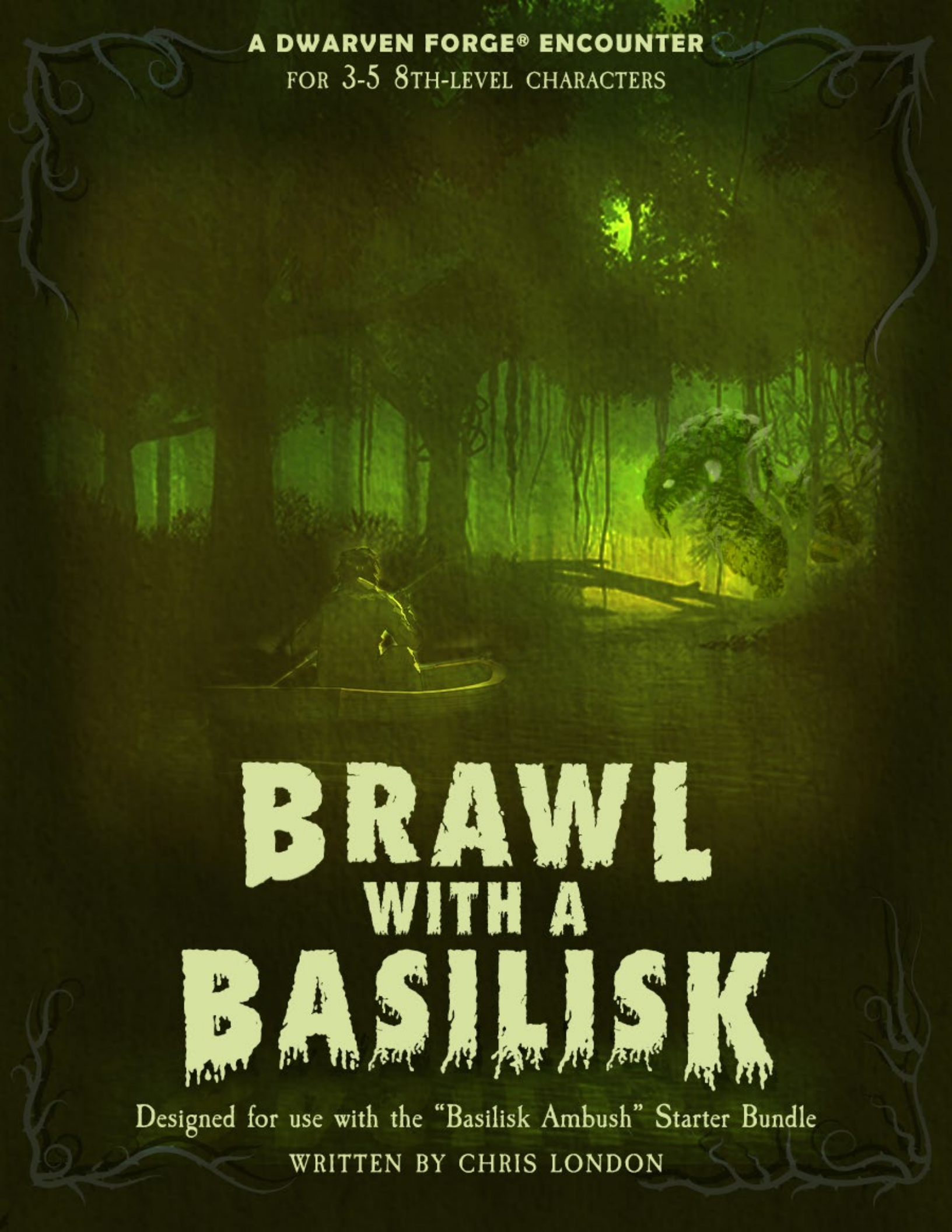




A DWARVEN FORGE® ENCOUNTER
FOR 3-5 8TH-LEVEL CHARACTERS

BRAWL WITH A BASILISK

Designed for use with the “Basilisk Ambush” Starter Bundle

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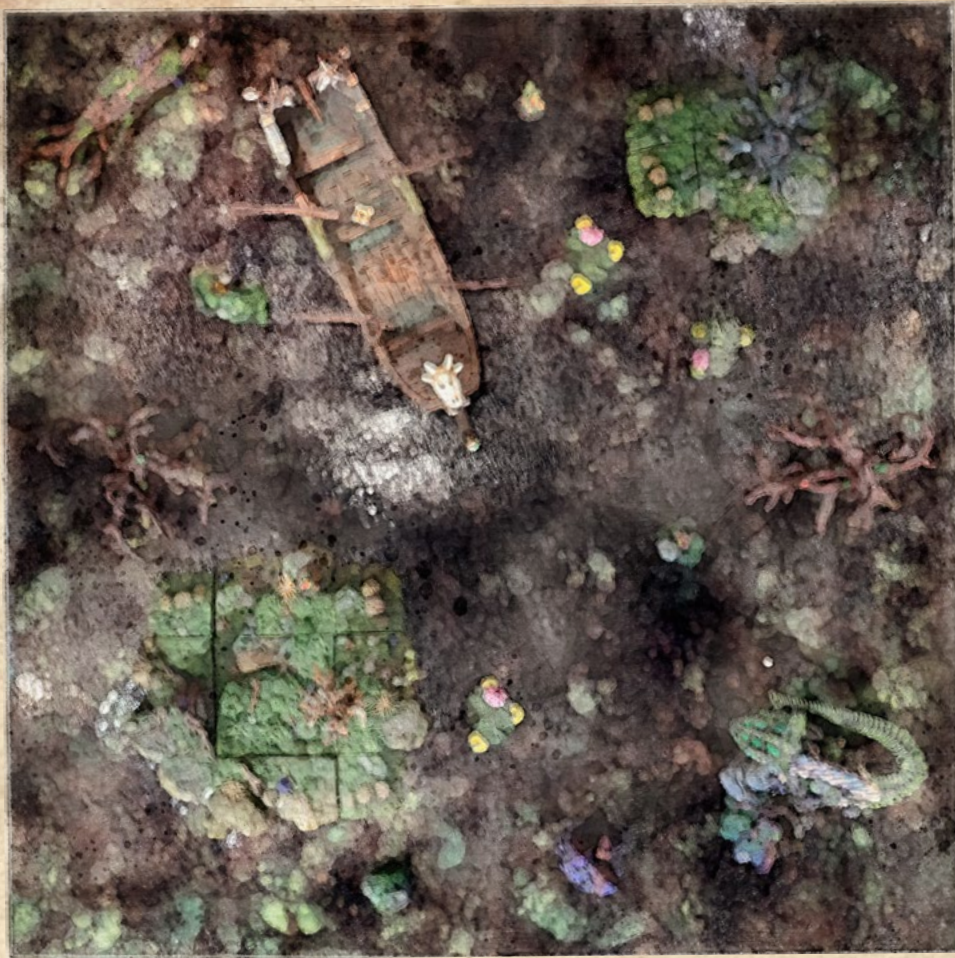
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Hook. Your party has taken a quest deep in a fetid swamp. Whether it's searching for an artefact or rescuing a botanist, they've heard some unnerving rumors about the marshland they're traveling through. Stories of hardened warbands obliterated by a mysterious beast, dragged beneath the swampwater in a frenzy of fangs and light. Having recruited an eccentric guide with a boat who swears he can take them safely to their destination, they have no choice but to hope for the best...

DM NOTES

Captain Cobgut (A deep gnome sailor) has agreed to ferry the party through the swamp in his barge. In theory, they should be much safer; the water gets pretty deep in some places, and even when it's shallow, it's much faster to glide across the surface than wade through the muck. In addition to the obvious, he also swears that his boat is "magically enchanted" and impervious to harm. As far-fetched as that story may seem, he's been traveling the marshlands for years and survived, so perhaps there's something to it after all!

If your party doesn't want to go along with Cobgut (or if you don't want to run an NPC), perhaps they can steal a boat, or it can be loaned by whoever hired them. Without the barge, they'll have a very hard time, so just find some way to get them on one.

