

# AMARUNE'S ADVENTURES



Prophecy

## The Vanishing of Arcanist Hildebane



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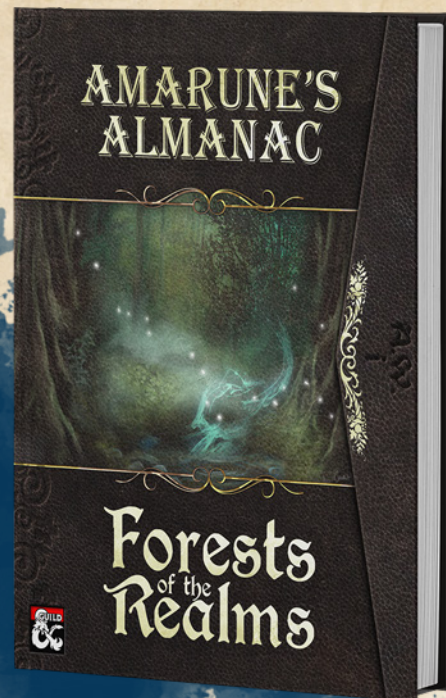
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## *The Vanishing of Arcanist Hildebane*

On the fringes of the forest known as Tangled Trees, arcanists and scholars mount expeditions into the inhospitable overgrowth from their basecamp at Survey Site 801. Their mission: to study the strange, twisted flora and assess if the abandoned forest can be tamed and inhabited by civilized races once again. When one of the famed arcanists, Eloris Hildebane, goes missing, the party is dispatched to find and recover Hildebane alive or dead.

The overgrown forest is rife with perilous hazards and inhospitable flora and fauna, but what the party uncovers in the heart of a blighted, plagued expanse of forest may expose the truth of the ruin that befell the forest's denizens nearly a thousand years ago.

### *Adventure Background*

After the death of a pair of green dragons known collectively as Venom, an enterprising and powerful red dragon called Narlgathra claimed their abandoned lair as her own. Though much of the treasure of the horde was plundered, the lair's deepest reaches were left unspoiled, including three green dragon eggs.

Narlgathra used a portion of her immeasurable wealth and influence to hire priests and enchanters to safeguard each of her five lairs, scattered throughout Cormanthor, Anauroch, and all the way to the Spine of the World. The lair of Tangled Trees was no different, suffused with many magical defenses and powerful magic meant to keep the dragon eggs there from ever hatching. All those hired to enchant her lairs met an untimely end, and the lair at Tangled Trees was all but forgotten.

In the year 1373 DR, a band of plunderers found the lair, dismantled many of its protections, and smashed two of the green dragon eggs before an

enraged and paranoid Narlgathra appeared through a portal that linked her lair to this one.

She ate the plunderers' bones before they could take a single coin from her lair, and in her rage unleashed a fury upon Tangled Trees that would leave it abandoned for a century.

Her wealth was retrieved and her own eggs brought to her lair at Myth Drannor, where she could watch them more closely. Little remained in the twice-abandoned dragon lair at Tangled Trees, save for a single green dragon egg, left in a basin that, to this day, keeps it from hatching.

The dragon magic that twists and corrupts Tangled Trees will never falter so long as the last remaining Venom calls the forest home.

### *Adventure Overview*

**Part 1.** The adventure begins when the head of security at Site 801 instructs the characters to track down and bring back a missing arcanist with the help of his trained cooshee. Traversing the forest proves difficult and requires several successful checks to navigate, even with the cooshee's aid. Too many failures prove dangerous, if not deadly.

**Part 2.** When the characters find the arcanist's abandoned camp, a wounded Redwood Crawler is busy devouring what remains. After following the arcanist's trail, the adventurers come across a corrupted expanse of trees in which the arcanist has escaped their second isopod pursuer.

**Part 3.** The cavernous refuge turns out to be the long-abandoned lair of the dragon Narlgathra. Inside, the party and their missing arcanist, find a green dragon egg sitting among a corrupted, forest-killing ooze that attacks the party.

## Part 1: The Missing Arcanist

You, through promise of payment, curiosity, or your own purposes, have found yourself at Survey Site 801. The site is home to fifteen scholars, arcanists, and surveyors all mounting expeditions into the twisted forest of Tangled Trees.

From their simple canvas tents and hastily constructed wooden shacks, they are charged with assessing whether the forest, abandoned for nearly a hundred years now, is ready to be tamed, utilized, and inhabited by civilized folk once again.

Suddenly, there is a shout from the wooden palisade wall, "Open the gate!" The few sellswords left to defend the camp draw weapons, ready for anything as the gates are pulled open.

Two cooshee, loyal fey hounds collected by the surveyors, limp into the encampment. One of the mercenaries inspects the cooshee's collar and cries out: "They're Eloris Hildebane's. There's no sign of the arcanist!"

There is a moment of quiet before the adventurers are involved directly. Take this moment to allow the players to:

- Introduce their characters and explain why they are working at the Survey Site and what they do there.
- Explain their reputation or relationship, if any, with the arcanists, particularly Eloris Hildebane.
- Establish if any characters have mounts capable of traversing the forest, such as trained giant boars, riding lizards, mastiffs, or elk. Common horses do not fare well in the forest's thick undergrowth and gnarled trees – no adventurer should force their horse into the forest.

## Security Detail, Depart

It is only a short wait before the head of security operations, Bruul Harker, arrives to speak to the party. Lady Harker is a female half-elf **knight** (see appendix B) that speaks in a crisp, direct, and unfaltering manner. She suffers no foolishness.

An imposing woman in a suit of darkly polished plate armor approaches your group. She rubs the blonde stubble atop her shapely head with her gauntleted hand and says: "You lot! Make yourselves ready. I need you to seek out one of our lead arcanists that's gone missing. Name's Eloris Hildebane."

One of the guards approaches with a hound as big as a mastiff on a leash and passes it to Lady Harker.

