certainly see the value of material goods, but they're nonetheless taboo.

## PEOPLE OF CRADLE OF KNOT

Two groups initially settled Cradle of Knot, though they've integrated over the past 50 years, largely eliminating strict distinctions and becoming a single tight-knit community. The first of these groups consisted of refugees from a half dozen "nodule" communities that were forced out of their previous homes by Ayrzul's Blight. Their paths merged as they made their way toward the trunk of Nodollin, but they stopped at the massive knot that would



Jial Yun

soon become their home. The second group arrived shortly after, bearing medicine and knowledge from the city—as well as axes, digging implements, and rules. Zibik's herald encouraged these groups to band together rather than come to blows, and the first generation of Knot dwellers tell their children of those early days as a lesson about the power of community and cooperation.

Intergenerational homes, often with individuals from multiple families (related or not), are common in Cradle of Knot. In a society where everyone is expected to do their part, and everyone in turn is expected to acknowledge and reciprocate those efforts, it's difficult to turn away a neighbor or guest in need. While the first generation has grown accustomed to this tradition of long-term shared living arrangements, it's overbearing to many members of the younger generations, who often find the rules, expectations, and cramped quarters stifling.

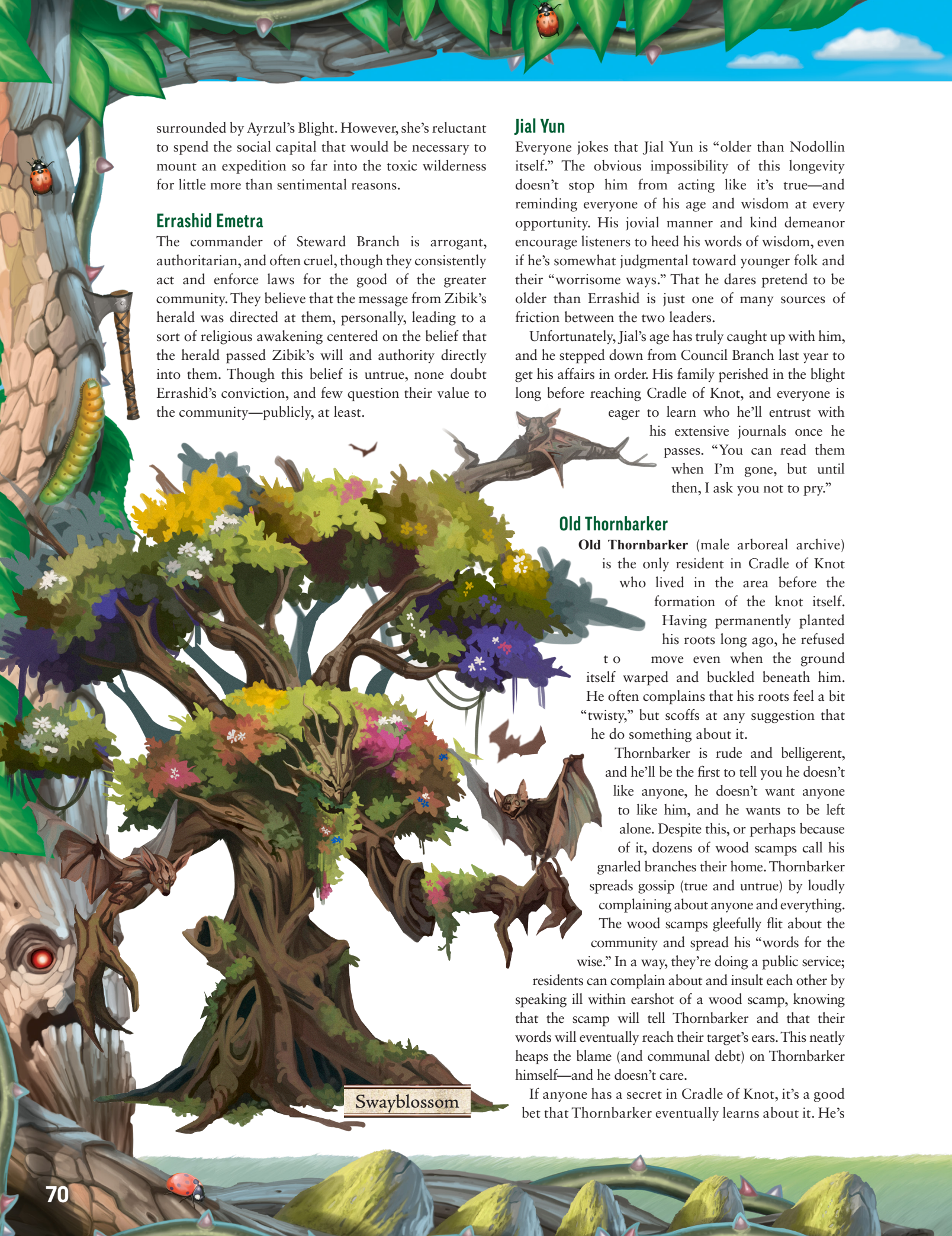
Most Knot dwellers have strong ardande heritages—the Plane of Wood had been isolated from the Universe for thousands of years, and the communities that formed Cradle of Knot are quite remote. Cradle of Knot arlandes have prominent treelike features and typically aren't identifiable as any other specific ancestry, though they come in all shapes, shades, and sizes rather than sharing a common appearance.

## Ap-Hild Krenst

No one in Cradle of Knot is more skilled at accumulating and manipulating social capital than **Ap-Hild Krenst** (female ardande matriarch), mother of nine, grandmother of twenty, great-grandmother of far too many. ("Let's all get together this evening for dinner so I can do another count.") Resembling a squat oak tree, including a head of gorgeously curled leafy hair, she's proud of her "renewed" kizidhar heritage—her ardande father was a mere village baker, but her mother was a kizidhar from the big city. Ap-Hild was among the settlement's founders, and the community often elects her to Council Branch when they need a welcoming representative to handle—or appease—visitors from afar (such as inspectors from Nodollin).

Ap-Hild frequently expends social capital to hire daring youngsters to traverse the blighted hinterlands and help families search for long-lost relatives or recover belongings from their ruined homes. These expeditions rarely succeed, but when they do, they're the talk of the town. Ap-Hild secretly wishes to visit her old home—an expansive country estate now





surrounded by Ayrzul's Blight. However, she's reluctant to spend the social capital that would be necessary to mount an expedition so far into the toxic wilderness for little more than sentimental reasons.

### Errashid Emetra

The commander of Steward Branch is arrogant, authoritarian, and often cruel, though they consistently act and enforce laws for the good of the greater community. They believe that the message from Zibik's herald was directed at them, personally, leading to a sort of religious awakening centered on the belief that the herald passed Zibik's will and authority directly into them. Though this belief is untrue, none doubt Errashid's conviction, and few question their value to the community—publicly, at least.

### Jial Yun

Everyone jokes that Jial Yun is "older than Nodollin itself." The obvious impossibility of this longevity doesn't stop him from acting like it's true—and reminding everyone of his age and wisdom at every opportunity. His jovial manner and kind demeanor encourage listeners to heed his words of wisdom, even if he's somewhat judgmental toward younger folk and their "worrisome ways." That he dares pretend to be older than Errashid is just one of many sources of friction between the two leaders.

Unfortunately, Jial's age has truly caught up with him, and he stepped down from Council Branch last year to get his affairs in order. His family perished in the blight long before reaching Cradle of Knot, and everyone is eager to learn who he'll entrust with his extensive journals once he passes. "You can read them when I'm gone, but until then, I ask you not to pry."

### Old Thornbarker

**Old Thornbarker** (male arboreal archive)

is the only resident in Cradle of Knot who lived in the area before the formation of the knot itself.

Having permanently planted his roots long ago, he refused to move even when the ground itself warped and buckled beneath him. He often complains that his roots feel a bit "twisty," but scoffs at any suggestion that he do something about it.

Thornbarker is rude and belligerent, and he'll be the first to tell you he doesn't like anyone, he doesn't want anyone to like him, and he wants to be left alone. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, dozens of wood scamps call his gnarled branches their home. Thornbarker spreads gossip (true and untrue) by loudly complaining about anyone and everything. The wood scamps gleefully flit about the community and spread his "words for the wise." In a way, they're doing a public service;

residents can complain about and insult each other by speaking ill within earshot of a wood scamp, knowing that the scamp will tell Thornbarker and that their words will eventually reach their target's ears. This neatly heaps the blame (and communal debt) on Thornbarker himself—and he doesn't care.

If anyone has a secret in Cradle of Knot, it's a good bet that Thornbarker eventually learns about it. He's

Swayblossom





keenly aware of the value he holds in his memories of the community and its residents through the years—as well as the fact that no one would dare challenge his place in the community because of all the things he knows.

### Scrayvle Prene

One of the only people everyone is glad lives outside town is **Scrayvle Prene** (male ardande beastkin halfling pyrokineticist). His blight-mutated features, from his scaled tail to his venom-coated whiskers, make it difficult to discern whether his beastkin heritage is from a dusk bark rat (common in Nodollin) or a rooteater snake (thought to be extinct). Nobody asks, though if they did, lonely Scrayvle would gladly invite them over for a meal in his hovel.

Somehow, Scrayvle possesses the exceedingly rare ability to create and control fire at will. When Errashid's forces initially failed in their efforts to cut or dig away the knotted landscape, they sent for Scrayvle. He'd been wrongly convicted of causing an immense fire near Nodollin's trunk, and as a prisoner under Errashid's watch, he was forced to use his powers to combat the blight. That his only reason for being in the area was to try to burn the knot to ash and cinders (and possibly kill infected people) led to decades of mistrust from the community. It doesn't help that he carries a leather sack of constantly-smoldering coals with him everywhere he goes.

When Errashid isn't keeping him busy with blight-burning work, Scrayvle is eager to learn new ways to help the community—he's always wanted to be a cook, but so far he hasn't found anyone willing to teach him.

### Swayblossom

Old Thornbarker's constant rival is **Swayblossom** (female arboreal archive), who's almost universally adored by the rest of the community. She refuses to gossip, even about Thornbarker, and maintains that she's the only source of trustworthy information from outside town. Scores of birds nest in her branches and undertake mass migrations to distant settlements in search of news. They deliver this news only to Swayblossom, who spreads carefully curated information across town by spreading magical "leaflets." Only Swayblossom's companion **Beeblerum** (male lomori sprout<sup>ROE</sup> pruner) knows her



Neldr Noddgrain

secret: she's agreed to deliver information to Errashid for approval (and adjustment) before spreading it across town.

### RELATIONSHIPS & CONFLICTS

Errashid must regularly contend with official inspections from their kizidhar shuyookh equals in Nodollin (if anyone can truly be equal to a kizidhar shuyookh). When Errashid initially proposed establishing a long-term outpost at the knot rather than destroying it, their ideas faced skepticism and scrutiny, but their belief that they'd earned Zibik's personal blessing gave them unwavering conviction. These inspectors still visit from time to time, often without warning, and look for reasons to wrest control of the

now-prosperous community from Errashid. Errashid begrudgingly admits that someone more diplomatic, like Ap-Hild Krenst, should take responsibility for appeasing them.

The greatest source of armed conflict arises from unpredictable attacks by blighted creatures from the nearby wilderness, as well as occasional "blight dweller" raids. The ardande soldiers and powerful wood elementals of Steward Branch can usually handle these attacks, but they've increased in frequency and severity in recent weeks, testing Errashid's might—and the community's patience. Ripples of unrest threaten to undermine Steward Branch's authority as the people begin to question how much faith they've put in Zibik, especially given that the demigod hasn't been seen or heard from in decades.

### POINTS OF INTEREST

Significant locations in Cradle of Knot are detailed on the following pages and correspond to the numbers on the map on the inside front cover of this adventure. Unlabeled structures include residences, public gathering places, workshops, storehouses, barracks, and emergency shelters.

