

Guardian of the Plum Tree

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Description: The module takes place in a small meadow with lush grass and an old partially rotted plum tree and ruined cottage. Why haven't any animals cleared the struggling tree of its remaining fruit? This is a small module that can be added to any campaign. It is a fun way to introduce a pseudodragon as a familiar/companion. It also modifies and fleshes out the Pseudodragon as an NPC (Non Player Character).

Organization: All information that may be shared with the players is enlarged and in bold print. The modified version of a pseudodragon used in this module has a few changes from the original 2nd Ed. AD&D Monster Manual. The changes are done to aid gameplay particularly if it becomes a companion or a familiar.

Pseudodragon (1): AC: 4 (2 when flying); Movement 6"/24"; HD 3; HP 14; #AT: 3; Can only perform one attack once per round while flying. If it has landed on a target, it gets two attacks: Tail stinger and Bite or Breath Weapon. Damage: Bite: 1-4; Tail: 0-3; Breath 0-2;

Special Attacks-Tail Stinger: The *Tail stinger* is +4 "to Hit" and can be used up to 4 times a day. Save vs Poison or immediately collapse into deep sleep for 1 to 6 hours. Subsequent sting attacks after the initial sting give any victim a +1 to the saving throw for every subsequent sting as its venom stores are depleted. *Breath Attack* is generally used as a distraction for escape. It usually comes out as an unlit 1-2 foot diameter small green caustic gas plume causing the target to turn its head away or choke and cough. It may choose to ignite the gas creating 1-2 foot diameter gout of flame intending to temporarily blind the target. The fire plume is typically utilized at night or in dark environments. The breath attack is physically difficult on the pseudodragon and has been rarely witnessed. It is akin to vomiting and is done only in dire circumstances. It can only be performed once a day.

Special Defenses: Pseudodragons have chameleon-like powers that allow it to blend into their surroundings. The camouflage ability to alter coloration is similar to a cuttlefish/octopus. They are only 5% detectable when motionless and up to 25% if moving. When Flying, the camouflage, size, speed and maneuverability of the pseudodragon makes it harder to hit and gives a -2 to armor class.

Description: Adult sizes range from a rat to a small housecat with the females tending to be slightly larger than the males. Typically weighing 5 to 7 pounds and having a maximum length (nose to tail tip) on 1 and half to two feet. They are quite light and their wings have a bat-like texture. Most Pseudodragons have small, shiny scales although some are scale less with thick, leathery skin. They can change to any color at will. Their base coloration tends to be more earthy colors such as red, brown and green. Their coloration typically darkens with age. When they are excited, their colors become more vivid.

Communication: The species communicates by a combination of vocalizations, telepathy, color changes, and body movement. The vocalizations are heard as thrums, chirps, hisses, trills, and warbles (somewhat

bird-like). They also have the ability to communicate with other species by two forms of limited empathic telepathy. These are *broadcast* and *eye to eye* telepathy.

Pseudodragons can *broadcast* emotions and feelings in a radius. This form of communication weakens significantly with distance and is not effective beyond 30 feet. Broadcast telepathy cannot be directed to a specific target. Broadcast telepathy is often used to warn their hatchlings or companions of danger. It is also be used to confuse and deter predators.

The second form is *eye to eye* contact telepathy. Thus, it only works on one target at a time and is more intimate and intense for both the Pseudodragon and the creature to which it is communicating with. Eye to eye telepathy is limited by visibility. The typical range of this form of communication is 60 feet although races with superior vision may extend the range up to 90 feet. If the Pseudodragon becomes a familiar to a mage, the bond between the Pseudodragon and its companion no longer requires eye to eye contact. It is also theorized that this mental bond is the source of permanent injury to a mage whose Pseudodragon familiar is slain.

Disposition: Pseudodragons are mischievous and playful. Their personalities are likened to that of a housecat. They are generally good natured and consider most humanoids trainable. If exploited or mistreated they will leave at the first opportunity and may even seek revenge.

