

# GAME MASTERY!

## Gorge of the Dead Druid

MINI  
ADVENTURE  
INSIDE

### COMPLEAT ENCOUNTER

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# Grove of the Mad Druid

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Any Setting • Mid-Level (7th–9th) • Temperate Forest

Grasker wasn't always insane, but he was never quite like the druids of the Circle of the Pine. As with many druidic orders, the Circle of the Pine dedicated itself to the preservation of wildlands in the face of encroaching civilization. Yet their methods were not violent or stubborn; rather, they served as ambassadors for the natural world, approaching and meeting with colonists, loggers, miners, and settlers who sought to settle within any region under the Circle's protection.

Grasker, on the other hand, has visions of an entire woodland transformed into a haven for the rot and decay of the natural world, and has developed two new methods for spreading and maintaining his beloved compost—the compost golem and the *staff of decay*. With these tools, Grasker has seeded the woodland with rot, and hopes to someday transform the entire forest into a new form of nature.

This Compleat Encounter uses the information found on the maps and data cards in this set to create a mini-adventure. The cards include information and game rules for the mad druid Grasker, his animal companion Eyesnatcher, his carrion golem minion, a magic item (the *staff of decay*), and a new spell (*spiritual menhir*) that Grasker has developed. See Card 4 for tips on how to scale this encounter to a variety of character levels.

Although the miniatures, maps, and plots in this Compleat Encounter can be used with any fantasy roleplaying game, the rules included herein are compatible with the Open Game Licensed version of the world's most popular RPG. You can download a copy of these rules at [dzosrd.org](http://dzosrd.org).

## USING THIS COMPLEAT ENCOUNTER

This encounter takes place in a temperate forest. The location can be deep in the woodland far from civilization, or only a short journey from a major trade road or settlement, as you desire. Grasker's presence in the area is relatively subtle, but left to his own devices he can quickly become a major menace to the surrounding region.

While the PCs could simply stumble across the mad druid's grove by accident as they explore any large temperate forested area, they may also be hired to seek it out. The sudden manifestation of strange zones of rot in the woodlands have become a point of concern for local druids, especially since they seem to be engendered by some form of warped druidic magic. Close study of the range and location of these rotten areas indicates that there may be a sort of “epicenter” for the activity, a rarely traveled region of woods that they might hire the PCs to explore.

## GROVE OF THE MAD DRUID ENCOUNTER KEY

The grove of the mad druid is located within a dense forest. A narrow trail leads into the area, although this trail doesn't necessarily need to lead from anywhere in particular, since it's in fact a lure of sorts created by Grasker to lead intruders along a path of traps he's created. The regions surrounding the four cards are dense forest (with the exception of the trail leading away from the grove); characters who move off the cards in these directions must contend with the thick undergrowth.

The map cards are double-sided; one side shows the grove as it initially appears to a visitor. As the grove's



secrets, traps, and hidden areas are revealed, flip the cards over so the PCs can keep track of them.

## GENERAL TRAITS

With the exception of the path and the two indoor areas (inside the compost heap and inside the tree), the ground in this clearing is treated as difficult terrain. Creatures with woodland stride can pass through this difficult terrain with ease.

## I. OVERGROWN PATH (CL 8+)

The forest opens into a roughly rectangular clearing that allows the sunlight to reach the forest floor. One side of the clearing is dominated by a fifteen-foot-high mound of compost and rotting organic matter. A cloying stink wafts off the mountain of decaying plants, dead animals, and other, less identifiable objects. About twenty feet from the mound, the burnt-out shell of a once enormous tree juts from the ground. The stump is still fairly massive, its jagged crown rising thirty feet into the sky. Balconies built into the sides of the immense stump and the thin

trail of smoke trickling from a vent in the top indicate that someone dwells within. A five-foot-wide path winds around the compost heap and up to a wooden door set in the dead tree's base. The terrain surrounding the path is a tangled mess of low undergrowth and twisted roots.

**Traps:** Grasker is a very skilled trapmaker, and he has made sure that the easiest route to his home is well protected by traps. Characters who stray from the path quickly find the tangled undergrowth hinders their movement, but doing so is probably the safest way to reach the druid's home.

