



SHADE OF THE DARK

Deep in the forests of Cormanthor, the Golden Paragon Trading Company has set up a logging camp to harvest the valuable trees of the Midwood. Until recently, the profitable camp delivered lumber downriver to Sembholme, but its last communication spoke of attacks from forest monsters and panicked loggers unwilling to work. The Golden Paragon Trading Company needs adventurers to find the underlying cause of their timber production problems. Are the incursions simply the woodland creatures defending their home, or is something more sinister happening in the ancient forest?

A 2-hour adventure for characters of 8th level



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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Shade of the Dark*, a D&D adventure that is part of the official D&D Adventurers League™ organized play system.

This adventure is designed for **three to seven 5th-10th level characters**, and is optimized for **five 8th-level characters**. Characters outside this level range cannot participate in this adventure. Players with ineligible characters can create new 1st-level characters or use pregenerated characters.

The adventure is set in the Moonsea region of the Forgotten Realms. During play, the characters travel to the forests of Cormanthor to aid a logging camp plagued by monsters. Are the incursions simply the woodland creatures defending their home, or is something more sinister happening in the ancient forest?

THE D&D ADVENTURERS LEAGUE

This adventure is official for D&D Adventurers League play. The D&D Adventurers League is the official organized play system for DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®. Players can create characters and participate in any adventure allowed as a part of the D&D Adventurers League. As they adventure, players track their characters' experience, treasure, and other rewards, and can take those characters through other adventures that will continue their story.

If you're running this adventure as a part of a store event or at certain conventions, you'll need a DCI number. This number is your official Wizards of the Coast organized play identifier. If you don't have a number, you can obtain one at a store event. Check with your organizer for details.

D&D Adventurers League play is broken up into storyline seasons. When players create characters, they attach those characters to a storyline season, which determines what rules they're allowed to use to create and advance their characters. Players can continue to play their characters after the storyline season has finished, possibly participating in a second or third storyline with those same characters. A character's level is the only limitation for adventure play. A player cannot use a character of a level higher or lower than the level range of a D&D Adventurers League adventure.

For more information on playing, running games as a Dungeon Master, and organizing games for the D&D Adventurers League, please visit the D&D Adventurers League home at:

www.dndadventurersleague.org

PREPARING THE ADVENTURE

Before you show up to Dungeon Master this adventure for a group of players, you should do the following to prepare:

- Make sure to have a copy of the most current version of the *D&D Basic Rules* or the *Player's Handbook*.
- Read through the adventure, taking notes of anything you'd like to highlight or remind yourself while running the adventure, such as a way you'd like to portray an NPC or a tactic you'd like to use in a combat.
- Get familiar with the monster statistics in the Appendix.
- Gather together any resources you'd like to use to aid you in running this adventure--such as notecards, a DM screen, miniatures, and battlemaps.
- If you know the composition of the group beforehand, you can make adjustments as noted throughout the adventure.

BEFORE PLAY AT THE TABLE

Ask the players to provide you with relevant character information:

- Character name and level
- Character race and class
- Passive Wisdom (Perception)—the most common passive ability check
- Anything notable as specified by the adventure (such as backgrounds, traits, flaws, etc.)

Players that have characters outside the adventure's level range **cannot participate in the adventure with those characters**. Players with ineligible characters can make a new 1st-level character or use a pregenerated character. Players can play an adventure they previously played or ran as a Dungeon Master, but not with the same character.

Ensure that each player has an official adventure logsheet for his or her character (if not, get one from the organizer). The player fills out the adventure name, session number, date, and your name and DCI number. In addition, the player also fills in the starting values for experience, gold, downtime, renown, and number of permanent magic items. He or she fill in the other values and write notes at the conclusion of the session. Each player is responsible for maintaining an accurate logsheet.

If you have time, you can do a quick scan of a player's character sheet to ensure that nothing looks out of order. If you see magic items of very high rarities or strange arrays of ability scores, you can ask players to provide documentation for the

irregularities. If they cannot, feel free to restrict item use or ask them to use a standard ability score array. Point players to the *D&D Adventurers League Player's Guide* for reference.

If players wish to spend downtime days and it's the beginning of an adventure or episode, they can declare their activity and spend the days now. Alternatively, they can do so at the end of the adventure or episode. Players should select their characters' spells and other daily options prior to the start of the adventure, unless the adventure specifies otherwise. Feel free to reread the adventure description to help give players hints about what they might face.

ADJUSTING THE ADVENTURE

Throughout this adventure, sidebars provide information to assist you in making adjustments for smaller or larger groups and characters of higher or lower levels than the adventure is optimized for. This is typically used for combat encounters.

You may adjust the adventure beyond the guidelines given in the adventure, or for other reasons. For example, if you're playing with a group of inexperienced players, you might want to make the adventure a little easier; for very experienced players, you might want to make it a little harder. Therefore, five categories of party strength have been created for you to use as a guide. Use these as a guide, and feel free to use a different adjustment during the adventure if the recommended party strength feels off for the group.

This adventure is **optimized for a party of five 8th-level characters**. To figure out whether you need to adjust the adventure, do the following:

- Add up the total levels of all the characters.
- Divide the total by the number of characters.
- Round fractions of .5 or greater up; round fractions of less than .5 down.

You've now determined the average party level (APL) for the adventure. To figure out the party strength for the adventure, consult the following table.

Determining Party Strength

Party Composition	Party Strength
3-4 characters, APL less than	Very weak
3-4 characters, APL equivalent	Weak
3-4 characters, APL greater than	Average
5 characters, APL less than	Weak
5 characters, APL equivalent	Average
5 characters, APL greater than	Strong
6-7 characters, APL less than	Average
6-7 characters, APL equivalent	Strong
6-7 characters, APL greater than	Very strong

Average party strength indicates no recommended adjustments to the adventure. Each sidebar may or may not offer suggestions for certain party strengths. If a particular recommendation is not offered for your group, you don't have to make adjustments.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

As the Dungeon Master of the session, you have the most important role in facilitating the enjoyment of the game for the players. You help guide the narrative and bring the words on these pages to life. The outcome of a fun game session often creates stories that live well beyond the play at the table. Always follow this golden rule when you DM for a group:

Make decisions and adjudications that enhance the fun of the adventure when possible.

To reinforce this golden rule, keep in mind the following:

- You are empowered to make adjustments to the adventure and make decisions about how the group interacts with the world of this adventure. Doing so is especially important and applicable outside of combat, but feel free to adjust the adventure for groups that are having too easy or too hard of a time.
- Don't make the adventure too easy or too difficult for a group. Never being challenged makes for a boring game and being overwhelmed makes for a frustrating one. Gauge the experience of the players (not the characters) with the game, try to feel out (or ask) what they like in a game, and attempt to give each of them the experience they're after when they play D&D. Give everyone a chance to shine.
- Be mindful of pacing, and keep the game session moving along appropriately. Watch for stalling, since play loses momentum when this happens. At the same time, make sure that the players don't finish too early; provide them with a full play experience. Try to be aware of running long or short. Adjust the pacing accordingly.
- Read-aloud text is just a suggestion; feel free to modify the text as you see fit, especially when dialogue is present.
- Give the players appropriate hints so they can make informed choices about how to proceed. Players should be given clues and hints when appropriate so they can tackle puzzles, combat, and interactions without getting frustrated over lack of information. Doing so helps to encourage immersion in the adventure and gives players "little victories" for figuring out good choices from clues.

In short, being the DM isn't about following the adventure's text word-for-word; it's about facilitating a fun, challenging game environment for the players. The *Dungeon Master's Guide*™ has more information on the art of running a D&D game.

DOWNTIME AND LIFESTYLE

At the beginning of each play session, players must declare whether or not they are spending any days of downtime. The player records the downtime spent on the adventure logsheet. The following options are available to players during downtime (see the *D&D Basic Rules* or the *D&D Adventurers League Player's Guide* for more information):

- Catching up
- Crafting (exception: multiple characters cannot commit to crafting a single item)
- Practicing a profession
- Recuperating
- Spellcasting services
- Training

Other downtime options might be available during adventures or unlocked through play, including faction-specific activities.

In addition, whenever a character spends downtime days, that character also spends the requisite expense for his or her lifestyle. Costs are per day, so a character that spends ten days of downtime also spends ten days of expenses maintaining his or her lifestyle. Some downtime activities help with or add lifestyle expenses.

SPELLCASTING SERVICES

Any settlement the size of a town or larger can provide some spellcasting services. Characters need to be able to travel to the settlement to obtain these services. Alternatively, if the party finishes an adventure, they can be assumed to return to the settlement closest to the adventure location.

Spell services generally available include healing and recovery spells, as well as information-gathering spells. Other spell services might be available as specified in the adventure. The number of spells available to be cast as a service is limited to a **maximum of three per day total**, unless otherwise noted.

Spellcasting Services

Spell	Cost
<i>Cure wounds (1st level)</i>	10 gp
<i>Identify</i>	20 gp
<i>Lesser restoration</i>	40 gp
<i>Prayer of healing (2nd level)</i>	40 gp
<i>Remove curse</i>	90 gp
<i>Speak with dead</i>	90 gp
<i>Divination</i>	210 gp
<i>Greater restoration</i>	450 gp
<i>Raise dead</i>	1,250 gp

Acolyte Background

A character possessing the acolyte background requesting spellcasting services at a temple of his or her faith may request one spell per day from the Spellcasting Services table for free. The only cost paid for the spell is the base price for the consumed material component, if any.

DISEASE, DEATH, AND RECOVERY

Sometimes bad things happen, and characters get poisoned, diseased, or are killed. Since you might not have the same characters return from session to session, here are the rules when bad things happen to characters.

DISEASE, POISON, AND OTHER DEBILITATING EFFECTS

A character still affected by diseases, poisons, and other similar effects at the conclusion of an adventure can spend downtime days recuperating until such time as he or she resolves the effect to its conclusion (see the recuperating activity in the *D&D Basic Rules*).

If a character doesn't resolve the effect between sessions, that character begins the next session still affected by the debilitating effect.

