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Dungeon Crawl Classics #5

Aerie of the Crow God

by Andrew Hind

AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTER LEVELS 7-9



Includes
all-new sequel
**Seed of
Evil**

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Nominee, Best Adventure
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8Credits

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Dungeon Crawl Classics #5.5

Seed of Evil

By Andrew Hind

AN ADVENTURE FOR 9TH LEVEL CHARACTERS



Introduction

Remember the golden days of role playing, when adventurers were underground, NPCs were there to be killed, and the finale of every dungeon was the dragon on the 20th level? Well, those days are back. Dungeon Crawl Classics feature bloody combat, intriguing dungeons, and no NPCs who aren't meant to be killed. Each adventure is 100% good, solid dungeon crawl, with the monsters you know, the traps you fear, and the secret doors you know must be there somewhere.

Seed of Evil is an adventure for four 9th level characters. It serves as a loose sequel to *Aerie of the Crow God*. It blends investigation and wilderness encounters, and ultimately climaxes with a dungeon crawl in a sacred druidic temple located below an ancient oak tree.

Adventure Summary

The village of Axebury is in dire straits. Bandits or fell monsters – no one is quite sure which – have been waylaying logging crews and visitors to the woods along

the Corduroy Road. These attacks, which have left no survivors, have not only deprived the beleaguered community of its sole source of income, but have also effectively isolated it from the outside world. The forest that was once the source of Axebury's prosperity has suddenly become a prison.

The adventure begins with the PCs having braved the dangers of the Corduroy Road to arrive at the druidic Sickle Rock Grove, once the shrine that protected the forest around Axebury. After penetrating the demon-corrupted sanctity of the grove itself, the PCs venture into the shrine located below the venerated oak tree at the heart of the holy site. There they must confront the deranged druid Kay Mossborn and his minions if Axebury is to be saved from the immediate threat.

But if the world is to be spared dominion by Malotoch, the Crow God, the PCs must venture deeper still into the long-sealed vault that secures the *Root of Malotoch*, long hidden between the Sickle Rock Grove. There, in a dramatic confrontation amidst a surreal forest-canopy, characters must strike down the growing power of this infernal relic.

Game Master's Section

Encounter Table

To help the GM prepare, we have included a quick reference table showing all encounters at a glance. Loc – the location number keyed to the map for the encounter. Pg – the module page number that the encounter can be found on. Type – this indicates if the encounter is trap (T), puzzle (P), or combat (C). Encounter – the key monsters, traps, or NPCs that can be found in the encounter. EL – the encounter level.

Loc	Pg	Type	Encounter	EL
1-1	37	C	Assassin vine	3
1-3	38	T, C	Pit trap Dire boar	1 5
1-4	38	C	Crow swarm	2
2-1	39	T	Staircase trap	1
2-2	39	T	Spike growth trap	3
2-3	39	C	Anthuria, dryad Sor2	5
2-4	40	C	Monstrous centipedes (4) Shambling mound	7
2-5	41	C	Oversized stirges (6) Mosquito swarm Carnivorous water lily	6
2-6	41	C	Coleus, fiendish human War1	2
2-8	42	T, C	Pit trap Fire trap Phantom fungus	2 1 3
2-9	43	C	Kay Mossborn, half-elf Drd9	9
2-10	44	C	Fiendish zombie crow swarm	3
2-11	44	T	Razor-root chute	7
2-12	45	T	<i>Glyph of warding</i>	4
2-13	45	C	Roost dretches (4) Malotoch	6 17
3-1	47	C	Ghasts (3)	6



Scaling Information

Seed of Evil is designed for a group of four 9th-level characters, but with a little work it can be adapted for use by weaker or more powerful characters. To begin with, simply adjust all NPC character levels up or down, as appropriate, by a number equal to that which the average party level of your group deviates from 9. Some specific changes to the adventure should include:

Weaker Parties (3 or fewer characters, or lower than 9th level): Rooty should be a normal dire boar. Reduce the number of stirges in location 2-5 by half, and eliminate one ghast from location 3-1. Remove the razor-roots from the chute trap in location 2-11, so that PCs suffer only falling damage. All other traps should have their Search and Disable Device DCs reduced by 2. Malotoch, when she arrives, should be considered shaken because of the suddenness of her summons to the Prime Material Plane and proximity to the holy druidic shrine. Perhaps most importantly for ultimate success, the *Root of Malotoch* should have a hardness of 8, only 40 hit points, and a Break DC of 20.

Stronger Parties (5 or more characters, or higher than 9th level): The PCs should encounter two assassin vines along side the road, not one. Kay Mossborn wields a *thundering club* and has been corrupted in the same manner as has Rooty. Add two more roost dretches in area 2-13.

Getting the Players Involved

Seed of Evil begins as the PCs approach the Sickie Rock Grove. If you are running this adventure as a sequel to *Aerie of the Crow God*, there is a natural continuity, as described below. If not, the PCs' reasons for being in the forest can be entirely coincidental (perhaps they're merely passing along the once heavily-travelled Corduroy Road), but its best if they've come for a reason related to the plot. Here are some suggestions:

- In the days after the defeat of the cult of Malotoch at Gurnard's Head, a mass exodus of crows is witnessed from the rock and the area around Carnelloe itself. Hundreds, if not thousands, of crows head inland in a giant flock, laying waste to fields along the way. This unusual phenomenon is taken as an ill omen by priests, a foretelling of doom and death, perhaps even of plague. Either on their own initiative or by the insistence of patrons (perhaps powerful clergy or nobles), the PCs decide to follow the flock and investigate. After a day's ride, they enter a forest that is under assault by a crazed druid and find themselves at the Sickie Rock Grove. Here their journey ends, because lo and behold, they find the crows – in unimaginable numbers – roosting in the sacred oak that stands in the heart of the holy circle. What has drawn them here?

- If you are not running this adventure as a sequel to *Aerie of the Crow God*, or wish for some time to pass between that adventure and this one, the PCs could be responding to hails for assistance from the beleaguered logging hamlet. Initially they will be completely unaware of the plot's connection to Malotoch. Motivation to solve Axebury's dilemma comes in the form of a promised 3,000 gp reward posted by the North Woods Lumber Company.

Background Story

There's a crisis brewing in Axebury, a sleepy hamlet located within shaded depths of the forest just a day's ride north of Carnelloe. Logging crews are being targeted by murderous bandits or fell beasts (no one knows which), preventing the community from harvesting the trees that are the its sole export. At the same time, these mysterious assailants have all but closed the lonely forest track that serves as Axebury's lifeline to the rest of the world.

The forest has always been peaceful, so the community was not sure how to handle the mounting crisis. The leaders' first thought was to seek aid from the North Woods Company, which owns the village sawmill and the timber rights to the entire forest. The call went unanswered, though no one is sure whether the Company has decided to leave Axebury to its fate or whether the messenger was waylaid before the cry for help could be delivered. Next, the young men of Axebury formed a posse and went into the forest to seek out and destroy the community's enemies. None were ever seen again. Logging has almost ceased entirely, and people are beginning to despair for their future. Axebury's survival is clearly at stake.

The story behind Axebury's current troubles is even more sinister than the villagers suspect. Kay Mossborn, a young druid charged with overseeing the forest in general, and the holy Sickie Rock Grove in particular, has watched with dismay for years as his beloved forest has been ravaged by lumbering and cultivation. He wept in sadness and anger when, a few months ago, trees felled by the lumbermen toppled one of the grove's ancient holy stones. And though Mossborn acknowledges the desecration was an accident, he knows it is symbolic of the settlers' endemic disregard for the sanctity of the forest whose resources they harvest.

What the young druid didn't know is that when the stone was destroyed, the grove lost much of its power. Just as the pillar of a building lends it strength, the stone strengthened the grove. Its loss weakened the grove's overall strength and integrity.

This has had dire, unforeseen consequences – for with-

in the underground shrine buried beneath Sickie Rock Grove lies the slumbering *Root of Malotoch*, the unrotting remains of a demonic tree that was once the Material Plane's roost of the evil Crow God herself. The Root's power was only barely kept in check by the standing stones above. With the grove weakened by the loggers' carelessness, it has slowly begun to reassert itself.

With his conscience already tortured over the damage done to his beloved forest, Kay Mossborn was further corrupted by awakened influence of the *Root of Malotoch*. His mind snapped, and Kay has become convinced that he must help the forest fight back against its enemies. Consequently, he has turned the temple into a greenhouse of sorts where he is literally growing a plant-army to soon unleash upon the unsuspecting loggers and farmers of the region.

In fact, the advance guard of his army, in the form of assassin vines and other easily-cultivated plant-predators, has already been set upon his enemies. It is they, not bandits or monsters, which have preyed upon the loggers and closed the tracks to the outside world. Mossborn intends to isolate the community from outside assistance, impoverish the people and sap their will, and then at his leisure move to eliminate them entirely. It won't be long now until the forest fights back and Axebury is destroyed.

Meanwhile, the essence of the *Root of Malotoch* grows stronger with each passing day. Soon, it will be strong enough to begin growing once more. Left unchecked, it will provide a renewed roost for the Crow God, an aerie of unimaginable power and a renewed foothold on the Material Plane.

Player Beginning

You've done Lady Pendour a great service in freeing her lands of the rook menace and the vile taint of the Crow God, Malotoch. Because of your deeds, you have been hailed as heroic figures. But eradicating the evil infestation in Gurnard's Head was just the beginning of your toils.

As if in retribution for interfering with Malotoch's foul designs, a swarm of crows so large it blots out the sun has cut a path of destruction across the land. You've followed it north for several days, hoping to discover if there is a secret motivation to their actions. You may have found one.

A hill peaked by an odd-shaped monument of standing stones and a massive oak tree rises up through the trees before you. It is here that the crows have roosted. It is here that your journey ends... and your adventure begins.

Level One: Sickle Rock Grove

These encounters are set in the sacred druidic grove, which has now been tainted.

Wandering Monsters

There are no wandering monsters in the grove.

Areas of the Map

Area 1-1 – Assassins on the Road (EL 3): Read or paraphrase the following:

At the intersection of Corduroy Road and the well-worn footpath leading to Sickle Rock Grove, you come upon a grisly scene. A pair of men lie off to the side of the Corduroy Road, their bodies crumpled under a tree. Beside the corpses is a pair of lunch sacks and a wine skin, while a handcart containing several shovels, rakes, axes and picks stands nearby. Whatever killed the men obviously interrupted repairs being made to the road. Opposite the corpses is the footpath leading west up an incline into the grove.

Having just settled down under the shelter of the tree to enjoy a meal, the two laborers were quickly set upon by an assassin vine that clings to the branches above. They died quickly and their bodies were left near the vines' roots to serve as fertilizer.

