

# The Plague Tree

Many are the monolithic boulders and chunks of rocky debris that tumble in orbit among the floating castles of the Tomb of the Thaalud, but not all are as they seem. For one of these careening islands of stone is actually the Plague Tree, the home of a marauding band of undead harpies and their master.

“The Plague Tree” is a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventure suitable for four 15th-level characters. This adventure works with the Forgotten Realms adventure *Anauroch: The Sundering of the World* and can be used after tactical encounter T4 when used in conjunction with that adventure. Dungeon Masters can also use this side adventure in their existing campaigns after tailoring it for them.

Within this adventure, superscripts are used to denote game elements and abbreviations indicate materials that appear in other supplements. Those supplements and their abbreviations are as follows: *Book of Vile Darkness* (BV), *Complete Warrior* (CW), *Dungeon Master's Guide* (DMG), *Magic of Faerûn* (Mag), *Monster Manual* (MM), *Monster Manual II* (MM2), *Monster Manual III* (MM3), *Player's Handbook* (PH).

## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The Plague Tree came into being from the petrified remains of an arakhor—an extraplanar, elder treant of great power—summoned by the elves of Aryvandaar into their sylvan realm in a bygone age. The few arakhors called to the Realms served as powerful guardians and wise sages to their elven summoners, and this particular arakhor fell victim to the corruption that eventually overcame Aryvandaar, becoming a potent force against the other elven kingdoms. During the Fifth

Crown War, high mages of the Elven Court overcame the arakhor and magically petrified it, leaving its stony corpse where it stood among the forests of old Thearnytaar.

Long afterward, the archwizard that became the Keeper of the Thaal stumbled upon this petrified forest-giant in a primeval woodland. A tribe of harpies



had hollowed its interior into chambers and occupied it as their aerie-fortress. When years later he used his powerful magic to steal myriad castles to place within the Tomb of the Thaalud to serve as his treasure vaults, he remembered the petrified arakhor. Slaying all of the harpies, he uprooted the tree and set it to float within his new demiplane. He animated the harpies as undead creatures to serve as guardians for the treasures of the Thaalud and placed them under the direction of a powerful necronaut that he transplanted within the base of the tree.

All proceeded as intended by the Keeper as the centuries passed, and the hollowed tree served its purpose as a treasure storehouse within the Tomb of the Thaalud. The harpies maintained their vigil while the necronaut grew too large to leave its lair in the bowels of the tree. As the dim-witted necronaut became increasingly irrelevant to day-to-day guard duty, the most powerful of the undead harpies installed itself as their tribal chief while the necronaut remained below, where it contentedly destroyed anything—harpy or intruder—that dared to breach the petrified tree's treasure chamber.

Recently, however, an intruder arrived unnoticed in the demiplane. This planar traveler, called a marrash, discovered the tree and its undead harpy inhabitants. The marrash brought the harpies under its sway by killing their tribal leader and did so without alerting the necronaut. Kizhaam the marrash recognized the value of the magic treasure that the necronaut guarded but chose to leave it alone and focus on his own plans rather than risk the powerful undead abomination's ire.

Firmly ensconced in his new floating fortress, Kizhaam has trained the undead harpies to raid the rare traveler who enters the Tomb of the Thaalud. In addition, by having the undead harpies perch upon the tree's limbs and beat their wings in unison, the marrash

#### USING MARAUDERS OF THE PLAGUE TREE

"The Plague Tree" can be used as a supplemental encounter area with the FORGOTTEN REALMS adventure *Anauroch: The Sundering of the World*. This encounter takes place as the PCs explore the Tomb of the Thaalud in Chapter 4 of the adventure and occurs immediately following the recovery of the *Chalice of Amaunator* in tactical encounter T4. The PCs are still in Askilion's Tower when the initial encounter occurs. Feel free to allow a few moments for the party to rest and recover hit points before proceeding with the encounter, but do not allow them to actually leave the ruined fortress of Askilion's Tower before springing the arrival of the Plague Tree on them.

## CREDITS

<b>Design:</b>	Greg A. Vaughan
<b>Editing:</b>	Miranda Horner
<b>Cartography:</b>	Kyle S. Hunter
<b>Interior Art:</b>	Jeff Johnson
<b>Design Manager:</b>	Christopher Perkins
<b>Managing Editor:</b>	Kim Mohan
<b>Art Director:</b>	Stacy Longstreet
<b>Director of RPG R&amp;D:</b>	Bill Slavicsek
<b>Web Production:</b>	Chris Thomasson
<b>Web Development:</b>	Mark A. Jindra

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can guide the tree in its floating course through the air of the tomb. His goal when doing this is to plunder the smaller floating fortresses that are not so well guarded. The harpies continue to follow him both due to his martial prowess and the fact that he has never tried to steal the treasure they guard or asked them to violate the Keeper's original. Though it is bound to happen soon, the Keeper of the Thaal has not yet noticed these minor depredations within his realm.

In the course of his activities in the tomb, Kizhaam also captured a mindless undead creature called a plague spewer and trapped it in the lower areas of the petrified tree. The disease-breeding marrash hit upon an idea with the plague spewer under his control. The marrash now has the plague spewer fermenting a new strain of the marrash filth disease combined with the creature's own inherent plague and is arming his harpy-wight servitors with plague-ridden arrows. He plans, when the time is right, to have the harpies maneuver the floating tree out through one of the Keeper's many spontaneous *gates*. Once free, he wants to set up his own band of plague-spreading raiders to prey upon Faerûnian caravan, using the petrified tree as his base of operations. He knows he'll eventually have to figure out some way to deal with the unknowing necronaut, but for now he just leaves it alone, trapped as it is in the bowels of the tree.

## ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

In "The Plague Tree," the party finds itself attacked by unusual undead harpies. After they defeat the initial group, they can enter the Plague Tree, the source of the attack, and deal with its denizens. If they persist, they eventually face the marrash Kizhaam, a plague spewer, and possibly even the necronaut.

## COMING OF THE PLAGUE TREE (EL 16)

As mentioned above, this encounter occurs while the PCs are still in Askilion's Tower after having recovered the *Chalice of Amaunator*. The undead harpy scouts of Kizhaam spotted the PCs as they entered the Tomb of the Thaalud and entered Askilion's Tower. At his direction, they have manned their perches on the tree's petrified limbs and flapped their wings to guide the Plague Tree over to Askilion's Tower. The marauders of the Plague Tree have arrived, and the PCs are their next victims.

