



LOST IN THE DARKMAGIC

5 Difficulty
4 Complexity

A standalone encounter for five adventurers

By Corwin Riddle

Lost in the Darkmagic is a standalone encounter designed for five 8th to 10th-level adventurers. The players must enter an abandoned lumber mill and defeat a weather-controlling sorceress and her entourage of mischievous gnomes.

BACKGROUND

A community built upon farming, logging, and horticulture, the town of Tyarc has always been reliant on the predictably present weather and sunlight—a perfect balance of rain and shine, ideal for tending crops, trees, and other plantlife. The residents sustain this lifestyle on the edge of Feylight forest, often venturing into its groves for seeds, companion plants, and lumber, doing their best to live in harmony with the creatures and greenery inside. With exports at an all-time high and their prized plants and lumber in such demand, additional craftsman and workers show up every day, hoping to take part in Tyarc's bright future.

But lately, Tyarc has been seeing darker days. The clouds above the town have turned an unrelenting gray, refusing to pass. Day by day, the clouds become thicker and darker, squeezing any light out of the sky and shrouding the town and the surrounding area with a cold, black shadow. Controlling this unnatural weather is a sorceress known by Ceretha Darkmagic, a troublesome elf who has always been found within the tallest and oldest woods of Feylight forest. Recruiting a chorus of puckish gnomes to assist her magic, Ceretha has begun to choke the life out of Tyarc, letting the cold darkness suffocate their plants, food supply, and way of life.

In response, many of the townsfolk have left the area, unable to make a living and unwilling to confront the powerful sorceress. Others have taken it upon themselves to solve the problem, cutting huge swaths through the forest in their search for Ceretha, but Feylight works against the outsiders, and the forest and the gnomes easily turn back any intruders. Running out of options, the people of Tyarc have begun calling for heroes able to kill the Lady Darkmagic, bringing light to such dark times and letting the sun shine on Tyarc once more—while there are still people left to enjoy it.

GETTING THE PLAYERS INVOLVED

Lost in the Darkmagic is a standalone encounter, but can easily be turned into a full adventure. The PCs can stumble upon the darkness, Feylight forest, or the town itself. They could also be responding to a call for aid or bounty from the people of Tyarc. Once they arrive in town, you can send them on their way with one of the following hooks:

HOOK 1: QUELL THE SPELLS

Unfamiliar with violence and problems in such a peaceful area, the town's mayor ran off, leaving one of the older craftsmen in charge—a burly dwarf named Drobar. Drobar has been around long enough to know of Ceretha Darkmagic and her past interference with the town's logging endeavors, so he immediately assumes her involvement. He tells the PCs that many of Feylight forest's inhabitants have been at ends with the town for years and years, unwilling to coexist in an area most of the forest-dwellers consider their own.

It's clear, he says, that there is never going to be any kind of resolution here, and so it comes to violence. Lady Darkmagic is the only formidable being within the forest, and Drobar points the PCs to her current location: an old, abandoned lumber mill within Feylight forest. He would rather not kill her, but once the PCs confront her, she'll probably refuse to back down—if it comes to that, end the sorceress's life; that should stop the darkness and let some sunlight through.

Drobar gives the PCs a map leading them to the lumber mill, and warns them that Ceretha will likely be prepared, as many others have begun looking for her.

Quest XP: 800 XP and 2,500 gp for confronting Ceretha Darkmagic and ending the darkness, killing her if necessary.

HOOK 2: AND HER LITTLE GNOMES, TOO

A large goliath pulls the PCs aside before they leave. He's heard that they're venturing into Feylight forest to confront the sorceress, and he'd like them to do a him a little favor. The goliath, Ut'Kal, has been felling trees for over a decade here near Tyarc, and every single day, a gnome sneaks by and plays a trick on him. Abominations, he calls them, so tiny and strange. Ut'Kal tries to phrase it tenderly, but fails: he hates gnomes.

He has heard that Ceretha keeps a company of gnomes, and wants the PCs to kill them. He'd do it himself, but he's so big and slow and they're so small and fast, and he can never manage to catch one. If the PCs will bring back the heads of some gnomes for the goliath to place as a warning around the camp and his house, Ut'Kal will reward them handsomely.