Grasker's traps range from the simple (a trap created by a *snare* spell and a simple spiked pit covered with cleverly hidden dirt-covered branches and packed mud) to the complex. Near his home, the druid has rigged a pair of logs to come swinging down from the branches of the trees above to crush anyone who walks between these trees. Nearby, a large branch fitted with numerous ironwood spikes is rigged to scythe down at anyone who approaches too closely; these spikes are coated with giant wasp venom.

The most insidious (although not the most deadly) trap is a variation of a simple snake pit. This 40-foot deep camouflaged pit trap contains a net at a depth of about 35 feet. Characters who fall into this pit suffer only 2d3 nonlethal damage as they land in this net, but are immediately entangled. Worse, the fibers of the net are coated with carrion crawler brain juice; each round the victim remains in contact with the net, he must make a DC 13 Fortitude save to avoid becoming paralyzed for 2d4 rounds. After one minute of struggle, the poison on the net is effectively rubbed away and must be reapplied. Finally, an angry Medium viper dwells at the bottom of

the pit, and it immediately begins biting anything that becomes caught in the net.

**Snare:** CR 4; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (*snare*, 11th-level druid, 1d6 damage plus entangle, DC 23 Escape Artist or Strength check to escape); Search DC 23; Disable Device DC 28.

**Spiked Pit:** CR 5; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; DC 25 Reflex save avoids; 40 ft. deep (4d6, fall); pit spikes (Atk +10 melee, 1d4 spikes per target for 1d4+4 each); Search DC 21; Disable Device DC 20.

**Snake Pit:** CR 5; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; DC 25 Reflex save avoids; 40 ft. deep (2d3 nonlethal, net); net coated with contact poison (DC 20 Escape Artist or DC 25 Strength check to escape); poison (carrion crawler brain juice, DC 13 Fortitude save resists, paralysis); Medium viper (hp 9; MM 280); Search DC 21; Disable Device DC 20.

**Poison-Spiked Branch:** CR 8; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; Atk +16 melee (2d6+10 plus poison); poison (giant wasp poison, DC 18 Fortitude save resists, 1d6 Dex/1d6 Dex); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 25.

**Deadfall:** CR 8; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; Atk +22 melee (8d6, crushing logs); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 25.



## 2. COMPOST HEAP (EL 9)

The stench of rotten plant and animal matter here is almost overpowering. The remains of dozens of various animal and humanoid species can be seen decaying within the gigantic mound of rot, feces, and flesh.

The carrion mound itself is not quite natural; it is in fact a hollow dome. Creatures can move around on the mound, although doing so requires a DC 10 Climb check to navigate the steep sides. Only in the four central squares along the mound's top are Climb checks unnecessary, although the terrain here is still considered to be difficult. The walls of the carrion dome are only a foot thick, and are infused with magic that grants them a limited form of animation. Access to the inside of the mound is possible by damaging and destroying sections of the wall, but it can also be simply pulled apart with a DC 15 Strength check (made as a move action), similar to the way that someone can pull open a heavy set of curtains. Sections of the wall opened in this manner remain open for one round before closing. The interior of the compost heap is filthy with disease, and any wounded character who enters this area is immediately exposed to filth fever.

**Creature:** Grasker's greatest creation, the carrion golem, dwells inside of the large compost mound. This guardian creature may have no will or mind of its own, but it follows orders from its master to perfection, and waits only upon a signal from the mad druid or his animal companion before emerging from the mound to defend the grove.

**Carrion Golem:** hp 86, see card 8.

**Treasure:** Grasker keeps what little treasure he has in a hidden chamber beneath the compost heap that can be found with a DC 20 Search check. Inside is 2,340 gp, 420 pp, a gold necklace adorned with teardrop-shaped pieces of jade worth 3,400 gp, a masterwork scimitar, a mithral spyglass worth 2,500 gp, seven +2 *shocking burst arrows*, and a +1 *dwarf bane short sword*. In addition, the unfortunate dead horse the carrion golem dragged into the compost heap still wears a set of *horseshoes of a zephyr*.

