

THE MAIL MUST GO THROUGH

A short encounter for 5th Edition Dungeons and Dragons.

This short encounter by **Swampland Games** accompanies and introduces the *Envelope of Expeditions Delivery*, designed by the **Tavern of Trinkets**, and uses the Overgrown Magical Forest map by **Cze & Peku**. The encounter will challenge 3-5 level 3-5 players. You can fit this encounter into any campaign that visits a new town or city near a forest where the player characters might meet a mysterious firbolg wizard.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Filbrend - neutral - firbolg wizard (use the *mage* statblock) with little concern for anything beyond his own curiosity. Fascinated by spells like Transport via Plants. Soft spoken and does not understand subtlety

Strike - neutral good - bugbear druid (use the *druid* statblock) focused on protecting the Heartwood, leader of the Fist of the Elderwood.

The Heart of the Forest - neutral good - use the *treant* statblock, except it has a movement speed of 0 and does not have the animate Trees ability.

PART I - VERY SPECIAL INGREDIENTS

Characters looking for work find the following posting pinned to the town notice board with glimmering silver pushpin:

I seek adventurers for an adventure. I can pay. Find me at the Blistered Walnut; ask for Filbrend, because that's my name.

Any player who looks around spots a sign hanging above the building on which the notice board hangs bearing a nut vaguely resembling a walnut. If they ask anyone passing by, the passerby will confirm that the building is, indeed, the Blistered Walnut, the only tavern around known for its Blisterbeer, a drink made from hazelnuts and hot peppers.

THE BLISTERED WALNUT

As the characters enter the tavern, read:

As you open the door, a faint smell drifts out. It carries the usual hints of tobacco smoke and brown liquor, but also of a broad array of spices. Inside, you see low cushions arranged to form benches surrounding long, low tables. Here and there, robed humanoids lounged on the couches or smoked from great twisting glass phials. In the corner, an enormous grey-skinned man sat alone, reading a book and absent-mindedly running his hands through his thick mop of pink hair.

Characters can also approach the bar, where the owner of the Walnut, a half ogre named Grugruk, will shove a tray with two mugs of thick, brown beer that burns the characters' noses and points them at the firbolg, identifying him as the wizard.



Filbrend greets the approaching characters warmly, and extra warmly if they're bringing his drink. Otherwise, Grugruk appears with the drinks almost immediately. Filbrend insists they cannot get down to business until someone shares a drink with him. A character that drinks the blisterbeer make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw. On a success, describe how their mouth fills with a burning fire like they've never experienced, but that it somehow enhances the flavor of the rich, brown beer. On a failed save, they pass out for one minute. Either way, Filbrend laughs and sets a Potion of Healing on the table. If his opponent passed out, he waits for them to awaken; then read or paraphrase

"I believe," begins the firbolg, his soft voice belying his giant heritage, "That we can harness the magic of the forest to send messages quickly. Sending and message are useful, but a written message can convey information that a verbal one cannot."

He pauses, and you notice that another enormous mug of blisterbeer has appeared at his shaggy hand. He takes a long drink and continues, "I believe that the heartwood of a forest elder might contain enough magic to make such an item, but harvesting it will not be easy. You must use no fire or necrotic magic during the fight; the traces of those magics in the weave near the heartwood will corrupt its essence. Once the forest elder is dead, you can pry its heartwood out with this."

From within his robes, he pulls a grotesque-shaped object that appears to be half crowbar and half dagger, handing it to you.

As a reward for the bringing him a heart Filbrend offers 10 gp per character. He promises an additional 10 gp if they return the heart uncorrupted. Filbrend has no further information to share with the characters, and shoos them away if they continue to pester him, reminding them that there are forest elders with hearts to harvest.

FINDING THE FOREST ELDERS

Filbrend gave very poor directions for finding the forest elders, so the characters will need to make their own way. Have one character in the party make a DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) check. Unless the character is proficient with Survival, make this check at Disadvantage. On a successful check, they find their way to the forest elders and progress to Part 2. On a failed check, roll a d4 (reroll duplicates) and consult the table below to see what random encounter they have.

d4	Random Encounter
1	You stumble upon a cache of supplies that contains a jar with 1d4-1 charges of Keoghtoom's Ointment, 1d4-1 Potions of Healing, and a Potion of Fire Breath.
2	1d3 jaculis attack. Characters will a passive perception below 11 are surprised.
3	An enormous fallen tree blocks the path and you must turn back.
4	2d4+1 giant wasps emerge from a nest you accidentally step in and attack

After four failures, the characters must long rest or risk a level of exhaustion, and they locate the forest elders on their first attempt the next morning (no check needed).

