

Nursery



JOURNEY INTO THE REALMS

5TH EDITION ENCOUNTERS & EXPLOITS



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GENERAL FEATURES

A temperate forest best suits this encounter, although with a few subtle changes, adventurers can experience this scene in a colder climate.

Level. Any

Lands. Ashenwood, Chondalwood, Chult, Cloak Wood, Dunwood, Vilhon Wilds, Yuirwood

However, as the pastoral sights grow distant and the wood ahead nears, the road deteriorates. When adventurers approach the forest, the road is nothing more than a gutted, two rut path. The road then ends just past the edge of the wood as wild brambles and brush obscure what remains.

To the left of the ancient path, stands an immense tree with knotted branches. It has a gnarled trunk made grotesque by large burls.

ENCOUNTER A *magic mouth* spell enchants the tree. When adventurers approach within 30 feet, a large hole bends into a mouth and two prominent knots appear as watchful, yet drooping eyes. The tree recites a warning:

"A curse befalls those seeking to enter the wood. DOOM! Doom and despair will find all who dare to trek beyond this point."

When the first tree delivers its message, it triggers a second ancient tree enchanted with a *magic mouth* spell, to speak. It is 25 feet from the edge of the wood and its voice echoes, resonant in sound.

"Leave this place now, or else abandon all hope and die!"

Afterward, the voices fall silent. Neither tree responds to questioning. Furthermore, should adventurers investigate the tree they discover nothing.

However, a *detect magic* spell does reveal an aura of *illusion* surrounds both trees. Should adventurers leave the 30-foot perimeter and return, both trees repeat the message.

A *dispel magic* cast upon each tree frees it from again spouting its ominous dialogue.

DEVELOPMENT The forest beyond may or may not have a curse. It might warn unwary intruders of a vicious monstrosity now long dead or an imminent encounter with a cantankerous druid.

- **Curse.** If a curse hampers those who enter, adventurers must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw, suffering a disadvantage on attack rolls against beasts that dwell in the forest. On the other hand, the curse can instead imprison adventurers within its borders until they disenchant the *Heart of the Forest*, a hidden gemstone at its center.

INTRODUCTION

The following is a compact series of encounters appropriate for different levels of play. Each exploit has a level suggestion along with recommended locations within the world of Faerûn.

While designed for the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting™*, the encounters are generic enough to fit into any existing campaign with a few minor adjustments. You can use the exploits as presented or modify them to suit your current campaign storyline.

The encounters are organized by level.

THE ARBOREAL CURSE

Adventurers travel through well-tended farmlands and bear witness to pastoral life: peasants gather nuts, berries, and nettles; sheep graze in lush fields of grass; several men work to replace the thatch roofing of a wattle and daub house; and children throw rotten vegetables at a man in the stocks.

- **Monster.** Perhaps a **night hag** or other desolate creature haunts the forest. While adventurers could confront the foul witch, low-level characters might suffer a night of unpleasant sleep from its **nightmare haunting** feature.

THE QUALMISH BRUTE

GENERAL FEATURES

A region with large, rolling hills hidden within a thick forest.

Level. 1-2

Lands. Chult, Dagger Hills, Glimmerwood, Marching Mountains, The Walls,

Light. Dim light. The crown cover of the forest diminishes the full rays of the sun.

Traveling in a thick-forested interior, adventurers hear trees break and snap under the force of something with tremendous strength. Birds flutter from the canopy and brush as a loud, plodding gait approaches.

Adventurers taking time to focus on the commotion, hear wrenching and heaving followed by thunderous groans. Unintelligible garble precedes the low, mournful cries and a moment after, a huge **hill giant** stumbles from the wood.

Upon emerging, the brute belches once, and then spews its stomach acid with such force and violence; it sprays 1d3 adventurers. Characters must succeed a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw, suffering 1d4 points of acid damage on a failed save.

The giant bellows out in common, "*Better!*" In frustration, he hefts a horse or a wagon, if available, and throws it to the ground. Characters avoid its wrath with a successful DC 10 Dexterity saving throw, taking 1d10 bludgeoning damage on a failure. The giant repeats its curious demand as one hand comforts its stomach.