Playing Captain Cobgut

While Cobgut is very friendly, it's also very apparent that he spends much of his time away from social norms and tends to follow his own train

of logic informed by his life on the swamp. He doesn't seem to understand why someone would be worried about heading into the swamp, but he genuinely wants to help and is delighted at the opportunity to have company on the barge.

If you'd like to drop hints about the Basilisk, consider him mentioning that he sometimes comes across statues in the marsh, though it certainly hasn't occurred to him that those are petrified adventurers rather than misplaced cultural artefacts.

Running the Encounter

Read the following aloud:

The swamp is filled with the high-pitched calls of the cicadas that call it home. The sound is so constant, so overwhelming, that you find it hard to concentrate or even keep track of time as you row. Cobgut is manning the rudder, chattering more to himself than any of you, and he guides the barge between patches of reeds, rock formations, and the gnarled trees that rise from the pungent water. As unsettling as the environment is, it's almost comforting that he seems so unbothered, so at home steering his vessel through this dark and unpleasant place. It was already a heavily clouded day, but even less

sunlight manages to pierce through the canopy of the swamp, and you find yourself grateful for the lantern chained to the front of the boat. At the very least, it lets you see 15 or 20 feet in front of you.

As the barge passes between a pair of particularly thick mangrove trees, Cobgut steadily swings the rudder back and forth with practiced ease, navigating between their outstretched roots and nosing the vessel out into an open expanse of swampwater. "A'rite, that's the worst of it!" He barks, letting go of the rudder for a moment and stretching his hands. "Lots'a rain lately, so water level's nice 'n' high in the fen. Just cruise for ten minutes or thereabouts and we're there!"

This is welcome news, and indeed, things do seem to be looking up. With the trees sparser in this area, the swamp is ever so slightly brighter. At moments, the light catches the water in such a way that it has an enchanting green glow that you might even dare call "pretty". Thankfully, the sound of cicadas has also trailed off, and you find it much easier to organize your thoughts and focus on the task at hand.

Ambush

As soon as the barge enters the open water, the basilisk begins tracking it. There are subtle signs that something isn't quite right, and the party may be feeling uneasy. If anyone asks to make a **Perception check**, on a **DC 20**, they can notice that there appear to be stone cicadas on the trunks of the trees that they pass by.

As they get deeper into the water, ask the party to each make a **Nature** or **Insight** check. On a **DC 15**, a player can notice that the green glow coming off the water is unusual, but can't figure out why. On a **DC 20**, they can deduce that the glow is coming from within the water itself.

Following a successful check, the party can roll a **Perception** check to try and locate the source of the glow. If nobody beat the **DC 20** threshold on the previous check to determine that the glow is underwater, they will have disadvantage on this **Perception check**.

This will be contested against the Basilisk's **Stealth check**, which it will have advantage on as it's underwater. If they succeed, they realize that the glow is rushing the boat and will have enough time to take an action

before the Basilisk attacks. They can either attack the glow at disadvantage since they can't quite see the target yet, ready an action, or brace themselves for whatever's coming.

If they fail to beat the Basilisk's **Stealth check**, they will be **Surprised** for the first round of combat, as the Basilisk strikes the boat.