A DC 10 Search or Heal check reveals severe bruising around the necks and other parts of the bodies, evidence of strangulation.

A DC 20 Spot check reveals the assassin vine before it attacks. Characters with Survival or Knowledge (nature) can use those skills instead of Spot to detect the plant. Because the width of the path is a mere 10 feet, the assassin vine can actually attack any passersby, which is precisely why Mossborn rooted the plant here.

Assassin vine: CR 3; Large Plant; HD 4d8+12; hp 40; Init +0; Spd 5 ft; AC 15, touch 9, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +3; Grp +12; Atk/Full Atk slam +7 melee (1d6+7); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft. (20 ft. with vine); SA Constrict 1d6+7, entangle, improved grab; SQ Blindsight 30 ft., camouflage, immunity to electricity, low-light vision, plant-traits, resistance to cold and fire 10; AL N; SV Fort +7, Ref +1, Will +2; Str 20, Dex 10, Con 16, Int -, Wis 13, Cha 9.

Area 1-2 – Sickle Rock Grove: Read or paraphrase the following:

Sickle Rock Grove sits atop a low hill in a verdant copse. Mist hangs low around the base of the hill. The upright standing stones and the massive oak tree which rest upon the hill's crest seem to float on clouds. As you move through the underbrush, moisture finds the seams in your boots and chills your feet. The ground is sodden and muddy from recent rains, slowing your progress and tiring your trail-worn feet. Your ascent is suddenly announced by a thunderous din of caws, the call of thousands of crows that have taken roost in the oak tree and atop the venerated stones, and you notice for the first time that several of the stones have toppled like oversized dominos.

The standing stones, each of which stands more than 8 feet in height and vaguely resembles a humanoid form, are arrayed in a sickle-like formation with the oak tree standing in the concave of the "blade." Characters who make a Knowledge (religion) check know of a druidic myth that says the stones were once members of a marauding ogre army which were petrified by the graces of the Earth Mother when they attempted to lay waste to her holy grove.

The misty vapor that clings to the hill thins within the grove, but still forms a ghostly shroud over the scene. All sight, including darkvision, is obscured beyond 20 feet. A creature up to 20 feet away has concealment (attacks have a 20% miss chance). Creatures more than 20 feet away have total concealment (50% miss chance, and the attacker cannot use sight to locate the target). The fog can be dispersed or burned away as per the *obscuring mist* spell.

In addition, the sodden ground is considered difficult terrain for movement (characters are reduced to half move) and requires characters engaged in combat to make Reflex saves (DC 12) each round or slip and fall prone.

If disturbed, the crows roosting atop the standing stones take flight and seek the sanctuary of the oak tree (see area 1-4).



Area 1-3 – Boar Pit (EL 1, 5): Read or paraphrase the following:

A well-worn trail leads towards the base of the tree, where you see a stone seal to a subterranean vault partly enmeshed by the encroaching roots of the mighty tree.

There is a camouflaged pit trap before the entrance to the underground vault. Only Mossborn, Anthuria, Old Coleus, and Mossborn's dire boar companion Rooty are aware of its presence.

Camouflaged Pit Trap: CR 1; DC 20 Reflex save avoids; 10 feet deep (1d6 damage); Search DC 24.

Monster: As soon as PCs approach Mossborn's oak tree sanctum, Rooty bursts forth from the surrounding forest and attacks. The boar has been altered by prolonged proximity to the powers of the sacred grove. His bristly hairs have been replaced in many places by a tough, bark-like carapace that afford heightened protection and camouflage within his forest domain. Rooty has detected the subtle changes in Mossborn, which have only soured the boar's temperament more than normal.

Tactics: Rooty attempts to bull-rush opponents into the pit trap. He fights until dead or the interlopers retreat from the sacred grove.

Rooty, Corrupted Dire Boar: CR 5; Large Animal; HD 7d8+21; hp 52; Init +0; Spd 40 ft.; AC 17, touch 9, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +5; Grp +17; Atk/Full Atk Gore +12 melee (1d8+12); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA Ferocity (fight without penalty while dying or disabled); SQ Low-light vision, scent, electrical resistance 5, camouflage (+3 to Hide in wooded regions); AL N; SV Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +8; Str 27, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 8

Skills: Listen +8, Spot +8.

Feats: Alertness, Endurance, Iron Will.

SA – Corruption: Rooty's bark carapace provides a natural armor bonus of +2, electrical resistance 5, and a +3 bonus to Hide checks in wooded regions (all of which have already been applied to the above stats).

Area 1-4 – Sacred Oak Tree (EL 2): Read or paraphrase the following:

The ancient oak tree at the center of the grove is clearly of ancient origin. It is so wide around that it would take a dozen men holding hands to create a human chain around the base of its trunk. It stands hundreds of feet in height, and is in perfect health, free of dead limbs, insect infestation, or leaf blight. The only blemish is provided by the thousands of glaring crows that crowd its branches, each bird seemingly mocking the sanctity of the grove.

Monster: If disturbed from their roost within the tree, or if characters approach within 10 feet of the tree, the crows will attack en masse to drive off their enemies.

Crow swarm: CR 2; Tiny Animal (Swarm); HD 4d8; hp 13; Init +2; Spd 5 ft., fly 40 ft. (good); AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +3; Grp –; Atk/Full Atk swarm (1d6); Space/Reach 10 ft./0 ft.; SA distraction (DC 17); SQ half damage from slashing and piercing, low light vision; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +2; Str 1, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 14, Cha 6.

Skills: Listen +9, Spot +12.

Feats: Toughness, Weapon Finesse.

Area 1-5 – Underground Entrance: Read or paraphrase the following:

A stone seal to some underground vault is partly obscured by thick oak roots that grow over it. The stone is etched with text of some sort.

The stone seal is the trapdoor entrance to Mossborn's sanctum, the druidic shrine entrusted to his stewardship. The text engraved upon the stone is Druidic, and announces the entrance to the holy shrine of the Sickle Rock Grove. Roots thoroughly seal the trap door in place. Mossborn uses *warp wood* to move the roots aside, then casts it again to replace them. Characters need to use a similar tactic, or perhaps cut the root away, to enter. Harming the tree in any way will unleash the wrath of the druid should he learn of it, not to mention the agitation of the crow swarm.

Characters may elect to chop through the roots, but the sacred oak is empowered by the divine power that flows within it like sap and is therefore tougher than normal.

Roots: 6 in. thick; Hardness 16; hp 120; Break DC 28.

Level Two: The Root of Malotoch

The underground caverns below the ancient oak have hidden the *Root of Malotoch* for generations. Once sacred, the caverns are now being slowly corrupted by Mossborn's transformation.

Unless otherwise noted, the walls and floors of the dungeon are rough hewn stone, and the ceilings are 10 feet high. All rooms and corridors are unlit, save by those currently occupied. The doors are unlocked and made of sturdy oak (Hardness 5, hp 20).

Wandering Monsters

There are no wandering monsters in the grove.

Areas of the Map

Area 2-1 – Staircase (EL 1): Read or paraphrase the following:

The trapdoor opens to reveal a stone staircase spiralling down into the earth below. Fibrous roots grow from cracks in the masonry, but nevertheless it's clear that the stairs see regular passage.

The stairs lead down fifty feet, finally ending in a stone hallway below. The oak tree can detect the presence of those not of the Old Faith, and subtly manipulates its roots to trip them up as they descend. Characters worshipping non-nature deities must make a DC 15 Reflex save to avoid tripping upon the roots and tumbling down the stairs. Those making a point of watching their step gain a +2 circumstance bonus to this check. PCs that fail the save can make a Reflex save (DC 10) every ten feet to arrest their fall, gaining a +1 bonus for each prior attempt (i.e. after tumbling 30 feet, a character would have a +2 bonus to his Reflex save). Characters that tumble down the stairs suffer 1d3 points of damage for every 10 feet fallen.

Staircase Trap: CR 1; magic; location trigger; automatic reset; DC 15 Ref save avoids; 50 feet deep (1d3 per 10 feet, fall); Ref save to arrest fall (DC 10 every ten feet, +1 bonus for every 10 feet); multiple targets (all characters who descend); Search DC 24; Disable Device 20 (destroy or immobilise roots).

Area 2-2 – Warded Hallway (EL 3): Read or paraphrase the following:

The stairs end in a stone corridor stretching out before you, the furthest reaches of which are shrouded in darkness. The hallway is narrow, only 7 feet in height, and shaped like an inverted egg.

A 20 foot long section of the tunnel is warded by a *spike growth* trap. Anyone stepping on that area of the floor causes razor sharp roots and rootlets to spring from between the stones, slicing boots and feet to bloody ribbons and impairing passage.

Spike Growth Trap: CR 3; 6' wide by 20' long; 1d4 points of damage per 5 feet; Reflex save (DC 13) or speed reduced by 1/3 for 24 hours; Search (DC 28); Disable Device NA.

Area 2-3 – Arboretum (EL 5): Read or paraphrase the following:

This cavern's domed ceiling is approximately 40 feet above. At first it looks to be translucent as sunlight streams through to the forest that stretches out before you. But then it becomes apparent that the ceiling is in fact made of enchanted stone that glows with the warmth and brightness of the sun. Many of the trees bend against the stones above, hungrily groping for light. The forest foliage is alive with birds, insects, and small mammals, essentially a complete ecosystem.

The ceiling is enchanted with permanent *daylight* spells, allowing the plants to grow without hindrance. The forest contains all manner of plant, including some of predatory intent.

Monster: Anthuria, Mossborn's dryad lover and companion, is often found cavorting in the arboretum.

Tactics: Upon becoming aware of intruders, Anthuria casts *message* to alert Mossborn. She begins combat by casting *summon monster I*, hoping to even the odds, then targets humans with her *bane arrows* (while she's ambivalent towards most humanoid races, she loathes humans for their ruthless destruction of the forest). Lone characters, or those she is confident of seducing, will be targeted with *charm person*, *deep slumber*, and *hypnotism*. If she's threatened with defeat, she'll seek to escape by assuming tree form or casting *expeditious retreat*.

Anthuria, Dryad Sor2: CR 5; Medium Fey; HD 4d6+2d4 (18 hp); Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18, touch 15, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +3; Grp +3; Atk/Full Atk Dagger +7 melee (1d4/19-20) or masterwork longbow +8 ranged (1d8/x3); Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Spells, spell-like abilities; SQ Damage reduction 5/cold iron, wild empathy, tree dependent; AL CN; SV Fort +3, Ref +9, Will +9; Str 10, Dex 20, Con 11,

Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 18.

Skills: Bluff +4, Concentration +4, Escape Artist +11, Handle Animal +11, Hide +11, Knowledge (nature) +11, Listen +9, Move Silently +11, Ride +6, Spot +9, Survival +9, Use Rope +4 (+6 with bindings).

