

# WRATH OF THE BRAMBLE KING

### Background

Two centuries ago, a creature known as the Weft of Shadows broke into a minor elf noble's extraplanar vault in the Summer Lands and deposited several powerful magic items from the vault in random forest locations on Midgard. Thanks to an unusual set of rules involved in the creation of the items, once mortal hands have touched the artifacts, the elves cannot reclaim them.

Such was the case with the Bramble Crown, which landed in the Margreve Forest. A young orphan lost in the deep woods discovered the crown. The boy's curiosity about the object overrode his fears about its thorns glistening with green poison, and he reached out for it. To his surprise, the thorns retracted where his hand touched, allowing him to grab the crown and place it on his head. As the crown settled on his head, it transformed him into a plant-like fey.

The Bramble King, as he is now known, is a reclusive creature who has lived deep in the Margreve for a century and a half. His distance from most settlements keeps civilization away from him, and terrible bedtime stories about the Bramble King prevent most reasonable people from looking for him. As with all such stories, the warnings about the Bramble King hold a kernel of truth. When a hunter encroaches in his territory, he threatens the trespasser with writhing, thorny vines and plants pruned in the likenesses of predatory animals. All the thorns belonging to the Bramble King's plants are tipped with a poison that creates an itchy rash. Those who persisted in their intrusion on his peace returned with horrifying red patches on their skin.

In actuality, the Bramble King is a gentle soul, who wishes only to be left with his creations. However, he often takes in lost souls and tends to their injuries before sending them back to civilization with a bramble animal escort. Perhaps ancient memories of his orphaning guide him to help those similarly lost.

This all changed when the Weft of Shadows took notice of the Bramble King's relative inactivity. It incited nearby children of the briar to envy the Bramble King's crown, and a contingent managed to wrest the crown from his head while he slept. They poisoned the vines and captured or killed many of the Bramble King's creations.

When the Bramble King awoke, he saw the devastation wreaked by the children of the briar and realized the Bramble Crown had been stolen. Despite the loss of his crown, he still wielded power over his surviving creations, and he sent them to the village of Cambervale. He had

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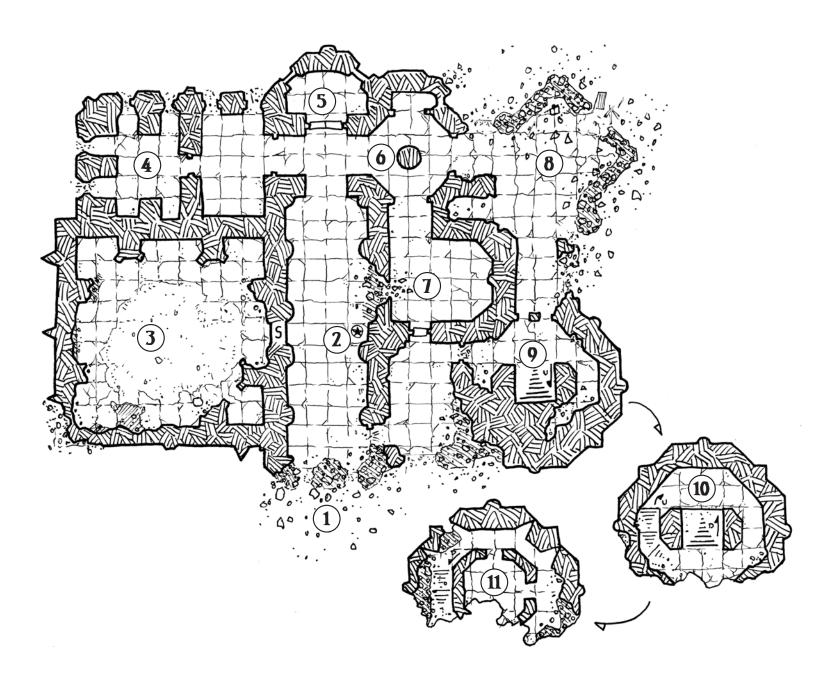
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## THE OVERGROWN TOWER

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recently sent a lost elfmarked girl named Tremika to the village, and he reasoned the villagers must have raided his home as some sort of twisted revenge. He spoke through his creations, demanding the villagers return his crown, and, when they denied having it, he instructed his bramble animals to tear apart homes in search of the prize. The Bramble King's servants now hold the village hostage, while he forces villagers to search elsewhere for the crown.