Diet: Generally pseudodragons are omnivores. They are quite fond of sweets and especially pies. The females tend to be more carnivorous particularly prior to egg laying. They can tear apart prey with their teeth and forelegs but cannot chew. They prefer bite-sized prey that can be swallowed whole and utilize a gizzard for grinding up food.

Magical Ability: It is not known if pseudodragons can cast spells, but it is rumored that some familiars can cast cantrips.

Treasure: Pseudodragons collect small gems. Gems are swallowed and aid in digestion since the Pseudodragon does not chew its prey. Gems function as grinding stones and typically 2-8 small gems are found in their gizzard. Occasionally a gem may be passed and found in their droppings. Gems may also be used in courtship. They will keep a keep several gems in their nests and will keep them in or near their lair.

Module Background: Finn was a retired Ranger/druid more comfortable in the forest than in a village. He sustained himself on a garden with native and some nonnative fruits and vegetables which he would trade at a local village. Unfortunately, many forest creatures came and pillaged his garden and food stores while he was away. After several failed attempts to fix this problem including building a moat, it solved itself. One of these visiting creatures was a young female Pseudodragon who developed a particular taste for his succulent plums. She also noticed the plentiful rodents, birds, and insects that raided the garden. After a trip to the village for traps, Finn noticed that his garden had not been pillaged. Baffled at this turn of events, he spent several weeks investigating the source of his good fortune. Finally, after starting a fire in his fireplace, he was rewarded with a blocked chimney and a flurry of angry hisses and chirps. A Pseudodragon had taken up residency in his chimney! Being quite surprised that such a

rare creature had moved in, Finn happily gave away his chimney and some of his plums to his new garden protector. Their symbiotic relationship lasted many years and gave Finn companionship in his solitude. On his passing from this realm, the Pseudodragon and/or its descendant has remained and claimed the meadow.

Over the years, the Cottage and garden have deteriorated and a single Plum tree is all that remains. The nonnative tree is very old and struggling to survive. The remaining fruit is quite sweet and flavors the air around the meadow. The Pseudodragon is aware of the tree's decline and is very protective of the sweet fruit and its lure of small game.

Introduction: Several Hooks can be used to lead to this area.

1. The local village elder or tavern owner or even an old acquaintance of Finn may say there was an old man who used to bring in the most delicious fruit for trade in the village, but has not been seen for years. He reminisces about the plum pies his wife used to make and may offer gold for some of the fruit.
2. An older elven druid/ranger may be inquiring about Finn's status.
3. Curious players can simply stumble upon the meadow.
4. A sweet aroma is carried in the breeze and the party tracks it to the meadow.

You enter a clearing in the woods surrounded by a small, clear slow moving stream. The stream is approximately 4-5 feet wide and 5 feet deep and encircles the clearing. A sweet aroma permeates the air. In the back of the clearing is a cottage which has fallen into utter disrepair with only a few remaining walls and a moss covered stone chimney. There is a small meandering stone pathway leading to a large stone pad in front of the cottage which is partially overgrown with grass and weeds. There are several dead trees around the meadow overgrown with grass and vines. The grass in the meadow is thick and lush. A single, short old tree in front of the old chimney has a few remaining branches with leaves, flowers, and a few low hanging plums. Some of the fruit are laying on the stone pathway and stone pad in front of the chimney. To the left of the cottage is a circle of stones approximately 4 feet in diameter and raised about 2 feet from the ground.

Once they cross over the stream the guardian of the plum tree will awaken. Her nest is in the top of the chimney which gives her a good visual vantage point. She is alert to any movement and is well camouflaged. She will not reveal herself unless someone takes her fruit either off the ground or from the tree.



Inspection from outside the meadow: The area outside of the encircled meadow has several game trails but none within the encircled meadow. There are no birds and only scant insects in the meadow. The fruit appear to large plums. They may notice that the fallen fruit is not lying directly under the tree. The pseudodragon places it on the stone area for easier hunting of vermin.

