PLAGUE FROM WITHIN

LEVEL 4 ADVENTURE

INTERSIVE SE ONE-SHOT ADVIENTURE FOR THE WORLD'S GREATEST RPG GAME

CREDITS

Designer. Derek Ruiz

Editor. Arthur Rouise

Cartography. Elven Tower Cartography

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INTRODUCTION

Before You Begin Playing

Read the adventure once or twice. Take notes of anything you would like to highlight or remind yourself of while running the game. Such notes could include, but are not limited to, ways to role-play an NPC, combat tactics for a creature, or the locations of important things. Familiarize yourself with the adventure's appendices and maps.

- Have all the material and accessories you will use to aid you in running this adventure. Such as flash-cards, a GM screen, minis, dice, and battle-maps.
- It is useful to have the player characters' names, race, class, armor class, and hit points in a separate and easy-to-see piece of paper or screen. It may also be important to note other things like backgrounds and personality traits.

PLAYING THE DUNGEON MASTER

You have the most important task. The GM is the table's narrator and organizer for a good game. You must take care of the narrative and adjudicate the party's actions. You transform these words into a living thing.

Here are a few guidelines to help you make this happen:

You have the Power. You make the decisions about the adventure progress and how the group interacts with NPCs, creatures, and the setting's elements. You are encouraged to improvise and change things. Each group is different and they will all have different needs and things they enjoy and things they don't like.

Give Them a Good Challenge. You are the judge of your group's experience. Give them a well-balanced challenge to keep them engaged. A good challenge does not necessarily mean combat. Try to feel out what your group is more interested in and try to give them what they crave. A role-playing situation like a tough negotiation, an interrogation, or calling a favor may be as intense as a full-blown battle.

Do not Stall. If the game starts to slow down because the players are unsure of what to do, feel free to provide hints, clues, or a helping NPC to nudge your group in the right direction. Players can get frustrated if they are unable to react to the adventure due to the lack of necessary information. Hints and clues may present themselves as "ideas" or "thoughts" the characters have. An alternative method is to introduce an NPC who will provide a veiled suggestion to the characters directly and serve as the "GM's voice"

CREATING AN ADVENTURING PARTY

This adventure does not rule out any combination of races, classes, or other features. There are no alignment requirements for this adventure but it is suggested that at least half the party is of good alignment. Otherwise, the incentives for finishing the adventure are curiosity and/ or the promise of gold. Good or neutral alignment are recommended for new players.

If you are playing with a new batch of PCs, ask the players why their heroes are together and acting as a team. Each player may choose one or two options from the following list to justify why they are together. This will help the game go smoother from the beginning and it will give them a few cues on how to interact with each other.

- Two characters are childhood friends. They come from the same city or town.
- One character saved another PC's life a year ago.
- One character owes money to another.
- Two or more characters are currently employed as mercenaries by the same guild.
- Two characters of the same race are relatives (siblings, cousins, etc.)

This list is not exhaustive. Players are free to invent reasons why they already know each other.

As the GM, you are free to disregard this if your players are experienced enough. These instructions are designed to kick-start the game from the top and help new players get a hold of the group faster. A group of experienced players might get together and come up with reasons to work together on the fly with little to no difficulty.

ABOUT LINEARITY AND PLAYER AGENCY

This adventure includes several approaches that the adventurers may take and several variants in the conclusions of each chapter. These options are not exhaustive but there is a limited amount of information or options a module can include. This adventure, as written, is somewhat linear but the intention is not to constrain players' creativity and options. We have included what we believe are the most likely courses of action in the adventure.

ABOUT NOTATION

Some events or things described in this document express their odds of happening in this format: "1-in-6", "2-in-6" and so on. This means that the GM rolls a d6. Rolling the first number or less means success.

There is a 2-in-6 chance of finding the hidden door.

This means that a player or the GM rolls a 1d6, on a result of 2 or lower, the hidden door is found.

Elven Couver Adventures

ADVENTURE PRIMER

The spirit of the Great Father Tree dwindles. Someone must stop this before we perish...

Fiadda Trinn

WHERE TO ADD THIS ADVENTURE

Plague from Within is a tier-1 adventure optimized for level 4 characters. The adventure centers around a magical sprite settlement in a forest. The sprites, known as Kokins, are weakened and dying because they owe their magical blood to the Great Father Tree. The tree has been infested by a variety of pests. The worst offender is a large colony of spiders. The spider queen strangles the tree's heart to feed herself and her offspring. The fairyfolk have hired several mercenaries to handle this.

Forgotten Realms. In the Forest of Wyrms, northeast from Soubar and east of the Trollclaw Hills.

Eberron. In the Towering Wood, north of Greenheart. The Great Father Tree may be the Great Druid Oalian.

Estimated Duration: 6 - 8 hours.

Elven Cower Adventures

Adventure Background

There are strange places in the world that are bound, by magic and fate, to faraway locations in the multi-planar universe. In the Material Plane, these places are known as Convergence Zones. Human scholars, elder elves, and even studious dragons have dedicated entire lifetimes to the understanding of the invisible connections between the planes. The most common convergence zones tie the Material Plane with its counterpart, the Feywild. It coexists with the material world. Only a step away from people's perceptions. So close, and yet so far. Few creatures understand the world of fairies, even fewer have crossed the veil that divides both worlds. Convergence Zones vary in strength throughout the seasons. Some of them come and go, following the whims of stars and other astral bodies. The most common are locations where the magical and physical properties of both worlds combine and exchange energy and matter.

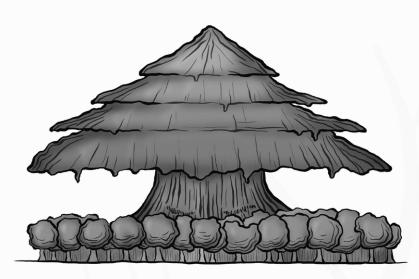
There is a large Convergence Zone near the center of a large forest. In it, an oak tree grew to an impossible size and became sentient. The Great Father Tree became the teacher and protector of other life in the forest. The energy of the Feywild crosses the veil of worlds and infuses its bark and leaves with otherworldly magic. Through the channeling of this energy, many fey creatures were born in the great forest; sired by the Great Father Tree. The most numerous of those fey creatures are a tribe of fairy-folk, sprites, that live close to the Great Father Tree's roots. They call themselves "Kokins" and care for the verdant life in the area. They believe it is their duty to tend to the Great Father Tree.

THE KOKINS

The Kokins are fairy-folk born in the Material Plane from the Great Father Tree. They spring from the tree's roots, leaves, and heart several times a year. These sprites inhabit the forest and have formed many small tribal settlements. The Kokins are immortal and sterile, their population growth depends on the Great Father Tree.

The tiny fairy-folk are one-foot-tall humanoids. Each of them has a pair of butterfly-like wings that flutter silently when they fly. They are agreeable and friendly to outsiders. Many local folk-tales speak of their long lifespans and their immunity to endemic diseases, however, their life-force is tied to the Great Father Tree's wellbeing.

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THE SLOW INFESTATION

Deep below the Great Father Tree, a cavern complex sprawls for miles below the forest. These caverns are the natural habitats and pathways of creatures such as spiders, goblins, myconids, aberrations, among others. The Kokins and druids that visit the Great Father Tree use these underground paths to reach the tree's heart. The heart is a pulsing, root-like organ under the tree itself. It is the physical representation of the merging of the two planes that empowers all fey-life in the forest.

