

Gorgon Breath A dventure

The Fight for the Forest



Written by Stew Shearer

A fantasy adventure filled with fire, fur, and maybe a few acorns.

GORGON BREATH GAMES

The Fight for the Forest

A FANTASY RPG ADVENTURE FOR 2nd LEVEL CHARACTERS

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Setting Assumptions

This adventure is designed to be easily inserted into most any medieval fantasy world. It takes place in a small, but vibrant woodcutting community named Timber. Located next to a large forest, almost all of the people spend their days swinging an axe or hauling logs to the local saw mill. It could also be easily inserted into existing towns in your own game world.

Adventure Start

The PCs have stopped for a brief respite in the village of Timber. The adventure begins after the PCs have rented rooms in the local inn: The Fallen Tree. Run by a husband and wife team -Gordon and Ashandra- the inn is bustling with people buying food, drink, and respite from the road. After the PCs retire for the evening, they'll awaken in the middle of the night to a commotion.

(1) Fire in the Night

The GM can begin the adventure by reading the following aloud:

The events of the previous day drift into memory as you fall into the oblivion of sleep. A few hours pass, and you awaken to restlessness.

Outside of your room you can hear the pounding staccato of rushing feet and the panic of voices awoken to a midnight emergency. The faint smell of smoke tinges the air.

Unless the PCs decide to go back to sleep, they'll find the inn deserted, save for Ashandra. She'll tell the PCs that town's sawmill is on fire. She won't know what caused the fire, only that the townsfolk are scrambling to douse the flames.

Should the PCs head outside to help, the GM can read the following:

The scent of smoke grows stronger as you step into the night. To the east of the inn, the shape of the village sawmill is illuminated in the glow of its own flames. Fed by the cut timber held inside, the blaze grow larger by the second.

The PCs will likely move to assist the villagers. As they draw closer to the fire, the GM should ask them to perform a **Perception check**. If they roll a **12 or higher**, the GM can tell them that they hear the sounds of a struggle coming from the direction of the sawmill. This could provide them with a chance to prepare for the coming confrontation.

When they're ready, or if they fail the Perception check, the GM can read the following aloud:

You're suddenly met by a stream of people running away from the fire.

"Help," someone shouts as they flee. "They're attacking anyone who gets close!"

Framed by the flames, you see figures standing near the burning building, weapons brandished.

These five creatures are **Nutaberrs**. Squirrel-like humanoids, they hail from the nearby forest. They've set fire to the mill and are attacking anyone who tries to put out the fire.

If the PCs speak with the them, they'll just move to attack. The GM should request an Initiative roll. When only two of the Nutaberrs are left, they'll flee.

After the fight ends, the GM can read the following aloud:

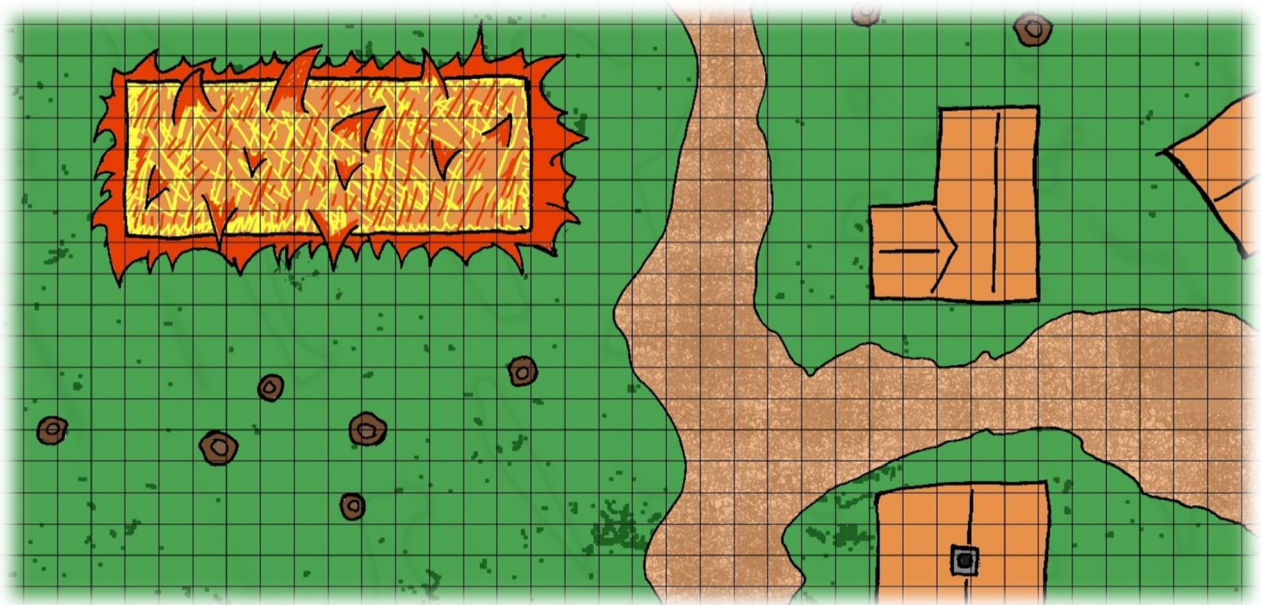
The townsfolk rush forward to douse the flames. When it's extinguished all that remains is and charred timbers.

