

2-1/2: FOOL'S GROVE

In a time long before the current age of the world, fomorians began magical experimentation with myriad life forms, fey and otherwise, to produce nefarious guardians and soldiers. Such experimentation inevitably results in successes and failures. Loath to part with their failed experiments without sowing some form of wickedness, the fomorians devised mystical prisons for their underwhelming monstrosities. These they built upon or near the surface of the world, where their castoff pets could do harm to the fomorians' enemies.

These "prisons" are dens of madness and confusion. Little, if anything, can be expected to make sense within them. The adventuring site of this scenario—the so-called Fool's Grove—is no different.

Fool's Grove is a far-flung tract of wilderness in a dangerous forest on the borderlands, and it is well known to the local humans, and humanoids, but avoided by all but the most foolhardy adventurers (such as your participants' player characters!). Adventurers come to this locale, of course, due to rumors of fabulous fey treasures locked away within it. Some others receive lies about the danger of allowing the

grove to continue to exist, probably from some power-hungry noble (fey or otherwise!) who will, no doubt, take credit for the ultimate depopulation of the area without bloodying his hands. One such reason might influence your player characters to (foolishly) set off for Fool's Grove.

Herein are all manner of monsters with little attention paid to their logical distribution or support. But as is common in fantasy milieux, fey magic is afoot, and the mundane considerations of logic and ecology need not be given a thought. That said, the prison does provide food for its inmates, of a fungal variety, and water, too. The monsters do not quarrel since they have, over time, simply become accustomed to the camaraderie of one another.

Adding to the chaos of the place is the intrusion of the Gnome and his pet, the badger Francis. Through guile and perverse charm, this infamous character has not only broken into the Fool's Grove, but he has befriended the monsters therein. He has, in fact, become their de facto leader.

Tiles: This delve uses tiles from two sets of DT4: *Ruins of the Wild*TM.



About the Authors

Logan Bonner has a lair that is a series of spiraling tunnels, and at the nexus of these passages lurks *Logan Bonner*. Any creature passing over one of these tunnels is drawn towards it hypnotically, for the tunnels form a pattern which is *hypnotic*. When a victim is within the passages, he approaches Logan without realizing it and is charmed by a spell from the game designer unless a saving throw at -4 on the die is made. The charmed victim will then be devoured at Logan's leisure. In these depths, Logan has produced fiendish works such as *Adventurer's Vault*, *Forgotten Realms Player's Guide*, *Draconomicon*, and *Arcane Power*.

Chris Sims—a mindless shell of nebulous humanoid shape—was created by traumatic thought. Driven by past connections with worldly beings, Chris seeks a material body with singleness of purpose. He searches for weak points in the fabric connecting the Astral Sea and the world, waiting for one of these stress points to become collinear so that he can pass through the singularity thus created. While he waits, he has used his utter lack of imagination on *Dungeon Master's Guide*, *Adventurer's Vault*, *Martial Power*, and *Monster Manual 2*.

ENCOUNTER 2-1/2-1: IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS

Encounter Level 2-1/2 (672 XP)

SETUP

5 carbuncle fatalists (C)
2 enveloper snugglers (E)
7 kercpa tinybow archers (K)

The player characters arrive at the grove's edge. Until they pass the ingress of the grove (which can allow up to Huge creatures through comfortably), they can progress no further. This door is not noted on the map, but it is instead just south of the path running through the grove's center—see “Features of the Area” for a full description. Unless the characters are stealthy, the monsters are apt to spot them quickly, but no attack occurs until the adventurers pass into the Fool's Grove. That is the time for determining initiative. Be sure to allow the player characters to use their skills to identify their adversaries, and the unique intricacies of each.

When the player characters come upon this most unusual scene, describe it in this way:

You wander along a strange path in the forest and arrive at an enormous ornate door of wood. This magnificent door is of clearly fey design, bearing intricate patterns of flora, runes in the Elven language, and a single peephole. Lacking any other decoration—even a handle or knob—it stands alone in the woodland setting, with no walls to hold it up. Beyond it is a grove of trees within which you can just make out a low structure. Silence hangs eerily about the area. Pleasant woodland smells mix with a hint of something foul. You each sense something is amiss—that perhaps it is not that the walls are not there, but that you cannot perceive them.

Arcana DC 15: A magical effect of some sort forms the walls of a dome, invisible to the naked eye, over and around this grove.

Arcana DC 20: The dweomer that creates the wall is meant to keep something in, not out.

If a player character can read Elven, recite this:

The runes read, “Keep Out! Yes, this means you.” (Add something here that specifically identifies your participants' player characters.)

