

BEARS FRUIT: PROTOCOLS

HOW TO USE

Bears Fruit is a solo dungeon module, which means that the GM and the player are one and the same.

Protocols are how I preserve suspense despite this setup – this entire document is basically a series of “secrets” that you unlock during play. The adventure will tell you when you need to read or activate a protocol, which is when you refer to this document!

My personal advice is to print this document out, or load it up on a separate monitor from the adventure itself, so as to have an easy way of bouncing between the two. Have fun!

THE ANT NEST PROTOCOLS

Protocol 1

The basin’s inscription reads as follows:

Drink deeply if you dare! This is a fountain of communion, created to honor Father Earth, his children the dwarves, and his fellow gods within the Old Pantheon.

Roll 1d4 for the iconography below the inscription.

1. *The Snake-Tailed Tortoise* is hard to recognize at first because dwarves tend to use only squares and knot motifs to represent them.
They are an elder elemental of water, fusion, of new identities. Their tale is of two water deities who bickered so much that they fused into one without noticing, and have been forced to live in harmony since. Dwarves believe that the reason rivers join together is due to this elemental precedent. If this is a fountain dedicated to them, you know their “boon” is likely to cause some identity crisis within you.
2. *The Twig-Made Worm* is an elder elemental of wood, dragon-kind, and the encroaching majesty of nature. She is easy to recognize for you, but humans probably only see what looks like a mess of sticks.
She is one of the reasons dwarven druids eschew metal objects – as a proper dwarf who finds metal

useful rather than taboo, you’ve never really seen the point of her as a goddess.

3. *Father Earth* is carved in delicate lines below the inscription. You could cry at its perfection, you could rage that this work is in so grungy a place, but you will hold your peace for now.

Father Earth has great compassion for all his children, even elves and men. It is safe to drink from this basin to earn his boon.

4. *That Which Screams in the Dark* is carved here – it is an elder elemental of nightmares and madness, so terrifying that dwarves only speak of it by this epithet, not its true name. When dwarves go missing in the tunnels or come back mad from the Underdark, it is this deity who is to blame.

Protocol 2

If your party had a dwarf and interpreted the iconography, as per **Protocol 1**, then pick the water will grant the appropriate enchantment to that iconography – simply pick the appropriate enchantment below.

If you didn’t make use of **Protocol 1**, read that protocol now, generate the appropriate iconography, and pick the appropriate enchantment below. Your character still doesn’t know any of this, but you as the player should.

If you *tested* the basin of water...good job! Run it how you would as a GM after reading the protocol, as there are simply too many ways to test basins of water in the D&D world for me to cover here.

Enchantment of the Snake-Tailed Tortoise:

If alone, you feel a strange pull about you and you watch, disconcerted, as a passing midge or fly is sucked into your skin and vanishes. The basin remains magically full.

If you have retainers with you, the imbiber absorbs everyone else to their body (a saving throw is allowed to resist) and incorporates their abilities into themselves. The imbiber gains no class levels, but does replace their HP, HD, attack progression, and saving throw progression with the best of those absorbed. They also gain access to spellcasting, turn undead, languages, and racial abilities as applicable. The basin then dries up.

Enchantment of the Twig-Made Worm:

All metal and magical items on your person vanish; cloth frays, paint chips, and wooden items sprout flowers all over them. Moss runs down your back and your body is covered in a mantle of wood. Until the next full moon, you gain a +1 bonus to AC and to your maximum HP (as well as any other effects of the spell *barkskin* that you wish to confer, as you desire). The basin then dries up.

Enchantment of Father Earth:

You become excellently groomed and all tensions in your body relax, as if tended to by the finest of dwarven high society. Particular attention is given to hair, beard, and posture, with elaborate braids that are bold yet tasteful (how this will affect morale and reaction rolls is up to the GM, though the designer recommends a +∞ bonus for dwarves at the very least). One random weapon or armor on your person is restored to brand new condition, and becomes a +1 magic item besides. The basin then dries up.