The Great Father Tree defends itself by commanding woodland beings to protect the roots and heart but it has grown sloppy as the centuries pass. No one knows that this is the natural course of things; the Great Father Tree shall perish one day and be replaced by another entity, while its body feeds the soil beneath its rotting carcass.

Its lackluster defense mechanisms have caused some predatory entities to move inside the tree's trunk and roots unchecked. The Kokins are not strong warriors individually but they have raided the tree several times in the last decade to fend off parasites, myconids, and even goblins from time to time. But things are different now.

A scarlet-belly spider has moved into the tree's heart chamber underneath the roots to lay her eggs there. The evil, sentient spider felt attracted to the fey-infused magical aura near the tree's heart. She thought the magical aura would help her offspring become sentient like herself. It doesn't work though; her offspring are mindless drone spiders with no calling or purpose. The Queen of Spiders realizes what she requires to spawn a true heir; she needs a voluntary host for her eggs (see page 12).

In the meanwhile, the scarlet-belly spider uses her webstrands to constrict the tree's heart. The heart's weakening deters the Kokins from attacking her den.

Elven Cower Adventures

Adventure Overview

This section provides an overview of the chapters and how the adventure is most likely to play out:

1. *The Kokins' Tragedy.* The adventurers arrive at the Kokins' settlement to find out their worsening state. A group of treasure-driven mercenaries in the area may attempt to overtake the little town and take advantage of the Kokins' weak state.

2. *The Father Tree.* The adventurers infiltrate the great tree from any of three entrance-points to find the way to the tree's heart. However, the Queen of Spiders is not the only life-form threatening the tree's life.

Adventure Hooks

Plague from Within may begin with one or more of the following adventure hooks:

A CONTRACT FOR SELLSWORDS!

Fiadda Trinn, the Kokins' leader, knows that their weakened state won't allow them to free the Great Father Tree from the Queen of Spiders. Fiadda sent a local druid to nearby human settlements to post a bounty contract for mercenaries and adventurers. It promises a reward of 1000 gold pieces for ridding the Great Father Tree from its terrible disease. The contract was a success: several sellswords have shown up to help, many of them with a faulty moral compass and dark hearts.

A CALL FOR FRIENDS

Druids, rangers, barbarians, or other naturally inclined adventurers receive a message from an animal messenger. The Great Father Tree, the protector of the great forest, is in danger. The message conveys the general state of affairs in the tree and the need for valiant warriors to lend their swords for the cause. It is expected of such individuals to come and help due to their inclination to protect the woodlands and those who dwell in them.

A MOST VALUABLE POISON

After several adventures and building some reputation, the heroes are summoned by an archmage in a large city. The mage's name is Arquidius. He explains that his research in alchemy and medicine requires 3 vials of poison from a rare type of spider. The scarlet-belly spider, he explains, is indigenous to the Feywild and its mating and nesting requirements make them extraordinarily rare in the Material Plane.

Fortunately, Arquidius has confirmed the presence of a scarlet-belly spider in the great forest; a town of fairy-folk nearby has alerted everyone of the spider's presence. Arquidius shall pay 300 gp per vial of the spider's poison.

Adventure Primer 6

THE KOKINS' DILEMMA

I won't stay here and do nothing while the Great Father Tree suffers. I can fight!

Adara Trinn

Regardless of the Adventure Hook that brought the heroes to the Kokin's settlement, their presence gives the tiny people hope. The friendly sprites are in no condition to fend off invaders anymore and their fate rests in the hands of the mercenaries camping beside their homes. However, the Kokins are not entirely convinced of the mercenaries' intentions. Zeke, their leader, seems to be interested in a little more than gold.

The heroes must read the situation to the best of their abilities if they wish to protect the Kokins not only from the pests in the Great Father Tree but also from the evil-hearted men who are just waiting for the right time to strike. If the adventurers are curious enough (see **Rumors**), they might learn enough to realize that leaving the Kokins with the mercenaries is not a good idea. The men-at-arms are far worse than the spiders in the tree.

THE KOKIN TOWN

Elven Couver Adventures

The Kokin's are a people like no other. They are magical beings born from the Great Father Tree. They belong in the Fey world, yet their existence came to be in the Material Plane. They are the result of a clash between two universes. The combination of two planes that have forever co-existed. Therefore, Kokins share traits and characteristics from both worlds.

Kokins are sprites in truth but they don't live as such. And they don't think as such. Kokins live underground. Their homes are multi-leveled bunkers where they harvest all kinds of fungi and tiny variants of human crops. They seem like an ideal society. They are always happy and eager to help each other. They welcome travelers, care for the forest, and tend to the Great Father Tree. The only time they ever resort to violence is when they defend their maker. Pacifists and idealists would brand the Kokin's way of life as their creed.

Nevertheless, the unseen forces of the universe must always seek a balance between evil and good, and fate has brought the mercenaries to the Kokins' town. The clever sprites aren't blind nor naive. They are suspicious of Zeke's men and smell their betrayal but they don't want to say anything that could trigger their anger before they do their part of the deal. Once the Great Father Tree is safe and cured, they will be capable of defending themselves.

On the other hand, the Great Father Tree's lifetime approaches its natural end, but the Kokins ignore this. If allowed, they will witness the death of their creator and watch as its carcass becomes the vessel of a young, renewed Fey entity. But the poor Kokins will never know this if Zeke and his men get what they want.

THE MERCENARIES' CAMP

Zeke and his men are here because of the bounty contract (see Adventure Hooks). They tried to do the job. Some of them entered the Great Father Tree to kill the spider but failed. The only survivor of one of Zeke's squads is maimed. Other mercenaries unrelated to Zeke showed up and ventured into the tree, they did not return and are presumed dead too.

In two days, Zeke saw the weakness of the Kokins and how easy it would be to raid their village. Now, he claims reinforcements are on their way, and that once they get here, they'll try again. No one is coming. He waits for the time to strike, kill the Kokins, and take everything from them. Will someone stop them? (see **Development**).

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Fiadda Trinn

Neutral good, fey (age 46)

All Kokins respect Fiadda, the proud leader of the Kokin tribe. But she carries a heavy burden now. As much as she wishes to help, Kokins' powers are weakened as long as the Great Father Tree suffers. She feels threatened, useless. Her voice speaks with great sadness. The sight of new heroes warms her soul and gives her hope.

Manner. She turns to see the Great Father Tree every time she speaks of it and says "It needs us as we need it".

Ambition. She wishes the well-being of the Great Father Tree more than anything. But nothing makes her leave the Kokins alone with the mercenaries.



ZEKE, THE BOSS

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Neutral evil, human (age 37)

The mercenaries obey Zeke's orders and commands. He has been their leader for years and has always found a way to benefit them. Zeke (**bandit captain**) is a dirty weasel. He doesn't flinch when betraying a contractor if it suits him. Ironically, his reputation is somewhat clean; he takes care of any loose end that could stain his name.

Manner. Zeke is an intimidating man who never, ever, deviates his eyes from whom he speaks to.

Ambition. Zeke does not care about the Kokins, nor the tree. He wants everything in the village, which is more than the payment of the bounty he agreed to.



