

THE BRAKKENWOODS ARE BURNING!

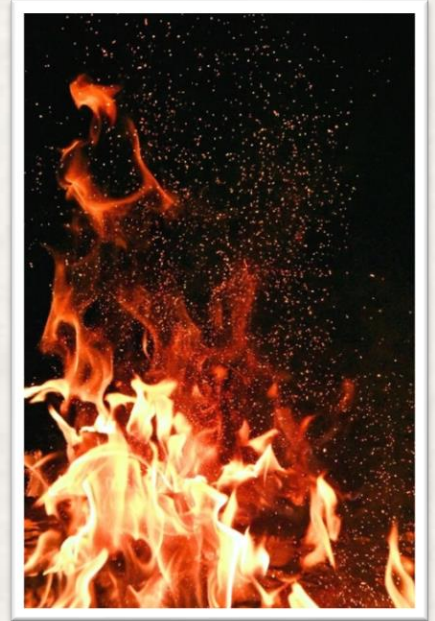
WRITTEN BY DAVE GOWANS

A Scalable, Stand-Alone Adventure for 3-5
Characters of Level 3-5



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SENSITIVITY WARNING

This adventure contains themes of distrust and animosity between human and ogre groups.

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ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

NEVER DOES THE GREAT SPIRIT SUFFER MORE THAN WHEN AN ANCIENT WOOD BURNS!

-ORSULA THE DRUIDESS

The Brakkenwoods are Burning! is a low level, stand-alone adventure in which the players are challenged to discover the real source of unrest in a majestic wood that is home to communities who do not trust or ultimately understand each other but unknowingly share a dependence on the forest around them. The adventure is designed for 3-5 characters level 3-5 but is easily scalable both in terms of party number and player level.

OVERVIEW

The adventure plays out as the party is called to stop the burning of the forest. The players' encounter with the ogres will reveal that they have a deeper motivation than wanton destruction as they work feverishly to contain a terrible blight that threatens to overtake and consume the entire majestic forest. The ogres will not venture beyond the buffer they have created but implore the players to seek out and destroy the source of the sickness. The players will travel through a hideous area of blighted forest before reaching the entrance to the source- a labyrinth of massive, twisted roots leading into the darkness beneath the surface. Should they survive to the end, the players will learn that the lair serves as a brood chamber for an army of maturing vine blights and culminates at the core, the source of the blight itself- the seed chamber tended by the evil druidess Zafira. She senses the power void created by the aging and weakening forest protector Orsula and intends to seize the land for her own purposes. The players may defeat or vanquish Zafira and destroy the seed. Upon completion, the spread of the blight has been halted, and the heroes may have opportunity to unite the ogres and villagers in efforts to reforest the Brakkenwoods and celebrate the victory of the day!

ADVENTURE HOOKS

1. The players are approached by the aging druidess Orsula who has protected the woods and the predominately human village of Arinor within for her entire life. She displays an obvious hatred for the ogres whom she says have moved into these woods with their destructive ways that threaten both the woods and the people she protects and must be stopped! Orsula can offer gold from the town coffers at an amount to motivate the players.
2. The players may see for themselves towering plumes of thick white smoke billowing above the distant forest and know there have been complaints of unwelcome ogres now living within.



Orsula the druidess

CHAPTER 1-THE FLAMES ARE RISING!

The Flames are Rising! Introduces the characters to the conflict happening within the Brakkenwoods. The players may or may not choose to first visit the village of Arinor before they investigate the source of the fires- the frantic ogre efforts to slash and burn a buffer between the newly blighted wood and the healthy forest that remains. After interacting with the ogres, the players may learn that the villagers' hateful accusations of the ogres lack an understanding of the deeper situation transpiring. The players should be motivated to seek out and eradicate the source of the blight.

THE MAJESTIC BRAKKENWOODS!

The towering green and gold canopy above you speaks to the age of these majestic hardwoods, many of a sort you have never before seen. The footpath to the village of Arinor is plainly visible heading away in front of you, but the cool forest air carries the faint smell of smoke from a different direction.

The players may choose to first visit Arinor or may choose instead to investigate the burning woods straightaway. The trip is around three hours from the village and four to five if they do not first visit Arinor.

THE VILLAGE OF ARINOR

An unwallled village of perhaps two dozen wood and stone buildings occupies an idyllic clearing you reach after about two hours travel. Men, women, and children move about freely in their activities of daily life as they tend gardens and carry water from a gently flowing river nearby.

