

Pitch Design Document

Game:

The Iron Hart



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High Concept

The Iron Hart is a 2D Action Platformer for the PC market. Where You play as the hero, "The Iron Hart", a druidic knight which is Bound by a pledge to protect the sacred grove, he must battle the mechanical minions of "The Iron Maiden" and put evil to rest.

Game Genre

The Genre of Iron Harts is an action, platforming adventure game. We believe this are the appropriate labels as you (The player) travels along a 2D level they have a small ability to find alternative paths and items which are non-essential but can enjoy the prospect of collecting items for small bonuses. It's an action game as it involves the player battling through the world in order to get to an end goal, using combat and exploration.

Target Audience

The target market would be the 12-15 demographic because the visual aspects and the story are something that the demographic can enjoy. The traditional tale of good vs evil and combined with thrilling combat and a visually attractive art style.

The idea is that due to a lack of blood, and only a use of fantasy violence against machines, it should be acceptable for a PEGI 12+ rating.

Market Information and Competition

One of the largest competitors is Celeste, which, much like Shovel Knight, changed what it meant to be a 2D platformer. In order to combat this rival, we would introduce the concept of a gripping and engaging story to draw in players and rely on word of mouth to distribute the game. We must also ensure our combat feels punchy and raw, and that YOU, the player, feels like the saviour of the wilds.

It is also like Cuphead, as the levels are designed around going through gauntlet phases and then boss fights.

Platform

The target hardware that we will be going for is the PC, as it is cheaper to move it through to online market places such as steam and will not have to worry about porting the game to different consoles with different specifications. However, the possibility of Porting to the PS4 is not off the table at this stage.

Unique Selling Points

- **“The Balance of Nature”** - The player has access to “The Balance of Nature” System. It is meant to show the duality of the player’s choice to either focus on his “mechanical martial prowess” or choose his affinity for the wilds and the grove that he has been bound to protect. These give the player new abilities and spells, but also change how the game ends and how the overall plot unveils. In the end, what is meant to drive the player is meant to make them think.

Will they strive to protect the woodlands? Or will they end up being more of a villain than the one they sought to destroy?

- **“Fabled Foe System”** – The Fabled Foe system is something activated once the player kills 100 of a type of monster in the game. This will cause these monsters to react more violently and pursue the player more vigorously instead of repeating certain cycles. This also means that the player’s weapons and skills are more deadly.
- **Retro Aesthetic** – We will be going back to the days of old, capturing what a NES title looks like and plays like!
- **Making use of Game Maker Studio 2** – GMS2 is advanced in comparison to its predecessor. Its more modernised tools seem appropriate for a project of this scale.
- **Changing levels** - The “The Balance of Nature” system also affects how the world changes. The more they go down the path of the wilds, the more overgrown and easier some levels become. However, they will not be as strong individually as those who pick the mechanical path, which are given more combat abilities at the expense of the levels being harder.
- **“Ghosting”** – If the player is connected to the internet, they can see other player’s “Ghosts” as they play through the same levels.

Game Overview

The player takes the role of The Iron Knight as the pool of beginning (Where all the world’s wildlife originates) comes under siege. This new foe is hell bent on replacing the greenery of the world and turning it into a world of red brick and brass, in a bleak and unflinching image dictated by the main antagonist, The Iron Maiden. The player must combat her and ‘The Nightmares’ (Mechanical beings she’s made to take control) and regain control of each of the 5 regions.

The player must look inward and ask themselves, is it better to save the wilds at any cost? Or is it better to honour the druidic code? The player must decide.

Game Objectives

The Long-term goal is to get to the Crimson Cathedral and defeat the Iron Maiden. Do this and save the wilds.

The intermediary goals of the levels are simple yet effective formulas of gameplay. Each of the 5 regions are split into two levels. The first level of each region goes through the initial level which sets up the mechanics of a new minion of the Iron maiden. It then proceeds to thrust you into the second section, and a proceeding end boss level which is meant to test the player on what they had learned in the previous level.

The short-term goals are to fight and relieve the woodland of the current mechanical blight that is affecting the world. They must kill all robots and clear the corrupting ash makers.