D&D ADVENTURERS LEAGUE		ADVENTURE LOGSHEET			
Record each session of play below. Express downtime totals in daily increments. Record certified and non-certified permanent magic items (all magic items except for potions, scrolls, and some wondrous items).					
Character Name: Hallap Fasketell		Classes and Levels: Wizard 4		Faction: Harper	
Player Name: Tom S.		D&D #: 854-789-2386		Sheet #: 1	
Lost Mine of Phandelver Part 1: Goblin Arrows 08/13/2014 Rick L. (349-213-9905)					
Adventure Name	Session #	Date	DM Name and DCI #		
0	0	0	0	0	
Starting XP	Starting Gold	Starting Downtime	Starting Renewal	Starting # of Magic Items	
350	+20	+10	1	0	
XP Earned	Gold +/-	Downtime +/-	Renewal Earned	Magic Items +/-	
350	20	10	1	0	
XP Total	Gold Total	Downtime Total	Renewal Total	Magic Items Total	
Adventure Notes/Downtime Activity:					
Lost Mine of Phandelver Part 2: Phandalin 08/24/2014 Rick L. (349-213-9905)					
Adventure Name	Session #	Date	DM Name and DCI #		
350	125	10	1	0	
Starting XP	Starting Gold	Starting Downtime	Starting Renewal	Starting # of Magic Items	
675	+275	+10	1	0	
XP Earned	Gold +/-	Downtime +/-	Renewal Earned	Magic Items +/-	
1,025	400	20	2	0	
XP Total	Gold Total	Downtime Total	Renewal Total	Magic Items Total	
Adventure Notes/Downtime Activity:					
Lost Mine of Phandelver Part 3: The Spider's Web 09/04/2014 Rick L. (349-213-9905)					
Adventure Name	Session #	Date	DM Name and DCI #		
1,025	400	20	2	0	
Starting XP	Starting Gold	Starting Downtime	Starting Renewal	Starting # of Magic Items	
2,475	+380	+10	1	+1	
XP Earned	Gold +/-	Downtime +/-	Renewal Earned	Magic Items +/-	
3,500	780	30	3	1	
XP Total	Gold Total	Downtime Total	Renewal Total	Magic Items Total	
Adventure Notes/Downtime Activity:					
Found a ring of protection.					

DEATH

A character who is killed during the course of the adventure has a few options at the end of the session (or whenever arriving back in civilization) if no one in the adventuring party has immediate access to a *raise dead* or *revivify* spell, or similar magic. A character subject to a *raise dead* spell is affected negatively until all long rests have been completed during an adventure. Alternatively, each downtime day spent after *raise dead* reduces the penalty to attack rolls, saving throws, and ability checks by 1, in addition to any other benefits the downtime activity might provide.

Create a New 1st-Level Character. If the dead character is unwilling or unable to exercise any of the other options, the player creates a new character. The new character does not have any items or rewards possessed by the dead character.

Dead Character Pays for Raise Dead. If the character's body is recoverable (it's not missing any vital organs and is mostly whole) and the player would like the character to be returned to life, the party can take the body back to civilization and use the dead character's funds to pay for a *raise dead* spell. A *raise dead* spell cast in this manner costs the character 1,250 gp.

Character's Party Pays for Raise Dead. As above, except that some or all of the 1,250 gp for the *raise dead* spell is paid for by the party at the end of the session. Other characters are under no obligation to spend their funds to bring back a dead party member.

Faction Charity. If the character is of level 1 to 4 and a member of a faction, the dead character's body can be returned to civilization and a patron from the faction ensures that he or she receives a *raise dead* spell. However, any character invoking this charity forfeits all experience and rewards from that session (both those earned prior to and after death during that session) and cannot replay that episode or adventure with that character again. Once a character reaches 5th level, this option is no longer available.

Additional Credits

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SHADE OF THE DARK

For many, the only thing more frightening than an ogre's club is the prospect of lost profits.

— *Furjur the Flippant*

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Deep in the forests of Cormanthor, the Golden Paragon Trading Company has set up a logging camp to harvest the valuable trees of the Midwood. The camp lies near a fork of the river Ashaba, which acts as a delivery system to timber bound for processing and shipping in Sembholme. Until recently, the camp produced a significant amount of profit, but within past tenday, production has ground to a halt. The camp's last communication spoke of monster attacks from the forest and panicked, wary loggers unwilling to work.

Unbeknownst to most of the logging camp's residents, the loggers have been slowly deforesting their way towards an old ruin on the edge of the Starwood. Nearly a month ago, a member of the logging crew stumbled upon a shard of ancient stonework hidden beneath the thick forest bed. The piece, which dated back to the times before the Cormanthor war, was drow in origin and from a nearby site that once served as a stronghold for the dark elves. While on reprieve in Sembholme, the hapless logger sold the shard to a "historian" in a pub. The purchaser was actually an agent of Suldran's Dark, a notorious band of outlaws.

Upon learning of the shard's history, Suldran's Dark quickly realized the benefits the stronghold could offer, both in long-lost drow artifacts and in gaining a remote base of operations in the region. To achieve their goal, the organization mobilized their agents to stop the loggers from discovering the site. They acquired the services of Mille Nightshade, a night hag who resides in the area, and charged her with the task of driving the logging crew from the forest by any means necessary.

To Millie's dismay, the loggers have proven more stubborn than expected. Despite several monstrous incursions at the hag's direction, the camp's foreman, Silas Nash, has continued push the logging company further into the forest. Silas' tenacity is rooted in his own agenda. He secretly works for House Nather, a rival (and somewhat shady) trading company out of Melvaunt.

Two tenday ago, House Nather informants monitoring Suldran's Dark heard whisperings of the ruined stronghold's location. They paid the camp foreman handsomely to betray his original employers and instructed him to find it. Silas

continues to function as the camp's supervisor, using his contract with the Golden Paragon Trading Company to clear a way to the ruins. The path he cuts leads north to the Starwood, instead of remaining eastbound in the Midwood as the terms of his contract dictates. Once Silas discovers the exact location of the ancient stronghold, he plans to abandon the contract granted by the Golden Paragon Trading Company, release all of the men in his employ, and allow House Nather's operatives to take the area for their own purposes.

ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

Shade of the Dark consists of three parts.

Part 1: A Monstrous Problem. The characters meet with Furjur the Flippant and learn of the monster troubles facing the Golden Paragon Trading Company's logging camp.

Part 2: A Camp of Logs. The characters travel upriver to the camp. Upon arriving, they meet its foreman, Silas Nash, and gather information about the attacks.

While investigating the forest, a group of orcs and ologs attacks the characters. After the battle, they spy a mysterious figure fleeing the fight. They follow the individual, eventually arriving at the entry to a small cave complex used by a night hag, Mille Nightshade, as her lair.

Part 3: Shade of the Dark. To end the threat to the logging camp, the characters must enter the lair and deal with Millie and her twisted minions. If successful, they learn of the hag's dealings with the outlaw group known as Suldran's Dark.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The characters may already have their own reasons for agreeing to help Furjur the Flippant and the Golden Paragon Trading Company, but if not, you can use the adventure hooks below to draw them into the story.

Harpers. The Harpers suspect the logging camp's decline in production might be a sign of outside tampering with regional business interests. Furjur the Flippant also believes the disruption could be related to rumors of House Nather's involvement in other business affairs in the region.

Order of the Gauntlet. The forests of Cormanthor are dangerous, and the loggers who work them are good hardy folk who deserve protection. The Order of the Gauntlet sees the threat as a serious problem, and they want to make sure supernatural or evil forces are not involved.

Emerald Enclave. Cormanthor encompasses vast ancient forests. While the Emerald Enclave grudgingly tolerates the managed forestry that takes place in its borders, the monster attacks are troubling. The situation bears further investigation to ensure the balance between man and nature is maintained.

Lords' Alliance. The Golden Paragon Trading Company has strong ties with the Lords' Alliance. The Lords' Alliance wants to protect its business interests in the area and possibly expose any interference by third parties.

Zhentarim. One of the loggers is a Zhentarim agent. When the Zhentarim were forced out of the area during the Cormanthor war, they left behind many relics, documents, supplies, and secrets that they would rather not see fall into anyone else's hands. Zhentarim characters need to make contact with the agent in the camp and collect any remains of Zhentarim occupation found within the area.

Factionless. If a character does not have a faction, assume they are traveling when they meet up with other adventures heading toward Elven Crossing. In the unlikely event that none of the characters in the party belongs to a faction, Furjur simply recognizes them as adventurers when they reach Elven Crossing and enter Amaratha's Teahouse.

PART 1: A MONSTROUS PROBLEM

Expected Duration: 15 minutes

Either of their own volition or by the direction of their factions, the characters arrive at the small village of Elven Crossing in the early afternoon. Their factions have instructed each of them to meet with a man named Furjur the Flippant to discuss the problems plaguing a logging camp in the Midwood that belongs to Golden Paragon Trading Company.

ELVEN CROSSING

The sun has just past its zenith when you arrive at Elven Crossing, a small, shady village on the banks of the River Ashaba. Situated along the Mistle Trail fifteen miles north of Ashabenford, the settlement is little more than a sparse collection of simple wooden houses. One structure, however, draws your attention, for it appears to be made from the hollow stumps of three massive trees joined together. Numerous large windows provide a view of its interior, where people sit at tables lined with teapots and cups. A sign above its entrance reads, *Amaratha's Teahouse*.

Elven Crossing has no inns or taverns. Amaratha's fills this void, and the locals spend time at the institution drinking various woodberry teas and eating honeyed biscuits and marbled green cheese. Read the text below when the characters enter the establishment.

The chatter of the teahouse's patrons dwindles to a hush when you enter the main room. For several moments, all is quiet, as the clientele looks you over. Finally, a pot-bellied man with bushy black sideburns rises from a table at the back of the room. He smiles broadly and chuckles before boisterously proclaiming, "Visitors are a rare thing in these parts, but they'll warm up to you soon enough. Don't just stand there! Come have a seat! I'm Furjur the Flippant, and I can tell by your garb that you are here to see me!"

Relieved looks play over the faces of many of the customers, and as quickly as it stopped, the chatter resumes.

