



# TREED!

A Side Trek for 7th-Level Characters

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**T**he Graythicket tribe of elves has long called the woodlands that bear their name their home. They have also always known that the temperamental portal to the Feywild in their woods might someday prove problematic. But despite their knowledge and vigilance, trouble has arrived from their ancient home, in the form of an angry, vicious owlbear.

“Treed!” is a D&D Side Trek for five characters of 7th level. It is easily adaptable to any campaign’s needs. While it takes place in a barren stretch of land near a forest, you can relocate the encounter to any area appropriate to your campaign.

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## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Not long ago, a particularly vicious owlbear blundered through a fey crossing into the world. Bewildered by its abrupt transposition and unfamiliar with its new surroundings, the owlbear went on a deadly rampage through the woodlands nearby, driving out all other predators before claiming a barren stretch of land on the edge of the forest as its own. Despite their best efforts, a nearby group of elves known as the Graythicket tribe, also traumatized by the owlbear, were unable to drive it out.

Despite a general respect for all life, the Graythickets have decided that it would be best if the owlbear was destroyed. Unwilling to risk any more of their warriors, several of whom have been killed or injured by the creature, they spread the word that they in need of aid to hunt down the owlbear. The first group to make the attempt was a band of adventurers who called themselves the Shevverim. One of their number was a Graythicket elf who had left to seek his fortune in the wider world. On hearing of his tribe's troubles, he returned to lend his aid accompanied by some loyal allies. Unfortunately, the angry owlbear proved too canny a foe, and two of the adventurers became its next meal. The rest refused to consider fighting the beast again and left. The elf adventurer, Luthan, remained behind, and now travels to surrounding communities in search of other adventurers who will rid his tribe of the menace. The ravenous owlbear has begun hunting further afield from its claimed land, causing the Graythicket tribe no end of problems.

The first takers Luthan found were a group of roguish kenku mercenaries. Led by a scruffy scoundrel named Atatakk, the kenku were curiously eager to pursue the owlbear. But their enthusiasm apparently didn't serve them well against the beast, as they never returned. Luthan scouted the area after they failed to report back, and saw only some scattered black feathers near the owlbear's lair. No other sign of the kenku remained.

Discouraged, Luthan redoubled his efforts, and succeeded in finding three more groups willing to engage the owlbear, whose legend had grown among the local communities. But each of the groups Luthan sent failed to return. Further scouting missions didn't even turn up sign of their clothes or belongings.

### THE MYSTERY

The truth of the matter is that the kenku are thieves from a larger flock from a nearby city. Tasked with finding a way to extort, steal, or cheat the local folk out of any coin they could, the kenku traveled from town to town until they met Luthan. They never had any intention of fighting the owlbear, but Atatakk saw an opportunity. After getting Luthan's directions to the owlbear's cave, they set off to scout the area. Atatakk had a few of his band sneak into the area when the owlbear was asleep and scatter some feathers on the ground. Then the kenku circled around into the woods nearby, where Atatakk could observe the comings and goings of the beast, and they waited.

Just a few days later, they saw Luthan come by and scout the area, note the feathers, and leave in dejection. The kenku continued to wait. Less than a week after that, a band of adventurers came to fight the owlbear once more. It defeated them easily. After the owlbear, replete on fresh adventurers, had dozed

off, Atatakk and his band stole down silently and collected the fallen adventurers' gear and money.

More adventurers followed in later days. Sometimes, if the owlbear was hard pressed, Atatakk would order his kenku into the fray to aid it. They always caught the adventurers by surprise and turned the tide, then fled before the beast could turn on them. Later, they would return and collect the treasure from the battle. The bulk of their loot has been sent back to their home flock in the city. But Atatakk has kept a few choice bits for himself...

Unknown to the Graythicket tribe or Luthan, another denizen of the Feywild recently wandered through the portal: a gnome arcanist by the name of Orva. A researcher at heart, she was disoriented at first, but quickly realized the portal she'd passed through had closed behind her. She set off in search of aid, but found the owlbear's territory instead. The enraged beast caught the scent of its home plane and flew into a rage. It chased the panicked gnome, wounding her badly before she managed to find refuge in the branches of a nearby tree on the edge of the owlbear's territory.

