

RAGING SWAN PRESS

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS: WILDERNESS



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RANDOM ENCOUNTERS: WILDERNESS

Got barely enough time to prepare the module? Want to include cool, evocative random encounters in your games, but just don't have the time to prepare them? Bored of pointless random encounters comprising bands of generic monsters that only seem to exist to attack wandering PCs? Then *Random Encounters: Wilderness* is for you!

Presenting ten ready-to-use random encounters suitable for use in woodlands, hills and swamps, *Random Encounters: Wilderness* takes the pressure off the time-crunched GM, enabling him to concentrate on crafting cool, evocative adventures.

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STAT BLOCK AND ENCOUNTER SUMMARY

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- **Forest & Woodland** Hunters as Bait, Terror from the Soil, The Ants Go Marching In, The Gray Grove
- **Swamp & Marsh** Canoes and Crocodiles, Lost Love, Secrets of the Swamp
- **Hills & Mountains** Death-Dealer of the Gloaming Hills, Mourning Monster, Stuck In the Mud

ENCOUNTERS BY DESIGNER

- **Canoes and Crocodiles** Jesper Andersen
- **Death-Dealer of the Gloaming Hills** Jeff Erwin
- **Hunters as Bait** Richard Bennett
- **Lost Love** Jacob Trier
- **Mourning Monster** Fabian Fehrs
- **Secrets of the Swamp** Denver Edwards Jr.
- **Stuck in the Mud** James F.D. Graham
- **Terror from the Soil** Fabian Fehrs
- **The Ants Go Marching In** Jacob W. Michaels
- **The Gray Grove** Brian J. Ratcliff

ABOUT THE DESIGNERS

Jesper Andersen lives in Copenhagen, Denmark and works in public relations. He has been a roleplaying gamer for almost 25 years and started out playing Dungeons & Dragons with a group of friends back in 1990. He still has very fond memories of that fantastic first journey into the unknown and the core members of that original gaming group still get together and play 3-4 times a month.

Jesper is a regular columnist in the fanzine Threshold – The Mystara Magazine about the original D&D world, and his work has also been published on the Adventure-a-Week Blog. This is

Jesper's first publication as a freelance game designer, although his work will shortly also appear in a new product by Jon Brazer Enterprises. Jesper's great personal adventure in 2014 will be the launching of his own rpg publishing company called Blood Brethren Games, which will also focus on the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game.

Richard D. Bennett has been playing games since shortly after he escaped from the womb, and role-playing games since 1980, when he ran his first game for his sister and Grammy. Since then, he's gamed in four states, three countries, and one

aircraft over international waters. His favourite gaming-related hobby is introducing new people to role-playing games, which includes his lovely wife Beth (now his favourite GM), his daughter Kathrine and his son Keith. Richard lives in Northern Virginia where he spends his time trying to decide what he wants to be if he grows up.

Denny Edwards is an old-time gamer, but not a “grognard.” While his work in this product represents his first published credit in a book; he’s been a contributor and member of the gaming community for over 30 years. He’s a long-time contributor to *d20pfsrd.com* and is the founder of *www.pfbeginner.com*—a site he made for his children. He’s been a player and gamemaster in practically every version of D&D and have been with Pathfinder from its alpha version. Denny’s full-time job as well as one of his other hobbies is software development. He tries to blend his love of technology and gaming together to create utilities to help players and gamemasters alike. Denny has two girls in elementary school and a two-year old son. He tries every chance he gets to instill in them the wonder and joy he found when he discovered table-top roleplaying.

Jeff Erwin is a freelance game writer and editor hailing from the island of California. He loves Pathfinder, Call of Cthulhu, Go Fish with his daughter, and buckling swashes. He tends to ramble on about medieval legend and obscure campaign settings a trifle much.

Fabian Fehrs is jolly modest.

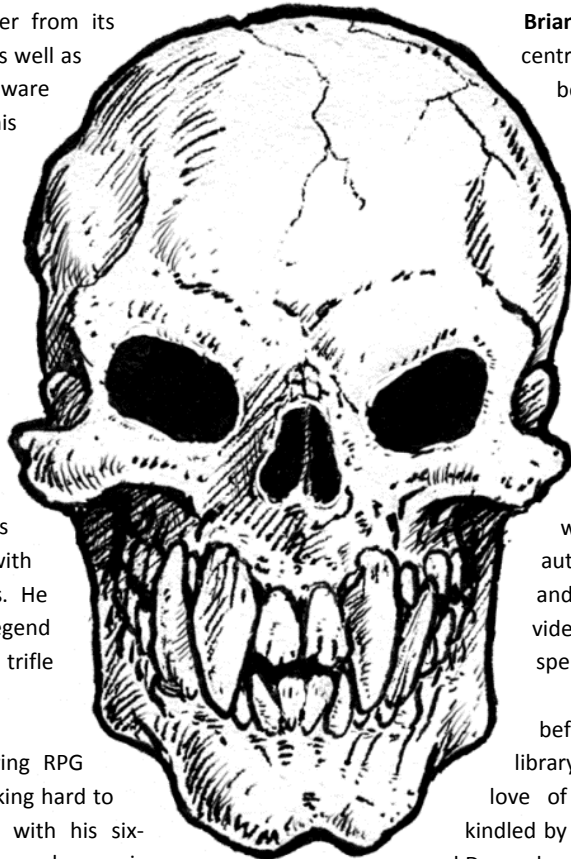
James F.D. Graham is an aspiring RPG writer/designer who is currently working hard to juggle his stay-at-home dad duties with his six-month old son, leading and playing several campaigns, and working on projects like *Random Encounters: Wilderness*. He has had the privilege to write for others such as *Kobold Quarterly* and *LPJ Design*. He was also honoured to participate in the 2009 RPG Superstar Contest by Paizo Publishing and blushing admits he made it into the top 8.

James has a B.A. in History with an interest in piracy (the original kind, not electronic!). He resides in Halifax, Nova Scotia along with his impish new son and his roguish, and utterly supportive, wife.

Jacob W. Michaels is a newspaper editor in eastern Pennsylvania, He has been gaming for 30 years, since he was

introduced to *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons* in the third grade. He’s a two-time finalist in Paizo’s RPG Superstar, making the Top 16 in 2012 and taking another shot at the title in 2014 (the competition is still going on as he’s writing this). He had his first module, *Ironwall Gap Must Hold*, published in 2013 and is excited to be working with Raging Swan Press for the first time.

He lives with his faithful hound, Holiday, who hasn’t inherited his interest in gaming, but enjoys when her dog friends come over during games. His parents and sister have always been supportive of his hobby, and he appreciates his fiancée’s encouragement, even if her reaction to watching her first (and only) gaming session was “there are some things you can never unsee.”



Brian J. Ratcliff was born and raised in south-central Texas, where he lived for 18 years before moving to Arizona, meeting his first gaming group, and being introduced to the video game *Neverwinter Nights* and through it to D&D 3.5 in 2003. He has since relocated to Chattanooga, Tennessee, where he works as a member of an accounting firm; by nights he tinkers with Pathfinder gaming ideas and homebrew setting and resources, and works his way toward completing a vast array of fiction stories. When not gaming, working on gaming projects, writing, or brainstorming with his co-author, he enjoys reading fantasy, sci-fi and/or anything that blends the two, playing video games (primarily console JRPGs), and spending time with his family’s four dogs.

Jacob Trier has been a book-worm since before he could walk. Growing up, the library was one of his favorite places, and his love of fantasy and role-playing games was kindled by *Sword and Sorcery* pick-your-path books and *Dragonlance* novels. At age ten, he got his hands on the AD&D 2nd ed *Players Handbook*, and he has been a gamer ever since. His singular claim to fame was an unsuccessful run at the title of RPG Superstar in 2012.

When he isn’t slaying trolls or guiding his players towards certain death and dismemberment, he’s busy playing the roles of father and husband. He and his lovely wife are the proud parents of two lively sons, both future gamers if their dad has anything to say about it. Trained as a journalist, he pays the bills handling communication at a local Social and Health Care College. He lives near Aarhus, Denmark.

CANOES AND CROCODILES (EL 6; XP 2,400)

Paddling canoes through a swamp, the party is attacked by vicious crocodiles. The adventurers must choose whether to fight on water to try to reach land. Read:

Paddling across the murky waters of a vast swamp, you navigate your way between scattered, vine-covered trees and brush growing on small patches of damp soil. The air is humid, and quiet except for the buzzing of mosquitoes.

Four hungry crocodiles likely spot the PCs first and try to surprise them by emerging from the murky water. The crocodiles are lying well hidden (Stealth +13) on the lookout for possible prey. They spot the canoes when the party are 2d8x10 feet away.

Given the relative speed difference between the crocodiles and the canoes, simple evasion may be difficult (assuming the PCs spot the danger). The PCs will most likely have to decide whether to fight the crocodiles from the canoes or try to reach land and fight the crocodiles on (semi)-solid ground. If the characters reach the hillocks and decide to climb into the trees, the crocodiles tear apart the canoes looking for food and leave in 4d20 minutes.

AREA FEATURES

The area has several features of note:

Murky Water: The murky water is calm (DC 10 Swim) and between 5 and 10 ft. deep. Below the surface, visibility is 5 ft.

Hillocks: Hillocks are about 5 ft. high, muddy and covered with light undergrowth. They are of a variety of sizes.

Undergrowth (Light): Vines, reeds and tall grass covers much of the ground.

It costs two squares of movement to enter such squares and such undergrowth increases the DC of Acrobatics and Stealth checks by 2.

Bogs (Shallow): Squares of shallow bog surround hillocks and have mud or standing water about 1 ft. deep.

It costs 2 squares of movement to move into a square with a

shallow bog; the DC of Acrobatics checks in such a square increases by 2. Bogs increase the DC of Stealth checks by 2.

Bogs (Deep): Much of the swamp is deep bog. A square that is part of a deep bog has roughly 4 feet of standing water.

It costs Medium or larger creatures 4 squares of movement to enter a square with a deep bog, or it can swim (DC 10 Swim). Small or smaller creatures must swim.

Mangroves: Stands of these huge trees grow throughout the swamp. These huge trees (AC 3, hardness 5, hp 600; DC 15 Climb check) fill an entire square. They provide cover (+4 AC, +2 Reflex saves).

TACTICS

As soon as the crocodiles detect the canoes, they attack, swimming under water to achieve surprise. They first focus on the canoes and try to sink them. Once their prey is in the water, they move into initiate a death roll.

A crocodile reduced to 6 hp or less flees.

CROCODILE (4)

CR 2 (XP 600)

A large reptile lunges out of the murky water, its huge jaw snapping at the canoe's occupants while its powerful tail lashes at the boat itself.

N Large animal

Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +8

Speed 20 ft., swim 30 ft.; sprint; **ACP** 0; Stealth +5 (+13 in water), Swim +12

Sprint (Ex [1/min.]) A crocodile can sprint, increasing its land speed to 40 feet for 1 round.

AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 13; **CMD** 18 (22 vs. trip) (+1 Dex, +4 natural, -1 size)

Fort +6, **Ref** +4, **Will** +2

hp 22 (3 HD)

Space 10 ft.; **CMB** +7 (+11 grapple)

Melee bite +5 (1d8+4 plus grab) and tail slap (reach 5 ft.) +0 (1d12+2)

Atk Options death roll, grab, trip

Death Roll (Ex [free]) When grappling a Large or smaller foe, a crocodile can perform a death roll with a successful grapple check. As it clings to its foe, it tucks its legs and rolls rapidly, twisting and wrenching its victim. The crocodile inflicts bite damage, knocks its target prone and maintains its grapple.

Grab (Ex [free]) If it bites a Medium or smaller target, the crocodile can try to start a grapple without provoking attacks of opportunity.

Trip (Ex [free]) The crocodile can make a trip attempt without provoking an attack of opportunity, if it hits with its death roll attack.

Abilities Str 19, Dex 12, Con 17, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2

SQ hold breath (68 rds.)

Feats Skill Focus (Perception, Stealth)

Skills as above



VEHICLE RULES RECAP

Control A vehicle moves at the start of its driver's turn. The drive action (if any) comes before any other action by the driver. A vehicle becomes "uncontrolled" if the driver does not control it.

The driver can take only one action each round to control a vehicle. Once the driver has selected an action, the vehicle moves (if applicable).

Driving Check The driver performs a driving check when he takes a driving action to determine the manoeuvrability and speed of the vehicle that round. The base DCs for all driving checks are DC 5 or DC 20 (when the driver is in combat).