Adventurers, who speak the giant language, can attempt to calm down the huge brute with a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check. It relates a part of his tale in his native tongue:

"Jorgen ate bad things. Many bad things. Ate many bad people. I sick. Make better . . ."

The giant coughs and wretches once more, before choking and wheezing. The brute staggers and grasps at its throat. Jorgen's face turns blue as the giant struggles to breathe.

Adventurers that act to aid Jorgen can make a DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check to help him swallow whatever chokes the giant. Regardless of success, those that gather close to Jorgen spot the following with a DC 15 passive Wisdom (Perception) check:

Something twists and squirms in the throat of the giant. His bloated stomach stretches as hands beneath the skin begin to claw their way out.

Several zombies burst from Jorgen, killing the giant, and shamble toward the adventurers. The numbers of zombies that emerge from the wretch depends on the size of the group.

Players	Creatures	XP
4-5	3 zombies	50 each
6+	6 zombies	50 each

TREASURE The giant has little of value. A ruddy sack holds 17 (5d6) cp and a half-eaten pig, left to rot, dangles from his belt. Upon close examination, however, adventurers find the remains of a satchel strap. A successful DC 5 Wisdom (Survival) check, coupled with a fortunate DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check, finds the satchel and its spilled contents.

- **Art.** 2 (1d4) copper plates worth 17 (5d6) cp each; a large portrait of an elven maiden on a broken piece of plaster worth 14 (4d6) sp, though it weighs 10 lbs.
- **Weapon.** An ornate short sword, bent and chewed (Jorgen used the blade to pick his teeth clean) worth 10 (3d6) gp. Should an adventurer spend 5 gp to have a weaponsmith repair the item, it is then worth 3 (1d6) pp.

Should adventurers press on, with a further successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check, they discover its lair. While adventurers might discover more treasure, it may also have its own guardians. One or more hill giants or several hill giant children (use the statistics of an **ogre**) wander the area.

WOLVES IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING

GENERAL FEATURES

A forested region at the edge of an old mountain range.

Level. 1-2

Lands. Dagger Hills, Sharawood, Tannath Mountains

Light. Dim light. The thick forest canopy dilutes the penetrating rays of the sun.

While exploring a dense forest with low, mountainous terrain, adventurers run from the shadow of one predator and into the lair of another. You can incorporate this exploit into an adventure that has characters guiding a merchant caravan through a treacherous region or searching for the entrance of a long forgotten dungeon.

Read or paraphrase the following:

It is midday and the sun is overhead. Its rays penetrate the thick canopy and bathe the trail in a soft light of greenish hue. On occasion, the roof of the forest gives way to an opening or powerful wind to reveal its full glory.

Adventurers who succeed at a DC 12 passive Wisdom (perception) check, notices quick movement above the forest that blots out the sunlight for just a moment. Alerted to the strange occurrence, adventurers can seek a break in the canopy to look toward the sky and make a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check. On a success, characters spy a **dragon** circling overhead.

Ardabast is a **young red dragon** on the hunt. It followed the adventurers for the past half-hour and now decided to make its presence known. Unbeknownst to the adventurers, there is a clearing ahead. The dragon attempts to drive its prey toward the area before it makes its final attack. *Ardabast* hopes its presence will cause adventurers to flee and expose themselves.

After seeing the threat, characters have a brief moment to take cover before the dragon makes its initial attack. If guiding or guarding a caravan, characters that take refuge beneath the wagons gain three-quarters cover from the attack. Diving into the surrounding foliage provides just half cover for adventurers.

However, adventurers with a DC 11 passive Wisdom (Survival) check discover a better alternative. Not far from the path, there exists a deep crevasse where a portion of the older mountain split. It is 5 feet wide and slopes 40 feet into the earth. It is well hidden and provides ample protection from dragon breath.

Ardabast's hunting excursion intrudes into a region under the sway of a greater, more powerful dragon and thus the beast does not wish its presence known. Therefore, the dragon refrains from unleashing the full might of its destructive power. Although for low-level adventurers, it still proves devastating.

Once characters decide their initial reaction, *Ardabast* skims along the top of the canopy and unfurls its dragon breath. Adventurers must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw, taking 2d6 fire damage on a failure or half as much on a success. Adventurers that take refuge in the deep crevasse do not need to make a Dexterity saving throw and take no damage from fire breath.