Orva has attempted to leave the tree twice, but both times, by chance, the owlbear was nearby and chased her. Now, her strength waning, she has succumbed to paranoia and despair, and doesn't know what to do. She has nearly run out of food, despite rationing, and is now in danger of starving to death.

### INVOLVING THE PCs

The PCs have come to one of the small settlements near the Graythicket lands and encounter Luthan, who still seeks the aid of adventurers. If the plight of the Graythicket elves isn't enough of a lure to get the PCs interested, consider one of the following hooks:

**Portal to the Feywild:** The PCs might be in the area in search of a portal to the Feywild. If they ask around, they will be directed to Luthan, as the Graythicket elves are the known experts on their forest's portal. Luthan knows of the portal and will share its location with the PCs, provided they help him with the "owlbear situation."

**Treasure of the Fallen:** Luthan could attempt to sway the heroes by explaining that many other adventurers have gone to face the owlbear and failed, and the heroes would be legends (albeit only locally) were they to triumph. If that still doesn't seal the deal, he points out that all those dead adventurers have surely left quite a trove behind, which is likely to be found in the owlbear's lair.

**Wanted: One Owlbear Head:** Finally, if all else fails, Luthan will offer the PCs 500 gp from the Graythicket tribe's meager savings if the PCs bring him the head of the owlbear.

## STARTING THE ADVENTURE

The PCs have arrived in the community of Havermere. (If you don't want to add a new settlement, have Luthan wander in wherever the PCs are currently staying. He's on the move constantly, making him easy to drop into any ongoing campaign.) This small town is protected by a wooden palisade and features a fairly healthy economy. Trade with other towns is brisk, but the residents have grown uneasy lately thanks to Luthan's near-frantic attempts to find aid for his tribe. He spends the bulk of his day in Havermere's market square, then at dusk, heads to the Dizzy Monk, one of the town's pubs. In either place, he attempts to interview every newcomer. As Havermere sits near a trade crossroads, that means a fair

number of merchants and members of their caravans pass through its gates.

Luthan has become something of a local nuisance, and he will often pester visitors beyond their patience. He's been tossed out of all the other inns and taverns in town. Only the Dizzy Monk remains open to him.

When the PCs arrive in Havermere, it could be for any number of reasons, depending on your campaign. If they seek out a good tavern, have a local direct them deliberately to the Dizzy Monk if the heroes aren't bothering to conceal their occupations. At this point, everyone wants the owlbear dead so Luthan will shut up and go home. New adventurers in town mean new potential hires for the weary, irritating elf.

Luthan has grown desperate, as his tribe's hunting grows more difficult with each passing day. When the PCs meet him, he is wan and pale, with dark circles under his eyes. Once a ranger, his equipment seems ill cared for, although he still wears hide armor and carries his longbow everywhere. His voice is deep, slow, and earnest, as he tries to persuade adventurers to aid his cause. He doesn't hesitate to share all that he knows from the Adventure Background. He knows nothing from The Mystery section, above.

Once the heroes have agreed to aid Luthan, proceed to encounter T1 after reading the General Details, below.

## GENERAL DETAILS

The owlbear's territory is mostly barren and lifeless rock fields. It's bordered to the south by some heavy forest, now the edge of the Graythicket lands. The tree holding Orva is on this border to the southeast, and is directly in the PCs' path when they approach.

## TREASURE

The PCs should gain two parcels of treasure by the end of the adventure. One of the parcels should be coin and goods, the other should be a magic item recovered from Atatakk's stash. This Side Trek grants parcel 4 and parcel 8 from the 7th-level list (*Dungeon Master's Guide*®, page 127). Both parcels are found in encounter T2. Modify the treasure as needed for your party's level.

## T1. DESPERATION

*As you emerge from the Graythicket forest, the change in the landscape is startling as the trees end suddenly. The most noticeable feature of this barren landscape is its utter lack of life. The only things rising from its parched soil are the desiccated remnants of several dead trees withered by the unforgiving sunlight. Otherwise, only a few piles of bleached stones provide what little shelter is available.*

Orva's tree is about 20 feet west of the PCs' position as they emerge from the forest. If they aren't approaching stealthily, she hears them automatically and begins calling for help in both Common and Elven. Proceed to the roleplaying encounter.