"The other cooshee is too injured to travel, but this one seems more than eager to go." The cream-colored dog pulls hard at the leash, toward the closed gate.

"Take it, find Hildebane and Lukatas, his escort, and bring them back... alive or dead. Understood?"

She pulls a pair of amber-colored *rootshape gauntlets* (see appendix A) from her belt and hands them to one of the party members. "Consider this your stipend."

Lady Harker knows the following information and answers any questions to the best of her ability:

- Hildebane and his escort, Lukatas, set out three days ago with Hildebane's two cooshee in tow.
- Their plan was to travel north north-west and explore a region of the forest that's home to enormous redwood and ironwood trees.
- Hildebane has a reputation for foolish action and destructive curiosity, but he is the foremost expert on this forest.
- Lukatas, the mercenary tasked with guarding Hildebane, is a well-trained and seasoned swordsman. His pair of silver swords are so flashy, he's hard to misidentify.

### THE SECURITY FORCE

The officer in charge of security at Survey Site 801 is Bruul Harker, who has eight **guards** and three **scouts** under her command enlisted to safeguard the camp.

Six **veterans** work as escorts for the surveyors, and are seldom in camp. It is rare for more than 2 veterans to accompany a single surveyor unless the trip is expected to be exceedingly dangerous. See appendix B for all creature stat blocks.

## Other Equipment

The supplies at the encampment are not limitless, but the party can purchase any mundane adventuring gear found in chapter 5 of the *Player's Handbook* from one of the many merchants that are present in the camp.

## Hildebane's Tent

Should the party decide to explore the arcanist's workplace, read the following or paraphrase:

The white, boxy tent that has been Hildebane's home for nearly a year now is completely stuffed full of journals, papers, sketches, and jars of various samples taken from the forest. More than any other surveyor in the camp, Hildebane seems invested in learning about Tangled Trees.

A desk covered in trinkets and loose papers sits alone opposite a well-made cot. Other than a peculiar fur blanket, boxes of samples, and a set of exceedingly well-made bed clothes hanging from the central tent pole, the tent is sparsely decorated.

The clothes are well made sleepwear worth 15 gp, but otherwise uninteresting. There is a compass, keyed to point back toward the survey site sitting atop the desk, along with a set of cartography tools.

The fur atop the bed is an *embracer's fur blanket* (see appendix A) which Hildebane uses to hide his bouts of night terror and mute the constant noise of the encampment around him. It is his most prized possession, other than his notes and compiled data.

Perusing all of the papers in the tent, even for a group of six nimble-minded scholars, would take several days. Should the party have a way to read them all, reward their ingenuity by allowing them to automatically succeed on **Intelligence (Nature) checks** made to identify flora and fauna in Tangled Trees.

## Hildebane's Trail

Once the party departs to locate Hildebane, the cooshee does most of the work, dragging whoever holds its leash directly toward Hildebane's abandoned camp.

The party can travel the first 12 miles (6 hours of travel at a normal pace) with relative ease, as the area has been scouted and cleared of dangerous plants and animals immediately surrounding Survey Site 801. The party must then decide if they wish to camp for the night or continue along the path in the dark.

## Camp for the Night

Each member of the party involved in making camp or taking watch should make a **DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) check**. Calculate the number of failures and consult the following table:

1 or fewer	The night passes uneventfully.
2-3 failures	The party camps near ant beds, poisonous plants, or blood-sucking insects. Each member of the party loses 1 hit die at the start of the day.
4 or more failures	The party's camp is plagued by all of the above and more. Each member of the party suffers 1 level of exhaustion at the start of the day.

Should you wish to make the night even more eventful, have a **poisonous snake** (see appendix B) crawl into the tent or bedding of a random party member. Have the snake make a **Dexterity (Stealth) check** opposed by the character's passive Perception (-5 if the character is asleep).

On a success, the snake curls up with the adventurer and attacks when they move or wake up. On a failure, the character is aware of the snake and can safely escape it or attack. Regardless, the snake fights to the death.

## Continue Through the Night

Trails, both man-made and natural, are extremely difficult to follow without ample light. The forest is completely dark after nightfall; the light of the moon is incapable of piercing the canopy.

While traveling in the dark, the cooshee seems incredibly restless and sporadic. The character holding the leash must make a **DC 13 Strength (Athletics)** or a **DC 15 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check** to keep control of the cooshee.

On a successful check, the cooshee eventually calms, but remains restless. On a failed check, it breaks away and runs deeper into the forest, straight toward the Camp Crawler encounter in part 2.

The party must then succeed on three **DC 13 Wisdom (Survival) checks** before two failures to find their way to the encampment in the darkness. If the party fails two checks before their third success, they run afoul of two **giant wolf spiders** (see appendix B), happy to have their next meal wander into their rope-like webs.

## Part 2: Camp Crawler

Eventually, the **cooshee** (see appendix B) leads the party straight to Hildebane's ruined encampment. When the party arrives, read the following aloud or paraphrase:

Redwood trees stretch hundreds of feet overhead. Each one of them is larger than what ten people could reach around hand-in-hand. The thick underbrush obscures what remains of a campsite not a bow shot away from you.

If the party arrives with the cooshee still in tow, read the following or paraphrase:

The large canvas tent is ripped apart and what remains of a hand-pulled cart lies destroyed nearby. A huge insect-like creature with interlocking plates along its flat back effortlessly scrapes away boards, boxes, and other debris before sticking its head down to eat at some exposed scrap of food.

Its body is criss-crossed in seeping wounds and scorch marks. Several of its legs on one side are hacked apart, making its otherwise smooth and careful movements lurch to one side. At nearly three-hundred feet away, it has not noticed you, but even at this distance, its incredible size inspires awe.

If the party arrives after the cooshee, read the following or paraphrase:

You see a huge insect-like creature stamping through a destroyed canvas tent and overturning pieces of abandoned equipment. It effortlessly flips a hand-pulled cart with its spear-length foreleg. The constant barks of the cooshee can be heard as it moves from obstacle to obstacle, snapping its jaws at the creature, more than fifty times its size. The enormous isopod does not see you, but it's only a matter of time before the cooshee runs out of places to hide.