In Combat Rowers do not threaten any area around them.

Manoeuvres Each round, the driver can take the following actions: *accelerate* (standard action), *decelerate* (standard action), *keep it going* (move action, goes forward or diagonal), *reverse* (standard action, only possible at full stop) or *turn* (standard action, allows 90 degrees direction change).

Cover The canoe grants partial cover (+2 AC, +1 Reflex) to occupants against attacks made by creatures in the water.

CANOES IN COMBAT

Uncontrolled and Propulsion An uncontrolled canoe continues straight if it still has propulsion from the forward rower. If neither occupant is providing propulsion, it decelerates 10 ft. per round until it reaches a full stop.

Fighting from a Canoe Any occupant in a canoe sitting down (whether rowing, driving or fighting) loses any Dex or Dodge modifier to AC. Sitting down, it is impossible to use ranged weapons other than crossbows.

Standing up in a canoe, while is not beached or tied up, requires an DC 15 Acrobatics check. A standing occupant adds +5 to the DC of the driver's skill checks to manoeuvre the canoe.

Damage to the canoe forces all standing occupants to make another (DC 10 plus the damage inflicted) Acrobatics check or fall overboard.

If an occupant falls overboard, any remaining occupant must make a driving skill or DC 20 Wisdom check, or the canoe capsizes.

Paddles The paddles may be used as an improvised weapon (as a club). Putting down the paddle is a free action, but picking it up is a move action.

Sinking and Capsizing A canoe which reaches 0 hp sinks in 1d3 rounds. A capsized canoe won't sink if it has hp remaining but any unsecured luggage, paddles (and passengers) fall into the water.

AFTERMATH

After the encounter, the PCs may find themselves with one or more canoes damaged, separated from one another or lost. Provided the materials are at hand, a canoe can be repaired with a DC 10 Craft (woodworker [or similar]) check. This takes 1 hour per hit point of damage.

The GM may allow PCs to make a DC 20 Survival check to make improvised rafts to escape the swamp.

Crocodile Lair: A PC making a DC 15 Survival or Perception check and spending an hour searching the surrounding bog discovers a crocodile's lair – a muddy bank overhung by a thick growth of trees. Within, lie the torn apart remains of a lizardfolk and several other unidentifiable chunks of rotting flesh. The lizardfolk wears a crude necklace of beaten gold decorated with a scaly design (worth 300 gp; DC 20 Appraise values).

SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

To modify this encounter, apply the following changes:

EL 5 (XP 1,600): Remove one crocodile and apply the advanced creature template to the remaining crocodiles (+2 on all rolls [including damage]; AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 17; CMD 22 [25 vs. trip]; hp 28).

EL 7 (XP 3,200): Apply the advanced creature template to the crocodiles (+2 on all rolls [including damage]; AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 17; CMD 22 [25 vs. trip]; hp 28).

THE CANOES

The party is travelling using a minimum of one canoe per two party members. It is possible for a single individual to operate a canoe as both driver and rower.

CANOES

These light vessels are made of treated hides stretched out over a thin wooden frame.

Large water vehicle

Squares 2 (5 ft. wide by 10 ft. long); **Cost** 20 gp

AC 9 (AC 2 when motionless); **Hardness** 2

hp 30 (broken condition at 14 hp; -2 penalty on AC, driving checks and CMD checks; moves at half speed)

Base Save +0 (modify by half the driver's skill or Wisdom modifier)

Maximum Speed 20 ft.; **Acceleration** 10 ft.

CMB +1; **CMD** 13 (modify by driver's skill or Wisdom modifier)

Ramming Damage 1d4

Propulsion current (*water*) or muscle (*pushed*; 1 or 2 Medium rowers; one is the driver)

Driving Check Survival (or Wisdom)

Forward Facing Canoe's forward; **Driving Device** Paddles;

Driving Space Rear square of the canoe

DEATH-DEALER OF THE GLOAMING HILLS (EL 5; XP 1,600)

Before running this encounter, consult “Foreshadowing” below.

FORESHADOWING

A week prior to encountering the cart, the party notices signs of an abandoned campsite near the road. It seems to have been used a few days ago. Read:

The dry air is crisp and cold, and the old highway, uncannily straight, stretches like a scar across the forested valley. A flash of colour on a tree by the roadside, on closer examination, is a tattered silk ribbon of pale azure caught on a thorny branch. Glancing about reveals a blackened fire pit below a gnarled oak.

The ribbon is of the sort sold by pedlars at fairs. The tracks of several boots, belonging to at least two different humanoids, are visible in the solidified mud.

- **DC 18 Perception:** Reveals a woman’s silver locket – containing an enamel portrait of a young woman, half buried in the mud. It is of fine quality, worth 50 gp.
- **DC 22 Perception or Survival:** Reveals a shallow grave, covered in rocks and leaves. Within is a pile of human bones. A DC 15 Heal check indicates they belong to an adolescent female, apparently slain by a blow to the head.

Several days later the PCs meet a tinker, his apprentice and their cart, making their way in the same direction as the party. The tinker and the apprentice are not as they appear; one is in fact an imposter. Yet this fact is difficult to ascertain and unknown to the other NPC.

ORNE AND “ILYN”

On the same rural road, about a week later, the sound of whistling is audible to a PC who makes a DC 15 Perception check, well before the cart comes into sight. The tinker and his companion make no attempt to be unobtrusive, and welcome the party warmly as soon as they notice them.

Riding in the cart are a red-haired young woman and a one-eyed old man. The clothes of the itinerants are worn but well-mended. Their names, they claim, are Ilyn and Orne. For the most part, Ilyn does the talking. Orne just listens, with a faint smile. A DC 20 Perception check suggests that other than a dagger in Orne’s boot, they are unarmed. “Ilyn” physically resembles the woman depicted in the locket.

The young woman is in fact a doppelganger who replaced Orne’s unfortunate daughter at the camp site discovered by the party a week ago. The half-blind Orne, while sensing something is different, is too lonely to confront his “daughter.” He thinks she is “not right” but defends her as best as he is able. He will not share his insights willingly, however.

“Ilyn” does not recognize the woman on the locket, though it belonged to the real Ilyn and depicts her mother.

The two travellers welcome the company of the party saying, “Rumours swirl about these woods. Ghosts. Ghouls...”

CART FEATURES

The cart is decorated with an elaborate abstract paint scheme, but age has worn it to a faded, peeling, ghostly pattern.

Horse: The gelding pulling the cart is bony and old. White hairs fleck his mouth and his eyes seem grey and weak. A DC 20 Handle Animal check shows it is shy and ill-at-ease.

Large Trunk: Within the caravan is a large trunk. Examination of the box shows it to be covered with depictions of dense, tangled floral patterns, and faded bright paint may be seen in the crevasses of the design. A simple lock of brass holds it shut, (DC 15 Disable Device). It contains an assortment of clothes, for a variety of shapes and both men and women, even children. Shoes, belts, stockings and assorted accoutrements are piled within.

Tools: Hanging from the inside of the caravan are numerous tools, and a bag of scrap metal, damaged pots, pans and cutlery.

Bag: A canvas bag contains a half-dozen cleaned knives, though one has a line of dried blood by the hilt. A long rusty saw dangles from a wooden hook on the wall. It seems out of place with the fine, well maintained tools.

CAMPING

Most of the roadway is fairly exposed to the elements and ambush, but as the sun descends, the caravan reaches a sunken, sheltered part of the road surrounded by trees and brush.

Here Orne and “Ilyn” offer to share a campfire with the party. They have scant food, but suggest they could trade entertainment for a share of the party’s provisions. In any case, “*Good company settles the stomach,*” says Orne.

The girl looks out toward the sinking sun and says to her father, “I am afraid.”

Ilyn urges the companions to remain for the night. If the party has other ideas, she’ll listen: the exact circumstances of where camp is made is unimportant to her plans.

BLOOD BY NIGHT

Ilyn waits till nightfall to strike, unless the group is themselves attacked by other wanderers. The ambush, if events proceed as Ilyn plans, occurs as the party and their companions are relaxing about the fire and eating dinner. The eyes of Ilyn gleam and she grins as she begins a somnolent lullaby.

If the party initiates combat, Orne – not releasing what is happening – defends Ilyn until it becomes obvious she is not his daughter at which point he attacks the doppelganger.

TACTICS

Ilyn begins singing, casting *sleep* on the party (and her “father”). She then cuts the throat of anyone asleep with her razor-sharp claws, if possible. If anyone resists her spell, she attempts *charm person* to neutralise them. She uses her potion and *vanish* to flee if overwhelmed. Orne defends himself and his “daughter” with a burning brand from the fire or his dagger.

AREA FEATURES

The campsite has several features of note:

The Cart: The cart (a 5 ft. by 10 ft. covered cart) is drawn up about 20 feet away from the fire.

ILYN CR 4 (XP 1,200)
The charming face of the tinker’s daughter dissolves into a sinister and mask-like visage, yet her voice remains the same.

Female doppelganger bard 1
CE Medium monstrous humanoid (shapechanger)
Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +13, Sense Motive +10
Speed 30 ft.; Stealth +10

AC 23, touch 14, flat-footed 19; **CMD** 20
(+5 armour [mithral chain shirt], +3 Dex, +1 Dodge [Dodge], +4 natural)
Immune charm, sleep
Fort +4, **Ref** +7, **Will** +8
hp 31 (5 HD)

Space 5 ft.; **Base Atk** +4; **CMB** +7
Melee 2 claws +7 (1d8+3)
Special Actions bardic performance (7 rds.; countersong, distraction, fascinate, inspire courage [+1]), change self (*alter self*; perfect copy), mimicry
Perfect Copy (Su) When Ilyn uses change shape, she can assume the appearance of specific individuals.
Mimicry (Ex) Ilyn is proficient with all weapons, armour and shields. In addition, she can use any spell trigger or spell completion item as if the spells were on her spell list. Her caster level is equal to her racial hit dice.
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 18th)
At-Will—*detect thoughts* (DC 15)
Bard Spells Known (CL 1st; concentration +4 [+8 casting defensively or grappling])
1st (2/day)—*charm person* (DC 14), *sleep* (DC 14)
0—*daze* (DC 13), *ghost sound* (DC 13), *lullaby* (DC 13), *vanish*
Combat Gear *potion of expeditious retreat*, *dust of tracelessness*

Abilities Str 16, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 16, Cha 17
SQ bardic knowledge, versatile performance, well-versed
Feats Combat Casting, Dodge, Great Fortitude
Skills as above plus Appraise +6, Bluff +12 (+16 while using change shape), Diplomacy +6, Disguise +11 (+31 when using change shape), Perform (recorder) +7, Sleight of Hand +7
Languages Aklo, Common, Gnome

Gear as above plus recorder, 250 gp

Fire Pit: The fire pit contains slender burning logs and a pot filled with beans and herbs.

Sunken Road: This section of road cuts through a low hill. The trail is 15 ft wide and is bounded by steep banks covered in light undergrowth. Characters moving uphill must spend 2 squares of movement to enter each square of steep slope. Characters running or charging downhill must make a DC 10 Acrobatics check when entering the first steep slope square. Characters failing this check stumble and end their movement 1d2 x 5 ft. later. Characters who fail by 5 or more fall prone when they end their movement.

Characters gain the benefits of higher ground (+1 on melee attacks against foes downhill).

Light Undergrowth: Light undergrowth surrounds the campsite. A square filled with light undergrowth costs 2 squares of movement to enter, but provides concealment (20% miss chance). Light undergrowth also increases the DC of Acrobatics and Stealth checks by 2.

SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

To modify this encounter, apply the following changes:

EL 4 (XP 800): Apply the young creature template to Ilyn (+2 on all Dex-based rolls; -2 on all other rolls; hp 21).

EL 6 (XP 2,400): Apply the advanced creature template to Ilyn (+2 on all rolls [including damage]; AC 27, touch 18, flat-footed 23; CMD 24; hp 41; special ability and spell DCs +4). Ignore Orne’s stat block below and treat him as a doppelganger identical to Ilyn who also attacks the PCs.

ORNE CR 1 (XP 400)
Hard living and violence are visible on the scarred, one-eyed tinker’s body.