Walkthrough

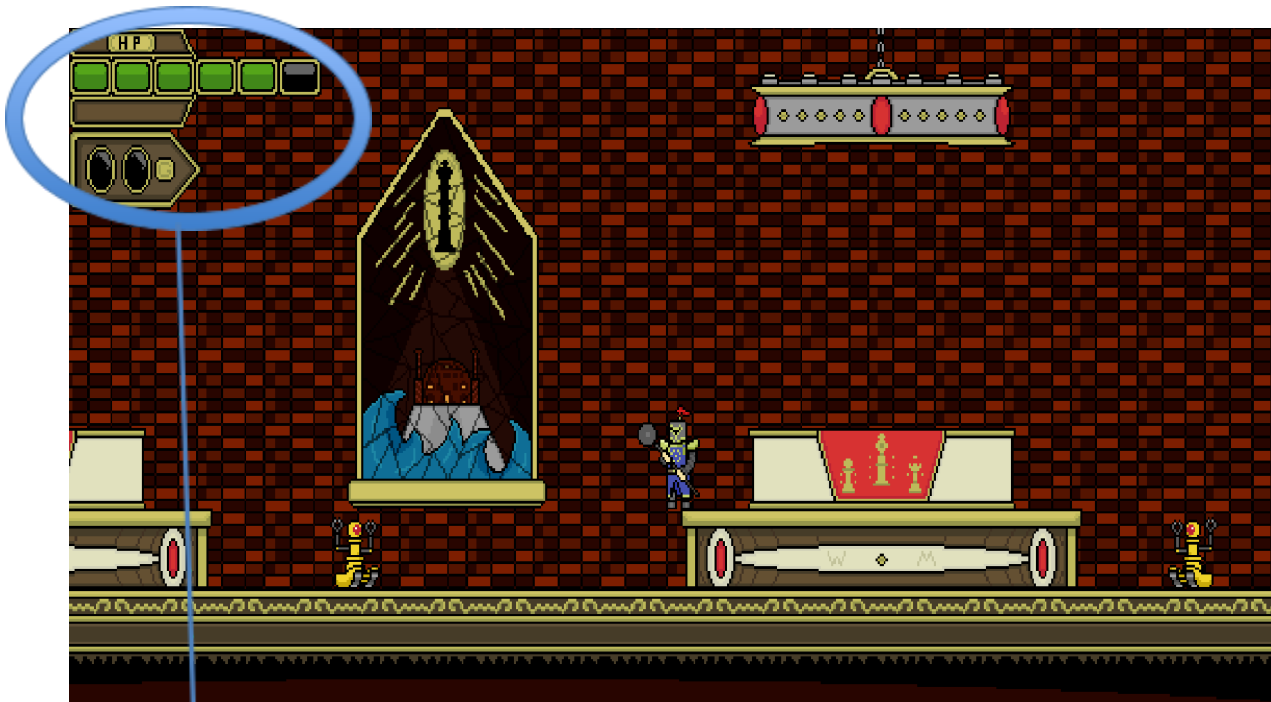
This is to describe a scenario between the player and an enemy as they fight, giving an idea of how the mechanics work and how the player's choices effect the world.

The Grove of Ancients burns. Smouldering ash and brimstone scatter across the once beautiful treescape, A nightmare burying itself into the once tranquil reality. Alone stands The Iron Hart, His rusted armour clanking with each step as he races towards the epicentre of the calamity (second level). His blade, an oaken handled axe which was given to him by the divine wilderness itself (1st option on the "Balance Of Nature" Wildlife choice) sings as it clashes with the brass and crimson breastplate of a towering being, sundering its ability to stand upright. It would take another blow to even conceive taking this Brazen beast down. The machine, seeing the Iron Hart motion for his second swing, enacts its emergency retaliation protocol. Iron Hart had slain many of its brass brethren before, and it was compelled to ensure no further losses were suffered (Fabled Foe Mechanic).

As it brought its metallic talon down, stained with its own oil from its oozing side, it was met with a retaliatory strike, cracking its glowing red eye and stopping it right in its tracks. The Nightmare machine is no more, laying as an immortal reminder to their otherkin for their lack of care of the wilds. The Iron Hart Marches forward, and with each step, slowly begets life. The ashen floor returns to its green, lush self as the invader's body is enveloped by vines and moss. The Hart brings life to his world once more and will retake his home (describing the "Balance of Power " influencing the level as they've elected to pick the wildlife choice in the previous level).