"Those bastard beasts!" A voice cries. A gray-haired man wrapped in haphazard robes hurries toward the skeleton of the ruined sawmill. "They've ruined me!"

The gangly man complaining about the sawmill is Athyes. A central figure of the Timber logging industry, he owned the sawmill.

While he has more than enough coin to see to its rebuilding (the other townsfolk would roll their eyes at his protestations of poverty), he will still insist that its destruction will be the end of his fortunes. An **Insight check** of **6** will be enough to confirm Athyes is exaggerating. If the PCs roll an **11**, they'll be able to discern that he's uneasy about something else besides the destruction of his property.

Outraged by the Nutaberr's assault, he'll thank the player party for their part in ending it. He'll identify the creatures as Nutaberrs and offer a reward of **350 gold** pieces if they'll agree to pursue them and locate their forest settlement.



Map 1- Nutaberr Attack Map

Assuming the PCs agree to this task, Athyes will suggest they return to the inn to rest, and then meet him at the sawmill in the morning so they can start tracking the Nutaberrs. If the PCs need any supplies beforehand, Timber does have a general store and a smithy where they'll be able to purchase basic goods and simple weapons. If they perform a **Persuasion roll of 16**, Athyes might be convinced to give them an advance on their reward to cover some of the costs of their supplies.

If they're curious about the Nutaberrs, they'll be able to learn basic things about them from the townsfolk, but nothing advanced. The biggest takeaway from the villagers should be that they don't like the Nutaberrs and view largely view them as pests. Only Timber's mayor -a human male named Jessep- will express any sympathy for them.

When the players are ready to proceed, the GM can advance to **(2) The Forest**.

(2) The Forest

When the PCs return to the sawmill the next day, they'll find a few of the townsfolk standing with the Jessep and Athyes, surveying the damage. The sawmill will look even worse in the daytime. All that remains of the building will be ashes and a few blackened beams of wood. Athyes

will greet the party upon their arrival and point out a pair of tracks leading away from the sawmill and into the forest on the eastern edge of the village. He'll then give them a short letter confirming the details of their agreement in writing. The letter will state:

Locate the Nutaberr's Village and report its location to me. You will be paid a sum of 350 gold upon your return.

-A

The tracks, at this point, will be large and obvious, so no roll is required to track them. As the PCs follow the trail left behind the fleeing Nutaberrs, they'll walk through a field of tree stumps left in the wake of Timber's logging industry. When the party reaches the edge of the woods, the GM can read the following aloud:

You reach the edge of the forest and the Nutaberr tracks disappear almost immediately. Ahead of you the forest looms tall, the branches of the trees folding like fingers into a thick canopy that sheets the brush below in shadow.

Assuming the PCs continue into the forest, the GM should ask them to perform a **Perception DC**. If they roll a **12**, they'll notice that a few of the trees near the edge of the woods have claw marks on them, almost as though a large creature had scaled them in a hurry.

Hoping to avoid pursuit, the fleeing Nutaberrs climbed into the trees upon entering the forest. They then began moving from tree to tree on a course back to their village. The PCs can track their tree-branch trail by succeeding in a **Survival DC** of **15**.

If the PCs fail that roll, the GM can tell them that they try to follow the trail, but lose it after a few moments. They'll have to search the forest blindly. This failure means they'll be wandering longer, drawing more attention from the local wildlife. After reading the text box below, the GM should perform an **Encounter Roll**. If the D20 lands on **7 or lower**, the PCs will be attacked by a forest creature. Use a D4 dice with the chart below to select one.