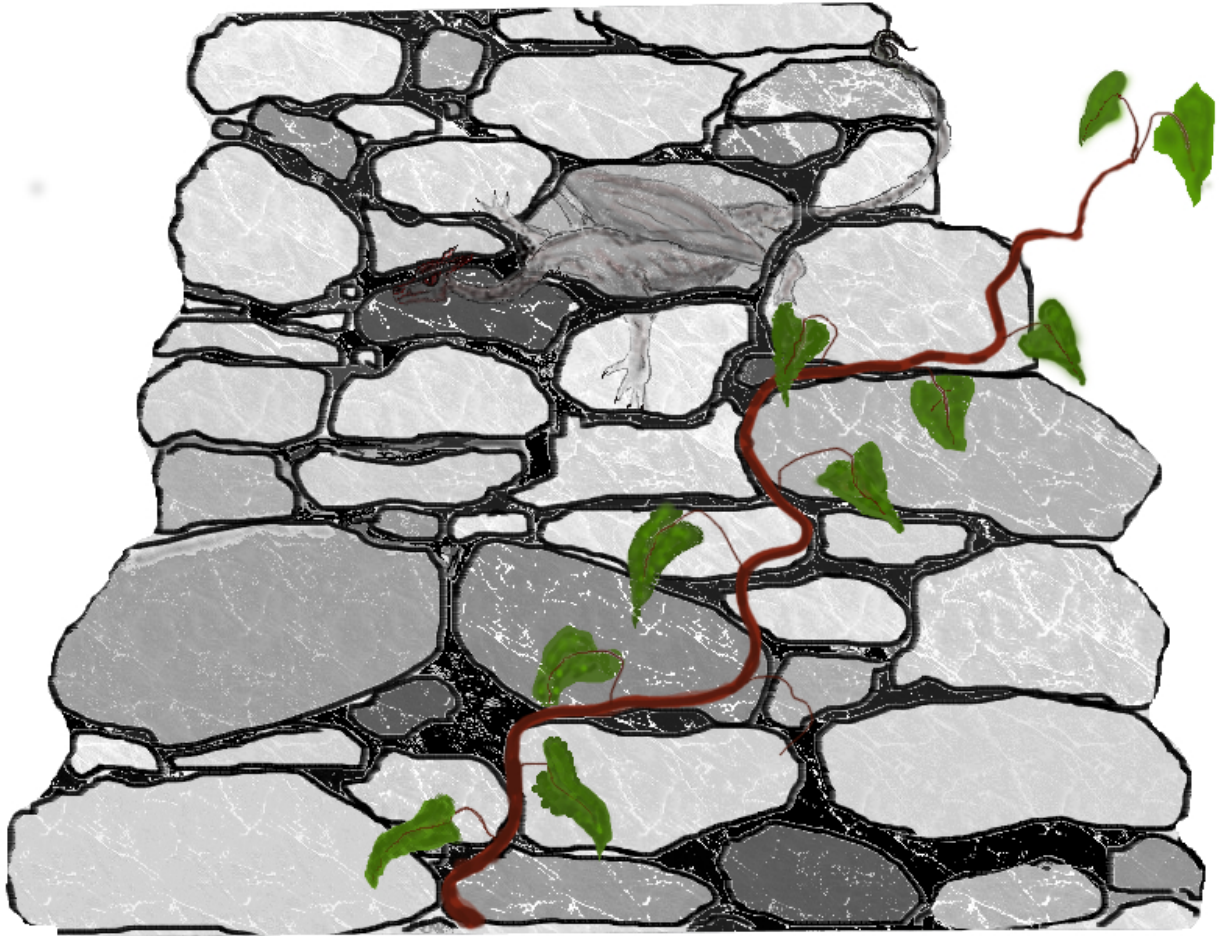
Inspection inside the meadow: The lush overgrown grass hides various gardening tools and clay pots in varying stages of decay.