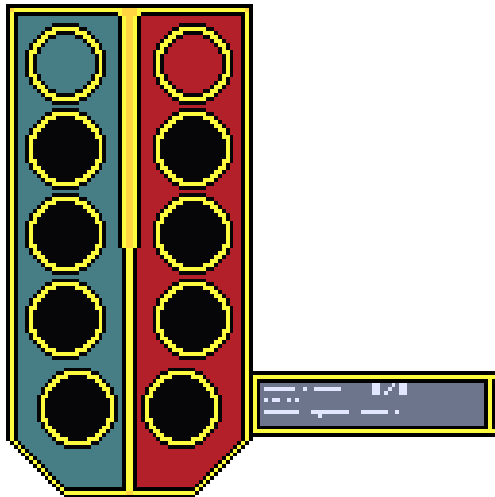
UI and Mechanics

Screen Layout



The screen layout is displayed in the top left -hand corner of the screen. The health bar is 6 across and is labelled as "H.P". It is clear and concise and requires very little to understand. The piece beneath the "H.P" bar is the collectables Bar. The player gets to earn gems by either finding the hidden gem in each of the levels or killing 50-100 of one of the monsters of a certain kind. It is meant to be a simple gimmick which entices players to do multiple playthroughs.

The Player is always also in the Middle of the screen.



This Image displays the "Balance of Nature" Screen, where the player gets to pick from one of each of the green or red choices when they defeat a boss. There is also a grey text box which appears, detailing the benefits that they gain for selecting either option. The player will not, however, be told how it effects the story. That is something for the player to discover.

Controls

The controls are for both PC and Xbox One/360 Controllers.

- Movement (any direction) = WASD/ left stick/ directional pad
- Crouch = S key/ left stick down / down button on directional pad
- Jump = Space bar / X button
- Interact = E / Circle button
- Attack = Left click mouse / square button
- Attack Upwards = left click mouse + space bar / x button + Square button
- Attack Downwards = Left Click Mouse + S key / down on left stick + Square button
- Special attack = E / R2
- Pause button = Esc / Start
- Rumble response = Optional

Gameplay Mechanisms

Combat and Puzzle Design

Combat involves the player having to assess the danger before he approaches it. In an example, players have access to a 3 Combo attack system. The player can hit once when hitting the attack button but can chain an additional 2 attacks. They can do this by hitting the attack button how many times they wish to attack. They also have access to a special attack which is linked to the "Balance of Nature" System.

2 Out of the 5 Choices they can unlock from each path are special attacks. One of these attacks acts as a 'Dash' Attack, called "Swift Wind", where the player is thrust forward and becomes a projectile. The other is an 'Area Of Effect' attack, which stretches outwards 3 spaces (a space is 32 x 32, same width of the character sprites) which causes damage to the player.

The balance system also gives feats that upgrade a player benefits. For example, the player has access to "Oaken Heart". This is a nature perk which allows the player to take one additional hit point per level.

The "Fabled Foe" System works to upscale the challenge a player faces as they get through to the end. When the player kills between 50 to 100 enemies, the enemies do twice the damage and take an additional hit point to kill. Some enemies a player must kill, some can be skipped if they can get past them. Once the "Fabled Foe" is turned on, it only lasts for that region of the game (2 Levels).

Mission/Objective Design

Mission design will work on the traditional sense of getting to one end of the stage from the start. Players will have to traverse a wide range of obstacles and puzzles which will challenge the player on their mental capacity and skills. It will work on the level design from the original Megaman game on the Nintendo NES.

Saving System

The Player will be able to save the game at save points at half of the level. Here they can have a moment to relax and know that their progress is safe and secure. They will only have one save file and it will save the number of levels completed, number of bosses killed and where they have reached in the level.

Structure



The design of each level follows a relative structure which can be split down into 5 parts. These are the following:

1. The player is introduced to the setting and the background will have animations showing what kind of level this would be.
2. Part two is where enemies are first contacted. Depending on the zone, they will contact the new monster that will be apart of the theme of each level.
3. Part three will let the player meet a checkpoint. This allows the player to have a moment to reflect and prepare for the next set of challenges.
4. Part four is a "Gauntlet" phase, where they must test their skills and fight their way through to the end. It is that, Or a Boss fight.
5. Part five is the end of the level.

Plot



- Map of Grothum.

