



THE ROOTED HOLLOW

This adventure is brought to you by:
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The Willowbrush Forest was once lustrous, green, and full of many animals. The folk of the nearby villages would visit the forest to hunt, or gather plants and mushrooms. The druids tended to the natural balance of the woods, and the travelers respected their advice.

Two hundred years ago, the wizard Vesh Thornheart attempted to create a portal to the shadowrealm. After a great battle, the druids managed to drive away the wizard and destroy the portal. It seemed that peace had returned to the forest and all was well.

The druids did not foresee that the scattered shards of the shattered portal would slowly corrupt the trees, creatures, and lands. Now, two hundred years later, the forest is known as the Rooted Hollow.

INTRODUCTION

This is an adventure for a group of level 4 adventurers. You can play this adventure on a different level, but you will have to change the difficulty of the encounters accordingly.

This can be a stand alone adventure, or you can fit the adventure within an ongoing campaign. The Rooted Hollow can be any forest within your game world, you can rename it if you wish.



ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The Rooted Hollow is a forest that has been corrupted by shards of an ancient portal frame. The few local druids have done their best to gather and cleanse many of these shards. There is one part of the forest that presumably holds a large piece. But the area is dark and wicked.

The druid Darael went out to search for the shard, but has not been seen for over a fortnight. The player characters must go into the woods to find the shard and/or search for Darael.

INVOLVING THE PLAYERS

The characters can be an adventuring party that are hired to search for the druid Darael.

Another option is to have the characters search for a relative, or friend that went missing in the forest. The party could be hired to cleanse the forest of the portal shards.

Another option is to have the characters search for the shard so that it can be used as an ingredient for crafting an artifact.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

These are encounters that can happen in the forest before the characters reach the blighted oak. You can roll a d20 for each hour of travel. Alternatively, you can select something from the list that is appropriate to the situation.

To travel to the blighted oak that grows on top of the portal shard, have one player make a Survival (Wisdom) check. If the result is lower than **10**, the journey takes 6 hours. If the result is **10-15**, the journey takes 4 hours. If the result is **15** or higher, the journey takes 3 hours.

DESCRIBING THE FOREST

The forest seems to become more colorless with every step you take. It is eerily quiet, there are no animal sounds except for the occasional caw of a crow. The little sunlight that pierces through the roof of the woods, is dispersed by a light mist that seems to be emanating from the underbrush itself. As the branches and leaves are crushed beneath your footsteps, you can't help but feel that you are being watched.

Encounter	D20 Roll
Tree Troll	1-2
Cocoon	2-4
Owlbear	4-6
Empty Campsite	7-8
Stirges	9-10
Sinkhole	11-12
Crows	13-14
Giant Wasps	15-16
Puffball Mushrooms	17-18
Nothing happens	19-20

TREE TROLL

You come upon a strange site. Many of the large trees seem to be hollow and black on the inside. Some of the trees have large openings.

Upon closer inspection, the trees seem to have burned from the inside. A DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check will reveal that some trees have rotten on the inside due to a particular type of fungus. When these trees catch on fire, the rotten inside will burn away, creating these strange looking hollow trees.

As you walk past one of the bigger trees, A large green skinned creature steps out through the opening in the tree's side. It reaches out towards you with its big hands and claw like nails.

This tree is home to a **Troll**. It is hungry and wants to eat the player characters. It keeps some of the possessions of its previous victims within the tree. There are many bones and small animal skulls. But a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check will reveal the following treasure.

Treasure. Leather belt with decorative silver buckle (40 gp), Malachite (10 gp), Rusty longsword (10 gp)



COCOON

A humanoid sized cocoon hangs from one of the branches. Whatever creature it is holding, it is alive and wriggling within.

Inside the cocoon is a human named Gareth (**Scout**). He was attacked by a **Giant Spider**, the poison paralyzed him and the spider kept him as a snack.

If asked why he was in the forest in the first place, he will say that he was looking for a missing friend. A DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check will reveal that he is lying. Gareth often ventures into the forest to loot the corpses of people less stealthy than him.

OWLBEAR

The player characters see a silhouette of a bear like creature in the mist before them. The players must succeed a DC 13 Dexterity (Stealth) check, or be spotted by the **Owlbear**. Use the group check rules from the Players Handbook.(Page 175).