The enormous isopod is a **redwood crawler** (see appendix B) that has been severely injured in its fight with Hildebane and Lukatas. It currently has 31 hit points and its speed, including climbing speed, is reduced to 20. If the redwood crawler drops

to 15 hit points or fewer, it attempts to flee up one of the massive redwood trees. If the redwood crawler dies, it curls into a ball and slowly opens again over the course of 1d4 hours.

**Treasure.** Sticking from one of its ruined legs is an ornate, razor sharp silvered short sword worth 25 gp, one of Lukatas' treasured swords.

## The Ruined Camp

The camp is mostly destroyed, but some salvageable gear can be found. A character that searches the area must succeed on a **DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check** or spend 1 hour searching the area to find usable items. Roll 1d8 and consult the following table or choose which items are found:

1d8		1d8	
1	Cook's Utensils	5	a Healer's Kit with four remaining uses
2	Tinkerer's Tools	6	a hand drawn map of the area
3	a Dragonchess set	7	4 unbroken vials
4	a merchant's scale	8	a <i>potion of greater healing</i> inside a small chest

## More Clues

Characters in the area can also make a **DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) check** to determine that there must have been more than one of these creatures in the area. A swath of destruction leads from the encampment, off to the west, clearly made by another redwood crawler. On a check of 16 or higher, the character also spots the suspicious absence of humanoid footprints outside of the camp.

Characters with a passive Perception of 12 or higher, or characters who spend an hour or more in the area, see a torn scrap of blue cloth tied to the lowest branches of the redwood trees overhead. Knowing the arcanist is a capable spellcaster, characters who find the scraps of carefully tied cloth can surmise the ambushed pair took literal flight to escape the isopods.



## The Trail

Should the party follow the path of damaged trees and flattened foliage to the west, they see similar scraps of cloth affixed to branches. The blue markers are spaced several hundred feet apart in a more-or-less straight line that weaves around trees when necessary. If the cooshee is present, it can follow the trail unerringly by the arcanist's scent.

Assuming the party continues down the path, read the following or paraphrase:

The trail continues for a little over a mile before it terminates at a long-dead Beetle Palm tree. Fifty feet up the side of the tree is slashed and clawed. Huge piles of powdery, termite-eaten wood are scattered and mounded around the base of the tree by the redwood crawler.

From here, another path of crushed foliage leads north-west, away from the larger redwoods and beetle palms and toward the densely overgrown center of Tangled Trees.

Hanging eighty feet overhead, a tan knapsack dangles precariously from one of the long, flat branches of the Beetle Palm. Though tangled to the branch, the breeze periodically rustles the open bag, causing scraps of paper and other tools to and fall to the ground in the surrounding area.

## The Arcanist's Pack

The pack is high enough to prove difficult for a grapple or rope to reach, requiring a **DC 18 Strength (Athletics) check** to manage it. The brittle branch can only support a Small or smaller creature, however. Anything larger than that causes the branch to snap and fall.

The tree can be climbed with a climber's kits, requiring no check, or a **DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check**. However, a **swarm of insects** (see appendix B) pour out of the small crevices and gnawed tunnels at the base of the tree and attack any creature that attempts to climb it.

The bag or branch can also be attacked from the ground and knocked free. Treat the branch and bag as having AC 15, 10 hit points, and resistance to piercing damage. When the target's hit points reach 0, the bag falls.

**Treasure.** Inside the arcanist's pack are 20 sheets of parchment, three stoppered inkwells, a map of the area leading from the Survey Site to their ruined campsite, a magnifying glass, 5 sample vials filled with various saps and insects, and Hildebane's diary. Stuffed into the side-pouch of the knapsack are ten bandages, some of which are bloody. Should the bag fall the full distance to the ground, the inkwells and sample vials shatter, ruining everything inside.

## Continuing On

The path to the north-west is similarly trampled by the single-minded redwood crawler. It has smashed a trail for another eight hundred feet through the underbrush before reaching an unusual rig of ironwood trees.

### HILDEBANE'S DIARY

The diary seems quite new if recovered without being ruined by ink, sap, and water samples. Inside it are only a handful of pages discussing migratory patterns of avian creatures through the forest and the mineral content of various natural springs and geysers.

The last two pages, however, are a record of what happened at their camp:

*"We awoke only an hour after sundown on our way back to Survey Site 801's north-northeast gate when our presence drew the attention of two redwood crawlers. Probably a mating pair, they can become quite territorial near their nests – a trait we wished to take advantage of, as malicious fauna steer well clear of all redwood groves in an effort to avoid the fate that befell us.*

*"Lukatas did his best to drive off the larger of the two isopods, which is likely the female, but they would not be turned away despite our combined efforts. When he was quite seriously wounded, we harnessed magical flight to make our escape. Had I not prepared it specifically for such an eventuality, I fear we may have met our end!*

*"We flew for the duration of the magic toward what I know to be the center-most growth of the forest, leaving behind a trail of breadcrumbs should my peers come looking for us. I pray to whatever fates there may be that my cooshee companions, Ambrose and Waffle, made it to safety. They are wise animals.*

*"Lukatas fears one or both of the crawlers are still tracking us through the trees, but we rest, for now, in an old beetle palm. The flaky bark should prove difficult to scale but the sheer size should easily support our weight. Lukatas' wounds do not seem life threatening, but he is in quite a bit of pain. I am no doctor of medicine, but I've done what I can."*

## Part 3: The Dragon's Maw

When the party reaches the ring of Ironwood trees, read or paraphrase the following:

The rampaged trail ends at a smooth-barked Ironwood tree. The enormous isopod that tore through the forest up to this point apparently abandoned its pursuit at this exact spot. Twenty feet to your right and twenty feet to your left you see another of the rare trees. Every twenty feet for as far as you can see, the tall, smooth trees stand in a nearly perfect circle.

