

D&D
**ADVENTURERS
LEAGUE**

THE PHANTOM PURSUIT



CCC-ARCANA-01

A TWO-HOUR ADVENTURE FOR TIER 1 CHARACTERS.

CCC-ARCANA-01



The Phantom Pursuit

By Luke Breen



Caravan duty in the Cormanthor forest can be dangerous, but normally you only have to deal with bandits and the odd goblin. No-one said anything about the undead, but now you're being chased by a malevolent spirit! Can you escape - or will you die trying?

A Two-Hour Adventure for Tier 1 Characters. Optimized for APL 3.

Credits

Designer: Luke Breen (@dmforhireau)

D&D Adventurers League Guildmaster: Chris Lindsay

Cartography: Cassandra Lafferty

Cover: Alek Weber

D&D Adventurers League Wizards Team: Adam Lee,
Ari Levitch, Chris Lindsay, Mike Mearls

D&D Adventurers League Administrators: Alan
Patrick, Amy Lynn Dzura, LaTia Jaquise, Ma'at Crook,
Travis Woodall, Claire Hoffman, Greg Marks

Playtesters: Mark Bawden, Derek Christensen, Harley
Dingey, Andrew Dynon, David Gnieslaw, Rob
Hansford, Belle Johnson, Maadonna, Michael Liparota,
Jonah Phillips, John Salter, Jay Stonehouse, Steven
Truong, Jack Tyler, Alek Weber, Kye You

Special Thanks: Merric Blackman, Andrew Callaghan,
Robert Hughes, Alek Weber

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Adventure Primer

I ain't 'fraid of no ghost.

—Ray Parker Jr.

This adventure is designed for **three to seven 1st- to 4th-level characters** and is optimized for **five characters with an average party level (APL) of 3**. Characters outside this level range can't participate in this adventure.

This adventure occurs in the Cormanthor Forest in the Moonsea region.

Background

Deep in the **CORMANTHOR FOREST**, a powerful **KI-RIN** named **ALSANDARE** lairs. Magically hidden from all evil creatures who seek it out, it casts a protective aura over the surrounding forest and hamlet of **KURINGROVE**. Recently the creature has fallen ill, and the protection it bestows over the forest is significantly weakened. An incubus named **NAGUINID**, sensing an opportunity to slay the creature and gain rank in the Nine Hells, directs **IGDEN WAGGLETOP**, a gnome merchant and warlock in service to the archdevil **BELIAL**, to hire a group of good-hearted adventurers and travel to **KURINGROVE** to locate the elusive creature.

The location of the **KI-RIN** is known only to two **SEERS** who live somewhere in the forest near **KURINGROVE**. Under the false pretense of requiring caravan guards to escort him and his wagon of supplies eastward from Hillsfar to Harrowdale, **IGDEN** plans to stop the wagon in **KURINGROVE** and offer the party this hunting task upon arrival if they seem to be good-hearted (and thus able to track the **KI-RIN** successfully).

Overview

The adventure's story is spread over **three parts** and takes approximately **2 hours** to play.

- **Call to Action: Meet the Downsteels.** The characters are escorting a merchant and his

wagon of supplies through a forest when they come across a family being pursued by a ghost.

- **Part 1: It Follows.** The journey continues with the spirit following the characters as they try to outrun it while avoiding the dangers of the forest.
- **Part 2: The Long Walk.** Exhausted after being on the run for over a day, the characters come across an abandoned wagon, and find a safe forest glade to rest at night.
- **Part 3: Ambush.** The wagon is ambushed by a group of bugbears sent by Naguinid to stop anyone heading to Kuringrove.
- **Wrap-Up: Welcome to Kuringrove.** The characters stop at a hamlet in the forest to rest, and their employer reveals the true intention for their hiring.

Author's Note

This adventure is primarily horror based, with the relentless pursuit and the mystery of the ghost's true intentions being the main story beats.

It takes place over multiple days and the characters should feel the need to constantly be on the move to not draw the attention of the ghost, only stopping as a last resort. It is recommended to employ a terrifying description of the ghost and its relentlessness to encourage the characters to flee from it.

It is not invincible, but it should sometimes give the appearance of being so to scare the characters.

Adventure Hooks

In addition to the characters' individual backgrounds, the following hooks are possible ways to involve the adventurers in the scenario.

Caravan Guard. Answering a call for guards in Hillsfar, caravan duty is simple, honest work. The pay isn't outstanding but it's better than nothing.

Traveler. Though the Cormanthor Forest is a vast expanse of forest largely abandoned by civilization, traveling through it alone is ill-advised - best to go along with a group.

Background. Characters with the Acolyte, Outlander, Hermit or Wanderer background may be interested in rumors of a small village in the Cormanthor Forest that specializes in magical healing.

Call to Action: Meet the Downsteels

Estimated duration: 15 minutes

That's the Spirit!

During a routine caravan duty job through a forest, the characters encounter a family being chased by an aggressive and persistent ghost.

Area Information

This area has the following features.

Dimensions & Terrain. Cormanthor Forest is a mixture of evergreen and deciduous trees. It is moderately dense, with light undergrowth hindering movement off the trail. The dirt trail is 10 feet wide and covered in fallen leaves. It is very bumpy and full of potholes.

Light. It is early afternoon and a fog has settled on the forest; distances further than 50 feet are heavily obscured. The winter sun can be faintly seen through the evergreen canopy.

Smells and Sounds. The forest air smells fresh and cool. The area is strangely absent of local wildlife.

Wagon. This simple wooden wagon is 10 feet long and 5 feet wide. It is stacked high with a dozen crates tied down with rope and loaded with an assortment of hunting supplies. Igden says the crates are exported furs for his store in Harrowdale. Igden steers the wagon pulled by his elderly mare **draft horse**, Dottie.