#### 1. Steward's Palace

This squat structure resembles a misshapen tree stump more than a palace—from the outside, that is. Through extravagant use of magic over the years, Errashid crafted a palatial home within the stump. It contains living quarters for Errashid's servants and

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soldiers, spaces to meet with their small retinue of kizidhar advisors, a shrine to Zibik and another to each Elemental Lord of Wood, guest accommodations for Errashid's admirers and entertainers, and Errashid's private suite, which no one else has ever entered.

## 2. Noddgrain Supplies

While it isn't technically a store, Noddgrain Supplies is where most residents "purchase" the things they need for day-to-day life. While Knot dwellers can walk in and grab what they need with little more than a smile and wave to the owner, **Neldr Noddgrain** (male ardande beastkin), the hedgehog-faced proprietor has a rigid "no roots for the rootless" policy. He's not interested in tracking debts, and he only provides supplies to those who've already earned them.

Noddgrain Supplies carries all manner of goods, though nearly all of them are most useful to those dwelling in the Plane of Wood. There just hasn't been much need to carry things for outsiders, and, again, Noddgrain doesn't want to track debts. Noddgrain Supplies appears to be a quaint general store from the outside, but once one steps inside they find that the lines of disjointed and irregular shelves stretch deep into the interior of the shop. Bags of soil and minerals sit next to cases of jars stacked haphazardly at the base of a shelf holding leaf-shaped kites and pouches of wooden marbles. On first appearance it would seem impossible to find anything in the shop, but residents of Cradle of Knot don't seem to have trouble finding what they want.

## 3. Neathwillow Amphitheater

The production of an annual play in the shade of a massive artificial willow (conjured by kizidhars) is one of the most important cultural events in Cradle of Knot. The 3-day performance of *What the Wind Remembers* provides a significant boost in morale to the town. Furthermore, the preparations and rehearsals involve dozens of residents for the better part of each year. The significance of the event is such that whoever is in charge of production that year holds a seat on Council Branch, allowing them access to the necessary resources. **Shyon an-Kit** (female ardande ranger) currently holds that role. This year, she's putting a new twist on the play: adults who've had a rough year of battle and expeditions are playing the parts of children (giving them a year to focus on the play instead of being called up for duty), while children are playing the adult roles (which provides much amusement).

In the off season when the play isn't running or in rehearsals, the Neathwillow Amphitheater hosts

all sorts of events, keeping the place lively and bustling. A handful of poets have residencies here and perform their works on a regular schedule, usually three times a week for a few weeks at a time. Ardande dance troops perform elaborate ballets, recounting stories of the knot's history and even more fanciful tales adapted from lands beyond. Though incredibly isolated, some performers from the trunk make journeys out here to play lilting music or polyrhythmic percussive concerts.

Though known for performances, the Neathwillow Amphitheater is also decorated with artwork from Cradle of Knot's most talented visual artists as well. Dappled paintings of distant landscapes and twisted and woven sculptures set on finely carved pedestals line the halls of this magnificent performance hall.

## 4. Leafrun School

Many of Cradle of Knot's children attend Leafrun School, where they learn—and teach one another—valuable practical skills. The current headmaster, **Gela al-Anbosta** (female kizidhar teacher), believes in learning by experience, so the students' days are filled with elaborate community service projects. Interviewing visitors to Cradle of Knot is a popular project, often resulting in groups of children giving tours to "big city folk" while they bombard them with questions about city life.

Classes are held year round with lengthy breaks between sessions. This allows the students time to apply what they've learned in a particular session to their individual experiences.

## 5. The Sapwell

Watery sap from the region's root-terrain provides much-needed nutrition for many of the town's residents. At any given time, finding sources of sap in the regrowing regions outside town is the sole focus of a few dozen scouts and foragers. If they find an abundant source, they haul whatever sustainable amount they can back to town for long-term storage. A single source exists in the town—the Sapwell. While it used to flow like a fountain, now it's usually dry. On the rare occasion that sap wells up, it's polluted more often than not.

A "sapwatcher" is always on duty to sound an alarm when the Sapwell is active, as the residents must act hastily to gather the fresh sap (or clean up the toxic mess and kill any mutants that come with it). The last sapwatcher died horribly, so **Fasen il-Roon** (male ardande delinquent) only has the courage to show up for his Steward-mandated shifts after imbibing too much sapmead.



## 6. Gnarled Gardens

Like other residents of the Plane of Wood, few Knot dwellers grow plants for consumption, but many plants have a variety of other uses. **Varroch Rosh** (nonbinary kizidhar inventor) cultivates the flora in the gardens with the help of seventeen lomori sprouts. They tirelessly experiment with different substances and materials to create antidotes, toxin-resistant armor, tools, and whatever else the town needs. The gardens may appear chaotic, but the sprouts know exactly what they're doing—everything is perfectly orderly (or so they claim).

At any given time, Varroch has three sprouts sent to explore the blight and bring back interesting or valuable mutated plants for research. Errashid reluctantly approves these missions but insists on careful inspections of what's brought back to Cradle of Knot. The expeditions are supposed to last no more than 3 days, but the sprouts have been returning several days late. The sprouts refuse to explain why, even to Varroch, so they're considering sending someone to follow the sprouts next time.

## 7. Ambassador's Rest

A frequent visitor to Cradle of Knot is none other than Errashid's estranged brother **Rakhat Emetra** (male kizidhar shuyookh priest of Verilorn), who's still jealous of his sibling for securing the apparent blessing of a demigod. Rakhat insists that this extravagant home remain unoccupied except during his seasonal visits, but Errashid allows the town's most valiant heroes to take turns living there (with the expectation that they trash the place) as a reward for their loyalty and service. Rakhat plans to install some burly wood elemental guards to deter such behavior next time he's in town.

## OUTSIDE THE KNOT

A few locations of note can be found outside of Cradle of Knot.

### Ring Nodes

In order to keep watch on the Blight and to protect Cradle of Knot, people in the community volunteer to go on patrols along the perimeter of the settlement. Spaced an even distance apart, these ring nodes are safe locations stocked with supplies and tools should they ever be needed. Some ring nodes also contain a hidden cache of weapons, enough to supply a small squad, in the event of an incursion.

One of these nodes near the leeward side of Cradle of Knot has seen an unusual number of strange threats. Not only have watches placed here

reported mutated creatures in greater frequency than other ring nodes, but periodically creatures from outside the Plane of Wood wander the area. When encountered, these creatures were either enraged and mindlessly rampaging or they proceeded toward the settlement in a torpor. There has yet to be an explanation for these occurrences, but some suspect a hidden rift.

### Tanglethorp

Near the outskirts of Cradle of Knot, a small community of wood scamps cluster together in a thorny thicket. These wild and sometimes unruly scamps stick together and rarely leave the comforts of their chaotic home except to wander the community looking for others to help.

This odd behavior puts off some in the community who expect wood scamps to be troublemakers. While this is still very true, the scamps of Tanglethorp balance their mischief with charity. Years ago, one of their progenitors caused devastating havoc in Cradle of Knot; they and their group were excommunicated from the settlement for their transgressions. In the decades since, one of the scamps sought to atone for their predecessors' actions and now leads the group of little creatures to make up for it by doing favors for those in the community. It's not uncommon to see a wood scamp carrying buckets of sap, making minor repairs, or tending a garden. Despite their apparent interest in becoming proper citizens, the wood scamps of Tanglethorp are outright rambunctious in their home. Lively and percussive music loudly erupts from the twisted cluster of thorny vines and jagged branches of Tanglethorp. When the scamps are being particularly celebratory, some residents of Cradle of Knot can hear their lively celebrations.

### The Writhing Bore

Less than a day's walk from Cradle of Knot, the Writhing Bore is a wide and pitch-black hole surrounded by millions of shifting filaments. This writhing thicket is populated by fungal creatures, though most of them stick close to their home and don't wander far. The area is cool and punctuated by a rhythmic wheezing as spore clouds pulse from the dark hole and hang in the air. Even though the creatures who seem to stand guard near the Writhing Bore don't leave their post, they viciously defend their home. Leadership in Cradle of Knot keep an eye on this place from a distance, but discourage anyone from exploring the place. Some claim that the Writhing Bore is an entrance to the Crypts of the Tuber Lords.





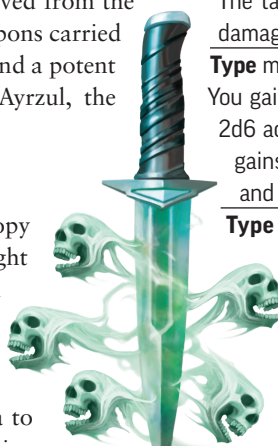


# Adventure Toolbox

The following new rules appear throughout “Shepherd of Decay.” Within, you’ll find tools derived from the primal magic of green men, several weapons carried by Ruzadoya’s remaining bodyguards, and a potent weapon the PCs might receive from Ayrzul, the Fossilized King.

## BONEBLEACHERS’ ARSENAL

The Verduran Forest’s expansive canopy casts haunting shadows that delight bugbears. Several bugbear bands dwell in the forest, using its ample cover to stalk travelers and launch raids on nearby towns. Most of all, bugbears have exploited endemic flora and fauna to develop unique toxins that amplify their victims’ fear responses.



Reaper’s Shadow

## Alchemical Bombs

The Bonebleachers have developed several bombs designed to vex their targets.

### INFLAMMATION FLASK

ITEM 3+

UNCOMMON ACID ALCHEMICAL BOMB CONSUMABLE DISEASE SPLASH

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk L

Activate ♦ Strike

This flask contains a caustic irritant that makes a target’s skin, scales, or carapace extremely sensitive to further nicks and burns. An inflammation flask deals the listed acid damage and acid splash damage. On a hit, the target also gains weakness to acid, fire, and slashing damage for 3 rounds. Many types of inflammation flask grant a bonus to attack rolls.

The target can end the weakness effect by three means: being drenched with water (such as submersion or exposure to an area water effect), being Administered First Aid (whose DC is based on the bomb type), or regaining Hit Points from a single effect equal to twice the inflammation flask’s level. A creature that critically fails to Administer First Aid in this way deals untyped damage to the target equal to the inflammation flask’s initial acid damage.

Type lesser; Level 2; Price 5 gp

The bomb deals 1d6 acid damage and 1 acid splash damage.

The target gains weakness 1 to acid, fire, and slashing damage, and the Medicine DC is 17.

Type moderate; Level 4; Price 15 gp

You gain a +1 item bonus to attack rolls. The bomb deals 2d6 acid damage and 2 acid splash damage. The target gains weakness 2 to acid, fire, and slashing damage, and the Medicine DC is 20.

Type greater; Level 12; Price 340 gp

You gain a +2 item bonus to attack rolls. The bomb deals 3d6 acid damage and 3 acid splash damage. The target gains weakness 3 to acid, fire, and slashing damage, and the Medicine DC is 30.

Type major; Level 18; Price 3,750 gp

You gain a +3 item bonus to attack rolls. The bomb deals 4d6 acid damage and 4 acid splash damage. The target gains weakness 4 to acid, fire, and slashing damage, and the Medicine DC is 38.

### SPIDER SATCHEL

ITEM 2+

UNCOMMON ALCHEMICAL BOMB CONSUMABLE POISON SPLASH

Usage held in 1 hand; Bulk L

Activate ♦ Strike

The Verduran Forest’s tiny tent-trap spider lays her eggs in a pyramidal web, and her young hatch only in response to intense vibration, such as the struggles of an ensnared insect or even songbird. Sadistic alchemists gather and augment these eggs, packing them in silken satchels that disgorge thousands of biting spider babies on impact. Many types of spider satchel grant a bonus to attack rolls.

Until shaken off—or for the desperate target, incinerated—these spiders make it difficult to concentrate on anything other than escaping the swarm. The fascination effect ends automatically if a creature uses further hostile actions against the target, but hostile actions against the target’s allies don’t automatically end the effect.

