

6TH LEVEL



THE DM TOOL CHEST

CURSE OF THE DARK GROVE

LORDS OF MADNESS PART I

FIFTH EDITION ADVENTURE

An evil force has seeped into the forest, corrupting all it touches with madness

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LORDS OF MADNESS

This is the first adventure in a four part series that delves into the mystery of a tear in the veil between the material plane and the elemental plane of chaos. Each can be adapted into a single adventure if desired or left as a series.

Curse of the Dark Grove An evil force has seeped into the forest, corrupting all it touches with madness

Tower of the Mad Wizard An ancient wizard in an elemental tower has succumbed to madness

The Circle of Five A group of evil mages have banded together, ripping a hole into the plane of chaos

The Courts of Chaos Chaos has been unleashed and an army of demons are preparing to flood into the world

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CREDITS

This adventure module was created with the help of all of these talented people:

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Thank You! To all of the awesome patrons who supported this work!

RUNNING THIS ADVENTURE

In order to run this adventure, you will need the Fifth Edition core rulebooks.

Boxed text like this present descriptions meant to be read aloud or paraphrased for the players. These are just prompts and may be used or not at the DM's discretion.

In this adventure you will come across references that point to information that is presented outside of this module.

Magic Items, Spells, and Equipment will be italicized and will be found described in either the core DM guidebook or the core player's rulebook.

Monster names will be in bold and the appropriate stat block will be found in the core fifth edition monster guidebook if not already presented in an attached Appendix.

ABBREVIATIONS

Common abbreviations used in this adventure:

pp - Platinum Piece(s)	LG Lawful good
gp - Gold Piece(s)	CG Chaotic good
ep - Electrum Piece(s)	NG Neutral good
sp - Silver Piece(s)	LN Lawful neutral
cp - Copper Piece(s)	N Neutral
NPC - Nonplayer Character	CN Chaotic neutral
DC - Difficulty Class	LE Lawful evil
AC - Armor Class	NE Neutral evil
xp - Experience Points	CE - Chaotic evil
hp - Hit Points	



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ADVENTURE PRIMER

Curse of the Dark Grove is an adventure made for a party of **three to five adventurers of 5th to 6th level**; it's optimized for **four adventurers with an average party level (APL) of 6**. It's been written using the Freelands campaign setting but is designed to fit into any setting with only a few changes. Feel free to use the content as is or plug-and-play with it in your own campaign! You have ultimate control of how this story will be played out so, as always, have fun with it!

ADAPTING THIS ADVENTURE

This adventure can be adapted into a single adventure by removing the backstory of the Circle of Five and making the chaos corruption a localized event to the Dryad Court. Perhaps the Queen sought more power in defending her forest realm or the corruption somehow leaked through to the Mother Tree through unknown means. It will be completely removed by Ishtara, negating the need to seek out Drazor for help.

STORY BACKGROUND

Ashenvale, a city on the outskirts of the Shimmering Forest, has had reports of travelers disappearing at an alarming rate. Those who make it to the city tell tales of strange creatures, twisted trees, and that the forest, a once bright and beautiful place, has grown dark and somber. The birds have stopped singing and small animal life has all but disappeared.

Hunters are not able to find much game and those who enter the forest at night do not return. The town elders are concerned there is a malevolent force at work and are desperate to find answers.

A band of wizards called the Circle of Five have been trying to harness the power of the elemental plane of chaos. They are siphoning energy through a small rift they opened in their secret underground complex in the Verdant Hills on the outskirts of the Shimmering Forest. Using the local flora and fauna of the forest in their experiments, they have created horrifying creatures by infusing them with chaos. They grew greedy in their lust for power and entered the rift, unknowingly causing it to rip and tear at the very fabric of reality behind them. The chaos has been seeping into the forest, slowly corrupting everything it touches over the last few months.

THE DRYAD COURT

Lystra, the dryad queen of the Shimmering Forest, and her retinue have been corrupted by the chaos. The forest has become twisted and corrupted and creatures are hunting down any who would dare to enter. Lystra controls a litany of chaos corrupted creatures bent on protecting nature at all costs. These creatures have been attacking anyone traveling in the forest and killing them.

The adventurers must trek into the dark forest where they will find a den of the chaos infected creatures. They also encounter a dryad Princess named Ishtara who tells them that her mother, Lystra the dryad queen, has been corrupted by dark magic and begs them for help.

She believes the roots of the Mother Tree have been tainted and are spreading her mother's corruption throughout the forest. Unfortunately, she knows no way to save those corrupted and bemoans that they must be destroyed in order to save everyone.

Ishtara has a small band of elves and other forest creatures that have been able to resist the taint so far and will aid the adventurers in getting to the court of the dryad queen. She will vow to take her mother's place and cleanse the forest.