There is room for a maximum of four additional people to ride in the wagon as crammed amongst the crates in the back.

Secret Compartment. The wagon has a secret compartment under the driver's seat that can be located with a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check. It is locked with a key that Igden carries around his neck (along with a holy symbol of Belial) or it can be opened with a successful DC 14 Dexterity check with thieves' tools.

The compartment contains a book of poetry written in Infernal and a cloth doll with bloodstains around its mouth. A DC 18

Intelligence (Religion) check reveals that this object represents an infernal contract with a devil. If confronted, he lies, claiming they are part of a special delivery task.

Setting the Scene

Hired by the gnomish merchant Igden Waggletop to escort him and his wagon of fine furs from Hillsfar to Harrowdale through the Cormanthor Forest, you have found the journey so far to be uneventful.

The crisp winter air in the forest is a nice change from the nearby cities, though a thick persistent fog makes it difficult to see. Your employer is unceasingly fidgety – pulling his floppy hat low and talking to his elderly horse rather than his new hires. Otherwise, all is quiet. Even the forest creatures are still.

Ask the characters to introduce themselves if they have not yet done so, as well as why they have taken on this job as caravan guards. Ask them where they are in relation to the wagon (walking ahead, behind, or riding on the wagon, keeping in mind the limited seating onboard.)

Call to Action: G-G-G-G-Ghost!

The **ghost** (see the "Encountering the Ghost" sidebar below and the Dramatis Personae for more information) emerges from the fog and attacks the characters to scare them into continuing to move onward.

A horrific screech suddenly echoes throughout the forest. A filthy, elderly woman carrying an unconscious child stumbles out onto the road behind the wagon. She runs toward you, pleading in a hoarse, strained voice: "Please! Help us!" Her eyes are wild as she looks behind her.

Fifty feet away, a spectral humanoid figure emerges from the fog. Vacant, black eyes stare from a disfigured, jawless head. It stretches out an arm and points toward the woman, then emits an ear-piercing scream and rushes towards you!

Creature Information

The female **commoner** and Igden (NE male gnome **illusionist**) are thrown into a panic when they see the ghost and try to flee.

The **ghost** is an ancient forest guardian that guides travelers through the forest. The characters will encounter the ghost multiple times over the course of the adventure.

What do they know? The forest is extremely dangerous - nobody should be stopping or resting in it due to the recent waning of the kirins protection.

What do they want? The ghost wants the wagon to be continually moving to ensure the characters leave the forest as soon as possible. It will achieve this by any non-lethal means possible but will not harm characters or NPCs that travel with the moving wagon and do not attack it. The ghost fights until the wagon is moving forward satisfactorily or until it is defeated.

Death. If defeated, the ghost reforms 1 hour later within 60 feet of the characters and continues following the wagon.

Playing the Pillars

Combat. The ghost attempts to approach the wagon to scare the driver, stopping to attack anyone who gets in the way. If the wagon begins moving, it uses its Etherealness ability to retreat to the Ethereal plane and continues following the wagon once it is more than 50 feet away.

The ghost first uses its Horrifying Visage ability to frighten and age characters. It will also use its Withering Touch attack (non-lethally) on hostile characters.

If the ghost knocks all hostile characters unconscious, it stops attacking and retreats into the fog. The characters wake up in the wagon 1d4 hours later. Joane explains that Igden waved a holy symbol from around his neck at the ghost, at which point it retreated. They then loaded the characters onto the wagon and escaped.

Where applicable, consider having the ghost emerge from the fog in a random direction at the start of an encounter; in front of, behind or to the side of the wagon.

If defeated, the ghost reforms 1 hour later within 60 feet of the characters and continues following the wagon.

Exploration. The intent of this scene is to scare the characters into retreating from the ghost. Demonstrate the ghosts' power but keep combat to a minimum if the wagon is moving.

Social. The ghost is unable (and unwilling) to communicate with characters unless it uses its Possession ability. It will not bargain or reason with the characters – it is focused solely on achieving its goal of keeping people moving through the forest.

Adjusting the Scene

For the ghost, use the **ghost** stat block, with the following changes:

- It understands Common but cannot speak.
- Its movement speed is 30ft.

As this is a non-lethal encounter, no adjustments are necessary. For strong or very strong parties, consider giving the ghost maximum hit points (80) for the adventure.

The following events happen during initiative:

- On initiative count 10, Igden panics, yells for the characters to run and drives the wagon forward 30 feet, regardless of anyone else's safety. Anyone standing in front of the wagon must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or take 1d4 bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone as it drives past.
- On initiative count 5, the elderly woman runs behind the characters and away from the ghost, she attempts reach the wagon and climb on with the child.

Part 1: It Follows

Estimated duration: 30 minutes

Summary. Once the ghost has been defeated or the wagon is moving again, the characters can speak to the woman from the forest. The ghost, if not defeated, follows the wagon relentlessly.

Area Information

This area has the following features.

Dimensions & Terrain. Cormanthor Forest is a mixture of evergreen and deciduous tree. It is moderately dense, with light undergrowth hindering movement off the trail. The dirt trail is 10 feet wide and covered in fallen leaves. It is very bumpy and full of potholes.

Light. It is early afternoon and a fog has settled over the forest; distances further than 50 feet are heavily obscured. The low winter sun can be faintly seen through the evergreen canopy.

Smells and Sounds. If the ghost has not been defeated, it follows the party 60 feet away, obscured by the fog. The constant screeching can be heard echoing throughout the forest, obscuring its true location.

