

DEADLY

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Along Came
A Spider

Level 1
Adventure

by Joel
Flank

FIFTH EDITION

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Along Came A Spider

1st-Level Adventure

FIFTH EDITION

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Adventure Background

The Ethereal Plane is home to many strange creatures, as well as the dreams of mortals. Beings made of pure thought inhabit the deepest reaches of the Ethereal Plane, normally so far from other planes that they never even meet material beings...normally. In the depths of the Webmoss Woods lies a site where the dying thoughts of ancient sacrificial victims plunged far deeper into the Ethereal in their dying moments, leaving a psychic trail back to that spot. After centuries, one of these creatures of pure thought followed the trail and, for the first time, discovered the Material Plane.

The entity was fascinated by what it saw: creatures of all sorts, none of which could communicate mind to mind but were amusing nonetheless as they skittered around in unpredictable ways. This presence projected its thoughts at the nearest creature, willing it to move, but was ignored. Frustrated, it moved closer, until at last its mind slipped into the primitive brain of the creature. Shocked at how little actual thought was there, the entity quickly overrode the instinctual thoughts of the creature and was able to control its every movement and action. The being of thought absorbed the knowledge of the primitive creature and the details of the world around it, gaining an understanding of how this collection of meat and fluids lived, hunted, and even procreated to create a new generation of creatures like it.

After the novelty of controlling its puppet wore off, the entity realized how much the physical world offered in terms of entertainment and sensation, both

of which were sorely lacking to a being with no physical existence. However, a sole puppet for its consciousness soon proved not enough to take in what the material world had to offer. The memetic lifeform probed forth from its host, reaching its mental tendrils into the mind of the next closest creature and found that with its new knowledge of these primitive brains, it could extend an additional mental strand to another and influence its actions as well. From the host creatures, it learned of the webs they made to ensnare prey and made a web-like network of its own, spanning across its hosts. With its superior mind guiding the force of creatures, it created a sort of hive mind that drove them to obey its whims and explored beyond the borders of the forest it had discovered.

The memetic entity sent scouts out and learned that it only could attach creatures to its hive mind if they effectively had no mind whatsoever, but it could mentally eavesdrop on more sophisticated minds through its puppets and learn from them as well. The creature of thought soon learned that there was a village of humanoids nearby and that they feared the ethereal entity's thralls the spiders native to the Webmoss Woods. It even learned that some vermin naturally created a hive mind of their own, guiding their actions as a group. If vermin could make their own hive minds, then surely it had created something greater, more significant. It gave itself a name based on this realization: the Grand Hive.

Frustrated that it still could not directly control more advanced animals, much less the more advanced humanoids, the Grand Hive decided it would control

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them through the proxies of its spider army. It sent its sentries to attack the nearby humanoids and to bring back specimens for further study. In time, the Grand Hive was certain it could discover how to bring them under its mental control as well.

Adventure Summary

The adventure begins shortly after the Grand Hive's spiders have attacked the hamlet of Mossdale. The adventurers arrive in town and discover it is overrun with giant spiders. Many of the citizens are dead, abducted, or cocooned in webs. The adventurers are likely in Mossdale to procure its only significant export, the superior websilk created by Ivandel Fiskarton, the local alchemist. Alternatively, they could be residents of Mossdale, returning from a trip to the nearest town to buy equipment not for sale at home. Fortunately for them, the majority of the spiders from the attack have returned to the woods, but several remain and must be defeated to safely explore the town. After the adventurers discover that Ivandel is among the abducted, his apprentice begs them to enter the Webmoss Woods, rescue the abducted villagers, and stop whatever is driving the local spiders to organize and attack.

Once in the woods, the adventurers must locate the lair of the Grand Hive. Since the spiders often travel in the canopy of trees, standard tracking proves fruitless but will lead the adventurers to several other residents of the woods. In addition to several false leads of usual suspects that control spiders, such as an ettercap and mites, they have the opportunity to meet a local druid and a wererat hunter—both of whom can help the adventurers, just not in the ways they might expect.

The adventurers finally locate the ruined shrine in an ancient circle of dolmens and find it overrun by both undead and a nest of spiders. In the center of the ruin is the giant assassin spider the Grand Hive uses as its personal puppet. When they confront the source of the spider invasion, they learn that the strange entity controlling them is growing in power and hopes to turn more advanced creatures into its thralls, starting with the adventurers. Killing the assassin spider breaks the Grand Hive's connection to the Material Plane and casts it back to the depths of the Ethereal. Afterwards, the adventurers find Ivandel cocooned and weakened by venom but still alive, along with several other villagers.

This adventure is designed for a party of four 1st-level adventurers. They should be 2nd level by the adventure's end.

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Part 1: Mossdale

Mossdale is a tiny hamlet at the edge of the Webmoss Woods. The forest is overrun with enough dangerous vermin that most people avoid it, limiting the size of the town. The small town's mainstay of trade is the unusual substance which gives the nearby forest its name. Webmoss is a unique blend of materials, a hanging plant infused with spidersilk. The plant absorbs some of the abundant spider webbing which the local vermin drape on many of the trees, forming a substance that is stronger than silk and just as pliable.

The adventurers have likely been hired to procure a shipment of webmoss from Ivandel Fiskarton, a local alchemist and exporter of fine webmoss goods.

1A. Village Green

This clearing is surrounded by a dozen houses with a single dirt track leading south. A weathered granite spur thrusts from the center of the clearing. The rock and the houses are covered with layers of webbing. The only motion is from a gentle breeze rustling a few fallen leaves.

The spur is ancient and has stood here for centuries, long before Mossdale was founded. A DC 10 Intelligence (History) check can confirm that standing stones like this in the region were used by the Drothic barbarian tribes that once roamed the area, more than 800 years ago.

Monsters: Two crab spiders lurk on top of the standing stone. If any creatures approach, they leap down to attack.

CRAB SPIDER (2)

Small beast, unaligned

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Str 10 (+0)	Dex 16 (+3)	Con 12 (+1)
Int 2 (-4)	Wis 7 (-2)	Cha 4 (-3)

DEFENSE

AC 14 (natural armor)
hp 9 (2d6 + 2)

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft.; spider climb
Melee—**Bite** +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. **Hit:** 3 (1d6) piercing damage plus poison

QUALITIES

Skills Stealth +3

Senses blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

Special Qualities hide

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Hide. As long as a crab spider is not moving it has an advantage to Stealth checks this round.