Roleplaying Furjur the Flippant

"Furjur the Flippant" was a legendary merchant who thrived in the 1340s and 1350s DR. He was known for his vibrant and jovial personality, but he also had a sly and prankish streak. The man who now claims the merchant's moniker is actually a Harper agent working in the southern reaches of the Moonsea. Furjur's real name is unknown to all but a few of the Harper's highest-ranking agents.

While the large man can be serious when necessary, he prefers to maintain his jolly personality in public, as it helps him appear non-threatening. He dresses as a wealthy merchant, wearing long coats and expensive leather riding boots. During conversation, he pauses often to laugh loudly or pat a character on the back and chuckle.

Under the façade, Furjur is an intelligent, thoughtful man who genuinely has the best interests of the Moonsea at heart. He travels and works tirelessly to help the Harpers accomplish their goals.

Furjur orders a pot of tea and two bottles of wine made from local forest plants. If any of the characters previously played *CCC-GHC-1 Tharaera Lost* or *CCC-GHC-3 Facing the Dark*, Furjur recognizes them and is genuinely glad to see them again. For the purposes of this adventure, he is acting on behalf of the Golden Paragon Trading Company. While his role is actually at the behest of the Harpers, Furjur does not mention his faction or display his Harper pin, but if asked directly, he does not deny being part of the organization.

After drinks and a plate of biscuits and cheese, Furjur's tone quiets, and he discreetly relays the information below.

- The Golden Paragon Trading Company has an agreement drafted by the Emerald Enclave permitting them to harvest timber from the Midwood.

- The area outlined in the agreement lies east of a drainage basin that forms a tributary of the River Ashaba. The trading company uses the tributary to deliver felled timber downstream to Semberholme, where it is processed and shipped to other parts of the Moonsea.
- To make certain the forest is properly managed, the agreement only grants them the rights to harvest trees of a certain age and size. In addition, they are not allowed to take any trees from the Starwood, which lies to the north of the area.
- The Golden Paragon Trading Company's logging camp lies near the river's branch. Production from it was steady until two tenday ago. Since then, the camp's output has dwindled to nothing.
- The last message from the camp came a tenday ago. It spoke of monster attacks from the forest, and panicked, wary loggers unwilling to work.
- The Golden Paragon Trading Company needs adventurers who can find the underlying cause of the problem and get the timber flowing downstream again. They should speak with the camp's foreman, Silas Nash, when they arrive.
- Furjur offers the characters 100 gp each if they can eliminate the threat from the forest. They can receive their payment from the camp's foreman, once their task is complete.
- While the Mistle Trail leads north along the River Ashaba, the trek to the camp is difficult and slow. To aid the characters, Furjur has obtained the services of a small river skiff and its owner. The craft is capable of transporting them and all of their gear upriver to the logging camp. When the characters are ready to depart, the skiff is waiting at a river ford just north of Elven Crossing.

PART 2: A CAMP OF LOGS

Expected Duration: 45 minutes

When the characters are ready to depart Elven Crossing, they can board the skiff at the river ford north of the village. The boat's owner, Rupert Nelsik and his 15-year-old son, Jakin, greet them at the bank and help them load their gear.

A long, narrow, flat-bottomed boat rests on a gravel bar just north of the ford that gives Elven Crossing its name. The craft's owner, a middle-aged man with a grey-streaked beard and brown hair, introduces himself as Rupert Nelsik. His son, a young boy of roughly fifteen years named Jakin, accompanies him. Together they load the boat, and within minutes, your journey upriver is underway.

The trip upstream takes nearly two full days of rowing and poling the riverboat. Once the characters

reach the tributary leading to the logging camp, shallow riffles break the long runs of deeper water, making portage necessary in several areas. To avoid possible skirmishes, Rupert and his son make camp each night on small islands in the river, and because of this, the expedition encounters no hostile creatures during the journey.

Throughout the trip (and to the dismay of his father) Jakin questions the characters about what it is like to be an adventurer. He asks about the treasure they have found and the monsters they have slain, all the while listening in awe. Allow each character to make a DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check to either persuade or dissuade the boy from pursuing the life of an adventurer. Feel free to award advantage on the check if a player roleplays the exchange well.

If half or more of the characters successfully dissuade Jakin from seeking a career as an adventurer, his father is relieved. When they reach the end of their upriver journey, Rupert pulls the character with the highest roll to dissuade the boy aside and personally thanks them by giving them a *potion of healing* that he had been saving in case of an emergency.

If half or more of the characters successfully persuade Jakin to seek a career as an adventurer, his father is annoyed, but the boy is delighted. When they reach the end of their upriver journey, Jakin pulls the character who made the highest roll to persuade him aside and personally thanks them. Award the character inspiration for their actions.

Note. The roleplaying encounter above has no impact on the plot. If you are running the adventure in a fixed timeslot, you can omit the encounter to save time.

AT THE LOGGING CAMP

At the trip's end, Rupert and Jakin depart, leaving the characters a short distance from the logging camp on the bank of the River Ashaba's northern tributary.

After unloading your gear, Rupert and Jakin Nelsik say their farewells and head back downstream. According to their directions, the Golden Paragon's logging camp lies roughly a third of a mile east of the tributary. A wide path, likely made by draught animals dragging logs to the river, marks the way. As you walk through the forest, you see the stumps of trees taken by the loggers. A short while later you smell campfire smoke and a timber palisade comes into view.

Two loggers watch the camp's gate from a raised platform behind the palisade. They call out to the characters to identify themselves as they approach. If the party mentions their mission, Furjur the

Flippant, or the Golden Paragon Trading Company, the men open the gate and let them through without further questions. When they enter, they find the camp's foreman, Silas Nash, waiting to speak with them.

A dozen large canvas tents occupy the interior of the camp and several campfires burn throughout. The encircling palisade rises to a height of ten feet. It appears hastily erected, yet strong enough to repel an attack. Near the back of the space, four oxen rest in a fenced pen. Beside it, a small lean-to provides shelter for barrels and crates of supplies. Men mill about either performing chores or watching you with interest. Within minutes of your arrival, a lean, bald man with hawkish nose and dark circles under his eyes approaches and introduces himself. "Greetings. I'm Silas Nash, camp foreman for the Golden Paragon Trading Company. I'm glad you're here. Now maybe I can finally get my men back work!"

Roleplaying Silas Nash

Silas Nash is a veteran logger who has made a lifelong career of harvesting timber. While not evil, his desire for money often overshadows his concern for his men and their safety. Silas' need for coin does not stem from greed alone. His brother died several years ago in a logging accident, and since that time, he has been supporting his sibling's family, as well as his own.

The stress of the situation has caused Silas to make some poor choices, and recently his dreams have been plagued with fears and doubts. Despite the coolness of the night, he often wakes in the morning exhausted and drenched in sweat. Silas is certain his condition stems from his concern about the logging expedition's lack of progress. He fully expects things to return to normal once the characters deal with the threat.

Silas does not have much in the way of amenities, but he offers the characters some thin ale and a bland porridge before relaying the following information.

- The camp's original crew consisted of two dozen loggers. Silas has lost six men to attacks from orcs. Several of the hideous creatures were twisted and scarred and wore full armor.
- Silas ordered his men to erect the palisade when the attacks first started. So far, the monsters have not assaulted the encampment directly.
- A well-organized attack ten days ago left four men dead. After the attack, Silas' men refused to work.
- Eliminating the threat is extremely important, and time is of the essence. Silas is under pressure from his employers to maintain a quota. If the trees do not start falling soon, he and his men will be out of a job.

- Silas suggests that the characters follow the path of cut timber to the scene of the last attack to see what they can learn. He also advises them to check with the loggers for more details before they leave.

TALKING WITH THE LOGGERS

While shaken by the attacks and death of their fellow crewmembers, Silas' men do their best to share what they know. Allow each character to explain how they plan to interact with the loggers and then have them make a Charisma (Persuasion) check. Award advantage on the check if a player roleplays the exchange or finds a clever way to gain the loggers trust. The characters with the three highest check results each learn one of the facts below.

- When the Golden Paragon Trading Company performed the original survey of the region, they found no signs of monstrous creatures residing nearby.
- Many of the men are lifelong loggers who have dealt with attacks from forest creatures often over the years. The assaults are usually chaotic, disorganized, and easy to repel. The cooperation between the different humanoids during the recent attacks points to a level of coordination uncommon amongst the denizens of the forest.
- Several loggers swear they saw a shadowy figure hiding in the forest during the last attack. They could not tell if it was a beast or a man, but it did not take part in the fighting. Once the loggers came together and formed a fighting defense, it fled with the rest of the humanoids.

THE BLACK NETWORK

One of the loggers, a soft-spoken, burly man with wild red hair named Kelton Reed, is a Zhentarim agent. If the party contains any characters who belong to the Zhentarim, Kelton makes contact by using discrete hand gestures known only to the faction's members. Once they are alone, he regretfully admits that he has been unable to locate any relics or documents relating to the Zhentarim's former presence in the area. The construction of the palisade around the camp has prevented him from sneaking out at night, making his task impossible.

Kelton advises the character(s) to be on the lookout for caves and ruined structures as they investigate the forest. The information given to him spoke of a Zhentarim hideout in the area during the Cormanthor War, but it did not provide any details about its construction.

If questioned about the monsters and the attacks, Kelton can only mirror what the other loggers have already shared. He agrees that someone or something is likely directing the humanoids, but he is at a loss for who or what it might be.

INTO THE MIDWOOD

A path of cut timber heads east from the logging camp, leading deeper into the Midwood. In spite of the threat of orcs, the forest appears peaceful and quiet. The late spring air is cool and the lush leaves of the mighty ash and beech trees provide a nearly unbroken canopy.

After nearly two hours of walking, you reach the end of the deforested path and locate the remains of the battle that Silas Nash and his loggers detailed. In numerous areas, blood stains the leaves that cover the forest floor, and several broken axe handles lie scattered about.