Quest XP: 400 XP and 1,000 gp for bringing back the heads of four gnomes. He'll offer 250 gp each if they come back with less than four.

HOOK 3: SEEING AND SAWING

Taking care of the mechanical aspects of Tyarc is a human blacksmith named Relasa. Though the equipment she has is fine, she's always looking to upgrade, and couldn't help but overhear some adventurers telling horror stories of Lady Darkmagic and her magically-enchanted saw blades. Impossibly sharp, they said, capable of slicing a crystal in half without even an effort—just the kind of saw blade Relasa would like to get her hands on. Attach a couple of those magic blades to her current equipment, and she'll triple her daily output.

Relasa asks the PCs to head down to Ceretha Darkmagic's place, an old lumber mill just inside Feylight forest, and bring her back a couple of those enchanted saw blades. She guarantees she'll make it worth their trouble.

Quest XP: 400 XP and 1,000 gp for bringing back two saw blades, or 200 XP and 500 gp if they bring back one.

SPECIAL FEATURES

CONVEYOR BELTS

The lumber mill is populated with several conveyor belts:

- An arrow on each belt indicates the direction it moves.
- A player or creature on the belt moves double speed if moving with the arrow direction.
- A player or creature on the belt moves half speed if moving against the arrow direction.

ENCHANTED BUZZSAWS

Three enchanted buzzsaws float around during combat:

- Ceretha and her gnomes can move the enchanted buzzsaws with *Cutting a Path* and *Cutting More Paths*.
- When an enchanted buzzsaw enters a square adjacent to any creature, it deals an immediate **1d6 + 4** damage and a -2 penalty to AC until the end of its next turn. If any creature starts its turn adjacent to an enchanted buzzsaw, it takes **1d6** damage and a -2 penalty to AC until the end of its next turn.
- A player can use a minor action during their turn to make a **DC 18 Arcana** check and gain temporary control over an enchanted buzzsaw within 10 squares, moving it up to 8 squares in one direction.
- The enchanted buzzsaws are seemingly indestructible, and attacks against them have no effect.

See page 5 to cut out buzzsaws for the encounter.

LOST IN THE DARK

Ceretha Darkmagic is protected by a magical aura called *Lost in the Dark*:

- Players within the aura take a -5 penalty to all opportunity attack rolls.
- If a player starts two consecutive turns in the aura, they are immediately blinded.
- To remove this blind effect, a player must leave the aura.
- If a player is blinded and leaves and re-enters the aura in the same turn, they are immediately blinded upon re-entering the aura.
- Players cannot save against this blind effect.

GETTING STARTED

Read this as the players enter Feylight forest:

Though it's only mid-afternoon, the sky appears almost black as night as you head toward Feylight forest. Passing by an open expanse of tree stumps and dirt, you enter a verdant forest.

Suddenly, your ears are filled with the sounds of animals, trees blowing in the wind, and the ever-present feeling of being watched. You feel as if you've passed into an extension of the Feywild, or at least an area closely connected with it.

AREA: THE ABANDONED MILL

Read this when the PCs approach the elder brain's sanctum:

The old lumber mill has been overtaken with vines, wildlife, and countless other plants, but it seems a natural part of its surroundings. As you navigate the inside, you notice that, despite its age, it has been kept in pristine condition; it's clear that someone has claimed the building as their own. Before you can react, several gnomes suddenly appear in front of you, their mouths twisted in a cruel and prankish grin.

Stepping out of the darkness and joining them is a tall, elven sorceress, who confidently approaches. She gestures to several buzzsaw blades lying on the ground, which spring to life, floating and spinning in a whirlwind of steel teeth. "I suppose I should say something about 'cutting' you down to size," she mocks. "But I'd prefer not to humor our intruders."

Perception (DC 15): Several conveyor belts spring to life, moving in different directions. They seem capable of supporting your weight.

Arcana (DC 15): The floating buzzsaws give off a faint pink glow, and appear to be enchanted with a basic spell of controlling. You feel that a minor effort would be enough to temporarily gain power over one of the saws.