The island of Grothum is a remote and secluded island, where all life originates and begins. In a small secluded spot on the island, is the pool of beginnings. This pool is supposedly where all life started and is the most holy site upon the secluded island.

However, some seek to harness the power of the pools, and dominate the island to spread death and stagnation. One being who seeks to topple this peace, is only known as The Iron Maiden. She is a cruel and ruthless being of unknown origin, brooding and planning for generations behind the walls of her Chrismon Cathedral on the ashen isle.

Now is the hour of her coming, her men of metal, hate and fear now begin to spread to the 4 points of Grothum, seeking to claim the pools to fuel her dark agenda. But there is a lone hope, a hero who emerges when the sacred groves are under threat. His true name is not known, but he takes only a simple name. The Iron Hart.

He's a force of nature which will stop at nothing to right the wrongs that The Iron Maiden had committed. However, as the pools were taken in the beginning phase of her invasion, his powers have greatly receded, and must recover his lost powers in order to take the fight to the Maiden. He must do this by traversing to each of the holy sites, the grave of the white hart, the shrine of the moon, the temple of oak, and lastly the pools. Each of them has been taken over by a malevolent machine.

Once he defeats each foe, he will have a choice. Does he take the powers of the grove? Or does he take the power of his foes? It is up to him and him alone to save the world he knows, or let it burn in defeat.

Characters



The Iron Hart

His regalia involves a helmet with two antlers on either side and sports his trusted chain mace and shields his tools of war. He also wears a green tunic with the emblem of his kingdom on it.

Background of the Bosses

Towering Nightmare

The Towering Nightmare is designed to be a 'turtling' character (One which remains steadfast to gain strength for when they assault). It features a slow firing chain gun which fires 6 shots at the player before using a talon to launch out a devastating attack which hits for half of the player's current health or kills them outright if their health points are at 25%. Pictured below is the initial concept design for the Boss.

Hulking Nightmare

The Hulking Nightmare functions as a more direct and single minded in comparison to the Towering Nightmare. It will use three methods of attack during the boss fight. It has a large hand which will work as a single direct attack, which has a low area of effect. It possesses a large curved blade which acts as an arch weapon. Lastly possesses a plunge attack which acts as an area of effect weapon. Pictured on the is the initial concept design for the Boss.

Elusive Nightmare

This boss dwells beneath the Temple of Oak. works with a 'Wack A Mole' Mechanic. Here, a serpentine mechanical monster will swap places with two other statues, the player(s) must attack the correct one otherwise it will take off one fifth of their life points. Players will be able to tell the difference by the colour of the eye of each statue, the decoys have one blue eye, whereas the actual boss has a red eye. Hitting the boss will stun it, letting the players do one fifth of the bosses' life points. Pictured below is the initial concept design for the Boss

The Amalgamation

The Amalgamation rests in the pool of beginning, atop the green mountain. This is a boss composed of multiple low tier monsters which have been pressed together to form a ball of arms reaching out and groaning faces. The player must run away from the boss, as they must traverse different obstacles. While they try to avoid being damaged by being crushed, the ball will gradually lose mass, due to it crushing the obstacles the player has managed to get over. At the end of the fight, the ball is small and easy to destroy in a few hits, ending the boss fight.

The Machine of Nightmares

This is the boss from level 9 of the game, composed of a blend of the first two bosses. It uses the turtling tactics of the Towering Nightmare, and the arch attack from the Hulking Nightmare. The boss will also spawn mobs of enemies that the player(s) must contend with while fighting the boss.