## 3. DEAD TREE (EL 11)

The interior of this stump has been fashioned into a crude living area. In one corner a dirty heap of furs appears to be some sort of nest. Piles of rotting organic matter dot the floor, making the atmosphere inside almost poisonous. On opposite sides of the chamber, two ladders extend up to a pair of balconies ten feet above the floor.

The enormous tree stump itself has been converted into a home; a single 20-foot-tall chamber comprises the stump's interior. There are three entrances into this structure; one door at ground level and two balcony windows, each at a height of 12 feet off the ground.

**Creatures:** Grasker dwells within the dead tree, where he passes the time researching the nature of decay and the life born from it, sleeping, or tinkering with the design of his carrion golem. His animal companion is a condor named Eyesnatcher. This keen-eyed bird spends most of its time perched on the upper branches of trees in the area, or in the upper reaches of the tree home. If he spots anyone entering the grove, he immediately swoops down to Grasker to alert the druid to the intruders.

**Grasker:** hp 71; see card 6.

**Tactics:** As soon as Grasker realizes his grove is being trespassed upon, he cracks open the door and casts *spiritual menhir* (see card 10) fifteen feet away. He then uses the menhir to scout out the area, moving it in 30-foot jumps to observe the intruders. One of his first actions is to move the menhir over to the compost heap and call upon the carrion golem to defend the grove. The golem can take 10 on its Strength check to emerge from the heap, and immediately charges the nearest intruder. Grasker aids the golem by casting spells from the menhir, beginning with *flame strike* and following up with *ice storm*, *entangle*, and *produce flame*. If the PCs seem about to destroy the menhir (or once he's finished casting these spells) he tries to maneuver the menhir into a location where he can detonate it and damage the most PCs.



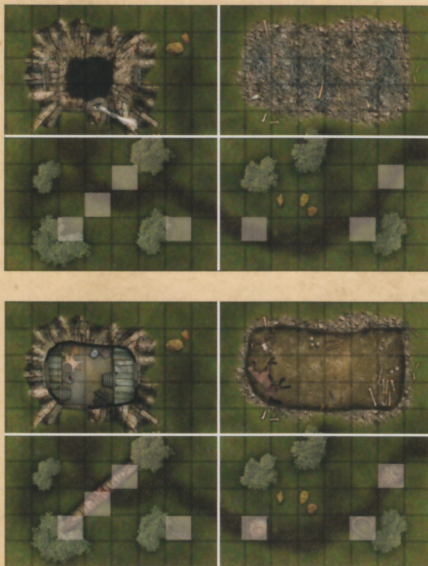
Once it looks like the PCs are nearing his lair, Grasker begins casting his defensive spells, doing so in this order: *stoneskin*, *air walk*, extended *barkskin*, *protection from energy*, *bear's endurance*, *bull's strength*, *cat's grace*, *resist energy*, and *longstrider*, giving the PCs nine rounds to finish dealing with the carrion golem and the traps. If they find Grasker's location before he finishes these spells, he casts *antilife shell* to prevent melee attacks.

If he's able to cast all of his defensive spells, Grasker then wild shapes into a dire bear, squeezes through his home's door, and charges the PCs. Grasker reverts to human form to heal himself if brought below 30 hit points, and then continues the fight using his remaining spells. The mad druid is too fanatic to ever consider surrender; the only way the PCs can take him alive is to use magic or knock him unconscious.

## CONCLUDING THE ENCOUNTER

If Grasker and his carrion golem are defeated, the mad druid's grove quickly returns to the natural order of things. The compost heap collapses in on itself in a matter of minutes and is reclaimed by the woodland in

a few months. Grasker's home may become the lair of a new hermit or loner (or could even be claimed by one of the PCs), but chances are good the new dweller in the grove will be much less antagonistic. If Grasker is captured alive, the Circle of the Pine soon learns about it and steps in to try to redeem the mad druid.



Trapped Square

## SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

In place of the guardians listed in the area descriptions, the grove of the mad druid can feature different mixes of monsters to accommodate different party levels.

**Beginning Parties (Levels 1–4):** Make Grasker a 5th-level druid; remove all of the traps save for the snare. Replace the carrion golem with a 1st-level druid bugbear or ogre apprentice of Grasker.