**Roleplaying Encounter:** T1. Desperation (page 19).

## T2. HUNTER BECOMES THE HUNTED

After the PCs have had a chance to interact with Orva for a bit, the owlbear catches wind of them and it races to attack. Meanwhile, Atatakk has his kenku warriors positioned strategically at a distance around the owlbear's territory. Atatakk knows about Orva, but hasn't take steps to eliminate her. He's patient, and he thinks the owlbear will get her eventually.

But even so, he has a spy watching her tree, who has reported back to Atatakk as soon as the PCs showed up. The kenku thief is even now gathering his troops to observe (and possibly contribute to) the fight he knows is inevitable. After all, he's seen it before.

**Tactical Encounter:** T2. Hunter Becomes the Hunted (page 20).

## CONCLUSION

Once the PCs have dealt with the owlbear, they can easily find Luthan back in Havermere to collect their reward, if they negotiated one. Upon searching Atatakk, they find the collected loot he saved for himself (see Treasure on page 17). Orva will come down from her tree is presented with the head of the owlbear. She is weak and will happily take any food or water that's offered. She's particularly incensed that the kenku were here, clearly knew she was in the tree, and offered no assistance. She makes plans to return to the Feywild portal as soon as possible and determine a way to activate it to travel home.

## EXPANDING THE ADVENTURE

This Side Trek can serve as a springboard for several larger, more ambitious adventures. Some ideas might include the following hooks.

### ORVA AND THE FEYWILD

There's a portal to the Feywild nearby, and it seems to be operating intermittently, or perhaps deliberately but at the whim of some other agent. Orva knows where the portal is, as does Luthan, and both are willing to show the PCs to its location. At your discretion, Orva knows how to activate the portal, enabling the PCs to return with her. Orva could be a representative of a gnome community of the Feywild, or a member of an arcane study group, either of which might need the help of able heroes. For example, perhaps Orva was out wandering the forest of the Feywild in search of the lost ruins of an eladrin city, long since destroyed by incursions from the Feydark. The city is said to hold important knowledge that she needs to defend the arcane society to which she belongs from harm.

### FLOCK ON THE PROWL

Atatakk has been sending the majority of the loot gathered from the adventurers eaten by the owlbear back to his flock in a nearby city. When the supply stops, more kenku are sent to investigate, and they're likely to be displeased by the slaughter of their companions. A vendetta is sworn by the vengeful kenku, who wield a substantive amount of power in this region, and assassins routinely show up to attack the PCs at the worst times. (After all, Atatakk isn't the only opportunistic kenku in his flock.) The PCs can trace their attackers back to the city, only to find that the kenku are major players in the underworld, and getting the bounty lifted from their heads might require them to take down an extensive criminal organization.

### PRISONER!

The last time the owlbear destroyed a band of would-be hunters, one of the adventurers in the party actually managed to crawl away before falling unconscious from her wounds. The kenku found the adventurer, stabilized the unfortunate soul, and have been keeping her prisoner. Atatakk hasn't quite figured out what to do with her yet, although he's toying with the idea of a ransom. He just doesn't know who to ransom her to. When the kenku have been defeated, the PCs find the prisoner, bound and gagged in the kenku encampment. Who this prisoner is can be up to you, but perhaps she's a member of a powerful merchant house that just happens to be look for some adventurers.

## T1. DESPERATION

### Roleplaying Encounter

Encounter Level 6

### RUNNING THIS ENCOUNTER

This roleplaying encounter begins when the characters emerge from the Graythicket Woods.

#### Perception DC 8

*You hear a woman's voice—weakened, but still with enough volume to carry—from a small cluster of trees roughly 20 feet west of your position. Calling out first in Elven, then in Common, you hear the voice cry out, “Please help me! I've been in this tree for days, and I don't know if I can make it much longer! Please!”*

If the PCs investigate, they can easily see Orva, filthy and disheveled, hiding in the branches of a tree on the edge of the forest.