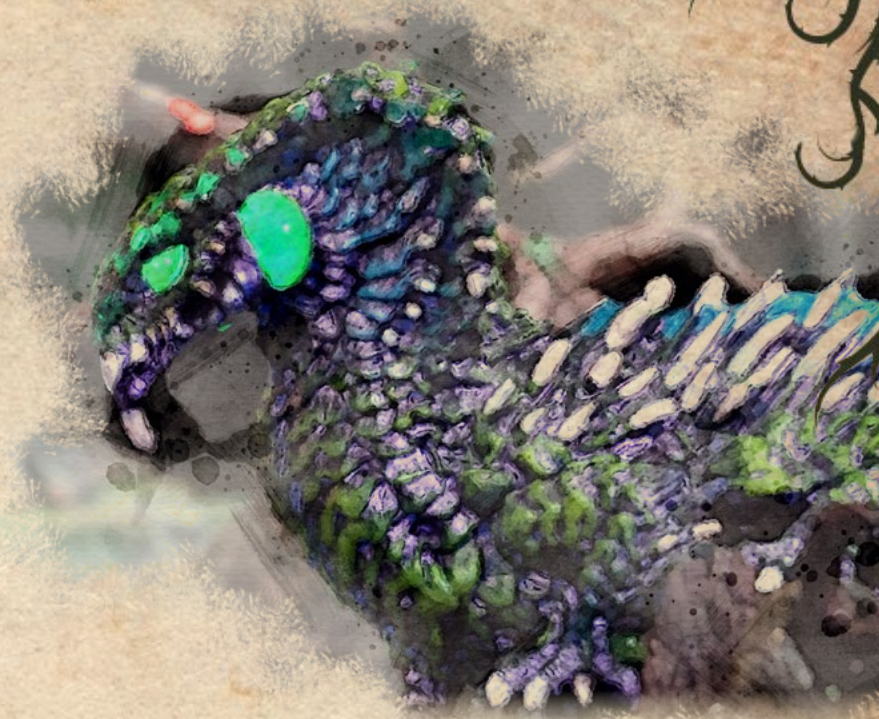
Beginning the Fight

The Basilisk's first move will be to emerge from the water beneath the boat, slamming into it and trying to knock the sailors out. Everyone must make a **DC 12 Strength saving throw**. On a success, they remain in the boat. On a failed save, they fall into the water on the other side of whatever edge they were closest to. If a character wasn't **Surprised** and chose to brace themselves, they have advantage on this saving throw.

Getting back up into the boat isn't very easy and requires a successful **DC 15 Athletics check** to scale the wet, wooden surface. A character inside the boat can use the **Help** action on their turn to assist, but many characters might be better off swimming to one of the islands to fight.

The water is deep enough on most of the map that characters can't touch the bottom, and they'll need to swim to get anywhere. However, any space within 10 feet of an island on the map is shallow water, allowing a character to stand and act as usual, though it still counts as difficult terrain.

Whenever Captain Cobgut takes a turn, he'll use all of his movement and actions to dive into the storage compartment in the back of the boat and close the lid over himself. It may not be helpful to the party, but it's kept him alive so far, and he's not about to change now.



Dangerous Plants

If it seems like the party needs more of a challenge, there are several plants included in the Basilisk Ambush bundle that can create additional obstacles. You should roll initiative for all of them at the start of the fight, but they won't act until the party gets close enough to trigger their abilities.

The *Slinkroots* are a pair of gnarled trees whose roots are rising out of the swamp. Though they seem like normal trees at first, they will join the fight if the party passes within ten feet of one, when they will then use a held Multiattack action. Once one of them attacks, both will become active, using their turns to pursue and attack the closest character. While they're in the water, they will have their movement speed cut in half, so the boat can outpace them if both sets of oars are used.

The *Sorrownest* is a stationary plant that can only act once a character is within 30 feet. On its turn, it will use Invitation on the nearest Large or smaller creature within range. If somebody is already under the effect of Invitation, it will choose the next closest target instead.

The *Blackrot Tree* is another stationary plant, and while it doesn't attack it emits a feeling of rot that affects any creature within 60 feet of it. All healing spells cast within this range heal for half as much, and any Good-aligned character that starts its turn within range must pass a **DC 15 Charisma saving throw** or take disadvantage on all ability checks for the next minute.

The *Mephit Reed* is a small plant that releases flammable spores when struck. These can be used to hide or as an explosive trap if set off with fire. The players can get very crafty with it, and it can also be harvested for later use.

A character can identify a plant and its effects on sight if they make a successful **DC 15 Nature check**. *Full stat blocks for all of these plants can be found at the end of this module.*

Utilizing the Barge

Cobgur's boat has a few elements on it that are helpful to the party. First is the *Balefire Lantern* hanging from the prow. This enchanted lantern emits a soft green light in a 15-foot radius. While inside the lantern's glow, creatures have advantage on the saving throws caused by the *Basilisk's Enchanting Glow* and *Stunning Flash* abilities, and partial petrification effects will fade if the creature doesn't look at the Basilisk for three turns in a row.