Adara Trinn

Neutral good, fey (age 35)

Adara (**sprite**) is Fiadda's younger sister but they are nothing alike. Adara's pride is huge. As the leader's sibling, she feels that the protection of the tree is not only her duty but her nature, her only purpose in life. Her words aren't simple verbal motivation. Adara does believe what she says and, somehow, has fought off the weakening state on the rest of their kind.

Manner. Adara lifts her sword and points to the tree whenever someone mentions it. She dies to go.

Ambition. Adara won't take no for an answer. She'll help the heroes in anything they do. She wants to fight.



Roll once or twice on the following table when the adventurers talk or chat with the Kokins or the mercenaries in the settlement, ignore repeated results or just pick one:

d10	Rumors
1	Fiadda says the monster inside the Great Father Tree is a type of arachnid and warns them about its web.
2	Kokins in the village say that Adara has supernatural powers. While all Kokins were weakened due to the tree's disease, Adara remains strong and motivated.
3	One of the Kokins tells the heroes that Zeke claims rein- forcements are coming but none of the mercenaries left with a letter, and they didn't see a messenger bird either.
4	Two Kokins believe the mercenaries have the intention of asking for more gold once their job is done.
5	One of Zeke's mercenaries tells the heroes that the Kokins grow Blue Cap Mushrooms inside their homes, a rare, and extremely expensive kind of fungi.
6	The heroes hear two of Zeke's men talking when pass- ing by them. The two mercenaries discuss if Zeke would be capable of doing such a thing, they don't say what.

7 One of the Kokin elders shares information about a characteristic in sprites. They can read people's hearts and intentions by touching them.

8 Adara tells the heroes she sneaked behind Zeke while invisible and placed a hand on him. She claims she's never seen a darker soul or heart than his.

- 9 A group of Kokins carrying baskets tells the heroes that some of the spices they grow are cherished by humans.
- 10 Fiadda tells the heroes that Adara might turn invisible and follow them even if they tell her to stay.

GENERAL FEATURES

The following descriptions of areas A1 through A8 correspond to the Kokin Town map.

Light. During the day, the Great Father Tree bathes the Kokins with golden light. Multi-colored sparks of light shine from time to time, creating a magical atmosphere.

Uneven Terrain. Kokins' homes look like tiny hills with round wooden doors. The grassy terrain is covered with slopes, farmed ground, trees, and bushes. All of it divided by a north-flowing river.

Uneasiness. The mercenaries' presence is not entirely pleasant to the Kokins. The two homes beside the camp are locked and empty at the moment. Their occupants feel safer on the other side of the river.

Weakness. All Kokins but Adara are visibly debilitated. They can't fly or turn invisible.

A1. MERCENARY CAMP

Tents (well-placed, wooden benches beside them). **Fireplace** (fortified with rocks, hot cooking pot).

Tents by a fireplace with a hot pot of food beside it. Armored men eat, laugh, and spill ale by the fire.

Regardless of the time of the day, there are two **thugs**, four **bandits**, and four **commoners** staying here. A few of them look like mere camp helpers.

Treasure. There is a total of 235 gold pieces within these tents. The mercenaries' spare weapons comprehend two longswords, and a shortbow (15 arrows).

A2. ZEKE'S TENT

Metallic Stakes (thick and heavy, made of steel). Extra Provisions (dried food and ale for weeks).

A large reinforced tent stands between two of the river's bifurcations. Its size is an unmissable contrast to the tiny hill-homes of the Kokins.

Zeke's tent doesn't look like one someone would employ for a couple-of-days job. Inside, he has stashed food for weeks, as if he didn't intend to leave soon. Zeke (**bandit's leader**) is always tailed by two bodyguards (**thugs**).

Treasure. There's a total of 354 gold pieces in assorted coins. A thorough search in his tent (DC 15 Investigation) reveals a healer's kit and two *potions of healing*.

A3. Kokin Farms

Fragrances (spring flowers, fruity scents, and trees). **Insects** (Tiny breed of shiny fireflies and dragonflies).

Kokins are vegetarian and they need no meat in their diet to remain strong and healthy. Kokin farms have spots with a pinkish hue due to a magical fertilizer that only Kokins can make. It is a mix of fungi, unique Kokin herbs, and a spice of their magic. This helps them create miniature versions of human vegetables and fruits. Their magic makes them tastier too.

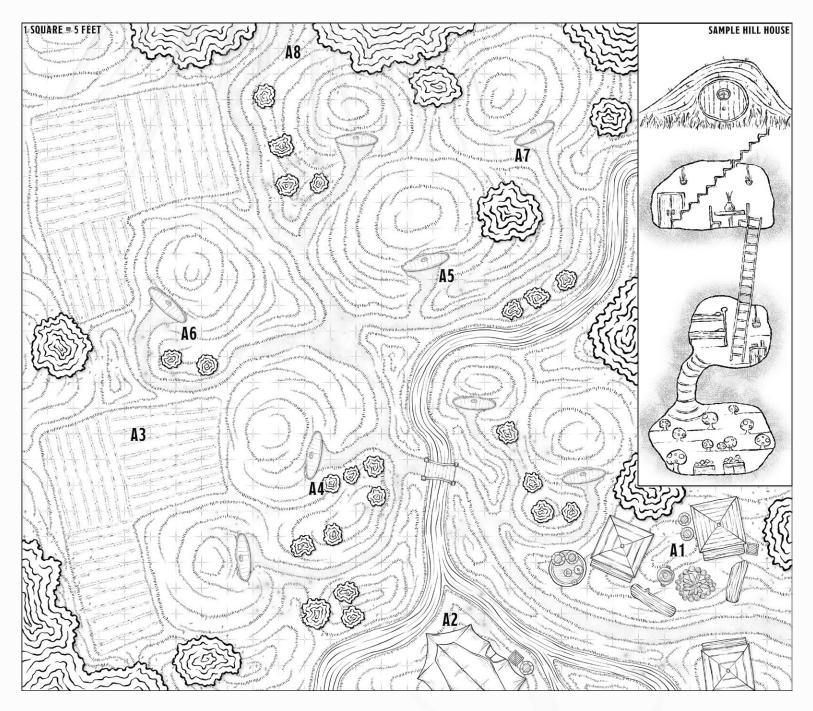
A4. Kokin Homes

Multi-leveled (all homes have at least three levels). **Doors** (magically sealed, only Kokins can open them).

Even if Kokin doors allow Medium-sized creatures, they would have to destroy the first level's floor of their homes to go through the tiny set of stairs that follows (see **Sample Hill House** in the Kokin Town map).

Treasure. Any Kokin home contains expensive fungi and spices that are ordinary for them, but rare and expensive for humans. Each Kokin home has 500 gold pieces worth of these rare resources.





A5. FADDIA'S HOME

Size (this is the largest home in the Kokin village). **Tea-lover** (Faddia's home looks like a teacup museum).

The leader of the Kokin tribe lives here. This is the spot where the warmth of the Great Father Tree's light can be felt the most, even in its present state. Faddia is always at home and only comes out if the heroes wish to speak with her. After that, she goes back inside.

Treasure. Faddia possesses Kokin relics and ancient family heirlooms. Besides the 500 gp worth of ingredients that any Kokin house has, Faddia's home has the following items: a magic scroll of cure light wounds, two potions of healing, a flask of dust of disappearance, an ioun stone of awareness, and a ring of animal influence.

