

**Game:** Greyhawk Campaign, D&D 5e

**Date:** October 13th, 2019

**Episode 3:** "The Roots of Evil"

**Campaign Date:** Goodmonth 13th, CY 579

**Characters:**

Lord Kurt Gunderson the Merciless, Human Paladin - 2 (Dave Nelson)

Captain Sparkle Rainbright - Half-Elf Fighter - 2 (Bob LaForge)

Huaa - Hill Dwarf Cleric - 2 (Chuck Fleurie)

Newt "Hotrod" Bladesgrimm, Human Bard - 2 (NPC)

**DM:** Andrew Smith

**Log:**

*Goodmonth 14, 579; The Sunless Citadel*

Lady Brienne Hercule had tasked the heroes with returning the members of a party she sent off after the goblins that included two human members of her family. They were her brother and sister, Talgen Hucrele (a fighter) and Sharwyn Hucrele (a wizard). The party also included a ranger named Karakas, and a paladin named Sir Bradford who wields a mighty sword named Shatterspike. Lady Hucrele, offered salvage rights to the party if they could return the four safely. If that was impossible, she wanted at least the return the gold signet rings worn by the missing brother and sister. She offered a reward of 125 gp per signet ring, per character. If the characters bring back the Hucreles in good shape (of good mind and body), she offers to double the reward.

The heroes rest up, and make the acquaintance of Huaa on a vision quest. He is a Dwarven War Cleric loyal to [Ulaa](#) the Goddess of the Hills. He has been drawn to the site by his deity to help the party in their time of need, as Atreyu Codori had shape changed and left the party unexpectedly. Lord Gunderson immediately gives him the nickname of "stretch." Once again, after checking with Puma Man and Dingus Wetface the party returns to fallen citadel. They head back toward the goblins' area. They realize that all the bodies of the slain goblins have been dragged to the goblins' throne room and dropped through the root-choked hole in the floor.

The party descends into the hole, doing their best to stay as silent as possible. This first room is filled with piles of mulch and dirt. A few alien scrubby bushes have taken root. Piles of dismembered goblin bodies lay in slick, bloody pools. Two hooded figures to the North are shoveling red, bloody dirt into a wooden wheelbarrow. Unfortunately, Kurt, Sparkle, and Huaa all make a racket in their heavy armor. Behind them, two murderous shrubs dig themselves out of the loam and attack. The two hooded figures turn, revealing that they are in fact undead skeletons. Despite taking a few hits, the heroes are able to put all these aggressors down.



A round after the battle ends, a bugbear who calls himself Balsag the Hunter enters from his nest in the rough-hewn room to the North. This massive goblin is clad in old scale armor and hide leathers and wears a pair of antlers on his head. A cruel-looking morning star is perched menacingly on his shoulder. He looks at the party, and then looks at the crushed twig monsters, "You aren't with Belak are you?" He pulls his morningstar off his shoulder and swings it at Sparkle Rainbright's head. "Get ready to meet the cookpot!" he bellows as his two giant rats join in his attack flanking him.

The party surround Balsag. Lord Gunderson hits the giant bugbear with a mighty smite. Radiant energy courses through his greatsword, crushing the ribs of the villain. Captain Rainbrite stabs the monster, and Kurt slays Balsag the Hunter with a swift swing of his sword. The party explores his disgusting pallet and the nests of the two giant rats he trained as his hunting companions. There they find some loose coin, and shoddy weaponry but not much else.

The party takes stock of the situation. A rough, natural exit extends to the North, a well-built square passage leads South, and a stout wooden door lies to the East.

The party begins to explore to the South. They follow the well-constructed passage until they reach a section of the citadel that appears to be a rift in the earth. There is a step down into the fractured section of the citadel and the rock is pock-marked with several random two-inch holes bored right into the living stone.

The party asks Huaa if he has ever encountered such a thing in his days as a dwarven stonemason. He instantly recognizes these holes as being those of the Thoqqua, rubbery worms that produce amazing amounts of heat to bore through stone causing cave-ins and rifts in underground stonemasonry. The group decides not to continue, and return back up the passage North to the mulch room.

As they return, Sparkle catches a glimpse of a goblin spying on them and then closing the east door. Expecting a goblin ambush, Lord Gunderson kicks open the door. There, eight goblins do their best to fight off the party. Two pairs hiding behind makeshift barriers of overturned furniture while goblin axemen clog the doorway. While Gunderson and Huaa hold the door, Captain Rainbrite charges the archers behind the barriers, shouting "Taste the Rainbow" and murdering the greenskins with shocking efficiency.