A creature can take a **Utilize** action while standing between two oars to row the barge, moving it ten feet. This can be done once per round with each set of oars on the boat, for a total of 20 feet of movement per round.

If someone uses any of the oars to move the barge during a round, a creature can take a **Utilize** action at the rudder to turn the barge up to 90 degrees.

Harpoon Launchers

The barge is also equipped with two *Harpoon Launchers* on the back. While far from the Balefire Lantern, they can prove quite useful:

- **Fire the Harpoons!** The harpoon launchers are treated as ranged weapons with the loading, ammunition, and two-handed properties, 120 / 300 foot range, and deals 18 (4d8) piercing damage on a hit. In addition, a creature hit by an attack made with the harpoon launcher must make a **DC 15 Dexterity saving throw**. On a failed saving throw, the creature becomes harpooned.
- While harpooned, a creature cannot move further away from the harpoon launcher. It can use an action to try to break the line and attempt a **DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check**. On a successful check, the harpoon line is broken, and the creature can move again as normal.
- Attacks can't be made with the harpoon launcher while it has a target harpooned. A harpoon launcher can only have one target harpooned at a time.
- **Reel Them In!** While the harpoon launcher has a creature harpooned, a creature can use an action to pull the harpooned target towards the launcher by reeling in the line. The harpooned target must make a **DC 15 Strength saving throw**. It is pulled 30 feet towards the harpoon launcher on a failed save, or up to 15 feet on a successful save. However, if the harpooned creature succeeds the save by 5 or more, it instead breaks the line and is no longer harpooned.
- **Release!** A creature can use a bonus action to release a harpooned creature from the line.
- **Cutting the Line.** The harpoon line can be attacked. It is an object with AC 20, 15 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage.



If the Party Succeeds

As the final blow strikes true, the Basilisk rears back and thrashes about, convulsing in pain. At last, it collapses in a heap. The swamp is still, and Captain Cobgut peeks out of the storage compartment in the barge. Once he sees the Basilisk is gone, he gets back to work as though nothing had happened, ready to guide the party to their destination.

The Basilisk can be harvested for several useful materials. With a successful **DC 15 Medicine check**, a player can collect up to three vials of *Basilisk Venom* from the sacs on its head. With another successful **DC 20 Medicine check**, they can safely extract a *Basilisk Fang* without breaking it. See *handouts at the end of this module*.

If the Party Fails

If the party is all killed or petrified, there are a couple of ways to keep the game moving forward. If Captain Cobgut has remained safe inside the storage compartment of the barge, he will wait until the coast is clear before guiding the boat back towards the settlement they came from, along with any of the party members' bodies who were still on board.

If a party member was killed or petrified inside the boat, Cobgut can seek out a nearby healer to revive them when he returns. If somebody was fully petrified and left behind, the basilisk will leave them where they stand for at least a few days.

If Cobgut returns alone, he will tell whoever hired the party what happened. This can set up a session where your players control new characters who head out to rescue their fallen PCs, teaming up with any of the party who remained in the boat and have been revived.

Setup

This encounter is designed to work with the "*Basilisk Ambush Bundle*" on the Dwarven Forge webstore. However, you can run it with other terrain or even in theater of the mind if you'd like.

Set up two islands in opposite quadrants of the swamp; you want them to have plenty of distance between them. Dress the swamp up as you like with the various trees and plants, but make sure there's a good amount of open

swamp for the boat and basilisk to navigate through.

If you'd like to use the *Blackrot Tree*, *Sorrownest*, or *Slinkroot* as traps, make sure they're spaced out evenly and in interesting places; the *Sorrownest* or *Blackrot Tree* are most dangerous when placed on an island, and the *Slinkroots* work best when spread out in the water, striking out at the adventurers when the barge passes by before giving pursuit.

Additional Terrain

While the *Basilisk Ambush Bundle* contains everything you need to run this encounter as-written, you can customize the build with any number of add-on sets to provide an extra challenge or tailor it more to your party's abilities. Here are some recommendations from our webstore:

The *Huge Hummock* can provide another island all by itself. It's a large elevated piece with a rock on it that a character could take cover behind, making it easier to avoid looking at the basilisk.