The court is hidden in an underground cavern teeming with chaos corrupted monsters. The main cavern holds the heart root of the Mother Tree, rising from a magical spring that is currently boiling and seething with chaos. The Dryad Queen must be defeated before the Princess takes the Mother Tree as her new home, thereby starting the cleanse of the forest.

Once bonded to the Mother tree, she is able to discern that the spread is being resisted but the force is too great for even her to completely destroy. She's able to determine that the dark magic is actually elemental chaos and slowly spreading.

She recommends that they seek out Drazor, an ancient wizard and long time friend of the dryads who lives in the Shimmering Forest. He knows more about the elemental powers than anyone else and may be able to help them figure out what is going on.

HISTORY OF THE FOREST

The Shimmering Forest is a vast area that is home to the Z'hing-Tao Elven Empire. The easternmost edge of the forest is part of the Freelands territory and supplies the area with lumber and a variety of plants used for alchemy and healing. The unique trees of the forest sometimes exude a sap that crystalizes on the bark, giving them a slight sparkling appearance when the light hits it, giving the forest its name.

The dryads of the forest have been a natural protector of its trees and creatures for centuries. Living in peace with both the Elves and the Human cities, they keep the balance of nature while making sure the forest is not stripped completely for its resources. They protect the Mother Tree, an ancient tree blessed by the earth goddess Amber, and home to the Dryad Queen.

The forest is home to all types of creatures as well as monsters. It's a moist, evergreen rainforest that contains a plethora of unknown plants and animals that are not found anywhere else in the world. While it has its dangers, the peace between the forest and the people living nearby has been kept by the court of the dryads until the chaos corruption came into play.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Here are a couple ways you can hook your adventurers into this story:

ASHENVALE SEEKS AID

The council of Ashenvale has put out notices that they are seeking assistance in a delicate matter. They've promised great reward for any who would answer the call for help. These notices can be found on notice boards, through town criers, or through adventuring guilds.

ATTACK ON THE ROADWAYS

The adventurers are traveling on the road to Ashenvale when they come across a wagon and three **commoners** being attacked by a **corrupted bear**. The bear appears to be infected with some kind of disease; it's veins are blackened and it's body has been distorted. The locals will want to let the council of Ashenvale know what is going on.





PART 1 - A MEETING IN ASHENVALE

ASHENVALE

Ashenvale is a small city on the outskirts of the Shimmering Forest and directly on the border between the Freelands and the Z'hing-tao Empire. This has made it an important hub of trade and travel between the two nations. A prosperous city, it is normally bustling with activity and filled to bursting with people. A dark pall has descended on the citizens who now lock themselves in their homes, the merchants are closed for business, and the marketplaces are mostly empty.

The three elders who make up the council of the city have called a meeting and have decided to hire a group of adventurers to enter the forest and determine who or what is attacking the travelers and traders. They have invited one of the traders who survived an attack in the forest to come and tell his story.

"A tall, nervous man stands before you, clutching a cap between his wringing hands.

"My name is Bareth and I am a trader by profession... rugs, and tapestries mostly" he shakingly begins. He appears as if he hasn't slept in days and is obviously still terrified from his experience.

"My companions and I were on their way to Ashenvale with a load of wares to sell in the marketplace when we made camp one night in the Shimmering Forest. We've done this journey dozens of times in the past few years and this trip was no different. In the middle of the night, I stepped outside of camp to relieve myself when suddenly," he clutches his cap even tighter and his eyes go wide.

"All I can remember is hearing the roars of the beasts filling the air... the screams from my friends." He swallows hard and continues, "I... I only caught glimpses of the dark creatures as they tore through the camp... flashes of teeth and claws... and blood... so much blood..." He rushes through his next words, eager to finish his story. "I ran. As fast as I could, I ran, I did. And I did not stop running until I reached the city gates."

Thanking him for his story, the council let the shaken man take his leave. They explain that Bareth is a lucky man to have survived; there have been no reports of other survivors from these attacks, only reports of the dozens who are missing over the last few months. They were able to get a rough location from Bareth of where the camp was located and would like the adventurers to investigate what happened.

The council will offer a reward of 2,000 gp if the adventurers can discover what is causing the disappearances and save the travelers from whatever evil has befallen them.

TRAVELING TO THE CAMPSITE

The campsite is located about six hours away just slightly off the northeastern roadway through the Shimmering Forest. It can be found with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check. The carts have been completely destroyed and the wares scattered across the small clearing. Oddly, the forest seems to have almost completely grown over everything and there is no sign of the people Bareth was travelling with. A successful DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) will show a few especially green patches of grass and moss that show what remains of the traders.

CAMPSITE ATTACK

The campsite was attacked by a group of corrupted dryads and panthers. The traders were all killed and the dryads used their powers to encourage the forest to grow over and reclaim everything. This is the tactic that the chaos corrupted have been using to cover their attacks on travelers.