**Low-Level Parties (Levels 5–8):** Make Grasker an 8th-level druid, and replace the carrion golem with a flesh golem. Make the surrounding terrain not difficult, and consider removing one or two of the traps.

**High-Level Parties (Levels 13–16):** Make Grasker a 16th-level druid, and advance the carrion golem to Huge size with 25–30 Hit Dice. Consider enhancing the traps with additional poison or druidic spells.

**Heroic Parties (Levels 17–20):** Grasker is now a 20th-level druid. He should have multiple carrion golem minions, along with a Gargantuan or even Colossal carrion golem minion. Traps become fairly meaningless at this level, so remove them to make the encounter flow more smoothly. Eyesnatcher should be come a roc (although he should remain condorlike in appearance).

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## GRASKER, THE MAD DRUID

Grasker is a short human dressed in a ragged tunic and cloak, and carrying a long wooden staff topped with an animal skull. His tall, spiky hair and wild expression indicate complete insanity, an impression backed up by the overpowering stench of carrion that surrounds him.

Grasker was born to a family of hunters who dwelt in a large town, and as he grew, he became obsessed with the great composting fields created by the Circle of the Pine for nearby settlements. Grasker couldn't help but see how life spawned in these heaps of rotting garbage intended to be a natural method of waste disposal. Was not the carrion of society a manifestation of some new order of nature?

Grasker developed several singularly repulsive habits. Eventually his penchant for sleeping in the compost heaps, feasting upon rotting flesh and plant matter, and befriending the festering scavengers of the city became public knowledge after he brutally defended an old compost heap from an attempt to burn and renew it by the locals. Following this, he was forced to flee his hometown.

### GRASKER

Male human druid 11

CN Medium humanoid

**Init** +1; **Senses** Listen +11, Spot +16

**Languages** Common, Druidic

**AC** 12, touch 12, flat-footed 10

**hp** 71 (11 HD)

**Immune** poison

**Fort** +9, **Ref** +5, **Will** +11

**Spd** 30 ft.

**Melee** *staff of decay* +10/+5 (1d6+2)

**Base Atk** +8; **Grp** +9

**Special Atk** wild shape 4/day (Tiny to Large)

**Combat Gear** *wand of produce flame* (CL 5, 14 charges),  
*potion of cure moderate wounds* (2)

**Spells Prepared** (CL 11th, +10 ranged touch):

6th—*antilife shell*

5th—*spiritual menhir*, *stoneskin*

4th—*air walk*, *extended call lightning* (DC 17), *flame strike* (DC 18), *ice storm*

3rd—*extended barkskin*, *contagion* (DC 17), *cure moderate wounds*, *poison* (DC 17), *protection from energy*

2nd—*bear's endurance*, *bull's strength*, *cat's grace*, *resist energy*, *warp wood* (DC 16)

1st—*cure light wounds* (2), *entangle* (DC 15), *faerie fire*, *longstrider*, *produce flame*

0—*create water*, *cure minor wounds* (2), *light*,  
*resistance* (2)

**Abilities** Str 12, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 18, Cha 8

**SQ** animal companion, nature sense, resist nature's lure, trackless step, wild empathy +12, woodland stride

**Feats** Craft Construct, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wondrous Item, Extend Spell, Great Fortitude

CR 11

**Skills** Concentration +16, Craft (trapmaking) +14, Handle Animal +11, Heal +11, Knowledge (nature) +11, Listen +11, Ride +4, Spot +16, Survival +13 (+15 above ground)  
**Possessions** combat gear, *staff of decay* (see card 10), *periapt of Wisdom* +2, diamond dust (1,500 gp)  
**Eyesnatcher, condor animal companion:** hp 38; MM 272 (eagle).