The *Standing Stones* are a pair of boulders with LED sockets. They come with two *Balefire Lanterns* if you want to provide more safe zones, or you can use the *Flaming Skull Sconces* instead to provide another aura, perhaps one that modifies spellcasting.

The *Felbourne Plants* would give you a second *Sorrownest*, as well as three *Sorrownest Bulbpods* that make their effects stronger. You would also get a *Bonebloom*, another treacherous plant that lies underfoot and closes on any creature that steps on it.

We have a lot more on our webstore as well! The stats in this module came from the *Wildlands Bestiary*, a free PDF download on our site that provides stat blocks for all of the creatures and plants in our Wilderness collection. We tried to give them all unique mechanics, and they just might inspire you. If you have any questions, you can reach out to us on our forums or Discord.

You can download a build guide for this encounter at bit.ly/bg-basiliskambush





BLEAKMYRE BASILISK

Huge Monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 16 (Natural Armor)

Hit Points 102 (12d12 + 24)

Speed 30 ft., swim 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	16(+3)	16(+3)	4 (-3)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)

Damage Immunities Poison

Condition Immunities Poisoned, Petrified

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., passive perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Proficiency Bonus +3

Amphibious. The basilisk can breathe air and water.

Legendary Resistance (2/Day). If the Bleakmyre Basilisk fails a saving throw, they can choose to succeed instead.

Swamp Lord. The basilisk has evolved to rule the swamp it calls home, dominating the ecosystem. While underwater, it has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks and cannot be detected if it isn't moving. It also has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks against any creature that enters or is within 5 ft of that body of water.

Petrifying Gaze. Any creature that can see the basilisk's eyes and starts their turn within 30 feet of it automatically begins to suffer the effects of its petrifying gaze. The first time this happens, their movement speed is cut in half. If they suffer this effect again within the next minute, their legs solidify, and they are restrained. On a third gaze, they are fully petrified. This petrification can be undone by greater restoration or other magic.

A creature that is not surprised can choose to avert their eyes at the start of their turn to avoid the gaze; however, if they do so, they can no longer see the basilisk and have disadvantage on any attacks they make against it. As long as they avoid looking at the basilisk, any partial petrification effects fade after 1 minute.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The basilisk uses its Enchanting Glow, then makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its claws.

Enchanting Glow. The green lights under the Bleakmyre Basilisk's hood pulse gently, filling the area with an inviting glow. All creatures currently averting their eyes within 30 feet must make a DC 13 Wisdom Saving Throw or be compelled to look at the hood, taking the effects of one Petrifying Gaze.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 To hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 14 (3d6 + 4) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) poison damage

Claws. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 16 (3d8 + 4) slashing damage. If the target is a large or smaller creature, it is grappled (escape DC 14).

Stunning Flash (Recharge 5-6). The glowing paralytic sacs on the Basilisk's hood suddenly flash with an intense light. Each creature in a 60-foot cone originating from the Basilisk must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be stunned until the end of their next turn. While stunned in this way, the creature may not avert their gaze. Any creature already averting their gaze when this ability is activated gets advantage on the saving throw.

LAIR ACTIONS

Slipstream. On initiative count 20, if no creature can see the basilisk and it is within 5 ft of a body of water large enough to conceal it, it can make a Dexterity (Stealth) check at advantage to Disengage and slip beneath the water's surface undetected. If it chooses to re-emerge in a different location on its turn, all surprised creatures within 30 feet must make a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw to avert their eyes in time to avoid its gaze.



SLINKROOT

Large plant, neutral evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)

Hit Points 75 (10d10 + 20)

Speed 30 ft.

STR
19 (+4)

DEX
15(+2)

CON
16(+3)

INT
10 (+0)

WIS
11 (+0)

CHA
6 (-2)

Damage Immunities Fire

Damage Resistances Poison, psychic

Condition Immunities Charmed, frightened, poison

Senses Blindsight 120 ft., passive perception 11

Languages —

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Unremarkable appearance. While it remains unmoving, the Slinkroot is indistinguishable from an ordinary dead tree.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The slinkroot makes two *whomp* attacks; it can replace one of those attacks with *Grasping Roots*.