When the PCs are ready leave the area after getting the chalice, read the following:

*The magic chalice firmly in hand, you prepare to leave the crumbling edifice that once sheltered it. However, the grayish light that suffuses the massive vault is suddenly dimmed by a shadow. In this murky twilight a strange sound comes to you—the sound of discordant drumming, like a heavy rain falling on the pile of tumbled stones outside. After this, the softer pattering of thousands of tiny feet and a growing, barely audible squealing comes to your ears. A noxious odor of filth and death suddenly permeates the entire tower.*

While the PCs were in Askilion's Tower, the plague harpies positioned the Plague Tree directly above it, with its lower roots only 20 feet above the topmost turret of the tower. After leaving the tree floating in place, Kizhaam's group of marauders swoops in to attack.

**Tactical Encounter:** Coming of the Plague Tree (page 8).

**Development:** After ordering the Plague Tree into position above Askilion's Tower, Kizhaam returned to his forge to continue his work, assuming his harpy marauders would have an easy time of destroying any survivors in the tower. As a result, the Plague Tree floats in place next to the tower for 10 minutes before Kizhaam realizes something is amiss and emerges to investigate. This gives the PCs plenty of time to destroy the initial wave of harpy marauders and enter the Plague Tree for a little raid of their own.

## STRUCTURE OF THE PLAGUE TREE

As mentioned, the Plague Tree was created from the petrified body of a type of elder treant called an arakhor. Before being slain and reanimated by the Keeper of the Thaal, the harpies had discovered the tree and hollowed out much of its interior to create chambers and six different levels. Now in the Tomb of the Thaalud, the tree floats freely in a nearly vertical position—only about 3 degrees off vertical (not enough to create higher ground combat bonuses for creatures on the higher side).

The thick base of the tree is capped by a mass of stony roots that extend downward 80 feet and stretch outward a total of 160 feet in diameter from where the tree was torn from the ground whole. The tree itself stands 160 feet high from its base to the top where its trunk has broken off in a ragged stump. Limbs protrude from the trunk at intervals where shown on the map, and numerous broken stumps exist where other limbs have broken off over the years, creating a rough surface conducive to climbing.

**Walls, Floors, Ceilings:** The trunk, inner walls, floors, and ceilings of the Plague Tree are all made from

# Plague Tree

1st Level

North



10 feet

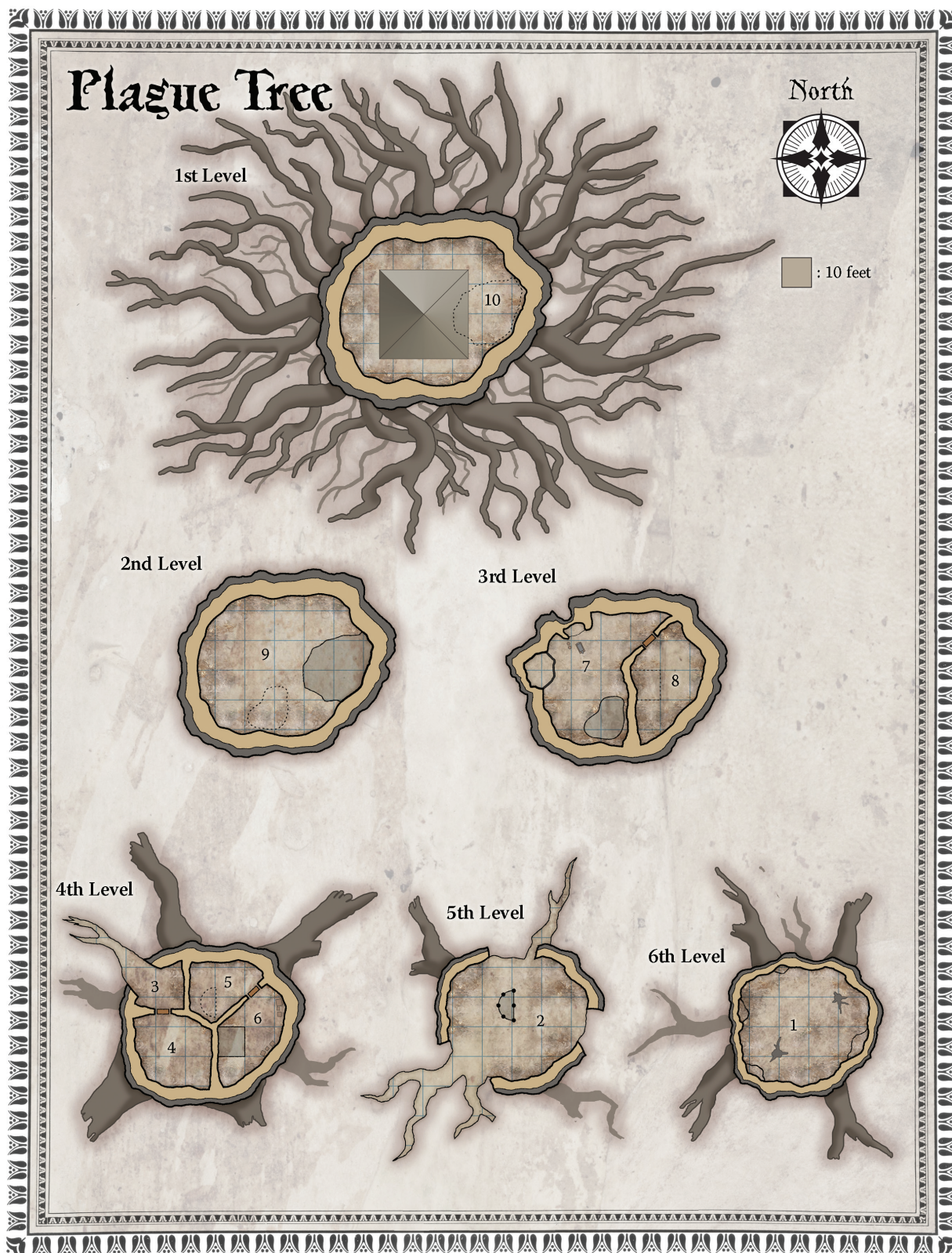
2nd Level

3rd Level

4th Level

5th Level

6th Level





stone carved directly from the arakhor's petrified body. The exterior of the trunk ranges from 2 to 15 feet thick. Interior walls and floors are 2 feet thick. The different levels of the tree are connected by holes that have been smashed through the flooring to create easy access for winged creatures such as the harpies.

**Walls, Floors, and Ceilings:** 2–15 feet thick; AC 6; hardness 8; hp 180 per foot of thickness; break DC 50 per 3 feet of thickness; Climb DC 22 (interior) or DC 15 (exterior).