Creature Information

Joane Downsteel (LG human **commoner**) is watching over her unconscious son, Ereth (NG human **commoner**) as she sits in the wagon. She has been aged an additional 40 years by the ghosts Horrifying Visage ability and is visibly elderly.

What do they know? Last night while traveling with their wagon from Ashabenford they were confronted by bandits. Abandoning her wagon, she grabbed her son and fled into the forest and spent the night there. The ghost appeared the next morning and chased them as she walked through the forest looking for help. They had been running for hours up until meeting the characters. She truthfully does not know why the ghost is following them and is terrified.

What do they want? Her eight-year old son, Ereth, has been deathly ill for the past two

tendays. She heard of a small hamlet in the Cormanthor Forest named Kuringrove that contains specialist healers, and she believes they can cure her son. She has been keeping her sons condition stable using herbal medicine obtained before leaving Ashabenford. The medicine was left behind when they escaped the bandits.

Now lacking their own transport, she hopes the characters can escort them safely to Kuringrove. Kuringrove is a few days away and on the way to Harrowdale, requiring no detour. She has nothing to reward the characters for their assistance – all their possessions were left on their wagon as they fled.

The Boy. Ereth is an eight-year old boy incapacitated by an unknown illness that can only be cured with a casting of a *greater restoration* spell. He has clammy skin and a mild fever. A DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine) check confirms that his health is deteriorating rapidly, and that he will need to receive treatment within the next few days if he is to survive. Ereth is unconscious but sometimes murmurs incomprehensibly. A DC 15 Intelligence check confirms that Ereth is speaking feverish gibberish – a result less than 15 falsely determines that he is speaking words in Abyssal at random.

Scene A: Stuck!

An hour after rescuing the Downsteels, the wagon hits a large pothole and becomes stuck. The ghost attacks the party to try and scare them into moving along.

Moving onward through the forest, the sounds of screeching from the ghost continue to echo all around the forest. Occasionally you see its horrific form at the edge of the fog before it melts away as quickly as it appears.

With a loud thud, the wagon suddenly tilts to the left as it hits a large pothole and promptly stops. A large crate is thrown off the wagon into the brush to the side of the trail, shattering on impact and sending a collection of crossbows and nets scattering into the bushes – not the cargo you are supposed to be transporting!

Igden exasperatedly grumbles “Well, that’s just great...” to nobody in particular, but his complaints are quickly drowned out by the rising wails of the ghost as it materializes at the edge of the fog.

The ghost appears at the edge of the fog in a random direction. If the wagon is not moving by the second round it will approach the wagon and attack until the wagon is moving again or until it is destroyed.

Have the players roll initiative. To remove the wagon from the pothole, **five successful relevant ability checks** are required. Some example uses of skills, magic or tools are listed below. For ability checks, a DC of 13 should be sufficient.

Let the players come up with their own creative uses of skills, magic or tools to help remove the wagon from the pothole.

Strength. A Strength (Athletics) check can be used to lift, push or pull the wagon out of the pothole.

Dexterity. Accurately throwing a rope over a nearby tree branch and tying it to the wagon grants advantage on future Strength (Athletics) checks to lift the wagon as long as the rope is being pulled.

Intelligence. An Intelligence (Nature) check identifies potential solutions - a fallen tree

branch could be used to lever the wagon out of the pothole, or a thick overhead tree branch strong enough to be used as a pulley.

Wisdom. A Wisdom (Animal Handling) check encourages the horse to pull the wagon using a Strength check (with a +4 bonus), however due to the horses age it has disadvantage on this check.

Charisma. A Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) check can convince Joane to help lift the wagon, or Igden to spur on his horse to pull the wagon out of the hole, prompting another Strength check from the horse.

Spells. Using *charm person* or *command* causes Joane or Igden to spur on the horse, prompting another Strength (Athletics) check. Using *mold earth* to partially fill the pothole grants automatically grants two successes.

Tools. Using a crowbar, tree branch or similar object to lever the wagon grants advantage on Strength (Athletics) checks to lift the wagon out of the pothole.

Shoving a bedroll or similar object under the wagon wheel grants advantage on Strength (Athletics) checks made to push the wagon out of the pothole.

After the required number of ability checks have been successfully completed, the wagon emerges from the pothole and continues moving. The ghost retreats if not defeated.

Adjusting the Scene

Very Weak. Lower the number of successful ability checks required to 4. Lower the ability check DC to 11.

Weak. Lower the number of successful ability checks required to 4.

Strong. Increase the number of successful ability checks required to 7.

Very Strong. Increase the number of successful ability checks required to 7. Increase the ability check DC to 15.

Igden's Task

If Igden is queried about the weaponry on his wagon, he says they are for hunting (which is true). A DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals that Igden grows increasingly nervous as this line of questioning progresses.

If pressed, he can reveal the following, all of which are true:

- He is taking the equipment to Kuringrove for a special job - some lucrative hunting work.
- He has been told he is looking for "some kind of special horse" that lives near Kuringrove. He does not know anything else about the creature.
- His employer is someone "very powerful" but will not say more unless magically compelled to do so.
- When arriving at Kuringrove, he is tasked with speaking to the local seers who know the location of the creature.
- He intended to ask for the characters assistance upon arrival to Kuringrove but was first observing the characters to see if they would be suitable for the job.

Scene B: Night Falls

The party deliberate over what to do as night falls in the forest. With the ghost still chasing them, it seems like the other travelers don't wish to stop for the night.

Area Information

This area has the following features.

Dimensions & Terrain. The 10-foot-wide dirt trail continues winding through the forest. The air grows a little colder as the sun sets.

Light. It is dusk and the fog has no end in sight. Distances further than 50 feet are heavily obscured.