Whomp. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 10 ft., one target.

Hit: 10 (1d12+4) bludgeoning damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 12 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone by the Slinkroot's branches.

Grasping Roots. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8+2) bludgeoning damage, and the target must make a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or be grappled by the Slinkroot.

SORROWNEST

Large plant, neutral evil

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 40 (4d10 + 15)

Speed 0 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16	7 (-2)	14	12	13	6 (-2)
(+3)		(+2)	(+1)	(+1)	

Damage Immunities Fire

Damage Resistances Poison, psychic

Condition Immunities Charmed, frightened, poison

Senses Blindsight 120 ft., passive perception 11

Languages —

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Bulbpod Synthesis. For every Sorrownest Bulbpod within 10 feet of the Sorrownest, the DC of the Intelligence saving throws for the Invitation Action increases by 1, to a maximum of 15.

ACTIONS

Invitation. The Sorrownest chooses a creature within 30 feet. They must succeed on a DC 11 Intelligence saving throw or be overcome with an intense desire to rest. On their turn, they must use their full movement to reach the Sorrownest and lay their head to rest inside it. At the end of each turn, they may repeat the DC 11 Intelligence saving throw to try and break the effect.

Feast. The Sorrownest closes around any creature inside it, squeezing the life force out. This attack does 10 (2d8) psychic damage and restores the Sorrownest's Hit Points by half the damage done. The target creature is now Grappled by the Sorrownest, and it must make a DC 11 Strength check to break free. The creature may not attempt to break free if it is still under the effects of *Invitation*, although if they successfully end the effects of *Invitation* at the end of their turn, they may immediately make this Strength check as a free action.



MEPHIT REED

Small plant, neutral

Spore Cloud. The Mephit Reed is filled with thick spores that crafty hunters have learned to use to their advantage. If the Mephit Reed is physically struck, it bursts open, releasing a cloud of fragrant spores that obscure a 15-foot diameter sphere around the plant. Any creature inside has advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks to hide, and any attacks against a creature in the cloud have disadvantage.

Harvesting the Mephit Reed for potions, spell components, or relocation is difficult and requires a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Nature) check. This check can be made at advantage if the harvester has and is proficient with an Herbalism kit. If the check is failed, the Mephit Reed bursts open.

The powerful scent can also be used to lure creatures driven primarily by smell, and can overwhelm them if the Mephit Reed bursts while they're next to it, stunning them until the end of their next turn if they fail a DC 12 Constitution saving throw.

The Mephit Reed and the spores within are also highly combustible; if touched by fire, they explode. Any creature within 15 feet of an intact Mephit Reed or within the spore cloud when it erupts must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, they take 10 (3d6) fire damage. On a success, they take half as much damage.



BLACKROT TREE

Large plant, neutral

Rotting Presence. The necrotic energy that runs through the Blackrot Tree can be felt throughout the area. Any healing spell cast within 60 feet of a Blackrot Tree is only half as effective.

In addition, any Good creature that approaches the Blackrot Tree can feel the ominous presence of the Shadowfell pulling them down. At the start of each turn that they begin within 60 feet of the tree, they must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma saving throw or have disadvantage on all ability checks for the next minute.





Basilisk Venom

This venom can be applied to a weapon with an action. When a creature is struck with the poisoned weapon, they must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution Saving Throw. On a successful save, nothing happens that turn. On a failure, their movement speed is cut in half.

Whether they pass or fail the first time, they continue making this save at the beginning of each of their turns. On a second failure, they become restrained. On a third failure, they become fully petrified and can only be restored with Greater Restoration or similar magic. If they make three successes before three failures, they no longer have to make Saving Throws, and any effects end.

Basilisk Fang

Wondrous Item, Rare

When fashioned into a wearable piece of jewelry like a necklace, the inherently magical nature of the Basilisk shields the wearer. The wearer has advantage on any saving throws to avoid being *Paralyzed* or *Petrified* by spells or magical effects. The wearer can also cast *Hold Person* through the fang once per long rest, and Wisdom is their spellcasting ability for this spell.



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