

The Demon Heart of the Deathtree

Written and Illustrated by [Jaime Nieves](#)

Background

Many generations ago, this Tree was the heart of the Elven Kingdom. However, the demon Yad deceived the elves and corrupted the Tree. The elves fled, and only through their ultimate sacrifice could the elven wizards contain Yad's evil, banishing him back to the Abyss. The forest was left uninhabited, and the stories of ancient curses made it a place to avoid.

Recently, a group of corrupt druids—known as the **Plagueseed Order**—found a way to reactivate the **Heart of Yad**, the demonic essence left inside the Ancestral Tree that the elven wizards managed to neutralize in the past. The effect of this evil is withering the woods around the Tree, and it threatens to destroy all life if it is not stopped.

Development

PCs are contacted by a champion of the forest: a druid, a centaur, an ent or a similar fey creature. Or, if there is an explorer or druid among the PCs, they can receive an assignment from their order or guild.

PCs will have to enter the forest, find the Ancient Tree, discover what has triggered the evil inside it, and stop it before it is too late.

Act I - The Forest

As the PCs wander into the forest, they will notice that the vegetation is increasingly withered. When they get close to the Tree, all that remains is blackened trees and dead plants. Sinister creatures lurk in the forest, summoned by the evil of the Heart of Yad. Roll in the following table for wandering monsters:

1d6	Creature
1-2	Warg leading a pack of wolves
3	Living creeper
4	1-3 Trolls
5-6	Dire bear

Act II: Outside of the Tree

The Ancient Tree is massive, tall as a cathedral with thick roots like columns. Its trunk is blackened, however, and its leaves, dead. An evil aura emanates from it. A slow, pulsating, sickly heartbeat is heard inside it.

The outer area is guarded by a herd of **corrupt ents** (undead treefolk, if you believe it!).

To access the interior, the PCs will need to use a wooden spiral staircase (10' wide) that surrounds the immense trunk of the Tree. A fair example of elf craftsmanship, the stairs are imposing, but they are old and creaky. A group of **striges** lurk in the foliage above, ready to attack any living creature climbing outside the tree. The stairs have railings, but they will break easily.

Act III: Inside of the Tree

The staircase leads to a carved archway and into the Tree, to a huge room that fills up almost the whole trunk. Up near the ceiling, the PCs will see a dark, throbbing crystal, floating in the center of a hole in the floor of a room at the top of the space. There is an intermediate level, kind of a gallery with railings that also surrounds the hollow space. The staircase connects the forest floor with the first floor in the inside, but also each floor with the rest. PCs will have to use the exterior staircase when they move from one level to the next.

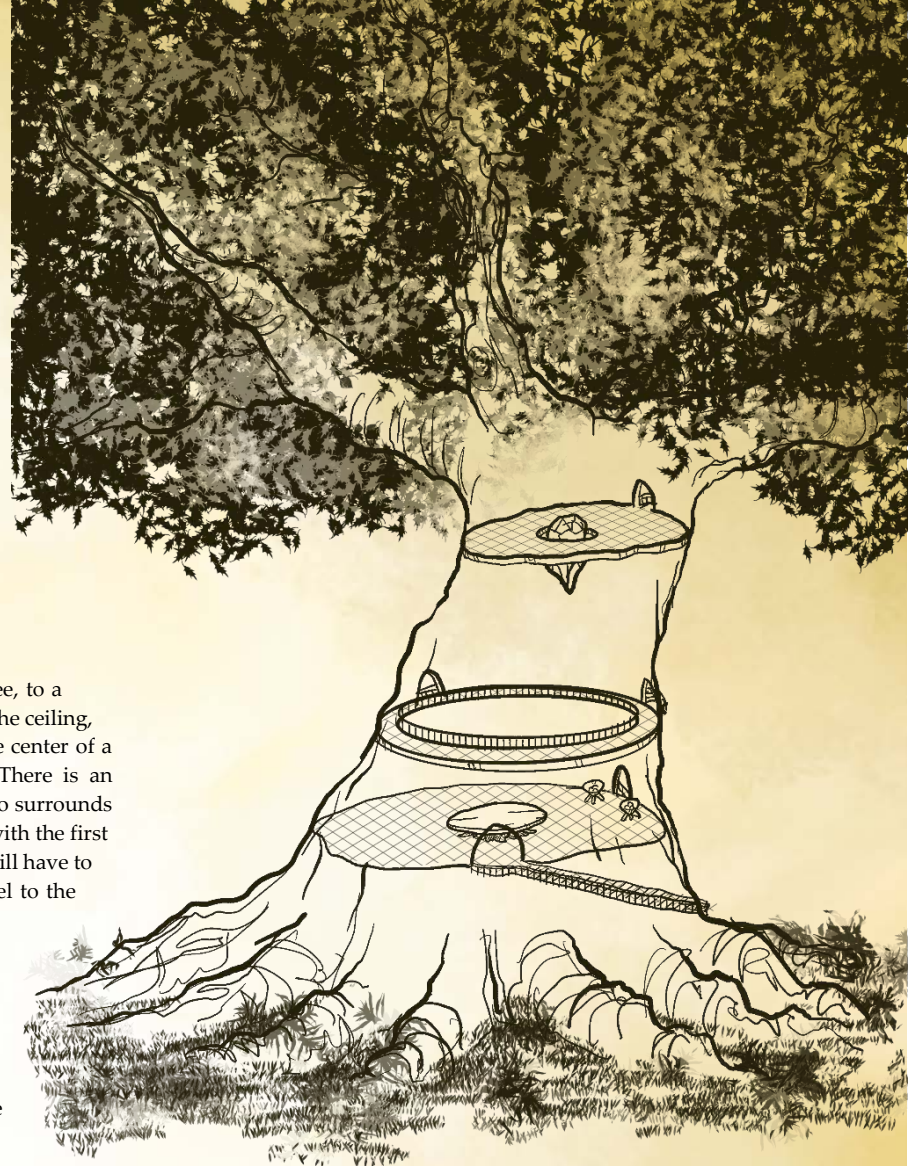
First level: At ground level, PCs will have to deal with **2-4 corrupt druids** and their minions (summoned worgs and **2-6 corrupt entlings**). Enemies in the upper gallery can also attack them from above.

Second level: Another **2-4 druids** stand guard in the gallery, unless the PCs managed to kill them from the lower room.

Third level: At the top, **2-4 druids** perform the ritual to keep the Heart of Yad active, commanded by an insidious **forest hag**. Once the PCs disrupt the ritual and defeat the enemies, the artifact will slowly shut down, and the tree will begin to bloom again, spreading its rebirth to the entire forest.

Plot Twist: Good Druids

If you want to add an additional plot twist, consider this: the Plagueseed Order has no evil intentions; while they are an unorthodox druidic organization, often despised by other druids, they take no interest in destroying the forest.



In fact, the forest is dying alone, and the only way to prevent it is to reactivate the Heart of Yad; although malignant, this relic is already part of the Tree and, unless kept active, the whole forest will perish. This allows you to include negotiations with the druids as an alternative to combat in the adventure, and the conflict between the PC's orders and the truth about the druids.

It may be even possible to keep the Heart running while suppressing its evil influence. This could lead to future adventures.