### Adventure Hooks

The PCs may be traveling to Cambervale following a lead on a rare herb only found near the village. They may be on other business in the Margreve but run across a villager desperate for help. Finally, the PCs may be searching for the Bramble Crown independently (see "A Strange Interlude" below) and investigations have directed them to Cambervale.

### The Mad Plants of Cambervale

The PCs arrive to Cambervale in a state of verdant chaos. A thick, circular wall of thorny vines surrounds a group of villagers, while a pair of badgers made of the same vines patrols around them. These two **giant bramble badgers** use the statistics for a giant badger with the bramble creature template (see below). The Bramble King withdraws his creations if one of them is damaged; he can't risk losing more of his precious creations. It is possible for the PCs to give chase, but the wall of vines closes around the trapped villagers, who cry out for help.

The wall of vines is 20 feet in diameter and 20 feet high. Each creature that touches the wall or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or take 2d8 piercing damage and be poisoned for 1 minute. The wall can be attacked and destroyed (AC 12; hp 10; vulnerability to fire; immunity to piercing, poison, and psychic damage per 10-foot section). A successful DC 11 Wisdom (Insight) check realizes the wall's retraction posed no immediate danger to the villagers, who are too panicked to realize the lack of threat. If the PCs rescue the villagers, the villagers offer them thanks and a reward of 5 sp. The villagers relate the sudden attack by the bramble badgers and the Bramble King's demands for his crown, spoken through the badgers. They speak with horror about the attack on their village. They feared for their lives, but they do note, with some confusion, that none of the villagers were harmed during the attack. A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) check notices the poisonous nature of the vines but none of the villagers have been poisoned.

The villagers are desperate to escape the Bramble King's grasp but are too afraid to confront him. They humbly offer an *alchemy jug* as a reward for ending the Bramble King's threat, leaving the details of how to the PCs.

### Finding the Bramble King

The PCs have a few avenues available to them in their search for the Bramble King. If they immediately set after the bramble badgers, a successful DC 8 Wisdom (Survival) check allows them to follow the badgers' tracks. If they assist the villagers, the delay increases the DC to 12. The villagers recall the general direction to the Bramble King's abode based on old reports about him. If the PCs overtly ask the villagers about the Bramble King's whereabouts, a successful DC 8 Wisdom (Insight) check notices a girl in the crowd nervously shifting from one foot to the other.

The girl is Tremika, the elfmarked child the Bramble King saved and sent to the village. She is reluctant to speak to the PCs. The Bramble King was nice to her (even having his "brambimals" perform tricks to delight her), and she doesn't want anyone to hurt him. In her mind, the Bramble King is mad because someone stole something he liked an awful lot, and he didn't mean to scare the others. A successful DC 11 Charisma (Persuasion) check convinces her to open up about the Bramble King and give the PCs enough details to find his lair. If the PCs haven't been hostile toward the villagers, they have advantage on the check. If Tremika shares the Bramble King's location with the PCs, she asks them to promise not to hurt him.

### A Strange Interlude

As the PCs travel to, or search for, the Bramble King's lair, they come across an oak tree with a pair of broken branches that touch the ground, forming an archway large enough for a person to pass through comfortably. The archway shimmers and an elven woman composed of thousands of motes of light steps through. She addresses the PCs by name and commends them on a previous victory of your choice. She introduces herself as Daesanderena and tells the PCs she hails from the Summer Lands. Since she cannot personally retrieve the Bramble Crown, she asks the PCs to provide a clipping from the crown to her. She relates the first paragraph of the Adventure Background on page 2 to inquisitive PCs and notes that possessing an infinitesimal fraction of the crown does not violate the rules preventing her from obtaining the item. She promises the PCs 100 gp if they return with the snippet of the crown. As noted in the Adventure Hooks, you can introduce Daesanderena prior to this adventure. If the PCs are at a loss for finding the Bramble King's lair, she can help them now that the crown has moved elsewhere.