**Ceiling Height:** Ceilings are typically 20 feet high unless otherwise mentioned.

**Doors:** The doors within the Plague Tree are crudely constructed from ancient wood that has dried and hardened to an almost stony texture. They are 8 feet tall and are 3 feet wide. They do not have locks or bars.

**Walls, Floors, and Ceilings:** 2 feet thick; AC 6; hardness 5; hp 20; break DC 23.

**Illumination:** Unless otherwise noted, there are no light sources within the Plague Tree.

## P1. Harpy Aerie

*The top of this great petrified tree ends at a jagged stump where the upper reaches broke away long ago. Revealed by this break is a hollow 20 feet deep and floored in stone carved from the tree's petrified heartwood. A pair of stone columns rise 15 feet from this floor, each set with a number of stone-carved perches. In addition, a number of ledges and perches have been hewn into the walls of this hollow. Several articles composed of sticks and twine hang from these perches. Everything in this area is covered in dark stains and broken, half-decayed feathers.*

The hollow top of the Plague Tree served as the primary nesting area for the harpies and continues to serve as the abode of the plague harpies. The hanging articles are constructed of feathers and small sticks, and they are tied with bits of twine and gut. These tribal fetishes of the harpies have no value to the PCs.

There is no access to the interior of the Plague Tree from this area.

## P2. Guarded Entrance (EL 14)

*The interior of this room is covered in old filth and the rotten remains of ancient, molted feathers. Three 10-foot-high openings look out from the sides of the chamber. A semicircular hole pierces the center of the chamber's floor and leads deeper into the tree. It is surrounded by a low stone railing.*

This chamber provides an entrance to the tree's interior. The harpies always maintain a guard here. Anyone

entering this area can make a DC 30 Listen check to see if she hears the faint ring of metal on metal coming from area P7.

**Tactical Encounter:** Guarded Entrance (page 10).

## P3. Guardroom

This chamber once served as the guardroom to the harpy leader's lair. It is empty except for the decomposing corpses of two plague harpies, both riddled by arrows. These were the leader and one of her guards—Kizhaam killed them when he arrived at the Plague Tree. Nothing else is of interest here.

## P4. Leader's Quarters

This room serves as the quarters for Kizhaam, though he is rarely found here. The only signs of habitation in this chamber are a worn bedroll and a small wooden plate and cup where Kizhaam takes his meals.

**Treasure:** Hidden beneath the bedroll is a leather pouch that holds some of the marrash's treasure. It contains 45 pp and three moonbars (pearly, opaque gemstones) stolen from a Tarig trader in the desert of Anauroch. They are worth 1,000 gp each.

## P5. Fletching Storage

*An opening has been cut through the ceiling of this chamber. A door exits through one wall. In the center of the room are two burlap sacks.*

The sacks hold colorful feathers taken from the arrowhawks in area P6. Kizhaam uses the feathers to create the fletching for his plague arrows.

A successful DC 25 Listen check while in this room allows PCs to hear Kizhaam working in area P7.

## P6. Rookery

*Opening the door to this chamber releases a cacophony of sound and the pungent stench of guano. The source of both is readily apparent from the crude wooden cages that hang from hooks in the walls and hold small, colorfully feathered creatures. A hole opens in the chamber's floor.*

Held captive in three bird cages are four arrowhawk chicks that were captured by Kizhaam a few months ago. These Tiny creatures have only 2 hit points and no attacks, having not yet developed into their juvenile forms—the marrash intends to destroy them once they become dangerous. Currently, Kizhaam plucks feathers

from them to use in his fletching. If released, these harmless creatures flap away as quickly as possible.

A successful DC 20 Listen check while in this room allows PCs to hear Kizhaam working in area P7.

### P7. Plague Forge (EL 18)

*Hot air fills this chamber, and a large hearth hewn into the stone of the tree glows red with coals. Before it stands an anvil, beside which are placed a pair of buckets. Beyond the buckets is a coal-filled stone bin partially carved out of the floor.*

Kizhaam converted this chamber into a smithy, where he crafts infectious arrows.

**Tactical Encounter:** Plague Forge (page 12).

### P8. Plague Incubator

*The stench of corruption and death fills this chamber. Slumped against one wall is the bound and bloated corpse of an ogre, its skin stretched taut and blackened with decomposition. Protruding from its flank are numerous small wooden shafts, like pins in a pin cushion. A door stands open in one wall, and a hole gapes in the ceiling.*

Kizhaam captured this ogre and infected it with the virulent plague he has been engineering. The ogre died in due time, and its corpse has since become a breeding ground for the new disease. Kizhaam pierces it with his newly completed arrows, which are then left for a tenday in order to become thoroughly saturated with the virulent plague. Twelve infected arrows currently protrude from its flank. These are safe to handle unless

they cause injury, but touching the corpse itself causes exposure to the plague.

A successful DC 10 Listen check while in this room allows PCs to hear Kizhaam working in area P7.

**Virulent Plague:** Supernatural disease—contact or injury, Fortitude DC 23, incubation period 1d3 rounds; damage 2d4 Dex and 2d4 Con. Each day that the disease lasts, the infected creature must also succeed at a second DC 23 Fortitude save, or 1 point each of that day's Dexterity and Constitution damage becomes drain instead.

### P9. Contagion's Source (EL 14)

This chamber is a simply a hollow in the tree with a hole in the floor and a hole in the ceiling. Other than the stench of corruption and sickness, it is empty of all save its monstrous occupants.

**Tactical Encounter:** Contagion's Source (page 14).


### P10. Guardian of the Tree (EL 16)

*This dark chamber appears to occupy the entire base of this petrified tree in a vast area 60 feet high. The hole in the ceiling provides its only entrance. A strange, titanic pyramid constructed of some substance that is difficult to discern in the dim light dominates the center of the chamber. Less identifiable are a number of glyphs and sigils that appear to have been carved into the walls of the chamber.*

This chamber holds the original master of the Plague Tree when the Keeper of the Thaal first transplanted it into the Tomb of the Thaalud. The chamber is







now avoided due to the danger of its inhabitant, who otherwise remains obviously unaware if left alone. The sigils on the walls were made by the Keeper of the Thaal and are identifiable with a successful DC 20 Knowledge (arcana) check as various symbols used in the necromantic arts. They were involved in the creation of the necronaut but hold no further power.