SETUP

1 Ceretha Darkmagic (C)

5 Feylight Gnomes (F)

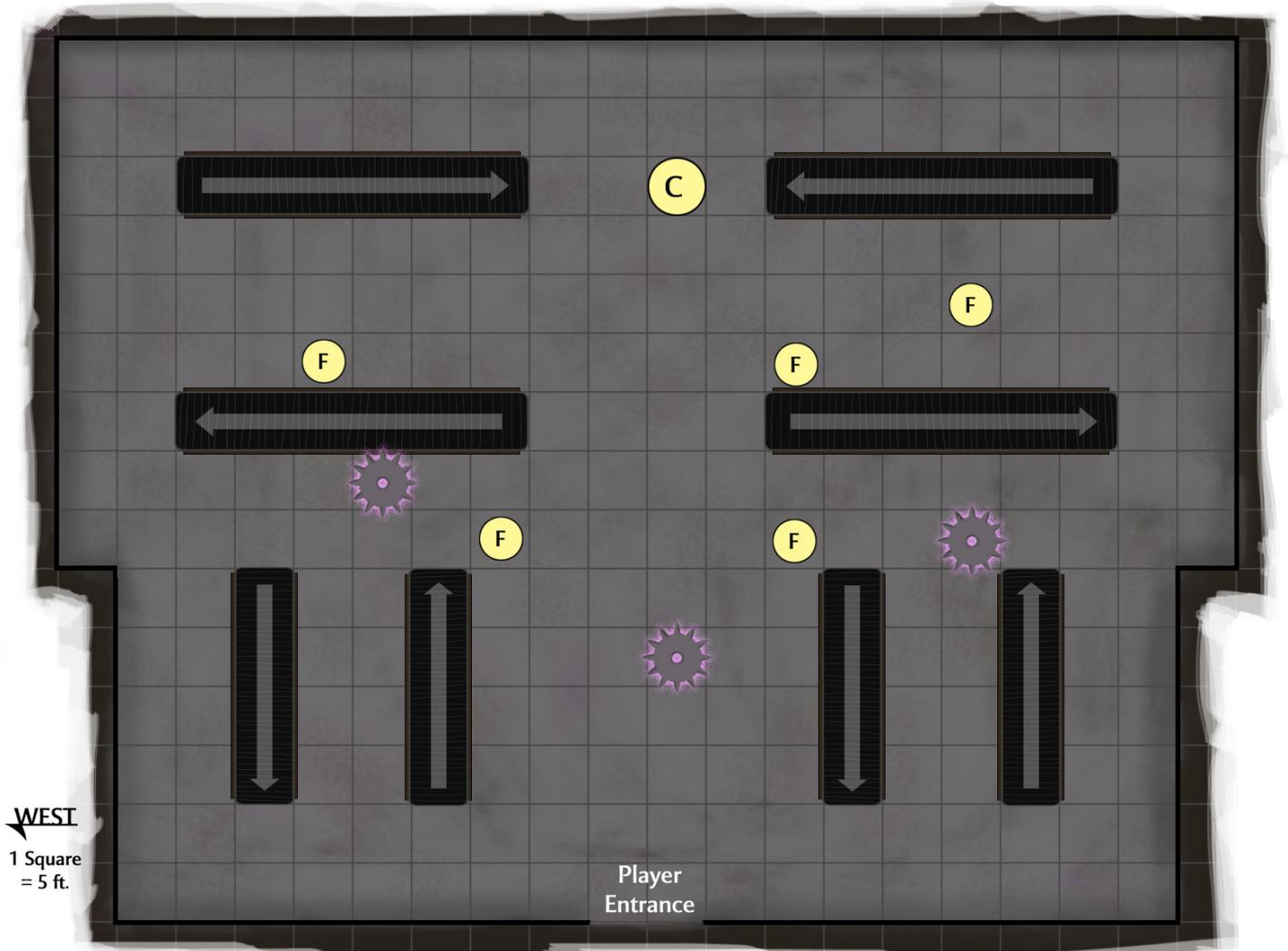
FEATURES OF THE AREA

Height: The ceiling is 20 ft.

Illumination: The chamber is dimly lit due to the clouds, trees, and roof.