Through the peephole one sees the following:

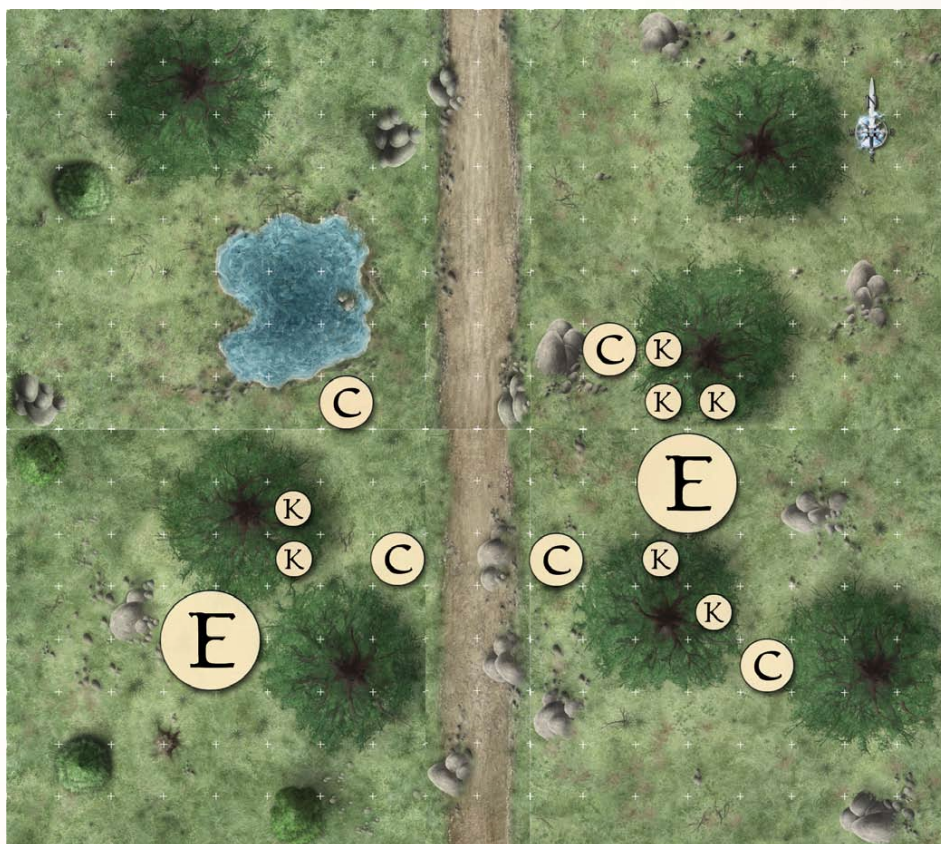
The peephole reveals only an empty grove.

Should the player characters simply peer around the door to look beyond it, or when they venture within the grove, tell them this:

Beyond the door is the grove, not surprisingly. Among the trees wander nearly half a dozen small creatures that look like golden armadillos. Each has what looks like a ruby embedded in its head. Two shiny pillars of a mysterious white substance also stand among the trees. To the north flows a brook, and you also spot a small pool amid the trees.

Arcana DC 16: The pillars of white are actually creatures known as envelopers. In combat, they take humanoid form. They can grasp a creature and mimic some of its battle knowledge.

Perception DC 23: Red squirrels, each about a foot tall, roam the tree branches, and each rodent is armed with a bow and armored in leather.



2 Enveloper Snugglers (E)**Level 3 Controller**

Large fey beast

XP 150 each

Initiative +1 **Senses** Perception +2**HP** 50; **Bloodied** 25**AC** 17; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 15**Speed** 7⊕ **Slam and Hug** (standard; at-will)

Reach 2; +8 vs. AC; the target is grabbed.

↓ **Consuming Cuddle** (minor 1/round; at-will)

Targets a creature grabbed by the enveloper snuggler; +9 vs. Fortitude; the target is weakened (save ends). While the target is weakened, the enveloper snuggler speaks all languages the target does; the enveloper snuggler adopts a personality that parodies the target's; and the enveloper snuggler can mimic one of the target's at-will or encounter powers (chosen randomly), shaping needed weapons or implements from its body. The power can be used at-will, with an attack bonus of +8 vs. AC or +7 vs. other defenses. Ability modifiers referenced in the power are treated as +4.

← **Great Big Hug** (standard; encounter)

Close burst 2; +7 vs. Reflex; the target is grabbed.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –**Str** 14 (+3) **Dex** 11 (+1) **Wis** 12 (+2)**Con** 18 (+5) **Int** 3 (-3) **Cha** 15 (+3)**5 Carbuncle Fatalists (C)****Level 2 Minion Soldier**

Small fey magical beast

XP 31 each

Initiative +2 **Senses** Perception +3; low-light vision**Empathic Monster Coordination** aura 5; creatures other than carbuncles within the aura gain combat advantage against enemies.**HP** 1; a missed attack never damages a minion; see also certain death.**AC** 18; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 11, **Will** 14**Speed** 3← **Will to Die** (standard; encounter) • **Psychic**

Close burst 2; targets enemies; +7 vs. Will; 4 psychic damage, and the target is slowed until the end of its next turn. *Effect:* The carbuncle fatalist dies.

