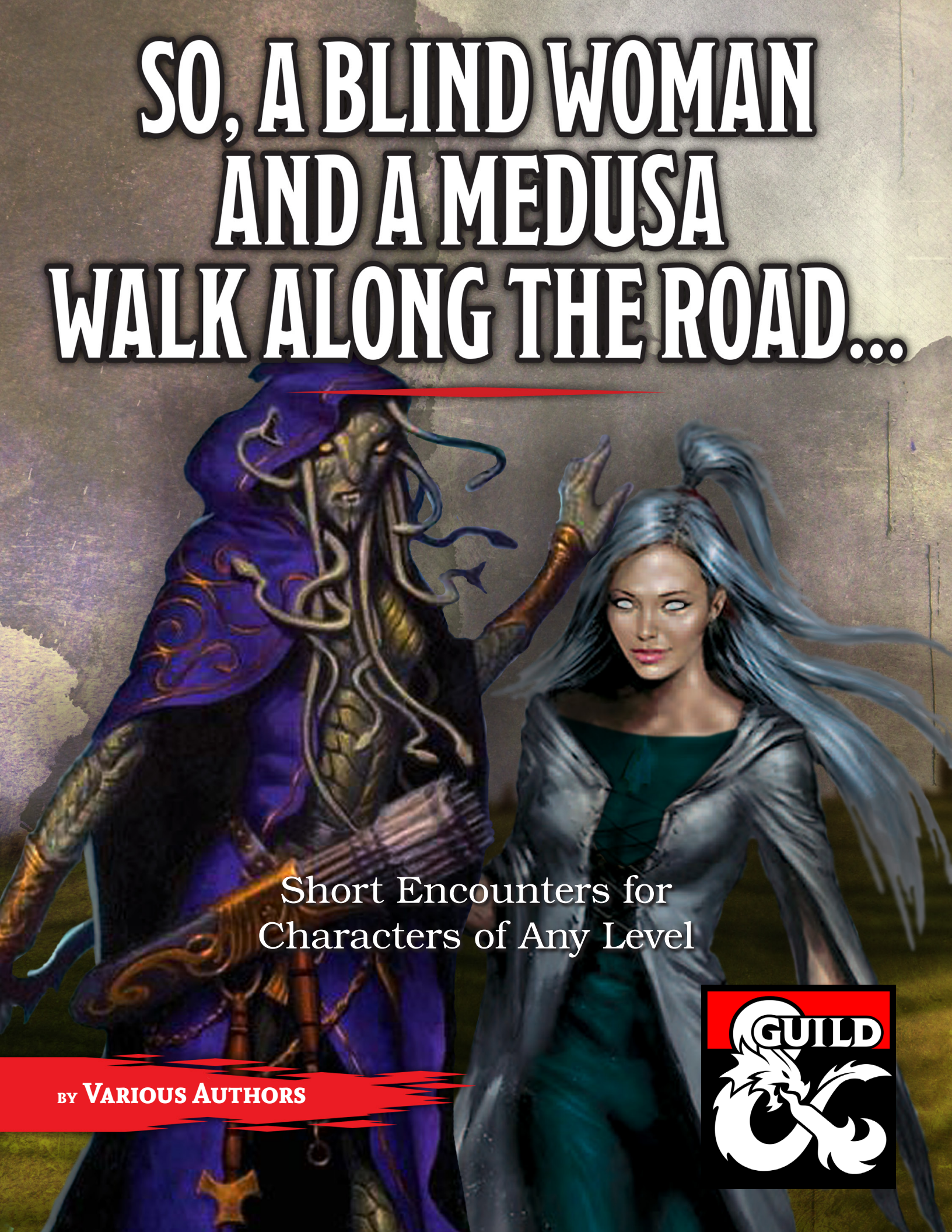
So, a Blind Woman and a Medusa Walk Along the Road...



Short Encounters for Characters of Any Level

By Various Authors

GUILD

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Credits

Design & Layout: Alan Tucker

Art: Alan Tucker, and licensed and modified stock art from DepositPhotos.com and DMsGuild Community Resources

Editing: Linda May and Alan Tucker

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Foreword

The travel montage… as DMs, we've all done it. The players only want to get from point A to point B and skip over "the boring parts."

But, when things happen in between adventures, on the road, it can make your world seem much more alive and interesting! So, make travel and camping out beside the road fun and intriguing and even a wee bit dangerous…

Following in the footsteps of the amazingly popular *So, a Cleric and a Vampire Walk Into a Tavern*, and the newly released *So, a Wizard's Apprentice and a Demon Walk Into a Magic Shop…*, this collection of short encounters takes your party on the road, trekking through the wilderness. Inside, you'll find imaginative stories from some of the DMsGuild's best and brightest contributors. You're sure to find something to liven up that trip to the next adventure!

I sincerely want to thank the tremendous community of DMsGuild authors, artists, and other contributors for their amazing support. This creative collective is absolutely top notch and true fans of this hobby we all love.

—Alan Tucker

Adventure Customs and Shorthand

Within the adventure, you will see text that is set apart in a box, like this:

> This text is meant to be read aloud or paraphrased to the players.

Other items will be highlighted in **bold**, referring to an ability check, saving throw, monster, or item from one of the published D&D materials, such as the *Monster Manual*. The core published books for 5th edition are abbreviated as follows:

PHB = Player's Handbook

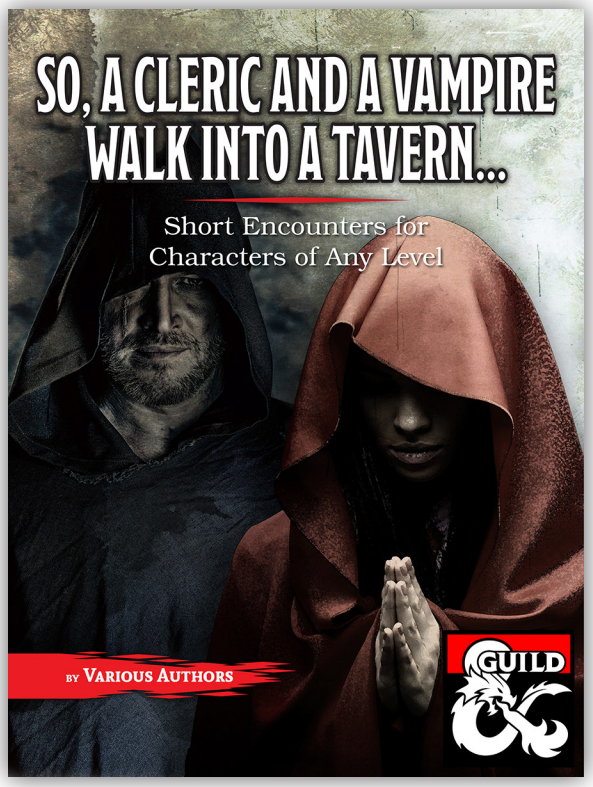
DMG = Dungeon Master's Guide

MM = Monster Manual

VGtM = Volo's Guide to Monsters

XGtE = Xanathar's Guide to Everything

MToF = Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes





About the Authors

Alan Tucker

Alan is a contributor and author of a number of bestselling products on the DMs Guild, including *Hey, Mister, Can You Help Me?* and the highly acclaimed *Myriad, City of Tiers.* Alan also has several fantasy and science fiction novels to his name. You can find more at www.AlanTucker.net.

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Chad is a contributor to *Villains and Lairs*. He is working on other projects to be released soon!

Harm Delva

Harm wanted to give something back to the community after years of impressing his players with stuff he mooched off the DMs Guild. This is his first ever contribution.

Ciaran O'Halloran

Ciaran is a new contributor to the DMs Guild. He is a DM, Dad, and Drama teacher.

Elven Tower

Elven Tower is a powerhouse of RPG content creation. The small indie studio has created hundreds of fantasy maps, short adventures, and DM content for three years straight.

Tony Petrecca

Tony has been DMing since the last millennium. He is the author of several critically acclaimed DMsGuild adventures. Check out his best sellers *Hunted*, *Journey Through the Center of the Underdark*, and *Killer Kobolds*.

Beatriz T. Dias

Mostly an adventure writer, the DMsGuild has several of Beatriz's works.

David McDonough

David is a new contributor on the DMs Guild and author of the adventures *The Priest, the Witch, and the Lost Temple* and *Undermountain: Caverns of the Many-Legged*.

Matt Vaughan (Dungeon Rollers)

Author of the *Treasures of...* series, featuring new magic items for use in all your campaigns. Dungeon Rollers has many new items coming in the coming months.

George Sager

George is a contributer to *Storm King's Barrows*, has a credit in Kobold Press' *Creature Codex*, and DMs a 5e campaign for friends when he isn't working on one of several other projects on the go. Follow him on Twitter @GeorgeSCanada.

Duncan Rhodes

Duncan is the author of several best-selling titles on the DMs Guild, most notably *Esquiel's Guide to Magic Weapons*, which brings 120 new blades, battleaxes, and bows to your game (along with a treasure trove of more fun stuff). He also blogs at www.hipstersanddragons.com.

Morten Greis

Morten is a new contributor to DMs Guild, blogs at Stemmen fra ådalen and converts Danish adventures to English on DriveThruRPG.

Richard Malena-Webber

Richard is a contributor and author of many projects on the DMs Guild, including the Ravnica adventure *The Tomb of Svogthos* and *Rise of the Champions*.

Karl Sciberras

Karl's first adventure, *All in a Day's Work*, was released to the Guild in late 2018. More adventures will follow as he extracts all the stories that are rattling around in his head.

ELF Vesala

ELF is a random generator aficionado blogging at https://randomcreation.net/. His favorite die is d10.

So, a Displacer Beast Cub and a Pack of Blink Dogs Ran Across Our Path...

by Alan Tucker

Suggested Party Level: Any

Traveling through this forest has been pleasant for the most part, but you sense something in the air this evening you can only describe as anticipation or tenseness.

While keeping your eyes peeled for a place to make camp, you hear a plaintive, animal cry just before a tiny, dark-furred creature bounds from the brush into your path. Tentacles wave with nervous energy from its shoulders.

A moment later the air behind the little newcomer shimmers and another, larger creature, with canine features and long, pointed ears, pops into existence. The dog bears its teeth and growls at the smaller, seemingly helpless beast.

The tiny creature is a **displacer beast** *(MM page 81)* cub (which experienced players will likely recognize) and the menacing canine is a **blink dog** *(MM page 318)*. The players have stumbled onto an ancient conflict and must make a split-second decision: help one creature or the other, or do nothing and see what transpires.

While the displacer beast is only a newborn, and many players' first thoughts might be to keep it as a pet, the creatures are inherently lawful evil. The blink dog, on the other hand, is lawful good. Your party's general disposition along the good or evil spectrum may come into serious question depending on what comes next.

If the players do nothing, or aid the blink dog, the cub's parent(s) or pride will emerge from the forest, possibly already bloodied from combat before. The DM can determine an appropriate amount of adversaries to challenge their party.

If the party decides to help the cub, a pack of several blink dogs will arrive to join the fray. Again, it is left up to the DM to decide how difficult they wish the encounter to be by adjusting the number of dogs in the pack or by adding additional fey as suggested in the Alternatives section on the next page.

continued next page...