Beyond the wall of ironwood trees, the trees twist and curl unnaturally inward, withered and oddly colorless. A stone's throw beyond that, only ankle-tall yellowed grass remains, then only gray, lifeless soil.

The arcanist and his escort lie beyond. Though the area is completely devoid of flora and fauna and safe to explore, the characters must choose to enter the blighted area, known as the Dragon's Maw. If they choose not to, do not force them – but this is where the adventure ends for them.

Should they choose to explore further, read or paraphrase the following:

The blighted expanse of land stretches in front of you for miles. You see the forest peeled away in an enormous ring around you. Not so much as a bird flies overhead, but the edges of forest, beyond the ironwood trees, teems with life. In the very center of this expanse of desolate soil, you see a dark lump of stone jutting from the ground with a massive, natural cave cutting through it like the smile of a gargantuan, toothy beast.

Near the mouth of the cave, clutching a vicious wound in their thigh, sits Lukatas, a half-elf **veteran** (see appendix B) currently with 15 hit points and suffering from one level of exhaustion. Lukatas is a rather handsome man in his late fifties with jaw-length chestnut hair and a surly disposition. His face is daubed with large beads of sweat and his oily hair clings to his cheeks. He constantly grunts and hisses past the pain of his wounds.

Lukatas tells the adventurers that Hildebane ventured into the cave hours ago. He believes the cave to be an abandoned dragon's lair and said he'd return soon. Lukatas urges the adventurers to find him "at once" and bring him back before he gets himself killed. But, before they leave, he asks they either heal him or knock him unconscious – that he cannot handle the pain a minute longer.

Should the party have magical healing, such as that of a *cure wounds* spell or a *potion of healing*, Lukatas' injuries are healed enough that he can

accompany the party into the cave, though he lost his short sword in his previous fight with the redwood crawlers. If it is returned to him, he thanks the party for safeguarding his family's heirloom and passes the one who returned it a coin purse with 7 pp, 5 gp, 13 sp, and an onyx gemstone worth 10 gp inside.

## General Features

The gargantuan cave stretches over a hundred feet across and twenty feet high, sloping ever-downward. Dead vines cling to the cave walls and rotted roots dangle from exposed soil, as though it were once lush with flora.

**Area.** The cave is situated among an expanse of dead vegetation and dried soil. The cave itself is just as barren and dry, crumbly and half-filled with dirt that leaks from between stones. From the mouth of the cave to the terminus is more than a thousand feet of passageways: a network of three tunnels, each one large enough for a gargantuan dragon to crawl through with its wings tucked close to its body.

**Light.** No light at all enters the tunnel past 100 feet of the cave mouth. No glowing fungus or bugs live in the blighted area, nor are there any artificial light sources available. Mundane and magical light illuminates normally, however.

**Brittle Structure.** While inside the tunnels, collapse is a possibility, though a remote one. Each 10-foot section of wall and ceiling has AC 15 and 40 hit points as well as vulnerability to thunder damage. Should a section be reduced to 0 hit points, it collapses on anyone within 10 feet of it. Creatures in the area must succeed on a **DC 13 Dexterity saving throw** or take 2d6 bludgeoning damage and be restrained. A creature can use its action to make a **DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check** to unearth the buried creature.

The passageway from the cave's opening extends 250 feet and steeply slopes downward until it is nearly 100 feet below ground. It then splits into three different tunnels. For simplicity's sake, try to refer to them as east, middle, and west at all times, even on a return journey. Though the three passages carve through the rock and soil at different elevations and have different features, they all lead to the same abandoned nest in a more-or-less direct path. In the past, they were guarded by various poisonous flora, bubbling streams of poison, magical effects, and illusions to disorientate all but the keenest of minds. Now, they are little more than earthen tunnels with the odd, aged hazard.



## East Tunnel

The east tunnel appears relatively flat and cuts smoothly through the stone and earth in a straight line. This tunnel extends for 800 feet in an unnatural, perfectly straight line before it reaches the Abandoned Nest. At the half-way point of the tunnel, the party sees the decayed remains of a long-dead humanoid suspended in mid-air at the exact center of the tunnel. Its arms and legs are tightly pressed against its body as if held aloft by an unseen force.

**Suspension Field.** The smooth gray stone of the tunnel is interrupted by a 40-foot wide band of rose-colored crystal embedded in the walls, ceiling, and floor. The crystal is perfectly smooth and seamless with the rest of the stone. Characters relying on darkvision must have a passive Perception of 25 to see the crystal at all. Light reveals the peculiar scene with no check required.

Creatures that come within 20 feet of the suspended corpse must succeed on a **DC 21 Strength saving throw** or take 2d6 force damage and be restrained. A creature restrained by the magic of the suspension field is pulled into the exact center of the band, and thus the tunnel, where they occupy the same space as the fetid remains of the last traveler caught here nearly a hundred years ago.

Huge or larger creatures moving through the area are unimpeded by the suspension field as well as non-corporeal creatures, such as ghosts or those under the *gaseous form* spell. To pull a creature free from the suspension field with a rope or similar line, requires a **DC 21 Strength (Athletics) check**. Multiple creatures pulling at once can combine their check totals to oppose the DC of this effect.

**Treasure.** The long-dead traveler wears a steel breastplate that is in perfect condition. In addition, they have 2 daggers, a 10-foot length of chain, and a healer's kit. Extricating the items from the field could prove a time consuming and dangerous task.

## Middle Tunnel

The middle tunnel carves upwards into the stone at a sharp angle, making it difficult to traverse without climbing gear or magic. This tunnel ascends 40 feet and immediately levels off. After 260 feet of turns and sudden, stepped changes in elevation, the pathway is bisected by a 15-foot wide, 3-foot deep stream of foul-smelling, bubbling liquid that streams in from the eastern wall. Though no plants survive in this tunnel, desiccated, dry remains of once lush moss line this area for several hundred feet on both sides of the stream, which crackle under foot.