Smells and Sounds. The sounds of the wagon fill the forest, and no wildlife can be heard. If the ghost has not been defeated, it follows the party from 60 feet away, obscured by the fog. Its

unsettling groaning and screeching can be heard all around.

Creature Information

Joane, exhausted from the events of the day, tries to sleep in the back of the wagon with Ereth. Igden discreetly talks to the characters about their situation:

- He is terrified of the ghost and says he will urge his horse, Dottie, to continue through the night to try and outrun it.
- He believes the ghost is chasing them because of Joane and her son - letting them travel with the wagon has caused all this trouble.
- He demands the characters get rid of Joane and her son or make them stop following the wagon. He begrudgingly backs down if the characters refuse.

If the characters travel through the night, they may gain the benefits of a short rest but not a long rest. They must also make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw the next morning or gain one level of exhaustion. Those who find room on the wagon (the Downsteels currently occupy two of the four available spots) for the entire night make this check with advantage.

Part 2: The Long Walk

Estimated Duration: 35 minutes

Summary. After a night of potentially exhausting travel, the party continue, the ghost still following the wagon. The characters stumble across the Downsteel's stolen wagon. It appears some of the bandits have fallen victim to a bugbear ambush.

Area Information

This area has the following features.

Dimensions & Terrain. Cormanthor Forest is like any regular wooded area in early winter. The dirt trail is 10 feet wide and covered in fallen leaves. It is very bumpy and full of potholes.

Light. It is late morning. The forest is brightly lit, with a slight canopy over the trail. The ever-present fog heavily obscures visibility beyond 50 feet.

Smells and Sounds. A faint smell of death fills the area, the sounds of the ghost can still be heard all around.

Wagon. The abandoned wagon has turned on its side. There appears to be no sign of the horses that pulled the wagon.

Bodies. The bodies of two humanoid figures lie on the trail beside the wagon.

Scene A: The Wagon

Rounding a corner on the trail, an overturned wagon comes into view through the fog 50 feet away. A fallen tree lies across the path in front of the wagon. Alongside the wagon, lying in the road, are two corpses. Joane cries "That's our wagon! We can get the medicine for Ereth!", as she quickly clambers down and begins to run toward it.

Igden yells out, "Someone get that blasted tree out of the way before we're forced to stop!"

Objective. The characters have limited time to retrieve the Downsteels belongings, investigate the scene and clear the road before the ghost catches up to them.

Quick Investigation

Have the players roll initiative. If the fallen tree is not removed from the trail by the end of the first round, Igden stops his wagon in front of the fallen tree at the start of the second round. The ghost emerges to attack the characters at initiative count 10 in the second round, starting with its Horrifying Visage ability.

Wagon. The wagon has run off the trail and overturned in a ditch. The crates contain rations and the Downsteel's personal effects. The wagon also has a secret compartment under the driver's seat (see **Treasure**, below).

Horse Harness. The horse harnesses have been cut with a sharp blade.

Footprints/Tracks. Hoof prints lead further down the trail. Other, larger humanoid footprints are also in the area, a DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals these to be bugbear footprints that lead back into the forest.

Bodies. The bodies are of two **bandits**. A DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine) check reveals broken bones, and skulls caved in by large, blunt objects.

Tree. A DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation or Nature) check reveals the tree was pushed down deliberately and did not fall naturally. Removing the tree from the trail requires **two** successful DC 18 Strength (Athletics) checks.

Medicine. Ereth's vials of medicine in the back of the wagon were destroyed when the wagon overturned. The broken vials can be located with a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception) check.

Treasure. Joane carries the key to the wagons secret compartment around her neck. The compartment holds a *potion of healing* and a pouch containing an assortment of coins.

Moving On

If retrieved, Joane offers the *potion of healing* and the coin pouch to the characters in gratitude.

If questioned, Joane can confirm there were more than two bandits that attacked them, but she is uncertain how many there were.

Scene B: The Glade

Summary. The remainder of the days travel is uneventful. Igden leads the characters to a safe place to stop and rest. However, it is occupied by others who are unwilling to share.

Area Information

Description of Location. A narrow path leads to the north off the main trail. Signs of wildlife have returned to the forest.

Light. A moonless night a few hours after dusk. The fog has faded away. A dimly-lit clearing can be seen in the forest 200 feet away.

The Ghost. The ghost, knowing the glade is a safe area, remains in the Ethereal Plane and waits at the main trail.

Approaching the Glade

Igden urges Dottie on through exhaustion, insisting that he knows of a safe area where they can rest.

Silhouettes of humanoid figures can be spotted in the glade. Igden pulls the wagon to a stop 100 feet from the glade on the main trail, notes the ghosts change in behaviour and asks the characters:

“Go get us an invitation, will you? Last time I interrupted one of those weird druid parties I woke up with an acorn tree growing out of my forehead.”

The Glade

Outer Circle. The glade is a large, 15-foot radius clearing in the forest. The outer ring of the clearing is marked by a dozen narrow standing stones carved with Druidic runes. The standing stones provide half cover.

Inner Glade. The floor of the glade is covered in a pleasant-smelling spongy green moss. It is dimly lit by a greenish-blue magical light and dozens of fireflies.

Bandits. Resting in the glade are two **bandits** and a **bandit captain**. Two grazing **draft horses** are tied to a nearby tree at the edge of the glade.

Spring. In the center of the glade is a 5-foot wide circular spring surrounded by a simple rock formation. An engraving on the stones in Druidic reads “Here you may seek respite from the dangers of the forest.”

Drinking the water reverses all aging effects of the ghosts Horrifying Visage ability.