Arinor is populated mainly by humans, but other races may be peppered in. The village is pleasant and the people friendly, but there is a palpable air

of concern over the fires and the growing tensions in the woods. Nearly any villager who is questioned voices distrust if not outright hostility toward the ogres for their aggressive destruction of the trees. Players who have previously met Orsula are welcomed warmly by the villagers as the help they have hoped for to deal with the new developments. Players may find basic food and lodging as guests in the village but no real adventuring gear for sale as the villagers mainly keep homesteading supplies. If they visit Arinor, the players are approached by the young village girl Layah who possesses a heart untainted by distrust and hate. She gives to the players a gift- the Amulet of Renewal (pg 4)

FEELING THE HEAT!

While there is no established path to the site of the burning woods, the players may use tracking or PER skills succeeding on DC rolls 14 or better to follow the smell of smoke that increases as they get closer. About an hour or so out the players begin to hear and follow the echoing sounds of mighty axe falls on PER check 14 or better.

You have followed the thickening smell of green wood burning and the now deafening echo of axe fall to the edge of the majestic trees where before you an ogre chops frantically- swinging its' mighty axe at the base of another massive hardwood that soon crashes to the ground, its' canopy landing in the blaze of the last one felled as a swath of wood now lays burning in a widening ring laid out in front of you.

As the ogre fells the trees, either the sound of his axe fall echoes throughout the deep woods or others at work elsewhere at the terrible task of felling these old trees. The ogre is so engrossed in the work that it will react instinctively to the party by engaging in combat. The ogre (dial up/ down ogre strength or add second ogre if needed) will engage in a battle to the death, but before anyone's demise a thundering voice issues forth as the ogre clan leader Olakohr and several other ogres arrive on the scene, "**Irkul agaleck amunii Kerig amunii!**" stays the ogre's hand as the ogre chief recognizes the value the party may bring to the situation.

OGRE

Large giant, chaotic evil

Languages Common, Giant

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Armor Class 11 (Hide Armor)

Hit Points 59 (7d10 + 21)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	8 (-1)	16 (+3)	5 (-3)	7 (-2)	7 (-2)

Senses [Darkvision](#) 60 ft., Passive Perception 8

Actions

Greatclub. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Javelin. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage.

THE AMULET OF RENEWAL

The Amulet of Renewal is a most unusual and unpretentious magical artifact. The body of the amulet is a circular piece of wood about four inches in length as though a section were removed from the trunk of a small tree. A network of roots dangle from beneath the wood and small shoots of green sprout from the top. The amulet body is wrapped in a strip of soft leather, and a strong cord allows it to be carried over the neck or shoulder. The wood is surprisingly soft and supple, and a sliver can easily be separated from the body of the amulet with a sharp knife. Any such section cut immediately begins to grow into a small and vigorous sapling suitable for planting while the remaining body of the amulet immediately regenerates the removed portion, effectively allowing the user to create an endless supply of young trees. The artifact is imbued with the power to produce by chance any variety of tree indigenous to the surrounding area where it is being used.

OGRE CULTURE

While ogres are commonly, and often rightfully, perceived as brutish beasts, they are presented here as being organized into their own community ruled by a chief. Olakohr will share what little he knows of the encroaching blight- an evil has sensed weakness in the Brakkenwoods and come to take over. The ogres will not under any circumstance go into the blighted wood but will work tirelessly to contain it. On a successful CHR roll of 13 the ogres will agree to stop cutting the forest until nightfall if the players will seek the source. Otherwise, they resume cutting the buffer they hope will prevent the spread of the blight to the rest of the woods.

CHAPTER 2-BATTLING THE BLIGHT!

In *Battling the Blight!*, the party will travel into the blighted forest and into the twisted vine tunnel labyrinth created by the evil druid Zafira. The players will travel deeper into the tunnels until they reach the very source of the blight, a powerful evil seed under Zafira's cultivation in her effort to breed an army of vine blights that can overwhelm the entire Brakkenwoods. The players may learn that the evil seed feeds and the blight grows stronger as it spreads outward consuming any healthy forest before it while leaving a path of pestilence in its' wake. The chapter may culminate in the party's defeat of the blight as the seed is destroyed and Zafira is either defeated or driven from the Brakkenwoods.