Displacer Beast Cub

Tiny monstrosity, lawful evil

Armor Class 11 (natural armor)
Hit Points 5 (2d4)
Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	4 (-3)	8 (-1)	7 (-2)

Senses darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 10
Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Avoidance. If the displacer beast is subjected to an effect that allows it to make a saving throw to take only half damage, it instead takes no damage if it succeeds, and only half damage if it fails.

Displacement. The displacer beast projects a magical illusion that makes it appear to be standing near its actual location, causing attack rolls against it to have disadvantage. If it is hit by an attack, this effect is disrupted until the end of its next turn.

Actions

Multiattack. The displacer beast makes two attacks with its tentacles.

Tentacle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 (1d4 - 2) bludgeoning damage plus 2 (1d4) piercing damage.

Alternatives:

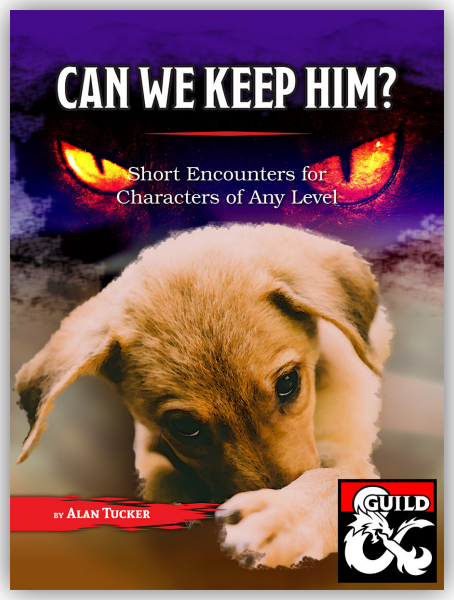
This encounter offers many possibilities for further adventure. The blink dogs could be part of a Seelie Court (good fey) hunting party that has crossed into the Material Plane for a bit of sport. If the party has harmed or killed one or more of the dogs in order to protect the young displacer beast, the fey could become quite cross with the adventurers, leading to some interesting conundrums for the players— especially if their characters are of good alignment.

The displacer beasts could be from a breeding program run by a group of evil fey (Unseelie Court) who have plans to cause trouble in the Material Plane in the near future.

About the Author

Alan is a contributor and author of a number of bestselling products on the DMs Guild, including *Hey, Mister, Can You Help Me?* and the highly acclaimed *Myriad, City of Tiers.* Alan also has several fantasy and science fiction novels to his name. You can find more at www.AlanTucker.net.

This encounter originally appeared under the title of "Wild Kingdom" in, Can We Keep Him?, another free collection of encounters with the central theme of party pets.



So, a Sverfneblin, Chased by a Duergar Posse, Walked into Our Campsite...

by Chad M. Lensch

Suggested Party Level: 8-10

Can be Adapted to: 5-20

Overview

Two **duergar** *(MM p122)*, each riding a **bulette** *(MM p34)*, are chasing down Gutta Perchapulp, a **deep gnome** *(MM p164)*. She possesses a valuable black sapphire she stole from a powerful duergar warlord, and is trying to find a hiding place on the surface. A duergar posse hunts down the thief, demands the gem back, and insists the gnome will be killed for retribution. This encounter may happen while traveling on the road, exploring underground, or at a campsite.

Setup

Off and on, through the main adventure, have the party make a **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check**. If it is successful, describe quiet, low-pitched reverberations shaking the ground for a minute or two, and decreasing in intensity before going still. This cycle may happen as many times as the DM wishes to create an enigma and build up the encounter. These rumbling noises are actually the bulettes traveling underground chasing Gutta, and can be heard over the course of an hour, or even a day.

The Hook

When the DM is ready to initiate the encounter, read or paraphrase the following:

> Suddenly, a gray-skinned gnome bursts from foliage near you, breathing heavily and looking over her shoulder. The distracted gnome trips and falls, cursing and crashing to the ground in an undignified flailing of arms and legs.
>
> She promptly sits up, looks at you with terror-filled eyes, and shrieks, "Please help me! They are going to kill me!" As if on cue, you feel a slight tremor in the ground.

Gutta's Desperate Deal

Gutta could not escape the posse. Her strategy for evasion was to head to the surface, where the sun would be unpleasant for the duergar. After she meets the party, the desperate gnome pleads with them for help. She lies to the party at first, telling them the reason her pursuers are chasing her is because they hate gnomes, and they already killed two of her friends. If the party succeeds on a **DC 15 Wisdom (Insight), Charisma (Intimidation),** or **Intelligence (Investigation) check**, they see through Gutta's story. If caught, Gutta confesses she has stolen a gem and appeals to the party's conscience. Without the help of the party, she will be murdered by the noble's henchmen. As a last resort, Gutta offers the gem as incentive for the party to help her.

If Gutta successfully lies to the party, she will continue that lie through the encounter, or until her lie is discovered.

The Posse's Arrival

After the party has had a few minutes to talk with Gutta, read or paraphrase the following:

> The tremors begin again, but grow in intensity. Just when it feels as though the tremors are under your feet, they stop. A second later, the earth around you explodes!
>
> As the dust settles, a hollow, metallic guffawing is heard over a deep, resonant breathing. Before you loom two huge, heavily armored beasts, with razor sharp beaks, powerful front legs and thick claws. They aggressively paw at the ground, and turn their attention towards you. Each sports a rider on their back, seated in a complex harness made up of hardened leather straps, reinforced by chains and metal collars around their legs, arms, and necks. On the back of the harness is a saddle with a conical iron housing that resembles a rounded fin. You watch as the leader unclips from his harness, and pulls himself from underneath the protective shield.
>
> The laughing stops, its metallic echoes fading as he speaks, "You can try all you want, but you cannot escape, you repulsive little worm! Give us the gem, now!"

continued next page...

The posse was hired to retrieve the black sapphire, and if possible, bring the thief's head back for extra money (an additional 50% of the gem's worth). They are not against talking with the party to get the gem without a fight. ("We have no quarrel with you; hand the gnome over to us and we can all go on our way.") However, the duergar are not easily swayed from executing their contract on Gutta, and are quite willing to fight. The players must succeed a **DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion, Intimidation, or Deception) check**, and have an exceptional description of the argument/behavior/lie in order to change the gray dwarves' minds.

Mount and Rider

The bulette and its duergar rider wear special harnesses that attach to each other, and allow the riders to stay on the animals as they burrow. The harness may be targeted by the players, and has an AC 15 and 20 hp. If it is destroyed, the duergar may no longer burrow underground with the bulette.

Combat Strategies

The posse attempts to keep Gutta from escaping whenever possible. If she does run, the posse disengages from the party to give chase. The posse easily follows Gutta due to the bulettes' tremorsense.

The posse burrows into the ground and attempts to surround or flank its enemy. If it is advantageous for the duergar, they may dismount to engage the party while the bulettes flank them.

If the gem and the body (or head) of Gutta is obtained, the posse attempts to burrow underground and leave.

Scaling Suggestions

Use the following chart to adapt the difficulty of the encounter:

Party Level	# of Duergar	# of Bulletes	Gem Worth (in gp)
5	1	1	1,000
6-7	2	1	2,000
8-10	2	2	3,000
11-12	3	3	5,000
13-16	4	4	8,000
17-18	6	6	12,000
19-20	8	8	16,000

Feel free to change the DCs in the encounter to increase challenge higher level parties.

About the Author

Chad is a contributor to *Villains and Lairs*. He is working on other projects to be released soon!



So, a Poacher Walks Into a Lodge...

by Harm Delva

Suggested Party Level: 4-6

> A cold wind blows and the sky turns to an ominous darkness. Before you know it you find yourselves in a fierce, torrential downpour. In the distance, just off the side of the road, you can just barely see what appears to be a house. A faint orange light glows from its windows.

The house is a lodge built to give traveling traders shelter for the night. There's a small stable right next to it which currently houses a single mule. The hearth in the center of the room is almost burnt out. The lodge itself is currently empty, the only other notable thing in the room is a stack of firewood in a corner next to the door.

The Hunter

The mule's owner walks into the lodge shortly after the players do...

> You're just acquainting yourselves with the interior when the door swings open and a small, drenched, cloaked individual walks inside. He takes off his hood, revealing a distinctly gnomish heritage. He has a few rabbits strapped to his comically large backpack. Seemingly startled by your presence, it takes a moment before he closes the door and introduces himself.

The gnome is called Badger and he's a local ranger. This is true in the sense that he lives in these woods, but he omits the fact that he hunts rare animals to sell to his wealthy contacts. He just got back from successfully stealing a basilisk's egg but the weather caught him off guard. If the players ask what he was doing outside, he points to the rabbits strapped to his backpack and says he was hunting dinner. Should the characters continue questioning him about his whereabouts, or his backpack, let them make a **Wisdom (Insight) check**, contested by a Charisma (Deception) check by Badger. He isn't a very good liar and has no bonuses to his Deception skill.

While he's waiting for the storm to blow over, Badger does his best to befriend the party. He gladly shares his food, gives them useful survival advice, helps them navigate the woods, etc. He'll also try to learn which direction the party's headed, so he can go the other way in the morning.

He's genuinely happy to have company this night, however, and will share rumors or trade stories if the players are interested. You can use these stories to guide the characters in a certain direction for further adventures. Have they been fighting giants? He may have seen some large footprints recently. Looking for some special herbs? He lives in these woods, maybe he can help. Or you can use some of these:

- He came across a couple of mutilated goblin corpses near the waterfall north of the lodge.

continued next page...



- He got caught by an owlbear once with his pants literally around his ankles.
- He's heard tales of a deer with antlers twice the size of a gnome.
- He found a coin purse in a hollow tree by the road. He only noticed it because a squirrel threw a copper coin at him.

The Prey

Before turning in for the night, Badger excuses himself to check on his mule in the stable. There's an unpleasant surprise, however, waiting for him: a mated pair of **basilisks** *(MM p24)* are lying in ambush to retrieve their offspring.

> Badger dons his cloak, takes a deep breath, and heads outside, braving the elements. Shortly afterward, you hear a muffled voice from beyond the lodge walls, "Berta? What happened to—"

If the players investigate they find Badger eye-to-eye with two basilisks. Badger has the stats of an **archer** *(VGtM p210)* but with a movement speed of 25 ft. He was met with a double dose of the basilisks' **Petrifying Gaze** and his mule, Berta, suffered the same fate. Unable to move the egg to their lair, since it's in Badger's petrified backpack, the basilisks will live in the stables until it hatches—or until someone forces them out.

Other than the basilisk egg, Badger has the following items in his backpack:

- An ornate but functional ivory dagger worth 20 gp
- A rabbit's paw that did not bring good luck on this day
- A handful of luminescent, dried mushrooms
- 10 food rations
- A bear trap
- Skillfully removed, but untreated, wolf hides

About the Author

Harm wanted to give something back to the community after years of impressing his players with stuff he mooched off the DMs Guild. This is his first ever contribution.

So, a Goblin in a Cage Hangs Over the Road...

by Ciaran O'Halloran

Suggested Party Level: Any

> It is late in the day and your travel has been hard. You will be lucky to reach safe haven in the two or three hours left of daylight. Fortunately, the road ahead cuts straight through the forest that surrounds it.
>
> Suspended about 12 feet above the road is what looks like a large rusty bird cage, gently swinging in circles. As you come closer, you see a small humanoid form slumped inside like a bundle of rags.