Feats: Great Fortitude, Weapon Finesse.

Spells (5/3; save DC 14 + spell level): 0-level – daze, ghost sound, light, message, touch of fatigue; 1st-level – expeditious retreat, hypnotism, summon monster I.

SA – Spell-like Abilities: At will – entangle (DC 13), speak with plants, tree shape; 3/day – charm person (DC 13), deep slumber (DC 15), tree stride; 1/day – suggestion (DC 15). Caster level 6th.

Possessions: 12 human bane arrows, ring of energy resistance (fire), dagger, masterwork longbow.

Area 2-3A – Vault of the Root of Malotoch: A careful search of the forest (DC 18 Search check) reveals a round stone door set into the wall and obscured by plants. Read or paraphrase the following when it is discovered:

Parting the foliage, you find yourself standing before a round portal engraved with runes and symbols. The seal clearly hasn't been broken in centuries.

The runes are written in the druidic tongue, and read as follows:

Beyond lies the final remnant of the arboreal roost of Malotoch, the Crow God. After her tree was destroyed by flame, all that remained was this root, a root of immense potential. A flicker of life yet remains in it. But the question remains: Is it the spark of pure life, as the mighty tree once was, or is it the infernal embers of a corrupted existence, as in its final days? We, the druids of the Covenant, could not be sure. But we could not in good conscience destroy it. And so it must remain secure until such time as its nature reveals itself once more.

Stone Seal: Thickness 18 inches; Hardness 8; Break DC 24; can be removed with a Strength check DC 22.

Area 2-4 – Compost (EL 7): Read or paraphrase the following:

A mound of decomposing organic material stretches across the floor of the small chamber before you. Its heady odor assails your nose and turns your stomach. The mound seems to quiver and move. A pitchfork protrudes from the

pile's stinking mass, and off to the side stands a wheelbarrow holding several pots and a small shovel. The room is warm and humid, almost oppressively so.

The room's warm temperature provides the ideal condition for bacteria to rapidly break down waste and transform it into rich fertilizer. Mossborn uses the compost to feed his seedlings and increase their rate of growth.

Monsters: The warm, humid conditions are also ideally suited for monstrous centipedes, four of which reside within the compost. Anyone disturbing the pile will agitate the creatures, which have grown large and fat from their cozy existence. Once the centipedes emerge, PCs will likely believe them to be the cause of the quivering movement noticed in the compost pile, and therefore the only danger present. In fact, the compost pile conceals a shambling mound (which enjoys +10 to Hide as it blends perfectly into the rooting organic matter). The shambling mound is loyal to Mossborn, having been raised from seed by the deranged druid.

Tactics: The monstrous centipedes react violently to their home being disturbed, bursting forth from the depths of the compost. They act almost randomly, their aggression driven by fear: one might attack an intruder, while another seeks to hide in a shadowy recess or escape through a hole in the masonry, and yet another might race for the doorway, only attacking if someone stands between it and safety. All, however, will fight viciously if cornered.

The shambling mound waits until the PCs let their guard down or are occupied fighting the centipedes. Then it reveals itself and attacks. When it bursts forth, compost flies in all directions, showering all PCs within 10 feet with stinking, rotting organic material. Characters must make a Fortitude save (DC 12) or spend one round stunned from either being nauseated or blinded by the filth. It's these individuals that the shambling mound will target first.

Development: The compost is endowed with druidic magic, and effectively serves as five castings of *plant growth*. As per the spell, the spreading of the compost can be used to overgrow an area or to enrich the soil.

Monstrous Centipedes: CR 1/2; Medium Vermin; HD 1d8; hp 5; Init +2; Spd 20 ft, climb 40 ft; AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +0; Grp -1; Atk/Full Atk Bite +2 melee (1d6-1 plus poison); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Poison (Fort save DC 10, damage 1d3 Dex); SQ Darkvision 60 ft., vermin

traits; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 9, Dex 15, Con 10, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 2

Skills: Climb +10, Hide +10, Spot +4

Feats: Weapon Finesse

Shambling Mound: CR 6; Large Plant; HD 8d8+24; hp 65; Init +0; Spd 20, swim 20 ft.; AC 20, touch 9, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +6; Grp +15; Atk slam +11 melee (2d6+5); Full Atk 2 slams +11 melee (2d6+5); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA Constrict (2d6+5), improved grab; SQ Darkvision 60 ft., immunity to electricity, low-light vision, plant-traits, resistance to fire 10; AL N; SV Fort +9, Ref +2, Will +4; Str 21, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 7, Wis 10, Cha 9

Skills: Hide +3, Listen +8, Move Silently +8

Feats: Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (Slam).

Area 2-5 – Water Gardens (EL 6): Read or paraphrase the following:

The room you enter is thick with the heady, pungent smell of stagnant water and the air is humid and damp. Swatting away the thick cloud of mosquitoes that hover around your heads, you take in the contents of the chamber. Six large, wooden tubs, each one as tall as a man and 10 feet in diameter, fill the room. A ladder leads to a series of catwalks that weave around the tubs.

This room is a water plant nursery, the tubs being used to grow new varieties of aquatic plants such as water lilies, water lettuce, dwarf papyrus, and various forms of reed. The catwalk is quite damp and slippery, so any fast movement (including combat) requires a DC 12 Reflex save or the characters slips and falls into a tub.

Before his mind was corrupted, Mossborn diligently ensured the room was free of vermin and the water kept fresh. Now, however, he has become somewhat lax in his duties and the tubs are becoming fetid breeding pools for mosquitoes. Though it might not look particularly threatening at first glance, the room actually hosts a range of potential threats.

Monsters: In addition to numerous mosquitoes, the room is home to a colony of stirges as well. Though Malotoch is known as the Crow Goddess, she is also fond of stirges and their bloodthirsty ways. These stirges have found their way into the shrine and, empowered by their proximity to the *Root of Malotoch*, have grown unusually large for their species. If PCs climb atop the catwalk, the stirges attack. At the same time, sensing the presence of fresh blood, mosquitoes swarm the characters in

ever-increasing numbers. Finally, one of the tubs contains a very hungry carnivorous water lily which attacks when it smells blood (essentially an immobile assassin vine, but note the 30-foot reach of the “vine”).

Tactics: The stirges and mosquitoes attack the PCs like a ravenous, maddening horde. They lack tactics and simply target the nearest victim. The carnivorous water lily attempts to entangle a foe and drag it into its pond to drown. The ponds are thick with algae, so any characters submerged in them must make a Reflex save (DC 12) each round to avoid dropping their weapons.

Oversized Stirges (6): CR 1; Small Magical Beast; HD 3d10; hp 19; Init +3; Spd 10 ft., fly 40 ft. (average); AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +3; Grp -3 (+9 when attached); Atk/Full Atk touch +7 melee (attach); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Attach, blood drain (1d6 points of Constitution; retreats after draining 8 points); SQ Darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +1; Str 7, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: Hide +10, Listen +4, Spot +4.

Feats: Alertness, Toughness, Weapon Finesse.

Mosquito Swarm: CR 3; Diminutive vermin (swarm); HD 6d8-6; hp 21; Init +4; Spd 10 ft., fly 30 ft. (poor); AC 18, touch 18, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +4; Grp -; Atk/Full Atk swarm (2d6); Space/Reach 10 ft./0 ft.; SA Distraction (DC 12 Fort save or nauseated for 1 round); SQ Darkvision 60 ft., immune to weapon damage, swarm traits, vermin straits; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +2; Str 1, Dex 19, Con 8, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 2.

Skills: Listen +4, Spot +4.

Carnivorous Water Lily (aquatic assassin vine): CR 3; Large Plant; HD 4d8+12; hp 30; Init +0; Spd 0 (rooted); AC 15, touch 9, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +3; Grp +12; Atk/Full Atk slam +7 melee (1d6+7); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft. (30 ft. with vine); SA Constrict 1d6+7, entangle, improved grab; SQ Blindsight 30 ft., camouflage, immunity to electricity, low-light vision, plant-traits, resistance to cold and fire 10; AL N; SV Fort +7, Ref +1, Will +2; Str 20, Dex 10, Con 16, Int -, Wis 13, Cha 9.

Area 2-6 – Gardener’s Shed (EL 2): Read or paraphrase the following:

This room seems to combine the functions of living area and gardener’s shed. Beside a fire pit under a chimney in the ceiling and a much-mended table with a single chair, there is a workbench lined with pots, a tool rack along the wall holding rakes, shovels, axes, shears, and other gardening implements, and several bar-



rels of soil and seed. A flimsy wooden partition creates a sleeping chamber in the rear corner. A short figure swathed in a plain wool cloak huddles over the workbench, head covered with a linen coif.

The figure turns upon your entrance, a beak-like face spreading wide in a grin. "Sit thee down, sit thee down. Old Coleus despairs of his shrinking frame enough. Thou need not tower over him."

Characters making a Spot check (DC 13) recognize that Coleus, the aging groundskeeper of the druidic shrine, is no longer completely human. He fell under the influence of the Root early and completely, and now infernal energy flows through his blood. With his oily black shoulder-length hair, thin and scaled legs like that of a crow, and a jaw which appears almost beak-like, the old man is well on his way to becoming more bird than man. Though he looks dull, Coleus is in fact every bit as deceitful and manipulative as any entity from the Abyss, and though his frame is aged and crooked, he is almost supernaturally strong.

Tactics: Coleus has several unique special abilities due to the influence of Malotoch. He feigns being simple and dim-witted when first encountered, hoping to lull intruders into a false sense of security. As part of the masquerade, he speaks slowly and acts childlike, cradling his shovel like an infant would a security blanket. (Characters making a DC 16 Spot check notice the shovel's razor-sharp head.) Once Coleus commits to battle, however, he does so with reckless abandon.

Treasure: Under the simple cot is a horde of treasure stolen from individuals that Mossborn's plant followers have slain. Mossborn himself disdains looting the dead, believing simple robbery is beneath his lofty goals and clouds his reputation.

Coleus has no such qualms, however, and often defies his master by scavenging from the corpses. Thus far he has collected 357 sp, 241 gp, 3 gems worth 50 gp each, and a scroll of 2 arcane spells (CL 2nd, *invisibility* and *web*).

Coleus, fiendish human male War1: CR 2; Medium humanoid (human); HD 1d8+3; hp 14; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +2; Grp +4; Atk/Full Atk two-handed shovel +1 melee (1d6+4); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA *Smite good* (1/day, +10 damage), ominous presence (-2 morale penalty to attack rolls, checks and saves; Will save DC 11); SQ *Protection from good* (+2 deflection bonus to AC and +2 resistance bonus on saves), darkvision, keen sight (see twice as far as normal), damage reduction 5/good, evasion; AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 17, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 8

Skills: Bluff +3, Knowledge (Plants) +4.