The creature you think is a bear, slowly turns its head in your direction. It growls, and then lets out a loud hoot, as it runs in your direction. You realize that you are being charged by an Owlbear.

If the characters are spotted, the owlbear will attack.

EMPTY CAMPSITE

Two wooden logs have been placed next to the remains of a campfire. The empty mug, and forgotten tent pegs, suggest that whoever set up camp here, left in a hurry.

A DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check reveals that the remains of the campfire are not older than three days. It will also reveal the tracks of two humanoid creatures. If the party decides to follow the tracks, the length of the journey will be reduced by one hour.

A DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals a faint symbol that has been carved into the bottom of the empty wooden mug. If there is a druid in the party, they will recognize the symbol as a druidic rune meaning 'dawn'.

STIRGES

This area of the forest is covered in a thorny underbrush and is considered difficult terrain.

While slowly traveling through the thorny branches, trying not to tear your clothing or get cut. You start to hear a buzzing sound. A horrible creature that looks like a cross between a bat and a mosquito, flies towards you.

The **Stirges** are attracted by the smell of fresh blood in the air. There are 10 stirges total, but they arrive in different rounds. In round one, three stirges attack. In round two, three more stirges arrive. And in round three, the last four stirges join the fight.

SINKHOLE

The ground slopes down in a bowl shape. The trees and bushes are slanted towards the center. The area looks very unusual.

The bowl is a 40 ft. wide sinkhole. If a medium or larger creature steps on the bowl area, the surface will cave in. The creatures standing in the bowl, will fall down 20 ft. causing 9 (3d6) bludgeoning damage.

The cave-in will attract the attention of 2x **Ankheg**. They will attack the party.

CROWS

A crow seems to be following you. It hops from branch to branch, watching your every move.

A DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that multiple crows are quietly following the party around.

If any of the party members has a way to communicate with animals, the crows will reveal that they are hungry, and hoping to have the leftovers once the herdsman is finished with them.

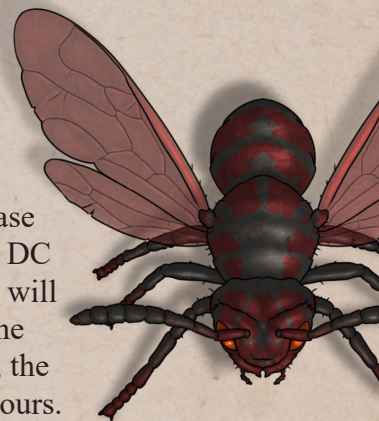
GIANT WASPS

You hear a deep buzzing sound coming from the trees above. A group of black and red wasps is flying towards you. The closer they get, the more you realize that they are very.. very big.

These 5x **Giant Wasp** are about five feet long from head to tail. They want to poison their prey and bring them back to their hive.

PUFFBALL MUSHROOMS

The ground of this area of the forest is covered with clusters of mushrooms. When stepped upon, the mushrooms will release poisonous spores. A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check will make the characters aware of the mushrooms. On a failed check, the character is poisoned for 1d4 hours.



You hear a dull popping sound and you realize that you have stepped on something. You lift your feet and see a cluster of broken round mushrooms. A cloud of green spores drift upward, and your lungs fill with a burning sensation.

A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check will reveal that these mushrooms will release poisonous spores when stepped upon.

Once the characters become aware of the mushrooms, they can move at half speed to avoid stepping on the mushrooms in the future.



THE OAK AND THE HERDSMAN

Within a clearing stands a great oak tree. The area is covered with fine strands of spider silk. You see cocoons hanging from the branches, and bones lying between the roots. Three spiders, the size of wolves come around the bend of the tree. A strange purple humanoid figure follows. It seems to be herding the spiders similar to how a sheepdog would herd its sheep. The humanoid figure makes a guttural sound towards the treetop. The leaves rustle loudly. Something big is in there.

The tree is home to an **Ettercap** that tends to a flock of spiders. His flock consists of 1x **Giant Spider**, 3x **Giant Wolf Spider**, 1x **Swarm of Insects (Spiders)**.

The whole area is covered with spider webs. This activates the Web Sense ability for the spiders and ettercap. The ettercap will order the spiders to attack the player characters on sight. The swarm of small spiders will crawl out of the bushes and tree barks to harass the characters, while the giant wolf spiders will rush towards them. If the ettercap is attacked, or the wolf spiders defeated, the giant spider will come down the tree to attack the characters.