**The Fetid Spring.** A gargantuan reservoir of blighted water exists just above this area, where it leaks into the tunnel and naturally trickles out through the rock and into the chasm beneath the west tunnel. Once the source of sustenance for thousands of pounds of poisonous fungus and lichen, it now does little more than carve through the rock. A creature that comes in contact with the water must succeed on a **DC 10 Constitution saving throw**. On a failed save, the creature takes 1d8 poison damage and is poisoned for 24 hours or until they finish a long rest. On a success, the creature takes no damage and is poisoned for 1 hour.

A creature that ingests water from the poisoned stream must make a **DC 18 Constitution saving throw**, taking 5d10 poison damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one. A creature that takes damage from ingesting water from the stream is poisoned for 24 hours.

**Flooding the Tunnel.** If the east wall of the tunnel or the ceiling are collapsed, more than a trillion gallons of poisonous water floods the tunnel, sweeping Huge or smaller creatures back to the tunnel's opening where it hammers them 40 feet down into the stone junction before carrying them all the way back to the toothy entrance of Dragon's Maw, depositing them outside of the cave. Creatures in the tunnel when this occurs will not survive unless they are immune to both poison and nonmagical bludgeoning damage.

**Treasure.** Inside this stream of water rests nine pea-sized uncut emerald gemstones worth 10 gp each.

Once the party has passed the stream of poisonous water, the tunnel slopes gently upward before suddenly dropping straight down 140 feet into the Abandoned Nest.

## West Tunnel

The west tunnel drops sharply nearly 200 feet and is lined with jagged, broken stones. Climbing down the uneven walls requires a **DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check** for every 50 feet. At the bottom, the passageway leads onward for 100 feet before it drops away into seemingly endless darkness.

**Hailfall Ravine.** This area is easily traversed by creatures with flight, such as the dragons that once resided here. The ravine drops 1,500 feet from the passage opening and stretches 30 feet overhead. The underground ravine splits the world like an axe wound for nearly six miles and made for a perfect passageway for the dragons that once lived here. In addition, before the blight fell over this land, the ravine was home to countless beetles and worms that acted as food for millions of bats that would

cling to the ceiling and gorge themselves. Their guano would fall to the ravine's floor constantly, making the entire area sound like it was trapped in a hailstorm and giving the ravine its name.

**Traversal.** The passageway leading up into the Abandoned Nest lies 700 feet ahead in the ceiling near the center of the ravine. Keep in mind that the entire lair is completely dark. Creatures with a fly or climb speed will find the area remarkably easy to traverse, but the passage will take herculean effort for average bipeds. With the assistance of a climber's kit, assume a creature can safely manage the task with 4 hours of work. A creature climbing free-handed can do so with a single **DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check**, but will suffer one level of exhaustion from the incredible effort.

## The Abandoned Nest

Regardless of the path they choose, the party will find themselves at a gargantuan chamber that stretches 800 feet across and nearly 200 feet overhead. Read the following or paraphrase:

This titanic circular room is dimly illuminated by a single brazier in the center that casts a pale green light. The chamber has dozens of small passages that lead out from this central location, each one barely large enough for a humanoid to crawl through, possibly home to kobolds or other servile creatures of the long-dead dragons. Scraps of torn tapestries, shredded by gargantuan claws, hang from iron rods dangling from the ceiling. Dozens of raised pedestals line each wall, long standing empty and covered in dust. Divots and niches in the walls and floor that were once home to vast wealth now lie barren save for a smattering of gold and silver coins half-melted and fused to the blackened stone.

Along the back wall, furthest away from you, stands a 100-foot-wide black stone disk that shimmers with a faint white light. But what catches your eye the most rests inside the massive central brazier: a single 4-foot-tall green egg.

Standing before the egg, with a pair of copper goggles on his face, stands a half-elven man, disheveled with a large rip in the front of his blue robe: Arcanist Hildebane.

Most of this cavernous expanse of room is completely barren and long plundered by Narlathra and her underlings. What features that remain, mentioned above, are detailed here:

## Arcanist Hildebane

Hildebane (CG male half-elf **mage**; see appendix B) has one 1st-level spell slot, two 2nd-level spell slots, a 4th-level spell slot, and 31 hit points remaining. Even still, he is more curious than frightened at the arrival of the party. A thin, willowy man in his later years, Hildebane sports a well trimmed, rounded beard which he tries his best not to touch. His dark robes are covered in tears and cuts from the harrowing journey he's been on. The large rip along his chest and belly exposes some of the dingy white underclothes beneath. A peculiarly average person in most regards, Hildebane is not troubled by some of the incongruous personality traits of many of his peers. Straightforward and even-tempered, he is more likely to request a strong cup of black tea than odd magical components or enigmatic favors.

Hildebane arrived with Lukatas and left the wounded sellsword to explore the cavern via the Western Tunnel, where he flew up and into this terminus. In the hours he's spent exploring it, he has discerned the following:

- This was once the nest of a green dragon and shows telltale traits of such a place. He guesses it to be the nest of one or both of the "Venoms" — ancient dragons that once ruled over Tangled Trees.
- The enormous disk at the back of the room seems to be some type of magical device he believes is infused with conjuration magic. Fiddling with it would be too dangerous without an *identify* spell. He has not prepared that spell and has no pearl to cast it even if he did.
- The brazier most certainly is magical and houses some type of glowing magical liquid. A green dragon egg is suspended partially in the ooze, along with scraps of shell and rotted material Hildebane believes are the remains of two destroyed dragon eggs.

With the arrival of the party, and potentially Lukatas, the arcanist desperately wants to further investigate both the brazier and the magical disk in this room. If denied, he will assert himself as the leader of this expedition and even threaten to withhold the party's payment for services rendered should they not assist him. If the party remains unswayed, he seems frustrated but agrees to return at a later date instead.