Feats: Great Fortitude, Toughness

Area 2-7 – Food and Water Storage: Read or paraphrase the following:

Several dozen clay pots line the floor-to-ceiling shelves in this small room. A well delves down into the rock below, supplying the shrine with fresh water.

The clay jars contain simple foodstuffs, most of which is harvested or gathered from the forest (berry jams, dried fruits, nuts and seeds, herbs, etc.). There's enough food here to feed two people for thirty days.

Area 2-8 – Secure Seed Storage (EL 2, 1, 3): The door to this room is constructed from stone to prevent vermin from eating their way through. It's locked and trapped.

Locked Stone Door: 4 in. thick; Hardness 8, hp 60; Break DC 28; Open Lock DC 20.

If the door is forced or the lock tampered with (e.g., a failed Open Lock check), a ten foot section of the floor in front of the portal opens up. A person falling into the fit falls 30 feet and takes 3d6 damage. The cover of the trap resets itself after two rounds, trapping those who fall inside the pit.

Pit Trap: CR 2; 30 feet deep; no attack roll necessary (3d6 damage); DC 20 Reflex save avoids; Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 20.

Once the door is opened, read or paraphrase the following:

Beyond the stone door is a small, shed-sized room containing burlap sacks, clay pots, and a large wooden chest. A fine powder covers the

floor, and your tongue becomes thick with an unpleasant taste.

This room is used to store Mossborn's most precious seeds. The burlap bags and clay pots all hold seeds of various kinds, some from as far away as the jungles of Eztenqui or the desert oases of Sheshat-Semet past the Barren Hills. In sum, they might be worth 2,000 gp to an interested party.

The chest is trapped with a *fire trap* strong enough to kill any rats that might be tempted to investigate, but not strong enough to kill most humans. Inside are the rarest of Mossborn's seeds, including those of assassin vines, carnivorous water lilies, phantom fungus, and even a few shambling mounds and tendrículos. These seeds would be worth at least 5,000 gp to interested buyers. A Knowledge (nature) check is necessary to identify the seeds, ranging from DC 15 for the mundane but rare varieties to DC 25 for the seeds of the carnivorous plants.

Fire Trap: CR 1; *fire trap* spell (5 ft. radius, 1d4+8 damage); Reflex save for half damage (DC 16); Search DC 18; Disable Device DC 29.

The powder on the floor is a mild poison designed to kill insects, but completely harmless to anything larger. It's this powder that creates the unpleasant taste that infuses the air. Characters making a DC 15 Knowledge (nature) or Craft (alchemy) check recognize it for what it is.

Monster: The insecticide serves to mask the foul odor of a phantom fungus. It wandered into the room while Coleus was at work and become trapped when the gardener left and secured the door behind him.

Tactics: The phantom fungus is hungry and attacks the smallest, weakest-looking character.

Phantom Fungus: CR 3; Medium Plant; HD 3d8+9; hp 24; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +1; Grp +3; Atk/Full Atk Bite +3 melee (1d6+3); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA—; SQ Low-light vision, plant traits, greater invisibility (as per spell at 12th level of ability); AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 14, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 2, Wis 11, Cha 9

Skills: Listen +4, Move Silently +6, Spot +4

Feats: Alertness

Area 2-9 – Bedroom (EL 9): Kay Mossborn waits within this room. If the PCs have made enough noise for him to hear (whether through combat, spells, or other methods), he will have prepared several spells, including a *fire trap* on the door. See the tactics section below for full details. Once the door is opened, read or paraphrase the following:

This room is obviously a private bed chamber, measuring 30 feet in length and over 20 feet in height. Unlike the previous chambers in the shrine, this one seems to be burrowed out of wood, probably the main root of the tree above. Furnishings consist of little more than a bed draped with Spanish moss, a simple dresser atop which stands a porcelain pitcher and bowl, and an alchemical desk.

The room is lit in a warm glow by a globe that is set into the ceiling, allowing the menagerie of potted plants that fill the chamber to grow tall and healthy. Lovingly caressing a tall fern is an insidious-looking individual with jet black hair swept back over his head, glowing yellow eyes, and rough cloth robes secured by a vine belt hanging about his waist. The tenderness with which he treats the plant is in direct contrast to the malicious scowl upon his angular face and the menacing manner in which he wields his cudgel.

This room is located within the central root of the sacred oak tree, so it is literally *hallowed* ground (per the spell) for druidic characters. All Plant domain spells cast within this chamber are considered both empowered and extended, per the metamagic feats.

This is Kay Mossborn's private chamber, and he's gone to great lengths to make it feel comfortable for him. The only real nod to civilization is the advanced alchemist lab, where he experiments with concoctions designed to increase a plant's growth rate or hardiness. This lab is so well furnished and advanced that it is worth 1,000 gp and provides a +2 bonus to Craft (alchemy) checks made when using its equipment.

Monsters: Kay Mossborn is here, preparing his final defense. He is a druid and herbalist who has devoted his life to studying plant life. He is convinced that it is only a matter of time before mortals render the Earth uninhabitable by their depravations upon the environment. He is particularly concerned with the depravations of loggers in his forest.

Tactics: Mossborn is a schemer who doesn't leave survival to chance. At the first sign of a serious threat, he casts *spike stones* around the entrance to his chambers, *fire trap* on the door, *barkskin* upon himself, and *shillelagh* upon his cudgel. When enemies are very close he casts *summon nature's ally III* (which, due to the influence of the Root, takes the form of an anathaema eagle). In direct combat, he depends largely upon *produce flame*, *entangle*, *obscuring mist* and *wind wall*, using *cure light*

wounds to heal himself as needed. If these efforts are not enough to defeat his foes, he escapes by casting *tree stride* and stepping through the walls.

Treasure: Mossborn's treasure is secured in the base of a large pot. It consists of 500 gp, 210 pp, two black opals worth 750 gp each, 2 potions of *cure moderate wounds*, and a *wand of knock* (8 charges remaining).

Kay Mossborn, half-elf male Drd9: CR 9; Medium humanoid (half-elf); HD 8d8+16; hp 64; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 11, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +6; Grp +7; Atk Cudgel +7 melee (1d6+1) or sling +7 ranged (1d4+1); Full Atk Cudgel +7/+2 melee (1d6+1) or sling +7/+2 ranged (1d4+1); SA Wild shape 3/day, wild shape (Large); SQ Nature sense, wild empathy, woodland stride, trackless step, resist nature's lure; AL N; SV Fort +7, Ref +3, Will +9; Str 13, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +4, Concentration +4, Craft (alchemy) +5, Diplomacy +2, Heal +4, Hide +4, Jump +4, Knowledge (plants) +11, Listen +2, Move Silently +4, Profession (herbalist) +11, Spot +2, Survival +5.

Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Knowledge (plants)).

Spells (6/5/4/3/2; save DC 12 + spell level): 0-level – *cure minor wounds*, *flare*, *guidance* (x2), *resistance* (x2); 1st-level – *cure light wounds*, *entangle*, *obscuring mist*, *produce flame*, *shillelagh*; 2nd-level – *barkskin*, *bull's strength*, *fire trap*, *tree shape*; 3rd-level – *cure moderate wounds*, *summon nature's ally III*, *wind wall*; 4th-level – *freedom of movement*, *spike stones*.

Possessions: Bracers of armor +2, ring of blinking, ring of tree striding (usable 1/day, as per 5th level druid spell), boots of striding and springing.

Anathaema Eagle: CR 3; Large magical beast; HD 4d10+4; hp 26; Init +4; Spd 10 ft., fly 80 ft.; AC 16, touch 14, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +4; Grp +11; Atk claw +6 melee (1d6+3); Full Atk 2 claws +6 melee (1d6+3) and bite +1 melee (1d8+1); SA Disease (Fort save DC 12, incubation 1d3 days, damage 1s3 Dex and 1d3 Con); SQ Evasion; AL CE; SV Fort +5, Ref +8, Will +3; Str 17, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 10.

Skills: Listen +5, Sense Motive +8, Spot +11, Survival +8.

Feats: Alertness.

Area 2-10 – Sacred Tunnel (EL 3): Read or paraphrase the following:

A long tunnel stretches out before you. The ceiling writhes in a dark mass, with hundreds of sinister yellow eyes peering maliciously down at you. Fifty feet ahead, the tunnel breaks off in an apparent "T" intersection.

Monsters: The ceiling of this tunnel is infested by the corpses of hundreds of crows that suddenly fell dead when Malotoch's roost was destroyed long ago. Unsure what to do with the unholy corpses, the druids simply entombed them within the vault. Prolonged exposure to the power of the Root has animated them as zombies and infused them with fiendish malevolence. Their lifeless forms have been kept remarkably preserved by the dry air, but they exhibit decidedly unnatural crow habits – such as hanging bat-like upside down from ceilings.

Tactics: These guardians can detect followers of Malotoch, and only they may proceed unhindered. When intruders attempt to pass along the passageway, they boil into a swarm around them in a maddening cacophony. The crows fight until destroyed.

Fiendish zombie crow swarm: CR 3 Tiny magical beast (swarm); HD 4d12; hp 25; Init +2; Spd 15 ft., fly 40 ft. (clumsy); AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +3; Grp –; Atk/Full Atk swarm (1d6); Space/Reach 10 ft./0 ft.; SA distraction (DC 17), smite good 1/day (+10 damage); SQ half damage from slashing and piercing, immunity to electricity and poison, resistance 10 (cold, acid, fire), damage reduction 5/magic, spell resistance 15, darkvision 60 ft., swarm traits; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 4, Dex 13, Con –, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Feats: Toughness, Weapon Finesse.

Area 2-11 – Trapped Hallway (EL 7): Read or paraphrase the following:

The hallway ends at a doorway crafted of fire-blackened wood. An indefinable coldness seems to seep from the door and inch its way down the hall towards you.

The doorway is false; there is only rock behind it. Any attempt to open the door triggers a gruesome trap. The floor in the 5 foot area before the door suddenly pitches downward, dumping everyone in the area into a steep chute carved from the very stone. Razor-sharp roots protrude from the walls of the chute, cutting at anything unfortunate enough to tumble down it. A falling character is subjected to 1d6 of these before being deposited in a natural cave complex about 30 feet below.

The chute deposits the characters in area 3-1.

Razor-root chute: CR 7; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset; chute deposits characters in cave (3d6 damage), sharp roots (Atk +12 melee, 1d6 roots per target for 1d4 damage each); multiple targets (all creatures in a 10-foot square); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 25.

Climbing up the chute from the cave below is pos-

sible (DC 12 Climb check), but doing so results in attacks by 1d3 roots at 1d4 damage each. The trap door leading to the chute resets in three rounds, barring passage. Characters trying to force their way through the trap door must brace themselves against the chute's walls in order to do so, and therefore lack both balance and leverage. Damage rolls and Strength checks in this position are made at a -4 penalty.