There are a series of tracks that the adventurers find and can determine to be made by panthers with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) The adventurers can follow them through the forest with a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Survival) check for each hour of tracking. It will take three successful checks of following the tracks before they reach the den where the chaos corrupted panthers live. For each hour of tracking roll on the table below for possible encounters that occur while tracking.

1	1d4 Corrupted Deer
2	1d4+1 Corrupted Dire Wolves
3	1d4 Corrupted Vine Blights
4	1d6 Corrupted Needle Blights
5	Corrupted Shambling Mound
6	1d4 Corrupted Dryads

CHAOS DEN

As the adventurers are moving through the woods, the trees appear to different than the others near the edges of the forest. The leaves are blackening and the bark is wilted and split, almost rotting off in some places. They will find a small cave entrance obscured by vines leading underground. The trees here are almost completely black and devoid of leaves.

A pair of **corrupted dryads** (see *The Corrupted* on page 7) step out from behind the trees when the adventurers attempt to enter the cave. Once they initiate combat, three **corrupted panthers** will streak out of the cave to join them. The corruption is clearly displayed in their twisted bodies and the dryad's blackened forms. The cave itself is empty.

THE DRYAD PRINCESS

Soon after the battle and the inspection of the cave, the adventurers will be greeted by Princess Ishtara and a pair of wary Elven warriors standing with her just outside the entrance to the cave. She will greet them warmly and with a smile to show no intent for harm, asking them if they were the ones who dispatched the corrupted.

Introducing herself as Princess Ishtara, of the Shimmering Forest Dryad Court, she will show extreme sadness at the loss and explain to the adventurers that the forest is in grave danger. Over the past few months a dark magic has infected the dryad court, slowly causing the dryads and creatures to go mad and twisting them with some sort of corruption. The Dryad Queen has succumbed to the infection and the Mother Tree has been corrupted as well. With horror filling her voice she'll tell them of the madness that has infected the Queen, of her murder of her people, and her plans to destroy the mortal settlements outside the forest.

Leading a small group of those that have resisted the infection, she has fled the court in search of help. Pleading with the adventurers, she tells them that she believes she can reverse the effects on the Mother Tree and repair the damage but is afraid her mother, the Queen, is too far gone in her madness to be saved. She sees that they are experienced and capable heroes and begs them to help her.

REBEL CAMP

Ishtara will lead the adventurers to the encampment where her rebels have been staying. Hidden in a small ravine, the camp is only about an hour away from the den and contains a ragtag group of elves, dryads, satyrs, centaurs, and other forest creatures. The rebels are hurting from prior encounters with the forest's corrupted creatures. They have watched in horror as friends and loved ones turned on them. They are worn down but resolute in reclaiming the Court from whatever foul magic has assaulted their home.

Princess Ishtara will introduce the adventurers to Zheng Hu, an elven fighter who was once a member of the court's guard. He explains the situation as one with little hope; the rebels are few in number and cannot hope to fight the court directly. What they need is a small force to enter the court from a back entrance known only to the Princess while other groups will conduct hit and run tactics to draw attention away from them. It is a dangerous mission but removing the Queen and getting Ishtara to the Mother Tree is their only hope of stopping the spread of the corruption from taking over the entire forest.



PART 2 - COURT OF THE DARK DRYADS

The Court of the Dryads was made both naturally and through magic from the roots of the Mother Tree, a massive tree that dominates a section of the Shimmering Forest. Over fifty feet in diameter and 600 feet tall, its canopy and roots are home to many of the forest's creatures and people. Normally a refuge and sanctuary for all, it's now become a dark place, filled with chaos corruption.

Princess Ishtara and a pair of elven guards will guide the adventurers through the forest, dodging patrols of chaos corrupted creatures until they reach a certain tree in the forest. It looks like any other tree, starting to wilt and rot from the corruption. Laying her hands upon the Tree, it will lift its roots, revealing a passageway leading down into the earth. This is a long forgotten secret escape tunnel; this is how Ishtara saved her people and got them out of the Court.

She gives the adventurers a map and directions on how to get to the throne room where they should find the Queen. The entrance to the chamber will most likely be locked by the Mother Tree but there is a way to force it open using the *staff of growing* that is in the Court's armory. It was originally used to help form the Court and has the power to command the door to open. She warns them that the Queen will be guarded and the path will be fraught with danger. Wishing them luck, she and her guards leave to join the guerilla attacks already starting.

GENERAL FEATURES

Recommended Ambiance. Enviro Ambient - [Forest of Dark Magic](#)



Environment & Terrain. All of the walls, floors, and ceilings are formed from a combination of natural hard packed dirt and magically adjusted roots. A layer of moss creates a soft carpet giving an advantage bonus to Stealth checks.

Sounds & Smells. The Court is normally filled with the smell of earth and fragrant flowers but the chaos corruption has replaced it with the scent of decay and a sour, swampy stench. Listening closely, there is a low, deep hum thrumming through the Court as if the earth itself is groaning. Insects and some birds create a forest like atmosphere.