## The Broken King

When the PCs reach the Bramble King, he is still angry about his missing crown, but his anger is tinged with despair that he will never find it again. He stands a head taller than the average human, and his body is composed of hundreds of thorny vines. Despite his physical age and appearance, he has matured very little beyond the boy who transformed into the Bramble King. He blusters and threatens the PCs when they arrive but makes no initial move to stop them from trespassing in his lair. If the PCs attack him and inflict damage, he begins to sob, leaking poisonous "tears" from his eyes. If the PCs cease attacking, he tells them about the theft of his crown and his overwhelming desire to get it back. If the PCs continue their attack, he protects himself by creating a wall of thorny vines between himself and the PCs, similar to the wall that surrounded the villagers, and commands them to leave him alone. Coaxing information out of him after a continued attack requires a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check. The Bramble King is a force of nature and, though distraught and without his crown, too powerful for the PCs to fight directly. The PCs must use diplomacy and tact to resolve the villagers' plight. If the PCs continue to attack him after he creates the wall, the King retreats from them, disappearing into the thorns and shadows of the forest. He keeps an eye on them either directly or through his bramble creatures and reappears if the PCs seem more receptive to conversation.

While the PCs are talking to the Bramble King, he suddenly becomes noticeably distracted shortly before his flower-like eyes widen in horror. He tells the PCs one of his creations was just murdered by a group of thorny people. He implores the PCs to stop them and expresses his hope that they will find his crown too. He promises to stop harassing the nearby villagers while the PCs undertake this mission, but he refuses to go with them, fearful of having his hopes dashed again. If the PCs ask about a reward, he indicates he will happily provide them with something wonderful if they find his crown.

### The Overgrown Tower

Predating the Margreve Forest's famed Griffon Towers, the ancient Deepwood Towers stood watch within the more remote parts of the forest. These towers never achieved the same level of renown as the Griffon Towers, since even the most stalwart of soldiers could not fulfill their assigned duties. Many left the haunted woods early with their sanity intact, while those who tried to persevere broke from the onslaught of chaos attacking the towers. The woods eventually reclaimed the land occupied by the towers. Overgrowth hides the buildings from all but the most determined searches, and vegetation has returned to formerly cleared ground. Children of the briar (*Tome of Beasts*, p. 56) claimed the tower as their home, where they safely return after they waylay travelers in the woods. They attracted the attention of the Weft of Shadows, which asked them to steal the crown. Jealous of the Bramble King but fearful of his power, they reluctantly agreed to the task after the Weft of Shadows provided them with a magical powder to knock the Bramble King unconscious. The Weft left a pair of shadows behind to ensure the children of the briar performed their duties and to create a shadow clone of the crown after the children of the briar returned with it.

The tower's walls are 15 feet tall and enough light penetrates the overgrowth to create dim light throughout the tower, except where noted.

### **1. ENTRANCE TO THE DEEPWOOD TOWER**

The Bramble King provided accurate directions to the tower, but the overgrowth makes it difficult to spot the tower and its entrance. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check finds the entrance among the plants. Even if the PCs don't immediately find it, they see enough evidence around the forested area to realize there is a habitable location nearby. If they fail to find the tower initially, the PCs find it after another half hour of searching, but the creatures in the compound are aware of their presence. Just inside the entrance, the PCs find a flayed giant bramble lizard—the "creation" the Bramble King lost while speaking with the PCs.

#### 2. HALBERD-WIELDING STATUE

The inner part of this hallway is the most intact section of this building. A secret door to Area 3 hides among the overgrowth on the western wall's masonry. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check notices a thin line of damaged vegetation that marks the outline of the door. A statue of a heavily armored humanoid stands at the center of the hall along the eastern wall (marked with the star) and faces the secret door to Area 3. The statue's right hand holds a stone halberd, which forms the basis of a simple trap left by the children of the briar. The hole in the wall next to the statue is filled with rubble and is only big enough for Tiny or smaller creatures to squeeze through it into Area 7.

*Falling Halberd Trap.* When a creature opens the secret door to Area 3, a trip wire snaps, releasing the halberd to fall in the spaces between the statue and the door. Each creature between the statue and the secret door when the trap triggers must make a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw, taking 11 (2d10) bludgeoning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

**Prevention.** A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check notices the tripwire hidden among the thick grass covering the floor. Alternatively, a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check notices a fracture on the right wrist of the statue where it was broken and then reattached



to form the trap. A successful DC 12 Dexterity check using thieves' tools harmlessly detaches the tripwire from the halberd. A character without thieves' tools can attempt this check with disadvantage using any edged weapon or edged tool. On a failed check, the trap triggers. If no creatures are between the statue and the door when the trap triggers, the halberd loudly, but harmlessly, clatters to the floor.

