



The Hanging Garden

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Background

Orcs have begun raiding the villages in the area of Spawnwood Forest and taking captives. It's not so strange that orcs have been raiding, but their focus has been on taking as many living captives as possible, rather than the standard orc killing and plundering. Regardless of the orcs' reasons, they must be stopped.

Rumors among the villagers (roll 1d6):

1. The orcs are selling the captives into slavery.
2. The orcs are eating the captives, and keeping them alive simply keeps them "fresher."
3. The orcs have begun digging a new mine in the area and lot of slave labor is needed.
4. The orcs are celebrating some sort of religious festival, and are in need of an exorbitant number of sacrificial victims.
5. The orcs are using them as slaves, but overwork them to the point of death, and therefore need constant replacements.
6. They are using them for military training (which tends to mean they die... a lot).

Almost every local the PCs meet will mention a "beaming light" coming from a particular part of the forest between mid-morning and late afternoon. Almost all of the locals believe the light is related to the orcs.

For the DM

Deep in Spawnwood Forest, the magic-user Erymos Elmundmor has constructed a large conservatory where he is cultivating a host of horticultural monstrosities, including a selection of carnivorous plants. The orcs are working at his behest. They bring the captives to Erymos, who infects them with a leprosy-like disease, and hangs them from a system of trellises bridging the upper area inside the conservatory. The plants below are fed with a slow rain of blood and falling body parts, while the captives suffer a particularly slow and painful death. The wizard's methods are a truly heinous transgression against humanity. The orcs are immune to the disease, and do not act as carriers.

The "beaming light" mentioned by the locals is the sun reflecting off the glass of the conservatory's dome. If the PCs follow the light into the forest, it will take them directly to the conservatory. It will also take them through approximately 3 miles of orc-infested forest (no matter which direction they enter from). Each turn, there is a 1-in-6 chance the PCs will encounter **1-4 orcs** armed with swords, spears, and shields. The orcs have been patrolling these woods so long, they've pretty much wiped out anything else living there. Very little else will be encountered.

Numbered Encounters

In a clearing deep inside Spawnwood Forest stands Erymos's imposing structure of gleaming white limestone, topped by a dome of iron and glass that beams in the light of the sun. Unless otherwise specified, the rooms inside the conservatory are kept in darkness. Dwarfed by the conservatory is a dirty wood building with a thatched roof, covered with soot from a nearby firepit. The smell of orcs and scorched human flesh drifts downwind from this building. There is a 1-in-3 chance each turn spent on the grounds (outside the conservatory) that the PCs will encounter **1-4 orcs** armed with swords, spears, and shields.

1. Orc Barracks

2 dozen cots are packed into area **1a**. The stench of orcs here is almost unbearable. Under each cot is a chest that contains 2d12 gp. Sleeping under one of the cots is **1 orc** with a sword. To the west (**2a**) is the orc leader's quarters, furnished with a cot, an iron chest, a stool, and a simple wood desk. Hidden in a secret compartment in the desk is a map to a buried chest which contains 5000 gp.

2. Orc Guards

Guarding the door are **4 orc guards** armed with crossbows (loaded) and swords.

3. Main Hallway

At the north end of this dark hallway, a cage holds **3 shriekers**. If the doors to the south open (letting any light in), they will begin shrieking loudly, and **2-5 orcs** with swords, spears, and shields will run in from outside (in addition to the guards).

4. Bedroom

This well-appointed bedroom includes a padded chair, a carved bookshelf, a massive wood-frame bed, a beautiful area rug. A secret compartment in the bed holds a *wand of darkness* (5 charges). The

shelf contains a decorative leather-bound 4-volume set of botanical illustrations (125 gp value).

5. Library

Shelves and shelves of books of esoteric botanical subject matter, a table, and a chair.

6. Seed Storage

Shelves of jars of seed pods, labeled with genus/species and storage dates.

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Shelves of jars of seed pods, labeled with genus/species and storage dates. Hidden on a high shelf is a small locked iron chest. The lock is trapped with a poison needle (save vs. poison or die in 2d6 turns). The box is also armed with a magical trap that causes a flash of blinding light when opened (all in 20' radius must save vs. spells or be blinded 1d4 turns). It contains an empty jar labeled simply with an "X."

9. Erymos's Lab

Tables with alchemical equipment. Seedlings and sprouts grow from small ceramic containers throughout the room. **Erymos** (a powerful, high-level magic-user, with a focus on spells affecting plants) is here, working. He will attempt to engage the PCs by talking about his work (speaking vaguely about "the possibilities of plant life.") He will attempt to guide them into the conservatory (where he will command his plants to attack).

10. Cross-breeding Room

Chained to a table in the middle of the room is a human female with plant tendrils sprouting from various parts of her body—a sick cross-breeding attempt by Erymos. She is alive, but catatonic. It will take powerful magic (both arcane and divine) if there is any chance for her survival/recovery. 12 cases of rations line the walls. (The rations are infected with the disease and are being fed to the captives in area **12**.)

11. Conservatory

This area is home to **dozens and dozens of carnivorous plants** (some ambulatory) that will attempt to attack/eat any living creature except Erymos (whose commands they will follow if he is present). Strung from a trellis over the room (out of reach of the plants) are 35 humans in various stages of the leprosy-like disease. The dripping of their blood resembles the sound of drizzling rain. 9 of them will die no matter what. 8 of them will survive if cured within 1 day, but they are unable to walk on their own. The remaining victims will survive if treated within 1 week; they can walk, but only at 1/4 the normal rate. Once the PCs enter this area, each must save vs. poison or contract the disease. If untreated, it kills in 1d4 weeks.

12. Holding Pen & Tower Shaft

The **15 captives** here were taken in the last few days, and the disease is only beginning to set in. In the shaft above, partial construction hints at the abandoned goal of using the upper portion of this tower as some sort of observation deck.