Enchanted Buzzsaws: The starting positions are marked below as gray and pink saws, found as cutouts on page 5. See **Special Features** for more details.

Conveyor Belts: Marked as black belts with arrows showing direction. See **Special Features** for more details.



FEYLIGHT GNOMES IN COMBAT

The gnome's first priority is to protect Ceretha, and they'll try to distract or attack any players going after her. They're playfully cruel and will use the conveyor belts to speed around the mill.

Each gnome use *Reactive Stealth* if possible when combat begins, attempting to stay at range and use *Arcane Arc*, reserving *Shadow Burst* when cornered so the gnome can slip by without taking an opportunity attack. Every gnome will try to use *Cutting a Path* each turn, steering a nearby buzzsaw past or adjacent to any players in range.

CERETHA DARKMAGIC IN COMBAT

Ceretha will prefer not to use the conveyor belts unless cornered, but is clever and will use *Shadow Missiles* to pull players into saws, gnomes, and belts. She genuinely cares for her gnomes and will try to save them if one is taking a lot of damage.

She relies on *Lost in the Dark* to keep players from constantly crowding her, using *Shadow Missiles* to pull a player into the aura and blind them, and waiting to use *Impending Darkness* until multiple players surround her or one of them is blinded, taking advantage of the extra damage. Ceretha can control multiple buzzsaws each turn *Cutting More Paths*, and will make use of the ability each turn if possible.

COMBAT FLAVOR

If you dislike reading powers and effects to your players, give them hints with the following flavor text.

When a buzzsaw is moved by a creature or player:

The buzzsaw pulses with magical energy, spinning and flying across the battlefield.

When a buzzsaw damages a creature, read:

The enchanted buzzsaw spins in an unstoppable tornado, tearing through the armor of any nearby creatures.

When a player gains control of a buzzsaw, read:

You temporarily gain control of a buzzsaw and send the spinning blade toward nearby enemies.

When a player enters Ceretha's aura, read:

As you near the sorceress, you feel a haze of darkness start to overcome you, beginning to weaken your vision.

When a player is blinded by Ceretha's, read:

Staying so close to Lady Darkmagic darkens your vision, blinding you as long as you remain in her vicinity.

Ceretha Darkmagic, Sorceress	Level 11 Elite Controller
Medium natural humanoid	XP 1,200
HP 170; Bloodied 85	Initiative +6
AC 23, Fortitude 20, Reflex 24, Will 25	Perception +12
Speed 6	Darkvision
Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1	
TRAITS	
☼ Lost in the Dark ◆ Aura 4	Players within the aura take a -5 penalty to all opportunity attack rolls. If a player starts two consecutive turns in the aura, they are blinded until they leave the aura. See Special Features for more details.
STANDARD ACTIONS	
Ⓛ Quarterstaff (weapon) ◆ At-Will	Attack: +16 vs AC Hit: 2d8 damage.
Ⓜ Shadow Missiles (force) ◆ At-Will	Attack: Ranged 20, two creatures; +17 vs. Reflex Hit: 2d10 + 10 damage and the target is pulled up to 3 squares.
☼ Impending Darkness (force) ◆ Recharge [☹][☹]	Attack: Close burst 3; +17 vs Reflex Hit: 3d10 + 10 damage and the target is pushed 2 squares. If the target is blind, it takes an additional 2d10 damage and is knocked prone.
MINOR ACTIONS	
Cutting More Paths ◆ At-Will	Range: 10 Effect: Move two enchanted buzzsaws up to 4 squares.
Skills Arcana +24, Bluff +22, Diplomacy +22, Intimidate +22	
Str 17 (+14)	Dex 17 (+14) Wis 21 (+16)
Con 24 (+18)	Int 26 (+19) Cha 23 (+17)
Alignment Unaligned	Languages Common, Elven
Equipment Quarterstaff, Spellbook	