Poison. A living creature damaged by a crab spider's bite must succeed a DC 11 Constitution save or take 2 (1d4) poison damage. A successful save means the creature takes half damage. A poisoned creature reduced to 0 hp is stable.

Spider Climb. A spider can walk on walls or ceilings without making a check.

1B. Trapper's House

The interior of this house contains simple wooden furniture: a bed, a table, and two chairs. A half-skinned beaver sits upon a workbench, with tools scattered nearby.

Helmut Roskan lived here, trapping animals in the nearby woods for their pelts and meat. When the village was attacked by spiders, he was taken by surprise while skinning his latest catch. The spiders cocooned him in webbing before returning to the Grand Hive.

Monsters: Four scarlet spiders hide in scattered locations around the hut, patiently awaiting prey. If a creature approaches the workbench or any of the furniture, the spiders move to attack. Otherwise, they use Stealth to move into a square adjacent to the closest foe and attack.

SCARLET SPIDER (4)

Tiny beast, unaligned

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Str 8 (-1) **Dex** 11 (+0) **Con** 12 (+1)
Int 2 (-4) **Wis** 6 (-2) **Cha** 4 (-3)

DEFENSE

AC 11 (natural armor)
hp 7 (2d4 + 2)

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft.; spider climb
Melee—Bite +1 to hit, reach 0 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 1 (1d4 - 1) piercing damage plus 1 poison damage

QUALITIES

Skills Stealth +2

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 8

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Spider Climb. A spider can walk on walls or ceilings without making a check.

Treasure: Stacked next to the workbench are beaver and mink pelts worth 10 gp.

1C. Alchemist's House

This hut is larger than any other in the village, and every available space inside is crammed with tables and benches covered with alchemical equipment. Many beakers and flasks sit over open flames and contain bubbling liquids, while racks along the wall boast containers filled with an array of colored liquids. Hanging from the ceiling are several coils of rope.

This is Ivandel Fiskarton's lab and home. When the spiders attacked, he was caught off-guard and unwilling to throw a bomb inside his home due to the multitude of volatile substances. He swiftly succumbed to the spiders' venomous bites and was brought back to the Grand Hive along with the other prisoners. He put up enough of a fight to give his apprentice, Dorrin, a chance to hide under a workbench. Dorrin (male human commoner, MM 345) stayed hidden even after the main force of spiders left the town and has avoided detection by the two spiders who have since taken up residence in the workshop.

Monster: Three giant wolf spiders have spun a web across the 15-foot-high ceiling, camouflaged among the ropes hanging there. They wait until the adventurers have entered the room, and then one spider creates a sheet of webbing blocking the door of the hut while the other attempts to entrap an adventurer in more webbing. They then lower themselves on webs and attack from higher ground, gaining an advantage on attacks on adventurers who remain at ground level.

GIANT WOLF SPIDER (3)

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP each)

MM 330

AC 13

hp 11 (2d8 + 2)

Treasure: Searching Ivandel's home turns up 8 antitoxins, 4 flasks of acid, 4 flasks of alchemist's fire, 3 torches, and 3 potions of healing. There are also 4 coils of webmoss ropes (see the sidebar).

Development: Adventurers can grab a flask or beaker in the room and throw it as a standard action. There is a 50% chance that the substance is inert, and the glassware simply shatters for 1d2 damage if it hits.

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Otherwise, the missile acts as a flask of acid. If the adventurers throw containers from the racks on the walls, they randomly select one of the alchemical items or potions listed under treasure, which have their usual effects.

An adventurer who climbs or jumps up onto a table can avoid granting the spiders their advantage for higher ground, but there is a 50% chance each round spent on a table to knock over a vial of dangerous substance, causing the adventurer to suffer 2d6 acid damage (a DC 8 Dexterity save negates this damage).

Any combat in the room causes Dorrin to scream in terror. If the adventurers are having a hard time with the fight, one of the spiders can attack Dorrin instead of an adventurer. If Dorrin survives, he relates the events of the spider attack on the town and that his master was taken alive, although poisoned, along with several other villagers. He offers the adventurers all of the alchemical items and potions in the lab if they agree to try to rescue Ivandel. Dorrin doesn't have any idea why the spiders attacked in force, as they usually avoid the village, but he can tell the adventurers that they scuttled off to the northeast.

1D. Dogged Resistance

This unremarkable hut has simple furniture and is covered floor to ceiling in webs. A mound cocooned in webbing twitches feebly on the far side of the room.

Monster: A swarm of spiders has slowly been feeding on a dog trapped in webbing in this house. However, they happily move towards more mobile prey if the adventurers enter this hut. They will not pursue creatures outside of the hut, preferring to stay with their captive meal.

SPIDER SWARM

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Insect Swarm, MM 338

AC 12

hp 22 (5d8)

Development: This mastiff has been reduced to 2 Strength due to spider venom and is unable to free itself from the webs. It currently has 3 hp but otherwise has the statistics of a riding dog. If the adventurers rescue it from the spider swarm and nurse it back to health, it will become fiercely loyal to whichever adventurer spent the most time caring for it and will protect them with its life.

Random Monster Table

1d6	Monster (CR)	Stat Location
1	1d4 + 2 crawling claw	MM 44
2	1d4 mites	page 11
3	1 scarecrow	MM 268
4	1 half-blue dragon giant spider	MM 180/328
5	1d2 skeletons	MM 272
6	1d2 gas spores	MM 138

1E. Empty Houses

This small one-room house seems deserted, save for the spiderwebs coating most of the simple furniture.

Each of these structures housed a family, all of whom were either killed by spiders during the attack or abducted afterwards. Half of these houses contain 1d3+1 dessicated corpses cocooned in webbing. The rest show obvious signs of struggle but contains no bodies.

Part 2: The Webwoods

Spiders of both the regular and monstrous varieties have always infested the Webwoods. Although dangerous to animals and people exploring the woods, the arachnids typically present no more of a threat to Mossdale than any other wild predator. The Webwoods take their name from the prolific habitats of the local spiders. Every tree contains at least one large web, and many are completely draped in webbing. Over time, the local flora has adapted to grow in the webs, including a species of vine with an integrated root system that forms into rope-like structures which hang from the web-covered branches down to the ground. Alchemists refine this material, called webmoss, to make exceptionally light and strong ropes and textiles that retain the gray-green color of the vine.