If the party examines the area around the cage, read the following:

> Surrounded by tree trunks is a sturdy wooden post. Attached is a 10 foot bar that emerges through the branches to make a crude gibbet. The cage hangs from an iron hook fastened to the bar.
>
> As you approach, there is sudden motion from the rags and two grimy, green hands reach out. A head emerges and a spindle nose pokes through. Slender fingers curl around the cage bars. Looking up you see the yellow glint of hungry eyes as the creature searches for your attention—
>
> "Thir— thirsty. Please...."
>
> The goblin hangs his pink tongue from his mouth in desperation.

The creature is Exarsht, a goblin who took up with a fearsome gang of **bugbear** *(MM p33)* bandits. They have set up a lair in an abandoned mill half a mile into the woods and intend to use this spot to ambush unwary travelers. They forced Exarsht to lay traps around their new hideaway, but when they caught him stealing from them, they hung him up in the gibbet as punishment, intending to leave him to starve and to mark their new territory.

Exarsht is angry at his ex-compatriots, but was very happy when he was with them. He looked with admiration at their vicious ways and wants to regain their favor. He knows that if the party are aware of the strength of the gang they may be reluctant to fight them. Exarsht does his best to portray the bugbears as a harmless religious order who could provide the party with healing and a safe resting place. If the party stop to engage with him, he sees an opportunity to talk his way to freedom. He tries to tempt them into going to the old mill and paints himself as indispensable for his knowledge of the forest and the location of traps he has set. If they find the gang, Exarsht intends to betray them and prove his worth to his old captors.

Exarsht may give some of the following responses to the PC's questioning:

Who are you?

"Exarsht. Exarsht trap-layer!"

Who put you here?

"Bo-bar. Bo-bar gang."

(Bo-bar is not the name of the order's leader, but refers to the bugbear.)

Who is Bo-bar?

"People. Bo-bar lead holy gang. Holy gang."

(The bugbears clothes are indeed tattered and full of holes)

Why did they put you here?

"Bo-bar punish Exarsht. Bo-bar send Exarsht away! Exarsht foolish. Exarsht take food!"

(Exarsht was sent away for stealing food)

Who is the gang? What does the gang do?

"Bo-bar like prey. Gang like to prey all day. You prey too! Gang like prey like you!"

(The gang intend to prey on travelers they intend to ambush)

Where are they?

"Gang have new place. Make rest place. By water. With bed. You go to them! They happy to see you! You big! They like you! You pray!"

(The Bugbears will indeed be happy to see the treasure-laden group)

What were you doing with them?

"Exarsht trap maker. Exarsht put traps around hiding place. Exarsht know all traps. Then gang punish Exarsht. Send me away. Exarsht too wicked for them. They punish him. They look after gang, not Exarsht."

(Exarsht hopes to give the characters the idea that it is his wickedness the gang punished, to imply the goblin is not their natural ally)

What do the gang want?

continued next page...

"They look for travelers. They want them to prey. They bring them to their hideout."

If the PC's don't themselves, Exarsht makes a suggestion:

"Exarsht take you to hideaway! Exarsht know all trap places, he show you! Set him free, he take you to Bobar."

Insight (Wisdom) checks reveal that the goblin is indeed telling the truth. A particularly high check or magic may reveal that he is withholding something.

Exarsht can lead the characters along the game trail that leads to the new hideout. Along the way he shows them where he has created a pit trap and laid a trip wire. If they are with Exarsht they easily walk around the danger. If not, they need to make a **Perception (Wisdom) check**— adjust the difficulty to reflect the strength of the party— the roll should be difficult but not impossible.

As they approach the old mill, Exarsht begins to sing. He tells the party that this is a prayer song to let the gang know that friends approach. He insists the party join in. Make the players chant the following:

"Pray. Pray. All we do is pray.
All day. Pray.
We like pray.
But we don't like
Goblins."

The players may be suspicious at the authenticity of the song. If the players join in, the bugbears will have time to position themselves. They attack before the character can finish the last line.

Two of the bugbears stay behind the cover of the ruined walls and use crossbows, while two stalk the party through the woods, attempting to cut off their escape route. The other two stay close to the mill, using partial cover and delaying their action to try to goad the party closer and over the pit traps, where they intend to engage survivors in melee. They use the reach of their spears to attack party members who have fallen into a pit.

The party could gain advantage if they realize something is wrong and scout ahead for themselves. In this case, Exarsht continues to ingratiate himself with them but will warn the bugbears of their approach at the last minute. As soon as the combat turns against the bugbears, Exarsht flees into the forest.

If the party flee back the way they came, the bugbears give chase. The party risks triggering the traps unless they slow to search— in which case they risk the bugbears catching up.

If the party overcome the bugbears and search the mill, they find two barrels loaded with provisions, three unusable suits of leather armor, riddled with holes from crossbow bolts, and a padlocked chest. The padlock can be opened by a character proficient in thieves tools who makes a **DC 12 (Dexterity) check**. Inside is a bag of 128 gp and 380 sp, as well as a silver inlaid hand mirror worth 75 gp and a **potion of gaseous form** *(DMG p187)*. Lying discarded underneath a small hammock is an antique book written in common. It is titled, *Ancient Tome of Puns and Wordplay* and is worth 120 gp to a collector.

Include a number of bugbears and **bugbear chief(s)** *(MM p33)* to be a significant challenge for your party. For a party of 5th level, 4-5 bugbears, led by a single bugbear chief should present a reasonable difficulty.

Exarsht uses stats for a normal **goblin** *(MM p166)* but has two levels of exhaustion.

About the Author

Ciaran is a new contributor to the DMs Guild. He is a DM, Dad, and Drama teacher.

So, an Exotic Merchant and a Crippled Aarakocra Landed on Our Campsite...

by Elven Tower

Suggested Party Level: Any

Background

Farid is an exotic goods merchant who owns a flying home that floats thanks to a hot air balloon. He travels from settlement to settlement and buys and sells all kinds of goods. Henna is the name of his floating home/ship. The hot air comes from a magic rod that produces fire on command.

Farid seldom has any problems when traveling but he recently caught the attention of a group of four aarakocra bandits who followed Farid for a few hours and then decided to attack, trying their best to capture Henna in hopes of gaining the command words for the magic rod. Farid managed to grab the fire rod and turn it against the aarakocra, successfully driving three of them from his home.

Garkaa, one of the aarakocra, suffered serious wounds in his left wing and could not fly away. Farid did not have the heart to throw him off the flying ship and let him stay, for now. Unfortunately, the bandits damaged the balloon's upper fabric and it is leaking. Farid needs a few hours to fix the balloon but he first has to land his flying home as softly as possible, as it is losing altitude fast.

Setup

This encounter happens on the road whenever the party is resting or camping during the day.

> As you unwind during your well-deserved resting time, a strange shape appears in the sky over a low hill. At first, it appears to be a hot air balloon, but the structure below is too big to be a basket. The structure below is like a miniature home. "Henna Shop" is printed in large blue letters on the house's façade.
>
> The balloon is quite big but its shape changes with the wind. Something is not right. The malformed balloon can only mean it lacks air. It is coming towards you, and it is falling fast!

The floating home approaches with a high-pitched whistling sound. All characters are aware of it. All creatures in the camp must make a successful **DC 15 Dexterity saving throw**, taking 12 (4d6) bludgeoning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If a character rolls a natural 1, they take double damage and are trapped under the floating home.

Duel of Lies

After crash-landing, Garkaa sees a chance to profit from the situation. He jumps down and explains to the PCs that the "evil merchant" used fire magic to burn his wings a few days ago to keep him as a slave. Farid jumps down, angry and red, and claims that the aarakocra and his "lackeys" assaulted his home/shop in mid-air.

Garkaa can be very convincing and will play the part of the poor victim in order to convince characters of his enslavement by a cruel master (have characters roll a contested Charisma (Persuasion) check to see if they are convinced or not). Farid, on the other hand, is angry, frustrated, and impulsive with his words and actions. A successful **DC 20 Wisdom (Insight) check** can be used to determine which is lying. Each wants the PCs to help them arrest the other and bring them to justice in the nearest city.

Available Evidence

The PCs will probably look for evidence to disprove any of their claims.

- A successful **DC 13 Wisdom (Medicine) check** reveals that Garkaa's wounds are not days old but rather recent; a few hours at most.
- If a character climbs to the top of the deflated air balloon, a successful **DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check** reveals that the balloon's fabric was torn by claws.
- If a character enters the home/shop, a successful **DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check** reveals that there are no facilities to hold slaves in the house, nor are there any handcuffs or similar restraining devices.
- A passive **Perception score of 12 or higher** or **a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check** allows any character to notice a map of the local area with the ship's itinerary for the

continued next page...

next month.

- If a character examines the floating home's deck, a successful **DC 16 Wisdom (Survival) check** reveals faint footprints of at least three different aarakocra creatures, several burn marks on the deck's handholds, and what could have been burnt feathers.

If any of the PCs makes a claim that these discoveries disprove his version of the story, Garkaa will attempt to justify and incorporate those facts into a newly revised version of it. Garkaa is a good liar and it might still be difficult to tell whether he is for real or not.

The DM is encouraged to let this situation play out for as long as players are interested. The characters could go either way and help any of them, even making a terrible mistake. If you would rather use a skill check, a successful **DC 20 Wisdom (Insight) check** reveals that Garkaa is acting.

Conclusion

If the PCs decide to help Farid and arrest Garkaa, he thanks them and gifts them with 10 gp each. He then retires to his flying home as he has a lot of repairs to do.

If the PCs decide to help Garkaa and arrest Farid, the merchant loses his mind and becomes aggressive. He is just a peasant and cannot resist the adventurers, though. If the PCs leave with Farid, the aarakocra loots the place that night with his allies. If the PCs appear interested in the flying home, Garkaa takes whatever he can and leaves on foot.

About the Author

Elven Tower is a powerhouse of RPG content creation. The small indie studio has created hundreds of fantasy maps, short adventures, and DM content for three years straight.



So, an Umber Hulk and a Slaad Fly Over the Road...

by Tony Petrecca

Suggested Party Level: 6-10

Fire in the Sky

During an evening's travel upon a forested road, read or paraphrase the following:

> Something burns from east to west across the sky. Something large, something wooden, something on fire and falling fast. A ship's hull? Maybe. Consumed by flame, it thunders overhead, losing altitude fast, as the smell of smoke fills the air. Towards the horizon it burns, lower, at the treetops of the forest, lower... and then it hits ground with a flash beyond the trees. A moment later, a shock, like a rumbling thunder strike, can be heard.
>
> Suddenly, out of the darkness, something massive hurls from the sky—slowing at the last minute, tumbling to a thunderous one knee landing. The strangest sight—a huge, beetle-like humanoid, with monstrous mandibles and four eyes, hunches close to the ground. Holding one hand out, palm up to silence onlookers, it places a telescopic monocle on one of its eyes and examines the ground with what might be a sniff.