**Tactical Encounter:** Guardian of the Tree (page 16).

## CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

Once the PCs have dealt with the initial incursion of plague harpy raiders and either retreated or explored the depths of the Plague Tree, they are free to leave the Tomb of the Thaalud as described on page 105 of *Anauroch: The Sundering of the World*, possibly with a powerful new magic item in tow. The encounter with the Plague Tree serves as nothing more than a side trek during the course of the greater adventure. However, several plot seeds and unanswered questions have been revealed in “The Plague Tree” that you can expand upon for use in your own campaign if you wish. Perhaps Kizhaam is merely a single part of a greater planar plot to spread

disease in an effort to weaken the defenses of Faerûn for a planar invasion. Maybe Talona is behind his actions, seeking to strengthen her Material Plane church with some extraplanar help. It could even be somehow tied in with Shar’s overarching plot for mastery of Faerûn and its magic. How you choose to incorporate this side trek into your greater campaign, if at all, is entirely up to you.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Greg A. Vaughan’s previous works include *Anauroch: The Sundering of the World*, *Drow of the Underdark*, and several adventures for DUNGEON Magazine and Paizo’s Pathfinder and GameMastery lines. He lives in Oklahoma.

# COMING OF THE PLAGUE TREE

**Encounter Level 16**

## SETUP

Seven plague harpies and three plague rat swarms participate in this raid. The harpies carry the rat swarms in large fishing nets held between two harpies apiece. They first dropped them on Askilion's Tower (killing some of the rats but not an appreciable number), which freed the rats from the nets to surge into the tower to attack the PCs. (This is what made the sounds initially heard by the PCs.) Then the harpies start attacking.

This battle does not include its own tactical encounter map. Instead use tactical encounter T4 from page 110 of *Anauroch: Sundering of the World*, placing the creatures as indicated below. When the swarm first enters Askilion's Tower, read:

*The source of the sound becomes apparent as putrid swarms of diseased rodents come pouring in through the entrance of the tower and down through the arrow slits. Flying in behind them are flapping caricatures of once-living creatures, their eyes now glowing with feral hate.*

## 7 PLAGUE HARPIES

**CR 10**

MM 150, BV 185  
hp 67 each (12 HD)

Harpy corpse creature<sup>BV</sup> ranger 5  
LE Medium undead  
**Init** +2; **Senses** Listen +12, Spot +8  
**Languages** Common

**AC** 13, touch 12, flat-footed 13; Dodge (+2 Dex, +1 armor, +2 natural)

**Immune** ability damage (Str, Dex, Con), ability drain, critical hits, death effects, disease, energy drain, exhaustion, fatigue, mind-affecting effects, nonlethal damage, paralysis, poison, sleep, stunning, any effect that requires a Fortitude save (unless the effect also works on objects or is harmless), death from massive damage

**Fort** +7, **Ref** +11, **Will** +7

**Speed** 20 ft. (4 squares), fly 80 ft. (clumsy); Flyby Attack

**Melee** slam +14 (1d6+2) or 2 claws +14 (1d3+1) or

**Ranged** +1 composite longbow (Str +2) +16/+11/+6 (1d8+3/×3 plus virulent plague) or +1 composite longbow (Str +2) +14/+14/+9/+4

(1d8+3/×3 plus virulent plague) with Rapid Shot

**Base Atk** +12; **Grp** +14

**Atk Options** Blind-Fight, favored enemy humans +4, favored enemy elves +2, virulent plague

**Combat Gear** 10 arrows infected with virulent plague  
**Ranger Spells Prepared** (CL 2nd):

1st—*magic fang*

**Abilities** Str 14, Dex 15, Con —, Int 7, Wis 12, Cha 17  
**SQ** undead traits

**Feats** Blind-Fight, Dodge, Endurance<sup>B</sup>, Flyby Attack, Persuasive, Rapid Shot<sup>B</sup>, Track<sup>B</sup>, Weapon Focus (composite longbow)

**Skills** Bluff +11, Hide +7, Intimidate +7, Listen +12, Move Silently +7, Perform (oratory) +5, Spot +8

**Possessions** +1 composite longbow (+2 Str), bracers of armor +1, large net

**Virulent Plague (Su)** The arrows of the harpy have been created by Kizhaam and are contaminated with the special plague strain he has engineered. Supernatural disease—injury, Fortitude DC 23, incubation period 1d3 rounds; damage 2d4 Dex and 2d4 Con. Each day that the disease lasts, the infected creature must also succeed on a second DC 23 Fortitude save, or 1 point each of that day's Dexterity and Constitution damage becomes drain instead.

## 3 PLAGUE RAT SWARMS

**CR 3**

MM 239  
hp 13 each (4 HD)

NE Tiny animal (swarm)

**Init** +2; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Listen +6, Spot +7

**Languages** —

**AC** 14, touch 14, flat-footed 12 (+2 size, +2 Dex)

**Immune** critical hits, flanking, targeted spells

**Resist** half damage from slashing and piercing

**Fort** +4, **Ref** +6, **Will** +2

**Weakness** vulnerability to area spells

**Speed** 15 ft. (3 squares), climb 15 ft.

**Melee** swarm (1d6 plus virulent plague)

**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

**Base Atk** +3; **Grp** —

**Atk Options** distraction, virulent plague

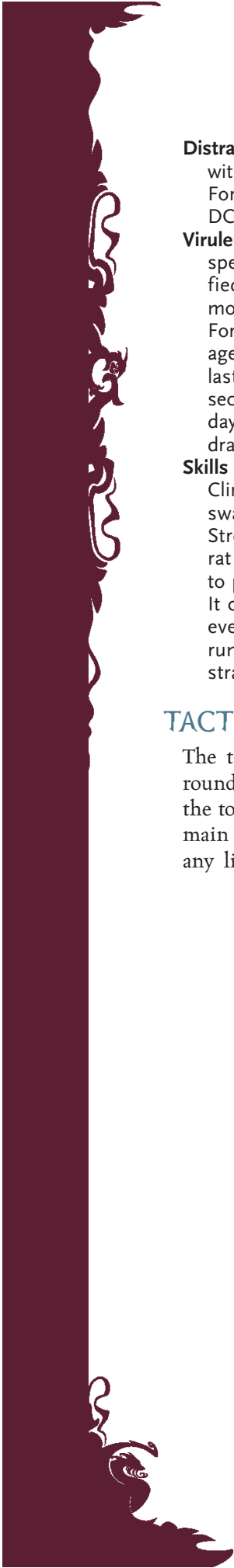
**Abilities** Str 2, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 2

**SQ** swarm traits

**Feats** Alertness, Weapon Finesse

**Skills** Balance +10, Climb +10, Hide +14, Listen +6, Move Silently +6, Spot +7, Swim +10





**Distraction (Ex)** Any living creature that begins its turn with a swarm in its square must succeed on a DC 12 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1 round. The save DC is Constitution-based.