Feylight Gnome	Level 10 Artillery
Small fey humanoid	XP 500
HP 84; Bloodied 42	Initiative +9
AC 22, Fortitude 21, Reflex 21, Will 23	Perception +4
Speed 5	Low-light vision
TRAITS	
Reactive Stealth	If the feylight gnome has cover or concealment when it rolls initiative at the start of an encounter, it can make a Stealth check to become hidden.
STANDARD ACTIONS	
Ⓛ Force Dagger (weapon) ◆ At-Will	Attack: +17 vs AC Hit: 1d8 damage and 1d6+4 force damage.
Ⓜ Arcane Arc (force) ◆ At-Will	Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +15 vs Reflex Hit: 3d8 + 6 damage, and the target is pushed 1 square.
⬅ Shadow Burst ◆ Recharge [☹][☹]	Attack: Close blast 3; +15 vs Fortitude Hit: 3d8 + 6 force damage and the target cannot take opportunity attacks until the end of the feylight gnome's next turn.
MINOR ACTIONS	
Cutting a Path ◆ At-Will	Range: 10 Effect: Move an enchanted buzzsaw up to 4 squares.
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
Fade Away (illusion) ◆ Recharge [☹][☹]	Trigger: When the feylight gnome takes damage. Effect: The feylight gnome becomes invisible until after it hits or misses with an attack or until the end of its next turn.
Skills Arcana +11, Bluff +15, Stealth +14	
Str 11 (+5)	Dex 18 (+9) Wis 9 (+4)
Con 18 (+9)	Int 13 (+6) Cha 21 (+10)
Alignment Unaligned	Languages Common, Elven
Equipment Dagger	

When a gnome uses *Shadow Burst*, read:

The gnome lets forth a cloud of shadows, temporarily dulling your senses and reflexes.

When a player uses a conveyor belt, read:

The belt slides beneath your feet, carrying you across the room as you hold your balance.

CONCLUSION

When defeated, Ceretha Darkmagic falls to the ground, and the clouds overhead instantly disperse—letting sunlight in and covering the lumber mill with bright light. *“There’s light at the end of the tunnel after all,”* she says. *“How disappointing.”* The gnome will continue fighting after her death until only one remains, who will attempt to flee. The players can collect the saw blades, which clattered to the ground when Ceretha died, as well as the gnome heads for the minor quests. On Ceretha, the players will find a level 11 magical weapon and a ritual of *Enchant Magic Item*.

Read the following as the players return to town:

The sun is shining as you exit Feylight forest, and the town has come alive. All around you are loggers, lumberjacks, and cutting tools, being carried to the perimeter of the forest. Without hesitation, the workers begin chopping down the trees of Feylight, laughing and singing with high spirits.

You find Drobar nearby, looking over a pair of glasses as he pores over a map of the area. “My lads!” he exclaims. “You did well, so very well indeed—saved our town and livelihood. Without that meddling sorceress impeding our progress, we’ll have this forest down in no time; record profits this year, I wager. The dark age is over!”

ADJUSTMENTS

If you like this encounter but aren’t sure how to fit it into your campaign, here is some advice:

We have too few or too many players:

For 4 players, subtract one of the gnomes and one of the enchanted buzzsaws. For 5 players, add 2 gnomes and another buzzsaw.

We aren’t the right level:

*Ceretha is based off the human wizard found in the **Monster Builder**, with a few custom abilities. The gnomes are based on the *Gnome Entropist*, also with a few modifications.*

It’s too easy:

If this doesn’t seem challenging enough for your players, increase the damage of the buzzsaws and make it more difficult for them to control the saws. You can also increase the range of Ceretha’s aura and the damage done to blinded players.

It’s too hard:

It shouldn’t be too hard unless the players refuse to exit Ceretha’s aura. There’s a lot of extra movement possible with the conveyor belts, so it shouldn’t be hard to spend a couple squares getting out of the aura once they realize what it’s doing. Make sure to use the flavor text to let them know what to do—being blinded over and over again and not knowing why could turn out to be pretty frustrating.

We want to play a full adventure:

Feylight forest has ties to the Feywild, and is a host to many strange and wondrous creatures and hazards. Finding Ceretha’s lumber mill could be its own adventure, fighting off vine horrors, kobolds, gnomes, and other dangerous wildlife while trying not to lose their way in the dangerous forest.



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Cutouts for Enchanted Buzzsaws