## CARRION GOLEM

### Medium Construct

**Hit Dice:** 12d10+20 (86 hp)

**Initiative:** -1

**Speed:** 20 ft. (4 squares)

**Armor Class:** 25 (-1 Dex, +16 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 25

**Base Attack/Grapple:** +9/+15

**Attack:** Slam +15 melee (2d10+9)

**Full Attack:** 2 slams +15 melee (2d10+9)

**Space/Reach:** 5 ft./5 ft.

**Special Attacks:** stench

**Special Qualities:** absorb carcass, construct traits, damage reduction 5/adamantine, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to magic, low-light vision

**Saves:** Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +4

**Abilities:** Str 23, Dex 9, Con —, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 1

**Environment:** Any

**Organization:** Solitary or gang (2-4)

**Challenge Rating:** 9

**Treasure:** None

**Alignment:** Always neutral

**Advancement:** 11-20 HD (Large), 21-30 HD (Huge), 31-40 HD (Gargantuan), 41+ HD (Colossal)

**Level Adjustment:** —

*The lumbering behemoth rises wetly from the heap of carrion. Its body is offensively humanoid, crafted from the cast-off ruins of slaughterhouses, compost heaps, and graveyards. The rotting plant and animal matter is held together by thick strips of moldy rope, wood, and crude stitching of coarse black twine.*

A creation of druids who have forsaken healthy nature for its darker aspects, a compost golem wears whatever clothing its creator desires, usually little more than a tattered loincloth. It stands 8 feet tall and weighs 750 pounds.

Although a carrion golem cannot speak, it can emit guttural, slobbery roars.

## COMBAT

A carrion golem is a brutal foe in combat, thundering into the midst of the enemy to deliver punishing blows with its fists.

**Absorb Carcass (Su):** A carrion golem can take a full-round action to draw any carcass of any Small or Medium creature within its reach into its body—doing so heals the carrion golem of 5 hit points for every Hit Die the absorbed creature possessed in life.

**Immunity to Magic (Ex):** A carrion golem is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance. In addition, certain spells and effects function differently against the creature, as noted below.

A magical attack that deals cold damage slows a carrion golem (as the *slow* spell) for 2d4 rounds, with no saving throw.

*Gentle repose* grants a carrion golem fast healing 20 for four rounds.

*Warp wood* and *wood shape* both inflict 3d6 points of damage +1 per caster level, with no saving throw.

*Repel wood* inflicts 10d6 points of damage to a carrion golem, with no saving throw.

**Stench (Ex):** Living creatures within 10 feet of a carrion golem must succeed on a DC 16 Fortitude save or be nauseated for one round by the golem's hideous odor. The save DC is Charisma-based.









## SPIRITUAL MENHIR

Conjuration (Creation)

Level: Druid 5

Components: V, S, DF

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

Effect: One 5-foot-tall stone menhir

Duration: 1 minute/level (D)

Saving Throw: Reflex half; see text

Spell Resistance: No

This spell causes a 5-foot-tall stone menhir to rise up from the ground. If you desire, you can forge a link between your own mind and the menhir. You can see and hear through the menhir as if you were standing where it is, and during your turn you can switch from using its senses to using your own, or back again, as a free action. While you are using the menhir, your body is considered blinded, deafened, and helpless.

While linked to the menhir, you can cause it to sink into the ground and then re-emerge at any point within 30 feet as a move action. You can also cast spells whose range is touch or greater from the menhir, provided the level of the spell being cast is equal in level to one third of your caster level (rounded down)—thus, a 14th-level caster could cast spells of up to 4th level through a

spiritual menhir. Spells cast from the menhir originate from the menhir instead of from you. The spells affect other targets normally, despite originating from the menhir. You cannot cast any spells on the menhir itself in this manner.

You must have line of sight and line of effect to the menhir when you cast the spell, but once the spiritual menhir has been conjured, you need only remain in the spell's range.

As a standard action, you may voluntarily end the spell's duration. When you do, you can cause the menhir to softly crumble into rubble, or you can cause it to explode. An exploding spiritual menhir inflicts 6d6 points of bludgeoning damage to all creatures within a 20-foot-radius burst; a successful Reflex save halves this damage.

A *spiritual menhir* is made of stone, but it can be destroyed if enough damage is applied to it. The *spiritual menhir* has a base AC 10 (–5 Dex, –2 immobile object, +7 natural armor), and receives an enhancement bonus to its natural armor equal to your caster level. The menhir has Hardness 8 and hit points equal to your caster level  $\times 5$ , and uses your saving throws as if it were an attended object. If the menhir is destroyed, it explodes as detailed above.