Trap Door: 2 in. thick; Hardness 8; hp 30; Break (DC 24).

Development: When the trap is activated, characters clearly hear the sounds of young children sobbing from below. If the trap is not triggered, characters may make Listen checks (DC 15) to hear the muffled cries.

Area 2-12 – The Final Test (EL 4): Read or paraphrase the following:

The tunnel ends in a smooth rock face, clearly not a natural formation and at odds with the rough-hewn walls that you've encountered thus far.

The resting place of the *Root of Malotoch* was sealed off by the druids with a wall of stone to prevent any attempt at recovery. Any attempt to force the wall will trigger a *glyph of warding*. The noise reverberates throughout the tomb and into the druidic shrine above; Mossborn, should he still be alive, hears the glyph with a successful Listen check (DC 15). If alerted, he immediately investigates.

A DC 20 Search check (with a +2 bonus for characters with stonecunning) reveals that the stone wall is unnatural and not hand worked.

Glyph of Warding (Blast): CR 4; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (*glyph of warding* [blast], 6th level cleric, 3d8 sonic, DC 14 Reflex save for half damage); multiple targets (all targets within 5 ft.); Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 28).

Wall of Stone: 2 inches thick; Hardness 8, hp 30, Break DC 24.

Area 2-13 – Forest Canopy of the Root of Malotoch (EL 6, 17): Read or paraphrase the following:

You emerge from the tunnel to be greeted by a gentle breeze of warm, fresh air. A forest canopy stretches out before you. The foliage above blocks out the sky or ceiling, whatever lies above, while the trunks of the mighty trees are lost in a gentle mist below hundreds of feet below. The only sound is the maddening cawing of crows, seemingly the only wildlife present

in this peculiar domain. Through the leaves you see a wooden platform in the distance, supported by large branches and suspended between several trees. Atop the platform lies a charred and twisted staff, measuring about four feet in length. The only means of reaching the platform is via the web of branches that makes up the wood-land canopy.

This is the final resting place of the *Root of Malotoch*. Whatever its original appearance, it is now lost to the mists of antiquity. What faces the PCs now is a surreal world crafted by the infernal energies of the unholy relic. There is no floor; the chamber continues downward infinitely. Nor is there a ceiling. The only things living in this cave are hundreds upon hundreds of crows (kept alive by some strange supernatural magic) and the demons that guard the Root.

Navigating the Trees: To reach the root and still its growing power, characters have to venture out onto the branches, the stoutness of which varies. Movement across the branches is at 10 feet per round due to the density of the foliage and the narrowness of the branches. Faster movement, or combat, requires a DC 15 Balance check or the PC falls. For each round of movement, roll on this table to determine what happens to the branches passed over:

Roll	Result
1	Branch bends under the weight of Small or larger characters, requiring a Balance check (DC 15) to remain aloft. It is safe for smaller characters.
2	Branch bends under weight of Medium or larger characters, requiring Balance check (DC 15) to remain aloft. It is safe for smaller characters.
3	Branch breaks under the weight of any Medium or larger character. It is safe (neither bending nor breaking) for smaller characters.
4	Branch breaks under the weight of any Large or larger character. It is safe (neither bending nor breaking) for smaller characters.
5-6	Branch is sturdy to characters of any weight.

Moving at quarter speed and succeeding at a DC 18 Search or Knowledge (nature) check each round allows PCs to find safe passage each round.

Falling characters crash through the canopy, stopped at some point by other branches. A DC 12 Reflex save arrests their descent. Determine how far they fall before making the save by rolling 1d4+1

x10 (yielding a result of 20-50 feet). If they fail the save, they fall 2d4+2 x 10 feet. Falling characters suffer 1d6 damage per 10 feet fallen. Once they have finally stopped, they can ascend with DC 10 Climb checks, but they must make the same rolls as above to move upward without having another branch break underneath them.

Monsters: As soon as PCs step foot out onto the branches, four roost dretches (a variety of dretch adapted to life amidst the trees) form to oppose them. They first appear as a stream of sap flowing from trees, before rapidly coalescing into their humanoid forms.

Tactics: If outnumbered by the intruders, the dretches' first acts will be to attempt to summon further of their kind. When engaged in combat, they attempt to gang up on isolated individuals, using numbers to make up for their relative weakness. Their primary objective is protection of the Root, so they move to interject themselves between the relic and the nearest character.

Roost Dretch (4): CR 2; Small outsider; HD 2d8+4; hp 13; Init +0; Spd 20 ft., climb 20 ft; AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +2; Grp -1; Atk claw +4 melee (1d6+1), Full Atk 2 claws +4 melee (1d6+1) and bite +2 melee (1d4); SA Spell-like abilities, summon demon (35% chance of another roost dretch); SQ Damage reduction 5/cold iron or good, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to electricity and poison, resistance to acid 10, cold 10, fire 10, telepathy 100 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 5, Wis 11, Cha 11.

Skills: Balance +5, Climb +9, Hide +5, Jump +5, +5, Move Silently +2, Survival +0 (+2 following tracks).

Feats: Multiattack.

The Root of Malotoch: If the Root sustains any damage, or if a character other than an evil-aligned druid, cleric, or ranger handles the relic, the wind suddenly picks up and the forest erupts as hundreds of crows take flight. Leaves and debris whistle by, and then Malotoch herself erupts from the foliage above, summoned to the Prime Material Plane to protect her prize.

As a CR 17 creature, Malotoch is clearly too powerful for 9th level characters to defeat. But while the demon is unlikely to be killed, she can be banished. If the Root is destroyed, Malotoch retreats back to the Abyss to lick her wounds and grieve the loss. Depending on the PCs strengths, the Carrion Crow Goddess might also pick up the Root and retreat to her own domain, leaving the PCs with the horrible revelation that they have inadvertently given this evil goddess the opportunity to rebuild her power.

This is the perfect opportunity for GMs to create a link to future adventures with the crow goddess, as she returns to seek revenge against the heroes.

The Root can be destroyed through brute force or by magical means. While it's remarkably strong and resilient to most forms of attack because of its infernal nature, fire inflicts double damage. If characters need a nudge in this direction – beyond the charred state of the Root – generous GMs may allow a Knowledge (religion) or bardic knowledge check to recall the legend of the Roost of Malotoch's fiery demise.

Another option is to simply drop the root into the endless abyss below the forest canopy. True, it won't be destroyed, but as the chamber is bottomless the relic will effectively continue to fall for all eternity. Malotoch might conceivably find a means of locating and recovering the artifact at a later date, but it likely won't happen for several centuries. If the players opt for this route, Malotoch will have to be detained or otherwise occupied for the three rounds it takes for the falling Root to be lost from sight; anything less and she will simply swoop down and retrieve the artifact.

Root of Malotoch: Hardness 10; hp 51; Break DC 25; SV Ref +6.

Malotoch, the Carrion Crow Goddess: CR 17; Medium outsider; HD 16d8+144; hp 216; Init +4; Spd 30 ft., fly 90 feet (perfect); AC 30, touch 14, flat-footed 26; Base Atk +16; Grp +29; Atk +2 *cleaving adamantine shortsword* +27 melee (1d6+11); Full Atk +2 *cleaving adamantine shortsword* +27 melee (1d6+11), 2 talons +24 melee (1d6+9 plus disease), and bite +24 melee (1d4+9 plus disease); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Disease, frightful appearance, spell-like abilities, command avian, improved grab; SQ Damage reduction 10/good and cold iron, darkvision 60 feet, immunity to electricity and poison, resistance cold 10, fire 10, acid 10, spell resistance 25, telepathy 100 feet, evasion; AL CE; SV Fort +19, Ref +14, Will +19; Str 29, Dex 19, Con 29, Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 24

Skills: Balance +10, Bluff +30, Concentration +20, Diplomacy +30, Disguise +7, Hide +19, Intimidate +23, Listen +23, Move Silently +23, Search +31, Sense Motive +28, Spellcraft +20, Spot +34, Survival +4 (+6 following tracks), Use Magic Device +20

Feats: Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Mobility, Multiattack, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (shortsword).

Special Abilities: See full stats on page 51.

Level 3: Ghast Cave

This ghast cave would have been cleared out long ago by the druids were Mossborn not so degenerated. As it stands, the festering of the *Root of Malotoch* has only helped sustain the ghosts.

Wandering Monsters

There are no wandering monsters on this level.

Areas of the Map

Area 3-1 – Ghast Cave (EL 6): The chute deposits the characters in a heap on the floor of a natural cave. Read or paraphrase the following:

You stand in a natural cave, about 20 feet wide and just as tall. A small tunnel in the northeast wall, just wide enough for a human to pass through sideways, seems to be the only exit from the chamber. Three children, tears streaming down their dirtied faces, cower against a wall. The oldest of the threesome is a girl of perhaps 12 or 13 who, despite the wildness of her appearance, bears an alert and intelligent expression. Clinging to her is another girl of about 8, her dark eyes enormous with fear. She's a piteous sight, frail with sunken cheeks. The youngest is a boy of about 5 years. His shirt is ripped in several places, and his hair stands on end as though he'd been struck by lightning. It's clear these children have not been fed or bathed in some time.

Monsters: Innocent and pitiful though they may appear, the three young children – who introduce themselves as Mary, Laura, and Little Charlie – are in fact ghosts. Their parents were killed by raiding gnolls several months back, though they them-

selves were spared by remaining in hiding during the attack. When the food stores inevitably ran out after a week or so, the children in desperation turned to their only remaining alternative and began feasting upon their parents. Unfortunately, with the gnolls burning out most homesteads in the area, no help ever arrived to save the frightened children. Eventually, hunger claimed their lives, but they were not even allowed this escape from their tragedy. After a few nights they rose as ghosts, suffering eternal damnation for having feasted upon human flesh.

Tactics: The “children” will feign innocence and fright, hoping to lure PCs into a false sense of security before attacking. They would love nothing better than to eliminate clerics immediately, so will play up the desperation of their physical conditions in an effort to get clerics to approach and heal them of their suffering. Once the well-intentioned priest is out of the way, the remainder of the ghosts’ would-be saviors can be dispatched more easily.

As soon as the first ghost is killed, those remaining begin cowering from the PCs and crying pitifully: “*It wasn’t our fault... we was so hungry... momma and poppa were killed and we hadn’t nary to eat for weeks... we had to do it, we had to eat them... we was so hungry.*” At the earliest opportunity, they attempt to flee. Once the PCs are baited into following, they wait for an opportune moment to stop suddenly and turn on their pursuers.