This exceptional **umber hulk** *(MM p292)*, who's just done the super hero landing, is Braak'L-Tikliktic, better known as the Hunter, a neogi servant who travels from world to world gathering valuable, often unique slaves for its neogi master. Typically, neogi keep their servants close at hand, but because of its remarkable strength, skills and self-motivation, the Hunter has been granted significant autonomy, and impressive equipment, to carry out its duties.

The Hunter's spelljamming vessel was attacked while transporting an incredibly valuable recent catch. During the attack, the cargo bay was shaken open, and any cargo that wasn't secured fell from the sky. The Hunter's **iron flask** *(DMG p178)* was one such item, and when it hit the ground the stopper came loose, releasing master's latest prize, a **gray slaad** *(MM p277)*. The Hunter leapt from the burning vessel as it hurtled toward the ground, intent on retrieving the flask and its priceless contents.

As it inspects the ground, the Hunter will ignore, wave off, or shush any attempts to communicate with it. Eventually it will turn its attention to the PCs in order to examine each of them, looming about each while leering with its **monocle of seeing** (a monocle that functions identically to a **gem of seeing** *(DMG p172)*). Once it is satisfied that none of the people present are its slaad quarry in disguise, the Hunter will turn its attention back to the ground, listening and sniffing, and eventually move off to the east away from the crash site, having seemingly picked up some imperceptible trail. The Hunter has determined the most likely direction of where the iron flask may have landed and is heading that way to search.

Should it be attacked at any point, it will visibly sigh in annoyance, roll its eyes, and burrow into the ground to escape the hassle and interruption of a fight. If the PCs attempt to follow it, will attempt to shoo them off and, should its efforts fail, it will burrow to get away.

The Crash Site

The craft crash landed roughly two miles west of the PCs. Finding the site isn't difficult. As the PCs near the crash site, read or paraphrase the following:

> A 100-foot-long, smoldering scar mars the landscape—clearly caused by the impact of the falling object. Trees are felled, underbrush charred, and debris scattered about along the crash site. Mulling about, seemingly searching for something in the debris, are four large, stocky, hippopotamus-headed humanoids.

These four **giff** *(MToF p204)* were teleported down from their triumphant spelljammer by their client, the Archmage Accertep. Unbeknownst to both the Hunter and his neogi master, the slaad was an asset of the archmage, who had planned to use it as part of his twisted magical experiments. When Accertep realized his slaad was stolen, the archmage commissioned a Giff spelljammer to pursue and recapture the beast.

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Having successfully destroyed the Hunter's vessel, the Giff now search the crash site, hoping to find the iron flask. Should they become aware of approaching PCs, their commander, Leftenant Biggatall, shall give a stern "Harrumph. I say, who goes there?!"

The leftenant, a pompous, humorless fellow, is wary and inquisitive, but not immediately hostile. Should the PCs present themselves as witnesses to the crash, he will demand a full retelling of what they witnessed. Any mention of an Umber Hulk will clearly peak his interest as he presses for more information.

> "Where did you last see the Hunter? What was it doing? You let it go?!? Which direction? Harrumph!"

Once he's extracted information pertaining to the whereabouts of the Hunter he ends the conversation with an abrupt "We're done here," a code phrase for Accertep, who's been scrying upon Biggatall the entire time, to teleport them back aboard their vessel. Once uttered, the five giff shimmer out of existence. Should the PCs become hostile at any point, the giff, who enjoy a good fight, will defend themselves with vigor, but Accertep will teleport them away after one round of combat, much to Biggatall's chagrin.

Should the PCs investigate the crash site further they will discover that virtually everything of value was destroyed in the crash, though the contents of a chest containing 1500 gp worth of coin and gems is scattered about. For every 10 minutes of time spent searching the debris field allow a **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check** to produce coins or gems worth 2d10 x 10 gp until, potentially, all is found. It is left to the DM's discretion if any local fauna might interrupt said search.

The Slaad and the Standoff

Soon after the PCs finish investigating the crash site and return to the road, read or paraphrase the following:

> A human girl, with tattered clothes and disheveled blonde hair, stumbles upon the road, cruel shackles upon her ankles. "Please, please, you must help me! Don't let it take me! Don't let the slaver take me. Please! Help me!"

This little girl is actually Skrelnik, the gray slaad who's wanted by the giff and the Hunter. The iron flask hit the ground roughly one mile east of the PCs, and Skrelnik burst out and immediately fled. Knowing the plane shifting ability of the slaad, the Hunter took an extra precaution and attached a pair of dimensional shackles to the slaad before imprisoning it in the flask. The shackles are intact and functional, preventing the slaad from plane shifting, and cutting its movement speed in half.

Skrelnik has *polymorphed* into the form of this little girl to elicit sympathy from any folk it might encounter. Through feigned sobs it introduces itself as Alana and explains that it was kidnapped by an umber hulk, shackled and imprisoned, to be sold into slavery. While the tale of captivity is entirely true, a successful **DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check** reveals that something about the girl's behavior seems a bit off. Of course, as the horror of the situation is explained, and before the slaad's true nature is exposed, the Hunter appears, burrowing out of the ground, to confront its quarry. When that occurs, read or paraphrase the following:

> The ground surges nearby, and the umber hulk bursts up from below, fifteen feet away.
>
> "Step away from that agent of chaos," the umber hulk states, speaking common quite clearly. "It is not what it appears to be."
>
> The little girl hisses—a frightening sound from such a frail waif—as the umber hulk pulls a flask from its belt, removes the stopper, and exclaims "You're mine!".

"You're mine," is the command phrase for the iron flask, but the fall dented the flask, damaging it noticeably and reducing the Wisdom DC to resist being trapped from a 17 to a DC 10. Having been previously imprisoned by this iron flask, the slaad has advantage on its save vs the flask's trap, and (for story purposes) automatically succeeds on this first saving throw. And this is, of course, when the giff show up. Teleporting in behind the PCs, the Leftenant exclaims "We'll be taking this beast, Hunter. Leave now or suffer the consequences."

What happens next is largely dependent upon the PCs' reactions. If they attempt to parlay, all sides will engage in the discussion. Both the giff

and the Hunter will reveal Skrelnik's true nature as a beast of pure chaos. Meanwhile, Skrelnik points out accurately that both parties are kidnappers and slavers and demands that the Hunter release it from its shackles. If the PCs choose a side and combat ensues, Skrelnik will take to the air with a fly spell, snarking "I can't believe this obvious little girl disguise worked," and toss a couple *fireballs* into the fray, before attempting to flee.

Aftermath

If Skrelnik escapes it is quite possible that a shackled Slaad remains on the loose, spreading as much chaos as it can on this plane until it is able to break the shackles and plane shift back to Limbo. Should The Hunter survive, it will continue to pursue its quarry. Accertep, meanwhile, cuts his losses and moves on to other test subjects for his experimentations.

About the Author

Tony has been DMing since the last millennium. He is the author of several critically acclaimed DMsGuild adventures. Check out his best sellers *Hunted*, *Journey Through the Center of the Underdark*, and *Killer Kobolds*.

The Hunter

Large monstrosity (umber hulk), neutral evil

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)
Hit Points 133 (14d10 + 56)
Speed 30 ft., burrow 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)

Skills Animal Handling +6, Perception +6, Survival +6
Senses darkvision 120 ft., tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages common, umber hulk
Challenge 7 (2900 XP)

Confusing Gaze. When a creature starts its turn within 30 feet of the umber hulk and is able to see the umber hulk's eyes, the umber hulk can magically force it to make a DC 15 Charisma saving throw, unless the umber hulk is incapacitated.

On a failed saving throw, the creature can't take reactions until the start of its next turn and rolls a d8 to determine what it does during that turn. On a 1 to 4, the creature does nothing. On a 5 or 6, the creature takes no action but uses all its movement to move in a random direction. On a 7 or 8, the creature makes one melee attack against a random creature, or it does nothing if no creature is within reach.

Unless surprised, a creature can avert its eyes to avoid the saving throw at the start of its turn. If the creature does so, it can't see the umber hulk until the start of its next turn, when it can avert its eyes again. If the creature looks at the umber hulk in the meantime, it must immediately make the save.

Tunneler. The umber hulk can burrow through solid rock at half its burrowing speed and leaves a 5 foot-wide, 8-foot-high tunnel in its wake.

Actions

Multiattack. The umber hulk makes three attacks: two with its claws and one with its mandibles.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (1d8+6) slashing damage.

Mandibles. Melee Weapon Attack: +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 15 (2d8+6) slashing damage.

Equipment. Iron Flask, Iron Bands of Bilarro, Monocle of Seeing, Ring of Feather Falling

So, a Blind Woman and a Medusa Walk Along the Road...

by Beatriz T. Dias

Suggested Party Level: 5-6

Meeting the Couple

Walking along the road the party finds two figures walking the opposite direction, they are both wearing hoods and trying to look inconspicuous. One of them is Lara, a blind woman (**acolyte** *MM p342*) and the other is Niraya, a **medusa** *(MM p214)*. Lara once got lost and ended up in Niraya's lair, a medusa known in the region for petrifying anyone who dared to come close to her. But due to the fact that Lara is blind, that didn't happen. Instead the two of them got close and ended up falling in love. However, a group of bounty hunters decided it was time to kill the medusa. When the women found out they ran away, trying to find somewhere else to live.

Lara will be friendly if approached and has no problems revealing that she can't see. Niraya will be standoffish and protective of Lara. Besides the hood, Niraya has a large scarf that she will use to try and avoid looking someone in the eye, by covering her face and looking through the fibers of the scarf.

A **DC 11 Wisdom (Perception) check** will reveal that under the ragged cloak, Niraya is wearing a very expensive green dress. And a **DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check** is enough to notice that Niraya is a medusa.

If the party discovers that Niraya is a medusa, she will warn them to back off and forget about them, or she will have no problem defending herself and her lover. Lara will be more diplomatic, claiming that Niraya wouldn't hurt anyone that didn't deserve it, which is true. If the party seems friendly, Lara will also inform them that hunters are chasing the couple, wanting to kill Niraya.

Bounty Hunters Arrive

Not long after the party passes by the two women, a group of 4 **veterans** *(MM p350)* will also come from the same direction as the couple. They are the bounty hunters wanting to kill Niraya. They believe she is a dangerous monster that needs to be put down and were promised a reward of 3,000 gp for the medusa's head. One of them, Thym, is willing to give his share of the reward (600 gp) to the party if they help with the final battle. Thym is willing to forgo his reward because the medusa killed his father and he only wants is justice.

Niraya will have no recollection of the bounty hunter's father since she has killed many people in her lifetime, but in her opinion, she only killed in self defense.

The party can help the two women fight off the bounty hunters, help the bounty hunters kill Niraya, or try and take the full bounty by themselves. In case of the later they will need to learn who gave the bounty from one of the bounty hunters. A successful **DC 17 Charisma (Intimidation) or (Persuasion) check** will be enough to get the information. This can be a guard captain, or a noble, from any nearby town or city. The DM can choose what location suits the campaign best.

Rewards and Consequences

If the party helps the bounty hunters, they get 600 gp and 1,500 XP, equally divided amongst the party members.

If the party helps the two women, they get 3,000 XP, equally divided amongst the party members, and the gratitude of Lara and Niraya.

About the Author

Mostly an adventure writer, the DMsGuild has several of Beatriz's works.