Lights. Phosphorus plants are growing on the walls and ceilings creating dim light in soft greens and blues.

CHAOS IN THE COURT

The Court of the Dryads has been decimated by the corruption. Most of the citizens and creatures have become little more than crazed beasts. The rooms of the Court are filled with destroyed objects that were shattered in their rage and there is little semblance of the beauty that was once there. The Court has always been open to free movement within it so there are no doors except the Main Gate and Throne Room door which are both magically sealed.

THE CORRUPTED

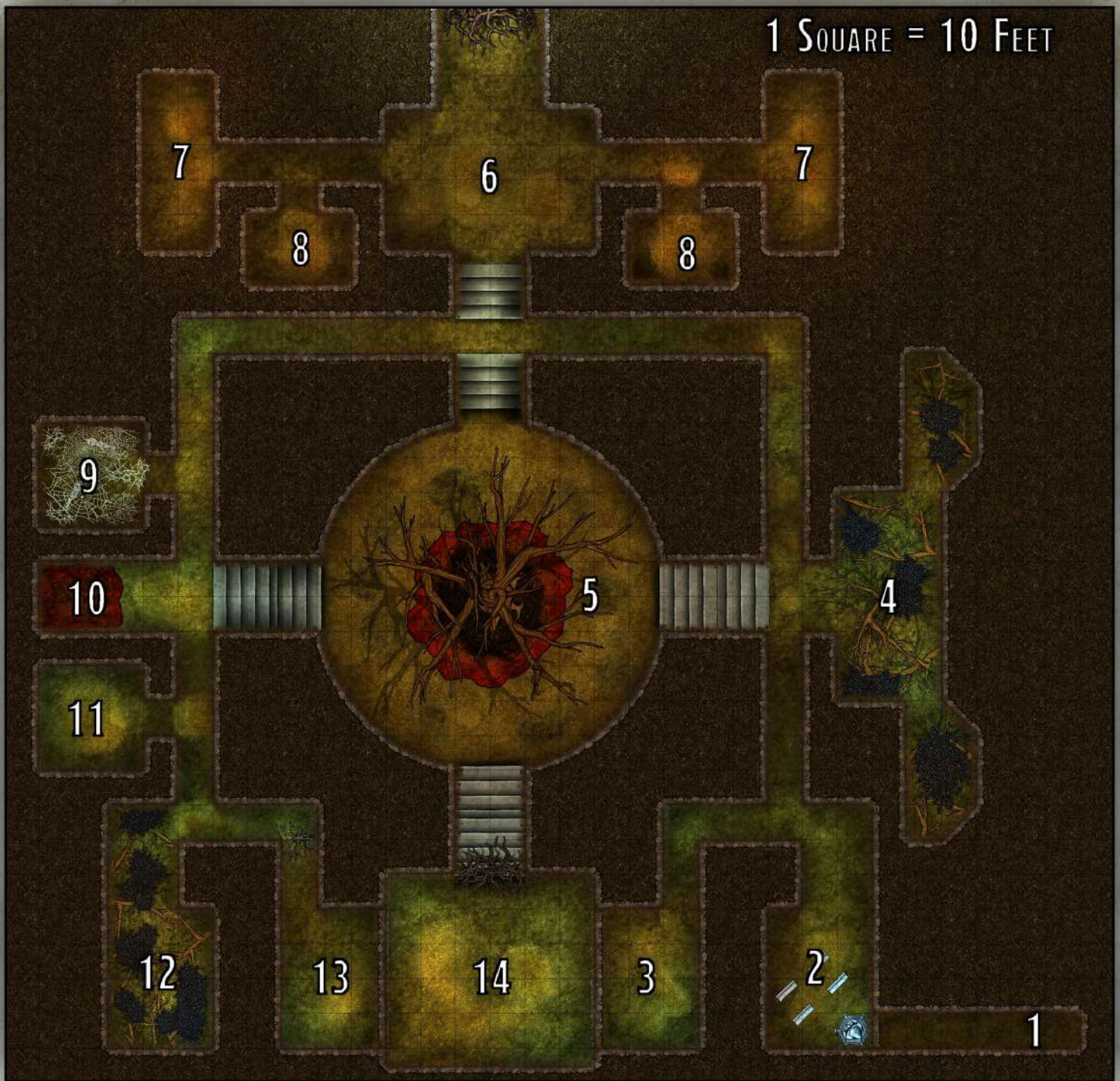
Throughout the adventure you will come across references to "corrupted" versions of creatures. Unless otherwise noted in a provided stat block, the references are to the regular versions of the creatures with the addition of:

+1 to CR, rounded up or down as needed
+1 to Str, Dex, Con
-1 to Int, Cha
2d8+2 added to hp

Chaos Bolt. You can cast a mass of chaotic energy. Make a ranged spell attack against the target. On a hit, the target takes 2d8 + 1d6 damage. Choose one of the d8s. The number rolled on that die determines the attacks damage type, as shown below.