1. Brown Bear x1 (MM p.319)	2. Giant Spider x1 (MM p.328)
3. Dire Wolf x1 (MM p.321)	4. Dryad x1 (MM p.121)

If they succeed in their Survival DC, they'll be able to follow the Nutaberrs more directly, avoiding the forest encounter in the process.

Regardless of success or failure, the GM should read the following before anything additional happens:

You move deeper into the woods, doing your best avoid the snags and branches beneath your feet. As the hours pass, the trees around you seem to grow larger and the air thickens with mist. It's hard to shake the feeling that you're being watched.

After the PCs win the forest encounter and advance further into the woods, the GM should tell the party that they see movement one of the trees. The GM should then ask them to perform a **Perception DC**. If they score above a **12**, they'll confirm that it's a lone Nutaberr. They should also note that it's staring right at them and making no move to flee.

That's because this is a trap. If the PCs continue advancing toward the perched Nutaberr (or forward in general) they'll trigger a net trap. If they have the foresight to perform **Detect Traps**, a roll of **15** will allow them to spot the net. If they don't spot it, the trap will trigger and every PC should be asked to perform a **Dexterity DC**. If they score above a **12**, they'll slip free before it closes all the way. A **Dexterity DC** of **16** will be required to escape, although any free PCs with a slashing weapon equipped will be able to cut it open. The net has 30 HP and an AC of 5.

Regardless of whether they succeed or are captured, a party of warrior Nutaberrs (two per PC) will emerge to ambush them. If all the PCs are caught in the net, they'll start menacing them with their spears. If some PCs avoided the trap, the Nutaberrs will attack. Before the Nutaberrs can execute the PCs (or two rounds into combat), the GM should read the following:

A strange voice suddenly shouts. "That is enough!"

The Nutaberrs lower their weapons and watch as an elderly Nutaberr hobbles through the brush, its hand gripping the tip of a gnarled walking stick.

The elderly Nutaberr will chitter at the warriors. They will respond with annoyance, but will stop attacking and cut down the net if any PCs are still trapped inside. Once the PCs are free, the warrior Nutaberrs will retreat into the forest.

This elderly Nutaberr will introduce herself as the Wise One. A respected elder and leader in the local Nutaberr tribe, she's one of the few who can speak Common, albeit with an odd accent.

She'll ask the PCs why they've come. If they tell the Wise One the truth about the deal they made with Athyes (or do a poor job lying about it), she'll shake her head and say she "was worried such a thing would come to pass."

She'll explain that she and her tribe have lived in this forest for generations. When the original settlers of Timber first arrived decades ago, many among her people wanted to kill them to protect their territory. The elders of that time, however, chose to try and live peacefully with their new neighbors. They negotiated an

agreement that protected large swathes of the forest from logging.

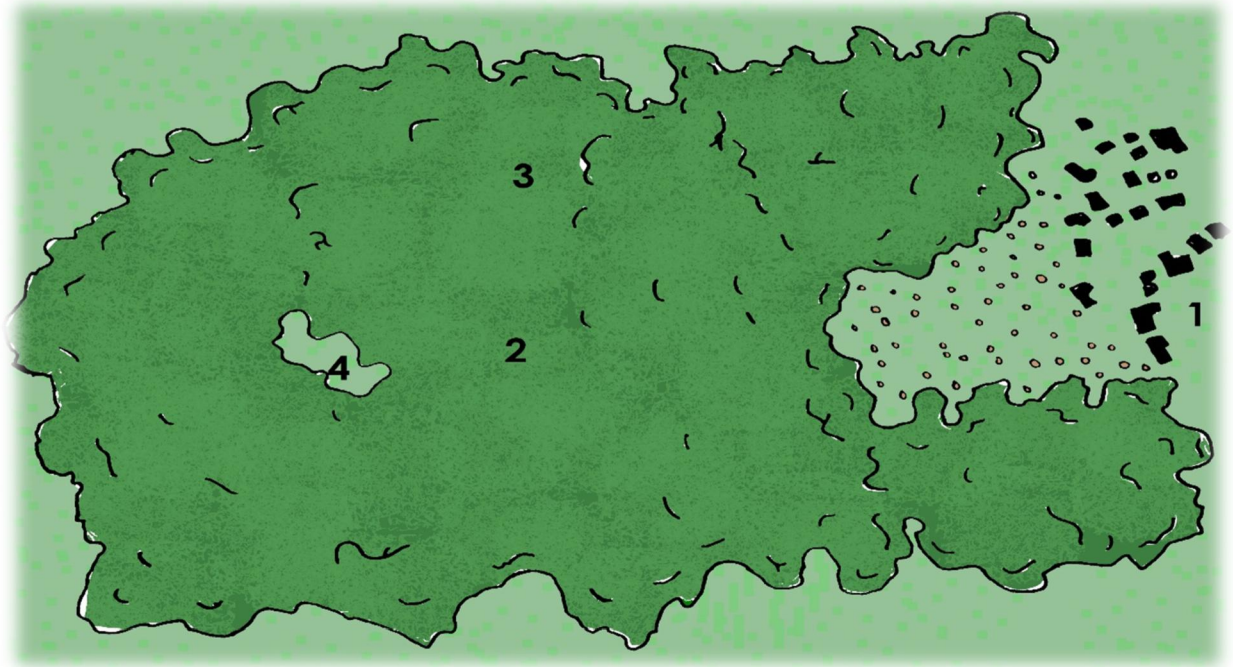
In recent years however, certain figures in Timber have been wanting to expand beyond the agreed upon boundaries. Most recently, a band of mercenaries pushed into the forest and tried to force the Nutaberrs out of their village. The Nutaberrs were able to fight them off, but several of their kind were killed.