**Virulent Plague (Su)** The natural plague of the plague spewer that created the plague rats has been modified due to the tampering of Kizhaam, creating a more virulent strain. Supernatural disease—injury, Fortitude DC 23, incubation period 1d3 rounds; damage 2d4 Dex and 2d4 Con. Each day that the disease lasts, the infected creature must also succeed on a second DC 23 Fortitude save, or 1 point each of that day's Dexterity and Constitution damage becomes drain instead.

**Skills** A rat swarm can always choose to take 10 on all Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened. A rat swarm uses its Dexterity modifier instead of its Strength modifier for Climb and Swim checks. A rat swarm has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. It can use the run action while swimming, provided it swims in a straight line.

## TACTICS

The three rat swarms are dumped in the surprise round and charge into the tower, one swarm through the tower's arrow slits and the other two through its main entrance in the next round. They seek to attack any living creatures and tear them apart, ignoring

undead creatures such as the harpies (even if a harpy is in a square occupied by the swarm). The harpies cast *magic fang* on their slam attacks, and five plague harpies follow the swarms, swooping in 1 round behind them and attempting to take up perches on the stairs and balconies out of the PCs' immediate reach. They use their plague-infected arrows as much as possible, and they resort to their slam attacks only if cornered or attacked by flying characters. The last two harpies remain on guard outside Askilion's Tower where they attack fleeing or victorious PCs from a distance. Neither the plague harpies nor the plague rat swarms flee from battle.

## FEATURES OF THE AREA

The area has the following features.

**Niches:** About 4 feet above the floor are several openings in the walls. These form niches 5 feet high and 5 feet deep. Climbing into a niche requires a move action or a DC 16 Climb check. Anyone inside a niche has cover from those outside (+4 bonus to AC and +2 bonus on Reflex saves) and receives a +1 bonus on melee attack rolls due to higher ground. Creatures larger than Medium must squeeze to enter a niche.

# GUARDED ENTRANCE

Encounter Level 14

## SETUP

Place the plague harpies on the map as indicated only when they are in sight of the PCs. For instance, if the PCs approach from the south, the plague harpy on the tree limb would be visible while the others may not. When the PCs first see a plague harpy, read:

*The creature's sallow skin is gray and slack in death, and the ruined tatters of rotten feathers cling to her wings. Her face is a hideous mockery of femininity—her eyes gleam with a burning malevolence over a mouth of jagged, broken fangs. Her skill with a bow seems undiminished with death as she nocks an arrow to the string with practiced ease.*

## TACTICS

These harpies were left behind on guard duty while the others participated in the raid. The one on the tree limb is the only one being particularly watchful. The others wait within, only occasionally glancing out through the holes in the trunk. If intruders are spotted, they flap up to engage them at a distance with their bows. If forced into melee combat, they retreat to the stone railing around the entrance to area P5 to both guard the entrance into the tower and gain the benefits of fighting from higher ground.

### 4 PLAGUE HARPIES

MM 150, BV 185

hp 67 each (12 HD)

Harpy corpse creature[BV] ranger 5

LE Medium undead

Init +2; Senses Listen +12, Spot +8

Languages Common

AC 13, touch 12, flat-footed 13; Dodge (+2 Dex, +1 armor, +2 natural)

CR 10

**Immune** ability damage (Str, Dex, Con), ability drain, critical hits, death effects, disease, energy drain, exhaustion, fatigue, mind-affecting effects, nonlethal damage, paralysis, poison, sleep, stunning, any effect that requires a Fortitude save (unless the effect also works on objects or is harmless), death from massive damage

**Fort** +7, **Ref** +11, **Will** +7

**Speed** 20 ft. (4 squares), fly 80 ft. (clumsy); Flyby Attack

**Melee** slam +14 (1d6+2) or

2 claws +14 (1d3+1) or

**Ranged** +1 composite longbow (Str +2) +16/+11/+6 (1d8+3/x3 plus virulent plague) or

+1 composite longbow (Str +2) +14/+14/+9/+4 (1d8+3/x3 plus virulent plague) with Rapid Shot

**Base Atk** +12; **Grp** +14

**Atk Options** Blind-Fight, favored enemy humans +4, favored enemy elves +2, virulent plague

**Combat Gear** 10 arrows infected with virulent plague

**Ranger Spells Prepared** (CL 2nd):

1st—*magic fang*

**Abilities** Str 14, Dex 15, Con —, Int 7, Wis 12, Cha 17

**SQ** undead traits

**Feats** Blind-Fight, Dodge, Endurance<sup>B</sup>, Flyby Attack, Persuasive, Rapid Shot<sup>B</sup>, Track<sup>B</sup>, Weapon Focus (composite longbow)

**Skills** Bluff +11, Hide +7, Intimidate +7, Listen +12, Move Silently +7, Perform (oratory) +5, Spot +8

**Possessions** +1 composite longbow (+2 Str), bracers of armor +1, large net

**Virulent Plague (Su)** The arrows of the harpy have been created by Kizhaam and are contaminated with the special plague strain he has engineered. Supernatural disease—injury, Fortitude DC 23, incubation period 1d3 rounds; damage 2d4 Dex and 2d4 Con. Each day that the disease lasts, the infected creature must also succeed on a second DC 23 Fortitude save, or 1 point each of that day's Dexterity and Constitution damage becomes drain instead.



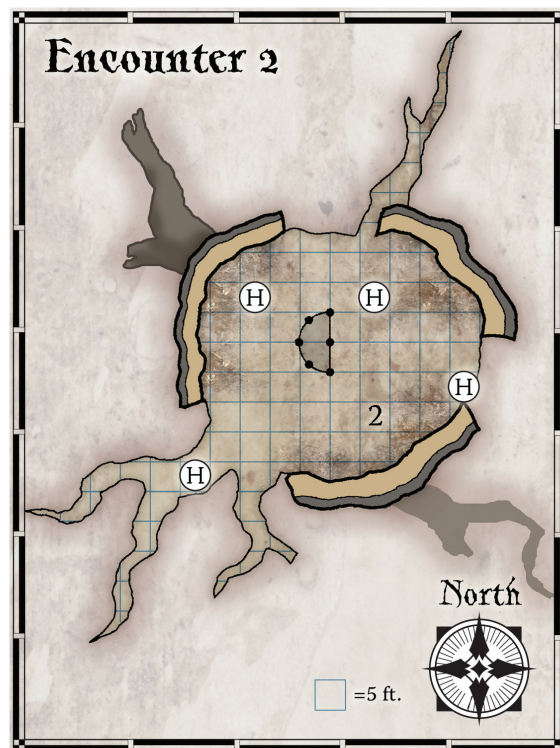
## FEATURES OF THE AREA

The area has the following features.

**Hole in Floor:** A semicircular hole has been cut through the floor of this chamber. It is 20 feet to the floor of area P5 below.