#### When the PCs approach, read the following:

*High in a tree on the edge of this desolate area, you see a small woman—a gnome—clutching desperately to some of the smallest branches at the very top of the tree. She looks thin, gaunt, and frightened, and she peers at you with both fear and hope.*

Orva is malnourished, having run out of food almost two days ago. She has been conserving her water, but is also dehydrated. She has barely slept since she climbed the tree, out of fear of the owlbear and falling out and hurting herself in such a manner that she would be helpless to escape from the owlbear should it come upon her. In addition, the owlbear hunts whenever it's awake, and as it hunts, it emits piercing screeches that echo across the land. The PCs hear just such a screech as they

arrive at the base of Orva's tree. During the course of this roleplaying encounter, the owlbear screeches periodically, sometimes closer, sometimes further away.

As a result of all this, Orva has developed a healthy case of paranoia about the owlbear she believes is stalking her, waiting to pounce as soon as she descends. She is relieved to see any potentially friendly faces, but her fear is both overwhelming and debilitating. As the PCs begin to interact with Orva, they can make Insight checks.

#### Insight DC 14

The PCs realize that Orva is extremely afraid, and it quickly becomes apparent that the source of her fear is the owlbear, which she will quickly point out lairs in the immediate area.

#### Insight DC 19

Orva is not simply afraid. She is paralyzed with fear. Her eyes dart back and forth across the landscape, constantly looking for signs of her tormentor. She refuses steadfastly to come down from the tree until she's seen the owlbear's corpse, or at least proof of its death, and she means it. Her fear is so overpowering, she would rather starve to death than descend from her position.

*“No! No! I will not come down! Not until that thing is dead. I know it's out there. I can smell it! Can't you? With its horrid eyes! I know it's there, waiting for me!”*

The PCs can also make Perception checks as they interact with Orva.

#### Perception DC 14

This gnome wears clothing unlike anything you've seen in this region. In addition, her Common is graced with an accent you've heard before, from folk who call the Feywild their home.

## WHAT ORVA KNOWS

Orva can relate the following:

- ◆ The owlbear lairs nearby. In fact, she's not sure why it hasn't jumped out to attack yet. This only further cements her belief that the owlbear is after her, personally. She claims the owlbear must have “developed a taste for gnome.”
- ◆ Orva passed through a portal from her home in the Feywild several days ago. She's an arcanist by trade, and quickly realized what had happened. Unfortunately, she couldn't find her way back to the portal, and instead wandered into the owlbear's territory. She's replayed her route in her mind several times, and she thinks she knows the way back to the portal from here now, however.

A few things also seem to be bothering Orva. With a little prodding, the PCs can learn some additional information.

**Insight (DC 19):** *I saw a kenku skulking along the forest edge yesterday. I was half asleep, and by the time I realized what I was seeing, he was gone. I called out, but he didn't return. I might have imagined the whole thing...*

**Diplomacy (DC 19):** *I can show you the way to the portal from here, if you kill that beast and show me its head.*

Finally, feel free to make Orva a source of other information, depending on the needs of your campaign. She can be an excellent resource for questions about arcane topics or the Feywild, especially, and could become an ally of the PCs who can bridge both worlds.

## T2. THE HUNTER BECOMES THE HUNTED

Encounter Level 7 (XP 1700)

### SETUP

Atatakk, kenku wing mage (A)

Cockatrice (C)

Owlbear (O)

4 kenku warriors (K)

Shortly after the PCs finish speaking with Orva, the fiercely territorial owlbear senses their presence and rushes out from its dusty nest to confront them. While hunting, it incessantly emits a terrifying, piercing screech that echoes across the desolate landscape.

The kenku keep a watch around the perimeter of the owlbear's territory, and they send word to Atatakk as soon as the heroes enter the area. The kenku then regroup, ready to observe the fight or aid the owlbear as necessary.

Atatakk, the kenku leader, is flush with confidence. Just this morning, his flock somehow captured a wandering cockatrice (though at the cost of his group's remaining kenku sneak). The unfortunate creature strains at a long leash, squawking madly and flapping its stubby wings in futile protest, but it has yet to turn on its new masters.

The kenku wait until the owlbear has attacked the PCs before striking; do not place them on the map until they join the fight in the second round, as indicated on the shaded section of the map.