Male middle-aged human rogue 2
N Medium humanoid (human)
Init +4; **Senses** Perception +6 (+7 vs. traps; trapfinding), Sense Motive +1
Speed 30 ft.; **ACP** 0; Ride +0, Stealth +5

AC 12, touch 10, flat-footed 12; **CMD** 13
(+2 armour [leather])
Fort +2, **Ref** +3 (evasion), **Will** +1
hp 10 (1 HD)

Space 5 ft.; **Base Atk** +0; **CMB** +3
Melee burning log +3 (1d6+3 plus 1d4 fire)
mwk dagger +4 (1d4+3/19-20)
Atk Options Catch Off Guard, sneak attack (+1d6), surprise attack

Abilities Str 16, Dex 11, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 10
SQ rogue talent (surprise attack), trapfinding (+1)
Feats Catch Off Guard, Improved Initiative
Skills as above plus Appraise +4, Bluff +4, Craft (tinker) +4, Disable Device +4, Intimidate +4, Sleight of Hand +4
Languages Common

Gear 88 gp

HUNTERS AS BAIT (EL 8; XP 4,800)

The forest has long acted both as a barrier between large settlements and as a shroud for monsters and ne'er-do-wells who hide beneath its sheltering canopy. Shady folk who wish to travel without drawing attention, such as smugglers and the like, have used a certain switchback game trail for years.

Recently, however, a mated pair of araneas discovered that creatures who passed along the trail were usually well-off and were the sort of people no one came looking for later. The two settled in and established a hunting ground with a few key ambush sites along the trail. Their success has brought them enough wealth to attract the attention of Zmey, a green dragon who thinks the spellcasting spiders' accrued treasure would make a grand start to his own hoard. Unfortunately (for the dragon, at least), Zmey has had difficulty hunting the araneas, due to their ability to turn invisible. As a result, he hit upon the idea of lurking near one of their favorite ambush sites until someone or something comes along and draws the spiders out. Someone like the PCs, for instance... Read:

ZMEY CR 6 (XP 2,400)
Even the dim light of the fading sun reveals the bright jade color of the dragon's scales, but the brackish green fog that billows from its jaws brings a toxic darkness.

Male very young green dragon
 LE Medium dragon (air)
Init +1; **Senses** dragon senses; Perception +13, Sense Motive +1
Speed 40 ft., woodland stride; fly 150 ft. (average), swim 40 ft.; **ACP** 0; Fly +11, Stealth +11, Swim +21
Woodland Stride Zmey can move through any sort of foliage at full speed without taking damage or suffering impairment. Areas of foliage that have been magically manipulated affect him normally.

AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17; **CMD** 21 (25 vs. trip) (+1 Dex, +7 natural)
Immune acid, paralysis, sleep
Fort +7, **Ref** +6, **Will** +8
hp 59 (7 HD)

Space 5 ft.; **Base Atk** +7; **CMB** +10
Melee bite (Power Attack [-2/+6]) +10 (1d8+4), 2 claws (Power Attack [-2/+4]) +10 (1d6+3) and 2 wings (Power Attack [-2/+2]) +5 (1d4+1)
Atk Options Cleave
Special Attacks breath weapon (30 ft. cone, DC 15, 4d6 acid)
Abilities Str 17, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 12
SQ water breathing
Water Breathing Zmey can breathe underwater indefinitely and can freely use his breath weapon, spells and other abilities while submerged.
Feats Alertness, Cleave, Iron Will, Power Attack
Skills as above plus Knowledge (nature) +11, Spellcraft +11, Survival +11
Languages Common, Draconic

The game trail is easy enough to follow, even in the gathering dark. You've been following it for the better part of a day and have met no one to ask you your business.

Dusk has turned the forest into a mass of long shadows. Up ahead you see a small clearing and a sound draws your attention. You see a wounded bear, shuffling with obvious difficulty through the brush.

The bear is a tandem illusion created by the two araneas: one creates the bear with *silent image*, while the other uses *ghost sound* to give it voice. Once the PCs are within 20 feet of the araneas, they attack.

Zmey is hiding 120 feet away and observing the area, as he knows this is a popular hunting spot for the araneas.

ARANEA (2) CR 4 (XP 1,200)
The hunchbacked spider, as large as a man, seems to grin with malevolence as its hideous appearance shimmers and becomes multiple, overlapping images.

N Medium magical beast (shapechanger)
Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +9, Sense Motive +1
Speed 50 ft., Climb 30 ft., **ACP** 0; Acrobatics +9 (+17 jumping), Climb +14, Escape Artist +8, Stealth +9

AC 20, touch 13, flat-footed 17; **CMD** 18 (+4 armour [*mage armour*], +3 Dex, +3 natural)
Fort +6, **Ref** +7, **Will** +4
hp 37 (5 HD)

Space 5 ft.; **Base Atk** +5; **CMB** +5
Melee bite +8 (1d6 plus poison [DC 14 {1 save}; *freq.* 1 rd./6 rds.; *effect* 1d3 Str])
Ranged Touch web (range 50 ft.) +8 (DC 14, hp 5)
Special Actions change shape (humanoid; *alter self*)
Change Shape (Su [standard]) An aranea can take the form of a Small or Medium humanoid or spider humanoid hybrid. In humanoid form, it cannot use its bite, web or poison. In spider-humanoid hybrid form, it looks like a humanoid with spidery fangs and spinnerets, with the latter typically located at the small of its back. The aranea retains its bite attack, webs, and poison in this form, and can wield weapons and wear armour. When in humanoid or hybrid form, its speed is 30 feet and it has no climb speed.

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 5th; concentration +8)
 2nd (5/day)—*invisibility*, *mirror image*
 1st (7/day)—*charm person* (DC 14), *mage armor*, *silent image* (DC 14), *sleep* (DC 14)
 0 (at will) *daze* (DC 13), *detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 13), *light*, *mage hand*, *resistance*

Abilities Str 11, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 16
Feats Eschew Materials^B, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Weapon Finesse
Skills as above plus Knowledge (arcana) +7
Languages Common, Sylvan

TACTICS

In preparation for the ambush, the araneas have already cast *invisibility* and *mage armour*. They do not use their change shape ability during this combat.

Round 1: The araneas launch webs from a high position (10 ft.) in the trees, attempting to catch as many PCs as possible.

Round 2: The araneas cast *mirror image* on themselves and advance. If they have anchored their webs to their own trees, they advance on the webbing. If not, they climb down.

Round 3: Zmey lifts off from his own hiding place and begins sweeping around for a breath attack. A DC 15 Perception Check (modified for the distance and the distraction of combat) spots the dragon. The araneas bite webbed PCs, depending on their *mage armour* and *mirror image* to protect them.

Round 4: Zmey flies over the clearing and attempts to catch as many targets as possible in his breath weapon. The araneas retreat into the trees, but continue to try and pick off PCs and drag them away to serve as food later.

Later Rounds (The Araneas): Once Zmey enters the combat, the araneas use *charm person* to get threatening PCs to focus on the dragon instead. If the araneas are reduced to 10 hp or less, they turn invisible and flee the scene, abandoning their webbed bag of treasure in fear for their lives.

Later Rounds (Zmey): If multiple PCs are caught in webbing, Zmey continues to fly over them and use his breath weapon. If an aranea, a spellcaster or someone with a good ranged attack (i.e. one that hits him for damage) appears on the trail, he descends to destroy them in melee. He flees the combat if he is reduced to 15 hp or less, so long as at least two foes are still fighting.

AREA FEATURES

The area has several features of note:

Illumination: Dusk plus the shade of the forest canopy means the entire area is cloaked in dim light (20% miss chance).

The Trail: The switchback trail is 10 ft. wide.

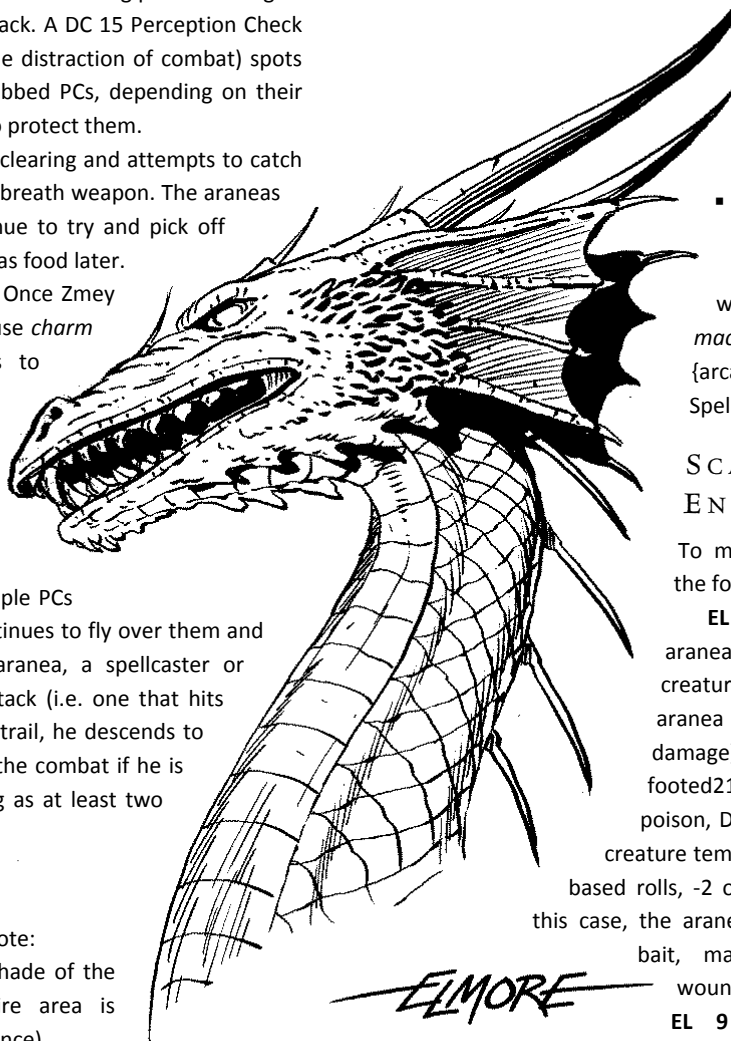
Light Undergrowth: If the PCs leave the trail, they enter light undergrowth. Each such square costs 2 squares of movement, but provides concealment (20% miss chance). It also increases the DC of Acrobatics and Stealth checks by 2.

Trees: Large trees (AC 3, hardness 5, hp 600; DC 15 Climb check) fill an entire square. They provide cover (+4 AC, +2 Reflex)

and have low-hanging branches. Anyone attacking a target on the ground from a tree receives the benefit of higher ground (+1 to melee attacks), and has concealment (20% miss chance).

Amassed Aranea Treasure: The araneas have been very successful in raiding travelers along the game trail, amassing a treasure hoard rich enough to tempt a young dragon. In a large sack made of webbing, they have:

- **Mixed Coinage:** 112 cp, 192 sp, 90 gp, 20 pp
- **Wand:** This thin, tapered wand of white wood is a *wand of cure light wounds* (faint [DC 16 Knowledge {arcana} evocation]; DC 21 Spellcraft identifies) with 47 charges remaining.
- **Heavy Mace:** This slightly dented heavy mace has a handle wrapped in strips of worn leather. It is a *+1 heavy mace* (faint [DC 18 Knowledge {arcana} evocation]; DC 18 Spellcraft identifies).



SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

To modify this encounter, apply the following changes:

EL 7 (XP 3,200): Remove one aranea and apply the advanced creature template to the remaining aranea (+2 on all rolls [including damage]; AC 24, touch 17, flat-footed 21; CMD 22; hp 47; DC 18 poison, DC 18 web). Apply the young creature template to Zmey (+2 to all Dex-based rolls, -2 on all other rolls; hp 43). In this case, the aranea uses a dead creature as bait, making it seem alive and wounded with *ghost sound*.

EL 9 (XP 6,400): Apply the advanced creature template to both aranea (+2 on all rolls [including damage]; AC 24, touch 17, flat-footed 21; CMD 22; hp 47; DC 18 poison, DC 18 web) and Zmey (+2 on all rolls [including damage]; AC 22, touch 15, flat-footed 21; CMD 25 [29 vs. trip]; hp 73; DC 19 breath weapon).

LOST LOVE (EL 5; XP 1,600)

The PCs are passing through a marsh when they encounter Garian Vessermos, a young bard looking for his lost lover, Brianna. Unfortunately, Brianna is really a green hag who plans to lure the bard to his death. Read:

The morning mist lies heavy across the marshlands. Thick fog blankets the bogs and hedgerows, distorting sound and limiting visibility to a few feet.

Brianna has taken advantage of the mist to slip away from Garian and turn invisible. Any PC who makes a DC 10 Perception check hear his frantic cries.

Somewhere in the fog, a male voice calls out "Brianna, where are you?" over and over. The cries carry an increasing note of fear and desperation.