PART 2 - THE HEART OF THE FOREST

As you reveal the map to players, read:

The foliage parts and you see an enormous, pulsating tree with a furious face formed in its bark. Standing in front of it, a bristle-haired bugbear gestures to two other bugbears holding drawn longbows. "Interlopers," the bugbear shouts, "You'll not have the heart! Turn back" Behind him, the tree glows a bright purple and teal.

At this point, have all characters roll an insight check. Any character who rolls above a 12 is not surprised in the upcoming combat. Then read or paraphrase:

"No," the tree's thundering voice interrupt's the bugbear, "Let them come. I warned that wizard that his insolence would get innocents killed, and he must learn. Kill them."

BATTLING THE FIST AND THE HEART

The two bugbears with bows use the Scout statblock. Strike uses the Druid statblock, except he has the following spells prepared from the druid spell list:

- Cantrips (at will): *Druidcraft*, *Shillelagh*, *Thorn Whip*
- 1st Level (4 slots): *Entangle*, *Ice Knife*, *Snare*, *Thunderwave*
- 2nd Level (3 slots): *Moonbeam*, *Spike Growth*

For each failed survival check before the characters found their way to the clearing, Strike will have cast Snare somewhere on the map (your choice). Strike recasts Snare in the same spots when the spell expires until the characters show up, so if the characters fail four survival checks, he may have no first level spell slots available to fight them.

1 - THE FOREST ELDER

The forest elder from whom the heartwood must be harvested has rooted here. It cannot move, but it liberally hurls boulders and uses its Slam attack on any creature who comes near. It curses frequently in Sylvan, and will only identify itself as "Old Oak" if asked by the players.

2 - THE CLEARING ENTRANCE

Characters enter the clearing of the forest elder from this vantage point. The entrance provides only a partial view of the clearing until the characters have fully entered it, leaving Strike the opportunity to surprise them. This is also a possible spot for Strike to cast Snare.

3 - STRIKE'S VANTAGE

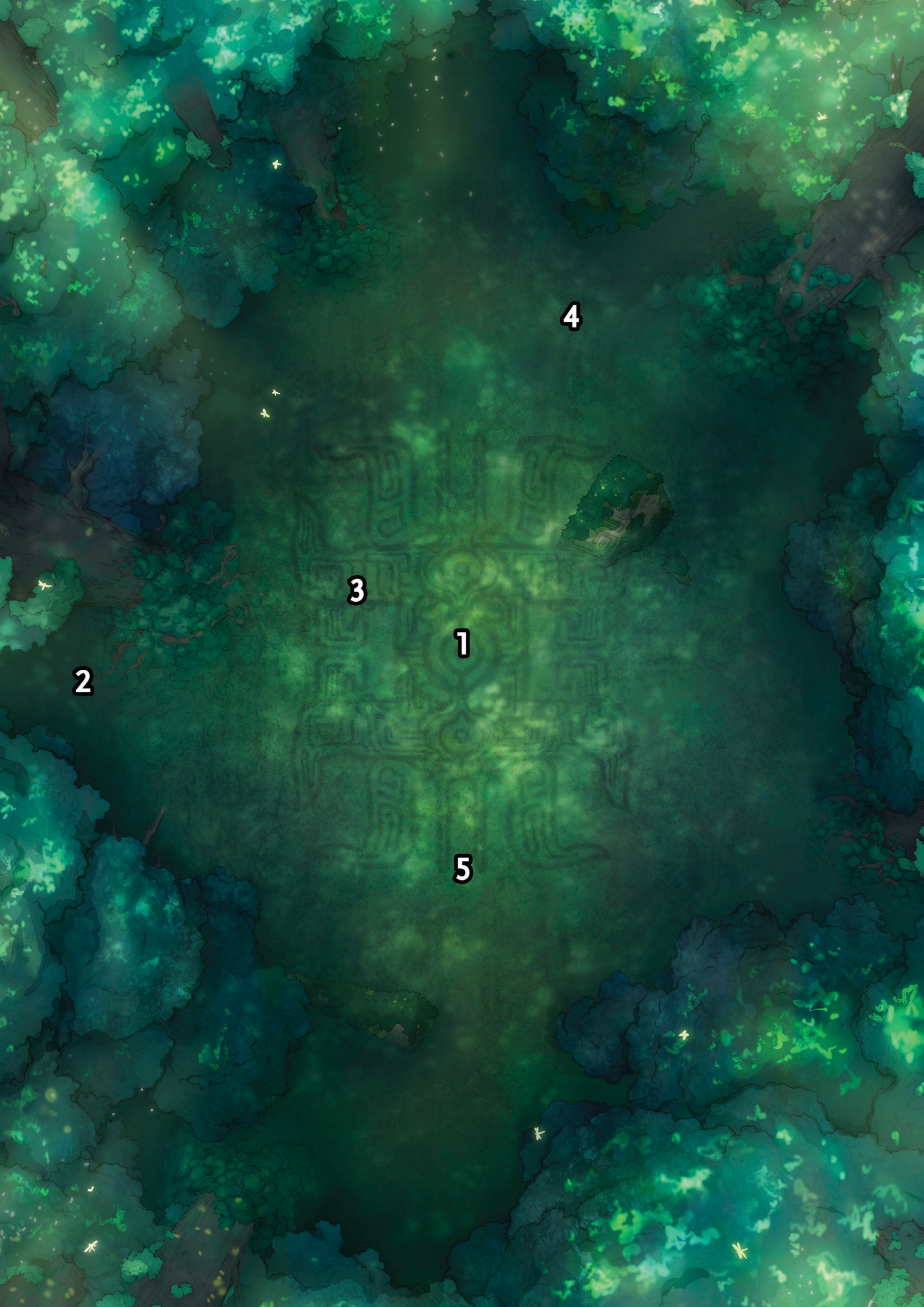
Strike stands here until a character gets close enough, at which point he will attack with Thorn Whip and Shillelagh with devastating efficiency. He is unafraid to get his hands dirty in combat and prefers to be in melee as much as possible. Strike may also favor placing Snare near where he plans to stand so that he can drag enemies into the Snare with Thorn Whip.