### When the owlbear comes into view, read:

*Unfortunately, you now discover the source of the awful racket that has been plaguing you for the last few minutes. A massive owlbear comes into view several steps ahead of you, crawling slowly over a pile of rubble. It scrapes its razor-sharp talons against the rocks, producing a dreadful, high-pitched sound that immediately puts you on edge. The owlbear rears up on its hind legs and bellows angrily; in a few moments, its full-throated roar reaches an awful, shrieking crescendo. After its display of dominance, you know that an attack is imminent.*

### Perception DC 14 (after the first round of battle):

*Over the din of battle, you hear a strange sound, almost like a mixture of hissing and clucking. It almost sounds like an angry chicken is lurking behind some nearby rocks.*

### TACTICS

The owlbear immediately attacks the nearest PC with *double attack*; if it manages to grab its target, it eagerly spends its action point to bite its captive prey. It is not a subtle adversary and employs the same basic strategy described above round after round. Once the kenku join the fray, the owlbear selects its target based solely on whoever inflicted the most damage upon it the previous round.

The kenku desire to approach the brewing melee unobserved, but the obstinate cockatrice makes that a more difficult task than they anticipated. The kenku enter the initiative count after the second round of combat, gaining combat advantage until the beginning of their next turn against any target who failed to notice their approach (the enraged owlbear is too preoccupied and automatically fails its Perception check). Atatakk knows generalities about the PCs (number, race, and so on), but nothing specific (his

spies aren't clever enough to try and determine the PCs' classes, for example). Atatakk directs the cockatrice at the heroes, but each round on its initiative, roll 1d6. On a roll of 1 or 2, it attacks the closest enemy to it, friend or foe, rather than automatically targeting one of the PCs.

The kenku warriors hurl their daggers at any target that they have combat advantage against and then try to maneuver to set up flanking opportunities. If close-quarters fighting proves too risky, they turn to hit-and-run tactics, using their *fluttering attack* power to stay constantly on the move.

Atatakk first uses *wings of the flock* so he can safely stay out of the reach of the owlbear (and the PCs), and then attacks from range with his spells, occasionally risking a *hurricane blast* if it recharges. He is not as haphazard as his flockmates; however, he does not care overmuch if he accidentally hits his fellow kenku with his attacks.

The temperamental owlbear fights to the death and relentlessly pursues fleeing creatures to the edge of its territory. The kenku are much less tenacious and try to retreat if more than half their number are killed or incapacitated. If the kenku warrior holding the cockatrice is killed, the cockatrice fights only until bloodied, then it flees, wanting nothing more than to find its burrow and hide there.

**Atatakk, Kenku Wing Mage (A) Level 5 Artillery**

Medium natural humanoid XP 200

**Initiative** +3      **Senses** Perception +3; low-light vision  
**HP** 50; **Bloodied** 25  
**AC** 17; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 18  
**Speed** 6

⊕ **Dagger** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**  
 +9 vs. AC; 1d4+3 damage.

⊗ **Murder of Crows** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Force, Implement**  
 Ranged 20; +10 vs. Reflex; 1d6+4 force damage, and the target grants combat advantage to the kenku wing mage (save ends).

↶ **Hurricane Blast** (standard; recharge ☞☞☞☞) ♦ **Force, Implement**  
 Close blast 3; +8 vs. Fortitude; 1d6+6 force damage, and the kenku wing mage slides the target 3 squares.

✱ **Death Flock** (standard; encounter) ♦ **Force, Implement**  
 Area burst 1 within 20; +8 vs. Reflex; 1d6+6 force damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

**Flock Effect**  
 A kenku wing mage gains a +3 bonus instead of +2 while flanking, and it grants a +3 bonus instead of +2 while aiding another.

**Mimicry**  
 A kenku wing mage can mimic sounds and voices. A successful Insight check opposed by the wing mage's Bluff check allows a listener to determine that the effect is faked.

**Wings of the Flock** (minor; encounter) ♦ **Force**  
 The kenku wing mage gains fly 6 (hover; altitude limit 4) until the end of the encounter.