## Disk of Translocation

The massive three-foot-thick disk of stone is a perfect 100-foot circle. Around the edges are draconic runes. Characters who can speak draconic know the inscriptions read “Peaks of Thunder,” “Throat of Poison,” and, spelled phonetically, “Korman-th-eer.”

**The Enchantment.** A character can attempt to discern the nature of the *disk of translocation* (see appendix A) with a **DC 17 Intelligence (Arcana) check**. On a success, the character knows this disk opens a temporary portal to one of three locations that are inscribed upon it. Without an *identify* spell, the command word is unknown. Should the characters venture to guess or use an *identify* spell, the command word is “tyranny” in draconic. Likewise, characters can confirm the locations written on the disk with three **DC 14 Intelligence (History) checks**: The Thunder Peaks, this dragon’s lair, and The Elvish City of Cormanthor known as Myth Drannor. Each disk is kept in a perilous and dragon-controlled area of the country, each in a lair once controlled by Narlgathra herself.

### THE THUNDER PEAKS AND MYTH DRANNOR

The three disks of translocation have been in Narlgathra’s control for over a century. The Thunder Peaks could be home to wyverns, dragons, kobolds, goblins, or even stone giants that worship Narlgathra or Tiamat.

Meanwhile, the disk that leads to Myth Drannor is inside Narlgathra’s original and most well defended lair. Venturing through the portal and into her lair will certainly prove deadly and could put the party face-to-face with a very unhappy ancient red dragon.

## Blighted Brazier

The central brazier is 6 feet across at the bottom and magically created from the floor of the cave itself. The mouth of the brazier sweeps out to 20 feet across and is filled with a glowing green sludge. The egg, which sits off-center, is adjacent to the smashed remains of two other long-broken eggs. The small bones of two half-formed green dragon wyrmlings lie sunken to the bottom of the ooze-like substance.

The remaining egg floats effortlessly atop the fluid and is almost colorless, a far departure from the mossy green exterior one might expect.

**The Secret of the Ooze.** The strange glowing fluid was once a magical liquid meant to keep the eggs from hatching. It has since been corrupted by chaos and the blood of the two dragon eggs shattered inside it long ago. Unknown to any, the ooze is responsible for the blighted, lifeless area surrounding the Abandoned Nest. Made to siphon a portion of life from three dragon eggs, its power has run rampant and pulled the life from everything living thing connected to the dragon’s lair. It also has a small vestige of sentience, that of the two undeveloped wyrmlings that perished inside it.

**Development.** If the egg inside the brazier is disturbed or a creature touches the suspension liquid, the **glowing ooze** (see appendix B) crawls from the brazier and attacks!

When the ooze is destroyed, it very quickly begins to dissipate and disperse. Where it dies, the ground immediately sprouts small vines and miniature grasses, even on the bare rock. Every living creature in Dragon’s Maw can feel the vanishing of an unease they may not have noticed before.

## The Egg

Should the egg be removed from the brazier without being damaged (it is extremely fragile), it immediately begins to regain its deep forest-green color and mossy exterior. The dragon inside is as small and undeveloped as it was over a thousand years ago. If left intact, the dragon returns to full strength and hatches 8 years later.

## Conclusion

If the ooze is destroyed, when the party resurfaces from the dragon's lair, they find the blasted surroundings already beginning to bud with life. What was once gray, lifeless soil is dotted with specks of green. So long as the green dragon egg remains in Tangled Trees, the forest will continue to be a twisted labyrinth of overgrown trees and skittish vegetation. The fate of the dragon egg is left in the hands of the surveyors and denizens that wish to settle Tangled Trees, but Eloris Hildebane turns all of his considerable knowledge to convincing his fellows to allow the dragon to remain and prosper with the guidance of keen and caring minds.

Bruul Harker supplies the party with the standard payment plus double-pay if they manage to return Hildebane and Lukatas alive: a purse of 210 gold pieces each.

Should the party have returned Hildebane's pack and materials, unspoiled, he offers them the *embracer's fur blanket* (see appendix A) from his own bed with his heartfelt thanks.

If Lukatas was healed and brought along into the dragon's abandoned nest, he returns the favor by presenting the party with a *potion of greater healing* and a warm smile.

The survey is far from complete and the work in Tangled Trees is nowhere near finished. What happens from here only time will tell, but there is no doubt at all that the surveyors' attention will turn to the dragon's nest, and what fate truly befell Narlgathra.

## Appendix A: Magic Items

### *Disk of Translocation*

*Wondrous item, very rare*

These magical disks come in pairs, each sharing unique and complementary markings with the other. Each disk can be made of a variety of materials such as bone, stone, or metals like iron or mithral.

As an action, you can touch the disk and speak its command word to instantly be teleported to the location of the paired *disk of translocation*. The teleportation is unerring if each disk is on the same plane of existence. When teleporting to a different plane, there is a 10% chance you will appear in an unoccupied space somewhere on that plane 1d100 miles from the paired *disk of translocation*.

### *Embracer's Fur Blanket*

*Wondrous item, rare*

This supple fur blanket is warm to the touch and surprisingly soft. The blanket, which normally measures only 3 feet by 4 feet, can magically expand to drape comfortably over two Medium creatures so long as they remain adjacent.

A creature that remains under the blanket during a short or long rest gains the following benefits:

- While under the blanket, you suffer no harm in temperatures as cold as -20 degrees Fahrenheit or as warm as 120 degrees Fahrenheit. You do not need to make ability checks or saving throws due to extreme temperatures during the rest.
- While under the blanket, you cannot be surprised except when incapacitated by something other than nonmagical sleep. The blanket awakens you if you are sleeping naturally and initiative is rolled.
- When you roll a Hit Die to regain hit points, you may double the roll of the Hit Die before adding your Constitution modifier.

While completely covered by the blanket, you may choose for no sound to pass through the blanket as if under the effects of a *silence* spell.