Type lesser; Level 2; Price 6 gp

The bomb deals 1d6 persistent poison damage, 1 poison splash damage, and fascinates the target while the persistent damage lasts.

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**Type** moderate; **Level** 4; **Price** 16 gp

You gain a +1 item bonus to attack rolls. The bomb deals 2d6 persistent poison damage, 2 poison splash damage, and fascinates the target while the persistent damage lasts.

**Type** greater; **Level** 12; **Price** 350 gp

You gain a +2 item bonus to attack rolls. The bomb deals 3d6 persistent poison damage, 3 poison splash damage, and fascinates the target while the persistent damage lasts.

**Type** major; **Level** 18; **Price** 4,000 gp

You gain a +3 item bonus to attack rolls. The bomb deals 4d6 persistent poison damage, 4 poison splash damage, and fascinates the target while the persistent damage lasts.

## Alchemical Poisons

Bonebleacher toxins aren't designed to kill their victims quickly, but rather these poisons ensure their victims quake with the visceral certainty of imminent death.

## BOGEYMAN BREATH

ITEM 11

UNCOMMON ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE FEAR INHALED MENTAL POISON

**Price** 360 gp

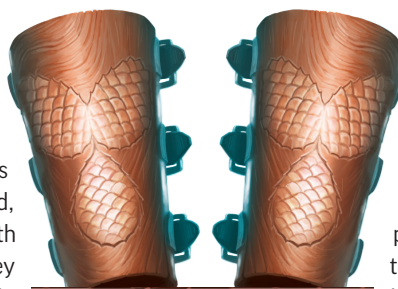
**Usage** held in 1 hand; **Bulk** L

**Activate** ◆ (manipulate)

This dust is created from the powdered bones of ensnared rabbits and other woodland creatures that died from fright. When inhaled, it pollutes the victim's mind with fear, awakening an unshakable prey response that sees danger lurking in every shadow.

**Saving Throw** DC 28 Fortitude;

**Onset** 1 round; **Maximum Duration** 6 rounds; **Stage 1** 4d6 mental damage, frightened 1, and can't reduce frightened value for 1 round (1 round); **Stage 2** 4d6 mental damage, frightened 2, and can't reduce frightened value for 1 round (1 round); **Stage 3** 4d6 mental damage, frightened 2, fleeing the poison cloud for 1 round, and can't reduce frightened value for 1 round (1 round)



Crushing Bough Bracers

## REAPER'S SHADOW

ITEM 13

UNCOMMON ALCHEMICAL CONSUMABLE INJURY POISON VIRULENT VOID

**Price** 525 gp

**Usage** held in 2 hands; **Bulk** L

**Activate** ◆◆ (manipulate)

Derived from duskwood sap tapped during the winter solstice, this toxin erodes the connection between body and soul, tricking the latter into assuming the former has already died. Survivors of this near-death experience report ominous tunnel vision, as if the Grim Reaper lurks in their peripheral vision and awaits their final breath.

**Saving Throw** DC 30 Fortitude; **Maximum Duration** 6 rounds; **Stage 1** 2d12 void damage and doomed 1 for 1 round (1 round); **Stage 2** 3d12 void damage and doomed 1 for 1 round (1 round); **Stage 3** 3d12 void damage and doomed 1 (1 round); **Stage 4** 3d12 void damage and doomed 2 (1 round)

## GIFTS OF THE GREEN MEN

With their mastery of plant life, green men sometimes coax their domains to grow magic items later granted to the leshy kings' champions. Given leshies' admiration of and service to green men, it's little surprise that leshies periodically learn to make these items for themselves and gradually disseminate those techniques to the world at large.

## BURGLAR'S ROSEBUD

ITEM 3+

UNCOMMON CONSUMABLE EMOTION MENTAL PLANT WOOD

**Price** 10 gp

**Usage** Held in 1 hand; **Bulk** –

**Activate** ◆ (manipulate)

Though originally intended to protect a green man's favorite agents against predation by pesky herbivores, thieves have adapted the design to help them disperse guard animals. The soft flower bud belies the horrible perfume contained within. Activated by cracking open the petals, the rosebud exudes a noxious cloud that has the olfactory trait for 10 minutes. If dropped, it fills a 10-foot-burst. If you carry it in one hand and periodically waft it as a free action, the rosebud instead gives you a 10-foot emanation. Creatures that enter or start their turn in the cloud must succeed at a Fortitude save against the listed DC or become sickened 1. Animals and beasts that critically fail are also fleeing for 1 round. A creature that successfully saves against the *burglar's rosebud* becomes temporarily immune to the effects for 24 hours.

**Type** *burglar's rosebud*; **Level** 3; **Price** 10 gp

The DC is 18.

**Type** *greater burglar's rosebud*; **Level** 8; **Price** 100 gp

The DC is 24.

## CRUSHING BOUGH BRACERS

ITEM 13

UNCOMMON INVESTED MAGICAL

**Price** 2,500

**Usage** worn bracers; **Bulk** L

Carved from the heartwood of some impossibly large tree on the Plane of Wood or First World, *crushing bough bracers* enable wearers to cling to and shape plant material with ease. The pine cone designs appear to open



and bare their seeds when the bracers are in especially verdant areas.

The bracers grant you a 20-foot climb Speed while climbing plants or fungi. Your Strikes deal damage to fungus, plant, and wood creatures as though their resistances were 5 lower (minimum 0). In addition, the bracers allow you to cast *timber* (*Rage of Elements* 198) as an innate primal cantrip. When you cast *timber* on a plane with the wood planar essence trait (or a supernaturally verdant area, at the GM's discretion), you can modify the spell in one of the following two ways: increase the spell's area to 20 feet, to 25 feet if your proficiency rank for spell attack modifier and spell DC is expert, or to 30 feet if your proficiency is legendary; or increase the cantrip's damage die size to d6.

## DURIAN BOMB

ITEM 1+

UNCOMMON ALCHEMICAL BOMB CONSUMABLE OLFATORY PLANT SPLASH

**Usage** held in 1 hand; **Bulk** L

**Activate** ♦ Strike

Whereas a durian's aroma ranges from pleasant to revolting depending on the person, a durian bomb is a fruit that's been alchemically modified for maximum revulsion. Many types of this bomb grant an item bonus to attack rolls.

On a successful Strike, a durian bomb deals the listed piercing damage to the target. Any creature hit by the bomb or in its splash area must attempt a Fortitude saving throw with a DC based on the bomb's type. Creatures in the splash area treat the results of their saving throw as one step better. Creatures sickened by a durian bomb are unable to smell anything else while the sickened condition lasts, suppressing any scent special sense they might have.

Once a creature is sickened by a durian bomb, they're immune to the sickened condition caused by other durian bombs for 1 minute.

**Critical Success** The target is unaffected.

**Success** The creature is sickened 1.

**Failure** The creature is dazzled for 1 round and sickened 1.

**Critical Failure** The creature is dazzled for 1 round and sickened 2.

**Type** lesser; **Level** 1; **Price** 4 gp

The bomb deals 1d4 piercing damage, and the DC is 15.

**Type** moderate; **Level** 3; **Price** 12 gp

You gain a +1 item bonus to attack rolls. The bomb deals 2d4 points of piercing damage, and the DC is 17.

**Type** greater; **Level** 11; **Price** 275 gp

You gain a +2 item bonus to attack rolls. The bomb deals 3d4 points of piercing damage, and the DC is 28.

**Type** major; **Level** 17; **Price** 2,750 gp

You gain a +3 item bonus to attack rolls. The bomb deals 4d4 points of piercing damage, and the DC is 37.

## IRRITATING SEEDPOD

ITEM 3+

UNCOMMON CATALYST CONSUMABLE MAGICAL

**Usage** held in 1 hand; **Bulk** L

**Activate** Cast a Spell (add 1 action)

When you crack open this soft, spongy seedpod, you can use it as a catalyst when casting a *mist* spell. When you do, irritating pollen fills the area for the spell's duration. Creatures in the area must attempt a Fortitude saving throw at the listed DC to avoid sneezing uncontrollably. On a failed save, the creature gains the listed condition for the listed time. A creature that succeeds at this saving throw becomes temporarily immune to the *irritating seedpod's* pollen for 10 minutes.

**Type** lesser irritating seedpod; **Level** 3; **Price** 11 gp

The DC is 15. On a failed save, the creature becomes slowed 1 for 1 round. Rather than last for the duration of the spell, the irritating pollen only remains in the area for 1 round.

**Type** irritating seedpod; **Level** 7; **Price** 55 gp

The DC is 21. On a failed save, the creature becomes slowed 1 for 1 round.

**Type** greater irritating seedpod; **Level** 10; **Price** 190 gp

The DC is 24. On a failed save, the creature becomes slowed 1 for 3 rounds.

**Type** major irritating seedpod; **Level** 14; **Price** 800 gp

The DC is 29. On a failed save, the creature becomes slowed 2 for 1 round, then slowed 1 for 3 rounds.

## TENDERIZER GRENADE

ITEM 1+

UNCOMMON ACID ALCHEMICAL BOMB CONSUMABLE PLANT SPLASH

**Usage** held in 1 hand; **Bulk** L

**Activate** ♦ Strike

Made from the acidic flesh of an especially astringent fruit found on the Plane of Wood, this bomb's contents soften, oxidize, and season whatever they touch. Many types of this bomb grant an item bonus to attack rolls.

On a successful Strike, a tenderizer grenade deals the listed acid damage to the target and the listed acid splash damage. Any resistances the target has against bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage are reduced by an amount based on the bomb's type. In addition, the target is showered with appetizing esters, oils, and salts, making them off-guard against jaws Strikes, fangs Strikes, or similar Strikes with a creature's mouth. These additional effects last until the end of your next turn, or for 1 minute on a critical hit.

**Type** lesser; **Level** 1; **Price** 4 gp

The bomb deals 1d6 acid damage.

**Type** moderate; **Level** 3; **Price** 12 gp

You gain a +1 item bonus to attack rolls. The bomb deals 2d6 points of acid damage.

**Type** greater; **Level** 11; **Price** 275 gp

You gain a +2 item bonus to attack rolls. The bomb deals 3d6 points of acid damage.



**Type** major; **Level** 17; **Price** 2,750 gp

You gain a +3 item bonus to attack rolls. The bomb deals 4d6 points of acid damage.

## UNFOLDING TREE HOUSE

## ITEM 7

UNCOMMON MAGICAL STRUCTURE WOOD

**Price** 340 gp

**Bulk** L (when not activated)

Though it looks like a simple profile of a bird's wing and body carved into a flat triangle of wood, this magical object can transform into a tree house.

**Activate—Unfold** 1 minute (concentrate, manipulate)

**Frequency** once per day; **Effect** You unfold the triangle on near-invisible seams and the bird animates, flying up to perch in a tree you designate within 300 feet of you. The bird's perch can be as high as 200 feet off the ground or the top of the trees, whichever is lower. The bird then alights, expands, and reshapes into an elegantly crafted tree house over the course of 10 minutes. Unlike typical items with the structure trait, this tree house attaches to the tree instead of needing to be on solid ground.

Once the tree house is in place, a ladder made of intricately woven vines attached to the tree house unfurls all the way to the ground. It can be manually pulled up by inhabitants of the tree house for safety. The tree house has a small veranda, circular windows, a door with a simple lock, and six bedrolls inside. Atop a small cushion sits a wooden whistle.

As an action, you can blow the whistle to create a soft bird call. At this signal, the tree house gradually folds back into a bird over the course of 1 minute, gently ejecting any occupants toward the ladder. Afterward, the bird flies to you, seizes the whistle, and then folds back into the wooden triangle. Unless commanded to dismantle, the tree house stays in place indefinitely, though it's subject to normal wear and damage.

## SPELLS OF WOOD

Plane of Wood spellcasters have developed many incantations to reshape or weaponize their surroundings. Though uncommon on Golarion, these spells will likely proliferate as more explorers visit this elemental plane.