Ardabast continues its assault until the all adventurers conceal themselves deep in the crevasse. Afterward, the dragon, being curious, clambers through the thick trees and investigates the path. Though it spies the crevasse and even exhales fire down into its depths, the adventurers are safe from its wrath. *Ardabast* will feast upon a horse or similar pack animal, should one exist, and takes a short rest before taking flight.

THE CREVASSE The cleft extends a mile. Once adventurers reach its end, they can elect to return to the route and recover any possessions they left behind.

A half-a-mile into the crevasse, several smaller fissures conceal the lair of a **giant wolf spider**. Though dangerous, the real threat is the hundreds of young that cling to its back. The spider waits at the mouth of its burrow for passing prey and then pounces. Unless adventurers succeed in a DC 17 passive Wisdom (Perception) check, the wolf spider gains the **surprise**.

For a larger group, increase the number of spiders.

Players	Creatures	XP
4-5	1 giant wolf spider	50 each
	1 swarm of spiders	100 each
6+	2 giant wolf spiders	50 each
	1 swarm of spiders	100 each

While attacking from its burrow, the wolf spider has half cover. However, should characters flee; the spider will leave its protection to pursue its prey. A successful DC 10 passive Wisdom (Nature) check reveals this fact.

The **swarm of spiders** attack adventurers once they deal with the wolf spiders or an area effect drives them from the back of its parent.

THE WILLFUL SACRIFICE

GENERAL FEATURES

The edge of a dark forest or a vast, open plain provides a great setting for this encounter.

Level. 2-3

Lands. Cormyr, Erlkazar (Day Baronies)

During the course of a few miles, adventurers notice a fellow along the side of the road, tied to an ornate stake. The farmer wears a rough, red tunic with a hood, a single white glove on the right hand, and simple leather shoes.

He bids them a good morning and if asked, the peasant introduces himself as Thomas Fallow. Although tied to a stake, Thomas appears quite calm and even comments on the weather (or otherwise engages in small talk).

Adventurers investigating the ornate stake, discover it bears markings of a white, right gauntlet. Those who succeed in a DC 10 Intelligence (Religion) check identify it as the symbol of Torm, god of courage and self-sacrifice.

Should curious adventurers inquire, Thomas explains that Torm blesses these lands and his village. About four months ago, this stake appeared during a ruinous rain that destroyed many farmsteads. While investigating the stake, one of the village elders found himself restrained and could not wrest free from the pole. After much struggle and the approach of nightfall, the others promised to return in the morning.

At dawn, the disastrous rains abated and upon return to the stake, the village elder was gone. No tracks led from or to the post. The priest, a simple man named Thessel, interpreted as a sign from Torm.

Now, at the end of each month, one willing villager must sacrifice his or her self to keep the torrential rains from returning. Five of the townsfolk present themselves to the elders. Dubbed the Fingers of Torm, the five victims walked counter-clockwise around the stake. In turn, each touch the post and one chosen by Torm becomes adhered, unable to move. He or she is then bound to the wooden pillar, and the following morn, is no more.

ENCOUNTER The ornate stake is a **mimic** that preys upon the ignorant villagers. The monstrosity took notice of the prominent displays of religious icons dedicated to Torm and assumed the shape of a border post.

If adventurers offer to free Thomas, the farmer refuses politely and explains it matters not, since his bindings are ceremonial. Thomas is adhered to the stake.

Adventurers that decide to witness the miracle of Torm and the ascension of Thomas, wait for an hour before hearing the farmer scream in awful pain. The mimic begins to devour Thomas from behind as his back is against the post.

Adventurers can make a DC 13 Strength check to pull the farmer from the post. The mimic attacks those attempting to wrench its meal free and thus, reveals its true nature.

BLACK SAP

GENERAL FEATURES

Deep in a thick wood is a good locale for this encounter. It is helpful for at least one adventurer proficient in Survival or Nature.

Level. 4

Lands. Aerilpar Forest, Chult, Gulthandor, Forest of Lethyr, Storm Horns, Vilhon Wilds

A prominent figure, either a noble or a respected druid, seeks the adventurers for aid.