Enchantment of That Which Screams in the Dark:

You are deafened by a horrible screeching sound that only you can hear. Furthermore, any water remaining in the basin transmutes into a water elemental, which either immediately tries to kill you (if by the basin) or stalks you through the dungeon (if you took water with you). The elemental fights to the death, driven to madness by the influence of a deity of chaos.

Protocol 3

There is a 33% chance that half of the bag's contents are actually coin-bugs, small poisonous bugs that resemble coins. If this is the case, they will remain docile while in the dungeon, but they will wait for you to make a purchase and bite the merchant after you have left. The merchant must save vs. poison or perish. If the merchant dies, you can obviously no longer buy from that merchant. If it's the town market, then the market closes out of fear.

Washing in a pond (found much later in the adventure), being set on fire, or taking a great fall will all be enough to agitate the coin-bugs into fleeing, or kill them outright.

Protocol 4

The giant pangolin joins your party, taking up no hireling slots. It is too large to enter the Subterranean Orchard part of the dungeon.

The giant pangolin attacks all ants on sight.

Protocol 5

The giant ant queen emits a psionic signal upon dying. Generate all Ant Nest chambers that you haven't yet generated. All giant ants and green-eyed ants are alerted and come, berserk, towards the ant queen's chamber.

If the party survives, all of the ants leave the Ant Nest, leaving this section of the dungeon entirely devoid of ants.

Protocol 6

A rhagodessa lies in wait high above the entrance, waiting to jump down on unsuspecting visitors.

> If characters enter without preparation, the rhagodessa attacks with surprise and the party must roll to see if they are caught unawares.

> If characters enter checking side-to-side, they are horrified by a pile of decapitated ant corpses against the wall. The rhagodessa still attacks with surprise, and the party is automatically caught unawares – no roll.

> If the characters peek inside and look up, they see it before it attacks them, and roll initiative as normal.

> If the characters toss something plausibly large into the room, the rhagodessa pounces on it and brings it back up to the ceiling. After such a strike, the rhagodessa is not inclined to make another attack, taking a full dungeon turn to get its bearings.

Protocol 7

The lost scout will be lying at the bottom of the shaft. They were trapped by the ants above and climbed down here to die. You may adjudicate what happened to the scout depending on when you discover them. It is, for example, possible that you do not find them until later trips into the dungeon, which would bode ill for their health.

Perhaps they survived off of scraps. Perhaps they passed away, but did so in a particularly amusing or tragic pose. Perhaps they have been re-animated by the magic of the orchard as a plant doppelganger.

Protocol 8

The script states:

The Ursine Orchard is hereby bequeathed to this town, that the townsfolk may tend it well.

Protocol 9

You are teleported to a cavern-themed demi-plane where the orchard currently resides. You have entered the next segment of the adventure: The Subterranean Orchard.

THE SUBTERRANEAN ORCHARD PROTOCOLS

Protocol A

You step through the portal and are dumped unceremoniously outside the village in a random location. The location changes each time you use the portal. You might reasonably conclude that it is through use of this portal that the orchard bears attack the town.

Protocol B

Unfortunately, the moment the dryad sings, your glass aphids shatter. Her voice is nothing to write home about, and she tends to go ever so slightly sharp when singing the higher notes.

Protocol C

You have found a secret passage that leads deeper into the Orchards. Cross out any of the first 6 entries on the table if you haven't crossed them out yet, and go to any of the chambers you wish (the secret passage leads you to that chamber). Continue Dungeon Generation from that point.

Protocol D

The Eight Eyes of the Shroud Weaver represent eyes of a giant spider deity. She is a goddess of understanding the past, granting visions of true (but perhaps lost) history.

Protocol E

The entire chamber grows dim, and you can see flickering shadows emitted by the candle's light, which is uncomfortably bright for a single candle. The shadows appear to *be* something, though it is hard to see what they are doing against the uneven walls of the cave. If you have some way of generating shadows onto a flat surface, it will be more apparent what is happening. Any shadows cast onto a surface will engage in what is essentially a magical shadow puppet show.

You can see a boy tending to a grove of trees, all rendered in flickering shadows. The boy is knocked down by a man approaching from behind him. The scene repeats.

Protocol F

The pond removes poisons and curses from you.

Protocol G

There are 3d6+6 azure peonies growing here.