Upon reaching the scene of the battle, characters with a passive Perception of 15 or higher notice that the logging path slowly deviated from its original eastward direction, turning to the north instead. Rangers, druids, and any character proficient in the Survival or Nature skill note the directional change regardless of their passive Perception score. The path's northward trajectory takes the logging operation closer to the Starwood, which is a direct violation of the contract granted to Silas Nash by the Golden Paragon Trading Company.

The camp foreman is well aware of the deviation. Silas recently betrayed his original employers for a substantial sum of gold offered by House Nather, a rival (and often unscrupulous) trading company. He has been directing his men northward for two tenday in hopes of locating an ancient drow stronghold. Once Silas discovers its exact location, he plans to abandon his contract with the Golden Paragon Trading Company, release all of the men in his employ, and allow House Nather's operatives to take the fortification for their own purposes.

While no monsters remain in the area, a night hag, Millie Nightshade, has left behind a pair of ravens to alert her if the loggers return. They remain silent while the characters are present and depart for the hag's lair immediately after they leave.

Speaking with Plants and Animals

Characters with the ability to speak with plants or animals may want to use their talents to learn more about the monster attacks. While no events have occurred in the last day, Millie Nightshade's presence in the area was foul enough to leave a lasting impression. Verbally or mentally communing with either a plant or an animal earns a character a somewhat cryptic string of images/words: north, crone, death, night, and west. Together they point to Mille Nightshade's involvement and her lair, which lies northwest of the location where the loggers were last attacked.

Little of interest exists at the scene of the battle, but characters who search locate tracks left by the fleeing monsters with a successful DC 12 Wisdom

(Perception) check. A DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check allows a character to follow the tracks, which lead northwest for an hour before disappearing at a small creek. Characters can retry either check. A failure denotes an hour of time spent searching.

A HAG'S MOTIVATION

As a night hag, Mille Nightshade seeks to corrupt or eliminate all that is good in the world, but it is not her only motivation. Nearly a month ago, a tiefling agent belonging to the criminal gang Suldran's Dark approached the hag. Suldran's Dark had learned of a ruined drow stronghold near Millie's lair. They requested her help pushing out a camp of loggers operating in the region so they could claim the fortress as their own.

The night hag might have simply murdered the tiefling and made a stew of her innards, but the young agent's soul already seemed corrupted, which would have spoiled the fun. Instead, Millie convinced the woman to offer something as payment that she could not easily obtain herself: a human baby.

Just over twelve years ago, Mille chanced upon a young pregnant girl foraging for food by the river. The pathetic child looked half-starved, and the hag easily overcame the girl, knocking her unconscious with a large stone. Millie took the wretch as a prisoner and nursed her back to health in her lair. When the babe finally arrived, the hag devoured the squealing child in front of her mother. Millie let the girl grieve for several days, and when her tears and sobs eventually stopped, she disemboweled the young woman and braised her with fresh leeks and wild garlic. Two days later, Mille gave birth to her own child, a tiny human baby who would grow for thirteen years before transforming into the spitting image of her hag mother.

Even though Millie's daughter has not completed her transformation, the hag could not pass up the chance to bear another child by consuming a baby. Raising another child to its transformation would give the hag what she has always desired, which is the opportunity to form a coven of her own making.

With her possible goal in sight, Millie procured the services of a small tribe of orcs that live across the river. She then orchestrated several attacks in an attempt to drive the loggers from the area. She expected the task to be simple, but instead of fleeing downstream for their puny lives, the wretched humans enclosed themselves behind a wall of chopped trees.

In addition to the services of the orcs from across the river, Mille has bought and raised several of the tribe's orcs as her own. Each has been twisted by the hag's dark magic, making them smarter and more loyal than their common orc brethren (treat them as orogs). The hag paid well for each, and the vile

beasts dote on her, obeying her every request without question. The creatures adorn their skin with hideous piercings and scars in an effort to impress their mother.

Despite her setbacks, Mille is determined to complete her task and have her baby. Since the attack, she has concentrated her efforts on eliminating the head of camp, a pasty, bald man named Silas. For the past seven days, the hag has been using her Nightmare Haunting ability to torture the man's dreams and sap his fortitude. It is only a matter of time until he succumbs to her efforts and perishes, leaving the loggers unorganized and vulnerable to a final attack.

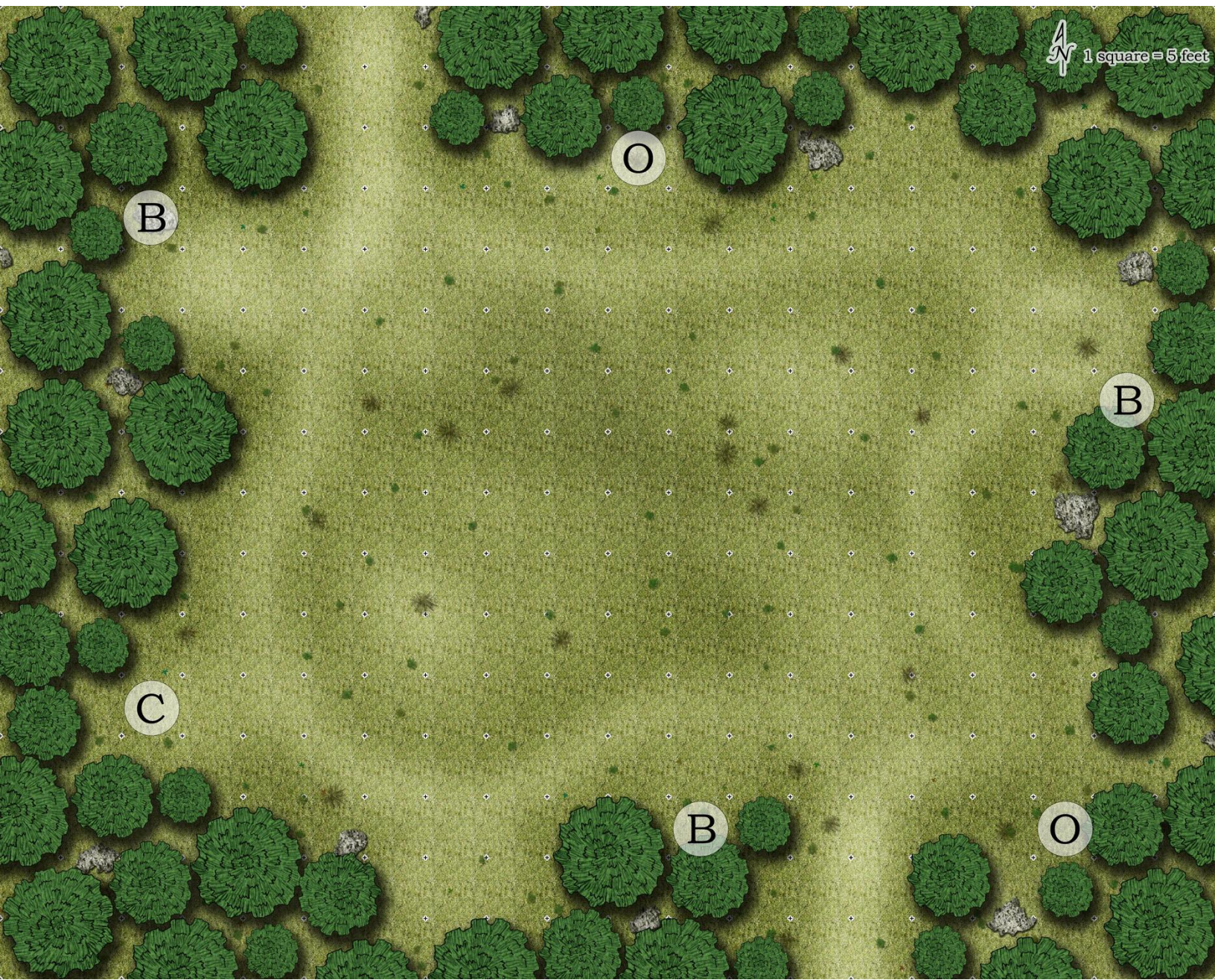
As the characters follow the tracks left by the monsters or explore other parts of the forest, Millie's ravens return to her lair, alerting her to their presence. The hag immediately gathers several of her orogs and the nearby orcs to deal with the threat (see **The Hag's Ambush** below for details).

THE HAG'S AMBUSH

As the characters explore the forest, Mille Nightshade and her gang of orcs and orogs plan an ambush. The hag uses her ravens to track the party and locate a suitable location for the attack. Read the text below to start the encounter.

The lush canopy of the forest gives way to a clearing of knee-high grass. As you cross the glade, the noise of squawking ravens pulls your attention to the sky. Seconds later, movement erupts from the surrounding trees, and a hail of javelins comes flying your way.

Two **orogs** (O), three **orc blades of Ilneval** (B), and their **orc war chief** (C) make up the attack force. Characters with a passive Perception score of 13 or less are surprised by the assault and unable to act during the first round of combat.



Adjusting the Encounter

Here are recommendations for adjusting this combat encounter. These are not cumulative.

- **Very weak party:** Remove two **orc blades of Ilneval**. Add one **orog**.
- **Weak party:** Remove one **orc blade of Ilneval**. Add one **orog**.
- **Strong party:** Add one **orog**.
- **Very strong party:** Add two **orogs**.

GENERAL FEATURES

The area has the following features.

Light. Daylight.

Rocks. The rocks in the area are one foot tall.

Trees. The surrounding trees provide half cover.

TACTICS

The orc blades of Ilneval and orogs use Aggressive to engage in melee combat during the first round. If possible, one orc blade of Ilneval uses Ilneval's Command each round to maximize their attacks. The orc war chief moves to the middle of the combat and uses his Battle Cry on the first round, giving his allies advantage on attack rolls.

Fearing the wrath of Millie Nightshade more than death, all of the humanoids fight until defeated.

TREASURE

The orcs and orogs carry a total of 100 gp in coins and various gemstones between them.

DEVELOPMENTS

While Millie Nightshade is present for the ambush, she does not take part in the battle. Instead, she skulks in the shadows watching the characters and gauging their mettle. When the last combatant falls, read the text below.

As the last humanoid falls, you quickly scan the surrounding area for additional threats. To the northwest, you notice a dark form lurking in the tree line. When your gaze settles in its direction, it disappears with a flurry of movement.