A dozen cocoons hang from the tree branches. One of them is Drael (Druid). The creatures within the cocoons are paralyzed by poison, but still alive. The other cocoons can hold animals, forest travelers, or even one of the bigger denizens of the forest such as an owlbear or a troll.



THE PORTAL SHARD

The faceted planes of the obsidian shard glimmer as you turn it. The nearby shadows seem to bend towards it. Being close to the shard gives you a feeling of unease, and a metallic taste in your mouth.

The shard is a piece of obsidian that is 1 foot in diameter and it is hidden underneath the roots of the tree. Touching the portal shard with uncovered skin will cause a Long-Term Madness.

The shard can be cleansed by using the Dispel Evil and Good spell, or by casting the daylight spell on it for five consecutive days.

There are many useless mundane items among the remains. But if the player characters decide to investigate, they will find some items of value.

Treasure. Longsword (15 gp), Heavy Crossbow (50 gp), Splint Armor (200 gp), 140 Gold Pieces worth of Assorted Coins, Leather Belt set with Hematite (25 gp), Leather Necklace with Jasper Stone (50 gp)

SAVING THE DRUID

Darael is paralyzed. The effect can be removed by casting a lesser or greater restoration spell. If no such spell is available, Darael will regain consciousness after an hour.

Darael will explain that she hired a mercenary named Killian (**Veteran**) to help her on her quest to find the portal shard. Investigating the remains that are scattered around the tree will reveal that Killian was killed and eaten by the spiders. His crossbow, sword, and armor can be salvaged.

If the obsidian shard has not yet been found, Darael will know where to find it. She will also warn the player characters not to touch the object with bare skin.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

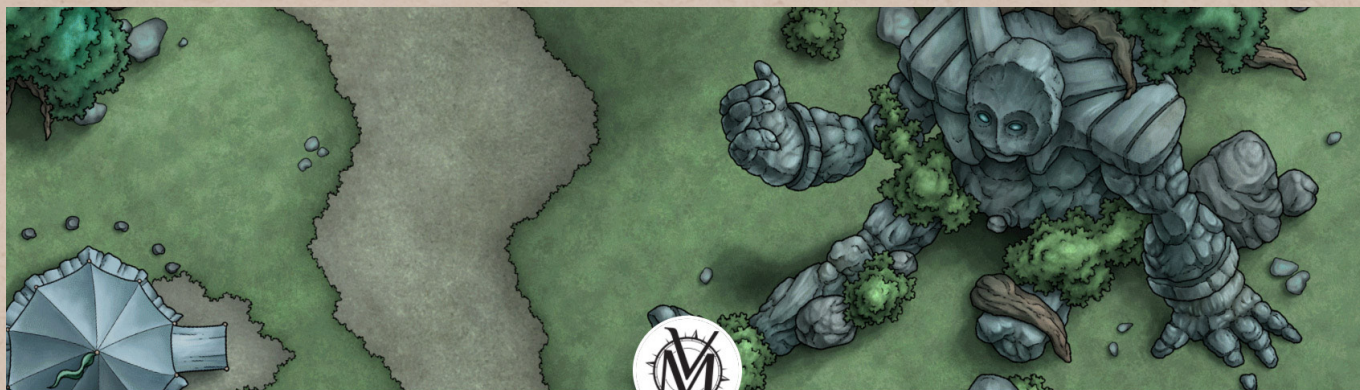
If the player characters do not have the ability to cleanse the portal stone, Darael will suggest to take the stone to the druid grove. Where the stone can be cleansed through daylight magic.

As a reward for their service, the player characters will be given a Quaal's Feather Token of the Tree variant.

Once the portal shard is removed. The fog that has lingered in the forest for so long, will start to dissipate. In the coming months, animals slowly will start to return to the forest, but it will take years for the forest to fully heal.



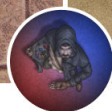
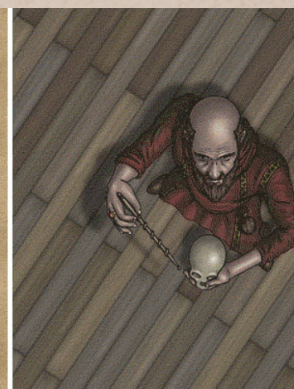
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