## BOOMERANG SHOT

## SPELL 5

UNCOMMON CONCENTRATE MANIPULATE PLANT WOOD

**Traditions** arcane, primal

**Range** 100 feet; **Targets** 1 creature

You launch a curved length of wood at a foe that arcs around objects and obstacles to strike from an unexpected direction. Make a spell attack roll against the target's AC. This attack ignores the target's concealed condition and ignores all cover except greater cover. If you hit, the projectile deals 7d10 bludgeoning damage.

**Heightened (7th)** The damage increases to 9d10.

**Heightened (9th)** The damage increases to 12d10, and the attack ignores cover completely.

## BRAMBLE BUSH

## CANTRIP 1

UNCOMMON CONCENTRATE MANIPULATE PLANT WOOD

**Traditions** arcane, primal

**Range** 30 feet; **Area** 5-foot cube

**Defense** basic Reflex

In a sudden burst of growth, you cause a thorned bush to sprout from the ground, lash around, and wither. Any creature in the area takes 1d4 piercing damage with a basic Reflex saving throw.

Until the start of your next turn, the area is difficult terrain and hazardous terrain. Any creature entering the square takes 1d4 piercing damage with a basic Reflex saving throw.

**Heightened (+2)** The initial damage increases by 1d4, and the damage dealt by hazardous terrain increases by 1.

## CONJURED CONVEYANCE

## SPELL 3

UNCOMMON CONCENTRATE MANIPULATE PLANT WOOD

**Traditions** arcane, primal

**Range** 30 feet

**Duration** 1 hour

You conjure an intricate vehicle, carved entirely from wood, to serve as a method of conveyance. The vehicle appears in an unoccupied area of your choice within range. The vehicle can be piloted using Arcana, Driving Lore, or Nature skill checks. The DC to pilot the vehicle and the DC of the vehicle's collision are equal to your spell DC. The vehicle's remaining statistics are presented below.

When you Cast this Spell, choose whether to create a Large skiff, a Large wagon, or a Medium cycle. With the GM's permission, you might instead summon a different vehicle of your choice with a maximum level of 1; this vehicle must be made primarily of plant matter, have common rarity, and be Large or smaller.

**Large Skiff—Space** 15 feet long, 5 feet wide, 3 feet high;

**Crew** 1 pilot; **Passengers** 3; **Speed** swim 30 feet (magical)

**Large Wagon—Space** 10 feet long, 10 feet wide, 7 feet high;

**Crew** 1 pilot; **Passengers** 3; **Speed** 35 feet (magical)

**Medium Cycle—Space** 5 feet long, 3 feet wide, 3 feet high;

**Crew** 1 pilot; **Passengers** 0; **Speed** 40 feet (magical)

**AC** 13; **Fortitude** +8

**Hardness** 5, **HP** 40 (BT 20); **Immunities** critical hits, object immunities, precision damage; **Weaknesses** fire 5, slashing 5

**Collision** 2d6

**Heightened (+1)** The vehicle's AC increases by 2, Fortitude bonus increases by 2, Hardness increases by 1, HP increases by 20, and the collision damage increases by 1d6. In addition, the maximum level of vehicle you





can summon with GM permission increases by 2. The duration increases by 1 hour.

## CORDYCEPS COMMAND

## SPELL 3

UNCOMMON FUNGUS CONCENTRATE INCAPACITATION MANIPULATE POISON

**Traditions** primal

**Range** 30 feet; **Targets** 1 creature

**Defense** Fortitude

You conjure a mote of cordyceps spores uniquely tailored to the target before whisking it at them. When you Cast this Spell, choose one of the following behaviors that the fungus compels: ascend, consume, descend, or lure. While the target is controlled by the cordyceps toxin's stage 3 effects, it performs that behavior. This control might include risky behavior (such as climbing down a precarious cliff or weaving between armed foes), but it doesn't compel outright lethal actions (such as leaping off the top of that same cliff). If the behavior directly leads to harm (such as falling off the cliff) or hostile actions (such as being attacked by creatures that can now reach the descending creature), the target gains a +4 bonus to their next saving throw against the poison.

**Ascend:** The creature tries to reach higher altitudes by any reasonable means, such as Climbing, seeking stairs, or even stacking debris to jump atop of in an attempt to be as high up as possible.

**Consume:** The creature greedily eats or drinks whatever is nearby, using actions to draw and consume elixirs, food, or other consumable items. If the creature has a jaws Strike, fangs Strike, or similar unarmed Strike, the creature can instead chase after and use that Strike against edible targets. If no other food or drink is accessible, the creature attempts to steal or seek nearby nutrition.

**Descend:** The creature tries to reach lower altitudes by any reasonable means, such as Climbing, descending while flying, or even falling prone and attempting to burrow into the ground.

**Lure:** The creature moves toward an exposed location and attempts to get bystanders' attention, such as by gesticulating, Performing, or igniting light sources. The target is off-guard while controlled in this way.

**Success** The target is unaffected.

**Failure** The target is afflicted with cordyceps toxin at stage 1.

**Critical Failure** The target is afflicted with cordyceps toxin at stage 2.

**Cordyceps Toxin** (poison) **Saving Throw** DC 28 Fortitude; **Maximum Duration** 6 rounds; **Stage 1** stupefied 1 (1 round); **Stage 2** confused (1 round); **Stage 3** controlled (1 round)

## REED WHISTLE

## SPELL 1

UNCOMMON CONCENTRATE MANIPULATE PLANT WOOD

**Traditions** arcane, occult, primal

**Duration** 1 hour or until expended

You enchant a blade of grass that you can easily hold in your mouth without inhibiting your speech or other actions. As a reaction, you can reduce the spell's remaining duration by 1 hour to Point Out (*Player Core* 419) a creature you detect as you sharply whistle through the reed. You and your allies also gain a +2 circumstance bonus to Perception checks to Seek the creature for 1d4 rounds.

**Heightened (3rd)** The spell's duration becomes 4 hours.

## GIFTS OF THE FOSSILIZED KING

A longtime ruler of the Plane of Earth, Ayrzul delights in slowly poisoning others and hiding his own intentions behind miles of stone and soil. As the PCs travel beyond Cradle of Knot, they might uncover these treasures. However, the Fossilized King enjoys few allies on the Plane of Wood, so accepting these gifts might jeopardize the PCs' existing connections.

## BOUGHSHATTER

## ITEM 13

UNCOMMON EARTH MAGICAL POISON

**Price** 2,875 gp

**Usage** held in 1 hand; **Bulk** 1

The spikes of this +2 *greater striking standard-grade adamantine morningstar* have a faintly green shimmer, as if resembling Ayrzul's crystalline teeth. The weapon vibrates briefly when first drawn in or carried into a radioactive area, with the intensity of the vibration correlating to the radioactivity's strength. While you carry *Boughshatter*, you gain a +4 status bonus to saving throws against radiation, including Ayrzul's Blight.

**Activate—Splintering Strike** ♦♦ (manipulate) **Frequency**

Once per minute; **Effect** Make a Strike with the morningstar that deals an extra die of weapon damage. If you make this Strike against a fungus, plant, or creature with the wood trait, the Strike ignores 10 points of the target's resistances to bludgeoning and piercing damage, if any. By damaging such a creature, the morningstar causes the target's flesh to explode in a shower of splinters that affect a 30-foot cone originating from the target's space, dealing 8d6 piercing damage to creatures in the area (DC 30 basic Reflex save). You and the target are unaffected by these splinters.

**Activate—Absorb Corruption** ↻ (concentrate) **Frequency**

Once per day; **Trigger** You take poison or void damage; **Effect** You channel some of the toxic energy into *Boughshatter*, granting the weapon the effects of either a *decaying weapon rune*, *grievous weapon rune*, or *wounding weapon rune* for 1 minute. While under this effect, the morningstar glows with dim green light in a 20-foot radius.

## Shepherd of Decay

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## BLIGHT BOND LIFE CYCLES

Many blight bonds consist of animals and plants working together to propagate. Spitting sawflies feed on the bile-like sap of coiled conifers and implant their eggs into the tree's bark. In return for the conifer's hosting, the sawflies plague other creatures by spreading the conifer's spores in their victims, which emerge as tiny creeping cones if left untreated. Swaths of creeping cones spread across the land, threatening to devour anything in their path until they root in a suitable spot.

# Blight Bonded

The Plane of Wood contains many unique ecosystems formed around species of wondrous trees; when Ayrzul's Blight mutates one of these trees rather than killing it, it can have a cascading effect on the tree's biome. Multiple species often mutate in tandem, becoming warped mockeries and a vector for Ayrzul's Blight. These "blight bonded" creature families are parasites and predators and typically form twisted symbiotic relationships.

## SPITTING SAWFLY

Spitting sawflies are enormous, bloated insects covered in tumor-like knots of spores. These ravenous pests sow disease and spores wherever they go, heralding the infestation of creeping cones.

### SPITTING SAWFLY

CREATURE 10

RARE MEDIUM BEAST MUTANT WOOD

**Perception** +19 darkvision, wood scent (precise) 30 feet

**Skills** Acrobatics +22, Athletics +20

**Str** +4, **Dex** +6, **Con** +5, **Int** -5, **Wis** +3, **Cha** +1

**Wood Scent** A spitting sawfly can smell plants and wood as a precise scent at the listed range.

**AC** 30; **Fort** +19, **Ref** +22, **Will** +16

**HP** 175; **Immunities** acid; **Resistances** poison 10

**Speed** 20 feet, climb 20 feet, fly 40 feet

**Melee** ✦ mandibles +22 (finesse, poison), **Damage** 2d12+10 piercing plus seizing venom

**Ranged** ✦ acid spit +22 (poison, range increment 30 feet), **Damage** 4d8 acid plus seizing venom

**Consume Essence** ✦ (healing, manipulate, primal) **Frequency** once per day;

**Requirements** The spitting sawfly is adjacent to a creature with the wood trait or to a coiled conifer; **Effect** The sawfly feasts upon the targeted creature or the coiled conifer's sap, regaining 5d6 Hit Points. A targeted creature must attempt a DC 29 Fortitude save or become drained 1 (drained 2 on a critical failure).

**Creeping Sprout** (disease) A creature afflicted with creeping sprout is treated by the spitting sawfly as if it has the wood trait; **Saving Throw** DC 29 Fortitude; **Stage 1** carrier with no ill effect (1d4 days); **Stage 2** drained 1 (1d4 days); **Stage 3** 12d6 acid damage, creeping cone swarm emerges (disease ends)

**Plant Spores** ✦ The spitting sawfly plants spores in an adjacent creature that's paralyzed or unconscious, exposing it to creeping sprout disease.

**Seizing Venom** (incapacitation, poison) **Saving Throw** DC 29 Fortitude; **Maximum Duration** 6 rounds; **Stage 1** off-guard and slowed 1 (1 round); **Stage 2** off-guard and slowed 2 (1 round); **Stage 3** paralyzed (1 round)

## CREEPING CONES

Caustic fluid seeps out from the scales of these sluglike cones, which spawn in unsuspecting hosts until they're mature enough to seek a place to root. Moving in writhing swarms that seek a habitat flush with prey, creeping cones spread Ayrzul's Blight when destroyed, but leaving them to grow unchecked poses a great risk to other creatures.

### CREEPING CONE SWARM

CREATURE 10

RARE LARGE ELEMENTAL MUTANT PLANT SWARM WOOD

**Perception** +18; darkvision, tremorsense (imprecise) 60 feet

**Skills** Athletics +22



**Str** +6, **Dex** +5, **Con** +6, **Int** -4, **Wis** +2, **Cha** -1

**AC** 29; **Fort** +22, **Ref** +19, **Will** +16

**HP** 135; **Immunities** acid, poison, precision, swarm mind; **Weaknesses** area damage 7, axes 10, fire 10, splash damage 7; **Resistances** bludgeoning 10, piercing 10, slashing 7 (except axes)

**Blight Burst** ◆ (acid, primal) **Trigger** The creeping cone swarm is reduced to fewer than half its Hit Points or is reduced to 0 Hit Points; **Effect** A 15-foot-radius emanation of acid explodes from the creeping cone swarm. Creatures in the area take 3d12 acid damage (DC 25 basic Reflex save). Non-blight bonded creatures damaged by this effect are exposed to Ayrzul's Blight (page 33).