- 1 | Acid
- 2 | Cold
- 3 | Fire
- 4 | Force
- 5 | Lightning
- 6 | Poison
- 7 | Psychic
- 8 | Thunder

Chaos Claw/Bite. Those creatures with claw/bite attacks deal an additional 1d6 damage of the type as per the *chaos bolt* random damage type table.



KEYED LOCATIONS

1 - ESCAPE TUNNEL

The secret escape tunnel is lined with tightly woven roots for walls interspersed with phosphorus glowing fungi. The moss that carpets the floor is soft but dying from the chaos corruption. The tunnel ends at a fake door built to blend into the earth and root walls on the other side but easily discernible from the inside.

2 - CHAPEL

This Chapel was dedicated to Amber, the Goddess of Nature. A statue depicting the goddess dominates one corner of the room, guarding the secret door to the escape tunnel. The room has been taken over by twisted and rotting roots and moss. A few stone benches and the statue are all that remain of what was once a beautiful chapel.

There are three **corrupted dryads** here in the process of trying to destroy the statue and any other remnants of the chapel. Opening the escape tunnel door will be immediately noticed by them and they will fly into a rage and attack.

3 - STORAGE

This was once a storage room filled with food and drinks for the guests of the Court. Everything has been destroyed and thick vines and moss have overgrown everything here, leaving no trace of what it once held. A nest of six **corrupted vine blights** have taken over and hide amongst the growth. They hide in the vines using *false appearance* and will use their *entangling plants* ability to trap any of the adventurers who enter the room before attacking.

4 - LIVING QUARTERS

Once a home for the people living in the Court, the living quarters have been transformed into a miniature dark jungle. Thick vines and rotting plants have burst from the walls and ceiling to create a new type of home for the chaos corrupted living here now. A stench of decay is emanating from this room and rolls down the hallways.

Living in this dark jungle are two **corrupted dryads**, a **corrupted guardsman**, two **corrupted needle blights**, and two **corrupted panthers**. They are all showing heavy signs of corruption as it has twisted them into misshapen forms of their previous selves.

CORRUPTED GUARDSMAN

Medium humanoid (elf, high elf), CE (Normally NG)

Armor Class 15 (leather and shield)

Hit Points 23 (5d8+2)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	9 (-1)

Saving Throws: Advantage against charm effects

Skills Perception

Condition Immunity Sleep

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Common, Elvish

Challenge 2 (400 xp)

Spellcaster. The Corrupted Guardsman's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 10, +2 to hit with spell attacks). They can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components.

- **At Will** *true strike*, *chaos bolt**
*gained through chaos corruption

Actions

Longsword. Melee Weapon Attack: +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d8+2) slashing damage or 7 (1d10+2) slashing damage if used two-handed.

5 - ROOTS OF THE MOTHER TREE

This hall was once a gathering place for all who wished to sit under the heart root of the Mother Tree. Pixies once danced and sang among the roots and the spring from which the roots drank was blessed by the Goddess of Nature herself, giving healing and a sense of calm to those who drank from its waters. Now the spring has been tainted by the chaos and it is spreading that corruption throughout the rest of the forest. The Mother Tree has been fighting the taint but the Dryad Queen has already gone mad from the effects, realizing too late what was going on. Now the Mother Tree is dying, its roots wilting and starting to rot. The spring below it swirls with chaotic energy.

Anyone who comes in contact with water from the pool will receive damage as if struck by a *chaos bolt* at level 1. They must roll a successful DC 15 Constitution check or be struck with short-term madness (DMG 259). Coming into contact more than once from chaos infected water will risk long-term madness effects. The chaos in the water will eat through most containers and will be extremely dangerous to gather. If gathered successfully, a vial will create a *chaos grenade* which will cause the damage previous described to targets hit by it.

The doorway to the Throne Room, like the Court Main Gate, is an elaborate twisting of thick roots from the Mother Tree that are immune to all forms of magic and physical attacks. Striking them will be as if striking iron and they will only open when commanded to by the Dryad Queen or by the *staff of growing*. Streaks of sunlight peak through small cracks between the roots and the sounds of combat can be faintly heard outside.

There are two **corrupted centaurs** and two **corrupted guardsmen** guarding the spring and roots and soaking in the chaos.

6 - COURT ENTRANCE

Once a grand hallway and the entrance into the court, this area has been completely overgrown and is now empty of everything, only moss covered mounds show where objects once stood. The main gate to the Court is sealed by the same type of Mother Tree roots blocking the entrance into the Throne Room. Immune to all forms of attack, it will only open at the Dryad Queen's command or by the *staff of growing*.

Lystra has sealed the gates in her madness, not willing to let any more of her subjects leave after Ishtara escaped. She sees it as protecting her people from the dangers of the outside world.