INTO THE BLIGHT

Beyond the ogre swath is a sickening sight- all that remains of the ancient mighty trees are splintered stumps as big across as boulders. Scattered throughout the stumps and broken limbs are large totems pounded into the ground- WIS difficulty check 10 to recognize ogre wards of protection have been driven into the ground in hopes of slowing the blight spread.

The woods beyond the ring of burning trees are shocking to behold- massive, ancient hardwoods now turned twisted and black, their leaves shriveled, exude the smell of death and rot; the bark of the trees now replaced by a stonelike hardness, cold and apparently devoid of any life. Black, rootlike tendrils even now are appearing at the base of the closest healthy trees as whatever insidious process taking place appears to be spreading.

PER check 13 to note the presence of a mysterious black owl following and observing from a distance- Zafira in a her Wild Shape form.

THE BLIGHTED LAIR

Suggested Ambiance: <https://tabletopaudio.com/>
Blighted Forest

M1: LAIR ENTRANCE

You reach what is likely the center of the twisted, blighted forest around you. The massive angry vines spiral inward from the scarred black trees and twist together to form a tunnel that dives beneath the surface, a cold blackness visible as a foreboding presence of what lies beneath.

The dungeon walls are a tunnel of twisted vines, most a foot or more in diameter that wrap and twist together to form an irregularly walled passageway, mostly circular in nature generally 8-10 feet in diameter (adjust up or down for party size). Entrance tunnel- cold black roots, gnarled and hard as stone, each as thick as an ogre's thigh weave together so tightly that they form a tunnel descending downward into darkness, the few areas where light can penetrate the space between them near the opening soon giving way into sheer blackness. Razor like thorns project outward on all surfaces making safe passage slow and deliberate.

M2: GUARD CHAMBER

This dark chamber is wet and earthy smelling, a mound of tangled roots and soft mud rising up to higher ground atop which lays a giant, moss covered crocodile, perfectly motionless with head cocked to one side as its cold amber eye seems to peer at you without blinking. A large hole in the tangled root floor seems to allow the beast access to the deep dark water below.

Note!! Adjust the crocodile down to a size, hp, and attack/dmg configuration appropriate to challenge your party.

GIANT CROCODILE

Huge beast, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (Natural Armor)

Hit Points 85 (9d12 + 27)

Speed 30 ft., swim 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	9 (-1)	17 (+3)	2 (-4)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)

Skills Stealth +5

Senses Passive Perception 10

Languages --

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Hold Breath. The crocodile can hold its breath for 30 minutes.