**Putrid Spores** (aura, poison, primal) 30 feet. A creature entering the aura must succeed at a DC 26 Fortitude save or become sickened 1 until the end of its turn (sickened 2 on a critical failure). While within the aura, an affected creature takes a -2 circumstance penalty to recover from the sickened condition. A creature that succeeds at its save is temporarily immune for 1 minute.

**Speed** 25 feet, climb 20 feet

**Jagged Scales** ◆◆ (primal) The creeping cones shake off a barrage of jagged, stony scales. Each creature in a 10-foot burst within 30 feet of the swarm takes 2d12+7 slashing damage (DC 29 basic Reflex save).

**Pummeling Lurches** ◆ Each enemy in the swarm's space takes 6d6 bludgeoning damage (DC 29 basic Fortitude save). A creature that fails its save falls prone.

## COILED CONIFER

This bent and slithering entity is barely identifiable as a tree. Tentacle-like roots extend from its trunk in odd places, meeting tumorous knots filled with caustic sap.

## COILED CONIFER

## CREATURE 13

**RARE** **HUGE** **ELEMENTAL** **MUTANT** **PLANT** **WOOD**

**Perception** +21 darkvision, tremorsense (imprecise) 120 feet

**Skills** Athletics +27, Stealth +24 (+26 in forests and swamps)

**Str** +8, **Dex** +5, **Con** +7, **Int** -4, **Wis** +2, **Cha** -1

**AC** 34; **Fort** +26, **Ref** +22, **Will** +19

**HP** 238; **Immunities** acid, poison; **Weaknesses** axes 15, fire 15; **Resistances** bludgeoning 15, piercing 15

**Regurgitate Sap** ➤ **Trigger** A creature grabbed or restrained by the coiled conifer attempts to Escape; **Effect** Sticky, caustic sap wells up in the conifer's maw. The DC of the Escape check increases by 2, and the creature takes 3d12 acid damage (DC 33 basic Reflex save).

**Speed** 20 feet

**Melee** ◆ branchy maw +27 (deadly 1d10, reach 15 feet), **Damage** 3d10+14 piercing plus Improved Grab

**Melee** ◆ root +27 (agile, reach 15 feet, trip), **Damage** 3d8+14 bludgeoning plus Push 10 feet

**Greater Constrict** ◆ 2d10+9 bludgeoning, DC 33

**Sap Spray** ◆◆ (primal) The coiled conifer spews bile-like sap in a 60-foot cone. Creatures in the area take 7d12 acid damage (DC 33 basic Reflex save) and become sickened 1 (sickened 2 on a critical failure). The coiled conifer can't use this ability again for 1d4 rounds.

**Slithering Roots** ◆ **Requirements** The coiled conifer has at least one creature grabbed; **Effect** The coiled conifer Strides up to its full Speed, taking any creatures it has grabbed with it.

**Swallow Whole** ◆ (attack) Large, 3d6+9 bludgeoning, Rupture 24



## OTHER BLIGHT BONDS

Oozing maples leak toxic sap that transforms entire regions into swampy wastes where the multi-headed reaping herons thrive. The herons use their scythe-like beaks to eviscerate prey and feed the guts to the maples, ensuring the production of the viscous ooze they use to nourish their young.



Creeping Cone





## A THOUSAND APOLOGIES

After dispersing, a leshy mob's members periodically revisit what they damaged and sometimes feel remorse for what they destroyed. In cases of collateral damage, a leshy community might quietly deliver gifts and perform services for those they wronged. These offerings range from fresh produce on a doorstep to weeding a farm field overnight, or even helping a wronged party's direct descendant uncover buried treasure generations later.

# Leshies

For all their cute appearances and harmless pretenses, leshies can become a formidable force when riled. What's more, leshies can grow larger, stronger, and more aggressive in regions rich in primal energy. The following presents several higher-level leshy threats that grow in primordial forests.

## LESHY MOB

A single leshy is a nuisance. A horde of leshies is a natural disaster. When confronted by existential threats or malicious ecological devastation, charismatic leshy leaders can rally their kin into a mob. These bands often include several kinds of leshy, creating a ragtag host that can communicate with and draw power from nearly any plant in its path. The farther they travel, the greater the mob's sense of cohesion becomes, gradually awakening an empathic hive mind, coordinated shapeshifting, and communal spellcasting far beyond what any individual could accomplish.

Leshy mobs rarely outlast whatever rallied them in the first place. After pillaging a lumber camp or liberating a greenhouse's contents, the leshies gradually shake off their mob mentality—often with some shock or sheepishness at recognizing whatever crimes they just committed. Though the leshies scatter, they often retain a faint sense of camaraderie with their old comrades, making it easier for them to gather again to confront future threats.

## LESHY MOB

CREATURE 11

GARGANTUAN LESHY PLANT TROOP

**Perception** +21; low-light vision

**Languages** Common, Fey; *speaks with plants*

**Skills** Acrobatics +19, Athletics +22, Nature +22, Stealth +19

**Str** +5, **Dex** +4, **Con** +7, **Int** +3, **Wis** +5, **Cha** +6

**AC** 30; **Fort** +23, **Ref** +19, **Will** +21

**HP** 195 (16 squares); **Thresholds** 130 (12 squares), 65 (8 squares); **Weaknesses** area damage 12, fire 8, splash damage 8

**Verdant Burst** (healing, primal, vitality) When a leshy mob's Hit Points reach a threshold that would reduce its size, a burst of primal energy explodes from the fallen leshies and empowers the surviving fighters. The leshy mob gains 4d8 temporary Hit Points that last for 10 minutes. In addition, all squares within 5 feet of the troop become filled with various plants, becoming difficult terrain. If the environment is not a viable environment for these plants, they wither after 24 hours.

**Speed** 25 feet; troop movement

**Form Up** ♦ (Pathfinder Bestiary 3 304)

**Primal Innate Spells** DC 30; **5th** *wall of thorns*; **Constant (3rd)** *speaks with plants*

**Change Shape** ♦ (concentrate, polymorph, primal) The leshies can transform into an assortment of Small plants that fills a 15-foot burst centered on any one square the leshy mob occupies, creating difficult terrain. When the leshies return to their natural form, they Form Up anywhere within the burst. This otherwise uses the effects of *one with plants*.

**One with the Foliage** The leshy mob ignores difficult terrain caused by plants and fungi, and it treats greater difficult terrain from such sources as difficult terrain.

**Rain of Seeds** ♦♦ The leshies grab and hurl an assortment of stones, spores, and explosive seeds, launching a ranged attack in the form of a volley. This volley is a 10-foot burst within 60 feet that deals 4d8 bludgeoning or poison damage



(DC 30 basic Reflex save). When the leshies are reduced to 8 or fewer squares, this area decreases to a 5-foot burst.

**Troop Movement** Whenever the leshy mob Strides, it first Forms Up as a free action to condense into a 20-foot-by-20-foot area (minus any missing squares), then moves up to its Speed. This works just like a Gargantuan creature moving; for instance, if any square of the mob enters difficult terrain, the extra movement cost applies to the whole group.

**Veggielante Justice** ♦ to ♦♦♦ **Frequency** once per round; **Effect** The leshies assault each enemy creature within 5 feet, with a DC 30 basic Reflex save. The damage depends on the number of actions.

♦ 3d8 bludgeoning or slashing damage

♦♦ 3d8+11 bludgeoning or slashing damage

♦♦♦ 3d8+16 bludgeoning or slashing damage

## REDWOOD LESHY

Guardians of old growth forests and the mightiest trees, redwood leshies behave with the courage and self-assurance that they believe befits their legacy. They rarely lord their duties over other leshies, instead believing it's their responsibility to shield, guide, and provide for others.

## REDWOOD LESHY

## CREATURE 10

UNCOMMON SMALL LESHY PLANT

**Perception** +22; low-light vision

**Languages** Common, Fey; *speaks with plants* (trees only)

**Skills** Athletics +22, Intimidation +18, Nature +19

**Str** +6, **Dex** +2, **Con** +6, **Int** +3, **Wis** +5, **Cha** +4

**Items** +1 striking *bo staff*

**AC** 29; **Fort** +22, **Ref** +16, **Will** +19

**HP** 205; **Resistances** fire 10; +2 status to all saves vs. fear

**Verdant Burst** (healing, primal, vitality) When a redwood leshy dies, a burst of primal energy explodes from their body, restoring 5d8 Hit Points to each plant creature in a 30-foot emanation. This area is filled with saplings, becoming difficult terrain. If the environment isn't a viable environment for these trees, they wither after 24 hours.

**Speed** 25 feet

**Melee** ♦ *bo staff* +23 (monk, parry, reach, trip),

**Damage** 2d8+12 bludgeoning

**Melee** ♦ fist +23 (agile, finesse), **Damage**

2d6+12 bludgeoning

**Primal Innate Spells** DC 28; **4th** *enlarge* (self only); **Constant (3rd)** *speaks with plants* (trees only)

**Change Shape** ♦ (concentrate, polymorph, primal) The redwood leshy can take the form of a Large tree, using the effects of *one with plants*.

**Looming Strike** The leshy deals an additional 1d8 damage to creatures smaller than it.

**Needles That Catch the Clouds** The leshy can cast *create water*, *downpour*, and *mist* as innate primal spells once per day, but only while Large or larger.



## TERRORS OF ARENWAY

The Isle of Arenway is infamous for its territorial leshies. While they and members of the Wildwood Lodge leave each other alone, trespassers can find themselves trapped in nets of living vines and hurled into the Sellen River—if not killed and composted beneath the island's titanic trees. These leshies supposedly predate human occupation, perhaps having arisen from the same magic that haunts the island.



Leshy Mob





## RARE URGENCY

Ayrzul's infamously cruel patience is a result of purging his own mind of any need for haste by channeling it into his experiments, burying his desire for swift victory over his enemies like an unpleasant secret. Thanks to the influence of their master's discarded emotions, gritblights display an unusual impatience and irritability compared to their fellow earth elementals and are quick to attack at any perceived provocation.

# Gritblight

Resembling twisted lumps of fused gravel with oddly angled crystal limbs, gritblights are shock troops commonly used by Ayrzul to spread terror and disease to his enemies. These creatures are the gruesome result of experiments on crystalline elementals who were once the allies or servants of Ayrzul's rival lord of elemental earth, Sairazul. Their crystalline body parts appear cracked and deformed, only their single "eye" left intact.

## GRITBLIGHT

## CREATURE 13

**RARE** **LARGE** **EARTH** **ELEMENTAL**

**Perception** +23; darkvision, blight sense (precise) 60 feet, tremorsense (imprecise) 120 feet, grit vision

**Languages** Petran

**Skills** Acrobatics +21, Athletics +27

**Str** +8, **Dex** +4, **Con** +5, **Int** +0, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +1

**Blight Sense** A gritblight can detect the location of nearby creatures afflicted with Ayrzul's Blight as a precise sense at the listed range.

**Grit Vision** A gritblight's vision is unaffected by clouds of sand, dirt, grit, or other earth materials in air or water.

**AC** 33; **Fort** +26, **Ref** +19, **Will** +23; +1 status vs. earth effects

**HP** 235; **Immunities** bleed, disease, paralyzed, poison, sickened, sleep;

**Resistances** acid 15, physical 15

**Blight Cloud** (aura, poison, radiation) 30 feet. A gritblight continually sheds tiny fragments of radioactive earth in a cloud around it. This cloud conceals the gritblight as a light fog and sheds dim light in the area. Any creature that begins its turn in the aura takes 2d6 poison damage with a DC 30 basic Fortitude save. A creature that fails its save is exposed to Ayrzul's Blight and a creature that critically fails is additionally sickened 1.