What if the PCs Don't Want to Cooperate with the Wise One?

The PCs might be inclined to just kill these Nutaberrs, and the Wise One to boot. If they decide to go that route, the GM can tell them that the Wise One appeared from the east. If they head that direction, they'll stumble onto the Nutaberr village. There won't be any sentries waiting (since the PCs already killed them at the ambush), but there will be another 20 Nutaberr warriors protecting the village. If the PCs can succeed in killing them all, the rest of the Nutaberr community will flee in fear, abandoning the village. This will be enough to satisfy Athyes's request.

While they had no concrete evidence, many among the Nutaberrs blamed the villagers in Timber. The burning of the sawmill was a retaliation. The Wise One fears that things will only grow worse if events are allowed to continue unabated.

If the PCs are willing to cooperate



Map 2- Forest Map

Map Key: 1-Timber 2- Ambush 3-Owlbear Cave 4-Nutaberr Village

If the PCs are willing however, there may be a way to stop the Nutaberr's aggression. Their tribe used to possess a magic relic -the Rod of Acorna- that served as a symbol of authority. Unfortunately, it was lost some years ago when a hunting party led by one of the elders encountered a ferocious beast in a nearby cave.

Many Nutaberrs have tried and failed to retrieve it. If the PCs could bring it back, they might earn the respect of the warrior Nutaberrs and make them more receptive to a peaceful resolution. "To have the Rod returned by some of the other-kind... it would carry weight."

with the Wise One, she'll tell them that the cave where the Rod was lost is north of their current position. If they can recover it and bring it to the Nutaberr village, the other Nutaberrs might be willing to let them enter. Once inside, the Wise One can show them evidence that may help cool the flames of conflicts if they bring it back to Mayor Jessep.

Once the PCs agree, the Wise One will then tell them that the Nutaberr village can be found to the southeast of the cave. She'll warn them not to approach the village empty-handed. "My people will not tolerate your presence without the Rod."

If the PCs decide to cooperate with the Wise One, the GM can proceed to **(3) The Owlbear Lair**.

(3) The Owlbear Lair

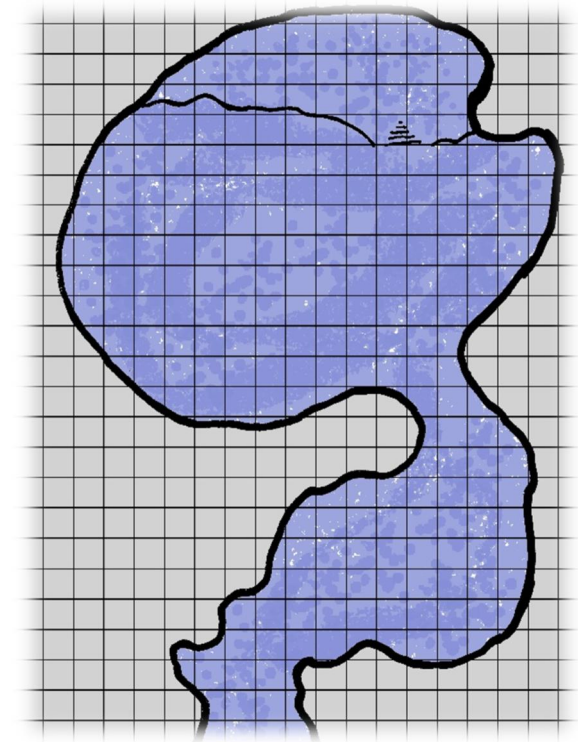
When the PCs are ready to move on, the GM can read the following:

You leave the Wise One behind and make your way north. After a time, you come upon a small opening at the base of a squat ledge. Bones - stripped clean of flesh- are scattered near the entrance: the remnants of the previous interlopers.

This is the cave the Wise One spoke of. The lair of an Owlbear (MM p.), there are two primary chambers inside. When the PCs enter the first one, ask them to perform a **Perception check**. As long as they roll above an **8**, the GM can tell them that they see hundreds of bats hanging asleep from the cave ceiling above them. The bats themselves pose no threat. If the PCs just go barging through, however, they'll startle them awake. They'll then flee the cave, creating a loud commotion that will rouse the napping Owlbear in the second chamber. The PCs can sneak past the bats with a **Stealth DC** of **10**.

If all the PCs successfully sneak their way past the bats, they'll enter the second chamber where they'll find the aforementioned Owlbear. Have feasted on a recent kill, it's sleeping in a pile of gore on a shelf in the rear of the room. Being asleep, the PCs

will have an opportunity to set up an ambush. Any attempts to move through the room undetected, however, will require another **Stealth DC** of **14**.



Map 3- Owlbear Lair Map

Assuming they defeat the Owlbear, they'll then be able to search its lair chamber. The GM should ask the PCs to roll an **Investigation DC**. As long as someone scores above a **5**, the GM can read the following aloud:

The Owlbear's lair is filled with the bones of its consumed prey; covering the floor as thick as autumn leaves. After searching for a time, you stumble upon a simple hooked staff. While it has little adornment save for an acorn that dangles from the arch of its hook, you feel like it's special.

The item described is the Rod of Acorna. There's nothing else of value in the cave, but it should be after dark at this point. The PCs may want to use the cave for a long rest before continuing. Once they're ready, the GM can proceed to **(4) The Nutaberr Village and the Return to Timber.**

(4) The Nutaberr Village and the Return to Timber

After retrieving the Rod of Acorna, the party will likely want to proceed toward the Nutaberr Village, located to the southeast of the Owlbear's Lair.



When get they close to it, they'll be intercepted by four Nutaberr warriors patrolling near the edge of the village. Initially, the patrol will be hostile to their presence. This will

change the moment they see the Rod. Their demeanor will change to one of awe and they'll gesture for the PCs to follow them. The GM can then read the following aloud:

Your Nutaberr escorts lead you forward. You shortly come to a place where the trees thin and sunlight shines down through breaches in the forest's canopy. It's here that you get your first glimpse of the Nutaberr village.

Most of it's built in the treetops: hovels of wood and mud fill the branches, bridged by narrow wooden walkways. Nutaberrs of all sizes peer down at you as you pass beneath them. You're led to a small cluster of buildings that rest on the ground beneath the trees the village's center.

As the PCs approach this building, the Wise One will emerge, accompanied by other Nutaberrs of varying age and disposition.

The Wise One will ask if they found the Rod. When the PCs reveal the Rod of Acorna, the Wise One and her companions will react with the same kind of awe that the patrol displayed earlier. Taking the Rod from the PCs, the Wise One will invite them inside the building she just came out of.

Inside, they'll find a pile of assorted weapons, armor, and more. The Wise One will pick up a shield and point to an emblem on the front of it: a boar's head. She'll then explain that they found that symbol all over the equipment they stripped from the mercenaries they killed. She doesn't

know its meaning, but she's sure it's important. She'll invite the PCs to search through the gear to find more evidence. She also won't have any problem with them taking anything they like for themselves.

The players will find **6 Leather Armor, 8 Shields, 4 Spears, 2 Maces, 2 Hand Axes, and 1 Longsword**. They'll also find an assortment of coin purses adding up to **61 Gold** and **200 Silver**. The GM should also have them perform an **Investigation DC**. If someone rolls a **10** or better, they'll find a small letter tucked into a pocket in one of the articles of clothing. The letter will be signed "A" and contain instructions for the mercenaries. The letter says the following:

Locate the vermin's village and do what you must to drive them away. Once the job is done, I'll deliver the agreed upon sum to your captain.