So, a Barghest and Its Goblin Prey Are Found on the Road...

by David McDonough

Suggested Party Level: 4-5

A quiet road meanders in the midst of a forest, a large rocky hillside on one side and thickets of trees on the other. As you turn around a corner, you see two small shapes tied to a large tree. They writhe against their bindings. As the clouds part overhead, the sun reveals the green skin, large bulbous noses and sharp teeth of goblins. Pieces of rope from what might have been a third captive lie on the ground.

The goblins are muttering to themselves, their eyes wide with fear, their skin dripping with sweat from the exertion of trying to escape their predicament.

Background

The two **goblins** *(MM p166)* are named Brax and Kraz; they are the remnants of the Broken Teeth clan that had made their home in the nearby hill. The tribe was decimated with the arrival of a **barghest** *(VGtM p123)*— a fiend born from goblin parents that appears as a goblin but is soon able to shapechange into its true form, which resembles a large fiendish canine.

Barghests have their origins as a curse from the General of Gehenna, who was betrayed by the master of the goblinoid gods, Maglubiyet. The barghest is born to devour the bodies and souls of goblins— seventeen to be exact, in memory of the seventeen oaths that Maglubiyet had broken to the General, before the barghest returns to join the yugoloth hordes under the General's command in Gehenna.

This barghest had secretly begun its killings of individual Broken Teeth goblins, all the while hiding its true fiendish nature. It had chosen its victims selectively, aiming to devour the more prominent members of the clan, including the top goblin warriors, bugbear enforcers, and even the hobgoblin advisor to the chief. It had devoured fourteen goblinoids before feasting on the goblin chief Raznak, doing so in full view of what remained of the clan, all of whom promptly fled.

The barghest has captured three of the goblins who fled from the goblin lair; one of the goblins had loosened its bonds enough to escape. That goblin is Kazlak, son of the goblin chief, who the barghest has since recaptured. The creature is now returning with Kazlak's unconscious body when the characters run into this particular encounter.

On the Road

Brax and Kraz are speaking quietly in Goblin. Characters who are proficient in that language and succeed on a **DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check** will hear them commenting with some urgency about the "Beast," and how they need to escape lest they lose their chance to serve Maglubiyet in Acheron. The goblins notice the characters, unless all the characters succeed on a **DC 16 Dexterity (Stealth) check**.

Both goblins are working furiously to try to escape, but can't unless the characters offer them aid. Characters who succeed on a **DC 15 Dexterity check** can untie or cut the bindings with a dagger or any slashing weapon. The bindings can also be ripped apart by those who succeed on a **DC 20 Strength check**.

If Brax and Kraz notice the characters, they will beg for help in Common. Both goblins are in a state of panic, as they expect the barghest to return at any moment. They are pathetic figures, blubbering and crying for the characters to help them escape the Beast. They also promise to change their ways and to never kill or hurt any humanoids after this point. Characters who succeed on a **DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check** will know that the goblins are lying.

The Beast Arrives

Before the goblins are freed, the barghest will return, dragging the unconscious form of Kazlak. Characters who succeed on a **DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check**— or who have a passive Perception of 18 or higher— will hear rustling in the trees. If anyone hears this sound, Brax and Krax will notice a change in the demeanor of the character(s), and will start yelling that the Beast is coming.

Read or paraphrase the following:

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A goblin's high-pitched voice emerges from the woods, saying in Common: "Fifteen have been taken. Two are still owed to the General. Kazlak here has been spoken for. Time for you to decide which one of you is worthy to join him."

A goblin emerges from the thick woods near the road. It's a small goblin, a runt even compared to its small kin, with ill-fitting clothes that doesn't look like they even belong to him. Yet it is dragging an unconscious goblin by the hand with little strain, and throws the body on the road with the flick of its wrist.

"Looks like we have visitors," the goblin says, its eyes glinting dangerous. "This matter does not concern you. The General is owed two more goblin souls. Leave, and you won't be harmed."

The barghest will not harm any characters who leave, as it is fixated on devouring the souls of two more goblins and returning to Gehenna. If the characters leave, the barghest will eventually transform into its true canine shape, and let the two trapped goblins try to prove that they are not worthy of being devoured, before killing both and picking one to consume its soul.

The barghest will laugh at characters who insist on helping the goblins, reminding them that goblins are vicious creatures that would not think twice of torturing and eating them if given the chance. The fiend will also point to a pouch being carried by Brax. If the characters open that pouch, they will see several human and elf ears and noses inside it.

If the characters still look hesitant, the barghest will offer them a choice: they can pick one goblin, either Brax or Kraz, to escape with them. The goblins will then start begging the characters to pick one of them to escape. If the characters refuse the barghest's offer, the creature will transform into a large fiendish canine and attack the party. If the creature is reduced to 20 hit points, it will cast *dimension door* to escape.

Characters who leave the encounter without fighting the barghest, either alone or with one of the goblins in tow, and who succeed on a **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check** will hear the screams of goblins being eaten. These are the final goblin souls the barghest needs to consume to fulfill its mission. It then disappears back to Gehenna.

Aftermath

If the barghest successfully escapes after a fight, it will take time to rest and temporarily forgo its hunt for goblins in order to take revenge on the party. An encounter with the barghest can occur a day or two later when the characters are least expecting it.

If one goblin escaped with the characters, or if they protected all the goblins from the barghest, the goblin(s) will profusely thank the characters and will leave to try to find their remaining kin from the Broken Teeth clan. But, at the character's next long rest, several goblins— including any of those who survived this encounter with the barghest— will try to waylay the characters during their rest. If the characters try to ask any goblins that they recognize from this encounter why they'd attack them after being rescued, the goblin will merely shrug and say: "It's in our nature."

Characters can also try to find the location of the goblin lair, which will still have some of the goblin chief's treasures, goblin prisoners who have been left in their cells, and other possible avenues for further adventuring opportunities.

About the Author

David is a new contributor on the DMs Guild and author of the adventures *The Priest, the Witch, and the Lost Temple* and *Undermountain: Caverns of the Many-Legged*.

So, a Child and His Sister Walk Onto the Road...

by Matt Vaughan (Dungeon Rollers)

Suggested Party Level: 2-4

> "Mummy! MUUUUMMMY!". A small human boy, no more than 6 years old, walks into the road. Dragged behind him is an even younger girl, obviously his sister. Both are covered in mud with tears streaming down their face. "I want my MUUUMMY!"
>
> Upon seeing you the boy stops screaming and looks up. "P-p-p-please...h-h-help us. M-mum-my was taken by some...fings." He sniffs up the previous contents of his nose. "We was out in the woods picking some berries. Me and my little sister Ana were playing when we heard mummy scream and she was dragged away by something big! Please help her. PLEEEAAASE!"

The boys says his name is Nathaniel; in truth, he is an orc who has been *polymorphed* into a human child and is attempting to trick the party. He claims his mother "Amelia" has been dragged off by some "big scary creatures, with fangs and red eyes." He is accompanied by a smaller *polymorphed* orc, who appears to be a young human girl around 3 years of age named Ana. She will not speak. Characters with truesight can see the true form of both Nathaniel and Ana. Characters who succeed on a **DC 20 Wisdom (Insight) check** will suspect that Nathaniel is not telling the truth, though he may come across as simply confused.

This whole ploy is in fact a trap. The orcs are led by a priestess, named Vanegri Deathspeaker, who channels the powers of Mrykul through her necromancy. She is in need of a blood sacrifice in order to resurrect the previous tribal leader: Goludirk the Bloody Fury.

"Nathaniel" and "Ana" can take the party back to where Amelia was allegedly taken. They will do their best to join the party, including following from some distance away, in order to take part in the trap, unless physically or magically prevented from doing so. They will remain in their *polymorphed* shapes until they are either reunited with Vanegri (see "Encounter") or the necromancer is defeated.

Following the Orcs

The scene of Amelia's capture is obvious as you approach. Ripped beige cloth from her dress lays pressed into the wet mud. Clumps of the ground are ripped up, intermingled with still-wet blood from where the scared woman clawed at the floor as the creatures dragged her away. Large tracks clearly lead away from the area.

Tracking the orcs is simple; the party will find no challenge in following them to their lair: a large forgotten barrow. The barrow is surrounded by thick woods, filled with bird noises, the scuttling of creatures through the undergrowth and the howl of the wind through the air.

While tracking the orcs, the party will attempt the five challenges below during the hour it takes to track the creatures. In so doing, they will learn some clues into what is really going on. At the same time, they will gain benefits or drawbacks in the final encounter based on the number of successes— this represents the knowledge they have acquired during their pursuit.

- **Check 1**: Prints in the Mud. **DC 12 Wisdom (Survival)**. Pass shows that the creatures are humanoids, but larger.
- **Check 2**: Cloth in the Trees. **DC 14 Wisdom (Perception)**. Pass shows that the captors are wearing tribal clothing, common among the warring races.
- **Check 3**: Scent on the Air. **DC 16 Intelligence (Nature)**. Rotting flesh, but no signs of animal carcasses.
- **Check 4**: Symbols on the Trees. **DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana)**. These are symbols of necromancy.
- **Check 5**: Bones on the Ground. **DC 14 Wisdom (Survival)**. Many of the bones are from humans, dug up by the beasts in the woods. This may have been an area of great respect in a past age.

Note: A severely poor roll during this tracking section could result in a random encounter. Wolves, bears, giant spiders, bears, ogres and even ank-

continued next page...

hegs are known to reside in the local area.

Encounter

> Your tracking leads you to a barrow in the middle of a small opening in the dense woods. A worn path, recently used, leads up to a stone that has been forced aside. An entrance to the burial chamber lies underneath.
>
> The smell of rotting flesh and excrement hits you as you enter through the small opening. Mold grows on the walls, and the dim light of candles flickers before you.
>
> "Ah, my sacrifices arrive," the throaty speech from the orc priestess before you seems to fill the air. "Not what you expected? So noble, so brave— so nearly dead."

If accompanied by Nathaniel and Ana:

> As you look on, Nathaniel and Ana start to change, their bodies growing in stature and their skin turning a dark green hue. Beside the priestess stands a huge orog marked with bloody warpaint. You realize there is no Amelia, no one was taken, and this is a trap.

Otherwise read:

> A huge orog stands beside the orcish priestess in front of you, flanked by blood-daubed orcs. You realize there is no Amelia, no one was taken, and this is a trap.

The trap has been set, and the following creatures are in the barrow depths:

Vanegri (stats) Orc Priestess of Myrkul
1x **orog** *(MM p247)*
2x **orcs** *(MM p246) (optional for higher level parties)*

Nathaniel and Ana, if accompanying you, have their enchantments undone by Vanegri, revealing 2 additional orcs.

Vanegri Deathspeaker is an orc priestess who has learned that the path of Myrkul, god of death, can help bring back the most fabled warriors of the tribe. In the barrow are the bones of Goludirk the Bloody Fury, leader of the Stone Chewer tribe seven generations past. Vanegri is attempting to resurrect him, using the party as the sacrifice in the ritual. She stands over a stone altar covered in bloody runes.