Development: In ancient times, a tribe of wild elves sought shelter in this cave and considered it a sacred site. Faded pictographs can be found along the walls, painted by shamans who venerated some rock spirit believed to inhabit the cavern. In fact, the

The Root of Malotoch as an Artifact

While the *Root of Malotoch* might, if left unattended, one day grow into a new fortress for the demon in the Prime Material Plane, in the meantime it serves as a powerful magic rod in the hands of evil druids, clerics, and rangers. It grants wielders usage of the following spell-like functions at 9th level of ability once per day:

- *Entangle* as the 1st level druid spell with a range of 400 feet and a Reflex save (DC 13) to avoid.
- *Diminish plants* as the 3rd-level druid spell with ranges as per the spell description.
- *Summon swarm* (crows only) as the 2nd-level druid spell.
- *Air walk* as per the 4th-level druid spell
- At all times, it serves as a +2 *plant bane* staff

Several other powers can be untapped in the hands of Malotoch herself, or someone who is able to fool the relic into believing she is the demon with a successful Use Magic Device check (DC 30). These abilities, which can only be utilized once per day each, include *blindness* (permanent, recoverable only with a *wish* spell as the eyes are literally plucked from the victim), *prying eyes*, and *control weather*.

pictographs are magical in nature, and can be deciphered by someone making a DC 16 Spellcraft check. The pictographs detail a ritual by which the mage may infuse any flint-headed arrow with an enhancement bonus of +1. Note that the acting spellcaster's casting level is still a limitation.

Ghasts: CR 3; Medium undead; HD 4d12+3; hp 20, 24, 27; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +2; Grp +5; Atk bite +4 melee (1d8+2 plus paralysis), Full Atk bite +4 melee (1d8+3 plus paralysis) and 2 claws +0 melee (1d4 plus paralysis); SA ghoul fever, paralysis, stench; SQ darkvision 60 ft., undead traits, +2 turn resistance; AL CE; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +6; Str 14, Dex 17, Con —, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 16

Skills: Balance +7, Climb +9, Hide +8, Jump +9, Move Silently +8, Spot +8

Feats: Multiattack, Toughness

Area 3-2 – Cave Tunnel: Read or paraphrase the following:

The tunnel narrows to less than two feet, squeezing in upon you like a jagged maw. A stream of light appears from up ahead, piercing the darkness like a white lance, and soon a sinkhole in the ceiling comes into view.

Medium or smaller characters can pass through the tunnel easily, despite the claustrophobic confines. Large characters must make a DC 15 Escape Artist check to squeeze their frames through. A check failed by 5 or more indicates the character has become struck and is considered prone until he can free himself with an Escape Artist check or be freed by others (Strength check DC 15, or perhaps magical means such as *grease*).

Fighting in the tunnels is problematic. Characters of

Medium size are considered squeezed (–4 to attack and AC). Characters of Small size are also considered squeezed but suffer only half the usual penalties (–2 to attack and AC).

Area 3-3 – Tunnel Exit: Read or paraphrase the following:

Through the sinkhole you see the green foliage of forest, some 15' feet above.

Using roots and natural handholds in the rough walls of the cave, characters can climb to the surface with a single DC 10 Climb check. They emerge in the trees just beyond the druidic circle.

Conclusion

Assuming the PCs have destroyed the *Root of Malotoch*, they have eliminated a looming threat and their service soon comes to the attention of the local druids. The area around Axebury is still littered with the carnivorous plants bred and released by Mossborn, and the druids may ask the PCs to dispatch them. As a reward for their continued service, each character is given *boots of striding and springing* (or a suitable alternative), and they have gained powerful patrons. At the same time, however, they have gained the enmity of Malotoch, who now has been twice bloodied by the same group of mortals. She'll begin plotting revenge, counting the days until she can feast on the tenders of these upstart adventurers.

Rewards

Characters who successfully destroy the *Root of Malotoch* earn a 3,800 XP story reward. Note that this award is given to each character who took an active part in achieving the objective and is not divided as part of the group experience pool.

Appendix 1: Environs of Gurnard's Head

Gurnard's Head is located on a remote section of coastline, a place where people can't help but be moved by its natural beauty. Despite constant battering by maritime storms, the small manor Carnelloe clings to the heath and ekes out an existence raising the rare Loghtan sheep, prized for the extremely warm wool they provide. Few crops grow in the shallow soil, and appropriately enough Carnelloe means "desolate place" in Elven.

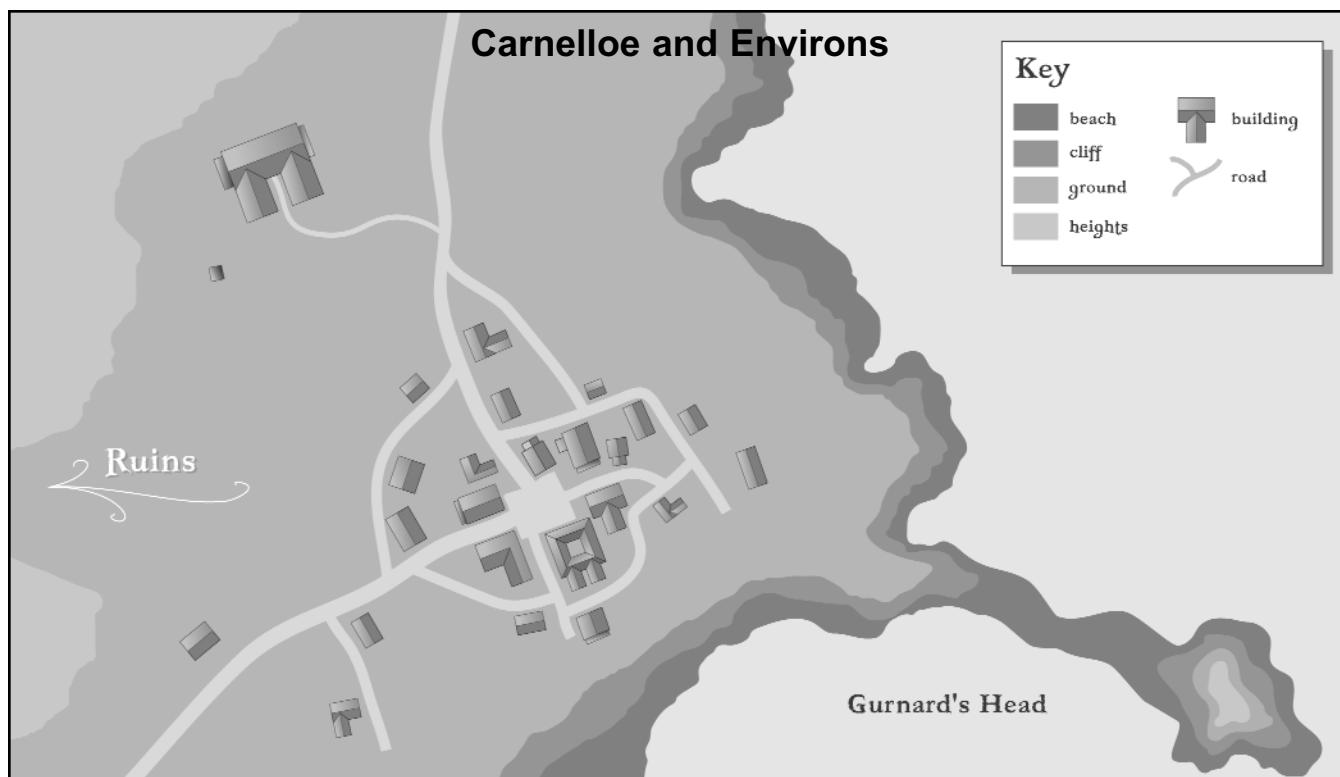
Climbing up to the headlands, one finds the ruins of an ancient settlement. The two ramparts and ditches are clearly visible, as are the foundations of 16 round huts and a burial mound that the locals insist is haunted. (See map on page 49.)

Carnelloe (large thorp): Conventional; AL LN; 60 gp limit; Assets 400 gp; Population 86; Isolated (Human 80, dwarf 6).

Authority Figures: Lady Elisabeth Pendour, female human Ari4; Dorn Bronzethegn, male dwarf Exp3 (miner and smith); Gar Ebal, male human Wiz5/Exp6 (Seneschal); Sir Gareth Porthglaze, male human Ftr4 (Sheriff); Rosemergy, female human Com3 (proprietor of Gurnard's Arms, the village inn/tavern).

Militia: War1 (5)

Bronzethegn's Smithy: Old Dorn has lived in Carnelloe as long as anyone can remember, and then some. He spends only part of his day at the forges, dedicating the remainder to his moderately successful



open-pit bronze mine. He won't admit it unless pressed (with an opposed Diplomacy check), but he has seen the inside of Gurnard's Head, or a few rooms anyway. It was after the fort was relieved and the garrison was scaled back to a skeleton crew, at which time Dorn received the contract to haul away unneeded metal (mostly in the form of old weapons and armor). He can provide a general description of the tower. An able if uninspired smith, he can make any normal weapon or armor and charges a fair price.

Gurnard's Arms: A low-ceilinged and smoky little watering hole, Gurnard's Arms is the only inn for several leagues and is therefore generally quite busy in the evening. It closes during the day while Rosemergy tends her sheep but the door is left ajar and there's generally a few old coots huddled around the fire exchanging gossip and tall tales. The interior is decorated with relics from the heroic defense of Gurnard's Head purchased from Dorn Bronzethegn (one is actually a +1 *shield*, but Rosemergy will not part with it for any amount of money). Locals love sharing the epic tale with any newcomer, even if they insist they know the story. For her part, the aging proprietor considers herself a friend to everyone in the village and the deep furrow-like lines in her face seem to be ever stretched in a warm smile.

Carnelloe Manor: Carnelloe Manor has clearly been designed more with aesthetics in mind than defensibility. Gone are the solid stone walls of its ilk, replaced by the more appealing "black and white" Tudor-style timber

framing. Its sole concession to fortification seems to be the low stone wall that surrounds the estate, though this is more likely to keep livestock in than invaders out. The lady of the manor, the recently widowed Elisabeth Pendour, is an attractive woman with a bright smile and a ready wit. Her warmth is somewhat forced at the moment, but she is a genuinely good woman who cares for her vassals. Recent events – the loss of her husband, the assault on herself, and the threats to her girls – have opened her eyes to the harsh realities of the world and allowed her natural courage to surface.

Gar Ebal, the seneschal of the manor, is somewhat put out by her newfound strength and conviction. He was sure that with Lord Pendour gone he would assume de facto control over the estate, but his confidence has proven unjustified. A tall man with black eyes and hair and a thin, mobile face, Gar Ebal is a scheming opportunist. Any trust afforded him is misplaced. He disguises the depth of his magical ability to make people believe he is a mere dabbler in the arts.