The local monastery purchases them at a rate of 5 gp/peony, but stop purchases after 50 peonies.

Protocol H

The pond removes poisons and curses from you, as well as enchantments from items you have on you. Contacting items within 10 minutes of bathing has the same effect.

Protocol I

The semi-transparent bark yields to your touch as if it isn't there, but upon withdrawing a scroll, all of the trees become opaque, and no other scrolls can be taken.

All cicadas fall deathly silent for the remainder of this delve. With the exception of this room, any room with cicadas in it for the rest of this delve will have them attack you as a **blood-drinking cicada swarm**.

Generate the spell scroll you obtain using the procedures outline in the system you are using to run this module with.

Protocol J

All 3 swords that you pull from the trees come free easily, but 2 of the 3 are cursed (unbeknownst to you).

All cicadas fall deathly silent for the remainder of this delve. With the exception of this room, any room with cicadas in it for the rest of this delve will have them attack you as a **blood-drinking cicada swarm**.

Generate the magic swords (for that is what they are) using the procedures for "intelligent swords" in the system you are using to run this module with. If the swords are cursed, generate the curse procedurally as well. If your system lacks such procedures, you can have the swords simply be +1 or -1 swords.

Protocol K

The tablet has cracked naturally along weakened stress lines from long ago – both pedestal and tablet are covered with layers of lichen and moss. The tablet's inscription:

We grant this orchard to you as a sign of our friendship even as our magic dwindles. We hope you will honor our gods, cherish our orchard, and that through this orchard we will live on in your memory. The orchard shall be your guardian against evil and corruption, against threats from within and without. In times of need it shall provide, so that you may stand strong even as the ages change.

Protocol L

One of the hirelings softly exclaims, "The mayor's son!" If pressed, they explain that the mayor's son went missing a few weeks before. Struck by unease, they cease speaking.

You may pick which hireling speaks to you, but they take a -2 to morale going forward.

Protocol M

The necklace is magical and allows you to Turn Orchard Bears, as the Turn Undead ability. It can be sold, and traveling merchants will pay 1,000 gp for it. However, attempting to sell it locally results in unpleasant questions about whether you got the necklace.

You and all of your retainers will be quietly tied up in the night by guards shortly after the questions are asked, and are subsequently tossed into a nearby river in chains.

Protocol Z

If you released the aphids anywhere in the O₁₋₁₆ rooms, you have a chance of blighting the Orchard. However, this chance varies heavily based on where you release them and what you've achieved in the adventure.

If you have not met any of the singing dryads on your adventure, or if their singing has not been stopped, the chance is listed for the orchard's destruction is halved. Their singing shatters glass aphids.

If you have convinced any dryad to stop singing, information gets around and all dryads stop singing. This eliminates the dryad penalty.

If the chamber does not mention the orchard in its initial description, the aphids have a 2% chance of blight.

If the chamber starts with the phrase, "You are beginning to truly enter the orchard," the aphids have a 10% chance of blight.

If the chamber starts with the phrase, "You are now deep within the orchard," the aphids have a 90% chance of blight.

If the chamber starts with the phrase "There are no fruit trees here," the aphids have a 100% chance of blight. This is because there are no threats in that space – aphids will multiply safely there and then spread to the other chambers of the dungeon.

If the chamber contains the phrase "The orchard is everything", attempting to place the aphids on the ground distracts you for a brief instant, and your will is subsumed by the Orchard. Game Over!

BEARS FRUIT: APPENDIX

NEW STATUS EFFECTS

Guano-Covered

All reaction rolls against you are automatically hostile until you can get washed in water. If you are outside the dungeon, finding a creek to wash in is trivial.

Intoxicated

You have disadvantage (roll twice and take the lower value) on both attack and damage rolls.

ANT NEST BESTIARY

Giant Ant

| | |
|--------|-------------|
| HD | 1+1 (5 hp) |
| AC | 3 [16] |
| #AT | 1 bite: 1d6 |
| Move | 180' (60') |
| Save | 16 |
| Morale | 7 |

Giant Honeypot Ant

| | |
|--------|-----------|
| HD | 1d4 (2hp) |
| AC | 4 [15] |
| #AT | none |
| Move | none |
| Save | 16 |
| Morale | n/a |

Honeypot ants exist to provide for the ant nest. They are fairly lethargic and are not particularly discerning about whether those receiving their nectar are ants or invaders.