**Speed** 30 feet, burrow 30 feet; earth glide

**Melee** ♦ claw +27 (reach 10 feet), **Damage** 3d6+14 slashing plus 2d6 acid

**Ranged** ♦ caustic shard +23 (range increment 60 feet), **Damage** 3d6+10 piercing plus 2d6 acid

**Ayrzul's Blight** (disease, earth, primal) See page 33, but DC 33.

**Earth Glide** The gritblight can Burrow through any earthen matter, including rock. When it does so, the gritblight moves at its full burrow Speed, leaving no tunnels or signs of its passing.

**Labyrinthine Vision** ♦♦ (mental, primal) The gritblight forces disorienting visions of Ayrzul's Blistering Labyrinth into the minds of nearby creatures. All creatures in a 60-foot cone take 7d12 mental damage with a DC 33 Will save. Creatures blinded by a gritblight's Labyrinthine Vision see only endless earthen tunnels in every direction. The gritblight can't use this ability again for 1d4 rounds.

**Critical Success** The creature is unaffected.

**Success** The creature takes half damage.

**Failure** The creature takes full damage and is blinded for 1 minute.

**Critical Failure** The creature takes double damage and is blinded permanently.

**Trample** ♦♦♦ Medium or smaller, claw, DC 33



## Speaker in Spores

As Zibik wanders the blighted wilderness and takes on the toxins of others, his body is overburdened by fungal growths. Zibik sheds these growths during his cycle of death and rebirth, and they sometimes emerge as a fungal creature that's independent of but innately connected to the green man. Zibik often shapes a speaker in spores to resemble an animal he encountered recently; speakers very rarely share the same form, but they all appear like fungal growths surrounded by glowing spores.

### BLIGHTED SPEAKER IN SPORES

### CREATURE 13

**RARE** **LARGE** **FUNGUS** **MUTANT**

**Perception** +25; darkvision, sporesight (imprecise) 120 feet

**Languages** Muan, Wildsong; shaped tongue, spore matrix

**Skills** Acrobatics +22, Athletics +24, Intimidation +21, Nature +27, Survival +27

**Str** +7, **Dex** +3, **Con** +4, **Int** -2, **Wis** +8, **Cha** +2

**Shaped Tongue** The speaker in spores can speak with all plants and the creature they resemble.

**Spore Matrix** (aura, mental, primal) 60 feet. The speaker in spores is surrounded by a strong concentration of spores. The speaker can communicate telepathically to any creatures in the aura who have breathed in their spores. This communication always uses the listener's native language and can't be used with a creature that doesn't breathe.

**Sporesight** The speaker in spores can see through spores drifting in the air, ignoring cover. This is an imprecise sense and functions only in areas without strong wind currents. Sporesight doesn't function underwater.

**AC** 32; **Fort** +23, **Ref** +20, **Will** +27

**HP** 250; **Immunities** poison; **Weaknesses** fire 15, slashing 15;

**Resistances** bludgeoning 15, piercing 15

**Blight Walker** The speaker in spores recovers from the paralyzed, slowed, and stunned conditions at the end of their turn. They're also immune to penalties to their Speeds and ignore cover, concealment, difficult terrain, and greater difficult terrain resulting from plants or fungi.

**Toxic Spores** **2** (disease, poison, primal) **Trigger** A creature critically hits the speaker or the speaker dies; **Effect** The blighted speaker in spores releases a burst of toxic spores. Any creature within 10 feet of the speaker in spores takes 3d6 poison damage (DC 31 basic Fortitude save). Creatures that fail their saving throw are exposed to Ayrzul's Blight (page 33).

**Speed** 40 feet; fly

**Melee** **2** tendril +28 (reach 10 feet), **Damage** 3d10+13 bludgeoning plus 1d6 persistent poison

**Primal Innate Spells** DC 33 **Constant (5th)** *environmental endurance, fly*

**Accelerate Decay** **2** (primal, void) The speaker in spores unleashes void energy that forces desiccation in a 30-foot emanation. Each living creature in the area takes 14d6 void damage (DC 33 basic Fortitude save). Creatures afflicted by a disease take a -2 circumstance penalty to this save. All Small or smaller non-magical plant life (though not plant creatures) in the area wither and die, eliminating any cover or concealment and leaving difficult terrain in their wake. The speaker in spores is immune to this effect and can't use this ability again for 1d4 rounds.

**Ayrzul's Blight** (disease, earth, primal) See page 33, but DC 33.

**Rituals** DC 33; **4th** *blight*



### HEALTHY SPEAKERS

A speaker in spores free of the corrupting influence of Ayrzul's Blight doesn't have Toxic Spores or Accelerate Decay. It replaces *blight* with *plant growth* as a ritual. Zibik has an empathic link with all healthy speakers in spores, as if they were familiars and he had the Share Senses ability.



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## ARBOREAL TREASURES

The same wounds that form phytohydras often generate vast quantities of sap that the elementals absorb. Over time, the elementals' movement dries and compresses this sap, leaving nodules of amber throughout their bodies. A careful adventurer can harvest a fortune in gems from the oldest phytohydras, and even a severed head left behind could conceal a life-changing bonanza.

# Wood Elementals

Wood elementals are nearly as varied as plant life itself. The following are particularly powerful elementals formed when immense plants experience environmental stress.

## PHYTOHYDRA

The fresh shoots that sprout from especially grievous cuts sometimes develop minds of their own, eventually budding off from the injured plant to create a phytohydra.

### PHYTOHYDRA

CREATURE 12

HUGE ELEMENTAL PLANT WOOD

**Perception** +25

**Languages** Arboreal, Muan (can't speak any languages)

**Skills** Acrobatics +21, Athletics +25

**Str** +7, **Dex** +3, **Con** +5, **Int** -1, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +2

**AC** 32; **Fort** +25, **Ref** +19, **Will** +22

**HP** (body) 180; **Immunities** bleed, paralyzed, poison, sleep; **Weaknesses** fire 10

**HP** (head) 30; **Immunities** area damage, bleed, paralyzed, poison, sleep;


**Weaknesses** fire 10, slashing 5

**Coppice Regrowth** A phytohydra ordinarily has five heads. A creature can attempt to sever one of the heads by specifically targeting it and dealing damage equal to the head's Hit Points. A head that isn't completely severed returns to full Hit Points at the end of any creature's turn.

A phytohydra can regrow a severed head using phytohydra regeneration. A creature can prevent this regrowth by dealing fire damage to the stump, sealing it. Single-target fire effects need to be targeted at a specific stump, but effects that deal splash damage or affect areas covering the hydra's whole space seal all stumps if they deal fire damage. If the attack that severs a head deals any fire damage or was dealt by an axe, the stump is sealed instantly. If all five heads are sealed, the phytohydra dies.

**Phytohydra Regeneration** The phytohydra has regeneration equal to  $5 \times$  the number of heads it has. If a phytohydra's body is missing any heads and the remaining stumps haven't been cauterized, the phytohydra attempts a DC 35 Fortitude save after it regains Hit Points from regeneration. On a success, one unsealed stump regrows two heads; on a critical success, two unsealed stumps regrow into two heads each. The phytohydra can never grow more than double the number of heads it ordinarily has. The phytohydra's regeneration only fully deactivates if all its heads are severed and all stumps are sealed, at which point it dies.

**Reactive Heads** A phytohydra gains an extra reaction per round for each of its heads beyond the first, which it can use only to make Reactive Strikes. It can't use more than 1 reaction on the same triggering action, even if a creature leaves several squares within its reach, and the phytohydra must use a different head for each Reactive Strike it makes. Whenever one of the phytohydra's heads is severed, the phytohydra loses one of its extra reactions per round.

**Reactive Strike**  (see reactive heads)

**Speed** 25 feet, climb 25 feet

**Melee**  branch +25 (reach 10 feet), **Damage** 4d6+11 bludgeoning plus Push 10 feet

**Melee**  fangs +25 (reach 10 feet), **Damage** 4d6+13 piercing

**Focused Assault**  The phytohydra attacks a single target with its many heads.

The phytohydra Strikes with its branches or its fangs. On a successful attack, the phytohydra deals damage from its branches or fangs Strike to the target, plus an additional 2d6 damage for every head it has beyond the first. On a failure (but



not a critical failure), the phytohydra deals the damage from one branch or fangs Strike to the target creature. This Strike counts as a number of attacks equal to the number of heads the phytohydra has toward its multiple attack penalty.

**Splinter Breath** ♦♦ The phytohydra spews splinters in a 60-foot cone that deals 4d6 piercing damage to all creatures in the area (DC 32 basic Reflex save). The damage increases by 2d6 for each head the phytohydra has. The phytohydra can't use Splinter Breath again for 1d4 rounds.

**Storm of Branches** ♦♦ The phytohydra makes a number of Strikes up to its number of heads, each against a different target. These attacks count toward the phytohydra's multiple attack penalty, but the multiple attack penalty doesn't increase until after the phytohydra makes all its attacks.

## TIMBERWEB

On the Plane of Wood, carnivorous plants sometimes grow so large that they can't sustain themselves on local prey. Rather than starve, parts of these plants sometimes tear themselves free and hunt for themselves. The resulting elementals adopt spiderlike forms and hunting strategies.

Timberwebs extrude vines covered in tiny barbules and sticky sap. After finding a territory with sufficient prey, a timberweb often uses these vines to create shadowy canopies in which to launch ambushes.

## TIMBERWEB

## CREATURE 14

**LARGE** **ELEMENTAL** **PLANT** **WOOD**

**Perception** +25; low-light vision, tremorsense (imprecise) 30 feet, vine sense

**Skills** Acrobatics +26, Athletics +27

**Str** +7, **Dex** +6, **Con** +5, **Int** +0, **Wis** +5, **Cha** +2

**Vine Sense** The timberweb has imprecise tremorsense to detect the vibrations of creatures touching its spun vines.

**AC** 35; **Fort** +27, **Ref** +24, **Will** +23

**HP** 250; **Immunities** bleed, paralyzed, poison, sleep;

**Weaknesses** fire 10

**Speed** 40 feet, climb 30 feet

**Melee** ♦ fangs +29, **Damage** 3d8+17 piercing plus timberweb toxin

**Melee** ♦ leg +29 (agile, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 3d6+15 slashing

**Ranged** ♦ vine +27 (range increment 30 feet), **Damage** 3d6+12 bludgeoning plus tree tether

**Rappel** ♦ (move) The timberweb moves straight down up to 60 feet on a spun vine. It can hang from the vine or drop off. The distance it descends doesn't count toward falling damage. A creature that successfully Strikes the vine (AC 36, Hardness 8, 30 HP) severs it, causing the timberweb to fall.