Circle of stones appears to be a latrine based on the smell of its contents.

Inspection of the latrine's contents will yield multiple small bones from birds, small mammals, reptiles and fish. There is a pebble sized small gem (10 gp Value) that may be seen in the droppings. What was Finn's fire pit is now the Pseudodragon's latrine. It uses the feces to attract tasty insects.

Cottage is roughly 12 x 16 feet in dimension. The roof is gone and collapsed into the remaining parts of the structure. The far wall has completely collapsed. The left wall is partially intact and has a vine covered rectangular pile of debris measuring about 6 x 4 x 3 feet inside of the wall. This is an old bed and contains the bones of Finn. It may contain a magical item(s) scaled to the party's level. A potion, ring or gloves of plant growth could be found on the body. **A large crossbeam lies across the top of the pile and is broken and rotted on the floor. The right wall is a small rounded heap of rotten wood covered in grass and vines measuring about 4 x 4 x 3 feet.** This is an old table and chair. If uncovered, a clay jar is uncovered with a 55 gp and 10 sp within the jar. It will also contain 3 small gems worth 10, 20 and 50 gp. **The fireplace is about 4 feet wide with an inner opening of 2 feet and rises upward about 9 feet. The fireplace and flue is filled with sticks and dry grass. The front stoop of the fireplace has a large flat stone with rounded discolored edges.** If this stone is lifted, there is a small underlying cavity which contains Finn's diary and notes on his garden and on Pseudodragon ecology. It will take at minimum several hours to read the old journals. They may be of some value to a collector. There may also be a magical item(s) if you desire.

The Plum tree appears stunted, quite old and is rotting from the trunk. There are 3 plums on the tree only one of which is ripe. The fruit and few flowers are quite aromatic and fill the air with a sweet smell. There are several rotted pits scattered on the ground.



If the entire party approaches the encircled meadow the pseudodragon will wait and watch. If they get close to the Plum Tree or to the Chimney she will telepathically broadcast a flash of anger, fear and foreboding and start to move slowly down the outside of the chimney. The closer they get to the chimney or to the tree, the greater the intensity of the feelings. She is more easily seen if moving and is 25% detectable if someone is searching in the general vicinity of the chimney.

The first one who picks or eats the fruit will be her target and she will try to sting them. This person should be fairly close to the chimney and she will stealthily approach and then jump on them. She will not initially attempt to fly knowing that the sound of her wings may alert the party members. If she succeeds in her sting she will remain immobile and camouflaged on the victim. The victim will turn to the closest member of the group act as if to say something then have the fruit fall from their fingertips and then collapse. The remaining party members will witness the scene may blame the loss of consciousness on the fruit. She will telepathically broadcast a sense of foreboding and fear in hopes that the party will leave. If she succeeded in her sting but is discovered, she will scramble to the neck of her victim and threaten to rip open their throat with her claw. She may also bear her teeth over the victim's throat to get the remaining party to back off. She will then sense the most trainable member of the party and try 'eye to eye' telepathy with that party member. She favors gnomes, elves, half elves and humans and especially rangers, druids or mages. She can be bribed with food and especially with gems

as offering these items are seen as courtship! She knows that the plum tree is dying and will join the party for a share of gems and food. Any attempts at repairing the tree or planting the seeds will gain loyalty and affection. She may even offer a precious egg as payment. If threatened she will fly away trying to lure the party away from her nest and her plum tree. If anything is taken from her lair she will follow the party and attempt to retrieve the item(s). She may also seek revenge if anything malicious is done to her area.

The nest in the top of the chimney may or may not contain a clutch of eggs. This is up to you. There should be a small collection of 1-10 gems worth 10 to 100 gp each in the nest. Furthermore, you can decide if there are any magical items on Finn's body, with his notes or in the nest. The notes allow the DM to discuss the nature of the pseudodragon with the party members to enhance their understanding of pseudodragons. I hope you enjoyed this module!