For the sheriff's part, Sir Gareth is as dumb and naive as he is brave and powerful. Like a huge (and extremely well-muscled) puppy, he instantly becomes the best friend of anyone who gives him even the slightest attention. People find it all but impossible to dislike the big dolt. It's a good thing Sir Gareth is as strong with his sword as he is because the almost childlike innocence he demonstrates leads him into repeated danger.

Appendix 2: New Monsters

ANATHAEMA EAGLE

	Large Magical Beast
Hit Dice:	4d10+4 (26 hp)
Initiative:	+4
Speed:	10 ft., fly 80 ft. (perfect)
AC:	16 (-1 size, +4 Dex, +3 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 12
BAB/Grapple:	+4/+11
Attack:	Claw +6 melee (1d6+3) or bite +6 melee (1d8+1)
Full Attack:	2 claws +6 melee (1d6+3), bite +1 melee (1d8+1)
Space/Reach:	5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks:	Disease
Special Qualities:	Low-light vision, evasion
Saves:	Fort +5, Ref +8, Will +3
Abilities:	Str 17, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 10
Skills:	Listen +5, Sense Motive +8, Spot +11, Survival +8
Feats:	Alertness
Environment:	Any land or aerial
Organization:	Solitary or pair
Challenge Rating:	3
Treasure:	None
Alignment:	Usually chaotic evil
Advancement:	5-8 HD (Huge), 9-12 HD (Gargantuan)

Anathaema eagles are the unholy product of giant eagle eggs that have been subjected to foul rituals known only known to clerics of Malotoch. The result is a bird that more closely resembles a crow than a raptor. Their feathers are oily black, their twisted talons are perfect for slashing skin to get at the tender flesh beneath, and their eyes burn with malicious intent.

A typical anathaema eagle stands 10 feet tall and has a wingspan of up to 20 feet. They speak Common and Abyssal.

COMBAT

An anathaema eagle attacks by diving down upon its opponents and making slashing attacks in an attempt to disembowel. They are ravenous feeders and will attack anything they are confident they can kill, which typically includes humans and other Medium or smaller humanoids.

Disease: Anathaema eagles are carriers of filth fever. Victims of their bite attack must make a Fortitude check (DC 12) to avoid contracting the disease: incubation time 1d3 days, damage 1d3 Dex and 1d3 Con.



Evasion: If subject to an attack that allows a Reflex save for half damage, the creature takes no damage on a successful save. This is a reflexive ability, and therefore the anathaema eagle doesn't need to be aware of the attack prior to using this ability.

Training an Anathaema Eagle

Training an anathaema eagle as an aerial mount requires a successful Handle Animal check (DC 24 for a young creature, DC 29 for an adult), but only if the creature is willing. Typically, they will only submit to followers of Malotoch, though there are exceptions. Due to the divine influence necessary to spawn anathaema eagles, followers of Malotoch receive a +4 circumstance bonus to attempts to train these creatures. Because of their temperament and reputation, anathaema eggs and chicks are not in great demand on the open market, selling for perhaps 500 gp and 1,000 gp respectively. An anathaema eagle can fight while carrying a rider, but the rider cannot also attack unless he succeeds at a Ride check.

Carrying Capacity: A light load for the bird is up to 172 pounds; a medium load 173-346 pounds; and a heavy load 347-520 pounds.

MALOTOCH, THE CROW WITCH AND CARRION CROW GODDESS

	Medium Outsider (Chaotic, Extraplanar, Evil)
Hit Dice:	16d8+144 (216 hp)
Initiative:	+4
Speed:	30 ft; fly 90 feet (perfect)
Armor Class:	30 (+4 Dex, +16 natural), touch 14, flat-footed 26
BAB/Grapple:	+16/+25
Attack:	+2 <i>cleaving adamantine short-sword</i> +27 melee (1d6+11/19-20)
Full Attack:	+2 <i>cleaving adamantine short-sword</i> +27 melee (1d6+11/19-20) or 2 talons +24 melee (1d6+9 plus disease), and bite +24 melee (1d4+9 plus disease)
Space/Reach:	5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks:	Disease, frightful appearance, spell-like abilities, command avian, improved grab
Special Qualities:	Damage reduction 10/good and cold iron, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to electricity and poison, resistances 10 (cold, acid, fire), spell resistance 25, telepathy 100 ft., evasion
Saves:	Fort +19, Ref +14, Will +14
Abilities:	Str 29, Dex 19, Con 29, Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 24
Skills:	Balance +10, Bluff +30, Concentration +20, Diplomacy +30, Disguise +7, Hide +19, Intimidate +23, Listen +23, Move Silently +23, Search +31, Sense Motive +28, Spellcraft +20, Spot +34, Survival +4 (+6 following tracks), Use Magic Device +20
Feats:	Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Mobility, Multiattack, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (shortsword)
Climate/Terrain:	Any air
Organization:	Solitary, or with cadre of 6 rooks
Challenge Rating:	17
Treasure:	Standard coins, triple goods, standard items
Alignment:	Chaotic evil
Advancement:	—

Though she has the alluring body of a perfectly proportioned woman, her silken skin only barely shrouded by elegant silk robes, the figure's demonic features make her horrific to behold. She has the head of a crow, with oily black feathers, a dark beak gleaming with fresh blood, and gleaming yellow eyes. Long, lithe legs end in



scaled crow's feet and razor sharp talons, while a pair of black wings, infested with bugs and showing festering wounds through threadbare feathers, sprout from her back.

Extremely bloodthirsty and ravenous for humanoid flesh, the crow-headed Malotoch is drawn to mortal battlefields where she sates her hunger by feasting upon the dead and dying. She rends the body beyond recognition and consumes its entrails, leaving the remains for other scavengers to fight over. Her hunger lures her to the Material Plane far more frequently than most demons.

Malotoch claims sovereignty over ghouls and ghosts, a claim which is disputed by Orcus. She is hailed as the only true deity by harpies and rooks, while some pagan tribes – goblinoid and others – who have the crow as a totem animal unwittingly offer their prayers to Malotoch. She also casts blessings upon necromancers who have acquired a vile taste for humanoid flesh.

There is a final source of recruits to swell the ranks of Malotoch's worshippers: the desperate. When an individual is lying wounded and helpless on the field of battle with ravenous scavengers closing in, or when food has been exhausted and the only means of staying alive is to sink to cannibalism, salvation is often sought through prayers to Malotoch. The Crow God often answers the call, but the price for her aid is steep. Some

whom she saves are allowed to live with merely their souls as payment, while others are transformed into ghouls, ghosts, or were-crows as part of the exchange.

COMBAT

Malotoch would far prefer to simply feast upon the dead and mortally wounded, ailing, or incapacitated, but when it is necessary to engage in combat she is a ruthless and bloodthirsty foe. She remains aloft, swooping down to strike foes with her razor-sharp shortsword, raking them with her talons, and biting at them with her beak. Her shortsword is +2 *cleaving adamantite weapon*. Three times per day the sword can be used to summon obscuring mist (CL 10th). Her hunger is legendary and once she deigns to appear on the Material Plane she will not return to the Abyss until she has been sated on the entrails of 2d10 individuals. When finally full, she flies away to ferry the souls to her Abyssal realm.

Spell-like Abilities: At will – *control weather*, *deeper darkness*, *detect good*, *detect thoughts*, *scare*. 2/day – *acidic fog*, *desecrate*, *plane shift*. Caster level 16th. The save DCs are Charisma based.

Disease: Malotoch is a carrier of both filth fever and demon fever. Victims of her bite or talon attacks must make Fortitude saves (DC 12 and 18 respectively) or contract these diseases.

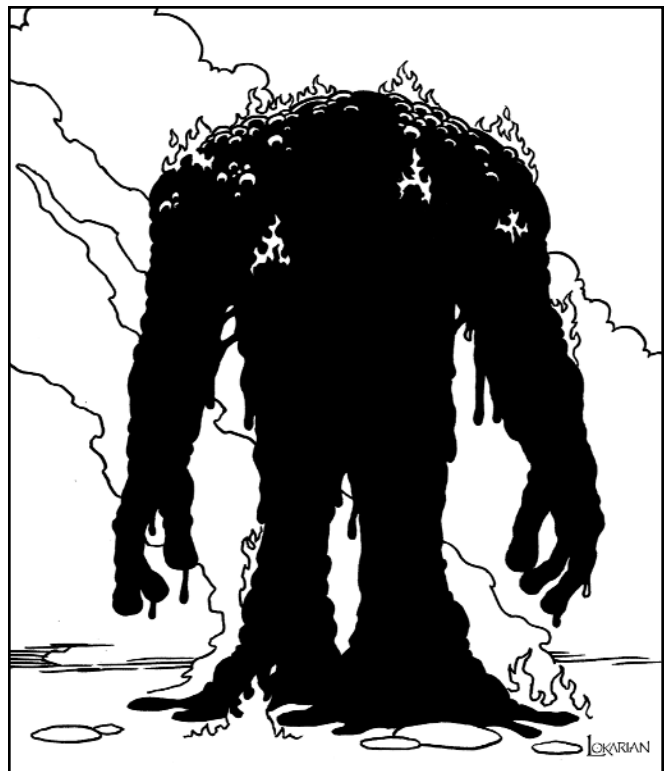
Filth fever: injury; Fort DC 12; incubation 1d3 days; 1d3 Dex and 1d3 Con.

Demon fever: injury; Fort DC 18; incubation 1 day; 1d6 Con; make second save or 1 point of damage is permanent.

Evasion: If subjected to an attack that allows a Reflex save for half damage, Malotoch takes no damage on a successful save.

Frightful Appearance: The carrion crow goddess is associated with death, disease, and the undead. As such, her mere presence is enough to make most men cower in fear. All those seeing her must make a DC 16 Will save (DC 16) or suffer a -2 morale penalty to all attack rolls, checks, and saves for the remainder of the encounter. After making this saving throw, whether successful or otherwise, a character is immune to this ability for the next 24 hours.

Command Avian: Once per round as a free action, Malotoch can command birds, rooks, and harpies to do her bidding. The targeted creature can resist the command with a successful DC 20 Will save. Birds other than rooks, harpies, crows, ravens, vultures and other scavengers gain a +10 resistance bonus to this save. Failure indicates that the creature becomes dominated (as the *dominate monster* spell) for 1 round.