Certain Death (immediate reaction, when missed by an attack; at-will)The carbuncle fatalist uses *will to die*.**Gem**

The gem in the carbuncle fatalist's head disintegrates when it dies. A creature grabbing the carbuncle can steal the gem (part of the encounter's treasure) as a minor action.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** telepathy 10**Str** 8 (+0) **Dex** 8 (+0) **Wis** 14 (+3)**Con** 17 (+4) **Int** 7 (-1) **Cha** 10 (+1)**TACTICS**

If the player characters lacked the care to locate the kercpas before entering the grove, these tiny archers gain a round of surprise in which to act. In any case, the kercpas run among the branches to pepper the unfortunate interlopers with tiny arrows. They don't shrink from leaping between trees or from hurling Elven expletives at the intruders.

Imminently aggressive, the envelopers immediately involve themselves in the melee, rushing to give the party a *great big hug*. Each Enveloper then simulates a player character's power to pelt the party with this surprise. Once this grand opening—which you, as Dungeon Master, should roleplay to the hilt—is done, the envelopers resort to their *slam and hug*, using player character powers whenever they can.

For the first round, the carbuncles watch the battle in blithe fascination. Only if a threat seems imminent does a carbuncle join the melee, nobly dying to harm its enemies and deny them the treasure on its forehead. On the other hand, a carbuncle telepathically tells a player character the exact value of its forehead gem if the adventurer seems at all amicable. That player character might gain a new companion, if he or she can tolerate the creature's *empathic monster coordination*.

7 Kercpa Tinybow Archers (K) Level 2 Minion Artillery

Tiny fey magical beast

XP 31 each

Initiative +4 **Senses** Perception +8; darkvision**HP** 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.**AC** 16; **Fortitude** 12, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 14**Speed** 4, climb 4⊕ **Bite** (standard; at-will)

Melee 0; +9 vs. AC; 3 damage.

r **Tiny Bow** (standard; at-will) • **Weapon**

Ranged 15/30; +9 vs. AC; 5 damage.

↘ **Go Nuts** (immediate reaction, when an attack misses the kercpa; at-will)The kercpa tinybow archer shifts 1 square and makes a *tiny bow* attack.**Skills** Acrobatics +9, Athletics +3, Stealth +11**Alignment** Unaligned **Languages** Elven**Str** 4 (-2) **Dex** 17 (+4) **Wis** 14 (+3)**Con** 8 (+0) **Int** 11 (+1) **Cha** 12 (+2)**Equipment** leather armor, tiny bow, 12 tiny arrows**Earseeker Infestation****Level 3 Disease**

Tiny, wood-dwelling insects have laid eggs in your flesh. Their larvae are now devouring your innards.

Attack: +7 vs. Fortitude**Endurance** improve DC 16, maintain DC 11, worsen DC 10 or lower

The target is cured. ❑ **Initial Effect** The target loses a healing surge, which cannot be restored until the target is cured.

◀▶ The target loses a healing surge, which cannot be restored until the target is cured. ▶ **Final State** The target dies as its vital organs and/or brain are irreparably damaged by burrowing larvae.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: Bright light.

Bushes and Rocks: These are difficult terrain.

Dweomer Wall: No attack the player characters or creatures here can muster can pass through this barrier. The player characters find they can pass through these walls (the borders of the mapped area) into the grove without harm. However, once the adventurers have foolishly done so, they cannot leave until all the denizens of the Fool's Grove are defeated or turned to the player characters' side. (Whether they know this fact depends on the circumstances of the game's progress, but if one of them bumps into the wall, the predicament then becomes all too apparent!) The wall also blocks sound much like a real wall.

The dweomer wall also divides the encounter areas from one another, as someone who succeeds on a DC 15 Arcana check can clearly ascertain. The only way into the next area is along the path and across the log bridge. When the PCs can see into area 2, feel free to describe that area.

Magnificent Door: The 15-foot door cannot be opened or knocked down. A player character can climb it (DC 15 Athletics) and pass through the dweomer wall in this way. If a player character listens at the door, require a Perception check, but no matter the result, the brave one hears the babbling of a brook and the sounds one might expect within a woodland grove (wind, birds, and so on). Anyone who touches the door for more than a second or two is exposed to an earseeker infestation (see facing page, bottom).

On the other side of the peephole is taped a thin piece of paper, which is blank on the outward-facing side. The side toward the peephole has a perfectly realistic painting of the grove, as one might see it through the peephole.

Tree: The tree's trunk is blocking terrain, and creatures standing in the branches have cover.

Treasure: Gems recovered from the carbuncles might make up one 2nd-level monetary treasure parcel. Otherwise, there is no treasure here.



2-1/2-2: JACKED IN THE BEANSTALKS

Encounter Level 3-1/2 (850 XP)

SETUP

- 1 brain mole mindmugger (M)
- 4 garden-variety al-mi'raj (A)
- 1 stale trail flail snail (F)
- 1 stench kow hellstinker (K)

Once the player characters discover their only path into this area, they can cross easily enough. Little do they know that a brain mole rules herein.

When the player characters set their eyes on this garden of unearthly terrors, read this to them:

A small stream loops into this area from outside and meanders happily north. A single, old, gray log with no bark allows one to cross the stream to another path. That path wanders toward a dilapidated structure. Rows of a root-vegetable and fungus garden flank the path near the stream and northward, dotted in several places with worn stones that look suspiciously like grave markers. The northernmost rows are covered in winding beanstalks that are taller than a man. Bunnies, large for their ilk, wander the garden, feasting on chutes and leaves. Each of the beasts has an enormous spiral horn jutting from its furry head.