7 - GUEST QUARTERS

These rooms were quarters for anyone who wished to visit the court for extended periods of time. The individual walls have collapsed, leaving large open areas that have been reclaimed by the dryads nature magic.

There are three **corrupted dryads** in each room. Any sounds of combat in the Guard Barrack nearest the individual room will alert them to danger and they will rush to join the guards. Likewise, if the guards in the adjacent barracks hear combat in the nearby Guest Quarters, they will come to the aid of the dryads.

8 - GUARD BARRACKS

The Elven Court Guardsmen were once warriors of repute, resplendent in their livery and shining armor. They are now twisted and corrupted versions of themselves, completely dominated by the taint of chaos. These rooms were where they lived, staying close to the main entrance to be able to protect the Court.

There are two **corrupted guardsmen** in each of these barracks. If they hear combat in the adjacent Guest Quarters they will rush to the aid of the dryads who will likewise rush to the aid of the guardsmen if combat is initiated in the adjacent barracks.

9 - MEETING ROOM

The Court used this room for all of its official meetings with visiting dignitaries. The giant spiders who lived in the Court were loving creatures who were trained to assist with the healers and were extremely helpful to any visitors. Now, the four **corrupted giant spiders** have turned this room into a nest, ensnaring and eating any who would dare to come close.

Two of the former elven healers of the Court were the first victims of the spiders and their bodies are firmly wrapped in webs. Completely drained, they still have their possessions on them. A pouch containing 20gp and 50sp can be found on one corpse while the other has a *ring of animal friendship* still on its finger.

10 - CHAOS POOL

This was once a well of fresh spring water that supplied the entire Court. The back wall of the area has collapsed and the well has sunken into the ground, its water being pushed up into the pool. Tainted by chaos, the pool will cause the same effects as the spring in area 5 (Roots of the Mother Tree).

11 - GUARD CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS

Gao Tingguang, the Captain of the Court Guard was an honorable warrior and respected throughout the area. He has fought the taint as long as he could but has now been driven almost completely insane by it.

GAO TINGGUANG

Medium humanoid (elf, high elf), CE (Normally LG)

Armor Class 19 (plate mail +1)

Hit Points 53 (10d8+12)

Speed 35 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+2)	13 (+2)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)	9 (-1)

Saving Throws: Advantage against charm effects

Skills Perception

Condition Immunity Sleep

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

Languages Common, Elvish

Challenge 5 (1800 xp)

Spellcaster. Gao's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 10, +2 to hit with spell attacks). Gao can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components.

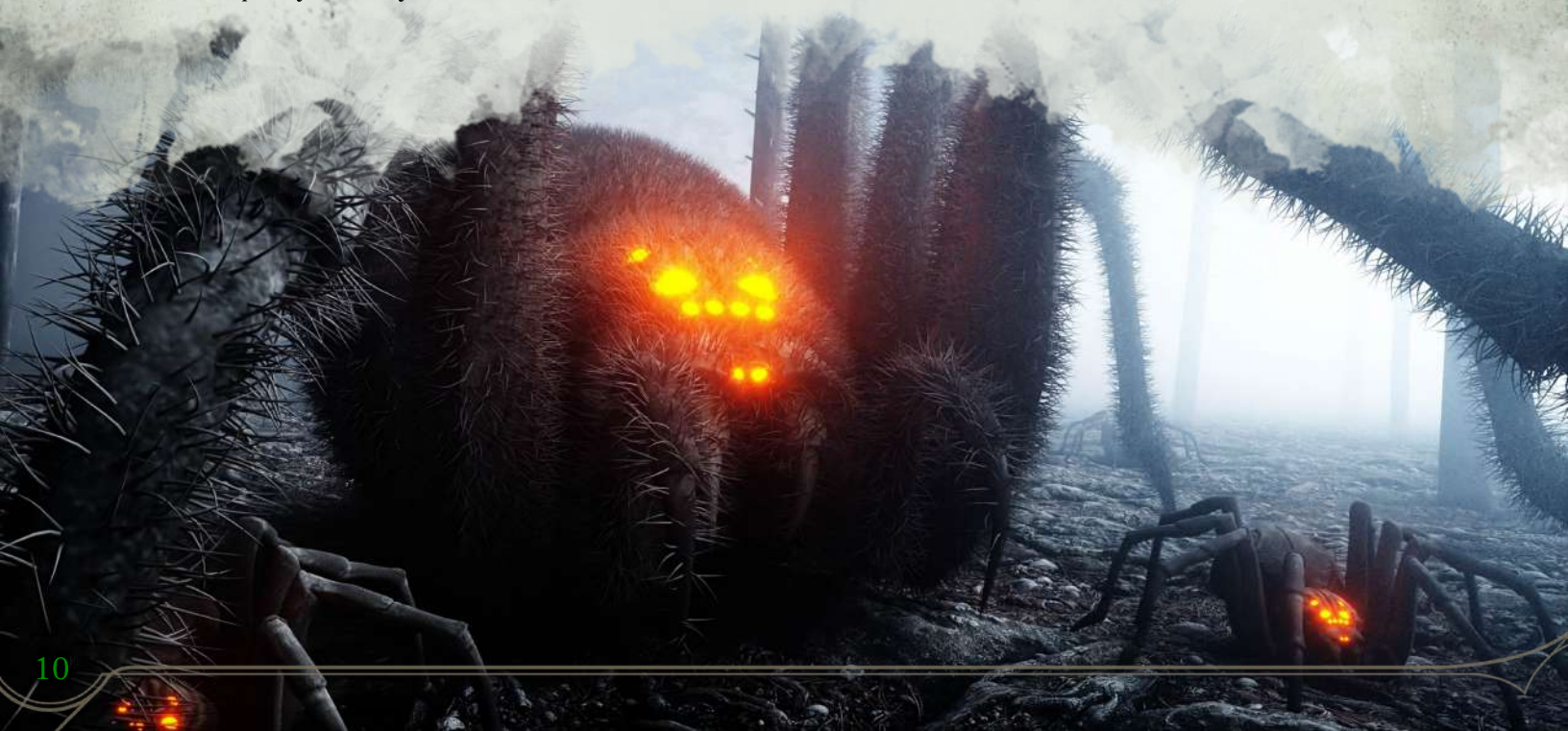
- **At Will** *acid splash, true strike, chaos bolt**, *poison spray*

