



## EARTH'S HEART

### AN INTRODUCTION

**T**HE TUNNEL IS DAMP AND CLAUSTROPHOBIC, THE CEILING dripping with water. Patches of lichen and moss grow between the brickwork while rivulets flow out of the crumbling stone walls. The tunnel is ancient and in an extreme state of decay, in places, roots erupt from the walls, pushing bricks out at odd angles.

The passage ahead opens into a large circular chamber. Every surface is covered in vines and roots, interwoven into a lattice of greens and browns, glistening with moisture. A green glow illuminates the space, coming from pods that hang from the roof and walls. Towards the center of the chamber is a pool of crystal clear water, so clear you can only see it by the slight ripples on its surface. As you enter the chamber you notice the vines twitch and twist with each step you take. You try to move lightly, placing your feet gently onto the living ground but with each step towards the center, the vines seem to become more agitated.

You gesture to your companions standing at the entrance to the chamber. Dangling from the Ranger's hand is a length of string, tied to its end is a small carved bone whistle. With a circular movement, he whips the whistle into the air and begins swinging it around his head. It creates a low rhythmic tone that seems to soothe the vines. You continue forward slowly.

With a few careful steps, you reach the edge of the pool. As you crouch down to scoop up a vial of water the rhythmic tones suddenly stop. Looking up in horror you see the whistle sail over your head and plop into the pool. You hear your friend curse and whisper an apology. He never was good at tying knots.

From all around you begin to hear sounds of movement. A leathery fibrous rustling as vines slither towards you and your friends. From above you hear popping and tearing, as a number of pods burst open to reveal multi-legged creatures, they scuttle down the walls and across the vines towards you. You quickly scoop up some water, tuck the vial into your belt and draw your weapons, it seems you'll be fighting your way out.

### NOTES AND TIPS

- 30x45 grid map
- This can be attached to almost any dungeon complex as a boss-style room or as a simple odd encounter.
- The vines have a chance of catching a player's legs or trapping a foot. Roll to see if they make dex checks while navigating the floor. Depending on their actions the vines could get quite angry, making for a rather difficult terrain ;)
- Have swarms of insects attack the party. Spiders, worms, fireflies, theme them as you wish, they can be a distraction from the main combat or could be dangerous enough to be a threat of their own.
- The water at the center of the chamber is magical and full of life energy. It has many amazing restorative properties. Much like

the Holy Grail in the third (and last!) Indy film you can't take the water out of the chamber, if you try, things go badly for you.

- Any number of things can live within the vines of this room, insects obviously, but also plant-based versions of other monsters. Stick some leaves on almost anything and you are good!
- A Druid sect is attempting to cleanse the world of civilization, they can control all the plants of the region from this chamber. Maybe they created this room, or maybe it has always been here and they are simply using it.
- This chamber is a prison for something evil. Maybe some ancient druids imprisoned it here or maybe the world itself has created this chamber to protect itself from the corruption this being is capable of causing.
- This could be an entrance to another plane of existence. Dive into the center and find yourself in the Feywild or Shadowfell, but beware the guardians at the gates!

### VARIANTS

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