Across the path from the beanstalks looms a grassy knoll and a sinister tree. Near the tree is a hideous, grumpy cow with a hunched back, orange hair, a green mane, and bulging eyes that have a vicious gleam. You think you can smell it from here, and that smell isn't just manure!

Perception DC 15: *Something large makes a squelching sound as it moves behind the beanstalks.*

DC 20: *Atop the grassy knoll, a dark mole peers at you from a mound of freshly turned earth. It must be about 3 feet long, judging from the upper part of its body.*

The player characters can cross the log bridge before the garden's denizens go berserk. Then all the creatures here attack, and initiative should be rolled.

TACTICS

When the battle begins, the brain mole starts off with *brain burrow*, unless a number of its allies are in the melee with the player characters, or near enough to charge the latter. In this most fortunate case, the brain mole uses *mole madness* on its allies. Until *brain burrow* recharges, the mole remains smugly atop the knoll and uses *mole aversion*. It resorts to melee only if it must, preferring to burrow away from danger.

The flail snail and stench kow hurl themselves into the melee. The former moves ponderously to flail

away at the nearest few enemies while the latter fearlessly charges enemies whenever it can. This bovine beast *might* become more hesitant once it is bloodied.

Normally timid and a pleasure to pet, the al-mi'rajes fight fiercely for their brain mole master. They bound and burrow about, stabbing madly.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: Bright light.

Beanstalks: The beanstalks can block line of sight. Small creatures can dart into them for cover, but larger creatures treat the area as difficult terrain. If subjected to radiant damage, the beanstalks grow at a rampant rate, doubling their height and becoming blocking terrain to all. If subjected to fire damage, the bean pods explode violently in a burst centered on the area that took fire damage.

← Bean-Pod Explosion

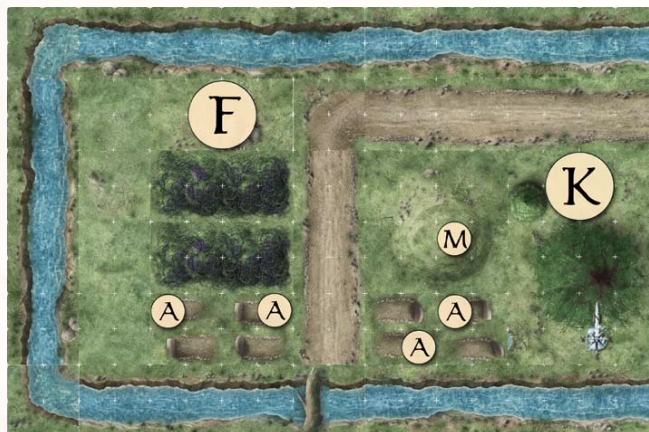
Close burst 2 (centered on each square that took fire damage); +6 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 3 damage. *Effect:* The area now contains hot beans, which are difficult terrain.

Bushes and Rocks: These are difficult terrain. The headstones are not difficult terrain (see below).

Dweomer Wall: The dweomer wall functions as aforementioned. It largely prevents sounds from reaching the area of the third encounter. The only way into that area is along the path.

Grassy Knoll: This knoll is steep enough to be considered difficult terrain for those ascending it. If your players should mistake your words, and believe a "grassy gnoll" is nearby, it's perhaps best to leave them to their foolish notions for the nonce.

"Grave" Stones: These stones are actually garden markers with inspirational quotes on them, although one simply says "The Gnome's Garden," and another "Badger to the Bone," and a third, "Mothers Plant Turnips That Keep Forever." If a player character takes a minor action, the player can recite an inspi-



rational quote to grant his or her player character a +1 bonus to defenses until the start of his or her next turn, or a +2 bonus to one roll or check before the end of his or her next turn. The player must say the quote aloud, and you and the other participants are to judge its worth (strictly!). Each player character can do this once during the encounter.

| Brain Mole Mindmugger (M) Level 2 Controller (Leader) | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| Small fey beast XP 125 | | |
| Initiative +3; see also <i>mountain or molehill?</i> | Senses Perception +4 | |
| HP 30; Bloodied 15 | | |
| AC 16; Fortitude 12, Reflex 15, Will 14 | | |
| Resist 5 psychic | | |
| Speed 3, burrow 3 | | |
| ⊕ Mole Aversion (standard; at-will) • Psychic | | |
| +6 vs. Will; 1d4 + 2 damage, and ongoing 5 psychic damage (ends if the target ends its turn at least 2 squares farther from the brain mole). | | |
| ⊕ Psychic Cascade Claw (standard; at-will) • Psychic | | |
| +7 vs. AC; 1d4 + 2 damage, and ongoing 5 psychic damage (ends if the target ends its turn at least 2 squares farther from the brain mole). | | |
| ↻ Brain Burrow (standard; recharge ☒ ☒) • Charm, Psychic | | |
| Ranged 20; +6 vs. Will; 1d10 + 3 psychic damage, and ongoing 5 psychic damage (save ends). <i>First Failed Saving Throw</i> : The target is dominated (save ends). At the start of each of the dominated creature's turns, roll a d6. On a 4, 5, or 6, the brain mole can't make the dominated creature attack its allies this turn. | | |
| ✱ Mole Madness (standard; recharges when first bloodied) • Charm | | |
| Area burst 3 within 10; each ally in the burst makes a melee basic attack against the nearest enemy, charging if it must. | | |
| Mountain or Molehill? | | |
| When the brain mole rolls initiative, its enemies think it's a minion. | | |
| Alignment Unaligned | Languages – | |
| Skills Insight +9, Stealth +8 | | |
| Str 10 (+1) | Dex 14 (+3) | Wis 17 (+4) |
| Con 6 (-1) | Int 2 (-3) | Cha 14 (+3) |