## Rootshape Gauntlets

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)

This gauntlet is covered in overlapping hickory slabs rather than plates of metal. Each of these plates has runes carved into its roughly-hewn face that have been filled with dirt over time. This item has 3 charges and regains 1 expended charge each morning at dawn.

If you are within arm's reach of a tree, as an action you can expend a charge and press your hand against the tree to draw a weapon or pieces of ammunition from it. This can be any weapon, or 2d4 pieces of ammunition for any weapon, with which you are proficient. The look and feel of each item changes with the type of tree from which it is drawn, but these differences do not affect its function in any meaningful way.

Weapons created in this way splinter beyond repair if the d20 roll for an attack is a 1, or after 1 day without being bathed in water. If you spend an action to return an un-splintered weapon created in this way to a tree within arm's reach, the gauntlets regain an expended charge.

SHIAH "CINDER" IRGANGLADEN



Cooshee

## Appendix B: Monsters

### Cooshee

#### Cooshee

Medium beast, unaligned

**Armor Class** 15 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 52 (8d8 + 16)

**Speed** 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	3 (-4)	14 (+2)	8 (-1)

**Skills** Perception +4, Stealth +5

**Senses** passive Perception 14

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Keen Hearing and Smell.** The cooshee has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

**Plant Camouflage.** The cooshee has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks it makes in any terrain with ample obscuring plant life.

**Pounce.** If the cooshee moves at least 20 feet straight toward a creature and then hits it with a tackle attack on the same turn, that target must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. If the target is prone, the cooshee can make one bite attack against it as a bonus action.

**Verdant Rush.** The cooshee can move up to 40 feet in a straight line as a bonus action on each of its turns.

#### Actions

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage.

**Tackle.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

## Giant Wolf Spider

### Giant Wolf Spider

Medium beast, unaligned

**Armor Class** 13

**Hit Points** 11 (2d8 + 2)

**Speed** 40 ft., climb 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	3 (-1)	12 (+1)	4 (-3)

**Skills** Perception +3, Stealth +7

**Senses** blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 1/4 (50 XP)

**Spider Climb.** The spider 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 spider knows the exact location of any other creature in contact with the same web.

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

### Actions

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) 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.

## Glowing Ooze

### Glowing Ooze

Large ooze, unaligned

**Armor Class** 8

**Hit Points** 45 (6d10 + 12)

**Speed** 10 ft., climb 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	6 (-2)	14 (+2)	2 (-4)	6 (-2)	1 (-5)

**Damage Resistances** acid

**Damage Immunities** lightning, poison, slashing

**Condition Immunities** blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, poisoned, prone

**Senses** blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 8

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Amorphous.** The ooze can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

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

### Actions

**Pseudopod.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage plus 3 (1d6) poison damage. Plants and plant creatures take maximum damage from the ooze's pseudopod attack.

### Reactions

**Split.** When an ooze that is Medium or larger is subjected to lightning or slashing damage, it splits into two new jellies if it has at least 10 hit points. Each new ooze has hit points equal to half the original ooze's, rounded down. New oozes are one size smaller than the original ooze.



## Guard

### Guard

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

**Armor Class** 16 (chain shirt, shield)

**Hit Points** 11 (2d8 + 2)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

**Skills** Perception +2

**Senses** passive Perception 12

**Languages** any one language (usually Common)

**Challenge** 1/8 (25 XP)

### Actions

**Spear.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) piercing damage, or 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

## Knight

### Knight

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

**Armor Class** 18 (plate)

**Hit Points** 52 (8d8+16)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)

**Saving Throws** Con +4, Wis +2

**Senses** passive Perception 10

**Languages** any one language (usually Common)

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Brave.** The knight has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

### Actions

**Multiattack.** The knight makes two melee attacks.

**Greatsword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage.

**Heavy Crossbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d10) piercing damage.

**Leadership (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest).** For 1 minute, the knight can utter a special command or warning whenever a nonhostile creature that it can see within 30 ft. of it makes an attack roll or a saving throw. The creature can add a d4 to its roll provided it can hear and understand the knight. A creature can benefit from only one Leadership die at a time. This effect ends if the knight is incapacitated.

### Reactions

**Parry.** The knight adds 2 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the knight must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

# Mage

## Mage

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

**Armor Class** 12 (15 with mage armor)

**Hit Points** 40 (9d8)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)

**Saving Throws** Int +6, Wis +4

**Skills** Arcana +6, History +6

**Senses** passive Perception 11

**Languages** any four languages

**Challenge** 6 (2,300 XP)

**Spellcasting.** The mage is a 9th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). The mage has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt*, *light*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*

1st level (4 slots): *detect magic*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*

2nd level (3 slots): *misty step*, *suggestion*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell*, *fireball*, *fly*

4th level (3 slots): *greater invisibility*, *ice storm*

5th level (1 slot): *cone of cold*

## Actions

**Dagger.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

mage



NATHANAËL ROUX

## Poisonous Snake

### Poisonous Snake

Tiny beast, unaligned

**Armor Class** 13

**Hit Points** 2 (1d4)

**Speed** 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
2 (-4)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	1 (-5)	10 (+0)	3 (-4)

**Senses** blindsight 10 ft., passive Perception 10

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 1/8 (25 XP)

## Actions

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw, taking 5 (2d4) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.



## Redwood Crawler

### Redwood Crawler

Huge beast, unaligned

**Armor Class** 16 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 93 (11d12 + 22)

**Speed** 40 ft., climb 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)	1 (-5)	7 (-2)	3 (-4)

**Senses** blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 8

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 4 (1,100 XP)

### Actions

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or take 19 (3d12) poison damage. 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.

### Reactions

**Curl Up.** When the crawler takes damage, it can curl up into a defensive posture, gaining a +3 bonus to its AC until the start of its next turn. When the crawler uncurls at the start of its turn, a creature of its choice within 5 feet of it must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw or be knocked prone.