A6. Adara's Home

Warrior's home (full of weapons and paints of war). Adara's farm (she has one normal-sized carrot).

Adara is seldom home. She can be found patrolling the town and spying on Zeke and his men. She doesn't trust them one bit. Adara is wary of the heroes at first glance too. She turns invisible and sneaks behind them to know their real intentions if they give her a reason to. Adara is reckless and brave, but her loyalty to Faddia is even larger. She'll report any threats she perceives, and she'll speak wonders of possible allies (see Development).

Treasure. Adara's home is the exception regarding fungi and spices. Her house contains 431 gold pieces of treasure worth in tiny silver weapons and silverware.



A7. ELDERS' HOME

Fauna (Magical tiny versions of squirrels and foxes). **Herbs** (expensive and rare spices and herbs).

Kokins' lifespan differs from sprites; they're immortal. Four-century-old Kokins live here. They don't do physical labor anymore. They write long, yet tiny books, and make records of their society, their family trees, and the state of the Great Father Tree. Right now, they are always at home due to their weakened state.

Treasure. Besides the 500 gp worth of ingredients that any Kokin house has, the elder keep written records of their civilization, which could be valuable for historians.

A8. Toward the Great Father Tree

Light (warms the face and makes armors shine). **Flora** (beautiful and healthy, plenty of flowers).

The road north toward the diseased tree is clear and easy to follow. It is calm and silent.

As beautiful as the road looks, the Kokins describe an even more charming landscape. Faddia explains all she can to the heroes about how to enter the Great Father Tree before returning home to rest (see **Development**).

OPPORTUNISTIC MERCENARIES

Zeke claims his reinforcements are coming and tells the heroes he'd rather wait for them. However, he tries to strike a deal with them. He says: "Now that you're here to help the tiny people. I have a proposal. Let's split the risk and work together, I can send two good warriors to help you slay that monster. How about it?".

If the heroes agree, Zeke orders two of his **thugs** to accompany the adventurers. These men have orders to betray the adventurers as soon as they have the chance. They turn on the heroes on the first tough fight inside the Great Father Tree. If they refuse his deal, he wishes them good luck with the spider and says he'd rather wait for the reinforcements (see **Development**).

Development

The Kokins are in a complicated situation. If the heroes fail to notice the clues that point to the upcoming catastrophe, the Kokins are doomed.

Reaching the Tree's Heart

Faddia explains that entering the tree can be done in three different ways. She describes that the easiest is to climb on one of its thick roots and follow it to a hole near its base. The second is to climb up to a high branch (150 feet) and reach any of the two openings and cracks between the tree's bark. The third is to enter through the river, to reach an underground chamber below the tree.

THE KOKINS' SAVIORS

The heroes realize Zeke and his men are a greater threat to the Kokins than the spider causing the Great Father Tree's disease. During the confrontation, Zeke orders his men to kill the heroes and take over the village. If things go south, Zeke attempts to flee to the nearest city to regroup and plan his revenge.

SLEEPING WITH WOLVES

The heroes fail to notice Zeke's evil intentions and leave toward the Great Father Tree, this leaves the Kokins alone with the mercenaries. Things do not end well. Zeke turns on the Kokins and sacks the settlement (see **Conclusion** on page 17).

Adara's Fate

She tries to convince the heroes about Zeke's true colors before leaving for the tree. She gladly helps them fend off the mercenaries if it comes to it. Adara Trinn follows the heroes to the Great Father Tree even if they refuse her the right to fight for her kin. She becomes invisible and reveals her presence later, inside the tree.

THE GREAT FATHER TREE

It's been weeks since I came here. I don't recognize the Great Father Tree at all...

Adara Trinn

THE INFESTATION AND FACTIONS

The Great Father Tree's dwindling defense mechanisms have allowed a variety of creatures and pests to find a temporary home inside and beneath it. These different factions do not like each other and compete constantly for space and resources within the tree.

It is a complex and rapidly changing ecology but the scarlet-belly spider and its offspring slowly gain ground.

THE SPIDERS

The Queen of Spiders and its countless number of mindless drone spiders have taken over at least half the space within the tree and below. The other factions cannot push back against the spiders.

THE MYCONIDS

Fungoid entities have taken over areas B8, B9, and B15. Only the ones underground are sentient and may be reasoned with. The desire the rotting corpse of the Queen of Spiders to nurture their growth within the tree.

THE GOBLINS

A pack of goblins has moved in and settled in area B11. They are stealthy hunters who survive by hunting spiders and harvesting mushrooms.

THE BLIGHT SHRUBS

Parts of the Great Father Tree have mutated into blight shrubs in areas B2 and B20. These awakened shrubs want all myconids in the tree destroyed for good.

THE QUEEN OF SPIDERS

An adult scarlet-belly spider lives under the Great Father Tree. These spiders are rare in the Feywild and even more scarce in the Material Plane. Mature scarlet-belly spiders are sentient predators. Their chitinous bodies are hard as a rock and the endpoints of their legs are like sharp pickaxes. The spider's poison causes necrotic damage to tissues and paralysis. It is an alchemical ingredient coveted by mages and scholars for its rarity.

The Queen of Spiders doesn't have a name that can be pronounced with a human mouth, it can only be conveyed telepathically, as a mix of thought and feelings.

The Queen of Spiders was attracted to the tree's heart as its glow and warmth are familiar to a scarlet-belly spider. It is the energy from its home-world, the Feywild. The Queen of Spiders has deduced that it is the source of the tree's life-force. The spider mated within the year and has a limited amount of eggs it can produce in its lifetime. The hatched eggs produce mindless drones which won't ever mature into scarlet-belly spiders. Even the warmth from the tree's heart won't produce a different result. By instinct, the spider knows what she must do.

THE SEARCH FOR A HOST

The only way for a scarlet-belly spider to produce real offspring is to find a voluntary sentient creature to sacrifice itself. The spider must lay its eggs under the volunteer's skin, the eggs hatch, and the infant spiders feast on the still-living volunteer's body. It is a slow, gruesome, and horrible death. This ritual causes the infant scarlet-belly spiders to eventually mature and become sentient.

Elven Cower Adventures

12

ENTERING THE FATHER TREE

The adventurers may enter the tree from areas B1, B9. and B11. Adara and Fiadda know of the three entrances. The chosen path will impact the development of the adventure. When moving within the tree and exploring new locations, there is a 1-in-6 chance of encountering any of the following threats:

- 1d4 mercenaries (thugs) looking to rob the adventurers 1
- 2d4 goblin explorers hunting spiders and sprites 2
- 1d4 myconid adults looking for rotting bodies 3
- A black pudding on the hunt 4
- An insane druid and 2d4 badgers 5
- 1d3 ochre jellies on a hunting rampage 6
- 1d3 swarms of spiders 7
- 1d3 giant spiders 8

GENERAL FEATURES

The following descriptions of areas B1 through B22 correspond to the Father Tree map.

Fungal Waste. There are noxious myconid spores in the tree. Breathing them for 1d3 hours develops a chronic cough that impedes most activities. Abandoning the tree cures the cough after 3 hours of rest.

Spiderwebs. Some areas have been taken over by the spiders and feature extensive spiderwebs. Coming in contact with the web strands requires a successful DC 14 Dexterity save to avoid getting caught in them.