-A

The signature will be identical to the one Athyes gave the PCs before departing Timber.

Once the PCs have finished looking over the mercenary's equipment, the Wise One will inform them that she and the other elders have decided to send a delegation to Timber to meet with the villagers and discuss the recent hostilities. They'll ask the PCs if they'd be willing to escort them.

If the PCs agree, the Wise One and three other Nutaberrs will follow them through the forest to Timber.

The journey back to Timber should take just shy of a day and the GM may want to perform another encounter roll (use the chart on page 4) to see if they bump into any of the local wildlife. The journey back should take the bulk of an entire day. When they reach Timber, they'll be met by villagers who will summon Athyes and Mayor Jessep.

How this next portion plays out will depend largely on the evidence the PCs acquired and how well the PCs perform as intermediaries. While Jessep will be willing to hear out the Wise One, the villagers will understandably be untrusting of them. Their hostility will only be fanned hotter by Athyes, who will do everything he can to aggravate the conflict.

The Wise One will open by apologizing for the recent violence and saying that her people were only acting out of anger after they were attacked themselves. She'll ask the PCs to show Jessep the shield she gave them in the Nutaberr village. Jessep will recognize it as the symbol of the Bloody Boars; a local mercenary group.

Athyes will scoff and say there's no way to tell how the Nutaberrs got the shield. Jessep will agree, but ask the PCs for their assessment. The PCs can either attempt **Persuasion (DC 13)** or show Jessep the letter they found. If they succeed in the Persuasion DC, Jessep will believe

the Wise One's claim and agree to work with her to help maintain the peace. If the PCs show Jessep the letter, he'll immediately recognize Athyes's handwriting and order his arrest.

If the PCs fail or don't have the letter? Things could go worse. While Jessep and the Wise One are both reasonable leaders, Athyes will work hard to use the situation as a way to oust the Nutaberrs from the forest, even if it means a local war. If something like that happens, he'll happily give the PCs their reward and laugh about how "this worked out better than he'd hoped."

If the PCs are successful in achieving a peaceful solution, Athyes will refuse to pay them. Jessep will offer them 200 gold for their troubles. The Wise One will also give them a large piece of **amber** worth an additional 200 gold as a parting gift. However events resolves, each PC should receive **200 experience points**.

NUTABERR

Small creature, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 14 (2d6+1)

Speed 40 ft.

STR 8 (-1) **DEX** 16(+3) **CON** 12 (+1) **INT** 12 (+1) **WIS** 14 (+2) **CHA** 12 (+1)

Senses Passive Perception 12

Languages Nutaberr

Challenge 1/4 (75 XP)

Treetop Acrobat- The Nutaberr is as comfortable traversing the branches of trees as other creatures walking on the ground. If it climbs a tree, it receives Advantage on all Dexterity DCs performed while it remains there.

Woodland Weapons- If the Nutaberr runs out of ranged weapons, it can quickly fashion new ones from its wooded surroundings. Once per round, as an action, it can break branches from trees to make Branch Spears javelins or pick nuts for its Acorn Sling. Each time it does this, it adds one piece of ammunition for either type of weapon.

Grip Slip. If an enemy tries to grapple it, the Nutaberr gains Advantage on its DC when using Dexterity.

Actions

Acorn Sling *Ranged Weapon Attack.* +6 to hit. Range 30/100 ft., one target, Hit: 1d4-1, bludgeoning damage.

Branch Spear *Melee/Ranged Weapon Attack.* +2/+6 to hit. Range 20/60 ft., one target, Hit: 1d6-1, Secondary Damage: 1d8-1, piercing damage.

The Nutaberr are a rare and reclusive species. Roughly the same size as halflings, they live in treetop villages built in secluded woods far from the reach of other races.

Protective of their homes, Nutaberrs will typically try to stay out of sight when confronted with intruders. Monitoring them from the branches above, they'll attack if they perceive anything even resembling a threat to themselves or their forests.

Their isolationist lifestyle is, sadly, a learned one. Once a friendly people, the other races soured them on outside contact with a string of broken promises and betrayals. Many times in the past the Nutaberrs have seen their forests destroyed to serve the whims of others. As a result, most Nutaberrs have eschewed Common and speak only their own language. This makes communication difficult even when they are inclined to speak with interlopers.

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