The blanketing canopy of the Webwoods leaves the forest floor unusually clear of plant life or dead tree debris; only 10% of the squares in the woods are covered in light undergrowth. The hanging webmoss can be scaled to reach the canopy level of the Webwoods with a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check to climb so long as the climber is within 10 feet of a tree. The thick canopy also blocks most natural sunlight from reaching the forest floor, resulting in only dim light even in the middle of the day. Every 4 hours exploring or every 8 hours camping in the Webwoods yields a 20% chance of a random encounter.

The adventurers will need to explore the Webwoods to find the abducted citizens of Mossdale. Prior to

Webmoss

Webmoss in its natural state is a tacky hanging vine, similar to Spanish moss but more gray in color. While not sticky enough to hinder anyone touching it, webmoss does provide an advantage on Athletics checks made on surfaces that it covers. An Intelligence check (DC 15, 8 hours work) can process webmoss into rope or textiles that retain the sticky qualities of its natural state as well as being as strong as silk.

Webmoss rope costs 50 gp for a 50-foot coil, weighs 5 lbs., has 5 hp, and can be burst with a DC 10 Strength check. Any climb checks using these ropes provide a +1 bonus to the climber.

Webmoss nets cost 100 gp, weigh 5 lbs., and have 10 hp. They can be burst with a DC 12 Strength check. Since they stick to entangled creatures, a DC 15 Dexterity check is required to escape the net.

Lassos made of webmoss cost 2 gp, weigh 3 lbs., and have 5 hp. They can be burst with a DC 15 Strength check, and require a DC 8 Dexterity check to escape.

Textiles made of webmoss have 4 hp per inch of thickness and cost double the normal price.

leaving the village, Dorrin may have told them that the spiders came from the northeast, which points them in the right direction to find their quarry. Alternatively, an adventurer who makes a DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check to track the spiders can follow their trail into the woods for a mile; the tracks end abruptly where the spiders took to the trees for the remainder of their trip. If the adventurers rescue the dog from area 1D, it can automatically track the spiders this far, following the scent of its former master. A DC 12 Intelligence check informs the adventurers that both an ettercap and a few bands of mites live to the northeast of Mossdale, and both are known for keeping trained monstrous spiders as pets or companions.

2A. A Rat In The Woods

The woods ahead are covered in sticky sheets of webbing. The corpses of dire rats hang in several of the webs, their faces contorted in pain. The bodies of three spiders the size of men litter the clearing as well.

The spiders killed these dire rats before their lycanthropic companion, Conrad, slaughtered the spiders in turn.

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Monster: The wererat Conrad Andon has lived in the Webwoods for years, avoiding the indigenous spiders and the village of Mossdale and preying on isolated travelers to supplement his meager income from hunting and tanning pelts. He knows the recent upheaval in the woods will impact his livelihood as much as Mossdale's, and while he would normally be more than happy to ambush the adventurers, he may instead decide to encourage them to deal with the threat to his home so that he can continue his life of casual banditry without the local spiders rampaging and killing off both his rat friends and his potential prey.

Conrad was unharmed during the spider ambush, having transformed into his hybrid form before the spiders could injure him. When the adventurers approach, he is in hybrid form and obviously a wererat, but asks to parley with them rather than fight. While he isn't happy about the recent aggressiveness in the local spiders, he also doesn't see it as his problem to fix, and after being ambushed and having his rat friends killed, he has decided to leave the Webwoods for safer environs.

Conrad's initial attitude is indifferent, but if his attitude is improved to friendly, he will tell the adventurers the location of the ettercap lair at location 2C as well as mention that he saw some mites in the general direction of location 2D; he surmises that either might be the cause of whatever has riled up the local spiders. Conrad tries to convince the adventurers to seek out and dispose of both threats. He does know about the stone circle deeper in the Webwoods (location 3) but won't suggest looking there for possible spider-related disturbances. If the adventurers specifically ask about other notable landmarks in the forest, however, he mentions the circle as well.

If made helpful, he will also warn the adventurers to beware Elina, the druid in location 2B, saying that she's not as friendly of a druid as they may expect. At the GM's discretion, he may even have a change of heart and shadow the adventurers, potentially coming to their aid if things go poorly for them during their expedition in the Webwoods.

CONRAD ANDON (HYBRID FORM)

Male human natural wererat

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Str 16 (+3) **Dex** 15 (+2) **Con** 15 (+2)
Int 9 (-1) **Wis** 12 (+1) **Cha** 8 (-1)

DEFENSE

AC 14 (studded leather)

hp 13 (2d8 + 4)

Saving Throws Dex +4, Con +4

Special Defenses lycanthropy immunities

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee—Longsword +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage

Melee—Handaxe +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) slashing damage

Melee—Bite +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage plus wererat lycanthropy curse

Ranged-Longbow +4 to hit, range 150 ft./600 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 4 (1d8) piercing damage

Special Attack multiattack (longsword and handaxe; longsword and bite)

QUALITIES

Skills Climb +5, Nature +2, Perception +3, Stealth +4

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Common

Gear handaxe, longbow, longsword, studded leather armor, 3 gp

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Lycanthropy Immunities. A wererat is immune to all weapon damage, unless the weapon is either magical or silvered.

Wererat Lycanthropy Curse. A creature damaged by the wererat's bite attack must succeed a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or contract the curse of lycanthropy (MM 206).

Development: Award full XP for Conrad if the adventurers peacefully get information from him.

2B. Lady of the Woods

A massive tree blocks the way ahead; the footworn path detours around it and out of sight. The strands of webmoss are especially thick near this tree. Faint crooning can be heard beyond the bend in the trail.

Monster: After her parents were killed by spiders in the Webwoods, Elina was adopted by a local hermit who lived on the periphery of Mossdale. She grew to resent the callous nature of the villagers, who always gave her and her adoptive father a wary eye for their choice of living among the spiders in the wilderness. She came to believe that spiders lived an exemplary life as efficient predators who coolly ignore socialization. When her father became ill, she offered him to one of the giant vermin as a meal, simultaneously putting him out of his misery and bonding with the spider. Elina



sees the recent uprising of the spiders of the Webwood as a sign of their innate superiority to the humans who occasionally invade their territory.

When the adventurers approach, the druidess is singing a simple children's song to her spider companion, Vlad, who lurks in the tree above. If the adventurers approach her peacefully, she feigns concern if they talk of the attack on Mossdale. She attempts to blatantly lie and suggests that she's noticed a strange rat man in the forest and that he might have something to do with it, directing the adventurers to Conrad in area 2A. If the adventurers see through her poor Charisma (Bluff) with an opposed Wisdom (Insight) check, she responds, "Maybe the fools in Mossdale simply got what they deserved!" and signals Vlad to attack.