**Stone Railing:** A 4-foot-high stone banister surrounds the hole in the floor. It is 6 inches wide, and a creature can hop up on it with a DC 10 Jump check, though doing so counts as 10 feet of movement. Anyone standing on the rail gains the benefits of +1 on melee attack rolls for higher ground but must make a DC 15 Balance check to keep from falling unless he has talons or claws with which to grip it (such as the plague harpies). It provides no cover.

**Petrified Limbs:** Tree limbs protrude from the side of the petrified tree's trunk, providing purchase and room to stand, though standing requires a DC 5 Balance check due to the rough and irregular surface unless one has claws or talons with which to grip them. A creature cannot charge or run on the surface of these branches.



# PLAGUE FORGE

Encounter Level 18

## SETUP

Place the marrash on the map as indicated. When the PCs first catch sight of Kizhaam, read:

*Standing before the anvil with hammer and tongs in hand is strange creature, almost harpylike in appearance. It has a head that resembles a hyena, two wings, and taloned feet like a great raptor. A massive bow is slung over one of its shoulders.*

### KIZHAAM

CR 18

MM2 145, CW 68  
hp 109 (20 HD)

Male marrash cleric (Talona) 3/order of the bow initiate 10  
LE Medium outsider (evil, extraplanar, lawful)  
**Init** +4, **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent; Listen +11,  
Spot +11

**Languages** Common, Infernal

**AC** 29, touch 17, flat-footed 25; Dodge, Mobility  
(+4 Dex, +6 armor, +3 deflection, +6 natural)

**Fort** +12, **Ref** +17, **Will** +16

**Speed** 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 70 ft. (good); Shot on the Run  
**Melee** 2 claws +20 (1d4+1) and  
bite +15 (1d6)

**Ranged** +3 *human bane composite longbow*  
+25/+20/+15/+10 (1d8+2/x3 plus virulent plague) or  
+3 *human bane composite longbow* +23/+23/+18/+13/+8  
(1d8+2/x3 plus virulent plague) with Rapid Shot

**Base Atk** +19; **Grp** +20

**Atk Options** Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Sharp-  
Shooting<sup>CW</sup>, Shot on the Run, close combat shot,  
double bowfire, extended precision, ranged precision  
+5d8, smite 1/day (+4 attack/+3 damage)

**Special Actions** rebuke undead 5/day (+2, 2d6+5, 3rd),  
*pain touch* 1/day, spontaneous casting (*inflict* spells),  
taklif arrow, virulent plague

**Combat Gear** *ring of blinking*, 39 arrows infected with  
virulent plague, taklif arrow, 2 *potions of cure light*  
*wounds*

**Cleric Spells Prepared** (CL 3rd):

2nd—*bear's endurance*<sup>D</sup>, *curse of ill fortune*<sup>MAG</sup> (DC  
13)

1st—*bane*<sup>D</sup> (DC 12), *cure light wounds*, *divine favor*,  
*shield of faith*

0—*create water*, *detect magic*, *purify food and drink*,  
*virtue*

D: Domain spell. Deity: Talona. *Domains*: Destruction,  
Suffering

**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 10th):

At will—*protection from arrows*

**Abilities** Str 13, Dex 18, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 14  
**SQ** outsider traits

**Feats** Dodge, Greater Weapon Focus (composite  
longbow)<sup>B</sup>, Mobility, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot,  
Rapid Shot, Sharp-Shooting<sup>B, CW</sup>, Shot on the Run,  
Weapon Focus (composite longbow)

**Skills** Balance +15, Craft (bowmaking) +11, Craft (weap-  
onsmithing) +10, Intimidate +2, Jump +12, Knowledge  
(religion) +3, Knowledge (the planes) +3, Listen +11,  
Move Silently +14, Search +10, Spot +11, Survival +1  
(+3 following tracks, on other planes), Tumble +15

**Possessions** +2 *chain shirt of improved silent moves*, +3  
*human bane composite longbow* (+1 Str), 2 quivers,  
*ring of protection* +3

**Close Combat Shot (Ex)** Kizhaam can attack with a  
ranged weapon while in a threatened square and not  
provoke an attack of opportunity.

**Double Bowfire (Ex)** In battle, a flying marrash grips its  
composite longbow with its taloned feet and draws  
the string with both hands. This unusual technique  
allows it to fire two arrows simultaneously at highest  
attack bonus along with its secondary shots as part  
of a full attack action.

**Extended Precision (Su)** Kizhaam's sense and feel for  
"the shot" is so attuned that he may make ranged  
precision attacks at a range of up to 60 feet.

**Ranged Precision (Ex)** As a standard action, Kizhaam  
may make a single precisely aimed attack with his  
composite longbow, dealing an extra 5d8 points of  
damage if the attack hits. When making a ranged pre-  
cision attack, Kizhaam must be within 30 feet of his  
target. This attack works only against living creatures  
with a discernable anatomy. Any creature that is im-  
mune to critical hits (including undead, constructs,  
oozes, plants, and incorporeal creatures) is not vul-  
nerable to a ranged precision attack, and any item or  
ability that protects a creature from critical hits also  
protects a creature from the extra damage. Unlike a  
rogue's sneak attack, Kizhaam's target does not have  
to be flat-footed or denied its Dexterity bonus. Treat  
the ranged precision attack as a sneak attack in all  
other ways.

**Pain Touch (Sp)** Once per day Kizhaam, as a cleric  
with the Suffering domain, can deliver a *pain touch*  
on a successful melee touch attack against a living  
creature. On a hit, his touch bestows a –2 penalty  
to Strength and Dexterity to the target for 1 minute.  
Creatures that are immune to critical hits are also  
immune to this effect.



**Taklif Arrow (Su)** Any creature hit by Kizhaam's taklif arrow must succeed on a DC 23 Fortitude save or contract virulent plague like with his normal arrows. However, a creature that fails any saving throw after its initial infection dies instantly and cannot be raised or resurrected just as if it had the outsider type. The corpse rises as a new marrash 1d6 days later.

**Virulent Plague (Su)** Kizhaam's arrows have been contaminated with a special plague strain he has engineered by combining his extraplanar filth fever with the plague of the plague spewer. Supernatural disease—injury, Fortitude DC 23, incubation period 1d3 rounds; damage 2d4 Dex and 2d4 Con. Each day that the disease lasts, the infected creature must also succeed at a second DC 23 Fortitude save, or 1 point each of that day's Dexterity and Constitution damage becomes drain instead.