| 4 Garden-Variety Al-mi'rajes (A) Level 1 Skirmisher | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| Small fey beast XP 100 each | | |
| Initiative +5 | Senses Perception +6 | |
| HP 26; Bloodied 13 | | |
| AC 15; Fortitude 11, Reflex 14, Will 13 | | |
| Speed 5, burrow 5 | | |
| ⊕ Unicorn Horn (standard; at-will) | | |
| +6 vs. AC; 2d6 damage, and the al-mi'raj can shift 1 square. See also <i>missing digger</i> . | | |
| This Means War! (immediate reaction, when an enemy within 5 squares drops an ally to 0 hit points; at-will) | | |
| The garden variety al-mi'raj charges and attacks the triggering enemy. | | |
| Missing Digger | | |
| When the garden-variety al-mi'raj misses with an attack, it can burrow its speed, surfacing at the end of the move. It doesn't provoke opportunity attacks for leaving a square when burrowing. | | |
| Alignment Unaligned | Languages – | |
| Str 7 (-2) | Dex 17 (+3) | Wis 12 (+1) |
| Con 10 (+0) | Int 2 (-4) | Cha 14 (+2) |

Log Bridge: Crossing this cantankerous log successfully requires a DC 10 Acrobatics check.

Stream: This waterway is shallow and full of cool, crisp spring water. Its channel is 5 feet deep, requiring any who fall in to make a DC 10 Athletics check to clamber out.

Tree: The tree's trunk is blocking terrain, and creatures standing in the branches have cover.

Treasure: Among the root vegetables is an enormous golden carrot (DC 15 Perception to locate while searching). It acts as *everlasting provisions* (*Player's Handbook*, page 254), and it gives each one who eats of it a +2 bonus to the first attack roll of each day due to mystically improved eyesight (level 5 magic item; 1,000 gp).

| Stale Trail Flail Snail (F) Level 4 Brute | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| Large fey beast XP 175 | | |
| Initiative +0 | Senses Perception +4 | |
| Stale Snail Trail aura 1; each creature that starts its turn in the aura is slowed until the start of its next turn. | | |
| HP 68; Bloodied 34; see also <i>flail wail</i> and <i>flail snail fail</i> | | |
| AC 18 (14 while bloodied); Fortitude 18, Reflex 12, Will 16 | | |
| Resist 5 to weapon attacks; see also <i>flail snail fail</i> | | |
| Speed 2 | | |
| ⊕ Flail Tentacle (standard; at-will) | | |
| Reach 2; +7 vs. AC; 1d10 + 3 damage. | | |
| ⊕ Flailing Snail (standard; at-will) | | |
| The flail snail makes two flail tentacle attacks. If both hit the same target, that target is also knocked prone. | | |
| ↩ Flail Snail Wail (standard; usable only while bloodied; at-will) | | |
| Close burst 2; +7 vs. AC; 2d10 + 2 damage. | | |
| Flail Snail Fail (when first bloodied) | | |
| The stale trail flail snail's shell shatters, causing it to take a -4 penalty to AC and lose its resist to weapon damage. | | |
| Alignment Unaligned | Languages – | |
| Str 16 (+5) | Dex 6 (+0) | Wis 15 (+4) |
| Con 18 (+6) | Int 1 (-3) | Cha 8 (+1) |

| Stench Kow Hellstinker (K) Level 3 Soldier | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Large fey beast XP 150 | | |
| Initiative +5 | Senses Perception +0; low-light vision | |
| Infernal Stench aura 1 (aura 2 while bloodied); enemies in the aura take a -2 penalty to attack rolls. | | |
| HP 50; Bloodied 25 | | |
| AC 18; Fortitude 17, Reflex 15, Will 12 | | |
| Resist 5 fire | | |
| Speed 6 (8 when charging) | | |
| ⊕ Horns (standard; at-will) | | |
| +10 vs. AC; 1d10 + 3 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the stench kow hellstinker's next turn. | | |
| ⊕ Hellacious Charger (standard; requires a charge; at-will) | | |
| +10 vs. AC; 2d10 + 3 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the stench kow hellstinker's next turn, pushed 2 squares, and knocked prone. The stench kow hellstinker can shift 2 squares to remain adjacent to the target. | | |
| Winds of the Nine Hells (immediate reaction, when damaged by an attack; at-will) • Poison | | |
| Each creature in the stench kow hellstinker's aura takes 5 poison damage and slides 1 square. | | |
| Alignment Unaligned | Languages – | |
| Str 17 (+4) | Dex 15 (+3) | Wis 9 (+0) |
| Con 18 (+5) | Int 2 (-3) | Cha 1 (-4) |