## Scout

### Scout

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

**Armor Class** 13 (leather armor)

**Hit Points** 16 (3d8 + 3)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)

**Skills** Nature +4, Perception +5, Stealth +6, Survival +5

**Senses** passive Perception 15

**Languages** any one language (usually Common)

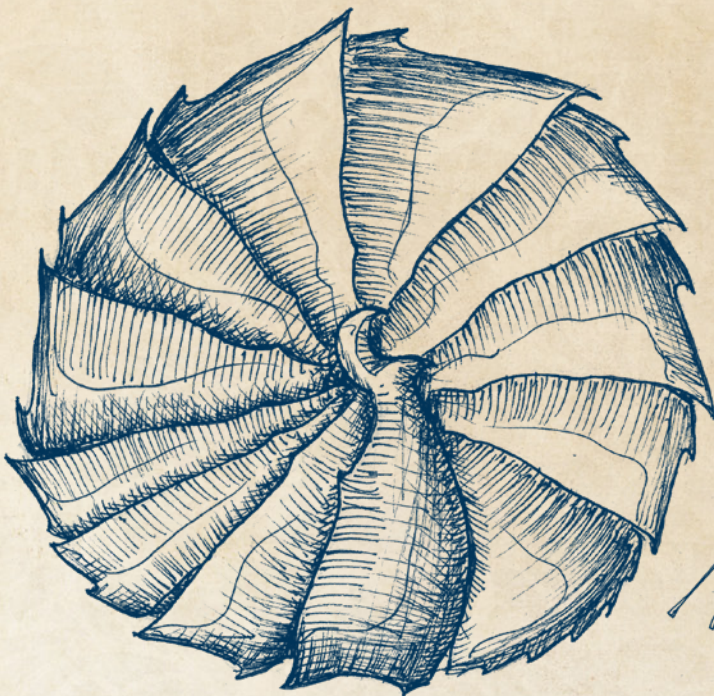
**Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP)

### Actions

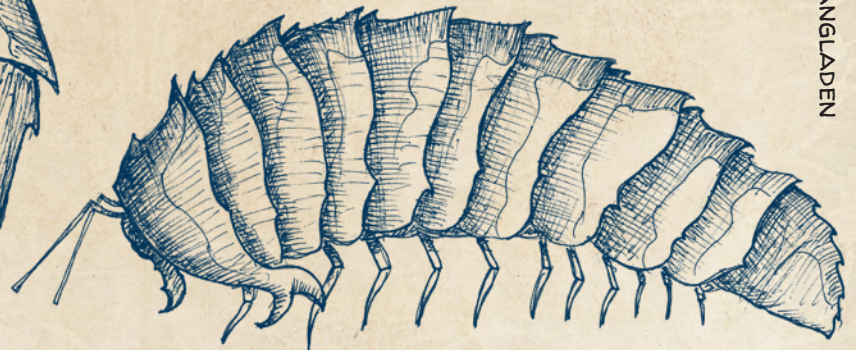
**Multiattack.** The scout makes two melee attacks or two ranged attacks.

**Shortsword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

**Longbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, ranged 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.



Redwood Crawler



## Swarm of Insects

### Swarm of Insects

Medium swarm of tiny beasts, unaligned

**Armor Class** 12 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 22 (5d8)

**Speed** 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
3 (-4)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	11 (-5)	7 (-2)	1 (-5)

**Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing, slashing  
**Condition Immunities** charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned

**Senses** blindsight 10 ft., passive Perception 8

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP)

**Swarm.** The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Tiny insect. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

### Actions

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 0 ft., one target in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 10 (4d4) piercing damage, or 5 (2d4) piercing damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer.



veteran

## Veteran

### Veteran

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

**Armor Class** 17 (splint)

**Hit Points** 58 (9d8 + 18)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

**Skills** Athletics +5, Perception +2

**Senses** passive Perception 12

**Languages** any one language (usually Common)

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

### Actions

**Multiattack.** The veteran makes two longsword attacks. If it has a shortsword drawn, it can also make a shortsword attack.

**Longsword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage, or 8 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage if used with two hands.

**Shortsword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

**Heavy Crossbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d10 + 1) piercing damage.

## Appendix C: Flora

### Beetle Palm

Native to the Midwood area of Cormanthor, this tree can reach upward of 100 feet. Its name comes from its smooth, black, scaled bark which is said to resemble the carapace of a beetle. The wood itself is oily and burns well, making it a good cooking material. It would be a fine building material as well, but it has the tendency to become brittle and snap into segments as it ages.

Once a year, beetle palms produce around a dozen plum-sized nuts at the base of their large, branch-like fronds. The nuts are quite bitter, but could be used as a substitute material component for the goodberry spell. If someone casts goodberry using a spell slot of 2nd-level or higher, with a freshly-picked beetle nut as a component, creatures that eat the resulting goodberries have advantage on Wisdom (Survival) checks for the next hour.

### Ironwood

There are a good few trees that are said to be as hard as iron in the Realms, but none deserve that title more than the Ironwood tree. These trees take after the classic oak in appearance, but with a rustic gray bark and with shiny orange veins lining its recesses. Its leaves are a dark green, but take after copper as the autumn comes.

These trees are unique, in that they were artificially created. To protect their home forests from the devastating effects of the Spellplague, druids and dryads joined in massive rituals to convert swaths of their forests into these nigh-on-invincible trees. Prior to that point, Ironwood only existed in the form of weapons and armor the druids fashioned for themselves with a smaller version of the same ritual.

Since then, Ironwoods have become a regular part of almost every druid grove located in or near temperate climates. Their lumber is carefully and graciously used by druids to create armor and weapons as durable and lasting as their steel counterparts. Some particularly experienced elven enchanters have said that ironwood is much easier to enchant than most other woods.

This tree's seeds spawn once every decade, and appear as nuggets of iron tipped with an acorn's cap. A spellcaster casting the barkskin spell while holding one of these acorns can allow the spell to consume it. If they do, the spell appears to coat them in a sheet of iron, granting a +2 bonus to barkskin's AC alteration.

Ironwood