## TACTICS

Kizhaam is working at the forge crafting more infected arrows for his undead minions. When the PCs enter, he immediately drops his hammer. He activates his *ring of blinking* and steps through the nearest wall (careful to avoid walking through the fire of the forge). Once outside the Plague Tree, he immediately flies up to the top edge of area P1 and keeps watch below while casting *bear's endurance*, *shield of faith*, and *divine favor* on himself in that order. Then he rallies any surviving plague harpies that may still be outside. Once that is done, he then ends his *blinking* and readies an action to fire a precision shot with his taklif arrow at the first PC to emerge into view. When engaged in combat, he flies to remain out of melee range and uses Shot on the Run in order to be within 60 feet to make precision shots against likely targets. He does not pursue PCs into the tower, preferring to let them deal with the undead within and picking them off when they emerge.

## FEATURES OF THE AREA

The area has the following features.

**Forge Hearth:** A hearth has been carved into the stone of the wall with a crevice at the back serving as its exhaust

### SHARP-SHOOTING [GENERAL]

Your skill with ranged weapons lets you score hits others miss due to an opponent's cover.

**Prerequisites:** Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, base attack bonus +3

**Benefit:** Your targets receive only a +2 bonus to Armor Class due to cover. This feat has no effect against foes with no cover or total cover.

**Normal:** Cover normally gives a +4 bonus to AC.

**Special:** A fighter may select Sharp-Shooting as one of his fighter bonus feats.

port. A smokeless fire of glowing coals burns in the hearth with three bars of pig iron being heated within it. Anyone touching the coals in the forge takes 3d6 points of fire damage per round. Anyone falling into the forge itself takes 10d6 points of fire damage per round. The pig iron bars are equal in size to a crowbar and are red hot at the tips. They can be wielded as clubs that inflict an additional 1d6 points of fire damage on a hit or melee touch, but the wielder takes 1 point of fire damage each round while holding one unless wearing gloves or gauntlets.

**Anvil:** This anvil stands before the forge hearth and is bolted to the floor. Consider the anvil a "low obstacle" during the combat. A low obstacle provides cover (+4 bonus to AC, +2 bonus on attack rolls), but only to creatures within 30 feet (6 squares) of it. The attacker can ignore the cover if he's closer to the obstacle than his target.

**Rough Walls:** Portions of the walls are rough hewn and form columns (DC 10 Climb check).

**Hole in Floor:** A hole has been cut through the floor of this chamber. It is 20 feet to the floor of area P9 below.

**Buckets and Bin:** Two buckets hold water for cooling the metal being worked at the forge. A stone bin holds coal for firing the forge. Squares containing these objects are considered difficult terrain, increasing the DC on Balance and Tumble checks by 2.



# CONTAGION'S SOURCE

Encounter Level 14

## SETUP

Place the advanced plague spewer and rat swarms on the map as shown.

When the PCs first see the plague spewer, read:

*The creature is a huge abomination. It stands 22 feet tall and is covered in contorted, quivering lumps. Its gnarled features and pustulant flesh boldly proclaim the disease-ridden pestilence it bears. The stumps of a few broken arrow shafts protrude from its hide.*

### ADVANCED PLAGUE SPEWER

CR 14

MM3 125

hp 208 (32 HD); DR 10/slashing

NE Huge undead

Init +1, Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +1, Spot +1

Languages —

AC 25, touch 9, flat-footed 24

(-2 size, +1 Dex, +16 natural)

**Immune** ability damage (Str, Dex, Con), ability drain, critical hits, death effects, disease, energy drain, exhaustion, fatigue, mind-affecting effects, nonlethal damage, paralysis, poison, sleep, stunning, any effect that requires a Fortitude save (unless the effect also works on objects or is harmless), death from massive damage

**Fort** +10, **Ref** +11, **Will** +19

**Speed** 40 ft. (8 squares)

**Melee** 2 slams +24 (1d8+10 plus virulent plague)

**Space** 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

**Base Atk** +16; **Grp** +34

**Special Actions** virulent plague, vomit plague rat swarm

**Abilities** Str 31, Dex 13, Con —, Int —, Wis 12, Cha 16

**SQ** undead traits

**Feats** —

**Skills** Listen +1, Spot +1

**Virulent Plague (Su)** The natural plague of the plague spewer has been modified due to the tampering of Kizhaam. Supernatural disease—slam, Fortitude DC 29, incubation period 1d3 rounds; damage 2d4 Dex and 2d4 Con. Each day that the disease lasts, the infected creature must also succeed at a second DC 29 Fortitude save, or 1 point each of that day's Dexterity and Constitution damage becomes drain instead.

**Vomit Plague Rat Swarm (Su)** As a full-round action,

the plague spewer can spew forth a swarm of plague rats. It can do this four times per day.

### 2 PLAGUE RAT SWARMS

CR 3

MM 239

hp 13 each (4 HD)

NE Tiny animal (swarm)

**Init** +2; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Listen +6, Spot +7

**Languages** —

**AC** 14, touch 14, flat-footed 12

(+2 size, +2 Dex)

**Immune** critical hits, flanking, targeted spells

**Resist** half damage from slashing and piercing

**Fort** +4, **Ref** +6, **Will** +2

**Weakness** vulnerability to area spells

**Speed** 15 ft. (3 squares), climb 15 ft.

**Melee** swarm (1d6 plus virulent plague)

**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

**Base Atk** +3; **Grp** —

**Atk Options** distraction, virulent plague

**Abilities** Str 2, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 2

**SQ** swarm traits

**Feats** Alertness, Weapon Finesse

**Skills** Balance +10, Climb +10, Hide +14, Listen +6, Move Silently +6, Spot +7, Swim +10

**Distraction (Ex)** Any living creature that begins its turn with a swarm in its square must succeed on a DC 12 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1 round. The save DC is Constitution-based.

**Virulent Plague (Su)** The natural plague of the plague spewer that created the plague rats has been modified due to the tampering of Kizhaam, creating a more virulent strain. Supernatural disease—injury, Fortitude DC 23, incubation period 1d3 rounds; damage 2d4 Dex and 2d4 Con. Each day that the disease lasts, the infected creature must also succeed on a second DC 23 Fortitude save, or 1 point each of that day's Dexterity and Constitution damage becomes drain instead.

**Skills** A rat swarm can always choose to take 10 on all Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened. A rat swarm uses its Dexterity modifier instead of its Strength modifier for Climb and Swim checks. A rat swarm has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. It can use the run action while swimming, provided it swims in a straight line.