The characters can attempt to chase Millie Nightshade or they can simply let her flee. If they opt to chase the hag, proceed to the **Chasing the Hag** encounter to continue the adventure.

Even if the characters do not chase Mille, they can still follow her trail. If the hag does not spot any pursuers, she takes a roundabout route back to her lair, leaving obvious tracks. Her path intentionally leads through an area of the forest occupied by ettercaps and their spider allies. Following the trail does not require a check. Proceed to the **Forest Webs** encounter to continue the adventure.

If the characters leave one or more of the orcs alive, they stand a chance of learning the location of Millie Nightshade's lair from their captive. (The orogs are too loyal to their night hag mother to divulge any information.) Breaking an orc requires a successful DC 20 Charisma (Intimidation) check. Characters who physically torture their captive gain advantage on the check.

If the check is successful, the characters learn about Millie Nightshade and get directions to her lair. Proceed to **Part 3: Shade of the Dark** to continue the adventure. If the check is a failure, the orc refuses to provide any information, preferring death at the characters' hands to the suffering it will likely endure for betraying the hag. If this happens, the characters have no other choice but to follow the trail left by the hag. Proceed to the **Forest Webs** encounter to continue the adventure.

AWARDING XP

If the party manages to learn the location of Millie Nighthshade's lair from one of the orcs, award each player 700 XP.

Keeping Time

Shade of the Dark is designed to run in a standard 2-hour convention timeslot. Adding the **Chasing the Hag** encounter could easily stretch the playtime beyond 2 hours. If the first fight took longer than expected, or if you need to reduce the time required to play the adventure, consider eliminating the **Chasing the Hag** and **Forest Webs** encounters. Let the characters follow the hag's trail to her lair without making any skill checks and proceed to **Part 3: Shade of the Dark**. Doing so shortens the adventure without upsetting the story.

CHASING THE HAG

If the characters decide to chase after Millie Nightshade, they must follow her through forest terrain she knows well. In order to keep up with the hag, the party needs to complete three rounds of group skill checks. Each check represents the obstacles and complications the characters encounter as they run through the forest for an extended period.

Let the characters roll initiative or simply go around the table. On each of their turns, have them roll a d10 and consult the **Forest Chase Complications** table. Each character who avoids an attack or succeeds at the skill check associated with their rolled complication contributes a success to the group skill check for the round. If half or more of the characters succeed at their checks for the round, they earn one group skill check success.

If at the end of the third round the characters failed two or more of the group skill checks, they lose sight of the hag and must spend time searching

for her trail. When this happens, Mille notices she is no longer being followed and takes a roundabout route back to her lair, leaving obvious tracks. Her path leads through an area of the forest occupied by ettercaps and their spider allies. After an hour, the characters locate her trail, which does not require a check to follow. Proceed to the **Forest Webs** encounter to continue the adventure.

If the characters succeed at two or more group skill checks out of the three, they manage to chase the hag all the way back to her lair. Proceed to **Part 3: Shade of the Dark** to continue the adventure.

AWARDING XP

If the party successfully follows Millie Nightshade back to her lair, award each player 700 XP.

Forest Chase Complications

d10	Complication
1	Your path takes you through a rough patch of brush. Make a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check (your choice) to get past the brush without slowing your pace.
2	Uneven ground threatens to slow your progress. Make a DC 13 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to navigate the area quickly.
3	You run through a swarm of bees. The swarm makes an opportunity attack against you; (+5 to hit; 5d4 piercing damage on a hit). If hit, you stagger momentarily, slowing your companions.
4	A small stream blocks your path. Make a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check (your choice) to cross the impediment without slipping.
5	Make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, you are momentarily blinded by blowing pollen, slowing your party.
6	A sudden drop catches you by surprise. Make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw to navigate the obstruction. On a failed save, you fall 1d4 x 5 feet, taking 1d6 bludgeoning damage per 10 feet fallen as normal, and land prone.
7	A group of wild boars charges you. Make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, you are knocked about and take 1d8 bludgeoning damage and 1d8 piercing damage.
8	Your path takes you near a patch of razorvine. Make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw to avoid it or willingly succeed by taking 2d10 slashing damage as you run through it with reckless abandon.
9	A large rock breaks loose as you scramble over the top of a ridgeline. Make a DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check to prevent the rock from falling and hitting other members of your party. If you fail, every member of your party (except you) takes 2d6 bludgeoning damage.
10	No complication (counts as an automatic success).

Important: Characters are not allowed to work together or use the Help action to overcome the complications above.

A Group Chase

Mille feels she can outpace the characters if they stay together. If a party decides to split up for any reason, she loses confidence and opts to cast *plane shift* and travel to the Shadowfell. Once there, she uses *plane shift* again to return to her lair. If this happens, the characters lose her trail, but an hour of searching allows them to locate tracks left by her orogs as they traveled to the ambush site. After an hour following the tracks, the characters arrive at her lair. Proceed to **Part 3: Shade of the Dark** to continue the adventure.

FOREST WEBS

If the characters do not pursue Mille Nightshade or she manages to outpace them as she flees, the hag changes direction, taking a roundabout path back to her lair. Her indirect route leads through an area of the forest that is home to four **ettercaps** (E) and three **phase spiders** (S). Mille leaves an obvious trail for the party to follow, hoping the creatures will defeat her pursuers or at least slow them down.

After an hour of following the dark figure's trail, you reach an area of the forest covered in webs. In many places, large, thick strands stretch between the trunks of the trees, forming sticky snares. In addition, dozens of smaller patches of dense webbing line the branches, giving the forest a sickly look.

As you proceed, you notice thousands of tiny spiders swarming the ground and are forced to stop and swat many from your clothing. Shortly after resuming your march, a series of clacking sounds draws your attention to the nearby trees. Seconds later, four creatures that look like a cross between a gangly human and a bloated spider emerge from the shadows. They snap their mandibles and move your way.

Adjusting the Encounter

Here are recommendations for adjusting this combat encounter. These are not cumulative.

- **Very weak party:** Remove one **ettercap** and one **phase spider**.
- **Weak party:** Remove one **ettercap**.
- **Strong party:** Add one **ettercap**.
- **Very strong party:** Add one **phase spider**.

GENERAL FEATURES

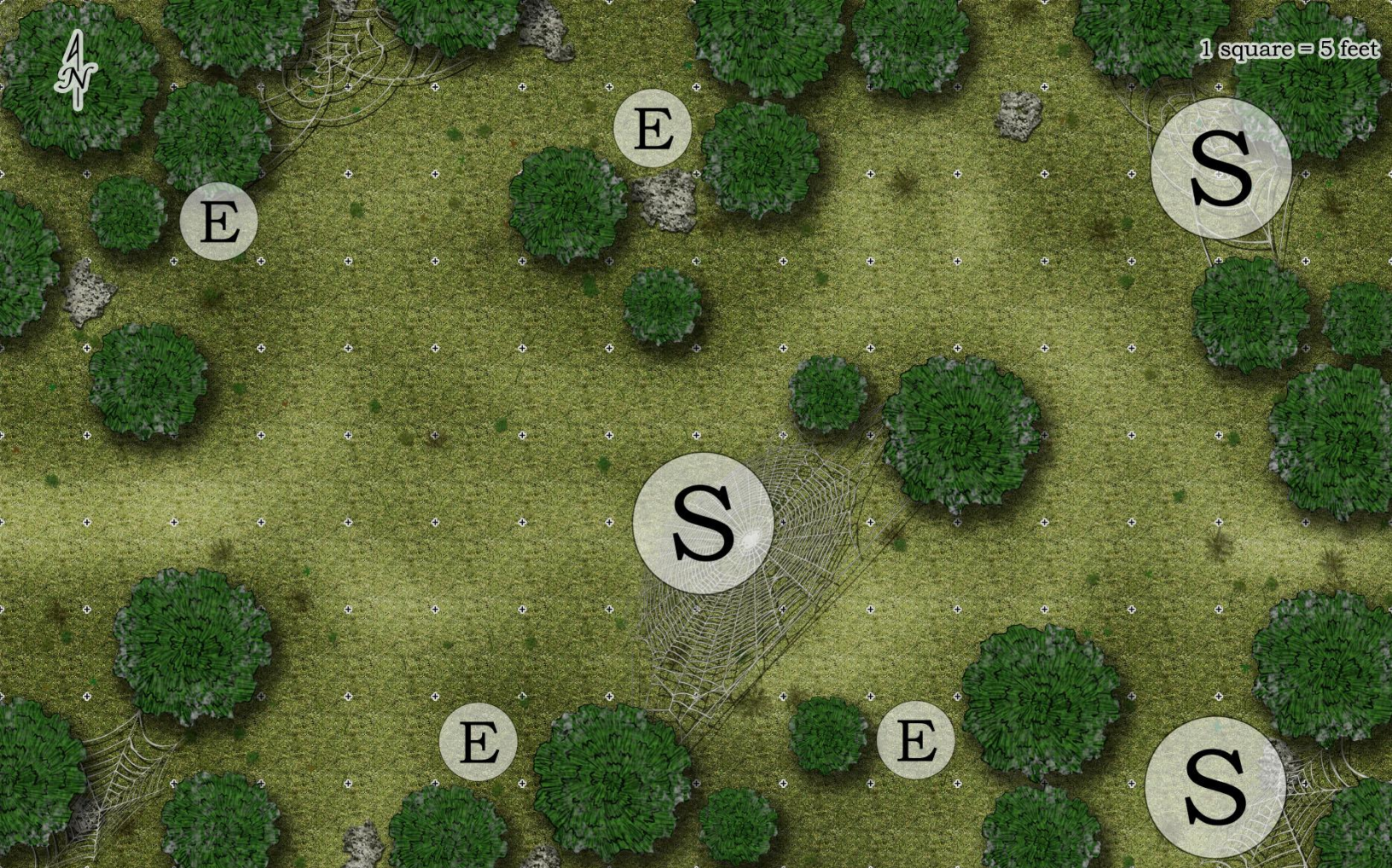
The area has the following features.

Light. Daylight.

