

TROUBLE'S ROOT

This is the hideout of the brothers Fairlane. As young adults their tendencies to excess and eccentricity rendered them pariahs. They struck out to make their fortunes through logging darkwood. In time they chanced upon a grove of trees more fantastic still.

John, who was an apprentice blacksmith, and Jarret, a ranger, developed a relationship with a hobgoblin tribe. The brothers trade their unique wares for supplies, booze and protection.

Hobgoblin raids have victimized the brothers' hometown. The blacksmith, to whom John was apprenticed, recognized the Fairlane's craftsmanship on the body of a fallen attacker.

The Approach

A grove of odd trees stands above the dungeon. PCs in the know will recognize darkwood and the species that produces living steel amongst them. Stumps indicate a recent culling of the grouping. Inspection reveals sawdust and tracks leading to the hideout.

During the evening two columns of smoke rise from the hideout: one from the kitchen (5), a larger plume belches from the forge (18).

2 hobgoblins patrol the surrounding area, day and night.

Notes

Doors are iron bound oak unless otherwise noted.

Secret doors are expertly crafted of sliding stone.

Living steel is incredibly hard and regenerates itself if damaged.

1. Shallow cave. The rock is roughly hewn, otherwise unremarkable. A lone hobgoblin guard stands guard.

2. Foyer. The doors leading north from this room are covered with leather and fit snugly into their frames. A pressure plate (activation lever located in the mess hall) causes the four nearby secret doors to slide open, releasing the swarms from the side rooms.

3. Alcove. This room contains several fetid animal carcasses. A spider swarm streams out of the carnage and through any open doorways to attack the PCs.

4. Alcove. As room 3.

5. Mess hall. Contains 2 tables 16 chairs and 5 hobgoblins. A galley kitchen, vented to the surface, extends from the southeast corner of the room.

If the hobgoblins have heard the PCs three of them will run to room 6, arm themselves with longbows and make use of the arrow slits in the wall between rooms 5 and 6. The remaining two will knock over a table and block the PC's path to room 6 while yelling for support from the sleeping quarters (8).

If the hobgoblins are unaware of the PCs, they are caught eating, sitting around one of tables in the room. They will raise the alarm and attack the PCs in hand-to-hand combat.

6. Armory. The room holds 5 longbows and 200 arrows, 3 suits of chainmail are hung on the Northern wall, 2 battleaxes, 5 longswords, a small halberd and small short sword lie in a pile in the southwestern corner.

7. Store room. 100 days worth of trail rations sit on shelves along the western wall. 3 bottles of fine wine and bread, cured meats, nuts and berries line the north wall's shelves. 3 kegs of beer sit in the northeast corner, concealing a small hole where the northern and eastern wall meet the floor. Within are 2 healing potions and a rare bottle of whiskey.

8. Hobgoblin quarters. There are 15 cots. 5 are occupied. If roused by a commotion in the mess hall (5) the 5 hobgoblins arm themselves and rush to join the fray.

9. Hallway. The hallway's walls are smoothly carved. The ceiling is riddled with holes, about 2 inches in diameter. The floor is flagstone. Several stones are trapped. Pressure plates trigger arrows from above.

If the alarm has been raised this is where Jarret the ranger and his hobgoblin attendant (10) will attack the PCs. Jarret will cast spells to slow them and loose arrows from his darkwood bow until he is badly hurt. He will then order his guard to remain whilst he flees deeper into

the dungeon, hoping to find protection behind the ogres (15).

10. Office. A large desk and several chairs sit in the center. Inside the desk are various ledgers denoting arrow and armor production. Several lengths of darkwood lay along the southern wall. If unwarned the ranger and his hobgoblin lackey are reviewing orders at the desk when the PCs arrive.

11. Workshop. The ranger creates darkwood weapons here. Lathes, knives and other tools of the craft lay scattered over his workbench, alongside an unfinished bow. A darkwood longsword leans against the eastern wall.

12. Passageway. The long narrow passage ends at a hole in the ground. Still water lies 60 feet below the lip of the opening.

13. Ranger's quarters. Plants abound, potted and rooted in piles of dirt strewn about the room. There is a bed of pine boughs in the middle of the room. Two orbs shine from above; they feel like sunlight on the skin. A barrel sits atop a table in the northeast corner of the room, a watering pail beside it. In the bottom of the water barrel is the severed head of an ettin.

14. Anteroom. The northwest corner of this room falls away. A PC falling with it lands in the well (12).

15. Root cellar. Roots intrude from the 20-foot high ceiling. Some hang far enough down to have implanted themselves into the piles of dirt and scraps on the floor, most dangle above the poorly leveled floor. The longer roots are planted in piles of dirt, metal shavings and sawdust. Two ogres labor here, arranging and lengthening the roots. They have used their axes to begin pulverizing several sections of trunk strewn about the room. The entire room is difficult terrain and occupants must check each turn to avoid entanglement.

16. Corridor. The walls, ceiling and floor are smooth, carved stone. The ogres' labors have produced 4 sacks of living steel, which lay against the western wall.

17. Blacksmith's quarters. There is a neatly made up cot, a small table and a chair. A living steel breastplate hangs from the northern wall. A suit of living steel chainmail is hidden in the mattress.

18. Forge. John the blacksmith works here, shaping the metal the trees have produced under the ranger's ministrations into magical arms and armor. A hobgoblin works the bellows. John is unarmored but attacks the PCs with his living steel sledgehammer, still hot from the forge. Masterworked tools and a thick leather apron round out his gear.