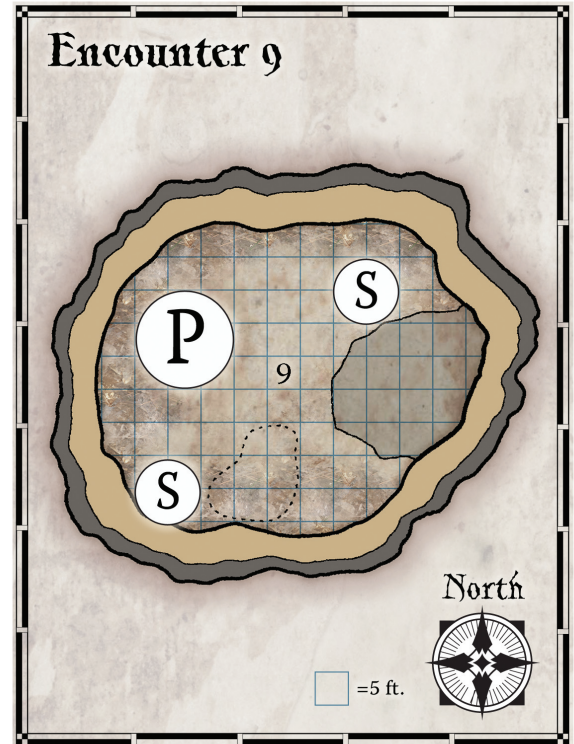
## TACTICS

The plague spewer is a mindless killer that barely tolerates the presence of Kizhaam and the harpies, though it makes no overt attacks when they lower their nets to harvest its rat swarms. It has created only two rat swarms today (the two swarms that are present), and upon sighting the PCs it vomits forth a third. It attacks with abandon and attempts to bull rush anyone that stands between it and the hole in the floor into the embrace of the necronaut below. The rat swarms attack all targets equally, even pursuing through the hole if anyone should fall through, but they ignore the plague spewer itself. If the PCs cluster into a single area, the swarms can overlap each other, each causing damage and distraction normally to anyone within its area. If the swarms are destroyed or the plague spewer is badly injured, it vomits forth its final rat swarm for the day and retreats behind it, using its reach to attack the PCs from beyond the swarm.

## FEATURES OF THE AREA

The area has the following features.

**Hole in Floor:** A hole has been cut through the floor of this chamber. It is 60 feet to the floor of area P10 below.





# GUARDIAN OF THE TREE

**Encounter Level 16**

## SETUP

Place the necronaut on the map as shown. When the characters get a good look at the necronaut, read:

*The center of this high-ceilinged chamber is occupied by a massive pile of bones and corpses over 20 feet high. The outer layer of this pile seems to be composed primarily of the tiny bones and skulls of thousands of rats or other small animals. Partially protruding from this mound of carnage is a sword hilt set with moonstones.*

## ADVANCED NECRONAUT

**CR 16**

MM3 108

**hp** 420 (40 HD); **DR** 15/lawful or magic

CE Gargantuan undead (chaotic, evil, extraplanar)

**Init** +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +41, Spot +41

**Languages** Infernal

**AC** 25, touch 5, flat-footed 25

(-4 size, -1 Dex, +20 natural)

**Immune** ability damage (Str, Dex, Con), ability drain, critical hits, death effects, disease, energy drain, exhaustion, fatigue, mind-affecting effects, nonlethal damage, paralysis, poison, sleep, stunning, any effect that requires a Fortitude save (unless the effect also works on objects or is harmless), death from massive damage

**SR** 25

**Fort** +15, **Ref** +12, **Will** +24

**Weakness** necromantic effects

**Speed** 50 ft. (10 squares)

**Melee**\* 4 slams +26 (4d6+20/19-20)

\*Includes 5-point Power Attack

**Space** 20 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft.

**Base Atk** +20; **Grp** +47

**Atk Options** Awesome Blow, Blind-Fight, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Overrun, Improved Sunder, Power Attack, trample 4d6+22

**Special Actions** assimilate corpse

**Abilities** Str 41, Dex 8, Con —, Int 7, Wis 14, Cha 18

**SQ** undead traits, unholy toughness

**Feats** Alertness, Awesome Blow, Blind-Fight, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Great Cleave, Great Fortitude, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (slam), Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Weapon (slam), Improved Overrun, Improved Sunder, Power Attack

**Skills** Knowledge (the planes) +10, Listen +41, Spot +41, Survival +2 (+4 on other planes)

**Necromantic Effects (Su)** Necronauts are affected differently by some spells. Because each one is composed of bones and corpses, spells that create undead deal 1d4 points of damage per caster level to a necronaut, up to the maximum given here for each spell: *animate dead*, 10d4; *create undead*, 15d4; *create greater undead*, 20d4.

**Trample (Ex)** Reflex half DC 45. The save DC is Strength-based.

**Assimilate Corpse (Su)** A necronaut can, as a move action, add the corpse of an opponent to its body. Once the corpse is added, the necronaut begins assimilating it. This process takes 1 round to run its course and heals some damage to the necronaut, based on the size of the assimilated creature: Small or smaller, 10 points healed; Medium, 30 points; Large, 60 points; Huge, 100 points; Gargantuan, 150 points; or Colossal, 210 points. Once a creature is fully assimilated, it cannot be raised from the dead. Before a creature is fully assimilated, an ally can pull it free with a DC 24 Strength check.

**Unholy Toughness (Ex)** A necronaut gains a bonus to its hit points equal to its Charisma modifier × its Hit Dice.

## TACTICS

The necronaut stands quiescent in this chamber until someone dares to enter or tries to recover the sword it possesses (see Treasure sidebar below). It hides its arms in an attempt to appear as nothing more than a massive pile of bones and corpses (Bluff +9 opposed to a Spot check to determine the truth). If anyone descends to the floor of the chamber, it attempts to trample them with surprise. Otherwise it attacks with surprise as soon as anyone enters its 20-foot reach. It maneuvers underneath the hole in the ceiling to try to prevent any escape attempts or reinforcements once PCs have entered the room. When battle begins, it absorbs the sword back into the interior of its bulk to protect it.

## TREASURE

The treasures of the thaalud are stored in the many floating castles around the vault and in the central enclave. The primary treasure of the Plague Tree is the mithral +3 *holy drow bane* longsword known as *One Thousand Broken Dreams* (from *Magic of Faerûn*). It is hidden within the bulk of the necronaut itself and can be found with a DC 20 Search check when the creature is slain and its component parts fall to pieces. If you do not have access to that source, replace the sword with a *holy avenger*.

## FEATURES OF THE ROOM

The room has the following features.

**Rough Floor:** The floor here at the base of the Plague Tree's interior is extremely roughly hewn from the petrified wood. A DC 10 Balance check is required to run or charge across the surface. Failure means the individual can't move in this round. Due to the necronaut's great size and unique body structure, the floor does not impede its movement.