Rocks. The rocks in the area are one foot tall.

Trees. The surrounding trees provide half cover.

Webs. Several large webs dot the encounter area. They are difficult terrain. A creature forced into or attempting to move through a webbed area must make a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check.



1 square = 5 feet

A creature that fails the check is restrained in the webs. A trapped creature can use its action to attempt to break free with a DC 12 Strength check. It can also try to cut its way out using a light weapon that deals slashing damage. The webs have AC 10, 5hp, vulnerability to fire damage, and immunity to bludgeoning, poison, and psychic damage.

TACTICS

The ettercaps begin combat by trying to restrain as many characters as possible with their Web attacks. On subsequent rounds, they focus their Bite and Claw attacks on any restrained enemies. The phase spiders start the fight on the Ethereal Plane, making them invisible to any character without the ability to see ethereal creatures. They move to any character restrained in webbing and attack after using Ethereal Jaunt to return to the Material Plane.

The creatures fight until reduced to one-quarter of their hit points before scuttling off into the forest.

DEVELOPMENTS

Once the party defeats the ettercaps and phase spiders, they are free to continue tracking Millie Nightshade. No check is necessary for the characters to rediscover the hag's trail, and after another hour of following her path, they arrive at her lair. Proceed to **Part 3: Shade of the Dark** to continue the adventure.

PART 3: SHADE OF THE DARK

Expected Duration: 45 minutes

The night hag, Millie Nightshade, makes her lair in the remains on an old Zhentarim observation post. The Zhents used the hidden location to track the activities of a nearby drow stronghold during the Cormanthor War, and it contains remnants from that period. Read the text below when the characters reach the hag's lair.

A noxious odor permeates this area of the forest, and a thin, greenish fog blankets the ground. Before you, twisted brush and warped cedar trees hide the entrance to a cave at the base of a limestone cliff. The opening glows with a soft light, but from your hidden vantage point, you see no creatures moving inside the cave or outside in the surrounding foliage.

FIGHTING THE HAG

When the characters arrive, the **night hag** (H), her remaining four **orogs** (O), and her daughter, **Maggie** (M) (a neutral evil commoner), are firmly entrenched inside the cave. A *glyph of warding* protects the opening, and Millie is more than happy to let the characters trigger it upon their entrance.



Adjusting the Encounter

Here are recommendations for adjusting this combat encounter. These are not cumulative.

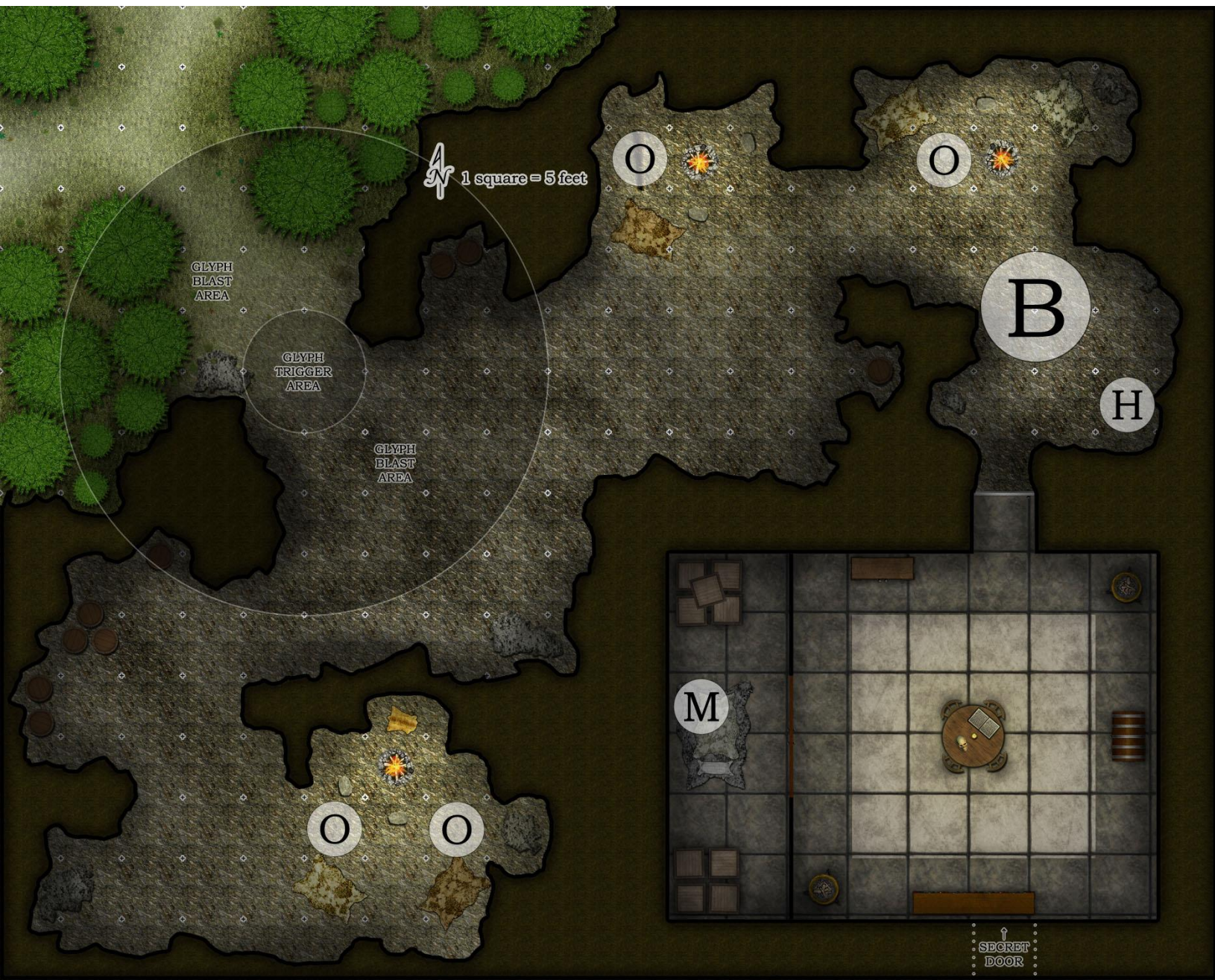
- **Very weak party:** Remove two **orogs**. The **banderhobb** has 42 hit points.
- **Weak party:** Remove two **orogs**.
- **Strong party:** Add one **orog**.
- **Very strong party:** Add two **orogs**.

To bolster her defenses, the hag performed a ritual of dark magic after returning to her lair. The summoning brought forth a heinous bipedal creature called a **banderhobb** (B), which resembles a giant toad made of shadow and flesh. With its assistance, she is confident she can overcome any intruders. Because of this, and because of her agreement with Suldran's Dark, the hag has no interest or intention of negotiating with the characters. She only desires their deaths.

Fortune Favors the Bold

The ritual to summon the banderhobb takes Millie Nightshade fifteen minutes to complete. If the characters successfully chased the hag all the way back to her lair in Part 2, they have the opportunity to prevent her from completing the ritual. If the party decides to forego any scouting or surveillance of the area and enters the cave within the first fifteen minutes of their arrival, they force Millie to abandon her ritual and join the fight. If this happens, remove the banderhobb from the ensuing combat, but award XP for the creature as if the characters had defeated it. Sometimes it pays to be bold!

Important. This option is only available to parties that successfully completed the Chasing the Hag group skill challenge in Part 2.



GENERAL FEATURES

Millie Nightshade's lair consists of two distinct sections. The first is a sizeable cavern with natural limestone walls that the hag's ologs use as a living space. The second is an adjoining bunker of worked stone once used by the Zhentarim agents who occupied the outpost. It now serves as private quarters for Millie and her daughter, Maggie. In addition, the area has the unique features detailed below.

Barrels. The barrels in the cavern portion of the lair contain drinking water. Each barrel can provide half cover to any creature fighting or hiding behind it.

Bookcase. A stout bookcase occupies the south wall of the lair's bunker. It contains Millie's personal writings on dark magic and her recipe books detailing the best ways to cook various humanoids. It also holds plates, bowls, cooking pots, and numerous labeled jars of exotic reagents such as preserved orc fetus, goblin bone marrow, and strips of dried elf skin. While these items have no monetary value, any character who specifically investigates the books notices three of them contain pages full of numbers and letters in a seemingly indecipherable pattern. Zhentarim characters automatically recognize the pattern as an encryption method sometimes used by their faction. Decrypting the books is not possible without the specific key of numbers and letters used to generate the code. Zhentarim characters who return the books to their faction contact complete their mission and earn additional renown. (See Rewards for more information.)

Braziers. Unlit braziers occupy the northeast and southwest corners of the bunker's main room. They are too small to provide any form of cover.

Cabinet. The wooden cabinet on the bunker's northern wall holds ragged robes and other garments worn by Millie and her daughter.

Ceilings. The cavern's ceiling is 20 feet tall, and the ceiling in the bunker is 10 feet tall.

Chest. See the Treasure portion of the encounter for details about the chest on the bunker's east wall.

Crates. The crates in the bunker once contained Zhentarim weapons, armor, and tools from the time of the Cormanthor War. Millie salvaged the choice pieces for her ologs. Only a few mundane items of insignificant value remain, but the crates themselves are in good shape and capable of providing half cover to creatures fighting or hiding behind them.

Doors. The stone door on the northern wall of the bunker is locked. Millie carries its key in the pocket of her tattered robes. Picking the door's lock requires a successful DC 15 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check. The doors can also be forced open with a successful DC 20 Strength check. The wooden double doors on the bunker's western wall are unlocked.

Fires. Creatures pushed or forced into a fire suffer 1 fire damage or 1d6 fire damage if they fall prone there.

Glyph of Warding. A *glyph of warding* cast from a forgotten Zhentarim spell scroll protects the entrance to Millie's lair. A character can spot the glyph with a successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check. The glyph is tuned to allow the night hag and her minions (including a banderhobb) to pass through its area. It discharges if any other humanoid creature enters the cave.