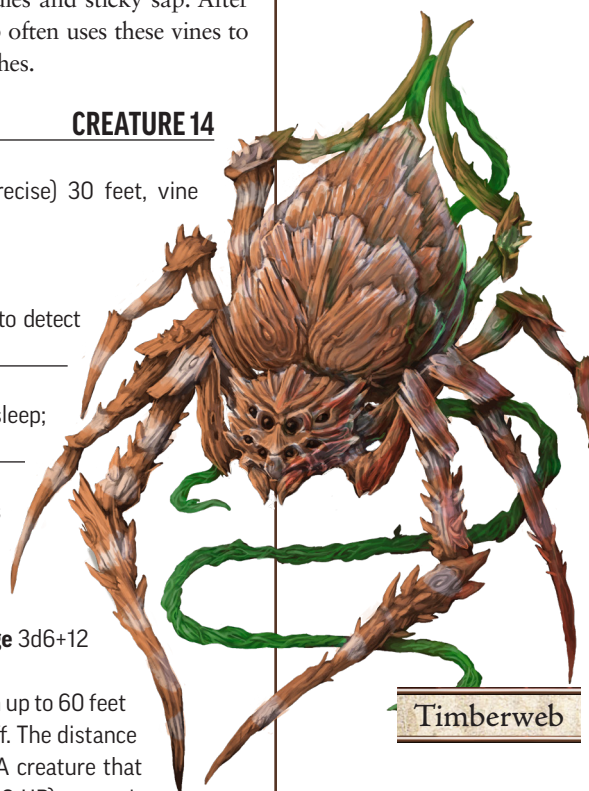
**Timberweb Toxin** (poison) **Saving Throw** DC 34 Fortitude; **Maximum Duration** 6 rounds; **Stage 1** 5d6 poison damage and clumsy 1 (1 round); **Stage 2** 6d6 poison damage and clumsy 2 (1 round); **Stage 3** 8d6 poison damage and clumsy 2 (1 round)

**Tree Tether** A creature hit by the timberweb's vine Strike becomes entangled by the sticky fibers, taking a -15-foot penalty to its Speeds for 1 minute or until it Escapes (DC 34) or is cut free (AC 36, Hardness 8, 30 HP). If the target is adjacent to a wooden object of its size or larger, the target is instead immobilized and stuck to that object until it Escapes or is cut free.



## EUSOCIAL TIMBERWEBS

A timberweb instinctively puts distance between itself and the giant plant from which it budded, seeking distant nutrients. However, when timberwebs unexpectedly discover prey close to home, they sometimes drag excess prey to their parent plant. With enough food, the elementals can even band together, operating like worker ants to feed their creator and encouraging the giant plant to create even more timberwebs.



Timberweb





# Ruzadoya Swiftmane

*Vengeful warmongering graveknight*

Ruzadoya Swiftmane wasn't always a warmonger. She remembers, as a child, that her parents frequently complained about the Verduran Forest's "protectorate" status. Protected from what? By whom? For what purpose? They always believed the Verduran would be better off left to fend for itself, and Ruzadoya lived much of her early life agreeing with them, though she didn't think much of it—life under the treaty was just the way things were, they said. There was nothing to do about it.

In time, as Andoran and Taldor pushed the terms of the treaty to their limits, Ruzadoya came to resent her family's passive acceptance of the treaty. She watched too many friends suffer from ignored quotas or being outright mistreated, threatened, belittled, and harassed by invasive woodcutters and colonists. Sometimes these incidents turned violent. The Lodge's continued repeated election of Valenar the Green baffled Ruzadoya. She believed the leader of the Wildwood Lodge was just like her parents—too much talk, too little action. But, for years, Ruzadoya's family said the same thing: "This is the price we pay for peace." Over time, Ruzadoya grew worse at controlling her anger, but her parents did little to control her frequent frustrated outbursts. Ruzadoya took her anger out in battle or, when there wasn't a fight to be had, in scuffles with her friends, her cousins, even her sister Vandalya.

As hostilities with Andoran and Taldor increased in recent years, Ruzadoya saw far too many friends and family pay the ultimate price. And if that price wasn't securing peace, why not change the terms? She attended the Greenwild Gala intending to confront Valenar and demand restitution for the losses caused by the Treaty of the Wildwood. Instead, Valenar died, as did Ruzadoya, each a casualty of the Greenwild Massacre.

As her blood soaked the ground, thick, greenish wood grew over Ruzadoya like a suit of plate armor. Twisted branches sprouted from her shoulders and grasping roots erupted from her body to dangle from the gaps between plates.

While her armor is impressive, it has an unnatural and unsettling appearance; the wood looks sick, like it

had given up its own vitality to keep Ruzadoya alive. Even without her armor, Ruzadoya was an imposing figure. Now, she's terrifying. Her desiccated flesh, raspy voice, unblinking eyes—they all make her seem like a corpse.

Ruzadoya's armor formed from coalesced primal energy that sprouted in her body and soul when she died, fueled by her anger and purpose and in turn granting her the "gift" of undeath. The time Ruzadoya spent on the Isle of Arenway no doubt contributed to this surge of primal energy, though she attributes her newfound power to her own strength and conviction. Ruzadoya has come to believe that her armor represents the will of the Verduran Forest. She considers herself a force of nature with a singular purpose: to restore natural order and Verduran might by destroying her enemies. She's willing to use (and utterly deplete) any resources, powers, and allies at her disposal. No price is too great, and no creature's suffering (not even her own) is unacceptable. Andoran and Taldor have sowed the seeds of their own destruction for centuries. Ruzadoya will only rest once the reaping is done.

## CAMPAIGN ROLE

After antagonizing the PCs for the past three adventures, Ruzadoya faces them in battle when they confront her at the end of this adventure. After gaining trust and support from the people of Cradle of Knot, the PCs can find their way through the blighted wastes and track down their final foe. Defeating Ruzadoya not only ends the threat that she might return to Golarion and retake the Wildwood Lodge, but puts a stop to her efforts to convince Zibik to lay waste to Andoran and Taldor. Of course, Ruzadoya has had a long time to influence Zibik, and the PCs must do more than destroy the graveknight—if they want to thwart Ruzadoya completely, they must also reveal the extent of her deception. If they fail, Ruzadoya's plans to incite war in Avistan could still come to fruition, even beyond her true death and final destruction. Ruzadoya might even return to seek revenge on the PCs if they don't completely eradicate her graveknight armor.



## RUZADOYA SWIFTMANE

## CREATURE 14

UNIQUE LARGE UNDEAD

Female centaur graveknight (*Pathfinder Monster Core* 58, 179)

**Perception** +26; darkvision

**Languages** Common, Druidic, Elven, Fey, Necril

**Skills** Athletics +28, Deception +26, Diplomacy +23, Intimidation +28, Nature +24, Society +23, Survival +24, Warfare Lore +27

**Str** +8, **Dex** +4, **Con** +5, **Int** +3, **Wis** +4, **Cha** +6

**Items** +1 resilient duskwood full plate, guisarme, composite longbow (20 arrows)

**AC** 38; **Fort** +27, **Ref** +24, **Will** +24

**HP** 255, rejuvenation, void healing; **Immunities** bleed, death effects, disease, paralyzed, poison, unconscious; **Resistances** vitality 10

**Grasping Armor** A creature that Strikes Ruzadoya with a melee weapon must succeed at a DC 31 Reflex save or be disarmed of that weapon. If the creature critically fails, the weapon ends up in Ruzadoya's space. A creature that hits Ruzadoya with an unarmed attack must succeed at a DC 31 Reflex save or become grabbed by Ruzadoya until the end of her next turn, it Escapes, or Ruzadoya moves, whichever comes first.

**Rejuvenation** (primal) When Ruzadoya is destroyed, her armor rebuilds her body over the course of 1d10 days. If her body is destroyed before then, the process restarts. Ruzadoya can only be permanently destroyed by obliterating her armor (such as with *disintegrate*), transporting it to the Plane of Fire, or throwing it into the heart of a volcano.

**Sapping Aura** (aura, primal, void) 30 feet. When a creature in the aura uses a vitality spell or ability, Ruzadoya automatically attempts to counteract it, with a +23 counteract modifier.

### Reactive Strike

**Speed** 40 feet

**Melee** ♦ *guisarme* +29 (magical, reach 10 feet, trip), **Damage** 3d10+14 slashing plus 1d6 persistent bleed plus rooting strikes

**Melee** ♦ hoof +29 (agile, magical), **Damage** 3d8+14 bludgeoning plus 1d6 persistent bleed plus rooting strikes

**Ranged** ♦ *composite longbow* +25 (deadly 2d10, magical, propulsive, range increment 100 feet, reload 0, volley 30 feet), **Damage** 3d8+10 piercing plus 1d6 persistent bleed

**Graveknight's Curse** (curse, primal) This curse affects anyone who wears Ruzadoya's armor for at least 1 hour; **Saving Throw** DC 39 Will; **Onset** 1 hour; **Stage 1** doomed 1 and can't remove the armor (1 day); **Stage 2** doomed 2, -10-foot status penalty to Speeds, and can't remove the armor (1 day); **Stage 3** dies and transforms into the armor's graveknight.

**Rooting Strikes** On a critical hit with a melee weapon or unarmed attack, Ruzadoya's target is immobilized for 1

round (Escape DC 31) and clumsy 1 for as long as the immobilization lasts.

**Ruinous Weapons** Any weapon or unarmed attack Ruzadoya uses gains the effects of the +1 *greater striking* and *wounding* weapon runes.

**Trample** ♦♦♦ Medium or smaller, hoof, DC 31 (*Monster Core* 360)

**Weapon Master** Ruzadoya has access to the critical specialization effects of any weapons she wields.

**Withering Blast** ♦♦ (primal, void) Ruzadoya unleashes a 30-foot cone of corruption. Creatures in the area take 8d12 void damage (DC 34 basic Fortitude save). Ruzadoya can use this ability once every 1d4 rounds.



## Shepherd of Decay

Chapter 1:  
For the  
Rootweft!

Chapter 2:  
Cradle of Knot

Chapter 3:  
Ruin and  
Renewal

Continuing the  
Campaign

Cradle of Knot  
Gazetteer

Adventure  
Toolbox





# Zibik

## *Green Man of Decay and Fresh Starts*

“Zibik shepherds death, and life follows.” A common greeting among Zibik’s followers, this saying encompasses many aspects of the green man’s life and teachings. While typical green men concern themselves entirely with the wellbeing of plants, Zibik focuses on the persistent collapse and decomposition that allows environments to thrive. In many ways, he’s the embodiment of a towering tree falling over, the loss of its expansive canopy allowing sunlight to reach a new generation of saplings. Fungus fascinates Zibik, and his long association with decay and regrowth has caused him to take on aspects of primal fungus.

Ages ago, before the Plane of Wood was sealed off, Zibik traveled there hoping to study and understand how a plane of unfettered growth could sustain itself. While exploring the Universe, he learned that many natural areas recovered from horrifying calamities to be stronger than before, while others stagnated after experiencing even mild changes to the environment. What allowed the Plane of Wood to eternally flourish? Did death and decomposition exist here as well, perhaps to an even greater degree? Or did the environment somehow thrive without natural cycles of decay? He learned much, but his investigations were short-lived, and he never returned to the Universe with his findings; the betrayal and conflict between the Elemental Lords sequestered the Plane of Wood, trapping Zibik there. However, these same events introduced Ayrzul’s Blight, giving Zibik newfound purpose. The disease caused fascinating mutations, and even as it killed off swaths of plant life, it left new life in its wake.

As the blight spread, eradicating entire ecosystems, Zibik’s fascination turned to desperate terror; natural diseases are part of life, but Ayrzul’s Blight is anything but natural. For thousands of years, he’s fought the blight by destroying vibrant frontiers (forming the equivalent of firebreaks), decomposing afflicted material, and absorbing disease and radiation into his own body so that blighted areas might regrow. The cycle of fighting the blight (involving Zibik’s own cyclical death and rebirth) has increasingly shaped his moral perspective; he sees that drastic

action against a part is sometimes the only thing that can save the whole.

Zibik focuses his efforts on remote areas of the plane, rarely interacting with settlements except to warn them of his intentions if they happen to be near an ecosystem he plans to transform. He often spends decades in a single blighted region before moving on. The Elemental Lords of Wood know to leave Zibik alone; he’s largely helping the plane thrive, even when he must make sacrifices, and confronting him poses certain risks due to the tremendous levels of disease and blight afflicting the green man at any given time.

Zibik’s appearance shifts as he progresses through cycles of decay and regrowth. After rejuvenating, he looks stout and healthy, his stride and posture almost regal. As he absorbs diseases from the environment, sickly fungus sprouts all over his body, weighing him down and draining his energy, both physically and spiritually. However he appears, his voice always carries the same grim determination and pride.