4 - NORTHERN ARCHER'S ROOST

Each of Strike's scout companions in the Fist of the Elderwood has built a small tower from branches and woven leaves they stand on to fire at the characters entering the clearing from the distance. Strike may also favor placing Snare near the roosts.

5 - SOUTHERN ARCHER'S ROOST

Each of Strike's scout companions in the Fist of the Elderwood has built a small tower from branches and woven leaves they stand on to fire at the characters entering the clearing from the distance. Strike may also favor placing Snare near the roosts.



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HARVESTING THE HEARTWOOD

When the Heart of the Forest dies, read:

With a thunderous crack, the enormous tree splits up the middle. The clearing is momentarily plunged into darkness as the gash in the Heart of the Forest absorbs all of the ambient light. As your vision clears, you see a black thread of wood twisting up the very middle of the ancient tree.

Any members of the Fist of the Elderwood retreat as soon as the tree dies, dropping their weapons and fleeing into the forest. Harvesting the heartwood from the forest elder using the tool Filbrend provided requires no skill check; however, if any of the characters used fire or necrotic damage, explain how the heartwood splinters a bit and seems to break apart under the effort of harvesting it.

PART 3 - RETURNING TO FILBREND

When the characters return to Filbrend, if they bring him an intact sample (that is, one undamaged by fire or necrotic damage), he tells the characters to return in a few days and he will have a surprise for each of them; he calls them Envelopes of Expeditious Delivery, and he feels certain the characters will appreciate them.

If the characters bring him a damaged sample, he expresses disappointment and offers them only one Envelope, which they will have to wait a full tendar for, during which time he encourages them to perhaps go out and find another forest elder and try again.

ENVELOPE OF EXPEDITIOUS DELIVERY

Wondrous Item, Uncommon

This worn envelope is 5 by 10 inches and can be used to contain a letter or object that weighs no more than 3 ounces. As an action you can write the name of a creature on the envelope, causing it to teleport to that creature. The envelope can distinguish between two individuals with the same name and understands the sender's intent.

Once the receiver opens the envelope, the name fades from it and the envelope can't be used again until the next dawn.

If the weight exceeds 3 ounces, the envelope is unable to properly shut or the receiver is on a different plane of existence than the sender, the name automatically fades and the teleportation is wasted.