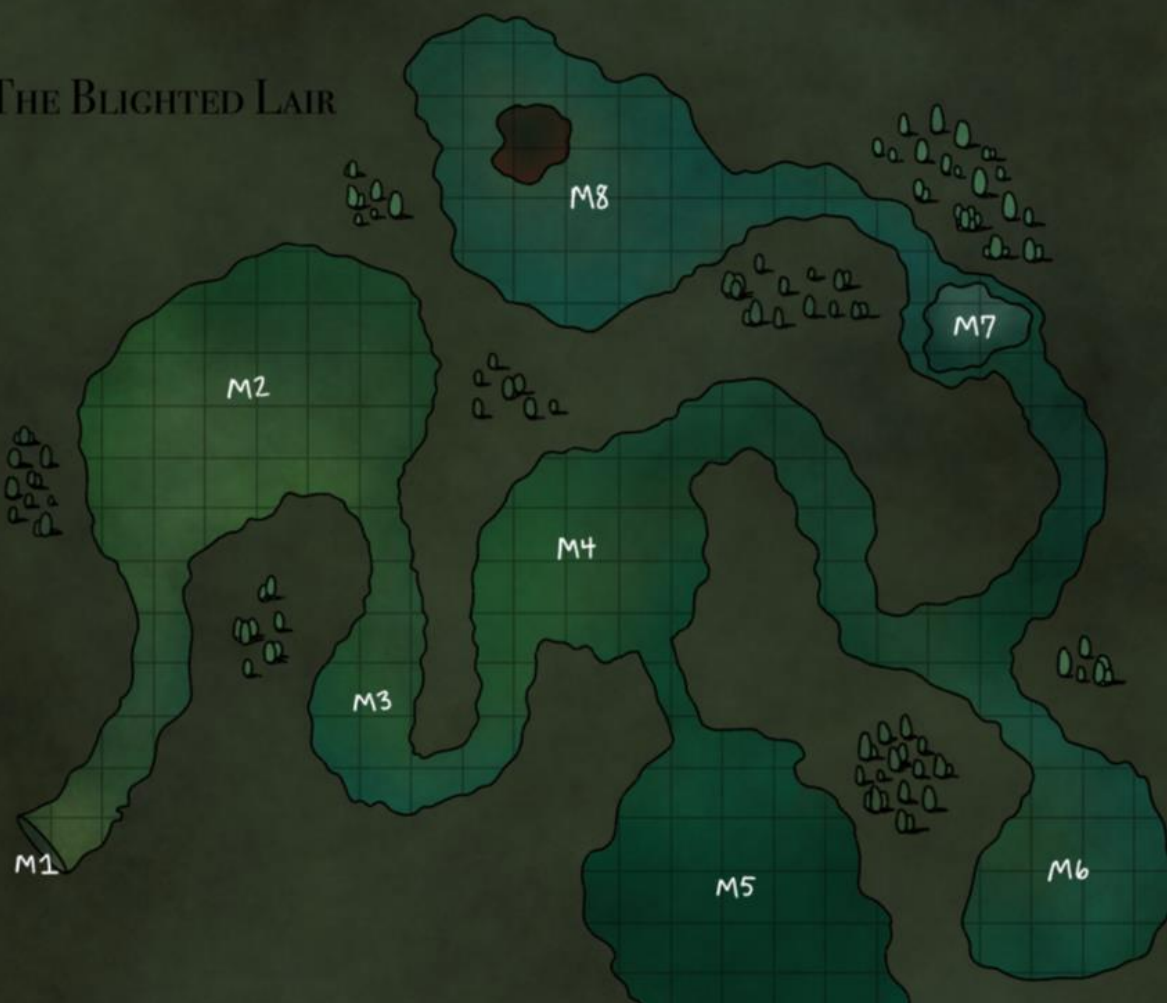
Actions

Multiattack. The crocodile makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its tail.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (3d10 + 5) piercing damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 16). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the crocodile can't bite another target.

Tail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target not grappled by the crocodile. *Hit:* 14 (2d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 16 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

THE BLIGHTED LAIR



M3: FUNGI TUNNEL

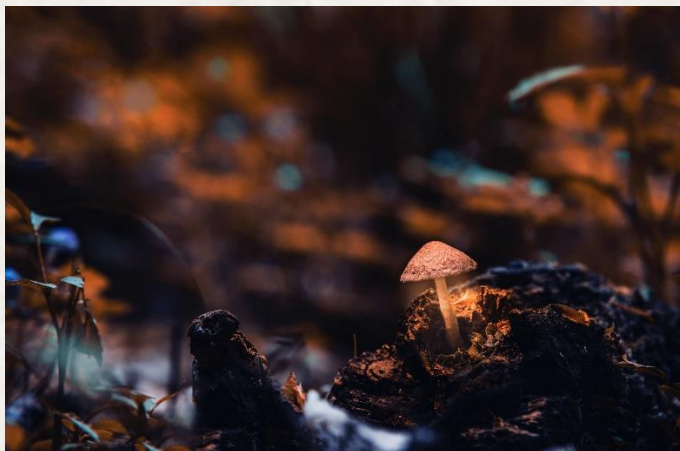
This humid, low-ceilinged chamber is filled on every surface with an endless variety of bizarre mushrooms, puffballs, mosses, and iridescent fungi.

PCs should likely recognize the inherent risks of poisons and spores- INT check 15 to navigate safely through room- if failed check PCs have a 50% chance of guessing wrong and activating a dangerous plant denizen.

Plant denizen table-

1. PCs activate puffball that shoots out blighted spores- CON 15 or suffer d8, d6, d4 over three rounds
2. PCs activate stinging nettles- DEX 15 or hit by dart like nettles for 2d6, intractable pain causing -3 on all rolls for 30 minutes
3. PCs touch a contact poison- a slime coating several mushrooms that causes complete numbness to affected areas- DEX check disadvantage for d20 minutes
4. PCs damage several stems that emit a powerful odor- WIS save 13 or become stoned for d10 minutes- -5 on all attack and ability rolls

INT or plant lore check 12- PC's may recognize several valuable specimens- Dragon Spittle- a pitcher type plant that has a powerful toxic liquid in its receptacle- DEX 10 to grab and pinch before it spews or CON save 13 or 2d6 poison dmg, half if successful.