### **CAMPAIGN ROLE**

Zibik is by far the most powerful being the PCs encounter in the Wardens of Wildwood campaign. Thankfully for the PCs, they aren’t likely to face him in combat, though he poses a grave threat to the Verduran Forest and nearby nations. In the adventure’s final scene, the PCs must convince Zibik that Ruzadoya Swiftmane has deceived him. Should they fail to counter the graveknight’s deceptive narratives about Avistan and its people, Zibik is sure to make his way through the portal to the Isle of Arenway. Once he does, few could stand in his way. In his current state, he would spread destruction, death, and disease. The blight would spread. Andoran and Taldor would be the first nations impacted, but without swift and decisive action, they would fail to stop Zibik. Most living things would be killed outright, survivors would experience agonizing disease, and decades of suffering would follow.

But in time, life would return to southern Avistan, the region forever transformed into something new. Something better. Stronger. More resilient. Zibik, his work accomplished, would be long gone—unless the



people of Avistan proved Ruzadoya Swiftmane was right all along. Should they mount an offensive against Zibik, rather than letting him destroy the region and bring about new life, he might decide he has no choice but to stay on Golarion a while longer. So be it. Zibik shepherds death, and life follows.

## ZIBIK

## CREATURE 24

UNIQUE MEDIUM FUNGUS LESHY PLANT

Male variant green man (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 3 118)

**Languages** Arboreal, Fey, Muan, Wildsong; green tongue

**Skills** Acrobatics +39, Athletics +42, Deception +40, Diplomacy +40 (+44 vs. plants), Intimidation +40 (+44 vs. plants), Medicine +48, Nature +48, Plane of Wood Lore +48, Stealth +41, Survival +44

**Aura of Absorption** (aura, fungus, primal) 120 feet. Zibik constantly absorbs toxins and pathogens from his surroundings. Zibik automatically absorbs afflictions from non-creature plants, increasing his drained value by 1 each round he absorbs any afflictions from such plants (with no maximum). Living creatures in the area can attempt a saving throw against any disease or poison afflicting them each round, increasing their degree of success for the save by one step. If a creature succeeds, Zibik automatically counteracts the affliction and increases his current drained value by 1 (with no maximum). When Zibik removes an affliction with this ability, he automatically advances to Stage 1 of the affliction and must continue to attempt saving throws as normal. Zibik can choose to exclude any number of creatures in the area from this effect, and generally does so to absorb Ayrzul's Blight while allowing natural afflictions to run their course.

**Fungal Rebirth** (fungus, primal) When Zibik dies as the result of a disease or his Aura of Absorption, fungus rebuilds his body over the course of 3d6 days. If his body is destroyed before then, the process restarts. When restored to life, he's bolstered by primal might; he gains a +3 circumstance bonus to saving throws against diseases for a number of weeks equal to the number of days it took his body to regrow, and he's unaffected by the drained condition for the same duration (though he can still gain the condition).

**Primal Innate Spells** DC 48; **10th** *flourishing flora* (×3; *Rage of Elements* 196), *heal* (×3), *nature's pathway* (at will), *regenerate* (×3), *truesight*; **9th** *energy aegis*, *entwined roots* (*Rage of Elements* 196); **8th** *desiccate*, *life-draining roots* (*Rage*

*of Elements* 196), *unfettered movement*; **Cantrips** (10th) *detect magic*, *read aura*

**Rituals** DC 48; *awaken animal*, *commune*, *control weather*, *plant growth*, *primal call*, *wish*; green rituals

**Purge Plaguebearers** ♦♦ (fungus, primal) Zibik exudes a cloud of spores in a 30-foot-radius emanation. They cling to all creatures currently afflicted with any disease in the area. Afflicted creatures take 25d6 void damage with a DC 48 basic Fortitude save. A creature that fails its save becomes doomed 1 for 1 minute and sickened 3. Zibik can choose to exclude any number of creatures in the area from this effect. Zibik can't use *Purge Plaguebearers* again for 1d4 rounds.





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by Richard Pett

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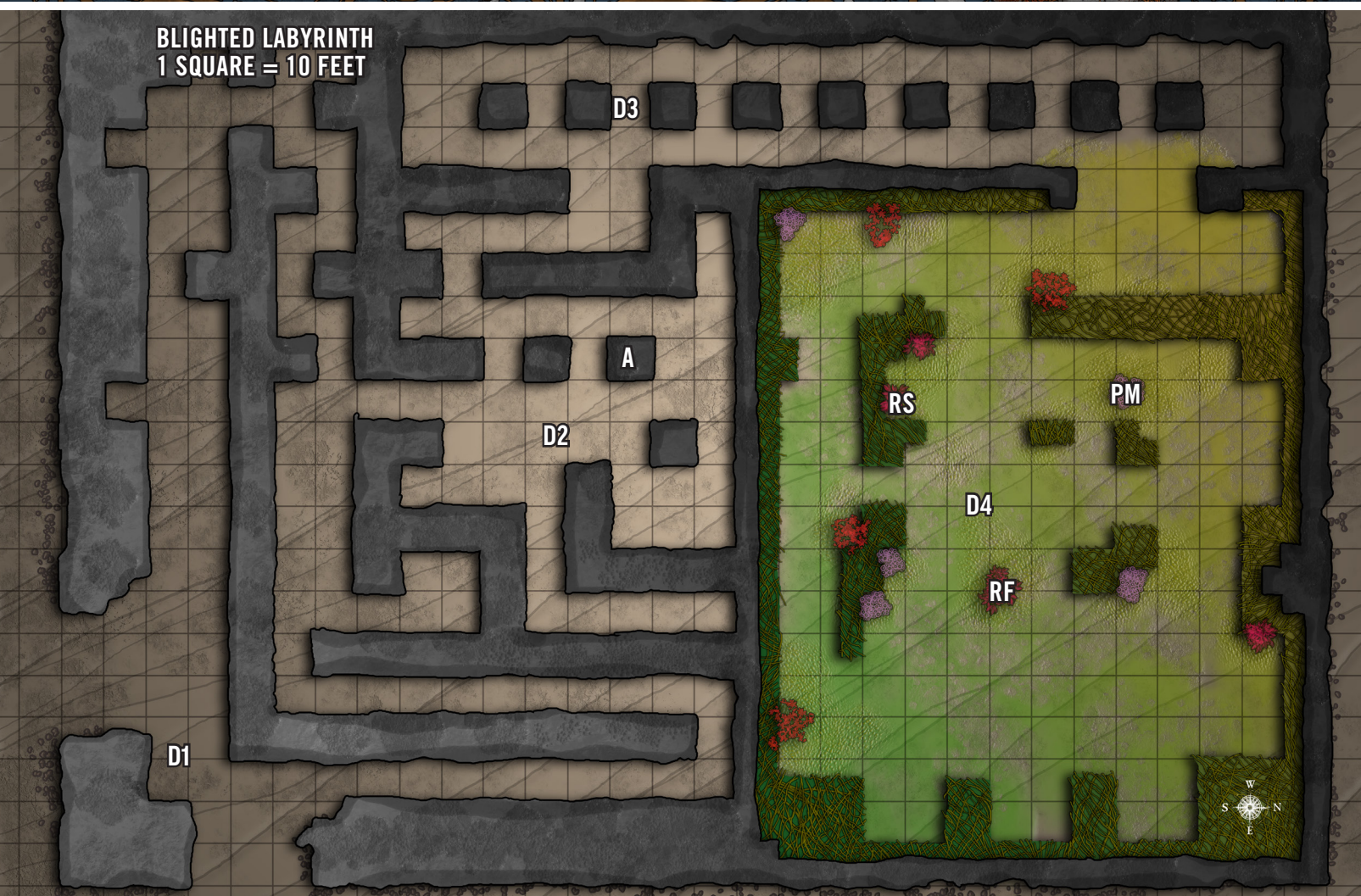
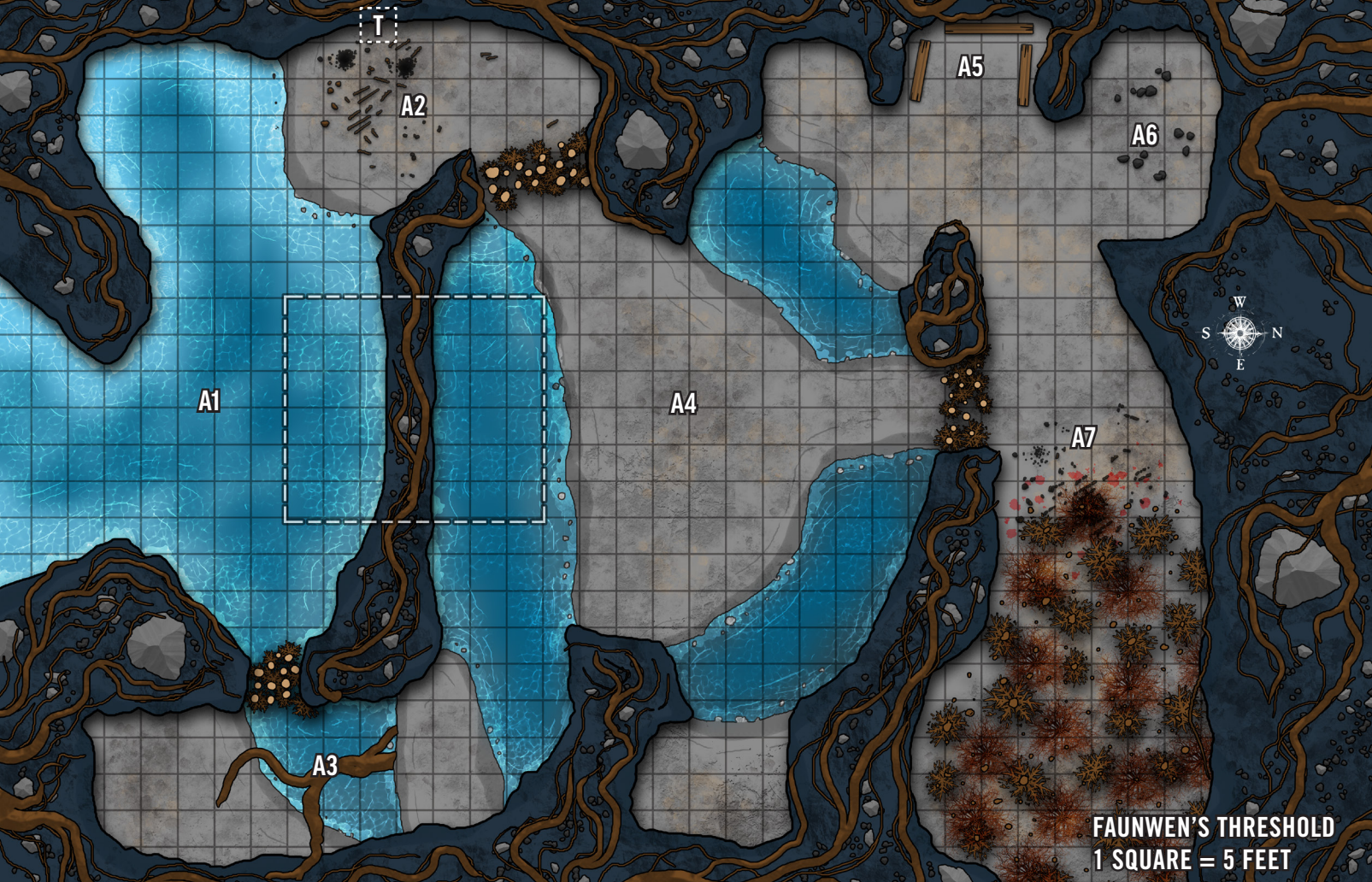


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Having neutralized the Wildwood Lodge's new weapons, the PCs and their allies assault it directly to oust its murderous despot. Yet after recruiting local allies and besieging living fortresses, they discover their foe has fled to an unfamiliar realm: the Plane of Wood. Can the PCs stop this villain from recruiting a demigod of decay to devastate the Verduran Forest? The Wardens of Wildwood Adventure Path concludes with "Shepherd of Decay," a complete adventure for 11th- to 13th-level characters.



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