#### 3. FOREST DRAKE AND FALSE CROWN

This chamber is open to the sky and filled with a mound of weed-covered soil. The overgrowth on the tower obscures its full dimensions, which helps to hide the existence of this room. A **forest drake** (*Creature Codex*, p. 128), charged by the children of the briar to guard the crown in its possession from "despoilers of the forest," prowls in this room. If the drake is alerted to the PCs' presence (such as by the PCs triggering the trap outside the secret door), it climbs 10 feet up the overgrown wall and waits to ambush them from above.

If the PCs get the drop on the drake and choose not to attack, they can convince the creature they are not despoilers of the forest with a successful DC 13 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check. If a PC exceeds the DC by 5, he or she convinces the drake to hand over the thorny crown in its possession. A druid PC has advantage on Charisma checks when interacting with the drake.

Unknown to the drake, the thorny crown in this room is a fake, crafted by a child of the briar and given to the drake to perpetuate the ruse. A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check makes it clear the crown has no power other than a glamour to make it seem magical. If the PCs are on friendly terms with the drake, they can convince the creature to join them in searching for the real crown with a DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion) check. The PCs have advantage on the check if they play on the drake's anger at being fooled. The drake's name is Zariss and only joins the PCs long enough to take his revenge on the children of the briar. After they obtain the crown, Zariss leaves the PCs with the warning to not despoil the forest. If the PCs make a particularly good impression on Zariss, he may return and aid them at a later time if they are ever in the Margreve Forest again.

#### 4. SHADOWY ALCOVE

Unnatural gloom permeates this alcove, filling the area with darkness. Two **shadows** are finishing up the creation of the shadow copy of the Bramble Crown. Because they are focused on their task, they are not alerted to the PCs' presence. When combat starts, one of the shadows places the shadow copy of the crown on its head and attempts to escape through one of the openings in the wall, while the other shadow stays behind to delay the PCs.

#### 5. COMMANDER'S OFFICE

A rotting wooden desk holds some slightly moldy papers detailing the last harrowing days of the final group stationed in the tower. The papers describe spirits and ghosts assaulting the tower for weeks and end with an entry about the captain's reluctant decision to abandon the tower. A gold band studded with sapphires worth 25 gp sits in what remains of the desk's bottom drawer.

#### 6. SEALED WELL

A **water weird** infested the tower's well a few decades after the soldiers abandoned the tower. It has been content living out its existence in peace here until the recent infestation of children of the briar. It attacks any who come near its well, including any children of the briar. The children lost some of their number to the water weird and have since used the hole in the wall between Areas 2 and 7 to travel deeper into the tower.

#### 7. FLOWER-OVERGROWN KITCHEN

Excited by the prospect of carnage, two **execrable shrubs** (*Creature Codex*, p. 304) took up residence in the tower's kitchen when the children of the briar moved in. They are accompanied by a **child of the briar** (*Tome of Beasts*, p. 56) who keeps watch through the hole in the wall between Areas 2 and 7. As the companions to the child of the briar on watch, the shrubs are often the first to feast on any intruders to the tower. If alerted to the presence of the PCs, this group might use the door in Area 7 to ambush the PCs from behind.

#### 8. COMMON ROOM

The children of the briar used this relatively spacious area to experiment with the Bramble Crown, channeling their energy through it to manipulate plants near them. Discarded remains of misshapen bramble creatures litter the floor, marking their failures. After dozens of attempts, they managed to create a deformed **giant bramble spider**. It uses the statistics of a giant wolf spider with the bramble creature template. Two **children of the briar** ride the newly-created monster to attack intruders.

#### 9. STAIRS TO THE BATTLEMENT

A tangle of thorny vines fills the base of this battlement but doesn't climb up the stairs. Each creature that touches the vines or hits them with a melee attack while within 5 feet of them must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or take 9 (2d8) piercing damage. The vines can be attacked and destroyed (AC 12; hp 10; vulnerability to fire; immunity to piercing, poison, and psychic damage per 10-foot section). Hacking through the vines alerts every creature in the tower to the PCs' presence. A creature can squeeze through the vines without alerting the tower's residents, but it must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or take 4 (1d8) piercing damage for each 5 feet it moves through the vines.

#### **10. MID BATTLEMENT**

If the PCs reach this spot without unduly alerting the tower's current residents, they clearly hear an argument from above.