**Alignment** Unaligned      **Languages** Common  
**Skills** Stealth +8  
**Str** 9 (+1)      **Dex** 13 (+3)      **Wis** 13 (+3)  
**Con** 14 (+4)      **Int** 18 (+6)      **Cha** 15 (+4)  
**Equipment** robes, dagger, implement, orb

**4 Kenku Warriors (K) Level 3 Skirmisher**

Medium natural humanoid XP 150

**Initiative** +6      **Senses** Perception +3; low-light vision  
**HP** 44; **Bloodied** 22  
**AC** 17; **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 14  
**Speed** 6

⊕ **Dagger** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**  
 +8 vs. AC; 1d4+6 damage.

⊗ **Dagger** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**  
 Ranged 5/10; +8 vs. AC; 1d4+6 damage.

↓ **Fluttering Attack** (standard; at-will)  
 The kenku warrior shifts 4 squares and makes a basic attack during that movement.

**Combat Advantage**  
 A kenku warrior deals 1d6 extra damage on melee attacks against any target granting combat advantage to it.

**Flock Effect**  
 A kenku warrior gains a +3 bonus instead of +2 while flanking, and it grants a +3 bonus instead of +2 while aiding another.

**Mimicry**  
 A kenku warrior can mimic sounds and voices. A successful Insight check opposed by the warrior's Bluff check allows a listener to determine that the effect is faked.

**Alignment** Unaligned      **Languages** Common  
**Str** 14 (+3)      **Dex** 17 (+4)      **Wis** 14 (+3)  
**Con** 12 (+2)      **Int** 9 (0)      **Cha** 11 (+1)  
**Equipment** 6 daggers, leather armor

**Cockatrice (C) Level 5 Skirmisher**

Small natural beast XP 200

**Initiative** +8      **Senses** Perception +2; low-light vision  
**HP** 63; **Bloodied** 31  
**AC** 19; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 15  
**Immune** petrification  
**Speed** 4, fly 6 (clumsy)

⊕ **Bite** (standard, at-will)  
 +10 vs. AC; 1d6+3 damage, and the cockatrice makes a secondary attack against the same target. *Secondary Attack:* +8 vs. Fortitude; the target is slowed (save ends). *First Failed Saving Throw:* The target is immobilized instead of slowed (save ends). *Second Failed Saving Throw:* The target is petrified.

↓ **Buffeting Wings** (Immediate interrupt, when an enemy moves adjacent to the cockatrice, recharge ☞☞☞☞)  
 The cockatrice uses its bite against the triggering enemy and then shifts 3 squares.

**Alignment** Unaligned      **Languages** –  
**Skills** Stealth +11  
**Str** 9 (+1)      **Dex** 18 (+6)      **Wis** 11 (+2)  
**Con** 15 (+4)      **Int** 2 (-2)      **Cha** 4 (-1)

**Owlbear (O) Level 8 Elite Brute**

Large fey beast XP 700

**Initiative** +6      **Senses** Perception +12; low-light vision  
**HP** 212; **Bloodied** 106  
**AC** 22; **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 20  
**Saving Throws** +2  
**Speed** 7  
**Action Points** 1

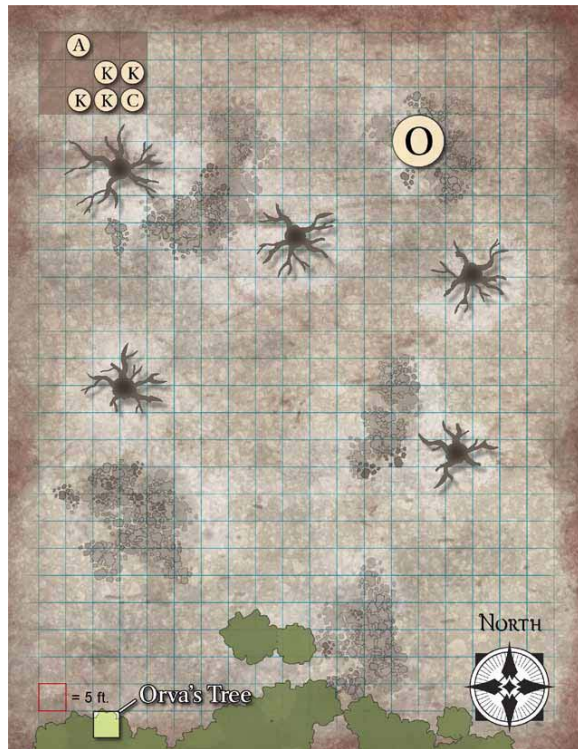
⊕ **Claw** (standard, at-will)  
 Reach 2; +12 vs. AC; 2d6+5 damage.