Flooring. Hard, dry wood in the upper levels of the tree trunk. Hard, exposed stone in the cave network beneath the tree. Extensive cracks on the stone reflect the constant growth of the tree roots.

Light. The only light sources within the Great Father Tree are luminescent fungi in myconid-infested areas and the tree's heart in area B22.

B1. ROOT ENTRANCE

Thick root (climbs 25 feet to the entrance). Impending rot (evidence of rot, mold, and fungi).

A ten-foot-wide root climbs to a single opening in the Great Father Tree's trunk. The canopy above is impossibly high, 250 feet above the ground.

This is one of three possible entrances to the Great Father Tree. Spore clouds are visible near area B2.

Adara Trinn. She remarks that the roots look dry and dead, a bad omen. They used to be verdant and fertile.

B2. BLIGHT SHRUB GUARDIANS

Wood walls (signs of rot and mold buildup). Parasitic vegetation (shrubs and grass).

A dark chamber of decaying wood. The smells of soil, rot, and pungent spores in the air. Four malevolent-looking thicket shrubs look up in curiosity.

The four **blight shrub shooters** appear sentient and are initially neutral. They speak Sylvan. A speak with plants spell allows for two-way communication. Adara Trinn can also translate if she is present.

The Request. The awakened shrubs have an instinctual hate for the myconid life-forms in the tree. The shrubs let the adventurers pass if they agree to destroy the myconids in the trunk and the caves. Otherwise, they attack!

B3. Underground Access

Wood walls (covered in mold and web strands). Spiderwebs (thin, gray, and sticky).

This area is covered with thin spiderweb strands that may catch someone with their guard down. If any creature passes through or gets caught in the webs, two swarms of insects (spiders) emerge from the webs to attack. The tunnel to the south descends to the caves under the Great Father Tree, to area B13.

B4. Spiders' Amblish

Wood walls (plastered with thick web strands). **Spiderwebs** (thick, gray, and sticky).

This chamber has been claimed by the spiders. Spider webs cover most of it from floor to ceiling. A belly-up, dead, giant spider lies in the middle of the room, it was killed by the first adventuring party. It features multiple sword wounds and a pool of congealed hemolymph.

Ambush. If the adventurers approach the carcass without inspecting the room, they are attacked by two giant spiders and one swarm of spiders that jump from a hole in the ceiling. The hole is their lair, there are countless one-inch spider eggs but nothing of value.

B5. MEDIUM-LEVEL ACCESS

Wood walls (increased mold buildup and decay). **Stench** (spores and rotting vegetable matter).

A narrow tunnel circles around the trunk and ascends to area B7. A dead mercenary lies dead in the middle of the ascending passage. A medic can determine its cause of death from a breathing obstruction caused by spores and mold accumulation in his throat (DC 14 Medicine).

Treasure. The dead man carries a leather pouch with 35 gp and an emerald earring worth 60 gp.



The Great Father Tree 13

B6. A DEAD-END FOR SELLSWORDS

Wood walls (evidence of acidic spore damage). **Corpses** (shriveled and dry, fungoid and mold growth).

Three dead sellswords died in this room after breathing the **Fungal Waste** for too long and succumbing to the spores in area B8. Rapid fungal growth on the bodies has shriveled them. They appear as if desiccated for a long time. A DC 15 Nature check reveals that they will grow to become myconid lifeforms within a few weeks.

B7. Cocoons for the Dead

Wood walls (plastered with web strands and mold). **Hanging cocoons** (thick, gray, contain dead bodies).

Ten hanging spiderweb cocoons hang from the ceiling. Two large spiders and countless tiny ones lay dead on the floor. Some of them have fungal growths on their dry bodies. The spores from area B8 killed them all. Some of the cocoons contain sprites, the rest are mercenaries.

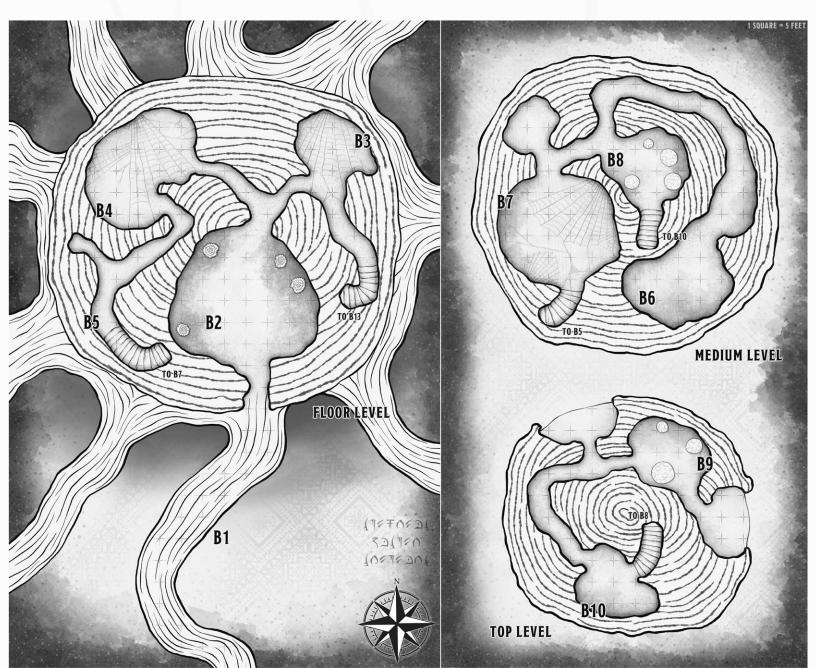
B8. Mindless Fungoid Life

Moldy walls (thick layers of mold consuming the wood). **Spore cloud** (thick, yellow, impedes visibility).

Myconid life-forms lie near the mold-consumed walls, behind a thick curtain floating spores.

Three **myconid adults** that guard this room have produced enough lethal spores to kill the spiders and cocoons in area B7. They are sentient beings but lack any form of communication method. Anything that occurs in the room is known instantly by the myconids in other areas of the Great Father Tree and the caves.

Asphyxiation Spores. The spores in area B8 cause a rapid buildup of moss and particles in creatures' throats. A creature affected by it asphyxiates and dies after 1d6 minutes (DC 14 Constitution save). Spells such as *remove curse* and *lesser restoration* cure this condition.



B9. TREE-TOP ENTRANCE AND MYCONIDS

Moldy walls (thick layers of mold consuming the wood). **High entrances** (150 feet up the tree's trunk).

This is one of three possible entrances to the Great Father Tree. Two **myconid adults** guard the chamber next to the trunk openings. They are sentient beings but lack any form of communication method. Anything that occurs in the room is known instantly by the myconids in other areas of the Great Father Tree and the caves. The myconids can produce **asphyxiation spores** like the ones in area B8 but they need 24 hours to do it.

Adara Trinn. She claims that numerous birds and apes would often be here but the place is deserted, except for the predatory myconids.

B10. TREE-TOP LANDING

Moldy walls (thick layers of mold consuming the wood). **Porous wood** (evidence of termite damage).

The descending tunnel leads to area B8. The deathstench of the spores can be perceived here.

B11. GOBLIN CAMP

Stone walls (riddled with roots). Underground Stream (freshwater, 10-foot-deep).