During the encounter, the orog will attempt to grapple the character closest to him, and drag them towards Vanegri to begin the ritual. If a character is brought into contact with the altar they must succeed a **DC 18 Strength saving throw** or be stunned, and placed prone on the altar. At this point Vanegri will attempt the ritual, this will take 3 rounds and if successful Goludirk will be resurrected and the character reduced to 0 hit points. A character can attempt to free the sacrifice by succeeding on a **DC 18 Strength (Athletics) check** to pull them free; this is made at disadvantage if the orog is adjacent to the altar.

Vanegri will stay by the altar, commanding her troops and using her ranged spells freely to attack the party. The orcs will charge forward, engaging in combat as fast as possible.

Benefits/Drawbacks

- **1 Success**: Too much noise! The Orcs and Vanegri all start in ¾ cover and will launch spears at the party as they enter the room. This occurs at Initiative 30 and does not count as their turn in this combat.
- **2 Successes**: Prepared. All enemies have advantage on all attacks in the first round of combat.
- **3 Successes**: No effect
- **4 Successes**: Well Trained. Each party member's AC is increased by 2 for the duration of the combat.
- **5 Successes**: Unnaturally Skilled! Each party member has advantage in the first round of combat, and their AC is increased by 2 for the duration of the combat.

Resolution

The characters are free to search the barrow after the encounter, discovering:

- A spellbook on Vanegri, this contains a scroll of *resurrection* and a scroll of *speak with dead*.
- A selection of coins totaling 48 sp
- 1d8 bronze or silver offerings, worth 20 gp each

If still alive, Vanegri will plead to be able to return to her tribe and promises not to contin-

ue necromancy (a successful **DC 16 Wisdom (Insight) check** proves this to be a lie). If Ana and Nathaniel are not part of the encounter in the barrows, Vanegri's defeat will result in them returning to their normal selves. They will flee the area.

Vanegri Deathspeaker

Medium humanoid (orc), chaotic evil

Armor Class 14 (studded leather)
Hit Points 51 (6d8 + 24)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	13 (+1)	9 (-1)	8 (+1)

Skills Intimidation +3, Religion +1
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11
Languages Common, Orc
Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Aggressive. As a bonus action, Vanegri can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature that it can see.

Gruumsh's Fury. Vanegri deals an extra 4 (1d8) damage when she hits with a weapon attack (included in the attack).

Spellcasting. Vanegri is a 3rd-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 11, +3 to hit with spell attacks). She has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at-will): *chill touch, prestidigitation, ray of frost*
1st level (4 slots): *burning hands, fog cloud*
2nd level (2 slots): *ray of enfeeblement, suggestion*

Actions

Spear. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (1d6 + 3 plus 1d8) piercing damage, or 12 (2d8 + 3) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

About the Author

Author of the *Treasures of...* series, featuring new magic items for use in all your campaigns. Dungeon Rollers has many new items coming in the coming months.

So, Two Clans of Goblins Gathered by the Road With a Hag—Then a Bunch of Bards Showed Up...

by George Sager

Suggested Party Level: Any

The evening chill has set in, balancing out the heat of your cookfire. A perfect night for telling tall tales. You begin a joke, but a staccato drum rhythm splits the air, swallowing the punchline. You silently abandon camp and creep back toward the King's Road, crouching low to crest the hill without being seen by whoever is making the increasing racket.

You blink in disbelief. The clearing below is overrun with goblins. Two hordes are gathered, facing each other, screeching and banging weapons together. Nearby, a huge pile of wood is just starting to burn beneath an even larger spit with some unlucky struggling creature tied ready to cook. You could probably just keep on moving unseen, but what will happen if all of these deadly creatures are left so close to civilization?

The two clans actually intend no harm this evening, except to their rivals' honor. The party has stumbled upon a sacred seasonal ritual that they take very seriously: a dance off. They are engaging in traditional trash talk, hurling insults, boasts, and threats at each other in Goblin. Include enough goblins to pose a threat to the party, particularly if both groups were to turn on them.

The action is all happening in a large clearing at the bottom of the hill, between the road and the woods beyond. Anyone who approaches risks being spotted. If the clans are attacked or harassed they temporarily put aside their animosity to wipe out the interlopers.

The bonfire blaze grows, throwing more light into the clearing, and imposing disadvantage on the goblins trying to see anything out in the darkness.

From the top of the hill the party can try to observe the gathering below, making **Wisdom (Perception) checks**, and noticing more or less depending on how high they roll.

- **DC 10**: Though some time has passed, neither group has gotten noticeably closer to the other.
- **DC 14**: You can make out individual shouts in Goblin from the din. "Prepare for agony, ass-pigs!" "Your prayers of mercy will be mocked vigorously by us!"
- **DC 16**: Each group of goblins has their own distinct markings and dress. Several are gesturing toward the full moon.
- **DC 18**: The bound animal is large and clearly alive, but not humanoid, just some beast.
- **DC 20**: You see a decrepit, sinister-looking old lady smiling from the edge of the wood, firelight shining in her eyes.

If the party manages to sneak part way downhill decrease the difficulties by 2, but the goblins no longer have disadvantage on rolls to notice the party. At the bottom of the hill decrease the DCs by 4, and the goblins now have advantage on their Perception checks.

If a party member gets noticed, the goblins do not immediately attack. Those that noticed nudge a few comrades who turn quiet and stare menacingly as the majority of their clansfolk rage on.

Ask your players what their characters are doing and how long they plan to observe.

After several minutes the hag, Granny Pestilence, steps from the edge of the woods into the firelight. The goblins on both sides are whipped into a greater frenzy. A successful **DC 15 Intelligence (Nature or Arcana) check** reveals that Granny is likely a night hag.

If the players try to engage Granny Pestilence in Common, she grins at them. A successful **DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion),** or **DC 16 Strength (Intimidation) check** gets her to call out an answer, if not a helpful one. "Just you stay right there dearies. It won't be long now."

Soon, several nicely-dressed musicians (bards) arrive, and fearlessly stand near Granny. The goblins from both sides toss coins and treasures into the space between the clans, and

at the feet of the musicians. When the musicians begin to play the shouting dies down and the dance off begins.

The rules of the contest are unclear. Generally, goblins enter the middle area and dance. Granny Pestilence watches, declaring after each dance a seemingly arbitrary amount of points for one of the clans. Even after watching for a few rounds it takes a successful **DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) check** to figure out the subtle cues that guide the proceedings.

Silence falls if anyone intervenes. If a party member asks to join in, a successful **DC 14 Wisdom (Persuasion) check** (made with advantage if they were successful in figuring out the contest cues) makes Granny bid them to try it, at their own risk. Otherwise she may halt the festivities and goad them into participating. "There are no spectators on this night, only participants, and fools for the feast!"

A successful **DC 12 Charisma (Performance),** or **DC 14 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check** results in wild laughing and cheering from both sides, and some acceptance granted to the party. Failure is met with utter silence. They may try again with the difficulty increased by 3. Another failure means that party member's banishment on pain of death.

Once accepted, party members can join the dancing (in fact each member is encouraged to), receiving cheers and boos in roughly equal measure.

The dancing lasts most of the night, eventually shedding any pretense of turn taking, and ending with the winning clan erupting in victory, mostly forgetting to pick up their winnings. Granny Pestilence even busts a move when the mood strikes her. No spectators after all. Anyone accepted by the clan can join in the wild post-dance barbecue with the musicians. At dawn the revelry ends, and the field is cleared unceremoniously.

Adjustments

Neither clan needs to be goblins. The general idea is that each is a group of sentient, but wild creatures, not speaking in Common, and gathered in numbers that would be deadly to any party of adventurers. Each clan member uses their regular statblock, with the addition of between +1 and +5 in Performance. Some other potential clan creatures could be: bullywugs, cyclops, dryads, gnolls, hobgoblins, kobolds, lizardfolk, ogres, or even slaadi.

About the Author

George is a contributer to *Storm King's Barrows*, has a credit in Kobold Press' *Creature Codex*, and DMs a 5e campaign for friends when he isn't working on one of several other projects on the go. Follow him on Twitter @GeorgeSCanada.



So, a Magic Axe, a Skeleton, and a Crowd of Peasants Block the Road...

by Duncan Rhodes

Suggested Party Level: 2-4

Overview

On the road to Oakhelm, a magic axe stands at the center of a local power struggle, and could be the catalyst for a new quest.

> "Forget it, it won't budge," spits the brawny huntsman. Grudgingly, he releases the handle and wipes his brow. The veins around his temples bulge from his failed attempt and the huge greataxe remains steadfastly embedded in the tree trunk, its gleaming blade reflecting the sunlight as sharply as a polished mirror. Clasping the very end of the axe shaft is a fleshless hand, connected to a brown, weathered skeleton with its head bowed and its legs half-buried in moss and weeds. A gaggle of citizens from the nearby village of Oakhelm are gathered around the trunk, muttering between themselves.

If the adventurers inquire as to what's going on, any of the villagers will gladly tell them. A confident youth of seventeen summers, Willem (halfling, **commoner** *(MM p345)*, proves particularly chatty, relishing the chance to share this local piece of lore and legend.

> "This here is the axe of the mighty warrior Gwenluin! She was the finest fighter of our village, a paladin of Ilmater, and protector of these lands you walk in. She was tricked into coming to this crossroads by a devious witch, who had fallen in love with her husband. The witch surprised Gwenluin in the dead of night, stabbing her with a knife laced with deadly poison. Before Gwenluin breathed her final breath, she uttered a prayer to Ilmater and besought him to keep her weapon safe until a warrior with a pure heart should claim it and avenge her death. With that she sunk her axe into the trunk right here. That was 25 years ago to this day! Ever since, the people of Oakhelm gather here on this date to try to claim the weapon as their own."

If the characters ask what happened to the husband, Willem will say that, having killed Gwenluin, the witch abducted him and took him to her lair, deep in the forest.

After the huntsman stands down, next in line to try their hand at removing the axe is a butch young woman with broad shoulders, wearing a chain shirt with a longsword sheathed at her side. Her name is Reilyn Rosefire (lawful good, human **guard** *(MM p347)* with 16 Strength and Athletics +5).Those that succeed on a **DC 15 Intelligence (Religion) check** notice that a symbol of two hands bound with red cord on the woman's doublet is the sign of the god Ilmater. Young Reilyn is training to become a paladin in his service, following the steps of her hero Gwenluin.

> Before the young woman has time to step up to the axe, there's a clamor of hooves on the dirt road and five horses thunder to a halt just a few yards from the crowd. A handsome young man dismounts agilely from his stallion and—pushing several villagers out of his way—he marches straight towards the axe. His retinue of thuggish-looking companions follow closely behind.
>
> "People of Oakhelm I call you to bear witness to my feat. The high priest of Oakhelm declared that whoever frees this axe should become the rightful protector of our town and its lands. According to their visions, I, Arter Wolfenheim, will do so before my 21st year. Those that swear loyalty to me will prosper under my rule!"

Arter Wolfenheim and his retinue are human **thugs** *(MM p350)* equipped with chain shirts (AC 13), longswords, and short bows. Arter himself is stronger and more charismatic than the rest of his band, with 16 Strength and 12 Charisma. He has Athletics +6 and Intimidation +4. His alignment is neutral. The dream of which he speaks prophesied a young champion, but it did not in fact specify that it would be him who drew the axe from the tree.