↓ **Double Attack** (standard, at-will)  
 The owlbear makes two claw attacks. If both claws hit the same target, the target is grabbed (until escape).

↓ **Bite** standard, at-will)  
 Grabbed target only; automatic hit; 4d8+5 damage.

↶ **Stunning Screech** (immediate reaction, when first bloodied, encounter)  
 Close burst 1; +10 vs. Fortitude; the target is stunned (save ends).

**Alignment** Unaligned      **Languages** –  
**Str** 20 (+9)      **Dex** 14 (+6)      **Wis** 16 (+7)  
**Con** 16 (+7)      **Int** 2 (0)      **Cha** 10 (+4)



## DEVELOPMENT

**Kenku Prisoners:** If the PCs manage to subdue any of the kenku, they find that the craven humanoids are willing to spill their guts with little prompting. Unfortunately, other than a self-pitying recounting of recent events, they know little information of practical use, but that will not stop them from making up what they think the PCs want to hear. The kenku can be part of a much larger criminal organization, should you desire. If that's the case, they try to bluster and bluff that their powerful kin will want them freed, or they could be consequences. A DC 10 Insight check reveals that this is partly true (they are part of such an organization) and partly false (the

organization frowns on members who allow themselves to get captured and can't free themselves).

If the PCs free the kenku, they flee home to the city, where they report their capture and release, and possibly earn the heroes a new enemy.

**Tracking the Cockatrice:** If the cockatrice escapes after petrifying one of the PCs, the survivors may want to track it down so they can create a poultice from its feathers that reverses the effect (a DC 17 Nature check reveals this property). Tracking the bird is a level 7 skill challenge with a complexity of 1, requiring four successes before three failures (primary skills are Nature, Perception, and Stealth). The solitary cockatrice nests in a small cleft in the nearby ridge. If the PCs succeed at the skill challenge, they find the cockatrice scratching at the ground, looking for food, but if they fail, the irate cockatrice leaps out from its hiding place, attacking with surprise.

When feathers freshly plucked from a cockatrice are mixed with mud, it creates a poultice that can reverse petrification when spread on an affected creature within 24 hours. It requires a DC 20 Heal check and 30 minutes of preparation to create the poultice; one cockatrice provides enough feathers to create a single application.

## FEATURES OF THE AREA

**Dead Trees:** A creature standing in the same square as a dead tree gains cover. If a dead tree is in the area of a burst or blast attack that inflicts fire or lightning damage (or if it is specifically targeted by such a power), it bursts into flames (close burst 1, +8 vs. Reflex, 2d6 fire damage) and burns until the end of the encounter. Creatures entering a square containing a burning tree, or who begin their turn there, take 2d6 fire damage.

**Gravel Field:** Patches of gravel cover the owlbear's territory; each patch counts as difficult terrain.

**Rubble:** The piles of rubble that dot the landscape can provide cover to a crouching, Medium-sized or smaller creature. Each pile counts as difficult terrain.

**Taut Leash:** The cockatrice continually struggles against its rope leash, keeping it extremely taut and constantly swaying, which poses a hazard to nearby combatants. On the map, draw a line up to 4 squares long from the center of the cockatrice's square to the center of the square occupied by the kenku warrior tethered to it (determine the kenku controlling the cockatrice at the beginning of the combat). Any creature that willingly moves through a space containing the line is subject to the following attack: +10 vs. Reflex, targets hit by the attack are knocked prone and their movement ends. The rope continues to make the attack until both the cockatrice and kenku warrior are killed, the cockatrice breaks free, or the PCs sever the rope (AC 10, Reflex 10, Fortitude 5, 3 hit points).

### About the Author

"Oasis of the Golden Peacock" was **Tim Eagon's** first published RPG work, in *Dungeon* #169. "Treed!" was originally an encounter included as part of that adventure, but the owlbear seemed to require a life (and an adventure) all its own.