Giant Pangolin

| | |
|--------|--|
| HD | 9 (40 hp) |
| AC | 5 [14] |
| #AT | 3 (2 claws, 1 tongue): 1d8/1d8/swallow |
| Move | 60' (20') |
| Save | 16 |
| Morale | 7 |

A hit with the tongue forces the target to make a saving throw vs. paralysis or be yanked into the pangolin's mouth and swallowed. Giant ants automatically fail this saving throw. The pangolin can be attacked from within (at an AC of 9 [10]). Anyone inside the pangolin's stomach takes 1d6 points of acid damage per round as they are digested.

Green-Eyed Ant

| | |
|--------|--------------------------------|
| HD | 1d4 (2 hp) |
| AC | 7 [12] |
| #AT | 1 bite: 1d6 + enfeebling curse |
| Move | 180' (60') |
| Save | 17 |
| Morale | 12 (undead) |

The green-eyed ant's true identity is that of a giant ant exoskeleton, a form of undead. Due to their undead nature, green-eyed ants mindlessly charge and attack non-ants, heedless of pain or danger. They are also less coordinated than giant ants – they cannot climb on walls or ceilings.

The curse is delivered in the ant's bite, requiring a save vs. poison. On a failure, lose 1d4 points from Strength until the curse is removed. This curse does not stack.

Orchard Bear

| | |
|--------|----------------------------------|
| HD | 3 (13 hp) |
| AC | 6 [13] |
| #AT | 3 (1 bite, 2 claws): 1d6/1d3/1d3 |
| Move | 120' (40') |
| Save | 12 |
| Morale | 7 |

If a victim is hit by both claws in the same round, the orchard bear does a bear hug for an extra 2d8 automatic damage. If you defeat an orchard bear or if the village has suffered a bear attack, read its entry in the **Subterranean Orchard Bestiary** for more information on how future orchard bears will change over time.

Orchard bears take double damage from fire.

Rhagodessa

| | |
|--------|--------------------------------------|
| HD | 4+2 (18 hp) |
| AC | 5 [14] |
| #AT | 2 (1 sucker-leg, 1 bite): stuck/1d12 |
| Move | 150' (50') |
| Save | 16 |
| Morale | 9 |

A rhagodessa is a giant arachnid, about the size of a horse. A strange feature about the rhagodessa is the set of suckers on its front legs which help it to grasp its prey.

A hit with a sucker-leg does no damage but means that the victim is stuck. In the next round, the victim will be pulled to the rhagodessa's mandibles and will automatically be bitten for 1d12 points of damage.

SUBTERRANEAN

ORCHARD BESTIARY

Blood-Drinking Cicadas (Swarm)

| | |
|--------|-------------|
| HD | 2+2 (10 hp) |
| AC | 2 [17] |
| #AT | Special |
| Move | 90' (30') |
| Save | 16 |
| Morale | 9 |

Swarms are a special type of monster that represent a mass of tiny creatures acting as one. A swarm occupies a 10' by 30' area, which can expand or shrink as the space requires.

Swarms do not roll to attack – instead, any creature within the swarm is automatically hit by the creatures. Warding off a swarm with a torch or weapon will inflict 1d4 points of damage to the swarm, and a *sleep* spell causes the entire swarm to go dormant. The blood-drinking cicadas inflict 2 points of damage to any character engulfed. Any character bitten by the cicadas has a 5% chance of contracting a disease. A saving throw versus Poison is permitted, and should it fail the character dies of the disease 1d6 days later.

Dryad (Confident, Oak, Shy)

| | | | |
|--------|------------|------------------|------------|
| HD | 2 (9 hp) | 6 (27 hp) | 2 (9 hp) |
| AC | 5 [14] | 4 [15] | 5 [14] |
| #AT | 1: charm | 2 fists: 1d6/1d6 | 1: charm |
| Move | 120' (40') | 60' (20') | 120' (40') |
| Save | 16 | 15 | 16 |
| Morale | 7 | 9 | 5 |

Dryads can disappear by joining with their bound trees. They die if the tree dies, and typically die if they are separated from the tree, though the orchard prevents this latter problem.