Freeing the Axe

Freeing the axe requires a successful **DC 25 Strength (Athletics) check**. Certain conditions increase or decrease your chance of success. If you

are of good alignment you gain a +2 bonus to your roll (+3 if you are lawful good), if you are female you gain a +2 bonus, and if you are a true follower of Ilmater (Arter isn't) you gain a further +2 bonus. If you are attempting to remove the axe on any day other than the anniversary of Gwenluin's death you suffer a -5 modifier.

Second attempts: If you fail on your first attempt you can make two more attempts, both at disadvantage, provided you rest 1 minute between attempts. After three failures, you must complete a long rest before trying again.

Gwenluin's Axe

Gwenluin's axe is an **Axe of Cleaving** *(as detailed in Esquiel's Guide to Magic Weapons)*, which has gained sentience since Gwenluin's spirit inhabited it, upon her death.

Axe of Cleaving

greataxe, very rare (requires attunement)

This huge double-headed axe has a haft over five feet long, and a wickedly sharp blade. When swung with full force it cleaves through opponents' armor with ease, slicing chain, plate and shields like melons, its deadly momentum often carrying it towards a second target.

When you attack with this magic weapon, you score a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20.

Additionally, when you hit a creature with this axe, you may choose another creature within 5 feet of your original target and within your reach. If the original attack roll would hit the second creature they take damage equal to half the amount dealt to the original target.

Sentience. The axe is a lawful good weapon with an Intelligence of 10, a Wisdom of 12 and a Charisma of 14. It has hearing and normal vision out to a range of 30 feet.

The weapon communicates telepathically with its wielder.

Personality. Gwenluin's ghost is determined to avenge herself of her ignoble death, and will pressure the weapon's owner to hunt down the witch that killed her. If the witch is killed, Gwenluin's ghost is laid to rest and the axe becomes a non-sentient axe of cleaving. If the weapon owner refuses the quest, Gwenluin's personality obstructs their ability to wield the axe, giving them disadvantage on attack rolls made with the weapon.

Possible Scenarios

Arter is keen to free the axe and use this event as a sign he is destined to rule Oakhelm and the surrounding lands, which are currently run by alderman Joenas Brackenbelt. Brackenbelt is a childless and frail old man, who is just in his ruling, but considered weak by those such as Arter who oppose him. Not only will Arter insist on trying his hand first at freeing the axe (he will then make a second and third attempt, before giving up), he will oppose and obstruct others from trying if he thinks he can get away with it. Especially any outsiders "who have no business in these lands".

If someone succeeds in freeing the axe, Arter will claim that he loosened the axe from the tree. He will try to intimidate them into giving it over to him, and is willing to resort to force. The crowd of commoners are scared of Arter and easily swayed by his words, although the huntsman (**thug** *(MM p350)*, armed with a handaxe and shortsword) is willing to stick up for what he feels is right. Both the crowd and the huntsman are more likely to stand up for Reilyn than for adventurers passing through.

continued next page...



Reilyn is keen to free the axe as Gwenluin is a personal hero to her, and she wants to continue her work as a paladin and protector of Oakhelm. If the characters help Reilyn free the axe (and keep it from Arter), she will invite them to her home to eat and rest. Upon understanding the will of Gwenluin, she will invite them to help her on her quest to kill the witch.

Avenging Gwenluin

If the heroes free the axe for themselves, or for Reilyn, they are likely to take up the side quest of avenging Gwenluin and laying her ghost to rest. The witch in question is a **green hag** *(MM p177)* called Lady Gargle. After murdering the paladin, she kidnapped her half-orc husband and lives with him in a warren of caves where the forest is darkest and foulest. By appearing as a beautiful, but depraved, young woman, the hag has seduced the half-orc into loving her, and he is willing to defend her with his life. Lady Gargle is cunning and knowledgeable in poisons, and you can further adjust the difficulty of the quest by populating her lair with deadly pets who attack on her command. Or you could create any other side quest of your own invention, with Gwenluin's ghost as the catalyst.

About the Author

Duncan is the author of several best-selling titles on the DMs Guild, most notably *Esquiel's Guide to Magic Weapons*, which brings 120 new blades, battleaxes, and bows to your game (along with a treasure trove of more fun stuff). He also blogs at www.hipstersanddragons.com.

So, a Campfire Appeared Along the Road...

by Morten Greis

Suggested Party Level: 2-4

> You have been traveling for most of a day along quiet dirt roads. You have seen few other travelers, and most were local peasants traveling from one village to another. In the distant horizon the sun is setting obscured by heavy gray clouds. Rain has fallen time and time again during the day, and trees and grasses around you are still wet.
>
> As darkness begins to set there is no village or roadside inn in sight, however, there are the dancing lights of a campfire ahead you. Somehow, somebody succeeded in lighting a fire even though everything around you is soaked.

As the PCs approach:

> You see an empty camp with a lively campfire. Bedding is laid out around the fire, and it seems almost as if the camp has just been set, but no one is in sight.
>
> Then you hear a voice call out. "Greetings weary travelers! Come, sit and sleep at my campfire. My warmth and light is yours for tonight."

Background

The campfire is a **fire elemental** *(MM p125)* that has learned to camouflage itself as a simple fire. It can take the shape of a small bonfire or campfire, but what might reveal it is that it does not consume the wood in the fire. It has, however, learned to use charcoal and burned wood as the basis of its fake campfire to enhance its camouflage.

The campfire calls itself Baalogbrand, and it is friendly to humanoids. It has learned that they appreciate fire, heat and light—especially on a cold, wet night—and it now sells its services as a campfire.

Baalogbrand will speak through a disembodied voice and likes to make people think that the campfire is the will of invisible fae.

Payment in Stories

Baalogbrand likes company and also takes its payment in stories. Anyone sleeping in the camp can entertain Baalogbrand with a story. Have each player tell a brief story about their character's exploits. If a character refuses to do so, then Baalogbrand will cease to be a campfire for the company and will leave.

Baalogbrand will remain alert throughout the night and warn, if hostile creatures approach. If befriended, Baalogbrand may even assist the travelers, if they are attacked during the night. It may come as a surprise for both the PCs and their assailants, when the fire suddenly rises up as an elemental.

Payment in Gold

Baalogbrand prefers to keep its true form hidden during the night, and then reveal itself in the morning. When the sun rises, Baalogbrand awakens the travelers by calling out and asking them to leave a payment of 4 gold each (a successful **DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check** may reduce it to 2 gold each). If Baalogbrand is not paid, then it will angrily leave, cursing the PCs: until they leave their payment in front of a fire, they will be unable to light any non-magical fire.

About the Author

Morten is a new contributor to DMs Guild, blogs at Stemmen fra ådalen and converts Danish adventures to English on DriveThruRPG.

So, Some Adventurers With a Locked Chest Step Onto the Road...

by Richard Malena-Webber

Suggested Party Level: 4-7

The Common Good

> As the sunlit path ahead stretches out before you, a small dust cloud appears just at the edge of the horizon. After a few minutes, you see a small group traveling towards you. Three of the adventurers are on horseback, while a huge, smiling goliath drives a large wagon filled with supplies. Among the goods strapped in the wagon bed is a large, iron-bound chest. From within, you can hear a steady pounding noise. The adventurers give a friendly wave as you approach, and a tall elf calls out "Well met, travelers! Any news about the path ahead?"

The adventuring party is known as the Common Good. Their leader, an elven woman named Sheylen, laughs as she explains the title. "With a name like that, people always know we're willing to help ease their troubles, no matter where we travel. And, if at times we decide to keep a little extra gold for ourselves, well it all goes to serve the Common Good!"

The Common Good is a rowdy troupe, and Sheylen's friends seem ready to joke along with the PCs as if they were sharing a pint in the local tavern. A quick appraisal reveals that Sheylen is some kind of priestess, while her two human companions, Alath and Vezir, a ranger and a rogue, are carrying thin blades and bows. The goliath, Kalmar, wears a loose collection of animal hides and a massive battleaxe rests on the wagon bench next to him.

Sheylen is more than willing to share news about the road ahead and can give useful knowledge about wherever the PCs are bound.

As the PCs interact with the Common Good, they may make skill checks to learn more about the adventurers.

- With a successful **DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check**, the PCs are able to determine that something within the iron-bound chest is knocking in a regular pattern.
- With a successful **DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) check**, the PCs notice that Kalmar is acting in a strange way. He is polite and soft-spoken, and when he speaks with the other members of the Common Good, he does so in a tentative manner, as if Kalmar isn't used to making jokes with the rest of the adventurers.
- With a successful **DC 14 Strength or Intelligence check**, the PCs can roughly gauge the power of the Common Good, and sees that they are almost a match for the PCs.

The Common Good freezes up immediately if anyone inquires about the iron-bound chest or the pounding within. Sheylen says that "we trapped a demon and are taking it to where it can be safely banished," which is revealed as a lie to anyone who succeeds at a **DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) check**. If confronted, the members of the Common Good refuse to change their story.

If the PCs move toward the iron-bound chest, read or paraphrase the following.

> The barbarian's eyes grow wide as he stands up and shakily wields the battleaxe. Before anyone can move, Sheylen shouts "Kalmar! We need to stay calm. Why don't you take that axe and cut us some firewood for tonight's camp. Now." The goliath frowns, but takes his axe and starts heading away from the path.

Once Kalmar has stepped away. Sheylen approaches the PCs for a whispered conversation. "Okay, I know how this is going to sound, but we've all agreed that it's for the best. The goliath? That isn't Kalmar." She points over at the iron-bound chest. "That is."

Sheylen explains that they hired Kalmar as extra muscle a few months ago, but the angry brute brought them nothing but grief and a mountain of fines and property damage. The barbarian regularly attacked members of the clergy, bristled at authority, and started brawls in their favorite bars. He even stole from the adventurers during their quests. So, when Kalmar's demeanor abruptly changed two days ago, Alath and Vezir did some digging. They learned that they'd passed a colony of doppelgangers on their travels, and wondered if their unwelcome comrade may have been replaced.

Meanwhile, the new Kalmar helped the compa-

ny with chores, listened to their problems, and made their journeys more friendly and comfortable. Since the pounding sound started from the iron-bound chest, the Common Good made a pact to ignore it and continue on their way. The party clearly supports the doppelganger, and have made plans to set the angry goliath free with enough supplies to make it back to town.

Conclusion

Once they have the full story, the PCs can decide how to proceed.

If the PCs wish to allow the Common Good to continue on their way, Sheylen calls out to Kalmar the Doppelganger, who returns to drive his wagon. With only a hasty goodbye, the adventurers ride away with the captive goliath.

If the PCs wish to free Kalmar the Barbarian, Sheylen sighs in frustration, but agrees. She only asks the PCs to allow her to explain the situation to the captive goliath. Sheylen claims that all three of them were fooled by the doppelganger, who told them that an angry demon had been trapped in the chest during the night. She apologizes, but says she truly believed they should stay away until they found a priest who could perform a banishment. Kalmar swears at Sheylen and shouts insults at Alath and Vezir and kicks up a storm of stones and dirt, but the goliath somehow believes the lie because, deep down, Kalmar is terrified of demons. The doppelganger vanishes into the surrounding hills, never to be seen again.

If the PCs wish to attack the Common Good, the adventurers fight back, though they attempt to flee if brought below half their hit points. The doppelganger returns from the woods, drops an armload of firewood, and immediately begins to protect his newfound companions.