ENCOUNTER 2-1/2-1: GNOME PLACE, LIKE HOME

Encounter Level 4-1/2 (950 XP)

SETUP

4 flumph headstabbers (F)
Francis, badger minion (B)
The Gnome (G)

Having had the good fortune to make it quite far through this most perilous grove (likely a result of your failure as a Dungeon Master to properly waylay or slay them), the player characters come upon a squat and dilapidated structure.

When the player characters peer upon the events unfolding in this domicile, recite this:

A round, squat room stands here, with several walls that have been—long ago, it would appear—knocked down or eroded away. Descending on the northern side of the building is a stairway from which thin smoke billows. Odors from that smoke assault your nose, smelling like fungus prepared with exotic spices and herbs from lands that exist only in your most fevered imaginings.

Around a low table, which appears to be made from a thick oak door laid upon ceramic pots that serve as table legs, are gathered several bizarre beasts. Floating in midair, these varyingly white and yellow creatures have eyestalks extending up from the tops of their saucer-shaped bodies. From their undersides hang slender tendrils that seem to wave in the breeze.

The table is piled high with plates, each filled with big mushrooms, or perhaps toadstools. You observe one of the floating creatures lower its body onto a plate of food, skewering a mushroom with a spike concealed on the underside of the monster's body, then rise up and drop the victuals into the mouth of one of the others.

A portly badger lies near one of the walls. It seems to be peacefully slumbering, judging by the raspy snoring emitting from its curled-up form.

Shortly after the player characters reconnoiter this dwelling, or if they begin fighting, the owner of the place returns:

A diminutive, wild-haired gnome trots amiably into the room, hoisting a platter of cooked mushrooms that smoke as though they've just come from off a cooking fire.

In a nasally fey voice he says, "I just brought in more campestris off the cooking fire," the creature speaks, "Who wants seconds?"

If the player characters are concealing their presence, make the present player character with the lowest

Stealth make a Stealth check against the highest passive Perception check among the monsters (11).

If the player characters are not detected, read:

The gnome sits upon the floor near the table and begins to consume his repast, saying, "Isn't it great that we're safe here, away from all those adventurers? We can be dangerous monsters, but not worry about them taking our fabulous treasure!"

The PCs can choose to fight, gaining surprise, or leave, in which case you should question their ability to play the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game, and remind them that vast stores of treasure are no doubt in their future should they fight.

If the player characters have been seen, or were foolishly not hiding, then this happens:

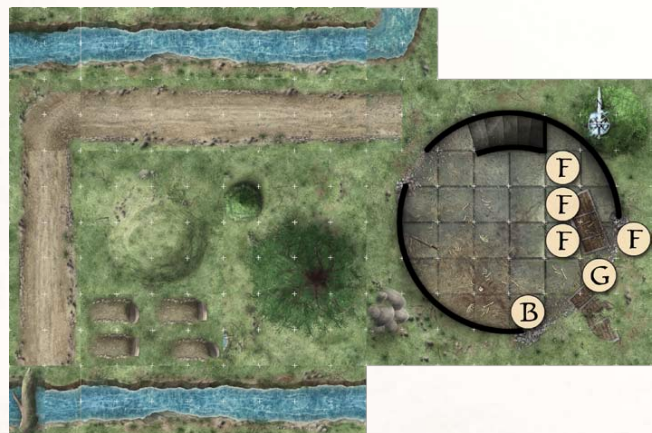
Staring directly at you, the gnome shrieks, quickly following with the words, "This isn't an adventuring party! It's for monsters only! Get outta here!" He promptly prepares to throw a plate of food at you.

At this point, rolling for initiative is mandatory.

TACTICS

The Gnome, feeling (perhaps rightly) that his home has been intruded upon, fights most vigorously, alternating between hurling cutlery and plates of campestris. (You'd be well advised to read about the "Features of the Area" section, the sidebar, and the Campestri Toss power.) Most likely, the Gnome utilizes the power to *fade away* early. Should the Gnome be defeated, Francis activates *quick escape* and burrows out of the area with utmost speed.