The Iron Maiden

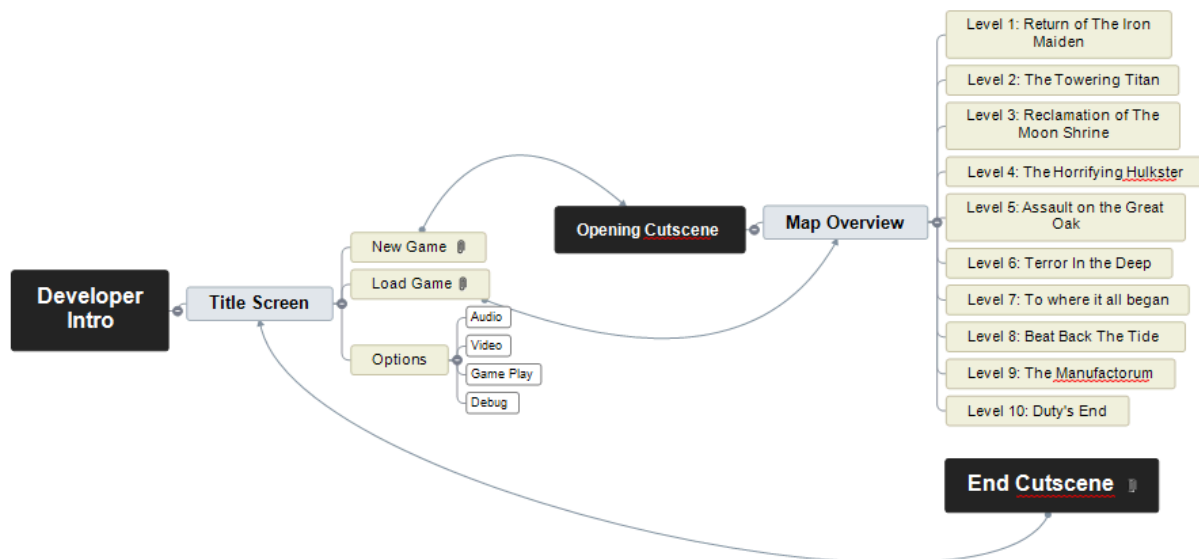
The Iron Maiden is a being of unknown origin, but legend tells of a forsaken priestess who wished to modernise and develop the island to contact the outside world. Shunned for this desire, she retreated to the Ashen Isle, where she eventually re-emerged like a dark phoenix, clad in black armour and a burning hatred for all life. She will not stop until the island is toppled and transformed into a staging area for world domination.

Enemy Types

The enemies in this game are essentially the four bosses which are brought down to a fifth of the scale. Towers are smaller versions of the towering nightmare, but only fire two shots instead of six. They also require four hits to kill. Hulkers are the scaled down versions of the Hulking Nightmare. The 'Rabble' Are groups of fanatical worshipers of the Nightmare Machine. These are much like the Amalgamation, only instead of a ball, they are individuals which roam around in packs. We lastly have the Elusives, which are stealth based attackers which are based on the Elusive Nightmare.

Gameflow

Provided is a general flow chart of the game.



Levels

Level 1: Return of The Iron Maiden

This level starts with the player being awakened in an underground chamber, being told by a higher power to reclaim the lands for the wilds, no matter the cost. Once outside, they traverse from the chamber of the knight to the grave of the White Hart, where the first guardian fell to an ancient foe long ago.

The level is designed to allow them to get used to the movement and the way the combat works. Small textured stones with glyphs show the player how the combat and design works. This way the player doesn't have to stop to activate a dialog box but instead just has to read the screen to understand the basics. Once this is complete, they finally meet for the first encounter. The towers. These enemies are strategically placed along the path to block the player's advance and are as described in the Plot and Character's section.

The player goes through this initial level as they get used to the world that they will be battling through and generate an understanding of the foe they are facing. They then arrive at what is a final foe in the area. It is called an Ash maker, these are essentially the Mario flags at the end of each level when you complete it. Once the player destroys it, they are free to move onto the next level.



Level 2: The Towering Titan

The Towering titan, a boss level, is fought within the mausoleum section of the grave. The Towering Nightmare is met here, standing as an obstacle to the player until he defeats it. As described in the above section, he acts relatively stationary, but packs a powerful punch if they linger too long.

The mausoleum is designed to be a great chamber with a large statue of a marble stag standing over a central grave. The surroundings are damaged, and the world is clearly straining against the destructive might of the Towering nightmare. It is symbolic as it displays the cycle of death and rebirth, where one Hart falls, another arises at the time of need.

Level 3: Reclamation of the Moon Shrine

Level three is the lead up through a jungle which goes to the temple of the moon, a large building with a crescent moon atop a large, overgrown temple. The machines of the Iron Maiden seek to weaponize the crescent by drawing in the lunar power which collects there into an energy weapon.

This level is where they meet the lumberers, large gorilla like monsters which chase after the player through charges and jumping attacks. Because of this, the level is based around pitfalls and spike falls which the player has to navigate around while dealing the jumping mechanics.