A few moments later, Garian stumbles into view.

MEETING GARIAN

A young man wearing a well-crafted chain shirt over colourful clothes appears out of the mist. Mud is splattered all over his clothes and he looks beside himself with worry.

Garian immediately asks if the party has seen a young red-haired girl named Brianna. If questioned further, he explains he and the girl have eloped together. They became separated in the mist shortly after breaking camp.

Garian firmly believes his lover is an innocent village girl, but she is really a green hag, who used *alter self* to seduce the bard. She lured him out into the marsh by claiming she knew a shortcut to a nearby town.

FINDING BRIANNA

Brianna lurks close by, having followed Garian while invisible. Whether the PC's agree to help search for her or not, she uses her spell-like abilities to lead everyone on a wild chase.

Examples include using *ghost sound* to have her voice seem to come from different directions or make it sound like something large is moving through the swamp, conjuring strangely glowing *dancing lights*, using *mimicry* to roar like a local predator before crying out in pain and so on.

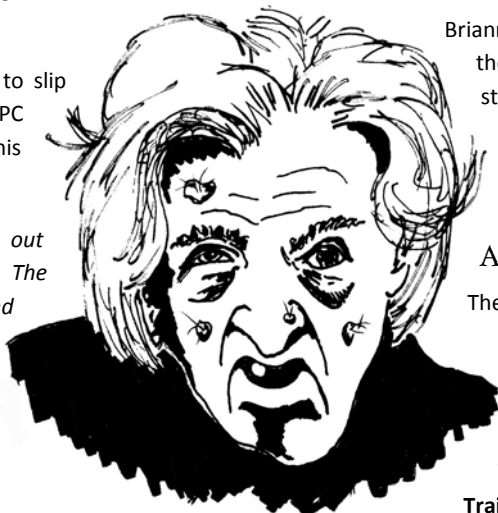
Just before the mist clears, Brianna dismisses her *invisibility* and positions herself on a muddy hillock.

Brianna pretends to be injured and calls out to Garian for help. Unless physically restrained, Garian rushes towards her,

moving 10 feet into the quicksand before becoming stuck. He panics, splashing wildly as he begins to sink.

Once this happens, Brianna takes a moment to taunt him before revealing her true form and attacking the PCs.

TACTICS



Brianna uses her *whip feather token* to grapple the closest spellcaster before attacking the strongest-looking melee character, using her weakness ability to drain his strength.

If reduced to 10 hp or less, she uses *invisibility* to escape.

AREA FEATURES

The area has several features of note:

Mist: The mist reduces visibility to 5 feet.

Moving faster than half speed requires a DC 10 survival check to avoid stumbling into a bog or ditch. The mist lifts just before the combat begin.

Trail: The trail twists and turns through the bog. On the trail, movement is without penalty.

QUICKSAND

One of the most dangerous of lurking perils in a marsh, such areas often entrap careless travellers.

Size: A typical patch of quicksand is 20 feet in diameter; the momentum of a charging or running character carries him 1d2 × 5 feet into the quicksand.

Spotting Quicksand: A character approaching a patch of quicksand at a normal pace making a DC 8 Survival check spots the danger, but charging or running characters don't have a chance to detect a hidden patch before blundering into it.

Effects of Quicksand: Characters in quicksand must make a DC 10 Swim check every round to simply tread water in place, or a DC 15 Swim check to move 5 feet in whatever direction is desired. A trapped character failing this check by 5 or more sinks below the surface and must hold his breath or begin to drown. Characters below the surface may swim back to the surface with a Swim check (DC 15, +1 per consecutive round of being under the surface).

Rescue: A rescuer must reach the victim with a branch, spear haft, rope or similar tool and make a DC 15 Strength check to pull the victim. The victim must then make a DC 10 Strength check to hold on. If both checks succeed, the victim is pulled 5 feet closer to safety. If the victim fails to hold on, he must make a DC 15 Swim check to stay above the surface.

Hillock: The hillock is 15 ft. in diameter and rises 5 ft. above the swamp.

Quicksand: A 20 ft. wide band of quicksand surrounds the hillock upon which Brianna stands. Two 5 ft. wide paths lead through the quicksand (DC 20 Survival or Perception spots). The quicksand presents a deadly threat to Brianna's enemies. See the "Quicksand" sidebar.

Bogs (Shallow): Squares of shallow bog cover the area. Mud or standing water fill them to a depth of about 1 ft.

It costs 2 squares of movement to move into a square with a shallow bog; the DC of Acrobatics checks in such a square increases by 2. Bogs increase the DC of Stealth checks by 2.

BRIANNA CR 5 (XP 1,600)

Knots of dark, mouldering hair spill over the features of this sickly, thin, green-skinned crone.

Green hag

CE Medium monstrous humanoid

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 90 ft.; Perception +15, Sense Motive +9

Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.; **ACP** 0; Stealth +13, Swim +18

AC 19, touch 11, flat-footed 18; **CMD** 24

(+1 Dex, +1 natural)

Fort +6, **Ref** +7, **Will** +7; **SR** 16

hp 58 (9 HD)

Space 5 ft.; **Base Atk** +9; **CMB** +13

Melee 2 claws +13 (1d4+4 plus weakness)

Atk Options Blind-Fight, weakness (2d4 Str, DC 16)

Weakness (Su) Brianna's claws sap strength from those she strikes. Each time she hits a foe with her claw attack, the victim takes 2 Strength damage (DC 16 Fortitude negates). Alternatively, she can attempt to inflict even greater weakness on a foe by making a touch attack—this variant requires a standard action, and cannot be attempted in the same round she makes claw attacks. The opponent touched takes 2d4 Strength damage (DC 16 Fortitude negates). The save DC is Charisma-based.

Special Actions mimicry

Mimicry (Ex) Brianna can imitate the sounds of almost any animal found near her lair.

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 9th; concentration +11 [+15 casting defensively or grappling])

Constant—*pass without trace, tongues, water breathing*

At will—*alter self, dancing lights, ghost sound* (DC 12), *invisibility, pyrotechnics* (DC 14), *tree shape, whispering wind*

Combat Gear *feather token (whip), potion of cure moderate wounds (2), potion of lesser restoration*

Abilities Str 19, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 13, Cha 14

Feats Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Casting, Deceitful, Great Fortitude

Skills as above plus Bluff +13, Disguise +13, Knowledge (arcana) +11

Languages Aklo, Common, Giant

Gear as above plus *elixir of love*

DEVELOPMENT

If Garian survives, he is heartbroken and ashamed, but once he recovers from the initial shock, he is grateful for the PCs saving his life. He spreads the tale of his rescue in the local area, granting the PCs a +2 circumstance bonus to Diplomacy checks in nearby settlements for one month.

If Brianna survives and escapes, she stalks the PCs and Garian, looking for a chance to take revenge.

SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

To modify this encounter, apply the following changes:

EL 4 (XP 1,200): Apply the young creature template to Brianna (+2 on all Dex-based rolls; -2 on all other rolls; hp 40).

EL 6 (XP 2,400): Apply the advanced creature template to Brianna (+2 on all rolls [including damage]; AC 23, touch 15, flat-footed 22; CMD 28; hp 76; DC 20 weakness; +4 on spell DCs).

GARIAN VESSERMOS CR 1 (XP 400)

This tall, slender man has thick black hair and wears a well-crafted chain shirt over his colourful clothes.

Male human bard 2

NG Medium humanoid (human)

Init +2; **Senses** Perception +6, Sense Motive +1

Speed 20 ft., base speed 30 ft.; **ACP** -1; Acrobatics +3 (-1 jump), Climb -3, Escape Artist +3, Ride -1, Stealth -1, Swim -3

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14; **CMD** 13

(+4 armour [mwk chain shirt], +2 Dex)

Fort +1, **Ref** +5, **Will** +4; +4 vs. bardic performance, sonic and language-dependant effects

hp 14 (2 HD)

Space 5 ft.; **Base Atk** +1; **CMB** +1

Melee rapier +3 (1d6/18-20) or

dagger +3 (1d4/19-20)

Ranged dagger (range 10 ft.) +3 (1d4/19-20)

Special Actions bardic performance (9 rds./day; countersong, distraction, fascinate, inspire courage [+1])

Bard Spells Known (CL 2nd; concentration +5)

1st (3/day)—*charm person* (DC 14), *expeditious retreat, silent image* (DC 14)

0 (at will)—*dancing lights, detect magic, ghost sound* (DC 13), *mage hand, prestidigitation* (DC 13)

Combat Gear alchemist's fire (2), *potion of cure light wounds, potion of eagle's splendour*

Abilities Str 10, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 17

SQ bardic knowledge (+1), versatile performance (wind)

Feats Skill Focus (Perform (wind instruments)), Weapon Finesse

Skills as above plus Appraise -1, Bluff +7, Diplomacy +13, Disguise +7, Handle Animal +13, Heal +1, Intimidate +3, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Knowledge (local) +5, Perform (wind) +13, Spellcraft +4, Survival +1, Use Magic Device +7

Languages Common

Gear as above plus entertainer's outfit, spell component pouch, masterwork flute, silk rope, 6 gp

MOURNING MONSTER (EL 7; XP 3,200)

Travelling through rolling hills, the PCs spot a circle of menhirs on a hilltop a short distance away. Recently a scholarly wizard died on the hilltop at the “hands” of an assassin vine. Now, her guardian watches over her body, unwilling to move on.

On the top of a hill a bit off the path, stand a circle of weathered, partly overgrown standing stones, although one of the menhirs seems out of place. A flock of crows perches on the stones, intently looking into the circle.

What from the distance looks like a smaller, rounder menhir sitting in the middle of the circle is in fact the young gray render Skinner. It is guarding the remains of his mistress, Devra Rhees, a wizard who ran afoul of a particularly nasty assassin vine when she entered the circle to study the stones.

From the path, a DC 20 Perception check identifies the odd “rock” within the circle as a creature. If the PCs move closer, they hear the gray render occasionally issuing low keening sounds while slightly rocking back and forth on its heels and prodding its mistress’s body now and then.

For now, Skinner leaves its mistress’s body to hunt only once a day, but doesn’t stray too far. The PCs can wait for that to happen to get to the wizard’s possessions. However, any such attempt is complicated by the carrion birds descending to feed once the render is gone. Any approach except a painfully slow and careful one causes the birds to fly up cawing, which draws Skinner back.

Eventually, Skinner abandons its former mistress to look for a new creature to protect, but it is impossible to know when it will do so.

TACTICS

Although Skinner is not fully grown yet, it is a dangerous opponent, which is evident by the assassin vine it ripped apart. When it notices the PCs, it rises and roars to scare them away.

It charges the first PC to enter the stone circle or the one who attacks first. It uses the bull rush and overrun combat manoeuvres to scatter its opponents and to avoid being surrounded. While gray renders are not the cleverest of creatures, Skinner has enough experience with arcane spellcasters to make any PCs who are clothed like one a priority target after the first round.

If the PCs withdraw, Skinner does not pursue them beyond the hilltop. It continues to threaten them for a short while, then returns to his vigil. Otherwise, it fights until death.

AREA FEATURES

The area has several features of note:

Stone Circle: The standing stones stand in a clearing and form a regular circle with an inner radius of 15 ft. The stones are between 6 and 8 ft. high, roughly cylindrical and take up a space of 5 by 5 ft. each. The centre stone is daubed with the image of a bird; runes surround the image.

- **DC 10 Perception:** The runes are old and weather-worn.
- **DC 15 Perception:** In several places, someone has made an attempt to dig at the base of the stones. The holes are small hold nothing of interest.
- **DC 10 Knowledge (engineering):** The stones are surprising sound; they are not in danger of collapse.
- **DC 15 Knowledge (religion):** The runes belong to an ancient nature cult that once dominated the area. They venerated eagles and other birds of prey.

Trees: Dense stands of tree grow across much of the hill. The trees provide cover allowing the PCs to get within 40 ft. of the circle without being seen (as long as they are quiet).

A creature standing in the same square as a tree (AC 4, hardness 5, hp 150, DC 15 Climb) gains partial cover (+2 AC, +1 Reflex).

SKINNER

CR 7 (XP 3,200)

Standing only seven feet tall, this creature has gray skin, numerous eyes and rows of shark-like teeth.