Characters who drink from the water but did not suffer an aging effect instead gain the benefit of the *sanctuary* spell with a duration of 24 hours.

The water loses its magical properties within 1 minute of being removed from the fountain if not consumed.

Creature Information

The bandits are opportunists and unaffiliated with anyone of note.

What do they know? The bandits escaped a bugbear ambush earlier that day and are resting.

What do they want? The bandits, afraid and on the run, are unwilling to share the glade with anyone.

Encounter Information

If the bandits are defeated, the characters can safely take a long rest in the glade.

Treasure. The bandits each carry coin pouches containing an assortment of coins and some of Joane’s jewelry.

Playing the Pillars

Combat. The bandits attempt to extort the characters for money but won’t let them stay. If all but one of the bandits is killed, the remaining bandit tries to flee.

Exploration. The characters can approach the glade quietly by making a Dexterity (Stealth) check contested with the bandits passive Wisdom (Perception).

Social. Joane recognizes her horses, and the bandits as the ones who stole her wagon. She demands her jewelry back if she sees them up close.

Adjusting the Scene

Very Weak. Remove the **bandit captain**.

Weak. Remove the **bandit captain**. Add a **bandit**.

Strong. Remove one **bandit**. Add a **bandit captain**.

Very Strong. Remove all bandits. Add two **bandit captains**.

Part 3: Ambush

Estimated duration: 30 minutes

Summary. As the characters near Kuringrove they are ambushed by a party of bugbears sent using a cunning trap. The ghost comes to their aid to ensure they reach Kuringrove safely.

Area Information

This area has the following features.

Description of Location. The 10-foot-wide trail heads east through the forest, then narrows slightly and bends sharply to the north. The trail is covered in fallen leaves.

Terrain. Steep embankments, 10 feet high, are adjacent to each side of the trail. Thick brush and rocks on the embankments provide ample places to hide. A large tree trunk is positioned on the northern embankment before the bend, perpendicular to the trail. Climbing the embankment requires a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check and is difficult terrain.

Light. Late morning. The fog is no longer present. The ghost is visible 50 feet behind the wagon in the Ethereal Plane.

Smells and Sounds. The sounds of the ghost fall silent about 5 minutes prior to reaching the bend.

Encounter Information

A gang of three **bugbears**, hired by Naguinid, have set a trap and are instructed to kill any travelers approaching Kuringrove, excluding Igden and his crew. They have been provided with a sketch of Igden, but at the time of the characters approach he is wearing a hat and does not match the sketch so the foolish bugbears attack.

The Trap. The bugbears have hidden an *immovable rod* vertically in a small pile of leaves in a shallow creek bed on the trail shortly after the bend. Their goal is to stop any wagons or horses that come through, and they hide close by on embankments above the trail when they hear the wagon approach.

The Woods. Characters with a passive Perception higher than the bugbears Dexterity

(Stealth) check spot large shadows moving in the forest behind rocks as the wagon enters the bend. Alerting the other characters puts them on guard, allowing them to make a Wisdom (Perception) check prior to the start of combat to avoid being surprised.

Alerted. If Igden is alerted and driving the wagon, he will panic and drive the wagon forward, potentially hitting the immovable rod, causing the wagon to stop suddenly. Anyone riding the wagon must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or fall from the wagon and land prone prior to the start of combat.

Treasure. The *immovable rod* can be found and removed from the creek bed by pressing its button. The bugbears carry coin pouches and one bugbear carries a torn and dirt-covered sketch of a gnome. A character can determine the sketch is of Igden with a DC 8 Intelligence (Investigation) check. If asked about the sketch, Igden truthfully does not know why they have a sketch of him (see “Playing the Pillars” below)

Playing the Pillars

Combat. The ghost rushes into combat from behind the wagon and aids the characters.

The bugbears attack when the wagon stops, either intentionally or by hitting the *immovable rod*. One bugbear next to the fallen tree trunk on the embankment pushes it onto the road during its first turn in combat, attempting to knock over the wagon, potentially falling onto other characters. It then throws javelins from cover at unarmored characters. The other bugbears leap into combat, targeting heavily armored characters. They fight to the death.

Exploration. Scouting far ahead of the wagon may reveal the presence of the bugbears before they hear the wagon approaching and hide. Use a Dexterity (Stealth) check compared to the bugbears passive Wisdom (Perception).

Social. If interrogated, the bugbears will give up the name of their employer (Naguinid) with a successful DC 15 Charisma (Intimidation) check. They describe him as a male human in his 20's who hired them a few days ago.

Adjusting the Scene

Very Weak and Weak. Remove one **bugbear**.

Strong. Add one **bugbear**.

Very Strong. Add one **bugbear** and a **bugbear chief**.

Wrap Up: Welcome to Kuringrove

Estimated Duration: 5 minutes

The characters reach Kuringrove with the Downsteels and Igden Waggletop. Igden reveals his true intentions for coming to Kuringrove, and the Joane sees to getting her son healed.

Area Information

Description of Location. Kuringrove is a small forest hamlet with only a few dozen homes and families.

Terrain. Kuringrove is in a large forest clearing, with a bubbling brook of clear water running through the town.

Light. It is late afternoon and brightly lit.

The Ghost. The ghost follows up until the edge of the hamlet, at which point it watches the party enter Kuringrove before departing, giving a wave farewell as it does so.

Encounter Information

Arriving at the village, Joane takes Ereth to be looked at by the village healers after profusely thanking the characters for their help.

Igden hurriedly pays the characters for their work and yells towards the villagers to go fetch the seers. He is informed that the seers live in the nearby forest, and he becomes frustrated and returns to the characters. If the characters are not already aware of his intention to come to Kuringrove, he offers them the hunting work listed in the 'Igden's Task' section in **Part 1**, seeming to not be bothered by his deceit.