With all the goblins dead, the party began searching the doors off the main ambush corridor. One held a dormitory of sorts and another was a storeroom that featured “elf pudding.” Another room held a vat of root vegetables and a few casks full of a goblin liquor. Huaa took a slug from one, saying that it was “stout but fortifying.” Lord Gunderson took a swig himself, but without a dwarven constitution it immediately backed up on him. Only through a feat of pure will was he able to keep the liquor down.

A final room held a science experiment of sorts. Two giant rats were chained to the wall, each with a reddish-brown wooden stake in its neck which blossomed in blood-red leaves. Their eyes were misty and glazed and they seemed docile. Huaa burned them to death with holy fire.

The party proceeded into several galleries. Each showed signs of the previous dragon cult’s opulence with fiery red tile and bas-relief carvings of dragons slaughtering elves, dwarves, and humans on the walls. However, this faded finery was covered by several layers of dirt, each with various different underdark ecologies growing in various soils composed of decaying bodies of goblins, rats, and kobolds. All these galleries feature an alien, purple lichen that glows with an eerie luminescence. Without exception, Huaa burned each of these evil arboretums to the ground with holy fire.



The heroes encountered a bugbear gardener on top of a mound of dirt. He was quickly dispatched along with three more skeletons. A final arboretum features a crude fountain of sorts and is tended by four goblins. All slain by the party as well.

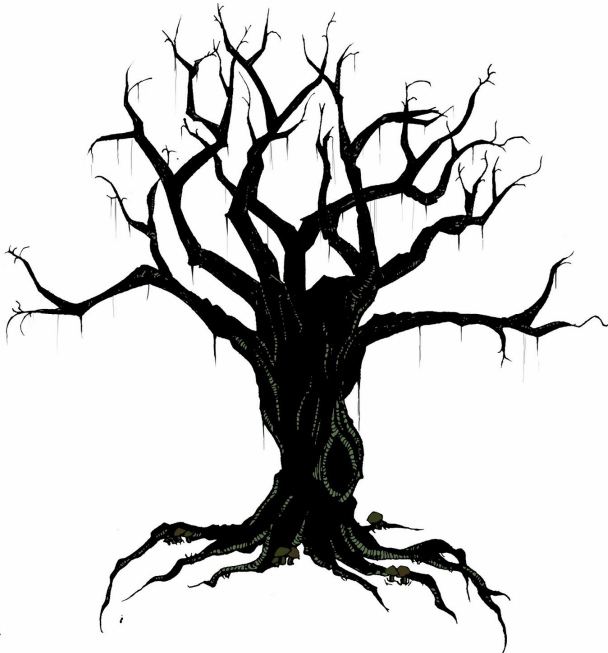
The group finds a shrine that has not been disturbed since the dragonlords built the complex. A giant stone dragon towers in the shadows of the room, rearing back as if to attack a certain specific 5’ diameter tile with some arcane writing on it. Newt takes ten minutes to study the text, eventually telling the group that it says “” Just then, the party is attacked by a shadow of a fallen dragonborn warrior that was hiding behind the idol. Huaa and Kurt murder the undead monster with holy fire efficiently.

The party realizes that they need to rest before proceeding through a wet hallway beneath the fountain room. They backtrack to a forgotten chapel of the dragon lords, where they pull the heavy door closed behind them and take a long rest. They are left undisturbed.

After the rest, the party proceeds through the underpass and walks toward the final boss. A goblin standing guard is shot to death with a crossbow bolt. The heroes decide to try to pick the lock of the first door, but it proves to be too complex for Newt. Gunderson and Captain

Rainbright begin to hack the door down, bringing goblins who cry "Watch out! Someone is breaking into the treasure room!" as they flee. The two adventurers knock down the door.

Inside, it is less of a "treasure room" than they imagined. Inside, there are personal effects for Belak - the druid Balsag mentioned. That includes a small library of books and scrolls, a spartan bed and desk, and some gardening equipment. The heroes loot the room, and then walk out toward where the goblins had fled.



They look out over a vast rough-hewn cavern filled with all sorts of evil underdark flora including a host of the spiky, scrubby bushes that turn into the tree monsters. Newt nearly has a fit, seeing the most evil looking tree across the chamber, towering over several figures along with the ruins of the keep.