At the end of the level, they arrive at the doors of the temple, which are being held close by the ash maker in that level. Once the player destroys the gates, the fling opens, where the player can move onto level 4.

Level 4: The Horrifying Hulkster

This level is done within the interior of the temple, where the player fights atop a set of pistons where the Hurling Nightmare is creating the weapon. It bounces and leaps across the pistons which drop down to where the player dies if they end up off screen. When the boss reaches zero, they can collect the second choices for powerups.

Level 5: Assault on the Great Oak

Level 5 is escaping to the Oaken temple, which is currently being destroyed by the new enemies called the elusive, they emerge from fake floor traps and use cut down trees to create a series of obstacles. There are also the two previous enemies displayed in the game. When it is revealed that they have been digging beneath the roots, the player must venture below, to the next level of the game.

Level 6: Terror in the deep

This is the third boss fight which incorporates the Elusive Nightmare fight. The level takes place in the amber chambers of the great oak, where it seeks to take the hardened sap to create weaponry for the other machines. Once the Elusive nightmare is defeated, the player undertakes a platforming section where they must raise up the inside of the tree to avoid the boiling sap which will entrap them if they get stuck.

Level 7: To where it all began

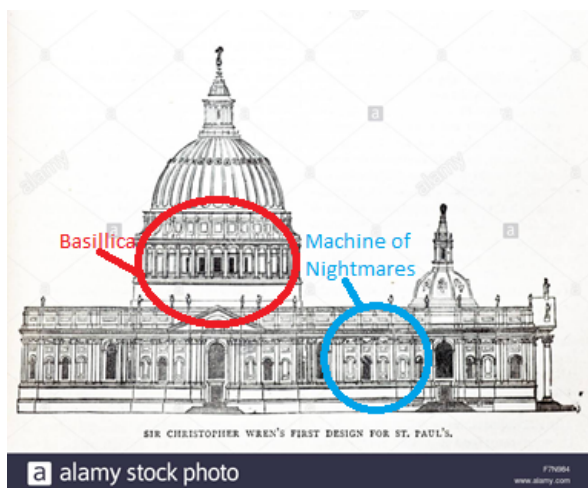
This level is the lead up to the final mission on the island. They must scale the mountain where they meet deadly combinations of the previous three foes, misshapen individuals which react in a shambling manner, imitating the previous enemies. Once they destroy the final Ash maker atop the gates of the pools, they will be free to take back grothum.

Level 8: Beat back the tide

This is the final boss on the mainland. All the enemies on the island combine into the amalgamation. It now sits in the pool, corrupting it with its very presence. The player leads the monster out, trying to draw it away from the mountain. It is a horizontal lava chase much like the level 6. Once the amalgamation is destroyed, its bodies create a bridge of bodies leading to the next level, the Ashen Isle. This is where they earn their 4th powerup.

Level 9: The manufactorum.

The player is tested on the skills they have learnt throughout the game as they storm the beach, fighting all four types of enemies which have been displayed in each of the 8 previous levels. They storm inside the Crimson Cathedral and fight the Machine of Nightmares, where it is described in the bosses and enemies' section of the plot. Once this is done, the player then rises into the upper basilica, to earn their last power on the "Balance of Nature" System.



- Photo of St Pauls cathedral to help illustrate where the player goes within the Crimson Cathedral (Limited,2019)

Level 10: Duty's End

The last level is purely a boss fight within the inner sanctum of the Iron Maiden. A dome of blackened iron and choking ash the building is collapsing due to the loss of the machine of nightmares, debris collapses and falls around the pair as they fight before an edifice of the maiden herself, this is where they use their malefic powers to try and destroy you. The player fights her with all his unique skills and eventually bests the Iron Maiden after she uses up the last of her powers.

If you pick a balanced approach to the Nature system (1 from each side), she gives the normal ending where you look out on the balcony to Grothum, its landmarks besmirched by the lingering technology, but in time it will grow back.

If you pick to be fully empowered by nature, The Iron Maiden laments and regrets her past dealings, perishing as the view of Grothum is restored to its full beauty. You are the keeper of the grove, and your word.

If you picked to improve your mechanical, martial prowess. The embittered maiden merely laughs, saying you both were similar. You look out to Grothum, charred by the harm you and the machines both did. You saved the grove... But at the cost of it.

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