Flumphs, pathetic creatures, strike out with the sharp blades projecting from their undersides. These



| 4 Flumph Headstabbers (F) | | Level 2 Skirmisher |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| Small natural magical beast | | XP 125 each |
| Initiative +6 | Senses Perception +1; darkvision | |
| HP 38; Bloodied 19 | | |
| AC 16; Fortitude 14, Reflex 15, Will 12 | | |
| Speed 1 (clumsy), fly 6 (altitude limit 2) | | |
| ⊕ Spike (standard; at-will) • Acid | | |
| +7 vs. AC; 1d6 damage, and ongoing 5 acid damage (save ends). | | |
| ⊕ Flight of the Flumph (standard; at-will) | | |
| The flumph headstabber flies its speed and makes a spike attack during the move. The flumph headstabber does not provoke opportunity attacks while moving away from the target of this attack. | | |
| ↻ Stink Squirt (standard; recharges when first bloodied) | | |
| Ranged 5; +5 vs. Reflex; the target is pushed 5 squares and smells horrible (save ends). While the target smells horrible, any ally that starts its turn within 1 square of the target is weakened until the start of his or her next turn. | | |
| Prone Powerlessness | | |
| If the flumph headstabber is knocked prone, it becomes helpless and can't stand up or fly (save ends all). | | |
| Alignment Unaligned | | Languages Common (its vocabulary is severely limited) |
| Str 7 (-1) | Dex 17 (+4) | Wis 11 (+1) |
| Con 14 (+3) | Int 10 (+1) | Cha 8 (+0) |

| Francis, Badger Minion (B) | | Level 1 Elite Minion Brute |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Small natural beast | | XP 25 |
| Initiative +2 | Senses Perception +0; darkvision | |
| HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. | | |
| AC 13; Fortitude 14, Reflex 13, Will 12 | | |
| Speed 4, burrow 6 (tunneling) | | |
| ⊕ Bite (standard; at-will) | | |
| +4 vs. AC; 5 damage. | | |
| Easy to Kick | | |
| If Francis is pushed, he is pushed an extra 1d10 squares. | | |
| Badger Badger Badger | | |
| At the start of his turn, if Francis is at 0 hit points, he regains 1 hit point. | | |
| Quick Escape (when the Gnome drops to 0 hit points) | | |
| Francis triples his speed in all movement modes, can burrow through anything, and can drag the Gnome with him. | | |
| Alignment Unaligned | | Languages – |
| Str 12 (+1) | Dex 14 (+2) | Wis 10 (+0) |
| Con 17 (+3) | Int 2 (-4) | Cha 12 (+1) |

creatures divvy up their attacks between several player characters, because the continuously burning acid (ongoing damage) their spikes deliver does not stack, per the rules laid out in the *Player's Handbook* (page 278).

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: Bright light.

Campestris: Any creature that starts its turn in a square of campestris is slowed until the end of its next turn. Unless said creature is deafened, it also has to leave the campestris' square if possible. At the end of every round, each square of campestris that aren't on a plate can move 1 square.

Dweomer Wall: The dweomer wall functions as stated in other encounters.

Rocks: The rocks outside are difficult terrain.

| The Gnome (G) | | Level 3 Elite Artillery |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Small fey humanoid | | XP 300 |
| Initiative +2 | Senses Perception +0; low-light vision | |
| HP 70; Bloodied 35 | | |
| AC 15; Fortitude 13, Reflex 15, Will 17 | | |
| Speed 5 | | |
| ⊕ Foot Stab (standard; at-will) | | |
| +8 vs. AC; 1d4 + 3 damage, and the target slides 1 square. | | |
| ⊕ Throw Cutlery (standard; at-will) • Weapon | | |
| Ranged 5/10; targets two enemies; +10 vs. AC; 1d4 + 3 damage. | | |
| ⊕ Gnome Fury (standard; at-will) • Weapon | | |
| The Gnome makes two basic attacks. | | |
| ⊕ I'm a Monster, RAWR!!! (standard; encounter) • Fear | | |
| Close blast 10; targets enemies; +8 vs. Will; the target is dazed until the end of the Gnome's next turn, and the target is marked by one of the gnome's allies (save ends). | | |
| Fade Away (immediate reaction, when the Gnome takes damage; encounter) • Illusion | | |
| The Gnome becomes invisible until after it attacks or until the end of its next turn. | | |
| Reactive Stealth | | |
| If the Gnome has cover or concealment when it rolls initiative at the start of an encounter, it can make a Stealth check to become hidden. | | |
| Alignment Unaligned | | Languages Common, Elven |
| Str 8 (+0) | Dex 12 (+2) | Wis 8 (+0) |
| Con 11 (+1) | Int 15 (+3) | Cha 18 (+5) |
| Equipment 10 forks, 10 knives | | |

Stairs: These are steep and difficult terrain. They descend to a small, oppressive kitchen with shelves, crockery, and a cookfire pit.

Tree: The tree's trunk is blocking terrain, and creatures standing in the branches have cover.

Walls: The walls are masonry but fell into disrepair long ago (Athletics DC 15 to climb).

Treasure: The Gnome has a bag of treasure. Have each player write down a 6th-level magic item and a 3rd-level magic item, each on a separate slip of paper. Mix these up in a hat or bag, and draw two. These are the magic items found. Also, the player characters find an additional 9 gp.

CAMPESTRIS TOSS

Anybody in the encounter can make the following ranged attack if they're adjacent to a plate full of campestris. There are six plates in total.

↻ **Campestri Toss** (standard; at-will) • **Psychic**
Ranged 5/10; +6 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 3 psychic damage. *Effect:* One square of the target's space now contains campestris (see "Features of the Area").