Use the following NPCs from the Monster Manual for a 4th level encounter:

Sheylen: **cult fanatic** *(MM p345)*
Alath: **spy** *(MM p349)*
Vezir: **scout** *(MM p349)*
Doppelganger: **berserker** *(MM p343)*

About the Author

Richard is a contributor and author of many projects on the DMs Guild, including the Ravnica adventure **The Tomb of Svogthos** and **Rise of the Champions**.

Encounter inspired by:



So, a Tearful Shepherd, Three Pixies, and Flock of Sheep Walk Onto the Road...

by Karl Sciberras

Suggested Party Level: Any

...Or more accurately the pixies fly over the road, the young shepherd pulls himself along about two meters off the ground by grabbing onto anything he can reach and the sheep, being too dull to really understand the concept of moving in three dimensions, bob haphazardly throughout the area, occasionally bumping into the characters, trees, and each other.

Naughty Sheep

Earlier in the day the sheep angered the pixies by eating and trampling a toadstool ring, their favorite entrance to the Feywild. The pixies took revenge on the sheep and the hapless shepherd by casting a *levitate* spell on the lot of them. But the little fey are not done yet: they demanded the shepherd take them back to his home so they can trample on it and "make things fair."

Nervous Shepherd

Upon seeing the characters, the shepherd (Albie Gill, **commoner**, *MM p345*), will call out frantically, expecting them to help resolve the predicament. The young boy is desperate for help and continuously blubbering about how "he didn't do anything," "he needs help," and "his family will starve without his sheep." Due to his emotional state and the fact that he didn't actually see what happened, Albie is of little actual help in clearing up or clarifying the situation. From Albie's point of view everything was going well when he and the sheep began to float and the angry pixie clique threatened to do much worse unless their demands were met.

Angry Pixies

The **pixies** (Colivren, Eerith, and Aerwolph) *(MM p253)*, on the other hand, will very clearly explain the situation from their point of view. The pixies expect the characters to side with them out of fairness, because the sheep were the boy's charges. During the conversation the DM should portray the individual personalities so that the players are able to formulate arguments.

Hungry Sheep

The sheep just want to eat.

Dealing With The Pixies

At least two of the pixies will need to be persuaded separately to drop the vendetta and each pixie is influenced by a different factor, detailed below in the Personalities section.

A successful **DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion) check** will convince a pixie to accept a different consequence for the destruction of their faerie ring. The nature of the change is up to the DM. Keep in mind fey logic is alien to mortals. The check is made at disadvantage if the characters attempt to argue that no punishment is required.

A successful **DC 14 Charisma (Intimidation) check** on each of the pixies is enough to cow them. The pixies will be unhappy and hostile but will not engage in combat unless provoked.

Pixie Personalities

Colivren

Colivren is a stickler for the rules. By fey convention an action of equal import is required to balance the scales. A well-reasoned argument grants advantage on the Persuasion check with Colivren.

Aerwolph

Aerwolph is impetuous and really just wants to bash something because it is fun. Any solution that involves her destroying something of Albie's grants advantage on the Persuasion check.

Eerith

Eerith wants to prove himself competent to the other two members of his clique. He tends to be quiet except when acting to support the other two pixies. If Colivren is already convinced to support the characters, or if the characters press Eerith to make a decision, the Persuasion check is made with advantage.

Developments

While the conversation is going on sheep will begin to drift away. Albie's emotional state and the levitation spell prevent him from gathering his flock.

A level-appropriate predator, such as a moun-

tain lion (either **lion**, *MM p331* or **panther**, *MM p333*) or a **peryton** *(MM p251)*, could appear, capitalizing on the limited mobility of the herd.

Should the pixie clique become impatient with the party, they summon other pixies who begin playing pranks on characters not involved in the discussions and otherwise being nuisances that need to be dealt with.

Conclusions

This encounter is not intended as a combat encounter. Let the players have fun with the situation and reward creativity. Pixies are tricky, excitable, and easily bored. These pixies know they are physically outmatched but are incensed and will hold their ground on principle until attacked with magic, mundane weapons, or sufficiently persuaded or intimidated. Killing or harming the pixies could have unexpected consequences:

- Raising the ire of a more powerful fey being.
- Being identified as troublemakers by the mortal ruler of the area who is concerned that the characters have upset the fey.
- Leading the pixies to the Albie's home will cause hardship for the family and could raise friction between the mortals and fey in the area. The villagers will find out that it was the characters who led the fey to the village.
- Losing too many sheep during the encounter could also result in hardship for Albie's family.

About the Author

Karl's first adventure, **All in a Day's Work**, was released to the Guild in late 2018. More adventures will follow as he extracts all the stories that are rattling around in his head.



Encounter Modifiers

by ELF Vesala

The classic random encounter is a confrontation with creatures that are automatically hostile and attack the adventurers. The modifiers below can add variation to these kinds of engagements with intelligent monsters.

It is not recommended to roll on every single table below before the encounter. Rather, choose one of the tables as a starting point and pick or randomize a modifier from there. That should be enough to make an encounter more unpredictable. Use any additional tables only when it feels appropriate.

Organization

The way creatures have organized themselves can have a major impact on the outcome of the encounter.

d6	Organization
1	Escapees: A disorganized array moving fast, perhaps escaping a more powerful creature or a natural disaster. The group is far from stealthy and can be easy to avoid or surprise.
2	Scattered: The creatures are not in immediate contact with each other. Maybe they have lost their way or are spread out, searching for something?
3	Guardians: A group protecting someone weaker and more vulnerable than themselves, perhaps their young or an elderly dignitary. They are willing to take risks to protect their ward.
4	Rivals: A divided group competing with each other, perhaps playfully, or perhaps in a deadly serious contest to win someone's favor.
5	Patrol: An organized team scouting the environment, ready for trouble and capable of calling in reinforcements.
6	Retinue: A group consisting of individuals with varying roles, typically in the service of a high-ranking leader. *(See the Roles table for inspiration.)*

Roles

The function the creatures serve can affect their tactics and equipment.

d6	Role
1	Weakling: The group consists mainly of young, infirm, or otherwise weakened variations of the standard specimen.
2	Grunt: Standard specimens of their type.
3	Scout: Faster moving and lightly equipped variation.
4	Elite: More heavily armored specimen with stronger than standard attacks.
5	Mystic: The creatures have with them an individual with mystic powers, be they magical, miraculous or psionic.
6	Leader: The creatures accompany a high-ranking individual with a special weapon, such as a magic item or even an artifact. The leader may also have valuable information or be worth a ransom.

Approach

Intelligent creatures can choose different approaches for dealing with the intruding adventurers. Roll with disadvantage for low intelligence creatures and with advantage for highly intelligent individuals.

2d10	Approach
2	Inattentive: The creature is oblivious to its environs, fully concentrated on its current task.
3	Occupied: The creature is already busy dealing with something else.
4	Observing: The creature is aware of the adventurers but wants to find out more about them before making its move.
5	Intimidation: The creature tries to avoid direct confrontation by scaring the adventurers away.
6	Entrapment: The creature tries to lure the adventurers into an unadvantageous position before attacking.
7	Ruse: The creature attempts to trick the adventurers by giving them a wrong idea about its plans and tactics.
8	Attack from Cover: The creature aims to stay in a well-protected position and attack safely from there.
9	Ambush: The creature waits in hiding until the perfect moment to launch a full-scale attack.
10	Sneak Attack: The creature starts combat with a surprise attack for example from behind, above or underneath, as appropriate.
11	Direct Attack: The creature attacks the adventurers directly.
12	Capture: The creature is interested in just one of the adventurers. As soon as it manages to capture its victim, it flees.
13	Thievery: The creature wants to steal something. When it has managed to grab what it wants, it flees.
14	Bribe Collection: The creature is willing to let the adventurers go without a fight if they agree to pay a bribe.
15	Deception: The creature acts friendly, but is ready to betray the adventurers when an opportunity presents itself.
16	Trade: The creature wants something from the adventurers and is willing to trade it with some trinket or equipment it has.
17	Negotiation: The creature needs an item or information it believes the adventurers may be able to provide. It is willing to negotiate the terms involved.
18	Information: The creature desperately needs to know something. If the adventurers are willing to satisfy its curiosity, there is no need for confrontation.

19	Interaction: The creature is bored and just wants some entertainment. Perhaps listening to a tale, participating in a riddle contest or playing a game.
20	Alliance: The creature faces an undertaking it is not able to handle without help. It is willing to side with the adventurers to get their help.

Tactics

Most intelligent monsters are able to utilize more tactical approaches than just charging head-on.

d8	Tactics
1	Guerrilla Tactics: The creatures observe the adventurers, making quick and dirty attacks when they are at an advantageous position.
2	Sabotage: The creatures initially target the adventurers' equipment and other assets to set them to a disadvantage in actual combat, which soon follows.
3	Ranged Combat: The creatures remain at a distance, attacking with ranged weapons as applicable. (If they have no ranged attacks, choose another option.)
4	War of Attrition: A tactic to wear down the adventurers over a longer period of time, initially causing only minor damage but giving them no opportunity to recover.
5	Flanking: The creatures do not face the adventurers directly but prefer to strike from the sidelines or behind. A strong creature can act as a decoy to draw the adventurers' attention to itself.
6	Divide and Conquer: The creatures aim to separate the adventurers from each other and deal with them one at a time.
7	Hit and Run: The creatures make a single charge and then quickly retreat into safety to re-evaluate the situation.
8	Attacks in Waves: The creatures take turns to attack to be able to recover between attacks.

Foreshadowing Powerful Creatures

While it's fine to encounter run-of-the-mill monsters directly, you can get more mileage from powerful creatures by using foreshadowing. Initially, you can give the players just a hint about the creature's existence, and after that show them more and more evidence of the creature's power. That will make the final encounter much more significant—and with luck, make the players fear what lies ahead.

The following table contains increasingly powerful ways to hint about a creature and its power. If you want to randomize the stages of the foreshadowing process, make the initial roll using a d4, and with additional encounters, proceed to use d6, d8 and finally d10.

d4... d10	Foreshadowing
1	Lore: The adventurers learn about an old legend or prophecy hinting at the existence of the creature.
2	Rumor: A recent rumor claims to give insight about the alleged activities of the creature. The rumor does not necessarily have to be true.
3	Premonition: One of the adventurers has a dream or a vision about the creature. At least initially this does not need to be anything concrete - an uneasy feeling or a symbolic image can be more efficient.
4	Eyewitness: The adventurers meet someone who claims to have seen the creature from afar with their own eyes.
5	Traces: Indirect evidence of the creature's existence—for example destruction it has caused in the past, perhaps years ago.
6	Tracks: Footprints or other evidence about the creatures past presence in the area.
7	Spoor: A fresh scent, broken foliage, disturbance in magical energies or other evidence of the creatures recent presence.
8	Sighting: The creature can be seen in the distance, probably too far away to reach. Apparently it is not aware of the adventurers.
9	Lair: The adventurers find the den or home base of the creature. They may not be able to enter, and the creature seems not to be present.
10	Close Encounter: The adventurers finally encounter the creature eye to eye.

About the Author

ELF is a random generator aficionado blogging at https://randomcreation.net/. His favorite die is d10.