- **Druid.** Elvare, a half-elf druid, guards a grove of trees near a crumbling ruin. One or more of the trees suffers from a strange malady that perplexes the half-elf. Large, grotesque burls and cancerous growths bloat and twist the trunk. It is beyond the knowledge of the druid and Elvare wishes adventurers to investigate.

- **Noble.** A minor knight, Sir William Falstaff, returns to his manor house after a skirmish with several orc warriors. Days ago, he noticed a plume of thick smoke rise from the forest that borders his lands. A scout located an orc camp near an old ruin crumbling beneath the weight of bloated trees. The scout further noticed the orc shaman collecting black sap from a large, grotesque tree into pouches marked with arcane runes.

Sir Falstaff rode to meet the orcs, though from the many warriors that followed him, only a handful returned. The arcane pouches rendered their armor and shields useless forcing the knight to retreat. He does not have enough men for a second attack and the knight now fears the orcs will soon overtake his lands.

ENCOUNTER The dark sap is a **black pudding** consuming the core of the tree. As it grows, the tree sickens and bloats, giving rise to large burls.

Investigating the tree or wayward spells during a skirmish causes it to burst, unleashing the ooze. An active

or passive DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check, if successful, reveals the malady is not natural, while a DC 20 Intelligence (Nature) check uncovers the true source of the sickness. Otherwise, the ooze surprises the adventurers

A number of **orc warriors** might still guard the area attempting to elicit the acidic nature of the ooze as a weapon, or after realizing the danger, fled.

BONES OF YELLOW

GENERAL FEATURES

This encounter serves best if the locale is under ground, such as a dungeon, or beneath a heavy canopy of trees that blocks sunlight from reaching the forest floor.

Due to the presence of **yellow mold**, increase the challenge rating of the **skeletons** featured in this encounter to CR 2.

Level. 5-10

Lands. Chondalwood, Luskan, Underhome, Waterdeep

Light. Dim light or dark.



While exploring a desolate area immersed in shadow, experienced adventurers mistake a simple encounter for one that threatens to become a deadlier affair. On the other hand, this encounter can take place at night, in a cemetery of a large city, such as Waterdeep.

The City of the Dead lies along the eastern cliffs that overlook Waterdeep. Some of the less prominent areas of the cemetery are poorly maintained, including mausoleums of long forgotten noble houses. Ivy and moss grow on many of the headstones. Opened tombs, ravaged by graverobbers, reveal bleached bones and scattered remains.

Lord Thorsten, a minor Waterdhavian noble, has had good fortune in the past few months and now seeks to build a grand mausoleum for himself. The lord further wishes to move the bones of his ancestors from the old site and inter the remains into the new tomb.

Rumors abound that a few of his ancestors practiced the dark art of necromancy, and thus Lord Thorsten feels the task best suited for adventurers. Since hundreds of years passed since the sealing of the tomb, the noble is unsure of its dangers.

ENCOUNTER Whether in a forgotten land at the edge of the world or in Waterdeep, adventurers delve deep into the earth. Stairs lead characters downward and into a 40-foot square chamber. Several stone sarcophagi rest at the center, surrounded by urns. Bones litter the room.

Once adventurers disturb the sarcophagi or bones, four **skeletons** animate and rise to attack the trespassers. The presence of a *necromancer's stone*, located in one of the sarcophagi, bolsters the will of the undead. The skeletons have an advantage to Wisdom saving throws against turn undead. Furthermore, **yellow mold** clings to the bones of each animated skeleton.

If adventurers retreat up the stairs and into the sunlight, the skeletons follow. Once outside, the rays of the sun destroy the yellow mold. Likewise, the *necromancer's stone* no longer emboldens the undead.

NECROMANCER'S STONE

Wondrous item, rare

This onyx gemstone bolsters undead in its presence. Undead within 60 feet of the *necromancer's stone* gain advantage to effects that turn undead.

Heart of Mortuum (Requires Attunement). When you cast the *animate dead* spell and use the stone as a part of the required material components (the casting does not consume the stone), undead created as a result from casting the spell gain advantage to effects that turn undead.