Young gray render

N Medium magical beast

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Perception +13, Sense Motive +2

Speed 30 ft.; **ACP** 0

AC 22, touch 13, flat-footed 19; **CMD** 27 (+3 Dex, +9 natural)

Fort +11, **Ref** +9, **Will** +4

hp 84 (8 HD)

Space 5 ft.; **Base Atk** +8; **CMB** +13 (+17 grapple)

Melee bite (Power Attack [-3/+6]) +13 (1d8+5) and 2 claws (Power Attack [-3/+6]) +14 (1d6+5 plus grab)

Atk Options Improved Bull Rush, Improved Overrun, grab, rend
Grab (Ex [free]) If it claws a Small or smaller target, Skinner can try to start a grapple a without provoking attacks of opportunity.

Rend (Ex [free]) If Skinner hits with both its claws in a round he latches onto his target and tears its flesh for 1d6+7 damage.

Abilities Str 21, Dex 17, Con 20, Int 3, Wis 14, Cha 8

SQ double damage against objects

Feats Improved Bull Rush, Improved Overrun, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (claw)

Skills as above plus Survival +6

Languages Giant

Wizard's Corpse: Devra Rhees' robed corpse lies in the ripped-apart remains of the assassin vine and is already starting to rot, as are the half-eaten carcasses of two deer the render caught and brought here as an offering. Her possessions are still with her body:

- **Ring of Protection +1:** A shard of obsidian is the only decoration of this golden ring (faint [DC 16 Knowledge {arcana} abjuration]; DC 20 Spellcraft identifies; worth 2,000 gp).
- **Wand of Burning Hands (CL 1):** This charred 2-ft. long wooden stick feels vaguely warm to the touch (faint [DC 16 Knowledge {arcana} evocation]; DC 21 Spellcraft identifies) has 11 charges remaining and is worth 165 gp).
- **Two Potions:** Small glass vials hold these light blue effervescent *potions of cure light wounds* (faint [DC 16 Knowledge {arcana} conjuration {healing}]; DC 16 Spellcraft or Perception identifies; worth 50 gp each).
- **Spellbook:** This plain brown book has held shut with a length of plaited black silk. It contains the following spells: 4th—*charm monster, greater invisibility, secure shelter*; 3rd—*arcane sight, dispel magic, summon monster III, tongues, wind*

wall; 2nd—*communal protection from evil, continual flame, fiery shuriken, locate object, mirror image, resist energy*; 1st—*ant haul, cause fear, expeditious retreat, feather fall, hold portal, identify, mage armour, magic missile, vanish*; 0—all.

- **Mundane Equipment:** The wizard's mundane equipment includes a masterwork dagger and typical travelling equipment (rucksack, water skin, rations, etc.), her notebook, which mentions both her name and the render's and a purse containing 24 gp.

SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

To modify this encounter, apply the following changes:

EL 6 (XP 2,400): Skinner is still wounded from his battle with the assassin vine; at the start of the encounter he has 64 hit points.

EL 8 (XP 4,800): Apply the advanced creature template to Skinner (+2 on all rolls [including damage]; AC 26, touch 17, flat-footed 23; CMD 31; hp 100).



TS

SECRETS OF THE SWAMP (EL 7; XP 4,200)

The Bonescale tribe of lizardfolk make their home near a dark, otherworldly portal and have begun to kidnap unwary travellers to sacrifice to a creature inside the portal they think is their god. In return, the creature returns the victims as zombies to destroy the tribe's enemies.

The din of mosquitoes, frogs and animal calls is suddenly broken by a frantic splashing ahead. Through the low-lying fog and hanging vines, the outline of a creature's head can be spied a moment before it seems to disappear into the ground.

The creature is a doe that has stumbled into a sinkhole. A DC 20 Perception check reveals it is in a water-filled sinkhole 50 feet ahead. Moving closer to the hole automatically reveals the nature of the hole.

The sinkhole is 5 feet by 5 feet and 10 feet deep; the doe weighs 100 pounds. The water is brackish and hard to see into. Peering into the hole and making out the doe requires a DC 20 Perception check as well. Anyone in the water can see the doe.

At the start of the first round, the doe becomes unconscious.

During the third round, three zombie lizardfolk make their way toward the clearing, drawn by the commotion. If the doe is still in the water by the end of the third round, it drowns.

Following The Zombies' Trail: The zombies left a clear trail that leads back to their origin. It takes 10 minutes to follow the trail to a pond surrounded by a ridge.

THE BONESCALE TRIBE

Six warriors of the Bonescale tribe guard the ridge surrounding the pond that contains the portal and the creature within. They have been altered by exposure to the portal and from drinking.

THE CREATURE IN THE PORTAL

The creature in the portal the Bonescale tribe worship as their god is a globster that is both unaware and uncaring towards their devotion. This strange ooze creature, normally found on ocean coasts, made its way inland following a ready supply of food in the marsh. It became trapped when it entered a pond that was also a nexus to the Negative Energy Plane.

Like the lizardfolk, the creature has been altered by its exposure to the portal. Creatures that die or that are already dead when it swallows them are transformed into zombies after an hour in the creature's belly. They then claw their way back out of the globster's mouth.

While it is mindless and eats any fallen Bonescale warriors, their shared affinity with the portal keeps it from attacking them.

Closing the Portal: If the globster is killed, it is sucked into the portal and the portal closes forever.

TACTICS

Globster: The globster initially lurks below the dark, fetid waters of the pond, waiting for an opportunity to attack creatures that fall down the slopes of the ridge or that get too close to it.

It is unable to move out of the pond because of the portal.

It will not attack Bonescale lizardfolk or zombies, unless those creatures are dead, or in the case of the zombies, destroyed.

The globster has recently eaten two lizardfolk sacrificed to it shortly before the battle, so if it consumes two more creatures (such as dead lizardfolk) during combat it uses its create spawn ability. The spawn is not trapped by the portal. There is a 10% chance each round a consumed creature reanimates as a zombie (instead of a globster) and climbs out of the globster's mouth.

Bonescale Warriors: They try to stay within the globster's stench aura (to which they are immune) and throw javelins. Wounded warriors may move closer to the pond to heal from the negative energy effect (see "Marsh Features"). They defend the globster with their lives and if badly injured sacrifice themselves to it to be reborn stronger (in their twisted minds).

MARSH FEATURES

The area has several features of note:

Distractions: Background noise, overgrowth and swamp gas inflicts a -5 penalty to Perception checks.

Light-Fog: There are a few inches of light fog low to the ground, not enough to provide concealment, except for things below ground level – such as the globster in the pond.

LIZARDFOLK ZOMBIES (3)

CR 1 (XP 400)

These dark-scaled, rotting reptilian corpses lumber forward with malicious intent.

NE Medium undead

Init -1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +0, Sense Motive +0
Speed 30 ft., swim 15 ft.; **ACP** 0; **Acrobatics** +3, **Swim** +10

Staggered (Ex) Slow and ungainly, a lizardfolk zombie can only take a single move or standard action each round. A zombie can move its speed and attack as a charge action.

AC 16, touch 9, flat-footed 16; **CMD** 13
(-1 Dex, +7 natural)

Immune mind-affecting effects, death effects, disease, paralysis, poison, sleep effects, stunning, nonlethal damage, ability drain, energy drain, damage to physical abilities, exhaustion, fatigue, massive damage, any effect requiring a Fortitude save (unless it affects objects or is harmless)

Fort +1, **Ref** +0, **Will** +3

hp 13 (3 HD); **DR** slashing/5

Space 5 ft.; **Base Atk** +2; **CMB** +4

Melee slam +4 (1d6+3) and
bite +4 (1d4+2)

Abilities Str 14, Dex 8, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 10

Feats Toughness

Sloping Ridge: The pond containing the portal and the globster is surrounded by slick, downward sloping terrain.

Creatures moving along the ridge must make a DC 12 Acrobatics check to keep from falling 15 ft. down the ridge to the shore of the pond.

Creatures on the slope between the top of the ridge and the pond must make a DC 17 Acrobatics check to keep from falling. The fall itself does no damage, but leaves the creature prone adjacent to the pond and the globster.

GLOBSTER

CR 5 (XP 1,600)

This foul-smelling ooze is made up of the half-digested parts of various sea-creatures.

N Large ooze (aquatic)

Init -5; **Senses** Perception -5, Sense Motive -5

Speed 20 ft., swim 40 ft.; **ACP** 0; Swim +14

AC 16, touch 4, flat-footed 16; **CMD** 16 (can't be tripped) (-5 Dex, +12 natural, -1 size)

Immune acid, bludgeoning and piercing damage, mind-affecting effects, paralysis, poison, polymorph, sleep, stunning, gaze attacks, illusions, visual effects and other attacks relying on sight; **Resist** cold 10, electricity 10

Fort +7, **Ref** -3, **Will** -3

hp 57 (6 HD); fast healing 3 (from the portal); decompose

Decompose (Ex) A slain globster decays into a mass of goo in 24 hours. However, the corpse retains the creature's stench aura for 1d10 days after its death.

Space 10 ft.; **Base Atk** +4; **CMB** +11 (+15 grapple)

Melee slam (reach 5 ft.) +9 (2d6+9 plus grab and nausea)

Atk Options create spawn, constrict (2d6+9), grab

Create Spawn (Ex [1/day]) When a globster eats a living creature, it only digests a small portion of the remains. As the undigested remains accumulate, the globster grows more and more bloated. As a full-round action that does not provoke attacks of opportunity, a globster regurgitates these foul remains along with portions of itself. Doing so causes the globster 1d6 damage, but creates a new, fully grown globster that immediately attacks the nearest non-globster target. A globster can create spawn only after it has fed upon at least four Medium-sized creatures (or the equivalent number of creatures of other sizes).

Grab (Ex [free]) If it hits a Medium or smaller target with its slam, the globster can try to grapple without provoking attacks of opportunity.

Nausea (Ex) A creature struck by a globster is nauseated for 1 round (DC 18 Fortitude negates). Once a creature makes this saving throw, it is immune to further nausea effects from the globster for 24 hours. This is a poison effect.

Negative Energy Absorption (Su) The globster heals 1 hit point of damage for every 3 damage that negative energy attacks would otherwise deal. It gets no saving throw against negative energy attacks. It gains this ability from its bond with the portal.

Abilities Str 16, Dex 1, Con 20, Int —, Wis 1, Cha 1

SQ water dependency

Pond: The pond is a rough circle with a diameter of 15 feet. It is 15 feet deep at the center. There is 5 feet of flat land around it before it begins to slope 45 degrees upwards towards the ridge, 15 feet above the ground.

Globster Stench: The ridgeline above the pond where the lizardfolk are guarding is within the 30 foot radius of the globster's stench ability.

The Portal: The portal is at the bottom of the pond and blocked by the globster, the only chance of getting into the portal is to go through the globster while it is still alive.

- **Negative Energy Damage:** A creature in the pond or within 5 feet of it takes 9 negative energy damage each round. This heals the globster 3 hit points each round.

SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

To modify this encounter, apply the following changes:

EL 6 (XP 3,000): Remove three Bonescale warriors. Also, the globster won't use its Create Spawn ability.

EL 8 (XP 5,000): Add two zombies; one appears each round from the globster's mouth after it first emerges from the pond.

BONESCALE WARRIORS (6)

CR 1 (XP 400)

These black-hued reptilian humanoid have several dark lumps on their faces and arms. Black ooze drips from their mouths.

Male terror lizardfolk warrior 1

NE Medium humanoid (reptilian)

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +1, Sense Motive +1

Speed 30 ft., swim 15 ft.; **ACP** -2; Acrobatics +2, Swim +10

AC 17, touch 10, flat-footed 17; **CMD** 12

(+5 natural, +2 shield [heavy wooden])

Immune fear effects, poison

Fort +4, **Ref** +0, **Will** +0

hp 11 (2 HD)

Space 5 ft.; **Base Atk** +1; **CMB** +2

Melee morningstar +2 (1d8+1 plus small centipede poison [DC 11 Fortitude {1 save}; *freq.* 1 rd./ 4 rds.; *effect* 1 Dex damage]),
claw +0 (1d4) and
bite +0 (1d4)

Ranged javelin +1 (1d6+1)

Negative Energy Absorption (Su) Terror creatures heal 1 hit point of damage for every 3 points of damage that negative energy attacks would otherwise deal. They get no saving throw against negative energy attacks.

Combat Gear javelins (3), small centipede poison (3)

Abilities Str 13, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 10

SQ hold breath (52 rds.)

Feats Multiattack

Languages Draconic

Gear as above

STUCK IN THE MUD (EL 2; XP 600)

As torrential rains pour down, parts of the dirt trails in the countryside have changed to mud. Travelling through these washed-out sections is dirty, uncomfortable and difficult.