A pack of 10 **goblins** moved here from the cave systems in area B14. They soon discovered the presence of the spiders and have managed to fend them off from this cave. The goblins' leader is named Turuki. The goblins do not harm the Great Father Tree but wish to settle here due to the abundance of food. They hunt small spiders and gather edible fungi in the caves.

A Truce. Turuki is willing to work with the adventurers in defeating the spiders if they are allowed to stay.

Adara Trinn. If she is present, she claims the goblins' presence is an insult to the tree. She wants to kill them.

The Dead Men. Two mercenaries came a few days ago and threatened the goblins. The goblins defended themselves and overpowered the two men. Turuki knows many other sellswords have visited the place recently, so they hid the bodies in area B12 to avoid suspicion. Turuki would rather not fight any more sellswords.



B12. Dead Mercenaries

Stone walls (riddled with roots). **Human remains** (bones cleaned by insects).

The remains of the two men have been cleaned to the bone by insects and vermin. There is nothing of value.

B13. THE QUEEN'S UPPER LAIR

Stone walls (riddled with roots and spiderweb strands). **Spiderwebs** (thick, gray, and sticky, from wall to wall).

This large chamber is directly above the Queen of Spiders' lair. There is a sinkhole by the east wall that drops 40 feet to area B22, where the scarlet-belly spider is.

Creatures passing through have a 3-in-6 chance of attracting the spiders that live in this large cavern chamber. Getting caught in the spiderwebs has the same effect. Three **large spiders** and two **swarms of insects** (spiders) descend on web strands and attack.

B14. Meandering Caverns

Stone walls (riddled with roots and cracks). **Underground breeze** (stench of stagnant water).

These caves lead to a large underground network of pathways beneath the forest. The goblins came this way. Many dangerous creatures inhabit the tunnel network.

B15. THE MYCONID COURT

Moldy walls (layers of mold and fungi on the stone). **Spore cloud** (thick and yellow, impedes visibility).

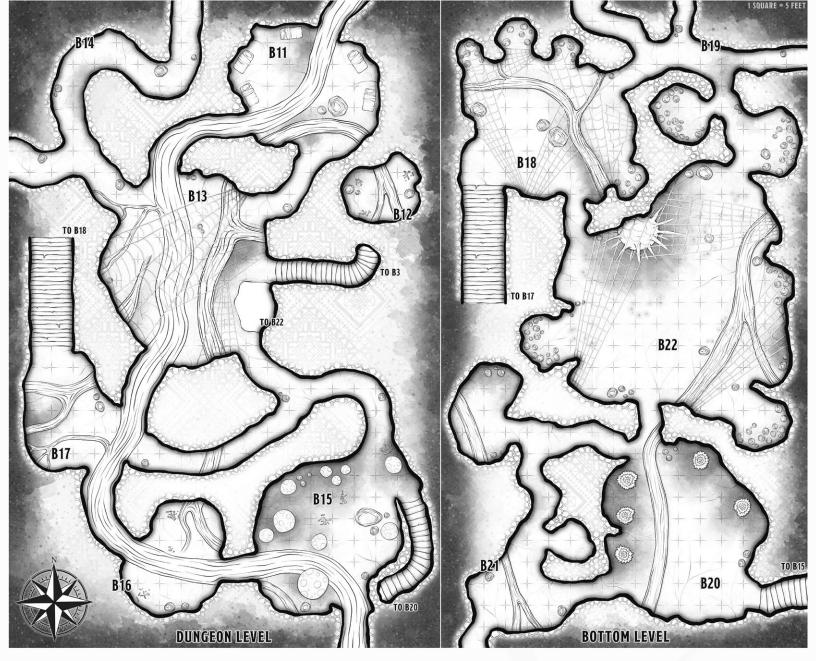
Myconid life-forms stand on a thick bed of mold and fungi, behind a thick curtain of spores. A telepathic mind-call pierces the ambiance in the room.

There are four **myconid adults** and one **myconid sovereign** in the chamber. The sovereign's Rapport Spores allow it to communicate telepathically with visitors. The sovereign wants to destroy the Queen of Spiders and use its rotting body to foster new myconids. It forgives any destruction of other myconids in the tree's trunk, claiming that rot and decay, even of their own kind, is a welcome thing. The sovereign offers a moldy drink that makes a person resistant to the spiders' poison for 24 hours. There is enough for two people. If the adventurers attack the myconids, the three spore servants (**thugs**) in area B16 come to protect the myconid sovereign.

B16. Hidden Chamber

Underground Stream (freshwater, 10-foot-deep). **Spore servants** (human, covered in mold and fungi).

Three mercenaries (**thugs**) were killed and brought back as **spore servants** by the myconid sovereign in area B15. They await in silent and mindless obedience.



B17. THE TRAPPED COWARD

Stone walls (recent cracks, evidence of an earthquake). Underground Stream (freshwater, 10-foot-deep).

A mercenary named Gallahan (guard) fled the spiders in area B13 after his companions were killed. He has been here for two days, unsure of how to escape. He pleads the adventurers to let him join them in exchange of help. The north passage descends 40 feet to area B18.

B18. THE NORTH HATCHERY

Stone walls (riddled with roots and spiderweb strands). Spiderwebs (thick, gray, and sticky, from wall to wall).

Dozens of unhatched scarlet-belly spider eggs await in natural alcoves in this chamber. Some eggs produce a faint green glow. Two giant spiders protect the eggs.

Treasure. Each unhatched egg is worth 10 gp to alchemists and apothecaries. Each egg weighs 2 pounds.

B19. Descending Tunnels

Stone walls (riddled with roots and cracks). Underground breeze (stench of stagnant water).

Three narrow tunnels slant down into the darkness and the underground network of paths beneath the forest.

B20. BLIGHT SHRUB PESTS

Stone walls (riddled with roots and spiderweb strands). Parasitic vegetation (shrubs and grass).

There are five **blight shrub shooters** that behave in the same way as those in area B2. The scarlet-belly spiders ignore the awakened shrubs.

Adara Trinn. She senses a sliver of the Great Father Tree's energy in the awakened shrubs. She wants to help the shrubs get rid of the myconids, if possible.

The Request. The shrubs want the adventurers to destroy the myconids in area B15. Otherwise, they attack!



B21. Mercenaries Shot

Stone walls (riddled with roots and cracks). **Underground breeze** (stench of stagnant water).

The dead bodies of two mercenaries lie on the floor, next to a large tree root. Wooden thorn-like stakes pierce their bodies in several places.

These adventurers refused the awakened shrub's request and were shot. The two of them fled here to die.

Treasure. Among the corpses, there is a leather pouch with 105 gp and a +1 shortsword with a ruby on the hilt.

B22. The Queen's Lair

Stone walls (riddled with roots and spiderweb strands). **Spiderwebs** (thick, gray, and sticky, from wall to wall).

A huge, root-like being is covered by hundreds of spiderweb strands that constrict it as it pulses. Green glow and warmth surround the tree's heart.

The Queen of Spiders has a stranglehold on the tree's heart and can destroy it with a single action. She uses this to negotiate (see The Queen's Offer). The huge spider speaks Sylvan and attempts to parley first. Adara Trinn can translate if she is present but she doesn't trust the spider and wants it gone. Adara doesn't believe the spider can destroy the heart. She thinks it is a bluff.