M4: BROOD CHAMBER

Thick, twisted dark vines extend out near the ceiling along the walls of this dark chamber- each vine terminating at a vine blight in some stage of development- apparently 6 in all.

The PCs can cut the vines right at the point where they enter each creature- PER check 12 to determine this. One of the blights is nearly complete- any delay on the PCs part and there is a 50% chance the blight will ripen fully and attack vs remain inanimate if cut. Otherwise, the blight attacks the party.

VINE BLIGHT

Medium Plant, neutral evil Monster Manual page 32

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 26 (4d8+8)

Speed 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
+2	-1	+2	-3	+0	-4

Skills: Stealth +1

Condition Immunities: blinded, deafened

Senses: blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive perception 10

Languages: Common

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

False Appearance. While the blight remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a dead shrub.

ACTIONS

Constrict. +4, 10 ft. 9(2d6+2) bludgeoning damage, and a Large or smaller target is grappled (escape DC 12). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the blight can't constrict another target.

Entangling Plants (Recharge 5-6). Grasping roots and vines sprout in a 15 ft radius centered on the blight. For one minute, that area is difficult terrain for non-plant creatures. In addition, each creature of the blight's choice in that area when the plants appear must succeed on a DC 12 Strength saving throw or become restrained. A creature can use its action to make a DC 12 Strength check, freeing itself or another entangled creature within reach on a success.

M5: BARRACKS

The tunnel narrows, turns downward sharply and dampens even further, your feet now stepping precariously on slippery, twisted roots, the space between clearly revealing the sounds and smell of dark water beneath.

Footing is particularly difficult here as the ground angles steeply downward- DEX 12 check if no precaution is taken to steady a player's footwork- failed check and the player slides right into the bog, attracting full attention of the army of vine blights. The PC can win initiative and scramble back into tunnel but must make DEX check to rush up the steep incline in retreat. If the PCs can sneak to the edge of the tunnel, they see that it opens into a dark, low lying misty bog area where an army of vine blights is amassing (maybe 50ish in number)- for Zafira's plan to take over the entire Brakkenwoods. The vine blights stand ready at attention in their various twisted forms, awaiting command to embark on their mission.

M6: RITUAL CHAMBER

This chamber contains a large basin woven into the rooted floor. The basin contains a murky water that when stirred will show images of Zafira's plan to send a hoard of vine blights to destroy the surrounding forest and peoples.

M7: CORRUPTED WELL

The tunnel floor in front of you drops off suddenly as you stand at the edge of a dark chasm beneath your feet, the smell and feel of dank water emanating from below. Passage will be difficult with the ten-foot chasm facing you and massive, razor-sharp thorns spread across the walls, floor, and ceiling of this chamber.

This is the corrupted well- the natural spring that is the water source to feed the blighted seed and all that grows in the lair. The players are faced with a difficult task getting to the other side- they may try to traverse the walls of the room that drop off steeply into the well- this is made more challenging

by the thick, razor sharp thorns spread throughout- a successful DEX check of 17 means a player makes the traverse uninjured, a DEX check of 13 or better means they take 1d6 of slashing damage; a DEX check of 10 or better means the traverse is made but 1d8 slashing damage; anything less than 10 and the player falls 30 feet into the darkness taking 2d8 as they fall splashing into the foul water below. A 10-12 foot jump is possible but complicated by thorns as well.

M8: SEED CHAMBER

The room before you is a dark chamber of thicker, twisted roots, gnarled, slippery, hard as stone. The twisted roots throughout the room seem to run towards a central mound that rises several feet upwards with a large, twisted root ball about three feet in diameter standing like a statue in front of you. A powerful evil presence fills the room, and you soon realize you are not alone.

This is the final chamber where Zafira guards the evil seed from which her army and the dreadful blight emanates. She is a chaotic evil druid that can be scaled to challenge the party (Stat block on the next page). If brought near the point of death she may shape change into a black owl and try to escape through a narrow space in the roots overhead. She can summon forth 1-3 giant bats from the dark ceiling or a vine blight from the brood chamber area that can make the encounter more difficult for the players. The demon seed must be destroyed, or the blight will continue- any player who makes a STR check 12 or better is able to drive a weapon through the thick outer shell and damage the seed for 1d8 damage- the player who holds a blade driven into the seed must make a CON save of 12 or better or the seed life drains that player for 1d6. Until the seed is destroyed (28hp), Zafira takes only half damage from all player attacks. Any damage to the seed is felt by her and this may be perceived by the players.