ELINA

Female Medium humanoid (half-elf), neutral evil

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Str 14 (+2) **Dex** 13 (+1) **Con** 12 (+1)
Int 10 (+0) **Wis** 16 (+3) **Cha** 8 (-1)

DEFENSE

AC 14 (hide armor)

hp 11 (2d8 + 2)

Saving Throws Int +2, Wis +5

Advantages saves vs charmed **Immune** sleep

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee—Sickle +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) slashing damage

Ranged—Sling +3 to hit range range 30 ft./120 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) bludgeoning damage

Druid Spells (1st level, save DC 13, attack +5 to hit)
Caltrips (at will)—*guidance, produce flame*
1st (2/long rest)—*charm person, cure wounds, entangle, speak with animals*

QUALITIES

Skills Animal Handling +5, Bluff +1, Nature +2, Stealth +3

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Druidic, Elvish, any one other language

Gear *scroll of cure wounds, scroll of spider climb* hide armor, sickle, sling with bullets, holly and mistletoe, 9 gp

VLAD, GIANT SPIDER COMPANION

Large beast, unaligned

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Str 14 (+2) **Dex** 16 (+3) **Con** 13 (+1)
Int 3 (-4) **Wis** 11 (+0) **Cha** 4 (-3)

DEFENSE

AC 14 (natural armor)

hp 26 (4d10 + 4)

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.; spider climb, web walk

Melee—Bite +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage plus poison

Ranged—Web (recharge 5-6) +5 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* The target is restrained by webbing.

QUALITIES

Skills Stealth +7

Senses blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., websense, passive Perception 10

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Poison. A living creature damaged by a giant spider's bite must succeed a DC 11 Constitution save or take 9 (2d8) poison damage. A successful save means

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the creature takes half damage. A poisoned creature reduced to 0 hp is stable but paralyzed for 1 hour afterwards, even if the creature regains hit points..

Spider Climb. A spider can walk on walls or ceilings without making a check.

Websense. A spider knows the exact location of all other creatures and objects in the same web.

Web Walk. A spider's movements are not hindered by webs.

Web. As an action, the restrained target can make a DC 12 Strength check, bursting the webbing on a success.

2C. The Usual Suspects

A tangle of trees ahead forms a narrow passage into a particularly dark clearing. Dense sheets of webbing surround the clearing on all sides, making this passage the only entrance or exit. A curtain of thinner webbing covers the passage but doesn't prevent egress.

The interior of the clearing is dark; no light penetrates the thick canopy of webbing above.

Trap: The entrance to the clearing is guarded by two ettercap suspension nooses.



SUSPENSION NOOSE TRAP (2)

Mechanical Trap

Challenge 1/2 (50 XP)

This trap consists of a webmoss noose tied to a bent over tree, which grabs the ankle of a creature, suspending it in the air. When a creature steps into the 5-foot-circular noose on the ground, the noose closes around the creature's leg. A successful DC 15 Dexterity save allows the creature to avoid being caught in the trap. A failed saving throw means the creature is suspended upside down, with its head about 3 feet above the ground (6 feet if the creature is Small sized), and restrained for as long as the creature is in the trap. Getting out of the trap can be done in one of two ways: fast or slow. Fast can be anything from cutting the webmoss with a knife, shooting the webmoss with an arrow, or making any number of skill checks that sound reasonably plausible. All fast options require a single successful DC 10 check to get out. However, all such checks that use Dexterity, whether made by the trapped creature or an ally trying to free it, are made at a disadvantage since both the tree and the trapped creature are moving. Any amount of hit point damage dealt to the old and worn webmoss will break it. Upon being freed, the trapped creature takes 1d6 falling damage unless someone is underneath and prepared to catch the trapped creature. Alternatively, the trapped creature can take one full round to escape, which requires no skill check and avoids any damage from falling.

The trap's noose is hidden by dirt and debris covering the webmoss. The bent tree tied to the webmoss is unlike any of the other tangled trees that form the narrow passageway. Noticing either the webmoss circle on the ground or the tied down tree requires a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check.

The trap can be disarmed in one of two ways: cut the webmoss noose or pull the stake out of the ground. Cutting the webmoss noose means that if the stake should come loose, the webmoss will not be able to grab any creature. Pulling the stake out of the ground allows the noose to close with no one caught, allowing the tree to return to its normal, somewhat upright and tangled position. Either method of disarming the trap requires one action.

Monster: Lurking inside is a depressed and confused ettercap. It doesn't understand why its spider friends have abandoned it. If the adventurers don't immediately attack, it tries to talk to them, potentially giving them directions to the Grand Hive, hoping that they can make things go back to how they were before.



YOUNG ETTERCAP

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

MM 131

AC 12 (natural armor)

hp 22 (4d8 + 4)

OFFENSE

Melee—Bite +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage plus poison

Poison A creature damaged by the young ettercap's bite attack takes 2 (1d4) poison damage and must attempt a DC 11 Constitution saving throw. One a failed save, the creature is poisoned for 1 minute. This save can be repeated at the end of the creature's turn to end the effects early.

Treasure: A DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check finds a desiccated human cocooned in spider silk hidden within the webs in the back of the clearing. It still wears a breastplate and carries a spear, longbow, and 28 gp.

Development: If the adventurers talk to the ettercap, it does its best to explain that it is not behind

the spider attacks and doesn't know why the spiders are acting strangely. Read or paraphrase the following statements the ettercap might offer, depending on the adventurers' questions.

"Me no send spiders to attack, spiders leave me all alone."

"Not know why spider friends act strange, just leave, not say why."

"Not attack town, stay in woods. Nice and safe."

"Spiders go to bad place, stoness there bad, rotten."

The ettercap can give crude directions to the stone circle in area 3 if asked. If the adventurers get these directions from the ettercap peacefully, award them full experience points as if they defeated him in combat.

2D. The Unusual Suspects

You spot several small blue bodies scattered on the ground between the trees ahead, the gaping wounds in their torsos weeping ichor.

Monster: The local mites are flustered and frustrated that their vermin friends simply got up and left. At first, they panicked and stayed in their lair under the Webwoods, feeling vulnerable without their monstrous pets. When several days passed and the spiders didn't return, the mites got even more agitated and eventually chose to leave the safety of their lair to rescue their spider friends. A noble intention, perhaps, had they not been using the spiders as warbeasts to attack and torment vulnerable prey.