If negotiations fail two **giant spiders** and a **swarm of spiders** help the scarlet-belly spider fight the adventurers and their allies. The Queen of Spiders spends the first turn crushing and destroying the tree's heart.

Unexpected Allies. If the adventurers got rid of the myconids, two **blight shrub shooters** from area B20 comes to help the adventurers to kill the spider, if they still live.

Unexpected Foes. If the adventurers refused the shrubs' request and any of them still lives, two **blight shrub shooters** comes to attack the adventurers.

THE QUEEN'S OFFER

The scarlet-belly spider threatens to crush the tree's heart and kill it if she doesn't get her way. She explains, in Sylvan, that she requires a humanoid to surrender their body for egg-implantation, sprites are too small for this purpose. It has to be a voluntary sacrifice that will result in the person's death. Such are the life-cycle and hatching requirements of her kind. A DC 15 Nature check confirms that the Queen of Spiders does not lie.

The scarlet-belly spider refuses anything else offered to her. Her reproduction cycle approaches its end. She must do this or she'll never sire sentient offspring.



CONCLUSION

THE SPIDER AND THE TREE

If the adventurers fight the Queen of Spiders, she destroys the tree's heart and kills the Great Father Tree. This causes all Kokins to perish within 1d6 days unless they find a way to travel to the Feywild. There's enough poison in the spider's hollow fangs (chelicerae) to fill six vials. Each is worth 300 gp to alchemists and mages.

If an adventurer accepts the spider's offer, the Queen of Spiders is true to her word and moves underground to the tunnel network, in the company of other spiders and the voluntary sacrifice. The adventurer is administered a sedative and then the eggs are implanted beneath the skin. The scarlet-belly spider eggs hatch within 1d6 days and cause the person's untimely death.

THE OPPORTUNISTIC MERCENARIES

If the adventurers do not confront Zeke and his lackeys before embarking to the Great Father Tree, the mercenaries take the chance to kill all Kokins and steal their belongings. When the adventurers return, they find a massacre in the sprite town, regardless of whether the Great Father Tree survived or not. If Adara Trinn witnesses this, she utters a last cry of anguish and falls to the ground. Despair and sadness kills her in a minute.

Zeke and company can be found in the nearest town, drinking and having fun, squandering their ill-gotten riches. Confronting Zeke here is no easy task, he has paid for increased protection and status with the local criminal guild. A true villain has just been born.



The Great Father Tree 17

BLIGHT SHRUB SHOOTER

Small fey, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 14 (natural armor) HP 22 (5d8) Speed 15 ft.

 STR
 DEX
 CON
 INT
 WIS
 CHA

 10 (+0)
 15 (+2)
 11 (+0)
 13 (+1)
 14 (+2)
 12 (+1)

Skills Perception +3 Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13 Languages Sylvan Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Spellcasting. The shrub's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 12). The shrub can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: druidcraft

2/day: entangle

1/day: pass without trace

Actions

Headbutt. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage.

Shoot Thorns. *Ranged Weapon Attack*: +4 to hit, range 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage. Plus 2 (1d4) poison damage.

THE QUEEN OF SPIDERS

Large fey, chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor) **HP** 93 (11d10+33) **Speed** 40 ft., climb 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Str +6, Con +6, Wis +4 Skills Perception +4 Senses Blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft., p. Perception 14 Languages Sylvan Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Spider Climb. The spider can climb any surface, including upside down on ceilings. No ability check is needed.

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

Web Walker. The spider ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing. It moves at normal speed.

Actions

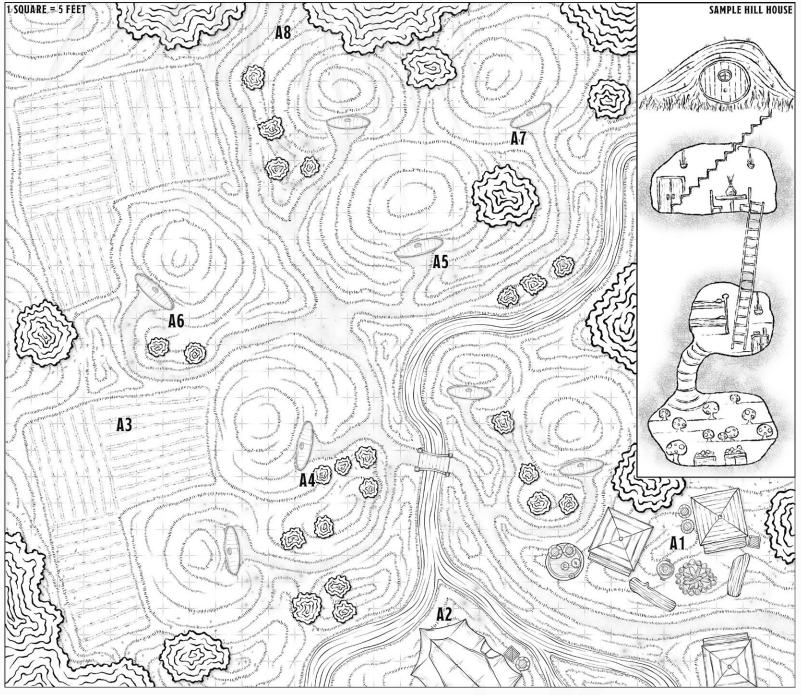
Multiattack. The spider makes a bite attack and an impale attack. It priorizes targets trapped in webs.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 9 (1d10 + 3) piercing damage, 18 (4d8) poison damage. DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success

Impale. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 12 (2d8 + 3) piercing damage.

Web (Recharge 4–6). Ranged Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one creature. Hit: The target is restrained by webbing. As an action, the restrained target can make a DC 14 Strength check, bursting the webbing on a success.