## STAFF OF DECAY

A *staff of decay* appears as a long oaken staff with a cobra's body wrapped tightly around its length. A *staff of decay* functions as a +1 *quarterstaff* (only one end of the staff bears this enhancement), but wounds caused by the *staff* quickly fester and turn gangrenous. Wounds

inflicted by a *staff of decay* do not heal naturally; they must be cured by magic. A creature slain by damage caused by a *staff of decay* quickly rots away into a pile of corruption.

On a successful critical hit, a strike from a *staff of decay* also inflicts 2 points of Constitution damage.

Moderate necromancy; CL 11th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, contagion; Price 9,000 gp.











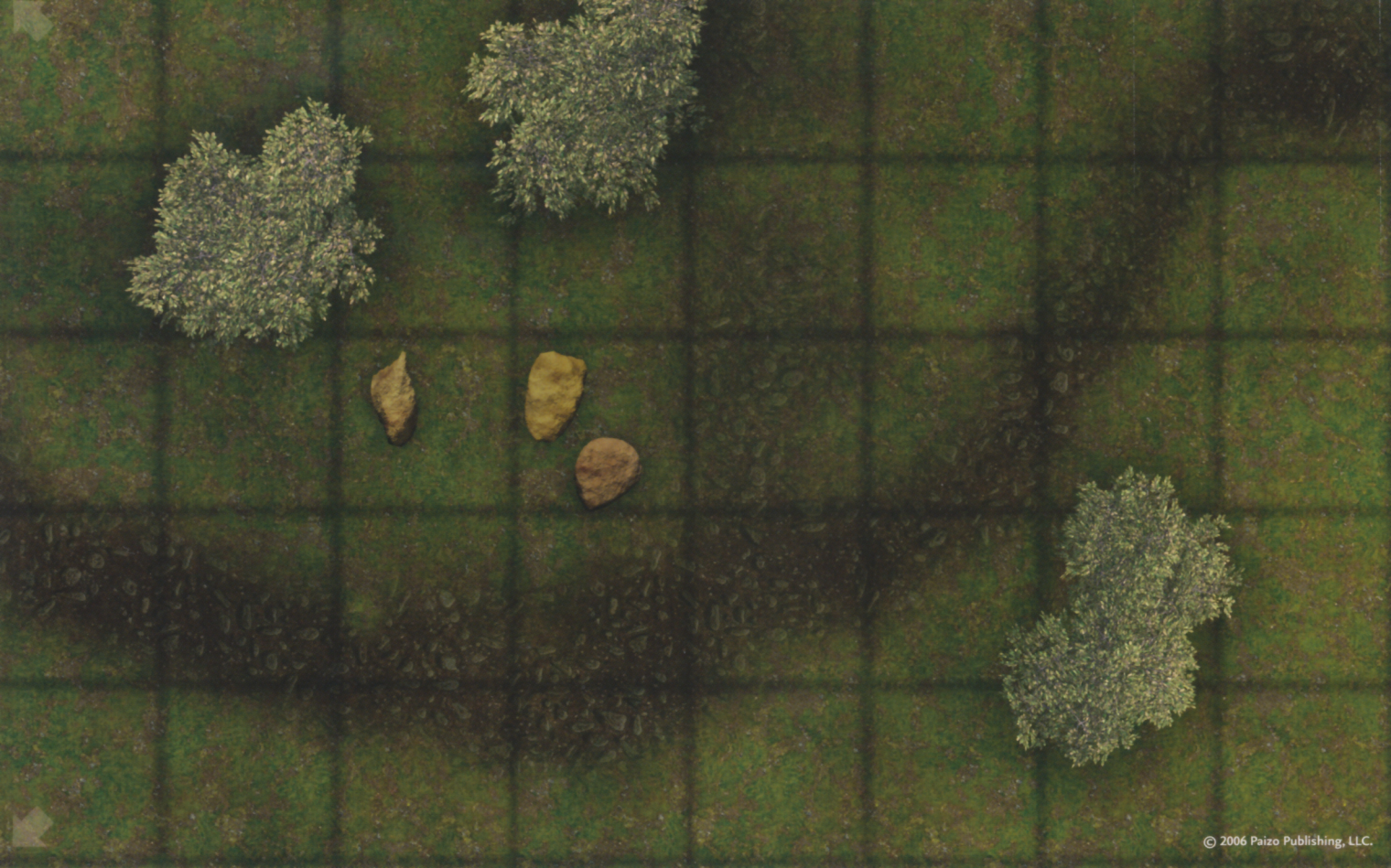
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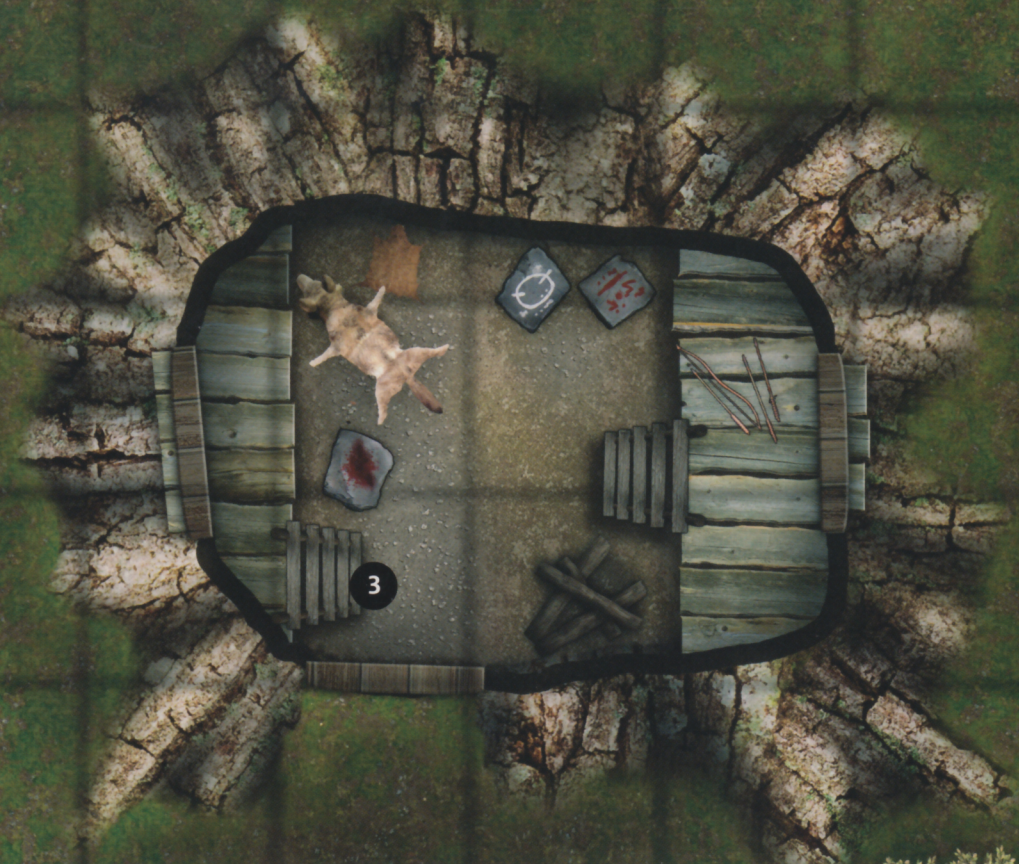