PLAGUE TAR ELEMENTAL

	Medium Elemental
Hit Dice:	8d8+24 (60 hp)
Initiative:	+6
Speed:	40 ft.
AC:	15 (+2 Dex, +3 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 13
BAB/Grapple:	+6/+12
Attack:	Slam +13 melee (2d6+6 plus 1d4 fire) or disengaged limb +9 ranged (1d6+6 plus 1d4 fire)
Full Attack:	Slam +13/+8 melee (2d6+6 plus 1d4 fire) or disengaged limb +9/+4 ranged (1d6+6 plus 1d4 fire)
Space/Reach:	5 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks:	Disease, fire
Special Qualities:	Elemental traits, fire subtype, damage reduction 10/+1
Saves:	Fort +5, Ref +8, Will +2
Abilities:	Str 21, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 6, Wis 11, Cha 11
Skills:	Listen +11, Spot +11
Feats:	Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (Slam)
Environment:	Any underground
Organization:	Solitary
Challenge Rating:	5
Treasure:	None
Alignment:	Neutral
Advancement:	9-15 HD (Large), 16-21 (Huge)

Plague tar elementals are creatures of pure hatred and bile given form. They are vaguely humanoid, a mass of bubbling gel with arm-like appendages on each side but lacking a discernible head. Typically, they stand 8 feet tall and possess a massive stature, yet they still move with deceptive speed and agility.

Plague tar elementals are native to the elemental plane of fire. They are the elemental equivalent of demons or undead – a corrupted form of the true elemental spirit. They are born of evil acts and a poorly understood union with the elemental plane of earth, which somehow spawns the plague-ridden tar that becomes these creatures. Once the monsters are spawned, they then journey to the plane of fire and reside there. On their home plane, they are rare creatures hunted by other elementals. They are occasionally found on the material plane when deposits of their native composition leak through. They can speak both Terran and Ignan, but rarely do so.

COMBAT

Plague tar elementals prefer to lie in ambush within the pools of gel that are their home, striking with surprise and devastating speed. When they enter combat, however, they do so with reckless abandon and wade into the midst of their foes, confident in their own superiority.

Plague tar elementals can “throw” their limbs as ranged weapons. The projectiles are super-hot masses of tar that literally resemble a thrown arm. They typically only do this against spellcasters who are out of reach of their slam attacks. A plague tar elemental can throw up to two limbs. Each thrown limb prevents it from making a slam attack. It takes 3 rounds for a plague tar elemental to regrow a thrown limb.

Disease: Plague tar elementals carry within their form the seed of slimy doom. Those wounded by the elemental must make a Fortitude save (DC 14) to avoid contracting this disease: incubation time 1 day, damage 1d4 Con; when a character loses a point of Con to slimy doom, he must make another Fort save or 1 point of the damage is permanent.

Elemental: Immune to poison, sleep, paralysis, and stunning. Not subject to critical hits. Darkvision to 60 ft.

Fire: Those hit by the plague tar elemental’s slam attack must succeed at a Reflex save (DC 14) or catch fire. The flame causes 1d4 damage per round and burns for 1d4 rounds. A burning creature can take a move action to put out the flame. Creatures hitting a plague tar elemental with natural weapons or unarmed attacks take fire damage as though hit by the creature’s attack, and also catch fire unless they succeed at a Reflex save (again, DC 14).

Fire Subtype: Fire immunity, double damage from cold except on successful save.

ROOK

Medium Monstrous Humanoid

Hit Dice:	7d8 (31 hp)
Initiative:	+2
Speed:	20 ft., fly 80 ft. (average)
AC:	13 (+2 Dex, +1 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 11
BAB/Grapple:	+7/+7
Attack:	Club +7 melee (1d6) or dagger +7 melee (1d4/19-20) or claw +2 melee (1d3)
Full Attack:	Club +7/+2 melee (1d6) or dagger +7/+2 melee (1d4/19-20) or 2 claws +2 melee (1d3)
Space/Reach:	5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks:	Disease, frightful caw
Saves:	Fort +2, Ref +7, Will +5
Abilities:	Str 10, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 14
Skills:	Balance +6, Hide +8, Listen +7, Spot +9
Feats:	Dodge, Flyby Attack
Environment:	Temperate and warm land and underground
Organization:	Solitary, pair, or flock (7-12)
Challenge Rating:	4
Treasure:	Standard
Alignment:	Usually chaotic evil
Advancement:	By character class

Some say harpies are the most wretched creatures imaginable. Those who make this claim are obviously unaware of the existence of rooks, a race of avians closely related to harpies but distinct in their appearance and habits.

Unlike harpies, who prefer fresh meat and therefore hunt for their prey, rooks are predominantly carrion feeders. They may attack defenseless creatures, such as livestock, but are lazy by nature and are far more likely to scavenge from the kills of other predators. They flock to battlefields and cemeteries, desecrating graves and feeding upon the dead and dying.

A rook resembles an old human woman with a twisted visage and gaunt figure, though its lower torso, legs, and wings are that of a crow. Its hair is tangled and oily black, the same coloration of the feathers. These vile creatures wear no clothing and have wicked talons on their scaly hands, ideal for slicing the flesh of victims to get at the organs within. Rooks will sometimes also wield daggers in combat, or fight with large heavy bones as though they were clubs.

Rooks speak a grating hybrid of Auran and Common.

COMBAT

Rooks prefer to remain at a distance from their enemies, using their Flyby Attack and slashing with their claws. They are actually quite cunning, especially when in defense of their lairs, and have been known to drop stones and other debris upon interlopers.

Disease: Rooks are carriers of filth fever. Victims of their claw attacks must make a Fortitude save (DC 12) or contract the disease: incubation time 1d3 days, damage 1d3 Dex and 1d3 Con.

Frightful Caw: The unnerving sound of a rook's cry subjects all living creatures within 300 feet to the *fear* spell as if cast by an 8th-level sorcerer (Will save DC 13).

ROOST DRETCH

Small Outsider (Chaotic, Extraplanar, Evil)

Hit Dice:	2d8+4 (13 hp)
Initiative:	+0
Speed:	20 ft., climb 20 ft. (4 squares)
Armor Class:	16 (+1 size, +5 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 16
BAB/Grapple:	+2/-1
Attack:	Claw +4 melee (1d6+1)
Full Attack:	2 claws +4 melee (1d6+1) and bite +2 melee (1d4)
Space/Reach:	5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks:	Spell-like abilities, summon demon
Special Qualities:	Damage reduction 5/cold iron or good, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to electricity and poison, resistance to acid 10, cold 10, and fire 10, telepathy 100 ft.
Saves:	Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +3
Abilities:	Str 12, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 5, Wis 11, Cha 11
Skills:	Balance +5, Climb +9, Hide +5, Jump +5, +5, Move Silently +2, Survival +0 (+2 following tracks)
Feats:	Multiattack
Environment:	The Roost of Malotoch, whether it be on the Material Plane or her Layer of the Abyss
Organization:	Solitary, pair, gang (3-5), crowd (6-15), or mob (16-40)
Challenge Rating:	2
Treasure:	None
Alignment:	Chaotic evil

Roost dretches are nothing more than a variety of dretch thoroughly adapted to the forest canopy environment that is Malotoch's Roost (either on the Material Plane or on her Layer of the Abyss), allowing them to climb, jump, and move amongst branches with impunity.



ty. Still, they are just as pathetic and weak as their more common brethren, and fill the same niche as rank-and-file troops in demon armies.

A roost dretch is about four feet tall. They cannot speak, but can communicate telepathically.

COMBAT

Like all dretches, roost dretches are slow, stupid, and not particularly effective as combatants. They rely on numbers to make up for their individual strength and tactical acumen, attempting to overwhelm foes in mob-like fashion. Where possible, they attempt to summon other dretches to ensure success. They flee at the first sign of real adversity, except if a more powerful demon is present to intimidate them into fighting.

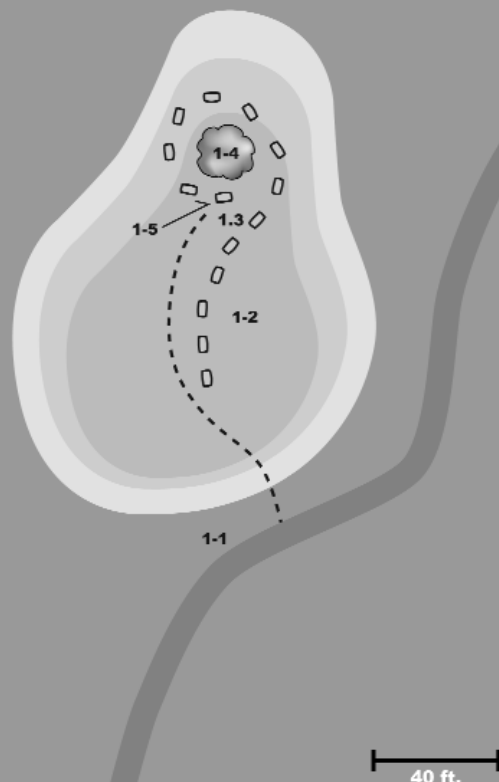
Spell-like Abilities: 1/day – *slow* (DC 12; manifesting as sap sticking to enemy's feet), *entangle* (DC 12). Caster level 2nd. The save DCs are Charisma based.

Summon Demon: Once per day a roost dretch can attempt to summon another dretch with a 35% chance of success. The summoned demon seeps forth from a nearby tree like a stream of sap and rapidly coalesces into its humanoid form. If there are no trees present, the attempt automatically fails. This ability is the equivalent of a 1st-level spell.

Telepathy: Dretches can communicate telepathically with creatures within 100 feet that can speak Abyssal.

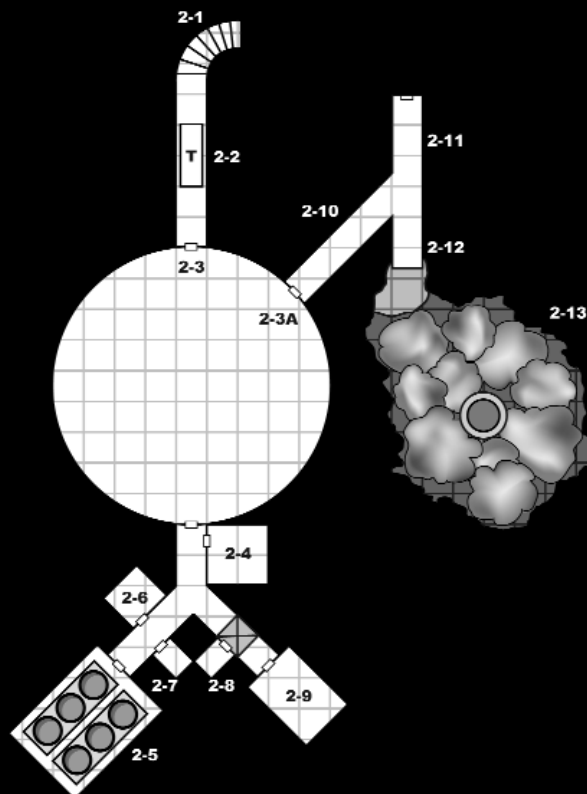
Seed of Evil

Level 1: Sick Rock Grove



Seed of Evil

Level 2: The Root of Malotoch



Level 3: Ghost Cave



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