The mites really have no idea how to find their particular spider friends, nor how to get them to come back home, so they've wandered the Webwoods and tried to keep a low profile. Unfortunately, their luck has run out, and they've been beset upon by a giant black widow spider. While their vermin empathy normally protects them from minor threats in the woods, this beast appears to be unaffected by any attempt to befriend it.

When the adventurers approach, they can see several mite bodies, and a DC 5 Perception check allows them to hear the sounds of combat ahead. 50 feet away, they find the injured black widow savagely attacking the remaining eight mites. In total, 5 mites have already been killed. The adventurers can easily avoid this encounter, as both the black widow and the mites are far too busy fighting each other to notice the adventurers if they don't close the distance. If they do approach, the mites call out to them in Undercommon for help. The black widow simply attacks the closest target each round and fights to the death. If the

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adventurers wait and watch, the mites flee if two more of their number are killed, but if the adventurers aid them, they will fight until four are killed before fleeing. If the adventurers simply watch, one of the mites tries to beseech them in Common with the single word “help” on the second round of combat.

MITES (8)

Small fey, lawful evil

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Str 9 (–1) **Dex** 12 (+1) **Con** 11 (+0)
Int 8 (–1) **Wis** 13 (+1) **Cha** 10 (+0)

DEFENSE

AC 11
hp 3 (1d6)

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., climb 20 ft.
Melee—Dagger +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature.
Hit: 3 (1d4 + 1) piercing damage
Ranged—Dart +3 to hit, range 20 ft./60 ft., one creature.
Hit: 3 (1d4 + 1) piercing damage
Spells (1st level, save DC 10, attack +2 to hit)
At Will—prestidigitation
1/day—bane, summon vermin

QUALITIES

Skills Animal Handling +3, Stealth +3
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11
Languages Undercommon, a few words of Common
Special Qualities vermin empathy
Gear dagger, 1d3 darts

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Vermin Empathy. A mite has an advantage when using Animal Handling on a beast with an Intelligence of 1 (–5).

GIANT BLACK WIDOW SPIDER

Large beast, unaligned

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Str 14 (+2) **Dex** 16 (+3) **Con** 13 (+1)
Int 1 (–5) **Wis** 11 (+0) **Cha** 4 (–3)

DEFENSE

AC 14 (natural armor)
hp 26 (4d10 + 4)

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.; spider climb, web walk

Melee—Bite +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage plus poison

Ranged—Web (recharge 5–6) +5 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* The target is restrained by webbing.

QUALITIES

Skills Stealth +7

Senses blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., websense, passive Perception 10

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Poison. A living creature damaged by a giant spider’s bite must succeed a DC 11 Constitution save or take 9 (2d8) poison damage. A successful save means the creature takes half damage. A poisoned creature reduced to 0 hp is stable but paralyzed for 1 hour afterwards, even if the creature regains hit points..

Spider Climb. A spider can walk on walls or ceilings without making a check.

Websense. A spider knows the exact location of all other creatures and objects in the same web.

Web Walk. A spider’s movements are not hindered by webs.

Web. As an action, the restrained target can make a DC 12 Strength check, bursting the webbing on a success.

Development: If the adventurers defeat the black widow, any surviving mites are willing to tell them what little they know about the situation and will forsake their more malicious natures for the moment. If the adventurers speak Undercommon, the mites clearly explain that they know about the ettercap and had planned to visit him to determine if he knew why the spiders are acting strangely. If the adventurers ask about other notable landmarks nearby, they can direct them to locations 2B and 3 as well. If the adventurers don’t speak Undercommon, the mites merely say, in broken Common, “Spiders run away. Looking why.” After their close call with the monstrous widow, they decide discretion is the better part of valor and retreat to their caves under the Webwood further to the east.

Part 3: Drothic Circle

In centuries past, the Drothic barbarian tribe roamed the Webwoods and from the forest launched a reign of terror on the surrounding lands. They raided settlements for sacrificial victims to offer to their dark god, and it was here in this circle of standing stones that they tortured and eviscerated their prisoners, drawing their pain and torment out for days at a time before finally finishing the sacrifice. The residual



miasma of the dark rites performed here has created a permanent unholy field that can reanimate the skeletons of dead creatures, as long as the skeletons stays nearby. The stone circle acting as a fixture to the dark deity.

The psychic torment of so many victims over time created the echo that drifted into the deep Ethereal Plane and left a trail for the entity calling itself the Grand Hive, and it is here that the adventurers eventually track down that entity and can put an end to its control of the vermin of the Webwoods. If they defeat its host body, they can also rescue the townsfolk of Mossdale and ensure that the spiders don't assault other settlements in the region.

3A. Ancient Dead

A ring of granite stones surrounds this clearing in the woods. Some are topped by dolmens, forming archways, while others lean drunkenly, propped up by adjacent stones. A few have fallen over completely.

Monster: When the Grand Hive breached the Material Plane after following the psychic maelstrom of the torment from this site, it brought some of that energy

into the Material Plane along with it. The memory of their torture and pain has stirred the bones of the victims who were buried here, animating them as skeletons. The skeletons ignore the mindless vermin of the woods and will not enter the circle of standing stones. When the adventurers approach, however, they mercilessly attack them, fighting to the death.

SKELETONS (4)

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

MM 57

AC 13

hp 13 (2d8 + 4)

OFFENSE

Melee—Claw +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. **Hit:** 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage

3B. Stone Circle

The interior of the stone circle is free of trees, but webs cross from one stone to the next, forming an overhead canopy which gives the circle the semblance of a room. In the center of the circle stands an archway of stone; a dark hole breaches the ground beneath it.

Along Came A Spider

The standing stones are 15 feet tall, and the web dome above is 30 feet high at its center. The archway is 10 feet high and requires a DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check to scale.

Monster: Three giant wolf spiders lurk in the webs above, roughly equidistant around the circle. Once the adventurers cross the threshold of standing stones, the spiders attack, flinging webs to entrap foes before lowering themselves from webs to get close enough to disable prey with their venomous bites.

GIANT WOLF SPIDER (3)

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP each)

MM 330

AC 13

hp 11 (2d8 + 2)

3C. The Dark Spiral

A dark tunnel descends into the earth, its rough crumbling walls curving ahead and out of sight.

This tunnel spirals under the stone circle to an ancient Drothic shrine. The profane resonance of the site has corrupted two spiders that live in these tunnels, turning them into hellspinners.