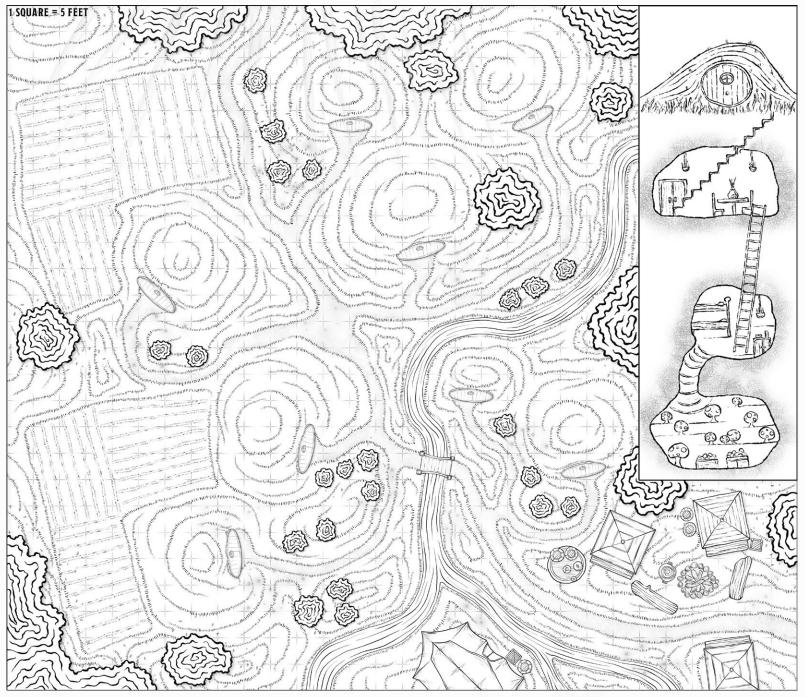
APPENDIX - MAPS



DM Map



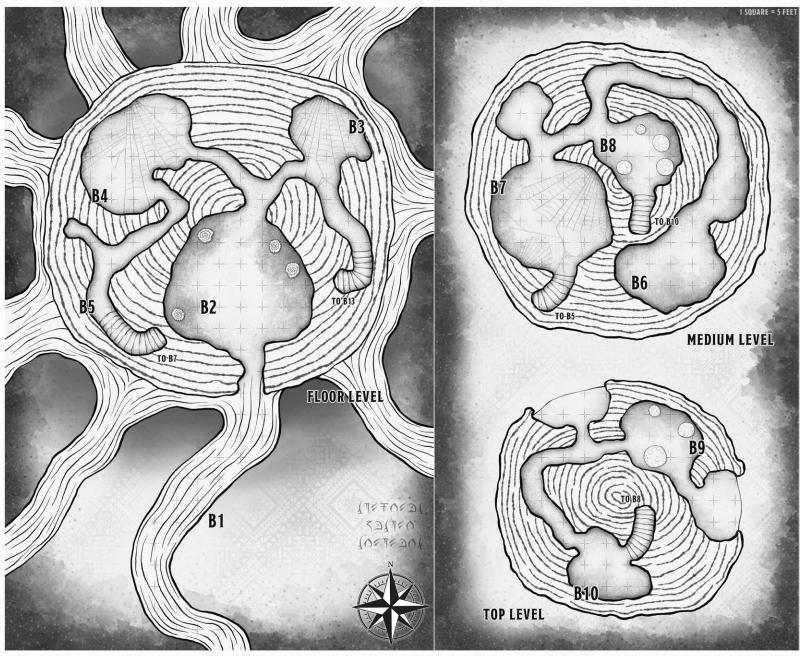
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PC MAP



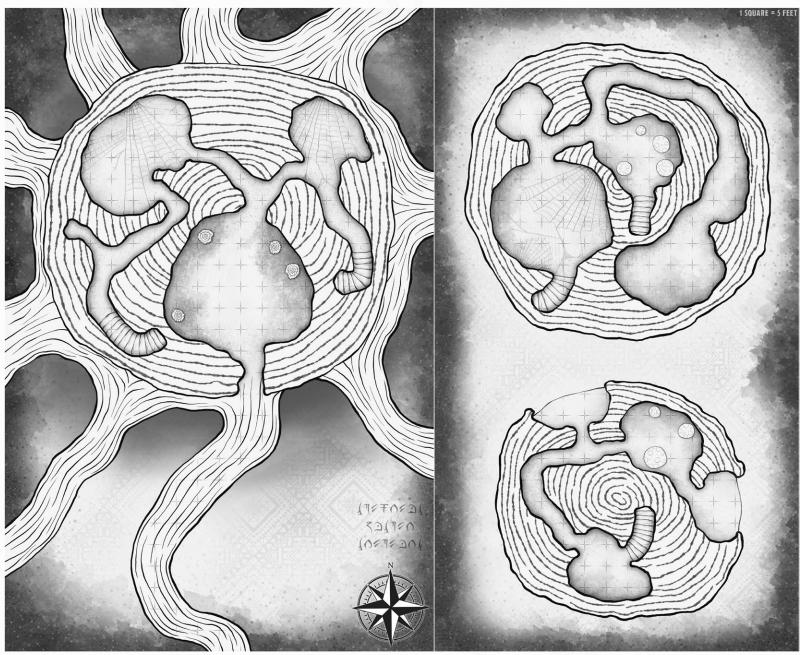
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DM Map

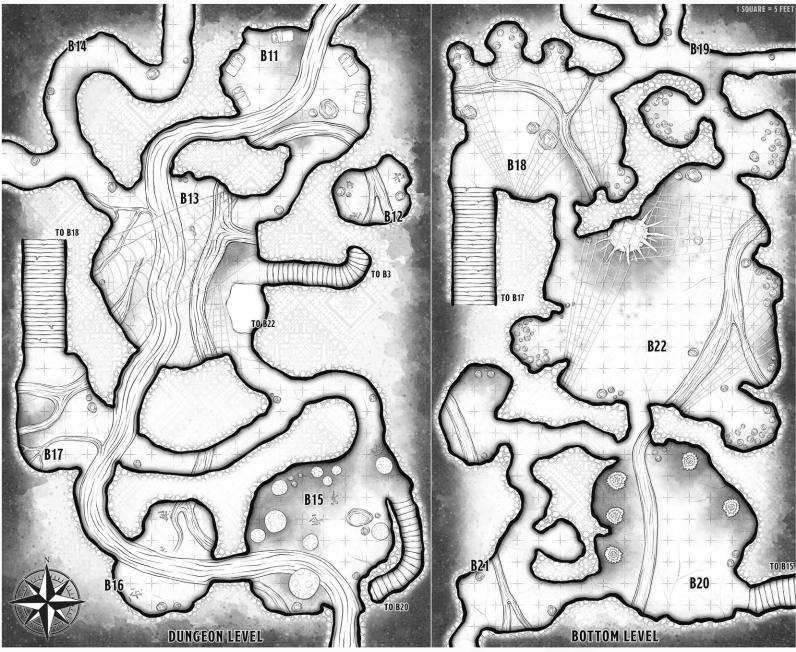




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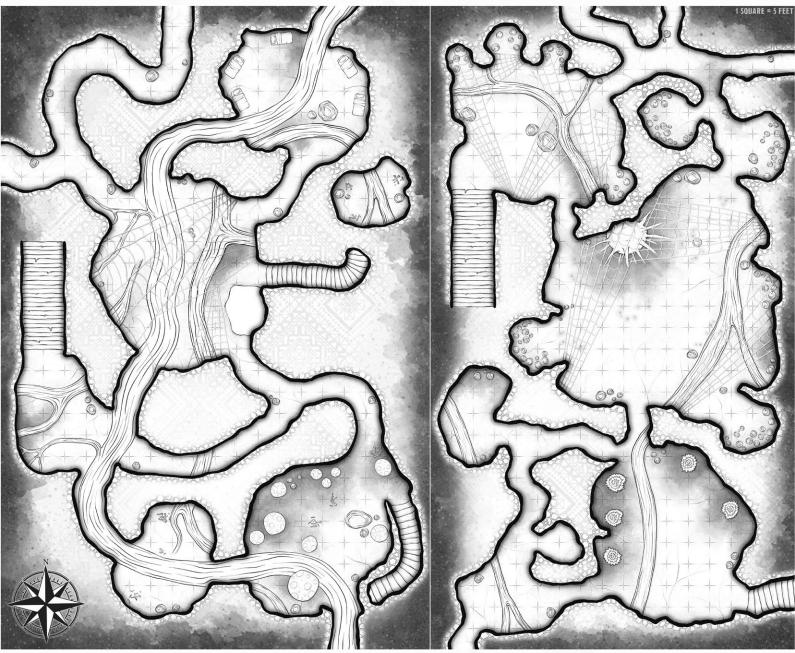


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DM Map





PC MAP



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