Using Huaa's powers of holy flame, the four heroes burn their way through the rough cavern overgrown with evil underdark flora toward the giant sinister tree. The entire time as the party hacks through the briars and burrs of the apocalyptic garden, the druid calls out to them. "I am Belak, called the Outcast. The druidic society expelled me. Those fools! And why? Because I dared to expand

nature's reach in ways their puny minds couldn't grasp. I don't care. I have found what I long sought, embodied in this most beautiful tree!" Belak gestures behind him at the nightmarish plant behind him, loosely resembling a tree but more closely looking like a colossal alien spider.

"It is beautiful, no? It lives though it looks dead. In an age long past, someone staked a notorious vampire to the earth on this very spot. The wooden stake was yet green and took root growing this magnificent marvel reverberating with dark primal power to those who can tap it."

Belak looks at the two figures beside him, and realize that Sharwyn Hercule and Sir Bradford are flanking the sinister druid. Just like the giant rats, a thin, wooden stake sprouts from the neck of each of them, each with a full blossom of blood-red leaves. Their misty eyes stare vacantly. Belak gives them a command to attack. "Bring me these interlopers - alive if possible," They murmur a response, "Yes master."

As the party approaches, they realize that many of these sharp, scrubby bushes they fight through are just the stick monsters in disguise. Five of them spring to attack the group as they

approach within 30' of the ruined walls of the citadel in which the tree stands. Goblins around the druid sire shortbows at the heroes as well. The fight is joined by more of the twig monstrosities, so Lord Gunderson pushes forward, relying on his stout armor to fortify him as he engages the goblins and skeletons that form the second line of defense. Lord Gunderson is then joined by Captain Rainbrite, and Sir Bradfor staggers stiffly into combat swinging his magic sword Shatterspike to try and destroy Lord Gunderson's greatsword.

Sparkle Rainbrite winces in pain as Belak casts a spell that heats his armor hot enough to glow red in the dark cave. The half-elf responds by charging the druid, tackling him. The spell continues to burn Captain Rainbrite, knocking him unconscious but not before also burning the druid badly with his own spell!

Meanwhile, Kurt has managed to grab the wooden stem hanging out of Sir Bradford's neck. With a mighty yank, he pulls the evil planting from Bradford. Like a burst balloon, Sir Bradford's blood spurts out in a mighty gush and while his eyes have cleared he lays motionless dying on the cavern floor. Lords Gunderson mashes the remaining goblins and skeletons in the second line of defense while Huaa knocks out the remaining goblins with warhammer and magical fire.

With the twig blights cleared, Huaa and Newt manage to heal Captain Rainbrite and Sir Bradford back from the brink respectively. Lord Gunderson closes on Belak and with Sparkle's help hits the druid in the ribs, knocking the outcast unconscious. Sparkle grabs the stake from Lady Hercule's neck, and she goes down in a gush of blood just as Sir Bradford did.

With their leader down, the twig monsters redouble their efforts. Many more appear from the grove beyond the tree. They surround Belak and one takes a healing potion from his belt and rouses its master. Belak rises to a knee, and heals himself in an effort to get back into the fight.

A giant toad appears, and tries to drag Captain Rainbrite into its shark-toothed maw with its rope-like tongue. It manages to get a bite in, but Sparkle managed to slay it with a kick and a swing of his axe.



The druid moves to counterattack, but Sparkle and Kurt will have none of that. With a nod of acknowledgement they both risk attacks of opportunity from the twigs to close with the outcast druid and end him. Lord Gunderson stabbing him in the guts and Captain Rainbrite with a mighty overhand smash to the head.

The fight is still not yet over! The wooden menaces continue to unearth themselves and move to the tree's defense. Sparkle hacks at the tree with his axe. Kurt strikes the tree with his great sword.

Fearing death, the tree itself speaks breaking into the mind of Lord Gunderson. "This is your last chance! Serve me and together we will conquer and rule!" With a mighty swing, Kurt brings his sword "Chopping Iron" down once more cleaving the trunk of the tree in half with holy fire. Huaa then uses his holy flames to completely consume the tree, roots and all to end it once and for all.

With the evil tree dead, all the purple lichen that lit the groves slowly darken. The heroes manage to save Lady Sharwyn Hercule. They light torches and take their time to collect anything they can find of value, and leave with Sharwyn and Sir Bradford in tow.

Each of the five heroes who helped with the expedition (Kurt, Sparkle, Newt, Atreyu, and Huaa) receive about 200 gold pieces from treasure taken from the citadel and their share of Lady Hercule's reward for returning Sir Bradford and Lady Sharwyn alive.