A cleric named Felin Pennythicket was travelling between two nearby communities when his cart got stuck in the mud. To make matters worse, as he was trying to free it, a bolt of lightning and accompanying thunderclap spooked his horse who broke free of its reins and fled into the fields in a panic. Now poor Felin sits at the side of the road, waiting to ask for assistance from the first person or persons to travel by.

The rain pouring down around you shows no sign of letting up anytime soon. Flashing lightning and booming thunder roll across the countryside at almost regular intervals. Large portions of the old dirt road you've been travelling have become a thick morass of muck and water. As you come around a bend, you see a small cart up ahead in the middle of the road. Its wheels are half-buried in the soft, wet mud. Sitting underneath a makeshift lean-to on the nearby grass at the side of the road is an elderly male halfling smoking a pipe.

On seeing the PCs, Felin cheerfully flags them down and ask them for help. Read:

"Oh thank goodness! I was terribly afraid I wouldn't see anyone else out on the road today. Not that I could blame them of course, what with this dreadful weather and all. Still, very happy to see you my friends. My name is Felin Pennythicket and, as you can see, I'm in a bit of a...sticky situation. Could I trouble you for a spot of assistance? I would be ever so grateful..."

In order to get the old cleric underway again, the PCs need to fix two problems.

FELIN PENNYTHICKET

Felin is an old, kindly halfling who was heading to a nearby town to sell some old goods and possessions to raise money for his community.

Background: Felin was once an active chap, doing good in his local community and keeping his fellow villagers safe from harm. Now in the twilight of his years, he just wants to sit, rest and write a genealogical history of his family.

Personality: Kindly and giving, Felin has come to realise he needs few of his possessions now he is entering old age. Consequently, he decided to sell those he didn't need and donate the money to his local community. He is always cheerful, and finds the good in nearly any person or situation.

Mannerism: Felin loves to smoke his pipe and keeps it well tended. Now short-sighted he often squints. He is quick to laugh and quicker to jest.

Distinguishing Features: His hair is now more gray than brown.

Hooks: If the PCs deal with Felin honourable and are friendly to a person in need, he spreads word of their good deed through the communities he travels through on his journey. The PCs gain a +2 Diplomacy check in such locales for one month.

PROBLEM: THE CART

The cart, although built slightly smaller to accommodate a Small-sized driver, is still large enough to require a regular horse to pull it along. It weighs 100 lbs. and has 75 lbs. of cargo and other assorted possessions loaded on board.

Stuck in the Mud: The cart's wheels are stuck deep in the mud. Getting them free requires a DC 15 Strength check. Every failed attempt further embeds the cart, adding +1 to the DC of future attempts (to a maximum of DC 18). Because of this consequence for failure, the PCs cannot take 20. The following conditional modifiers may apply:

- **Mud:** Due to the rain and the slippery mud road, Strength checks made to free the cart or assist in freeing the cart suffer a -2 penalty.
- **Aid Another:** Up to three other characters can assist whoever is attempting to free the cart by using the aid another action
- **Leverage:** Any suitable item or piece of equipment at least 5 feet in length can be used for leverage. Doing so grants the user a +2 bonus on their Strength check (to either assist or free the cart). If the item used is made primarily of wood and the check fails by 5 or more, the item gains the broken condition.
- **Traction:** Any suitable item or piece of equipment at least 6 inches wide can be placed by one of the wheels to gain the benefit of traction. Doing so grants a +2 bonus on the Strength check made to free the cart. A second item placed by the other wheel increases this bonus to +4. If an item used is made primarily of wood and the check fails by 5 or more, the item gains the broken condition.

PROBLEM: THE HORSE

Felin's horse, a beloved old mare named Delil, ran off into the nearby fields three hours ago. Felin was waiting for her to come back on her own but now, he's not so sure she will. Finding Delil requires either:

- **Searching:** A DC 15 Perception check and one hour. Remember to include the -4 penalty to Perception checks due to rain.
- **Tracking:** A DC 9 Survival check made to track. This DC includes a +2 bonus due to poor visibility and the rain. Success finds Delil in 20 minutes.

The horse is still frightened from the thunder and does not let anyone approach within 10 feet. She moves away from anyone who gets too close. Getting her training to overcome her fear requires one of the following:

- A DC 12 Handle Animal check.
- A DC 13 wild empathy check.
- *Charm animal* or a similar spell.

Once calm, Delil lets anyone lead her back to Felin and the cart.

REWARD

After the PCs have gotten Felin back on the road, he thanks them and offers to heal any injured party member free of charge. If the party is heading to the same community as the halfling, he offers to treat them all to a fine meal and fine lodgings.

FELIN PENNYTHICKET

CR 1 (400 XP)

This elderly halfling male is dressed in plain clerical vestments. His short brown hair is starting to grey, as is his moustache and beard. His bright, twinkling blue eyes are surrounded by wrinkles caused by smiling rather than age.

Male old halfling cleric 2

NG Small humanoid (halfling)

Init -2; **Senses** Perception +5, Sense Motive +8

Speed 20 ft.; **ACP** 0; **Acrobatics** +0 (-4 jumping), **Stealth** +2

AC 11, **touch** 9, **flat-footed** 11; **CMD** 5

(+2 armour [mwk leather], -2 Dex, +1 size)

Fort +4, **Ref** -1, **Will** +7 (+9 vs. fear)

hp 12 (2 HD)

Space 5 ft.; **Base Atk** +1; **CMB** -2

Melee mwk light mace +0 (1d4-2)

Special Actions channel positive energy (6/day; 1d6; DC 14), rebuke good, touch of good

Rebuke Death (Sp [standard; 6/day]) Felin's touches a living creature below 0 hp and heals it 1d4+1 damage.

Touch of Good (Sp [standard; 6/day]) Felin touches a creature and grants it a +1 sacred bonus on attack rolls, skill checks, ability checks and saving throws for 1 round.

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 2; concentration +5; domains: Good, Healing)

1st—*bles*, *comprehend languages*, *sanctuary*, *cure light wounds*^D

0 (at will)—*detect magic*, *light*, *purify food and drink*, *resistance*

Combat Gear *potion of cure light wounds* (2), *antitoxin* (2), tanglefoot bag

Abilities Str 7, Dex 7, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 17, Cha 17

SQ good aura (moderate)

Feats Skill Focus (Handle Animal)

Skills as above plus Handle Animal +8, Heal +8, Knowledge (history) +6

Languages Celestial, Common, Halfling

Gear as above plus healer's kit, (2), silver holy symbol, spell component pouch, 5 gp

AREA FEATURES

The area has several features of note:

Heavy Rain: The heavy rain reduces visibility ranges by half, resulting in a -4 penalty on Perception checks, ranged weapon attacks and Fly checks.

Mud: Squares of mud cover the area.

It costs 2 squares of movement to move into a muddy square the DC of Acrobatics checks in such a square increases by 2. The mud increases the DC of Stealth checks by 2.

Muddy Fields: The nearby fields are muddy and they have just been ploughed. Consequently, they are difficult to move through. It costs 3 squares of movement to move into a muddy field square and the DC of Acrobatics checks in such a square increases by 2. The mud increases the DC of Stealth checks by 2.

SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

To modify this encounter, apply the following changes:

EL 1 (XP 400): Delil has not run away, and instead stands forlornly next to the mired cart. The only challenge the PCs face is to free the cart from the mud.

EL 3 (XP 800): As well as being stuck in the mud, the cart has a second problem. Part of the driving mechanism was broken when Delil escaped. There are several solutions:

- A DC 13 Craft (carpentry) check and one hour repairs the damage.
- A DC 15 Disable Device check and one hour can jury-rig a temporary fix that lasts long enough to reach the next community so long as the cart is driven carefully.
- A *mending* spell that repairs at least 4 points of damage.
- A *make whole* spell.

DELIL

CR 1 (XP 400)

This dark grey mare is standing nervously in the rain.

N Large animal

Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Perception +6, Sense Motive +1

Speed 50 ft.; **Run**; **ACP** 0; **Acrobatics** +2 (+10 jumping)

AC 11, **touch** 11, **flat-footed** 9; **CMD** 17 (21 vs. trip)
(+2 Dex, -1 size)

Fort +6, **Ref** +5, **Will** +1

hp 15 (2 HD)

Space 10 ft.; **Base Atk** +1; **CMB** +5

Melee 2 hooves -2 (1d4+1)

Abilities Str 16, Dex 14, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 7

SQ docile

Feats Endurance, Run^B

Gear bit and bridle

TERROR FROM THE SOIL (EL 4; XP 1,200)

While the PCs are traversing a wooded area, they happen across a clearing in the forest which, at first glance, seems to be well suited as a place to rest. However, unstable terrain and an aggressive wasp swarm soon make them feel unwelcome.

Sunlight filters through the trees into a peaceful clearing. On its right, a small brook runs down the length of it, but has been dammed to a shallow pool about halfway down. A meadow of dandelions fills the rest of the space, and hundreds of seeds float through the air.

As long as the PCs stay near the spot where they entered, the clearing is indeed a good place to rest, although they might be accosted by a few wasps while eating during daytime.

Should the PCs closely examine the dam, they can discover (DC 25 Perception or DC 20 Craft [woodworking]) it was constructed using tiny tools. PCs investigating the dam also discover a sinkhole (see “Hazard” for more information).

HAZARD (CR 1; XP 400)

A year ago, a group of brownies thought the clearing would be a good spot for a burrow. They got quite far with their project, including shoring up the brook, before abandoning the warren. As a result of their efforts, the ground becomes uneven a third of the way into the clearing (see Area Features below).

The brownie tunnels’ unfinished supports may (50% chance per round) give way if Medium or larger creatures walk across them. Small creatures have a 25% chance per round of causing a sinkhole to open. Tiny or smaller creatures can move about the clearing safely.

Sinkholes: The sinkholes are about 3 ft. deep and can be avoided with a DC 18 Reflex save. Creatures in a sinkhole are entangled and cannot move. To free themselves, creatures can take a full-round action to climb out of the hole.

CREATURE

Adding injury to insult, the burrow is not as abandoned as it looks. Wasps have built their nest in the tunnels, and it has gotten quite big. The insects are most active during the day and start to swarm whenever a creature comes within 10 ft. of the nest. (Place the nest in a square that suits you.) When the sun sets, the wasps settle down as well. A creature needs to move into or through the nest’s square – which counts as a sinkhole – to enrage the swarm.

TACTICS

The wasps attack whoever disturbs them first and do not let up until their victim stops moving. Diving into the pool can help shake them; a creature has to remain underwater for at least ten

rounds for the swarm to lose interest. Defending its nest, the swarm fights until destroyed or all offending creatures leave the clearing.

AREA FEATURES

The area has several features of note:

Clearing: The clearing is about 120 feet long and half as wide. The furthest two thirds of the clearing are uneven terrain (except for the brook and its bank). When moving at full speed, creatures need to make a DC 10 Acrobatics check to avoid falling prone. Moving at half speed reduces the DC by 5.

Brook: The brook runs along the right side of the clearing from the PCs entry point, cascading over rocks into the pool. At this point, it is only 5 ft. wide and 2 ½ ft. deep. Below the dam, its width and depth expand to 8 ft. and 5 ft. respectively. A 5 ft. wide strip of ground between the brook and the meadow is stable and even ground.

Pool: The pool is roughly circular, with a radius of 10 ft. At its centre, it is 5 ft. deep. The brownies used rocks to shore up the pool’s sides, so that the water wouldn’t run into their burrow. The dam is well made and still functions as intended.

SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

To modify this encounter, apply the following changes:

EL 3 (XP 800): Remove the sinkhole hazard.

EL 5 (XP 1,600): Apply the advanced creature template to the wasp swarm (+2 on all rolls [including damage]; AC 19, touch 19, flat-footed 18; CMD –; hp 45; DC 17 poison, DC 17 distraction).