Monster: Two hellspinners have built nests around the first bend in the spiral. They patiently wait for prey to pass between their trap doors, and then spring out and attack. Any creature passing by their lair that fails a Perception check against their Stealth check is surprised. While within its lair, a hellspinner has cover.

HELLSPINNER (2)

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Modified Giant Wolf Spider, MM 330

AC 13

hp 11 (2d8 + 2)

Resist fire

OFFENSE

Melee—Bite +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. **Hit:** 4 (1d6 + 1) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) fire damage.

3D. Demonic Castoff

This room is dominated by a faintly glowing magic circle. Dim red light pulses to the rhythm of a heartbeat. A figure stands silently in the center of the circle.

A DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check is required to notice the secret door leading to this room. When the Drothic barbarians used this shrine for sacrifices,

priests and wizards summoned demons into this area to aid them in battle. When the room was last used, a lowly dretch found itself stuck within the summoning circle, trapped but never bound into service. Its summoner is long dead now, never to return to complete the binding. The dretch has entered a catatonic like state after centuries of boredom trapped in the summoning circle with no ability to escape on its own. The Grand Hive has not discovered this room, and so the dretch remains trapped and forgotten here.

Monster: Crossing the threshold of the circle, either bodily or with a ranged or melee attack, frees the dretch, who quickly returns to a conscious state. The following round, the dretch attacks the nearest creature; maddened by the idle passing of centuries, it fights to the death.

DRETCH

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

MM 57

AC 11

hp 18 (4d6 + 4)

Treasure: In the far corner of the room, unreachable without breaking the circle, is a small table with a number of rolled up scrolls upon it. The scrolls contain the spells *detect magic*, *longstrider*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *shield*, *true strike*, and *web*.

3E. The Grand Hive

A dark stone altar lies at the far end of this chamber. Its rough surface is marred by dozens of chips, as if it were repeatedly stabbed with a sharp implement; a faint rust-colored stain fills the holes. Hanging from the webbing along the ceiling are the cocooned forms of over a dozen humanoids.

The archway requires a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check to scale.

Monster: The Grand Hive has chosen the most deadly spider in the woods as its anchor to the Material Plane. A giant assassin spider hides under the archway, observing the giant spiders in the clearing as they fight the adventurers. If they defeat the spiders, the Grand Hive waits until they approach the altar before ambushing them. Once it attacks in the surprise round or first round of combat, it reveals its presence by telepathically speaking to the adventurers, mocking their failures in combat, and aggrandizing its superiority. If it impales an adventurer, it climbs the exterior of the archway, giving itself time to kill its victim before seeking out another. It fights to the death, confident it is superior to the weak corporeal creatures of the Material Plane.

THE GRAND HIVE

The Grand Hive is an unusual enemy, as it isn't a creature per se, but a bodiless entity. It's not merely incorporeal, made of gas, or some other sort of ephemeral being, but more akin to an intelligence that exists purely mentally, similar to the consciousness of an intelligent magic item. Normally such entities never encounter physical beings or matter, instead existing in a realm of pure mental energy and thought. However, the Grand Hive was able to follow a trail of strong emotion back to the Drothic ruins, and when crossing the barrier to the Material Plane, it became something new and unique. It has the following abilities:

Intellect, neutral evil

Int 18 (+4) **Wis** 8 (-1) **Cha** 15 (+2)

OFFENSE

Spells (3rd level, save DC 14, attack +6 to hit)

At Will—*dominate creature*

QUALITIES

Senses vision and darkvision 60 ft., *detect thoughts* 60 ft. (constant)

Special Qualities hive mind, inhabit creature

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Dominate Creature. This spell works like *dominate animal*, except that it only works on creatures similar to the one the grand hive is currently inhabiting (i.e. spiders). The grand hive can only concentrate on a single creature at a time. If the target creature has an Intelligence of 5 or less, it continues to follow the grand hive's last orders to it for one hour after the grand hive has switched concentration.

Hive Mind. When inhabiting a creature, the grand hive can form a hive mind with similar creatures (i.e. spiders). Any such creature within 300 feet is mentally linked such that if any is aware of a particular danger, they all are and cannot be surprised.

Inhabit Creature. The grand hive cannot normally exist in the physical world. Upon crossing a planar breach into a plane with physical matter, it can only remain for 1 minute before being shunted back to the deep Ethereal. It can shield itself from this effect by inhabiting a host creature, if that creature fails a DC 14 Wisdom save. Once inhabiting a host, it fully controls that creature's actions as if it were the Grand Hive's body and uses the host creature's abilities. If the host creature is killed, the Grand Hive is immediately shunted into the deep Ethereal, and is forever barred from using the particular planar breach it crossed.

Some examples of taunts and boasts it might use during combat include:

"You may call me the Grand Hive. You've destroyed some of my playthings, but studying you will be... informative."

"You cannot comprehend my superior intellect. Fall before me if you insist on resisting."

"Your pathetic attempts to harm me are futile. I exist beyond your understanding."

"As disgusting as your bodies are, the fluids inside should prove to be delicious indeed."

GIANT ASSASSIN SPIDER

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

See page 16

AC 14 (natural armor)

hp 32 (5d10 + 5)

Treasure: A secret compartment can be found in the base of the altar with a DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check. Inside are 3 +1 *arrows*.

Development: Once the adventurers kill the host body of the Grand Hive, all of the spiders in the Webwoods revert to their usual behaviors, and while they certainly present a threat, they are now dangerous only to those who enter their territory or to small animals near the woods upon which they prey. The Grand Hive itself is flung back to the depths of the Ethereal Plane, shrieking a telepathic cry of despair. The cocoons hanging from the ceiling contain all of the abducted victims from Mossdale, including Helmut Roskan and Ivandel Fiskarton, as well as 10 other townsfolk. They all have Str 2 from spider venom, but can walk back to town if the adventurers escort and protect them.

Concluding the Adventure

After the adventurers return the abductees to Mossdale, the townsfolk quickly recover after a few days of rest and vociferously thank the adventurers for saving them and their town. Ivandel is more than

Along Came A Spider

happy to let the adventurers keep any of his alchemical items and potions they may have taken and also rewards each of them with a 1st-level potion of their choice. If the adventurers initially came to Mossdale to pick up a delivery of webmoss ropes, Ivandel is happy to give it to them, and they can return to drop off the shipment with their initial employer. Upon delivery, they are paid 50 gp each. The adventurers are forever welcome in Mossdale and treated as heroes there, given free room and board anytime they decide to visit in the future. If they wait for the townsfolk to recover from their ordeal, a great feast is organised in their honor.