Some dryads can charm victims (save vs. spells with a -2 penalty) to approach a tree, and the victim may vanish inside the tree, lost forever.

The orchard dryads tend to be more social and trusting than most and on unfavorable reactions prefer to mock and scold rather than to attack.

Floral Beast

| | |
|--------|---------------------------------|
| HD | 5+5 (27 hp) |
| AC | 3 [16] |
| #AT | 1 bite: 2d6+2, pollen (special) |
| Move | 90' (30') |
| Save | 12 |
| Morale | 7 |

Looks similar to a maned wolf, except that it's the size of a grizzly bear and the mane is comprised of pollen-emitting daffodils. Its entire body has body "plates" growing outward from its spine and skull, providing it additional protection.

It is constantly surrounded by a cloud of pollen that extend 60' out from it (save vs. spells or instantly charmed). Those who make the saving throw are immune for the next 24 hours.

The floral beast is not inclined towards pursuit. By nature it is a scavenger rather than a predator, using its pollen to pacify other predators as it shares meals with them. Run it with this in mind.

Kobold

| | |
|--------|---------------|
| HD | 1d4 (2 hp) |
| AC | 7 [12] |
| #AT | 1 weapon: 1d4 |
| Move | 60' (20') |
| Save | 18 |
| Morale | 6 |

Kobolds can see in the dark and enjoy setting up ambushes if they absolutely have to fight. In this module, most kobolds are not at all inclined towards fighting, even on an unfavorable reaction roll.

Orchard Bear

| | |
|--------|----------------------------------|
| HD | 3 (13 hp) |
| AC | 6 [13] |
| #AT | 3 (1 bite, 2 claws): 1d6/1d3/1d3 |
| Move | 120' (40') |
| Save | 12 |
| Morale | 7 |

Orchard Bear Mutations: In addition to the basic orchard bear abilities described in the **Ant Nest Bestiary**, the druidic magic of the Subterranean Orchard responds to the death of orchard bears by “upgrading” them with mutations, both when the village is able to defeat them and when you defeat them while dungeoneering. To account for these changes, follow the following steps:

1. Record of the number of bears that have attacked the town (from the Timekeeping section).
2. Record the number of bears that you have killed, as the player.
3. Add the numbers in 1 and 2 together. That is the increase to the maximum HP of any orchard bears you meet.
4. Orchard bears become resistant (taking half damage) to the last form of damage that killed an orchard bear. If the last orchard bear was slain with a spear, all orchard bears become resistant to piercing weapons. If the last orchard bear was killed with fire, all orchard bears become resistant to fire. These resistances do not stack – they can only have the most “recent” resistance.

Pebble Golems

There is no need for these to be given a stat block – they effectively have no hit points and no means of attack.

Plant Doppelganger

| | |
|--------|--------------|
| HD | 4 (18 hp) |
| AC | 5 [14] |
| #AT | 1 bite: 1d12 |
| Move | 90' (30') |
| Save | 6 |
| Morale | 10 |

Plant doppelgangers take double damage from fire.

A plant doppelganger that is not caught will turn on you the next time you enter combat, or will attempt to attack you if you try to release the glass aphids into the orchard. Despite being quite good at infiltration, they cannot resist a flair for the dramatic, and will gloatingly announce their betrayal, preventing the need to roll for surprise.

Shield-Bearing Bear Statue

| | |
|--------|------------------------------------|
| HD | 3 (13 hp) |
| AC | 2 [17] |
| #AT | 2 (1 shield bash, 1 fist): 2d6/1d6 |
| Move | 90' (30') |
| Save | 12 |
| Morale | 12 (construct) |

After a shield-bearing bear statue takes any damage for the first time, its large stone shield will crack into rubble, reducing its AC to 5 [14] and causing it to lose the shield bash attack. It will instead make 2 fist attacks: 1d6/1d6.