**gained through chaos corruption*

Actions

Multiattack. Gao makes two attacks with his short spear.

Spear + 1. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 10 ft. range 20 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d6+4) piercing damage 9 (1d10+4) slashing damage if used two-handed.



A part of him still remembers his duty to protect his queen but he has been staying in his quarters meditating, shutting down his mind to try and regain control. He will be found sitting here, cross-legged, with his eyes closed.

Entering the room will snap him of his concentration, breaking what little control he had left and the chaos will take him over completely. He is wearing a *plate mail +1* and wielding a *spear +1*.

12 - QUEEN'S CHAMBERS

A dark jungle similar to area 4 (Living Quarters) has grown in what was once the Queen's Chambers, destroying any semblance of what was once here. Living in this area are two **corrupted dryads**, a **corrupted druid**, and two **corrupted panthers**.

13 - ARMORY

The Amory held all of the weapons and armor that was used by the guard as well as some of the treasures of the Court. There was once a heavy door of the Mother Tree's roots here but they have rotted away and can be chopped down or torn away with a successful DC 12 Strength check.

A **corrupted shambling mound** and a **psychic gray ooze** have decimated this room. The ooze has dissolved everything the room once held except for the *staff of growing* which it is trying to dissolve without success.

STAFF OF GROWING

A staff of living wood formed the heart root of the Mother Tree, anyone wielding this staff can feel that the wood is warm and feel a very faint throb as if from a heartbeat. The staff reflects the current state of the Mother Tree; blackened and sickly while the Tree is corrupted, healthy and exuding a faint floral scent when healthy.

Commune with the Mother Tree The wielder of the staff can communicate directly with the Mother Tree psychically. The Mother Tree expresses itself in the form of feelings instead of words. The Mother Tree will respond to requests to shift or move any of its roots for the wielder.

Corruption While the Mother Tree is corrupted by chaos, any use of the staff will result in 2d6 psychic damage to the wielder. A successful DC 15 Wisdom check will result in half damage. While communing the wielder feels the madness and taint that is killing the Mother Tree as if it is screaming in horror in their head.

LYSTRA THE DRYAD QUEEN

Large fey, CE (Normally LG)

Armor Class 14 (18 with barkskin)
Hit Points 75 (10d10+ 20)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)

Skills Perception +7, Stealth +6
Senses passive Perception 17
Languages Sylvan, Elvish
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. Lystra's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). Lystra can innately cast the following spells, requiring no components.

- **At will.** *mold earth, goodberry, chaos bolt**
- **3/day.** *entangle, earth tremor, thorn whip, speak with plants*
- **1/day.** *barkskin, dispel magic, pass without trace, plant growth, spike growth*

**gained through chaos corruption*

Magic Resistance. Due to her bonding with the Mother Tree, Lystra has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Tree Stride. Once on each of her turns, Lystra can use 10 feet of her movement to step magically into one living tree within 5 feet of her and emerge from a second living tree within 60 feet of her that she can see, appearing in an unoccupied space within 5 feet of the second tree. Both trees must be Large or bigger. The roots of the Mother Tree that line the walls of the Throne Room allow Lystra to use them to stride to any position along the walls as if they were separate trees.