#### **11. THE BATTLEMENT'S CROWN**

Three **children of the briar** fight over the Bramble Crown, each arguing it is the most suited for the item. The crown rejected each of them after a short time as it is bound to the boy who became the Bramble King, but each is convinced the crown will be swayed to its side with time and persuasion. They briefly set aside their differences to attack intruders.

### Concluding the Adventure

If the PCs return the Bramble Crown to the Bramble King, he is delighted to have his crown back and rewards them with a *bag of bramble beasts* (see below). Because of the PCs' assistance, the Bramble King is open to making an arrangement with the nearby village for mutual protection. This gives the Bramble King a little more insight into his neighbors and the goings-on of the area outside his section of the forest. It also provides the villagers safe passage into parts of the forest to harvest herbs and fruits, though the Bramble King doesn't agree to allow logging in the forest. Finally, if the PCs have been unable to obtain a clipping from the crown, the Bramble King gives them one.

#### DEVELOPMENT

The Bramble Crown's centuries of being attuned to the boy-turned-Bramble-King have given it a limited sentience and tied it inexorably to the Bramble King. It desires to be returned to the King and projects this desire continuously at whichever creature is holding it. If the bearer promises to return the crown to the King, it quiets its projections for 1 hour. It can sense the direction of the Bramble King and grows more insistent if its bearer carries it in the opposite direction of the Bramble King.

The Bramble Crown is not happy being worn by any creature other than the Bramble King and only tolerates such creatures for 1 hour. Afterwards, it becomes quiescent and appears nonmagical until a creature it believes can return it to the Bramble King is within 30 feet. Once such a creature is within range, it calls out to the creature for assistance in returning it to the King.

PCs attempting to take a clipping from the crown for Daesanderena face a challenge: it is physically impossible to cut the crown unless the crown permits it. A successful DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion) check convinces the crown to let a PC take a clipping from it. A PC has advantage on this check if it promises to return the crown to the King.



The Weft of Shadows is aware of Daesanderena's involvement, and, if the PCs encountered the shadows in Area 4, it becomes aware of them as her champions. If the PCs destroy the shadow with the copy of the Bramble Crown, the Weft of Shadows is annoyed at the setback but doesn't immediately plot revenge against the PCs unless they interfere again.

If the PCs return the clipping from the crown to Daesanderena, she pays them 100 gp, as promised.

### **Bramble Creature**

Only a beast can become a bramble creature. It retains all its statistics except as noted below.

*Type*. The creature's type changes from beast to plant. *Vulnerabilities.* The creature is vulnerable to fire damage. *Resistances.* The creature has resistance to piercing damage from nonmagical attacks.

Immunities. The creature has immunity to poison.

*Condition Immunities.* The creature can't be poisoned. *Senses.* The creature has tremorsense with a radius of 10 feet. *New Trait: Thorn Body.* A creature that touches the bramble creature or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 4 (1d8) piercing damage.

#### **BAG OF BRAMBLE BEASTS**

Wondrous item, uncommon

This ordinary bag, made from green cloth, appears empty. Reaching inside the bag, however, reveals the presence of a small, spiky object. The bag weighs 1/2 pound.

You can use an action to pull the spiky object from the bag and throw it up to 20 feet. When the object lands, it transforms into a creature you determine by rolling a d8 and consulting the below table. The creature is a bramble version (see template) of the beast listed in the below table. The creature vanishes at the next dawn or when it is reduced to 0 hp. The creature is friendly to you and your companions, and it acts on your turn. You can use a bonus action to command how the creature moves and what action it takes on its next turn, or give it general orders, such as to attack your enemies. In the absence of such orders, the creature acts in a fashion appropriate to its nature.

Once three spiky objects have been pulled from the bag, the bag can't be used again until the next dawn.

Alternatively, one willing animal companion or familiar can be placed in the bag for 1 week. A non-beast animal companion or familiar that is placed in the bag is treated as if it had been placed into a *bag of holding* and can be removed from the bag at any time. A beast animal companion or familiar disappears once placed in the bag, and the bag's magic is dormant until the week is up. At the end of the week, the animal companion or familiar exits the bag as a bramble creature (see template) and can be returned to its original form only with a *wish*. The creature retains its status as an animal companion or familiar after its transformation. Once the bag has been used to change an animal companion or familiar into a bramble creature, it becomes an ordinary bag.

1d8	Creature
1	Weasel
2	Giant rat
3	Badger
4	Boar
5	Panther
6	Giant badger



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