Once triggered, the glyph erupts with magical energy in a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on the entrance. The sphere spreads around corners. Each creature in the area must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw. A creature takes 5d8 acid damage on a failed saving throw, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Unlike a typical trap, the glyph cannot be disabled using thieves' tools, but it can be dispelled with a *dispel magic* spell.

Light. Three small fires provide bright light in a 20-foot radius and fill the remaining portion of the cavern with dim light. A single candle burning on a table in the bunker sheds bright light in a 5-foot radius and dim light for an additional 5 feet.

Secret Door. Unbeknownst to Millie, the bunker portion of her lair contains a secret door hidden behind a bookcase. Characters can only locate the door if they move the bookcase. Once moved, a passive Perception score of 20 or higher automatically reveals the door. A character actively searching the exposed wall finds the door with a successful DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check.

The door opens inward to a tunnel 5 feet in diameter and 30 feet in length. A 5-foot-diameter shaft at the end of the tunnel rises 50 feet to the top of the cliff, where rocks and years of forest debris hide its opening. A DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check allows a character to climb the shaft, and a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check enables a character to break through the rocks and debris at the top.

If one or more characters search the top of the cliff before entering the lair, they find the hidden shaft after an hour, provided they make a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check. Clearing the rocks and debris from the entrance takes about five minutes and reveals the shaft. Characters who descend the shaft automatically find the secret door at the end of the tunnel, but it opens to the back of the bookcase. The bookcase can be pushed over without difficulty, but doing so causes a ruckus, alerting the hag and her minions to intruders. Moving the bookcase quietly requires a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check. Failing the check causes the bookcase to topple over.

TACTICS

Mille begins the fight by casting *ray of enfeeblement* on the strongest looking character (fighter, paladin, etc.). She does her best to stay out of melee combat and casts *magic missile* at any characters she sees casting spells. If reduced to 28 or less hit points, she uses *Etherealness* to enter the Ethereal Plane and flees to the bunker to join her daughter. Once there, she uses *Change Shape* to assume the form of a young human girl and pretends to be a prisoner, hoping the characters will fall for her ruse and set her and her daughter free.

When possible, the ologs fight in pairs. They do their best to keep the characters from engaging Mille in melee combat. If necessary, they shove characters who attempt to block or bottleneck any doors or openings. The ologs are completely loyal to the hag and fight with vigor to their deaths to protect her.

The banderhobb uses *Shadow Stealth* to move to an area of dim light in the cavern. It then uses its *Tongue* attack to pull weak-looking creatures to itself and attempts to *Bite* and *Swallow* them. The vile creature's only desire is to defend Mille, and it fights until slain. Upon its death, it dissolves into a large puddle of tarry goo and wisps of shadow.

TREASURE

The entries below detail the various opportunities for treasure in the encounter.

Millie's belongings. The hag carries a dirty burlap sack that contains a lustrous black gem called a *heartstone* and a black sack of stitched flesh known as a *soul bag* (see the *Monster Manual* for additional information concerning each item and its purpose). Mille crafted both of these magical items, and only she can use them. Together they are worth 1500 gp to a collector or an arcane scholar.

In addition, the hag carries two keys: one made of brass and one of iron. The brass key unlocks the stone door between the cavern and the bunker, and the iron key unlocks the banded-iron chest inside the bunker itself.

Chest. A banded chest rests near the bunker's east wall. It is locked and protected by a poison gas trap. Spotting the tiny holes that emit the trap's gas requires a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Disarming it requires a successful DC 15 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check. Failing the check by five or more triggers the trap.

If a character triggers the trap, poison gas spews from the chest, instantly filling the bunker's main room with a poisonous green cloud. All creatures that start their turn in the cloud must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. A creature suffers 5d8 poison damage on a failed save and half as much damage on a successful one. The gas dissipates in three rounds.

Mille carries an iron key that opens the chest and disarms the trap. Locking the chest rearms the trap. Unlocking the chest without the key requires a successful DC 15 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check. Forcing the chest open requires a successful DC 15 Strength check. Unlocking or forcing open the chest without first disarming the trap causes it to trigger and release its gas.

The chest contains 400 gp in coins and gems and a *ring of warmth* that the hag has no need to wear. In addition, the characters find a letter detailing the agreement made between Millie and Suldran's Dark. The agreement outlines the hag's role in removing the loggers from the Midwood and her payment of one human baby for her services. Presenting the letter to Silas Nash completes the characters' mission and earns them a reward of 100 gp each.

DEVELOPMENTS

Wooden double doors lead from the bunker's main area to a smaller room that Millie Nightshade and her daughter, Maggie, use for sleeping. Upon returning to her lair, Mille instructed her 12-year-old daughter to hide in the room. She also told the girl to pretend to be a prisoner if anyone managed to break through their lair's defenses.

If the characters slay the hag and her minions, they find Maggie hiding in the room wearing dirty, ragged robes. The girl pleads with the characters to save her from the ugly woman who tortures her for fun. Maggie is a shrewd liar, and the scabs and scars covering her young body add credibility to her deception. In truth, the girl inflicted the vast majority of the injuries upon herself in an effort to look "beautiful" like her mother.

A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals the girl's story as a lie. A successful DC 15 Charisma (Intimidation) check causes Maggie to divulge the truth, which is that in less than a year, she will be reborn into a hag, just like her mother. If the characters discover her ruse, the girl is unapologetic and even brash concerning her inevitable transformation. Millie has groomed the girl from a young age, and she considers it her destiny.

If Mille manages to flee the battle using her *Etherealness* ability, she quickly changes clothes in the bunker and joins her daughter in its western room. Once inside, she uses *Change Shape* to transform into a young human girl similar in age to Maggie. While the hag does not like the idea of abandoning her lair, surviving is preferable to death.

In spite of the risk, Millie is not willing to part with her *heartstone* or her *soul bag*, and she hides the items beneath her newly donned clothing. Characters who make a successful DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check notice the concealed objects.

If both Mille and Maggie are present in the bunker, they spin the same lie, claiming an ugly old woman in the woods near Shadowdale captured them nearly a year ago. Millie does the majority of the talking, stating that the girls are sisters and their father, Alend Renford, is a cobbler in Shadowdale. They ask the characters to escort them to Elven Crossing so they can travel upriver to their home. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check exposes the tale as a lie. If this happens, Mille abandons her daughter and casts *plane shift* to flee to the Shadowfell. Her exit sends Maggie into a rage, and the girl attacks the characters in a tantrum with her bare fists.

A successful DC 10 Intelligence (History) check allows a character to recall the information in the Monstrous Motherhood sidebar. There is no right or wrong answer concerning Maggie Nightshade. The girl will transform into a hag in ten months. Nothing can stop it. Let each player roleplay their character's decision concerning the girl's fate, and feel free to award inspiration if they do it well.

Monstrous Motherhood

Hags propagate by snatching and devouring human infants. After stealing a baby from its cradle or its mother's womb, the hag consumes the poor child. A week later, the hag gives birth to a daughter who looks human until her thirteenth birthday, whereupon the child transforms into the spitting image of her hag mother.

Hags sometimes raise the daughters they spawn, creating covens. A hag might also return the child to its grieving parents, only to watch from the shadows as the child grows up to become a horror.

CONCLUSION

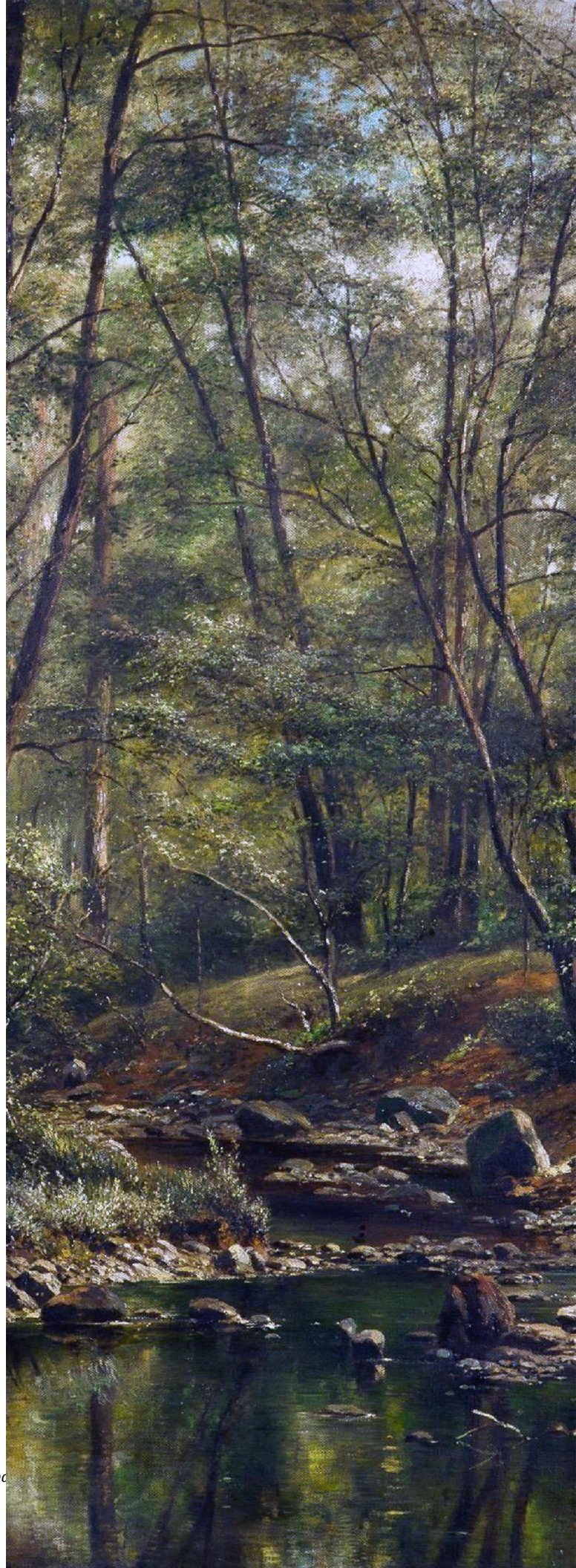
Expected Duration: 15 minutes

The return trip to the logging camp takes the characters several hours, and they arrive just before nightfall. If they travel with Millie and/or Maggie Nightshade, both girls are noticeably quiet. They do their best to appear frightened of everything and everyone. Once the party reaches the camp, the girls sneak off during the night. Try as they might, the characters are unable to locate their trail.