WASP SWARM	CR 3 (XP 800)
<i>Thousands of angry, stinging wasps emerge from several holes in the ground, ready to defend their nest.</i>	
N Diminutive vermin (swarm)	
Init +1; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +9	
Speed 5 ft., fly 40 ft. (good); ACP 0; Fly +11	
AC 15, touch 15, flat-footed 14; CMD – (+1 Dex, +4 size)	
Immune bull rush, critical damage, flanking, grappling, mind-affecting effects, targeted effects, tripping, weapon damage;	
Weakness area effects, high winds	
Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +3	
hp 31 (7 HD)	
Space 10 ft.; Base Atk +5; CMB –	
Melee swarm (reach 0 ft.; 2d6 plus poison [Fort DC 13 {1 save}; freq. 1 rd./4 rds.; effect 1 Dex] plus distraction [nauseated {1 round}; Fort DC 13 negates])	
Abilities Str 1, Dex 13, Con 10, Int –, Wis 12, Cha 9	



THE ANTS GO MARCHING IN (EL 8; XP 4,800)

When Tiernus, a faun bard, attracted the eye of Baron Adalric Brauwald, he also drew the attention of Adalric's domineering mother, the dowager Baroness Lavernia Brauwald. Lavernia, deciding to eliminate the threat to her dynasty, hired two fey-hunting brothers to kill Tiernus. Wanting to scare her son back to the straight and narrow, she demands a gruesome end for Tiernus. While the PCs travel through woods near Brauwald Keep, they hear the faun's cries for help and pleas for mercy. When they investigate, read:

The voice comes from a faun buried up to his neck in the centre of a grassy clearing near a large ant hill. Sticky, golden honey covers his head and finger-sized ants crawl on it. A pair of humans stand nearby watching impassively.

NEGOTIATIONS

Grimhold and Greghof Darck are not looking for, nor expecting, trouble. If approached, they explain calmly, but coldly, that Tiernus was causing difficulties and they were hired to dispose of him. They are initially indifferent, but with a DC 14 Diplomacy

check, they explain the full story. However, they fear angering Lavernia. Unless the PCs make a DC 29 Diplomacy check, the brothers won't leave before the ants kill Tiernus.

During discussions read or paraphrase the following:

The buried faun suddenly flinches, yelping in pain, and shaking his head furiously as more ants arrive from the nearby anthill. "Please," he pleads, voice sounding desperate, "Help a poor musician. I've done nothing wrong. Mercy, I beg of you!"

ARMY ANT SWARM	CR 5 (XP 1,600)
<i>A carpet of finger-sized black ants rush forward, thousands of tiny mandibles clicking menacingly.</i>	
N Fine vermin (swarm)	
Init +2; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +4	
Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.; ACP 0; Climb +10	
AC 20, touch 20, flat-footed 18; CMD — (+2 Dex, +8 size)	
Immune any spell or effect that targets a specific number of creatures, critical hits, flanking, mind-affecting effects, weapon damage; Weakness +50% damage from spells or effects that affect an area, susceptible to high winds	
Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +3	
hp 49 (11 HD)	
Space 10 ft.; Base Atk +8; CMB —	
Melee swarm (0 ft.) (3d6)	
Atk Options cling, consume, distraction (DC 15)	
Cling (Ex) If a creature leaves an army ant swarm's square, the swarm suffers 1d6 damage to reflect the loss of its numbers as several of the crawling pests cling tenaciously to the victim. A creature with army ants clinging to him takes 3d6 damage at the end of his turn each round. As a full-round action, he can remove the ants with a DC 17 Reflex save. High wind or any amount of damage from an area effect destroys all clinging ants. The save DC is Dexterity-based.	
Consume (Ex) An army ant swarm rapidly consumes any creature it swarms over. Against helpless or nauseated targets, an army ant swarm attack deals 6d6 damage.	
Distraction (Ex) Any living creature that takes damage from an army ant swarm is nauseated for 1 round (DC 15 Fortitude negates). The save DC is Constitution-based.	
Abilities Str 1, Dex 15, Con 10, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 2	

TIERNUS	CR 5 (XP 1,600)
<i>A human head with curling horns sticks out of the disturbed earth. Black ants crawl over the amber liquid coating the whimpering creature.</i>	
Male faun bard 5	
CG Medium fey	
Init +4; Senses low-light vision; Perception +7, Sense Motive +6	
Speed 30 ft.; ACP 0; Acrobatics +9, Stealth +10	
AC 17, touch 14, flat-footed 13; CMD 23 (+4 Dex, +3 natural)	
Fort +4, Ref +11, Will +8; +4 vs. bardic performance, sonic and language-dependent effects	
hp 16 (3 HD); DR cold iron/2	
Space 5 ft.; Base Atk +7; CMB +9	
Melee unarmed strike +9 (1d3+2 nonlethal)	
Special Actions pan pipes, bardic performance (24 rds.; Lingering Performance, countersong, distraction, fascinate, inspire courage [+2], inspire competence [+2])	
Panpipes (Su [swift; 3/day]) Tiernus can use his masterwork panpipes to augment his spell-like abilities, increasing the DC of the next spell-like ability he uses on his turn by +2.	
Bard Spells Known (CL 5th; concentration +11)	
2nd (4/day)— <i>alter self</i> , <i>gallant inspiration</i> , <i>suggestion</i> (DC 18)	
1st (6/day)— <i>charm person</i> (DC 17), <i>share language</i> , <i>touch of gracelessness</i> (DC 17)	
0 (at will)— <i>dancing lights</i> , <i>detect magic</i> , <i>lullaby</i> , <i>message</i> , <i>spark</i> , <i>summon instrument</i>	
Spells-Like Abilities (CL 3rd; concentration +9)	
At will— <i>ghost sound</i> (DC 16)	
1/day— <i>hideous laughter</i> (DC 17), <i>sleep</i> (DC 17)	
Abilities Str 14, Dex 18, Con 15, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 22	
SQ bardic knowledge, lore master, versatile performance (wind), well-versed	
Feats Extra Performance, Lingering Performance, Point Blank Shot, Spellson, Weapon Finesse	
Skills as above plus Appraise +10, Bluff +12, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +8, Knowledge (engineering) +8, Knowledge (geography) +12, Knowledge (history) +8, Knowledge (local) +12, Knowledge (nature) +9, Knowledge (nobility) +9, Knowledge (planes) +8, Knowledge (religion) +8, Perform (wind) +17, Spellcraft +10, Survival +3, Use Magic Device +14	
Languages Common, Elven, Gnome, Sylvan	

When the PCs arrive, the ants are just picking up the honey's scent, and a few crawl on the helpless bard. If the PCs attack the Darcks, an ant swarm emerges from the anthill in the first round of combat; if the PCs do not attack, the ants emerge several minutes after their arrival at a dramatic moment in negotiations.

TACTICS

Ants: The ants move directly toward Tiernus, using their consume ability on the helpless faun. If undisturbed, they pick the flesh off the bard for one minute after Tiernus dies, retreating to their hill afterward.

Tiernus: Tiernus is trapped and helpless but uses *gallant inspiration* to help PCs during a fight. If freed, he summons his pan pipes and uses his bardic abilities to support the PCs.

Darcks Brothers: If the PCs try to free Tiernus or attack the Darcks, the brothers fight in unison; if one isn't in melee, he uses the aid another action to boost the other's AC. They harbour no ill will against the PCs and fight defensively, using their judgment ability to boost their AC or heal themselves and saving their bane ability unless reduced below 36 hp. If either is reduced to 10 hp, both surrender. If either brother is killed, the other concentrates on killing whoever was responsible.

GRIMHOLD AND GREGHOF DARCK CR 5 (XP 1,600)
Neatly trimmed beards adorn the faces of these men, who wear brown leather tunics and a fur cloak over their chainmail. A morningstar hangs at their hip and a symbol of the god of law adorns their neck.

Male human inquisitor 6
LN Medium humanoid (human)
Init +4; **Senses** Perception +12, Sense Motive +15
Speed 20 ft., base speed 30 ft.; **ACP** -6; Acrobatics -5 (-9 jumping)

AC 20, touch 12, flat-footed 18; **CMD** 18; vermin repellent (+7 armour [+1 chainmail], +1 Dex, +1 dodge [Dodge], +1 shield [light steel])

Vermin Repellent The Darcks applied vermin repellent before burying Tiernus. The ant swarm must make a DC 15 Fortitude saving throw to enter their square.

Fort +7, **Ref** +3, **Will** +10
hp 48 (6 HD)

Space 5 ft.; **Base Atk** +4; **CMB** +6
Melee +1 morningstar +8 (1d8+3)
Ranged shortbow (range 60 ft.) +5 (1d6/x3)
Atk Options judgment, bane, solo tactics

Bane (Su [swift; 9 rds./day]) A Darcks brother imbues his weapon with the *bane* weapon quality.

Judgement (Su [swift; 2/day]) A Darcks brother in combat can pronounce judgement on a foe. They only use the following judgements (and the benefit lasts until the combat is over).

- **Healing:** The Darcks brother gains fast healing 3.

AREA FEATURES

The area has several features of note:

Clearing: Tiernus is buried in the centre of a 60-foot grassy clearing.

Anthill: The anthill is 30 ft. north of Tiernus.

Light Undergrowth: Light undergrowth surrounds the clearing. A square filled with light undergrowth costs 2 squares of movement to enter, but provides concealment (20% miss chance). Light undergrowth also increases the DC of Acrobatics and Stealth checks by 2.

CONSEQUENCES

If the Darcks survive, they report to the dowager baroness, who might seek revenge against the PCs. If Tiernus survives, he asks the PCs to escort him out of the barony, supporting them as best he can until he feels safe.

SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

To modify this encounter, apply the following changes:

EL 7 (XP 3,200): Apply the young creature template to the Darcks (+2 on all Dex-based rolls, -2 on all other rolls; 36 hp)

EL 9 (XP 6,400): Add a second ant swarm.

- **Protection:** The Darcks brother gains a +2 sacred bonus to AC.

Special Actions touch of law

Touch of Law (Su [standard; 6/day]) A Darcks brother can touch a willing creature. The creature treats all attack rolls, skill checks, ability checks and saving throws for 1 round as if it rolled an 11.

Inquisitor Spells Known (CL 6th; concentration +9; law domain)
2nd (4/day)—*castigate* (DC 15), *invisibility*, see *invisibility*, *spiritual weapon*

1st (5/day)—*ear-piercing scream* (DC 14), *forbid action* (DC 14), *protection from chaos*, *shield of faith*

0 (at will)—*detect magic*, *guidance*, *light*, *read magic*, *resistance*, *stabilize*

Spells-Like Abilities (CL 6th; concentration +9)

At will—*detect chaos*, *detect evil*, *detect good*, *detect law*
6 rds./day—*discern lies* (DC 17)

Combat Gear arrows (20), *potion of cure light wounds* (2)

Abilities Str 14, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 17, Cha 8
SQ monster lore, stern gaze

Feats Back to Back, Dodge, Extended Bane, Iron Will, Stealth Synergy, Weapon Focus (morningstar)

Skills as above plus Diplomacy +5, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (arcana) +6, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +6, Knowledge (nature) +9, Knowledge (planes) +6, Knowledge (religion) +6, Spellcraft +6, Survival +9 (+12 tracking)

Languages Common

Gear as above plus backpack, cold iron masterwork manacles, vermin repellent (2), shovel, weapon blanch (cold iron) (2), wooden holy symbol

THE GREY GROVE (EL 12; XP 19,200)

The Grey Grove is described by those nearby as a desolate realm of loss and despair, haunted by – if rumours are true – the mourning spirit of a glimmering fairy princess and her court. While it is true fey visitors infest the grove, they are not haunts; rather, these malevolent creatures are equal parts prisoners and predators, themselves captured by the true source of the listless miasma that infests the deep woods: the Witchlight.

As you pass through the deeper wood, it is impossible to miss the absence of colour from more and more of the surrounding flora. Plant debris – twigs, leaves, underbrush – crackle and snap beneath your feet, crumbling to dust with a touch, and the trees have faded to a dull, flat grey colour and appear lifeless and skeletal in the dim half-light.

PCs may make a Perception and Knowledge (nature) checks, followed by a DC 22 Will save, to learn more.

- **DC 20 Knowledge (nature):** The flora in this part of the forest is heavily stunted and dead, as if under the stunt growth effect of *diminish plants*, but it does not detect as magical.
- **DC 30 Perception:** A slight dusting of faintly luminescent dust covers the undergrowth; this dust is magical, radiating a faint evocation aura and is the remnants of killed lurkers.
- **DC 22 Will Save:** PCs failing this save are affected by the Witchlight's 300-foot aura of lassitude. The colour may be quite some distance away at this time, but the vast range on its aura taints the entire Grey Grove and all within.

PREDATORS AND PREY

Three of the five lurkers enthralled by the Witchlight hide amidst the trees in the grove, waiting for prey. Normally they feed on wildlife wandering into the area; however, they lust for intelligent prey and eagerly attack travellers.