GIANT BAT

Large beast, unaligned

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +2

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 22 (4d10)

Speed 10 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	2 (-4)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)

Senses Blindsight 60 ft., Passive Perception 11

Languages --

Echolocation. The bat can't use its blindsight while deafened.

Keen Hearing. The bat has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Zafira- Medium humanoid, chaotic evil druid

Armor Class 11 (16 with barkskin)

Hit Points 56

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	15 (+3)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Intelligence, Wisdom

Skills Medicine+4, Nature+3, Perception+4

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages Druidic, common

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Spellcasting. Zafira is a 4th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). Zafira has the following druid spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *druidcraft*, *produce flame*, *shillelagh*
1st level (4 slots): *entangle*, *longstrider*, *speak with animals*, *thunderwave*

2nd level (3 slots): *animal messenger*, *barkskin*, *hold person*

ACTIONS

Corrupted Staff of the Woodlands. *Melee weapon attack:* +4 to hit (+6 to hit with shillelagh), reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit* 10 (1d10+4) bludgeoning damage or 12 (1d12+2 with shillelagh or wielded with 2 hands). The staff also grants a +2 bonus to spell attack rolls while being held.

Spells. The staff has 6 total charges. Zafira can use an action to expend 1 or more of the staff's charges using her spell save DC: *animal friendship* (1 charge), *awaken* (5 charges), *barkskin* (2 charges), *wall of thorns* (6 charges)

Tree Form: Zafira can use an action to drive one end of the staff into the ground and produce a blighted tree with a twisted trunk 3 feet in diameter, a 25-foot height, and a sickly canopy spread of 10 foot radius. Anyone fighting Zafira while under the canopy must make a CON 12 save each round or suffer d6 lifedrain.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Wild Shape. Zafira may assume the shape of a black owl. She can use this feature twice and regains expended uses when finishing a short or long rest.

CHAPTER 3-WHERE DO WE GROW FROM HERE?

If the party either defeats Zafira outright or drives her away, continue with chapter 3: *Where Do We Grow from Here?* If the party is unable to eliminate the source of the blight, the pace of blight spread will soon overwhelm the ogre efforts at buffering the healthy woods, and the people of Arinor will flee the Brakkenwoods.

The players may choose to return to Arinor to share the news but will meet the ogres enroute. An opportunity for healing both the forest and relations between opposing sides should present itself.

You emerge through the white smoke that lingers to find the mighty ogre chief Olakhor and his warriors ready, axes poised to resume their desperate containment efforts. He looks into your eyes with a hope you never imagined an ogre might possess. "Speak of what you have seen forest keepers."

If the party has obtained the Amulet of Renewal, Olakhor will solemnly step forward into the swath of destruction and drive a mighty axe into the earth, twisting it back and forth to open the ground for the planting of a new tree. The Amulet of Renewal can be used indefinitely to create saplings to reforest the destroyed woods. If the players become involved in planting new trees alongside the ogres, they will soon find they have company.

As you quietly follow the ogres who move before you to create open ground for the vibrant saplings you produce, you turn to see new company has arrived. Emerging from the woods are Orsula and the villagers, led by a smiling little girl Layah who all seem now to move with a new sense of humility as they come behind each of the young trees you lay into the earth and close the ground the ogres opened, knowing in your hearts that powerful new growth, renewal has begun.

SUGGESTED XP AWARDS

Each player should receive approximately 1500XP for successful completion of the adventure, scaling up or down as indicated. For example, less XP would be awarded if Zafira is able to flee prior to being defeated. This is only an estimate based on the monsters encountered and adventure difficulty. Please adjust XP awards to suit your party or factor into milestone leveling progression.

WHERE *DO* WE GROW FROM HERE?

The Brakkenwoods are Burning! is my very first effort at ttRPG content creation and has certainly been a learning experience! I very much appreciate thoughtful and constructive input to help me grow as a creator. Thank you DMs who take the time to run this content and share your thoughts-

Dave Gowans



THE BLIGHTED LAIR