If the party presents the letter from Millie's chest to Silas Nash, he appears genuinely troubled but pays each character 100 gp as promised. He offers them lodging and food and insists they stay the night, claiming he may have further need of their skills if Suldran's Dark is involved.

If the characters inquire about the deviation in the timber-harvesting path, Silas feigns surprise and thanks them for pointing it out. He agrees to check his maps and alter his course. A successful DC 20 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals he is lying, but he refuses to say more on the subject.

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REWARDS

Make sure players note their rewards on their adventure log sheets. Give your name and DCI number (if applicable) so players can record who ran the session.

EXPERIENCE

Total up all **combat experience** earned for defeated foes, and divide by the number of characters present in the combat. For **non-combat experience**, the rewards are listed per character. Give all characters in the party non-combat experience awards unless otherwise noted.

Combat Awards

Name of Foe	XP per Foe
Banderhobb	1800
Ettercap	450
Night Hag	1800
Orc Blade of Ilneval	1100
Orc War Chief	1100
Orog	450
Phase Spider	700

Non-Combat Awards

Task or accomplishment	XP per Character
Learn the location of the hag's lair from an orc	700
Successfully chase the hag back to her lair	700

The **minimum** total award for each character participating in this adventure is **2000 experience points**.

The **maximum** total award for each character participating in this adventure is **3000 experience points**.

TREASURE

The characters receive the following treasure, divided up amongst the party. Characters should attempt to divide treasure evenly whenever possible. Gold piece values listed for sellable gear are calculated at their selling price, not their purchase price.

Consumable magic items should be divided up however the group sees fit. If more than one character is interested in a specific consumable magic item, the DM can determine who gets it randomly should the group be unable to decide.

Permanent magic items are divided according to a system. See the sidebar if the adventure awards permanent magic items.

Treasure Awards

Item Name	GP Value
Orc and orog treasure	100
Millie's <i>heartstone</i> and <i>soul bag</i>	1500
Millie's gold and gems	400
Silas Nash's reward	100 (per character)

RING OF WARMTH

Ring, uncommon (requires attunement)

While wearing this ring, you have resistance to cold damage. In addition, you and everything you wear and carry are unharmed by temperatures as low as minus 50 degrees Fahrenheit.

POTION OF HEALING

Potion, common

You regain 2d4 + 2 hit points when you drink this potion.

Permanent Magic Item Distribution

D&D Adventurers League has a system in place to determine who is awarded permanent magic items at the end of a session. Each character's log sheet contains a column to record permanent magic items for ease of reference.

- If the players at the table agree on one character taking possession of a permanent magic item, that character gets the item.
- In the event that one or more characters indicate an interest in possessing a permanent magic item, the character that possesses the fewest permanent magic items gets the item. If there is a tie in the total number of permanent magic items owned by contesting characters, the item's owner is determined randomly by the DM.

RENOWN

All faction members earn one renown point for participating in this adventure.

Zhentarim characters earn one additional renown point if they locate the ledgers in the hag's lair and return them to their faction.

DOWNTIME

Each character receives **five downtime days** at the conclusion of this adventure.

DM REWARDS

You receive **750 XP**, **375 gp**, and **five downtime days** for running this adventure.

APPENDIX: MONSTER/NPC STATISTICS

BANDERHOBB

Large monstrosity, neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 84 (8d10 + 40)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	8 (-1)

Skills Athletics +8, Stealth +7

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages understands Common and the languages of its creator, but can't speak

Challenge 5 (1800 XP)

Resonant Connection. If the banderhobb has even a tiny piece of a creature or an object in its possession, such as a lock of hair or a splinter of wood, it knows the most direct route to that creature or object if it is within 1 mile of the banderhobb.

Shadow Stealth. While in dim light or darkness, the banderhobb can take the Hide action as a bonus action.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 22 (5d6 + 5) piercing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 15) if it is a Large or smaller creature. Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the banderhobb can't use its bite attack or tongue attack on another target.

Tongue. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 15 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) necrotic damage, and the target must make a DC 15 Strength saving throw. On a failed save, the target is pulled to a space within 5 feet of the banderhobb, which can use a bonus action to make a bite attack against the target.

Swallow. The banderhobb makes a bite attack against a Medium or smaller creature it is grappling. If the attack hits, the creature is swallowed, and the grapple ends. The swallowed creature is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the banderhobb, and it takes 10 (3d6) necrotic damage at the start of each of the banderhobb's turns. A creature reduced to 0 hit points in this way stops taking the necrotic damage and becomes stable.

The banderhobb can have only one creature swallowed at a time. While the banderhobb isn't incapacitated, it can regurgitate the creature at any time (no action required) in a space within 5 feet of it.

The creature exits prone. If the banderhobb dies, it likewise regurgitates a swallowed creature.

Shadow Step. The banderhobb magically teleports up to 30 feet to an unoccupied space of dim light or darkness that it can see. Before or after teleporting, it can make a bite or tongue attack.

ETTERCAP

Medium monstrosity, neutral evil

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 44 (8d8 + 8)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	15 (+2)	13 (+1)	7 (-2)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +4, Survival +3

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages —

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Spider Climb. The ettercap can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Web Sense. While in contact with a web, the ettercap knows the exact location of any other creature in contact with the same web.

Web Walker. The ettercap ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The ettercap makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) poison damage. The target must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute. The creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d4 + 2) slashing damage.

Web (Recharge 5-6). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one Large or smaller creature. *Hit:* The creature is restrained by webbing. As an action, the restrained creature can make a DC 11 Strength check, escaping from the webbing on a success. The effect ends if the webbing is destroyed. The webbing has AC 10, 5 hit points, is vulnerable to fire damage, and immune to bludgeoning, poison, and psychic damage.

NIGHT HAG

Medium fiend, neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 112 (15d8 + 45)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	14 (+3)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

Skills Deception +7, Insight +6, Perception +6, Stealth +6

Damage Resistances cold, fire; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from non magical weapons that aren't silvered

Condition Immunities charmed

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Abyssal, Common, Infernal, Primordial

Challenge 5 (1800 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The hag's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *detect magic*, *magic missile*

2/day each: *plane shift* (self only), *ray of enfeeblement*, *sleep*

Magic Resistance. The hag has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Claws (Hag Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) slashing damage.

Change Shape. The hag magically polymorphs into a Small or Medium female humanoid, or back into her true form. Her statistics are the same in each form. Any equipment she is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. She reverts to her true form if she dies.

Etherealness. The hag magically enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa. To do so, the hag must have a heartstone in her possession.

Nightmare Haunting (1/Day). While on the Ethereal Plane, the hag magically touches a sleeping humanoid on the Material Plane. A *protection from evil and good* spell cast on the target prevents this contact, as does a *magic circle*. As long as the contact persists, the target has dreadful visions. If these visions last for at least 1 hour, the target gains no benefit from its rest, and its hit point maximum is reduced by 5 (1d10). If this effect reduces the target's hit point maximum to 0, the target dies, and if the target was evil, its soul is trapped in the hag's *soul bag*. The reduction to the target's hit point maximum lasts until removed by the *greater restoration* spell or similar magic.

MAGGIE NIGHTSHADE (COMMONER)

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 4 (1d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 0 (10 XP)

ACTIONS

Fist. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 bludgeoning damage.

ORC BLADE OF ILNEVAL

Medium humanoid (orc), chaotic evil

Armor Class 18 (chain mail, shield)

Hit Points 60 (8d8 + 24)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+2)	11 (+0)	17 (+3)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Wis +3

Skills Perception +3, Insight +3, Intimidation +4

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Orc

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Aggressive. As a bonus action, the orc can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature that it can see.

Foe Smiter of Ilneval. The orc deals an extra die of damage when it hits with a longsword attack (included in the attack).

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The orc makes two melee attacks with its longsword or two ranged attacks with its javelins. If Ilneval's Command is available to use, the orc can use it after these attacks.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d8 + 3) slashing damage, or 14 (2d10 + 3) slashing damage when used with two hands.

Javelin. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Ilneval's Command (Recharge 4—6). Up to three allied orcs within 120 feet of this orc that can hear it can use their reactions to each make one weapon attack.

ORC WAR CHIEF

Medium humanoid (orc), chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (chain mail)

Hit Points 93 (11d8 + 44)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)	11 (+0)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Str +6, Con +6, Wis +2

Skills Intimidation +5

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Orc

Challenge 4 (1,100XP)

Aggressive. As a bonus action, the orc can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature that it can see.

Gruumsh's Fury. The orc deals an extra 4 (1d8) damage when it hits with a weapon attack (included in the attacks).

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The orc makes two attacks with its greataxe or its spear.

Greataxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 14 (1d12 + 4 plus 1d8) slashing damage.

Spear. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (1d6 + 4 plus 1d8) piercing damage, or 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

Battle Cry (1/Day). Each creature of the war chief's choice that is within 30 feet of it, can hear it, and not already affected by Battle Cry gain advantage on attack rolls until the start of the war chief's next turn. The war chief can then make one attack as a bonus action.



OROG

Medium humanoid (orc), chaotic evil

Armor Class 18 (plate)

Hit Points 42 (5d8 + 20)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)

Skills Intimidation +5, Survival +2

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Orc

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Aggressive. As a bonus action, the orog can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature that it can see.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The orog makes two greataxe attacks.

Greataxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d12 + 4) slashing damage.

Javelin. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

PHASE SPIDER

Large monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 32 (5d10 + 5)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	6 (-2)

Skills Stealth +6

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Ethereal Jaunt. As a bonus action, the spider can magically shift from the Material Plane to the Ethereal Plane, or vice versa.

Spider Climb. The spider can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Web Walker. The spider ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 7 (1d10 + 2) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw, taking 18 (4d8) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If the poison damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, the target is stable but poisoned for 1 hour, even after regaining hit points, and is paralyzed while poisoned in this way.