CAMPESTRIS

These fungal creatures with creepy old-man faces release spores that slow creatures. The happy-go-lucky creatures also sing horrible parodies of nursery rhymes in a nasal falsetto, and any DM worth his or her salt will clearly roleplay this to the fullest.

EXPANDING THE DELVE

To turn this delve into a larger adventure, you can expand it in a couple ways. You, as Dungeon Master, are, of course, quite capable of constructing devious plots for your participants' player characters, but these suggestions might help you find a particular direction in which to carry your milieu.

- The kitchen is actually part of a wider underground dungeon complex. Who knows what fey depravity and evil lurks beneath the Fool's Grove? One thing is for certain, you have the freedom to include any bizarre monster you wish.

Perhaps the beanstalks, if treated with enough care, provide a pathway to some lofty realm wherein something nasty dwells. The stalks might instead grow rampantly when the monsters of the grove are all gone, giving player characters the route they need to other avenues of adventure in your milieu.

- In one area, is a strange creature that can help or hinder the party depending on their own finer motives, or fouler ones. This creature is an umpleby, a gigantic humanoid covered head to foot with shaggy hair and unclothed except for a strange, corded belt (actually a net made of the beast's own hair!).

For its part, the umpleby removes itself from any fracas entirely, avoiding violence unless compelled (such as by the brain mole). It fights back only if it cannot evade attack. Otherwise, in broken Elven, it offers to join the player characters in their adventures for a fair share of the treasure. It doesn't fight alongside the player characters or their foes, but is extremely loyal if given food and treasure. The umpleby advises friendly PCs on how best to find nearby treasure. It expects an equal share of such finds, however, and runs off in a huff if denied.

If the player characters rebuff the umpleby, it follows them through the grove anyway, asking for treasure and food after such is discovered.

Electropelt Umpleby Level 4 Elite Brute

Large fey magical beast XP 350

Initiative +4 **Senses** Perception +5; darkvision

Static Cling (Lightning) aura 1; each creature that starts its turn within the aura takes 1 lightning damage. If the umpleby takes lightning damage, its static cling aura expands to 2 squares and deals 3 lightning damage until the end of the umpleby's next turn.

HP 132; **Bloodied** 66

AC 16; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 14

Resist 5 lightning; see *static cling*

Speed 8

⬇ **Slam** (standard; at-will) • **Lightning**
Reach 2; +7 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage plus 1d6 lightning damage. If the target is immobilized, it takes 1d6 extra lightning damage.

⬇ **Double Attack** (standard; at-will) • **Lightning**
The umpleby makes two slam attacks.

⬅ **Hair Net** (standard; requires net; recharge ☞ ☞ ☞) • **Lightning**
Close blast 3; +5 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 4 lightning damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of the umpleby's next turn.

Static Stance (minor; recharge ☞ ☞)
The electropelt umpleby's next melee attack deals 2d6 extra lightning damage.

Treasure Sense
The electropelt umpleby can sense the direction of monetary treasure (one parcel or more) within 10 squares and without line of sight or line of effect.

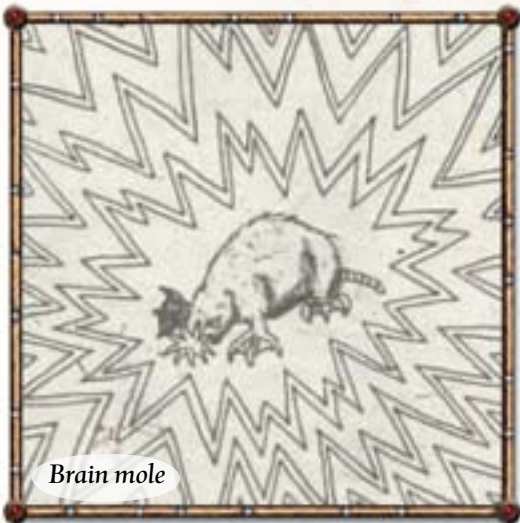
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Elven (rarely speaks)
Str 18 (+6) **Dex** 15 (+4) **Wis** 7 (+0)
Con 16 (+5) **Int** 4 (-1) **Cha** 10 (+2)
Equipment hair net



Umpleby



Campestris



Brain mole



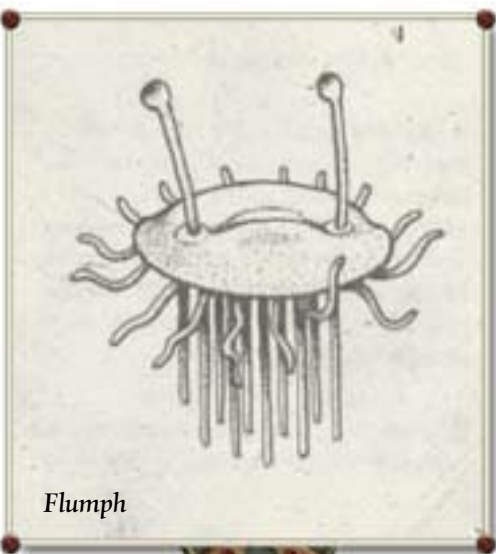
Al-mi'raj



Flail snail



Stench kow



Flumph



The Gnome and Francis