TACTICS

The lurkers wait in hiding until at least one of the PCs is affected by the aura or, if all make their saves, until the party has fully entered the grove. Once ready to pounce, one uses its *daylight* spell-like ability while the other two – now concealed by the light – spring out, hoping to flank a nearby enemy; the first joins

the fray on the next round. The lurkers focus on a single opponent at a time, always re-casting *daylight* if it is dispelled.

If two are slain, the third calls the blighted lurkers and the Witchlight to come aid it. The lurkers arrive in 1d4 rounds, and the Witchlight one round later. Due to their enthrallment to the Witchlight, all five Lurkers cannot use their ritual gate ability.

The blighted lurkers use the same tactics as their healthier kin, though their reduced Charisma prevents them from using their spell-like abilities. The Witchlight focuses its disintegrating touch on the nearest hostile target, or anyone striking it with a

LURKER IN LIGHT (3)

CR 5 (XP 1,600)

This small, winged, emaciated woman appears blurry and semi-translucent, fading into near-invisibility as she moves into bright light.

NE Small fey (extraplanar)

Init +8; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +16, Sense Motive +3

Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (average); **ACP** 0; Acrobatics +15, Escape Artist +15, Fly +17, Stealth (blend with light) +19

Blend with Light (Su) In areas of bright light, lurkers are invisible, as per *greater invisibility*. In shadowy illumination, they lose this invisibility. If the lurker is flying, its wings partially negate this effect, giving it only partial concealment (20%) rather than total concealment.

AC 18, touch 15, flat-footed 14; **CMD** 18; **Miss Chance** 20% (in bright light, while flying)
(+4 Dex, +3 natural, +1 size)

Immune blindness

Fort +4, **Ref** +10, **Will** +9

hp 44 (8 HD); **DR** cold iron/5

Space 5 ft.; **Base Atk** +4; **CMB** +4

Melee 2 claws +9 (1d3+1) or

Melee dagger +9 (1d3+1 plus poison [DC 17 Fort {1 save}; freq. 1 rd./6 rds.; 1 Str drain initial, 1d3 Str drain secondary])

Atk Options Flyby Attack, poison use, sneak attack (+3d6)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th; concentration +11)

At will—*dancing lights*, *flare* (DC 13), *ghost sound* (DC 13), *light*, *mage hand*

3/day—*daylight*, *blindness/deafness* (DC 16)

1/day—*daylight door*

Daylight Door (Sp) A lurker can use *dimension door*, transporting only itself and 50 pounds of material. The start and end points of the teleport must be in areas of bright light; if the destination lacks sufficient light, the teleport fails but does not expend the ability for the day.

Abilities Str 13, Dex 18, Con 15, Int 15, Wis 16, Cha 17

Feats Alertness, Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse

Skills as above plus Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge (planes) +10, Survival +11

Languages Aklo, Common, Sylvan

Gear 600 gp worth of non-magical gems, rings, and/or jewellery taken from victims

COLOUR-BLIGHTED LURKERS (2) CR 5 (XP 1,600)

This lurker's appearance is even further warped, hideous and feral, and radiates an indescribable aura of coloured light.

As a normal lurker in light, but with the following changes:

Melee +1 to attack and weapon damage against all non-colour-blighted creatures

Spell-like Abilities none

Cha 1

force effect. If any characters are reduced to unconsciousness, the Witchlight attempts to feed.

All creatures fight to the death once the Witchlight arrives.

AREA FEATURES

The area has several features of note:

Illumination: Dim light.

Rough Terrain: The debris and brush in the Grove creates rough terrain, slowing movement of those walking through it. (It costs 2 squares of movement to enter such areas). The lurkers and Witchlight avoid this by flying; PCs can spend a full-round action to clear a five-foot square and remove the movement penalty. Area-effect spells, splash weapons and similar effects also remove this obstruction.

Fallen Tree: Some of the grove's trees have fallen. They provide cover (+4 AC, +2 Reflex). Characters can clamber over it with a DC 5 Climb check or leap atop it with a DC 12 Acrobatics check. Characters on a fallen tree gain the benefits of higher ground (+1 on melee attacks) but are considered balancing.

The fallen tree's canopy is brittle and lifeless. Characters entering a square containing canopy cause it to crumble into gray dust.

THE WITHLIGHT CR 10 (XP 9,600)

The air is suddenly filled with an unspeakable, alien light, a shimmering glow in the air unlike anything ever seen before, which somehow radiates malice.

Colour out of space

CN Huge ooze (incorporeal)

Init +12; **Senses** blindsight 120 ft.; Perception +18, Sense Motive +6

Speed fly 50 ft. (perfect) **ACP 0**; Fly +27, Stealth +12

AC 23, touch 23, flat-footed 14; **CMD** 36 (can't be tripped); **Miss Chance** 50%; Mobility (+6 deflection, +8 Dex, +1 dodge [Dodge], -2 size)

Immune acid, cold, fire, poison, sonic, mind-affecting effects, ooze traits; **Weakness** force effects

Susceptible to Force Effects (Ex) The Witchlight takes 50% extra damage from force effects and a -4 penalty on saves to resist force effects. It cannot damage force effects with its disintegrating touch. Its aura and feed ability are completely blocked if entrapped within a force effect such as *forcecage* or *telekinetic sphere*.

Fort +10, **Ref** +14, **Will** +10; **SR** 21

hp 126 (12 HD)

Space 15 ft.; aura of lassitude (300 ft.) **Base Atk** +9; **CMB** +19

Aura of Lassitude (Su) A creature within 300 feet of the Witchlight (even when the colour is hiding within a solid object) must make a DC 22 Will save or become overwhelmed with listlessness and ennui. While under this effect, the creature takes a -4 penalty on all Will saving throws, and will not willingly travel farther than a mile from the area where it failed this save. A *break enchantment* (DC 22) ends the effect, as does removing the victim from the aura's area by force. Every 24 hours, a creature can attempt

Normal Trees: These trees are gray and lifeless. A creature standing in the same square as a tree (AC 4, hardness 2, hp 75, DC 15 Climb) gains partial cover (+2 AC, +1 Reflex). The tree's branches are brittle and break if a character weighing more than 50 lbs. climbs among them.

Massive Trees: These trees (AC 3, hardness 2, hp 300; DC 15 Climb check) are gray and lifeless. They fill an entire square and provide cover (+4 AC, +2 Reflex). The tree's branches are brittle and break if a character weighing more than 100 lbs. climbs among them.

SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

To modify this encounter, apply the following changes:

EL 11 (XP 12,800): Remove two of the lurkers. A lone lurker works to lure PCs to the other enemies then activates *daylight*.

EL 13 (XP 25,600): Add an extra lurker to the first group, and apply the advanced creature template to the witchlight (+2 on all rolls [including damage]; AC 27, touch 27, flat-footed 18; CMD 40; hp 150; aura of lassitude DC 26, disintegrating touch DC 26, feed DC 26).

a new DC 22 Will save to escape the effect. A creature that succeeds at this save is immune to the Witchlight's aura for 24 hours, and a creature under the effect of its aura cannot be affected by another colour's aura. This is a mind-affecting effect; the save DC is Charisma-based.

Melee Touch disintegrating touch (reach 15 ft.) +15 (6d6; DC 22 Fortitude halves)

Atk Options Spring Attack, Vital Strike, disintegrating touch

Disintegrating Touch (Su) A DC 22 Fortitude save halves the damage caused by the Witchlight touch attack. A creature reduced to 0 hit points must make a DC 22 Fortitude save or be immediately slain and reduced to a pile of fine ash. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Special Actions feed

Feed (Su) The Witchlight can feed on a living creature or region of plant life as a full-round action. It must have line of sight and be within 300 feet of a creature; it must only be within a region to feed on it. Feeding on a region blights it as per *diminish plants* to stunt growth. A creature can resist feeding with a DC 22 Will save – if successful the Witchlight must wait 24 hours before trying again. If it fails, it takes 1d4 points of ability drain to Charisma and Constitution. If drained to 0 Charisma, it gains the colour-blighted template. Every time it feeds, the Witchlight gains a growth point; expending 100 growth points over 24 hours causes it to gain 1 permanent Hit Die. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Abilities Str –, Dex 26, Con 22, Int 19, Wis 23, Cha 23

Feats Dodge, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Spring Attack, Vital Strike

Skills as above plus Knowledge (geography) +16, Knowledge (nature) +16, Knowledge (planes) +16

READING STAT BLOCKS

Random Encounters: Wilderness includes all necessary stat blocks; these notes explain how to read them. Unless otherwise noted, all listed scores include all the creature's normal modifiers. Stat block appear in four sections: basic, defensive, offensive and supplemental.

BASIC

Name, CR and XP: The monster's name appears first followed by its CR and how many experience points it is worth. If more than one creature is encountered, a bracketed number lists how many appear.

Appearance: The GM can read aloud or paraphrase this section. If a picture depicts the creature, this section may be omitted.

Sex, Race, Class and Level: If the monster has class levels these appear here along with its race and sex. The first noted class is the creature's favoured class.

Alignment and Type: The creature's abbreviated alignment and its type (including applicable subtypes).

Init and Senses: This creature's initiative modifier appears before any special senses (such as scent or darkvision) and the creature's Perception and Sense Motive scores. If the creature has special Perception-based abilities, such as trapfinding or stonecunning, these appear here.

Speed: The creature's modified land speed appears first along with any other relevant speeds (such as climb or fly). If the creature's base land speed is different to its modified speed this is also listed.

ACP and Movement Skills: ACP presents the creature's normal armour check penalty modifier. If the creature's Acrobatics, Climb, Escape Artist, Fly, Ride, Stealth or Swim modifier differs from the relevant ability modifier minus its armour check penalty, these skills appear here.

DEFENSIVE

AC: The creature's normal, touch and flat-footed AC along with its CMD; additionally this section lists any defensive powers or abilities that affects the creature's AC.

Immune, Resist and Weaknesses: If the creature has immunity, resistance or a vulnerability to an effect or condition it appears here.

Fort, Ref and Will: The creature's saving throw modifiers along with any conditional modifiers and defensive powers (such as evasion) and spell resistance appear here.

HP: The creature's full, normal hit points along with the number of hit dice it possesses. A bracketed hit point total indicates that the creature is injured. If the creature has damage reduction or hardness it appears here.

OFFENSIVE

Space, Base Atk and CMB: The creature's space, base attack bonus and CMB.

Melee: This section lists a creature's melee attacks. If the attack has a reach that is not 5 ft. it is listed here. This line also lists any specific feats a creature can use with the attack (for example Power Attack), but the effects of these feats are not

included in the attack's statistics. Each attack includes attack bonus and damage information. If the attack has the default critical hit characteristics (20/x2) this information is omitted.

Ranged: This section lists the creature's ranged attacks. It always includes the attack's range. Each attack includes attack bonus and damage information. This line also lists any specific feats a creature can use with the attack (for example Point Blank Shot), but the effects of these feats are not included in the attack's statistics. If the attack has the default critical hit characteristics (20/x2) this information is omitted.

Atk Options: This section lists any abilities or feats that can affect more than one of the creature's attacks, unless it has already been presented with the creature's specific attacks. Subsequent listings describe all but the most basic abilities in depth.

Special Actions: This section lists any useful abilities that a creature could use in battle. Subsequent listings describe all but the most basic abilities in more depth.

Spells and Spell-Like Abilities: The creature's caster level, along with its concentration modifier and domains appears in brackets before the main spell listing. If one or more of the creature's spells require a touch attack, the relevant attack bonus is included. Spells available appear in reverse order from highest to lowest level. Spells denoted ^D are domain spells. If applicable, a spell's DC is also provided.

Combat Gear: This section lists any combat-related equipment the creature possesses.

SUPPLEMENTAL

Abilities and Special Qualities: These sections list the creature's ability scores and any special qualities that do not appear anywhere else in its stat block.

Feats: An alphabetical listing of all the creature's feats.

Skills and Languages: These sections list any skills the creature possesses that have not already appeared in the stat block and all languages spoken or understood. Any language-based special abilities also appear here.

Gear: This section lists any gear not already listed in the creature's stat block. This section hardly ever contains weapons or armour as they usually appear in the relevant sections above.

Spellbook: The contents of the creature's spellbook and its opposition schools.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Special abilities appear in the section to which they are best suited. Thus, offensive abilities appear with a creature's attacks while defensive ones appear with its other defences. Full write-ups of irrelevant powers (such as those that could not affect combat) are omitted. The effects of abilities that factor into a creature's normal attacks or defences have already been included in the relevant calculations.

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