Actions

Multiattack. Lystra makes two attacks with her staff.
Quarterstaff +2. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit (+9 to hit with staff), reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Fey Charm. Lystra targets one humanoid or beast she can see within 30 ft. of her. If the target can see Lystra, it must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or be magically charmed. The charmed creature regards Lystra as a trusted friend to be heeded and protected. Although the target isn't under Lystra's control, it takes Lystra's requests or actions in the most favorable way it can. Each time Lystra or her allies do something harmful to the target, she can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on herself on a success. Otherwise, the effect lasts 24 hours, or until Lystra dies, is on a different plane of existence than the target, or ends the effect as a bonus action. If a target's saving throw is successful, the target is immune to Lystra's Fey Charm for the next 24 hours. Lystra can have no more than one humanoid and up to three beasts charmed at the same time.

14 - THRONE ROOM

The door to the Throne Room is made of the roots of the Mother Tree and is impervious to any and all attacks. It can only be opened by the Dryad Queen or by communing with the Mother Tree via the *staff of growing*.

"Sitting on a throne of interwoven blackened roots sits Lystra, the Dryad Queen. Over 9 feet tall, her elegance and beauty are striking even with her features marred by the corruption coursing through her body; black and orange veins streak through her and the light of madness burns in her eyes. A pair of centaurs flank the throne, their bodies twisted and hideously morphed, gripped in thrall by their Queen.

Her face twists in rage as she stands, holding a staff in one hand. "You DARE to enter my domain?! You profane this sacred ground with your very presence! I will destroy all of your kind!"

She roars out an order to the Centaurs, "Cleanse this filth!" before lifting her staff high. A burst of sickly green light starts to flood the room and the doors to the Throne Room grow shut behind you."

TACTICS

Lystra has been driven mad by the chaos corruption, seeing the adventurers as enemies of her people. She will initiate combat using *entangle* and use *tree stride* to move around the room striking at them from behind when possible. Her insanity is ever present as she is practically foaming at the mouth in her hatred and she will fight to the death

Before she dies, the Queen will have a brief lucid interval. Read the following aloud:

"Collapsing to the ground, the Queen struggles to rise again one last time. Her breathing grows ragged as her body begins to wither away. Her face twists in horror as she gasps with her dying breath, "Oh sweet Amber... What have I done? My children... Forgive me..."

The light finally fades from her eyes and the body of the Queen starts to blacken further, eventually crumbling to ash that collapses completely. The Throne Room is now still and quiet except for the sound of the door growing apart and opening once more."

CONCLUSION & WRAP-UP

After the defeat of the Dryad Queen and her guards, the adventurers will find Princess Ishtara and her rebels entering the Court. Walking towards them she will grimly ask them if it's finally done. At their confirmation, she will sigh and a great sadness will fall upon her, bowing her head briefly. She will say that the Shimmering Forest will mourn her passing but now is the time to save her people. Raising her head in determination, she will stride forward to the Mother Tree's heart root in the center of the hall.

With her eyes closed, sparkling lights will surround her as she floats towards the heart root, slowly becoming incorporeal until she enters into the roots. A few moments will pass before a rumbling will shake the room, almost knocking everyone off their feet. Suddenly strands of glowing green magic will be seen wrapping themselves around the roots, snaking their way down to the chaos pool below. A horrific scream will fill the air as everyone will be momentarily blinded by a bright flash of light.

Once they can see again, the adventurers will see that the color of the pool has changed from the sickly red and orange to the fresh green and blue that the pool once was. Cracks in the blackened sections of the roots will appear, splitting off to reveal healthy roots beneath them.

Exiting the Mother Tree, Ishtara will appear drained and extremely tired. She will tell the adventurers that the healing process has started but it cannot be completed. The power that has tainted the land and her mother is an extremely powerful stream of raw elemental chaos. She does not know where the power is coming from but she knows it is spreading quickly. She was able to reinvigorate the Mother Tree but it will not last for long. The source must be sought out and destroyed.

She will ask the adventurers if they can seek out Drazor, an ancient elemental wizard who lives within the Shimmering Forest. He is wise and knows more about the elemental powers than any other in the land. With his help, she believes they will be able to find the source and destroy it before the entire land falls victim to the madness just as the Court did. She will give them the location of his tower on their map.

As a reward for helping her restore order to the Court, she gives the adventurers her own personal items of power. A *cloak of elvenkind*, a *stone of good luck*, and a *brooch of shielding*. She will declare them Heroes of the Fey Court and welcome within its hallways as guests and friends at any time they need shelter. Swearing to do everything she can to restore peace to the forest, she promises that the people of Ashenvale will no longer need to fear traveling the roadways.

The council in Ashenvale will reward the adventurers the promised 2,000 gp and their heartfelt thanks. They will be horrified at the story of what they had to go through and will encourage them to seek out this Drazor in order to protect the land from the chaos infection.

Thank you so much for playing **Curse of the Dark Groved!** If you want to check out more of our content, please visit www.DMToolChest.com!

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