If the characters ask the villagers about the ghost, they explain it is a forest guardian that protects and escorts people to Kuringrove when they are in danger. They explain that many dark creatures have started to linger in the area around Kuringrove that seemed to have made it more aggressive in pursuing its goals.

This adventure continues in *CCC-ARCANA-02 Seclusion*.

Rewards

The characters receive rewards based upon their accomplishments. Aside from advancement, these rewards are earned during the session.

Advancement

Upon **completing** this adventure, each character gains a level. At their discretion, they may choose to decline advancement. Remind those that express an interest in this that they have a limit to how much gold they can earn per level; declining advancement means that they may reach a point where they earn no gold.

Gold

Award each character gold for each hour of the session. Adventures typically features cues for this, but you can add it where you see fit. The maximum gold that you can award a character per hour is determined by their tier, as follows:

Tier	Hourly GP Award	GP Limit per Level
1	20 gp	80 gp
2	30 gp	240 gp
3	200 gp	1,600 gp
4	750 gp	6,000 gp

Magic Item(s)

If found during the adventure, the characters can keep the following magic items; these items are described in **Appendix D**:

- *Potion of healing*
- *Immovable rod*

Dungeon Master Rewards

For running this adventure, you gain a DM Reward. This reward can be redeemed for levels, magic items, and other season-themed things. See the Adventurers League DM Rewards document for more info.

Dramatis Personae

The following NPCs and locations feature prominently in this adventure.

- **Ghost.** The not-so-friendly ghost. An ancient guardian of Cormanthor Forest tasked with protecting people as they travel through it. It has black eyes and a disfigured and jawless head. Despite its horrific appearance, it is a spirit with good intentions.

What They Want. Well-known to frequent travelers of the forest as a friendly presence, its warnings about the recent dangers of the forest are not taken seriously. It is dedicated to watching over travelers and urging them forward.

If You've Got It, Haunt It. The forest has become incredibly dangerous as of late, and the ghost has had to resort to more aggressive tactics to get its message across. It refuses to communicate with travelers unless necessary.

- **Igden Waggletop (ig-DEN).** A 310-year old male gnome merchant and warlock in the service of Belial, archdevil of the Nine Hells. He wears a large, floppy hat that mostly obscures his features. He is cantankerous, balding, has a bulbous nose and thick, white hair growing out of his ears.

What They Want. Ever the opportunist, Igden entered into an infernal contract in order to gain arcane power. His best friend is his elderly horse, Dottie.

Pact Tactics. Igden is selfish and willfully ignorant of the consequences of his actions in order to get what he wants. He is secretive about his evil intentions and his magic abilities to try and ensure people trust him.

- **Joane Downsteel.** A farmer from Ashabenford, Joane is an honest woman suddenly faced with some a difficult situation. She is middle-aged and dressed in travelers clothing.

What They Want. Joane is travelling with her son, Ereth, to Kuringrove to try and heal him of an unknown illness.

Worried Mother. Joane is nervous and afraid for the safety of her son. She is suffering from a lot of stress due to the events of the past few

days and will only speak when spoken to, and often only in short sentences.

- **Ereth Downsteel.** An eight-year-old boy from Ashabenford and Joane's son, Ereth is suffering from an unknown illness that has incapacitated him.

Sick Boy. Unconscious and plagued by fever dreams, Ereth is not in control of his actions and frequently murmurs gibberish under his breath.

Creature Statistics

The following creatures are encountered in this adventure.

Bandit

Medium humanoid (any race), any non-lawful alignment

Armor Class 12 (leather armor)

Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Senses Passive Perception 10

Languages Any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Actions

Scimitar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d6 + 1) slashing damage.

Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 80 ft./320 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage.

Bandit Captain

Medium humanoid (any race), any non-lawful alignment

Armor Class 15 (studded leather)

Hit Points 65 (10d8 + 20)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	14(+2)

Saving Throws STR +4, DEX +5, WIS +2

Skills Athletics +4, Deception +4

Senses Passive Perception 10

Languages Any two languages

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Actions

Multiattack. The captain makes three melee attacks: two with its scimitar and one with its dagger. Or the captain makes two ranged attacks with its daggers.

Scimitar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

Reactions

Parry. The captain adds 2 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the captain must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

Bugbear

Medium humanoid (goblinoid), chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (hide armor, shield)

Hit Points 27 (5d8 + 5)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	8 (-1)	11 (+0)	9 (-1)

Skills Stealth +6, Survival +2

Senses Darkvision 60ft, Passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Goblin

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Brute. A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when the bugbear hits with it (included in the attack).

Surprise Attack. If the bugbear surprises a creature and hits it with an attack during the first round of combat, the target takes an extra 7 (2d6) damage from the attack.

Actions

Morningstar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d8 + 2) piercing damage.

Javelin. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30/120 ft., one target. Hit: 9 (2d6 + 2) piercing damage in melee or 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage at range.

Bugbear Chief

Medium humanoid (goblinoid), chaotic evil

Armor Class 17 (Chain Shirt, Shield)

Hit Points 65 (10d8 + 20)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	14 (+2)	14(+2)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)

Skills Intimidation +2, Stealth +6, Survival +3

Senses Darkvision 60ft, Passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Goblin

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Brute. A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when the bugbear hits with it (included in the attack).

Heart of Hruggok. The bugbear has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned, stunned, or put to sleep.

Surprise Attack. If the bugbear surprises a creature and hits it with an attack during the first round of combat, the target takes an extra 7 (2d6) damage from the attack.

Actions

Multiattack. The bugbear makes two melee attacks.