It's up to the adventurers how to handle the various monstrous inhabitants of the Webwood. They may choose to let them be if they had peaceful interactions, or decide to hunt them down once the spider crisis is over to ensure they don't cause trouble for Mossdale in the future. Depending on any agreements they may have made in the course of this adventure, this could have alignment repercussions for some lawful or good characters.

The Grand Hive is banished back to the Ethereal, banished from the corporeal playground of thoughts and sensations it discovered. However, it knows the Material Plane exists now, and it won't stop seeking a way back. If the adventurers research what kind of entity the Grand Hive was, a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check tells them that the deep Ethereal contains strange creatures composed of pure thought and mental energy with no physical bodies.

A month after the adventurers defeat the Grand Hive, they all experience a vivid dream of their minds being sifted through, with their innermost thoughts being spied upon. They awake in a cold sweat to the telepathic echoes of the words, "I won't forget you; your thoughts are unique."

Continuing the Adventure

The Grand Hive isn't going to let its banishment from the Material Plane stop its designs on the

material world. Now that it knows the Material Plane exists, it will eventually find its way back, and time is meaningless to it. Once it returns, it will look for more hosts it can inhabit, and more powerful creatures it can control. After being defeated by the adventurers, it knows their mental signature and will seek them for revenge. Initially, it can only control mindless creatures, such as the spiders in the Webwood, and upon its return it might discover that it can also control mindless constructs or undead, providing for a more powerful army of puppets. Given enough time in the material world, it will eventually learn to control intelligent creatures, such as humanoids, which would give it access to a far more diverse set of abilities. The GM could decide to have the Grand Hive return multiple times, when the adventurers are of higher levels and able to combat more powerful hosts which the Grand Hive can control. A final adventure against the Grand Hive might entail following it into the deep Ethereal Plane, either to confront it directly or after discovering a means to sever its connection to the material world forever.

In the more immediate future, Ivandel can act as a mentor and sponsor for additional adventures. He could hire the adventurers to deliver additional shipments of webmoss ropes, as few are willing to travel to Mossdale due to the danger of the Webwoods, or he could ask the adventurers to retrieve other exotic flora and fauna which he can alchemically treat to create valuable and useful goods.

The adventurers might also choose to investigate other Drothic ruins and sites to explore for lost treasure or ensure they don't spawn additional dangers due to the dark rites performed there. Because the Drothic barbarians were demon worshipers and practitioners of human sacrifice and cannibalism, there are opportunities to encounter ghouls and other undead as well as fiendish servants bound to their ruins. The Drothic tribes' success as conquerors and raiders also allowed them to gather treasures from many surrounding lands, in addition to their own magic which remains hidden at various locations.

NEW MONSTER: GIANT ASSASSIN SPIDER

The head of this awkward-looking vermin towers above its body. Long mandibles reach almost to the ground amidst a forest of spindly legs.

GIANT ASSASSIN SPIDER

Large beast, unaligned

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Str 15 (+2) **Dex** 16 (+3) **Con** 13 (+1)

Int 2 (-4) **Wis** 11 (+0) **Cha** 4 (-3)

DEFENSE

AC 14 (natural armor)

hp 32 (5d10 + 5)

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.; spider climb

Melee—Bite +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage plus restraining bite

QUALITIES

Skills Stealth +7

Senses blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., websense, passive Perception 10

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Restraining Bite. A creature bitten by the giant assassin spider is restrained 10 feet from the giant assassin spider. The restrained creature may attempt to escape with a DC 13 Dexterity check at the start of its turn. If the creature fails to escape, the creature automatically takes 10 (2d6+3) bludgeoning damage as the jaws squeeze the creature tighter and tighter. The giant assassin spider can choose to let the creature go at any time, but it cannot move nor can it bite another creature while it is restraining a creature.

Spider Climb. A spider can walk on walls or ceilings without making a check.

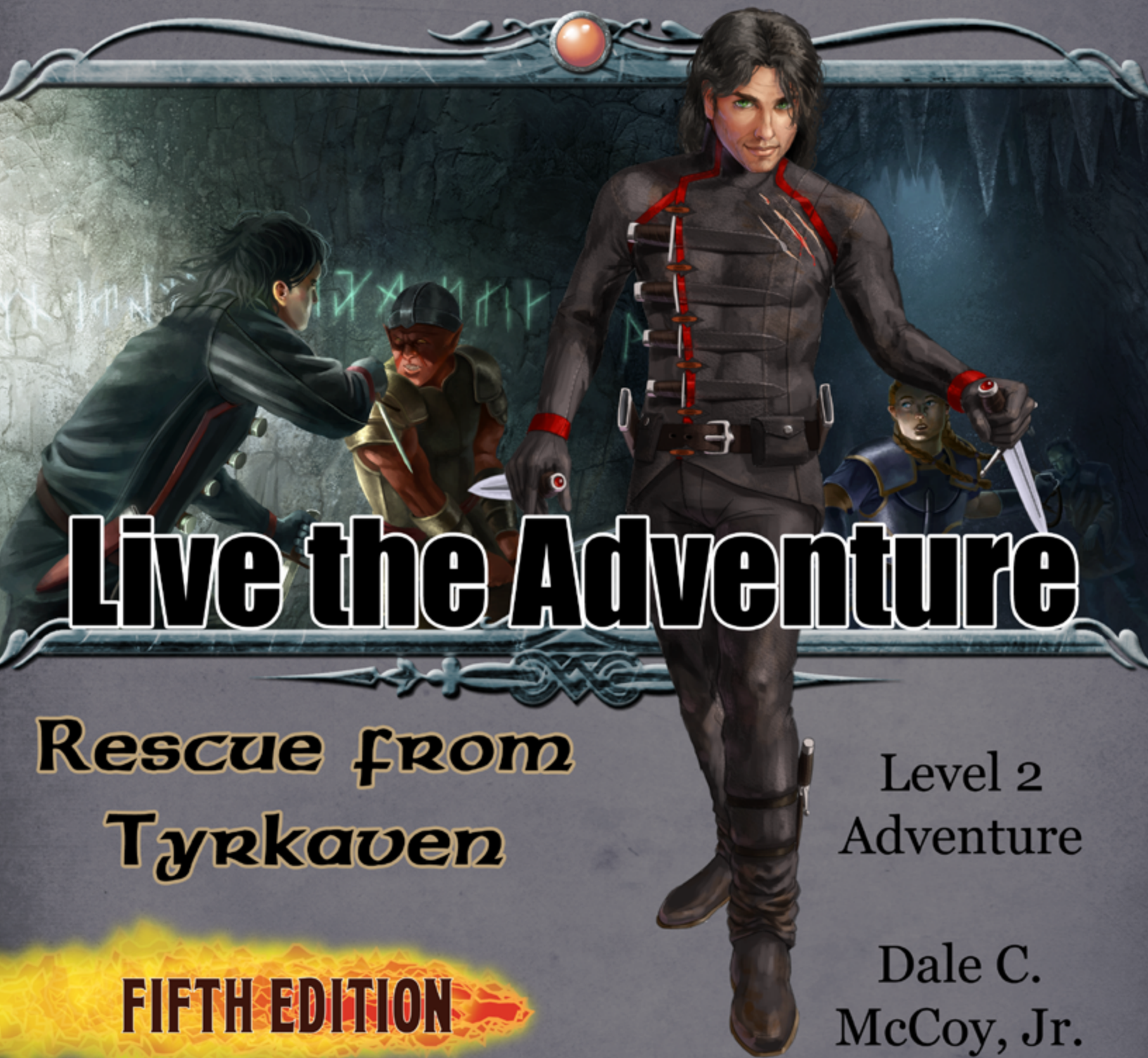
Giant assassin spiders lurk upside down from cave ceilings, overhangs, or tree branches, waiting for prey to approach. Once in range, they plunge their mandibles into their prey, fixing them in place, making them unable to escape or close the distance to attack. Assassin spiders patiently wait for their prey to succumb to their poison, and, once limp, lower their corpses to ground level so as to feed.