Speaking Rust Monster

| | |
|--------|-----------------------------|
| HD | 5 (22 hp) |
| AC | 2 [17] |
| #AT | 1 feeler: rusting (special) |
| Move | 120' (40') |
| Save | 12 |
| Morale | 7 |

A rust monster is a magical, armadillo-like creature with long tails and two long, antennae-like feelers. This one in particular has apparently learned speech, perhaps from the magic of the orchard. Any metal that touches a rust monster (weapons that hit it or armor struck by a feeler) crumbles instantly to rust. Magic items have a 10% chance to be unaffected on contact.

The rust monster is actually immune to mundane damage, and can only be harmed by magical attacks.

DESIGNER NOTES

Thank You!

Anthony Wu here (also known as Jojiro on the interwebs). As the designer of this module, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your support!

This was a labor of love that I whipped up over three weeks' worth of time. I've never created something like this, and I really do hope you enjoy what I've made! I stand on the shoulders of giants, and this project would not have been possible without the *Solo Dungeon Tabletop RPG Jam*, without the one-roll discovery tables from *Freebooters on the Frontier*, the market generation mechanics from *Adventurer Conqueror King*, or the support of the many play-testers on Chris McDowall's OSR Discord server.

The inspiration for this adventure came from a Tumblr post called "D&D adventure premises inspired by stupid bear puns", which was brought to my attention by my housemate, R. Y. In terms of tone, I borrow heavily from *Bone Marshes* by David Schirduan – the tone of this module is inspired by his work and in particular his NPC Azimech, who I like to imagine is friends with the Lintwitch. I also sought the whimsy structure of *The Gardens of Ynn* by Emmy Allen. I humbly thank you all for inspiring this work.

I want to end by thanking the artists – all art used is public domain, from the following photographers and artists: Darya Tryfanava, Wolfgang Hasselmann, Bishnu Sarangi, ProbableTrain, and Onkelskrut. Thank you all for providing the artwork for this project.

Using This Product

While this was made for a solo dungeon tabletop experience, there are lots of ways to use this book. I don't know your preferences or what your needs are as a tabletop RPG enthusiast, so I encourage you to use this book in other ways:

- > You can use it for a solo dungeoneering experience.
- > You can take the parts you like from it and introduce them to your campaign world.
- > You can run this entire module at your table, re-tooling it as a dungeon for multiple players.
- > You can read through it not for useful content but for general inspiration for your gaming needs.

The Truth of the Orchard (Spoilers!)

It's not necessarily evident in every play-through, but the truths of the dungeon are as follows:

- Long ago, the town had a relationship with dwarven druids, who as their magic waned, vanished.
- The orchard was a parting gift from these dwarven druids to this town that they had grown fond of.
- Over many generations, town leaders took care of the orchard, and in turn the orchard protected the town from outside threats.
- The orchard's purpose faded over time, and the townspeople grew complacent. They enjoyed a peace borne from the orchard's protection, but no longer knew that it was the orchard that offered them this protection.
- The current town mayor's son was significantly better at tending to the orchard than any who came before him. Due to the traditions of the town – the *why* behind the traditions having long been lost – many claimed that the mayor should step down, that his son should take his place as their leader.
- The mayor came to resent the orchard and all it stood for, and he murdered his son in the orchard, prompting the orchard's bears to turn their eyes upon the town in vengeance.

A player may very well destroy the orchard. That's not a "bad ending" in my eyes. As-written, after all, this is a dungeon-crawl, not an investigative adventure. However, especially if you plan to run this for a larger group, you may decide to make it an investigative adventure, rather than a pure dungeon crawl.

The Portal Room TPK

When you first encounter the 6d6 green-eyed ants in the second portal room, it can seem like an unwarranted spike in difficulty. As they are all undead, you have no way to parley with them, and as this is a solo-adventure, you are likely underprepared to deal with them.

I admit that this was a fairly harsh design choice, and a bit of nightmare fuel if you imagine so many undead scuttling out from the darkness to assault you. My recommendation for dealing with mindless undead is a mix of using bottlenecks, oil flasks, and fire. Enemies who so readily rush to their deaths are uniquely vulnerable to this combination.