Morningstar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d8 + 3) piercing damage.

Javelin. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30/120 ft., one target. Hit: 9 (2d6 +3) piercing damage in melee or 5 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage at range.

Commoner

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 4 (1d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Senses Passive Perception 10

Languages Any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 0 (10 XP)

Actions

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

Draft Horse

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 19 (3d10 + 3)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	2 (-4)	11 (+0)	7 (-2)

Senses Passive Perception 10

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Actions

Hooves. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 8 (2d4 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Ghost

Medium undead, any alignment

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 45 (10d8)

Speed 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)

Damage Resistances Acid, Fire, Lightning, Thunder; Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing from Nonmagical Attacks

Damage Immunities Cold, Necrotic, Poison

Condition Immunities Charmed, Exhaustion, Frightened, Grappled, Paralyzed, Petrified, Poisoned, Prone, Restrained

Senses Darkvision 60ft, Passive Perception 11

Languages Any languages it knew in life

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Ethereal Sight. The ghost can see 60 feet into the Ethereal Plane when it is on the Material Plane, and vice versa.

Incorporeal Movement. The ghost can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Actions

Withering Touch. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 17 (4d6 + 3) necrotic damage.

Etherealness. The ghost enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa. It is visible on the Material Plane while it is in the Border Ethereal, and vice versa, yet it can't affect or be affected by anything on the other plane.

Horrifying Visage. Each non-undead creature within 60 feet of the ghost that can see it must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for 1 minute. If the save fails by 5 or more, the target also ages 1d4 × 10 years. A frightened target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the frightened condition on itself on a success. If a target's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the target is immune to this ghost's Horrifying Visage for the next 24 hours. The aging effect can be reversed with a greater restoration spell, but only within 24 hours of it occurring.

Possession (Recharge 6). One humanoid that the ghost can see within 5 feet of it must succeed on a DC 13 Charisma saving throw or be possessed by the ghost; the ghost then disappears, and the target is incapacitated and loses control of its body. The ghost now controls the body but doesn't deprive the target of awareness. The ghost can't be targeted by any attack, spell, or other effect, except ones that turn undead, and it retains its alignment, Intelligence, Wisdom, Charisma, and immunity to being charmed and frightened. It otherwise uses the possessed target's statistics, but doesn't gain access to the target's knowledge, class features, or proficiencies.

The possession lasts until the body drops to 0 hit points, the ghost ends it as a bonus action, or the ghost is turned or forced out by an effect like the dispel evil and good spell. When the possession ends, the ghost reappears in an unoccupied space within 5 feet of the body. The target is immune to this ghost's Possession for 24 hours after succeeding on the saving throw or after the possession ends.

Illusionist

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 12 (15 With Mage Armor)

Hit Points 38 (7d8 + 7)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws INT +5, WIS +2

Skills Arcana +5, History +5

Senses Passive Perception 10

Languages any four languages

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Spellcasting. The illusionist is a 7th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). The illusionist has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *dancing lights, mage hand, minor illusion, poison spray*

1st level (4 slots): *color spray, * disguise self, * mage armor, magic missile*

2nd level (3 slots): *invisibility, * mirror image, * phantasmal force**

3rd level (3 slots): *major image, * phantom steed**

4th level (1 slot): *phantasmal killer**

*Illusion spell of 1st level or higher

Displacement (Recharges after the Illusionist Casts an Illusion Spell of 1st Level or Higher). As a bonus action, the illusionist projects an illusion that makes the illusionist appear to be standing in a place a few inches from its actual location, causing any creature to have disadvantage on attack rolls against the illusionist. The effect ends if the illusionist takes damage, it is incapacitated, or its speed becomes 0.

Actions

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +1 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 2 (1d6 – 1) bludgeoning damage, or 3 (1d8 – 1) bludgeoning damage if used with two hands.

Igden Waggletop

Igden is an **illusionist**, with the following changes:

Size. His size is Small.