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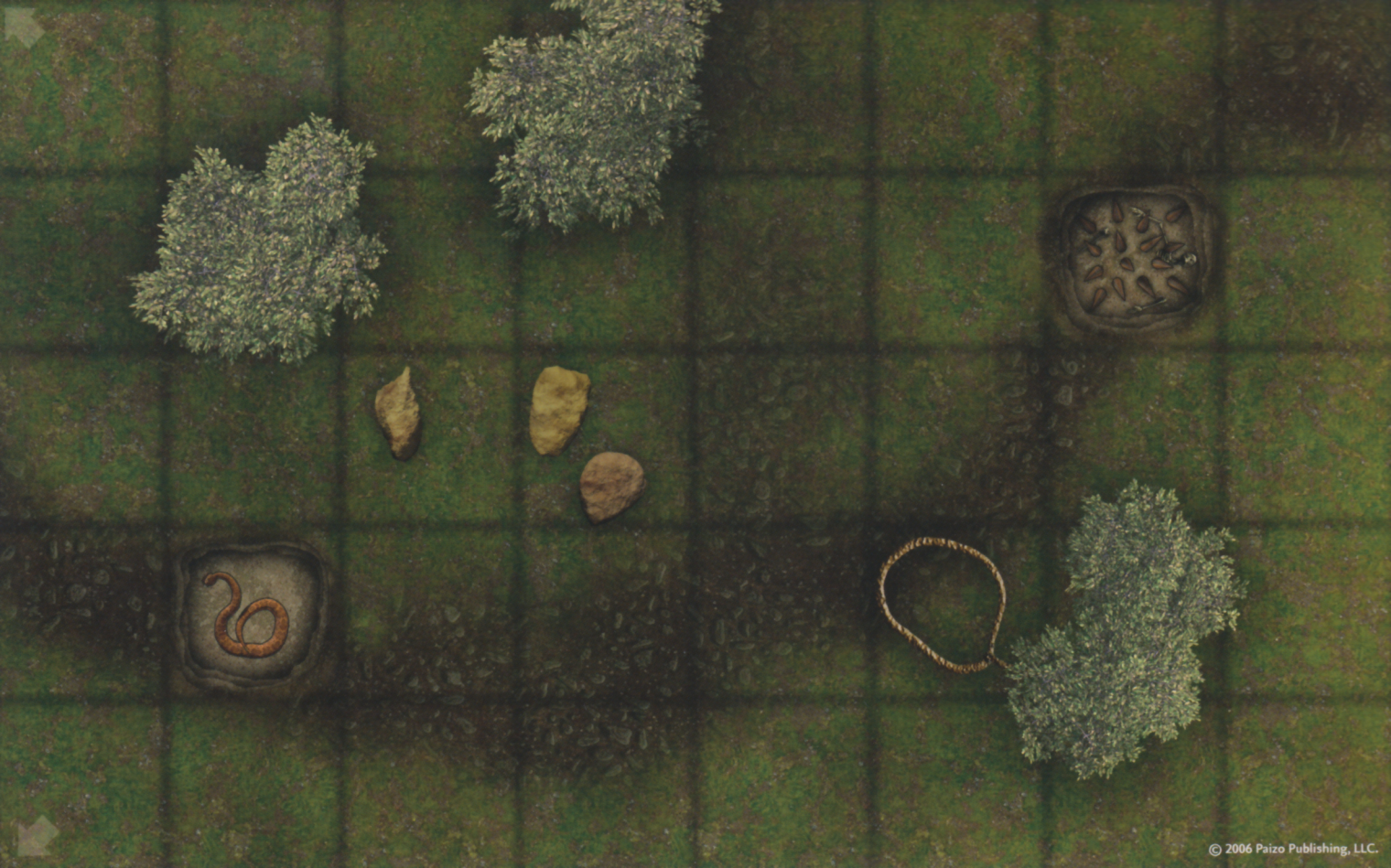






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# Grove of the Mad Druid

A 9TH-LEVEL ADVENTURE SCALEABLE TO ALL LEVELS OF PLAY

Andrew Hou, James Jacobs, Dennis Mize, Corey Macourek

Grasker has never been exactly "normal." Obsessed with the filth, decay, and corruption of the natural world, he has recently been exiled for violently defending the carrion pit that had been his home. Now withdrawn into the wilderness, he has slowly begun to transform the surrounding landscape into a perverted paradise of worms and rotting flesh. Can the PCs stop the corruption before it spreads through an entire forest?

This Compleat Encounter features three lead-free pewter miniatures suitable for use in any fantasy roleplaying game. 10 double-sided full-color cards provide a complete map of the Grove of the Mad Druid scaled for miniatures play, an adventure that uses the miniatures provided in the set, and complete statistics for the enemies and magic items encountered within. All game rules adhere to the Open Game Licensed version of the world's most popular roleplaying game.

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