Assassin spiders often invade the webs of other giant spiders, plucking at them to cause vibrations that lure arachnid prey to investigate.



DEADLY

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Live the Adventure

*Rescue from
Tyrkaven*

Level 2
Adventure

Dale C.
McCoy, Jr.

FIFTH EDITION

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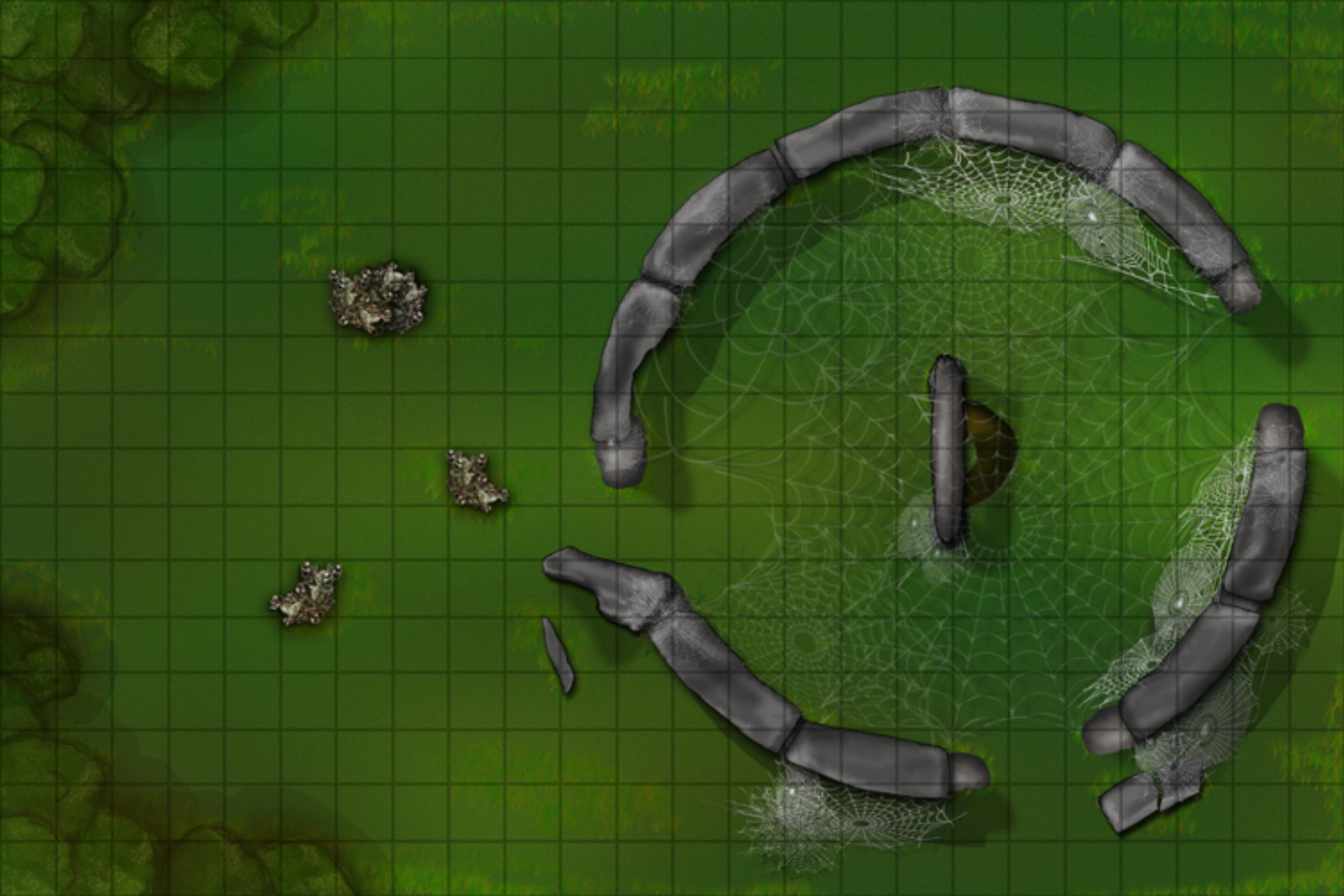
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These Spiders Aren't So Itsy Bitsy

Giant spiders have overrun Mosssdale, and every last villager is either dead and dessicated, or cocooned and abducted. But what were they after, and who coordinated the vermin to attack en masse? Could it have been the local ettercap or a crazed arachnophile druid... or was something far more sinister behind the attack? Can the adventurers rescue the missing citizens and foil the plans of the nefarious mind behind this dastardly deed before it is too late?

Along Came a Spider is an exciting adventure module in Jon Brazer Enterprises' **Deadly Delves** series for the Fifth Edition of the **World's Oldest Fantasy Roleplaying Game**. This 20-page adventure is designed to challenge four to five 1st-level PCs like no other content has to date. Inside this volume, you'll find:

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