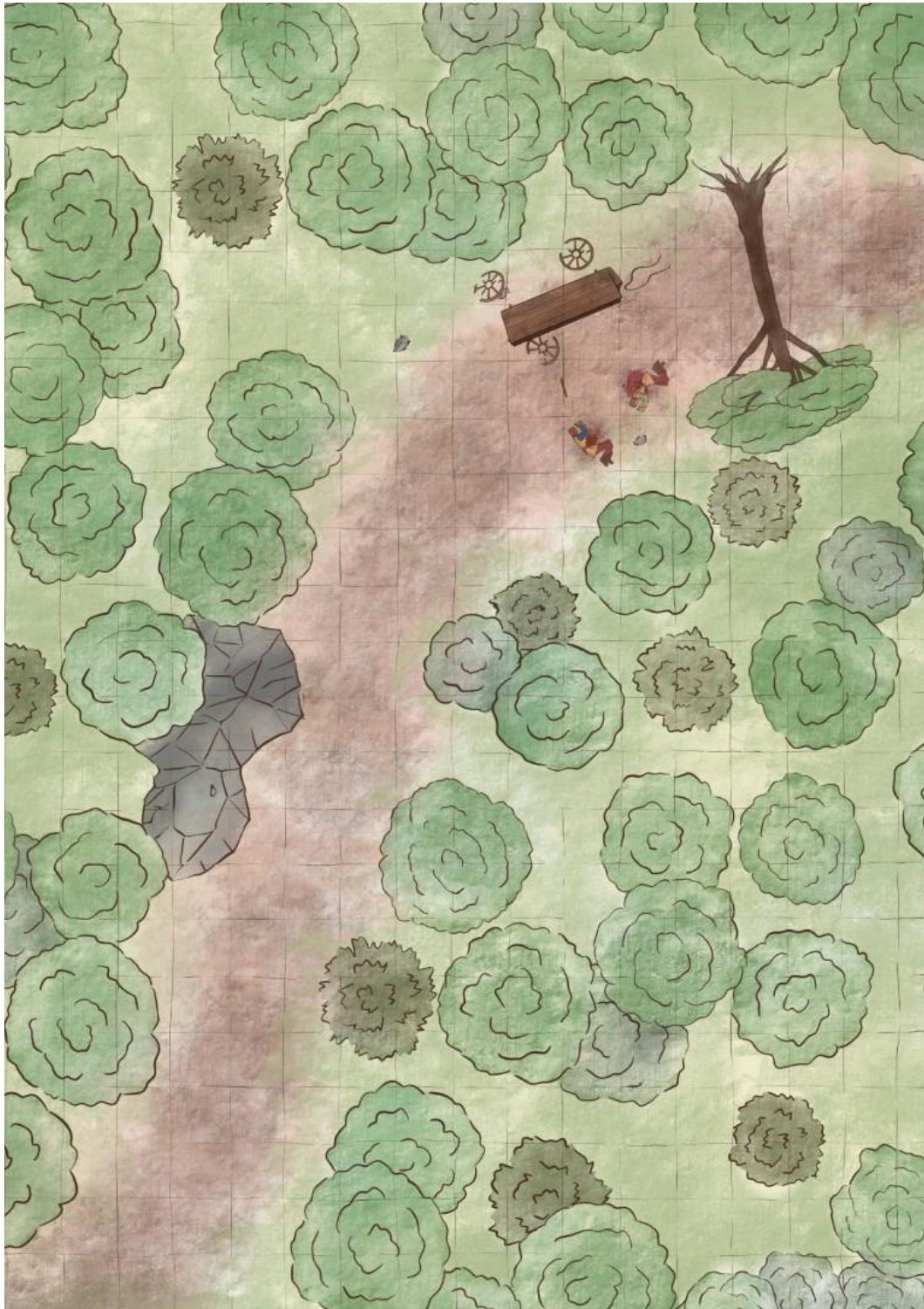
Speed. His walking speed is 25 feet.

Darkvision. He can see in dim light within 60 feet of him as if it were bright light, and in darkness as if it were dim light. He can't discern color in darkness, only shades of gray.

Gnome Cunning. He has advantage on all Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma saving throws against magic.

Languages. He can speak, read, and write Common, Abyssal, Infernal and Gnomish.

Appendix A: Joane's Wagon Map



Appendix B: Glade Map



Appendix C: Bugbear Ambush Map



Appendix D: Character Rewards (Magic Items)

Immovable Rod

Rod, uncommon

This flat iron rod has a button on one end. You can use an action to press the button, which causes the rod to become magically fixed in place. Until you or another creature uses an action to push the button again, the rod doesn't move, even if it is defying gravity. The rod can hold up to 8,000 pounds of weight. More weight causes the rod to deactivate and fall. A creature can use an action to make a DC 30 Strength check, moving the fixed rod up to 10 feet on a success.

This item can be found on Magic Item Table B in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (DMG).

Potion of Healing

Potion, common

You regain 2d4 + 2 hit points when you drink this potion. This item can be found in the *Player's Handbook*. The potion's red liquid glimmers when agitated.

This item can be found on Magic Item Table A in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (DMG).

Appendix E: Dungeon Master Tips

To DM an adventure, you **must** have 3 to 7 players—each with their own character within the adventure’s level range (see *Adventure Primer*). Characters playing in a **hardcover** adventure may continue to play to but if they play a different hardcover adventure, they **can’t return** to the first if outside its level range.

New to D&D Adventurers League?

<http://dnd.wizards.com/playevents/organized-play>

New to the Annual Storyline?

<https://dndadventurersleague.org/storyline-seasons/descent-into-avernus/>

Preparing the Adventure

Before you start play, consider the following:

- Read through the adventure, taking notes of anything you’d like to highlight or remind yourself of while running the adventure, such as a way you’d like to portray an NPC or a tactic you’d like to use in a combat. Familiar yourself with the adventure’s appendices and handouts.
- Gather any resources you’d like to use to aid you in running this adventure--such as notecards, a DM screen, miniatures, and battlemaps.
- Ask the players to provide you with relevant character information, such as name, race, class, and level; passive Wisdom (Perception), and anything specified as notable by the adventure (such as backgrounds, traits, flaws, etc.)

Players can play an adventure they previously played as a Player or Dungeon Master but may only play it once with a given character. Ensure each player has their character’s adventure logsheet (if not, get one from the organizer) with their starting values for advancement and treasure checkpoints, downtime days, and renown. These are updated at the conclusion of the session. The adventure information and your

information is added at the end of the adventure session—whether the completed the adventure or not.

Each player is responsible for maintaining an accurate logsheet. If you have time, you can do a quick scan of a player’s character sheet to ensure that nothing looks out of order. If you see magic items of very high rarities or strange arrays of ability scores, you can ask players to provide documentation for the irregularities. If they cannot, feel free to restrict item use or ask them to use a standard ability score array.

Point players to the D&D Adventurers League Players Guide for reference. If players wish to spend downtime days and it’s the beginning of an adventure or episode, they can declare their activity and spend the days now, or they can do so at the end of the adventure or episode. Players should select their characters’ spells and other daily options prior to the start of the adventure, unless the adventure specifies otherwise. Feel free to reread the adventure description to help give players hints about what they might face.

Adjusting This Adventure

To determine whether you should consider adjusting the adventure, add up the total levels of all the characters and divide the result by the number of characters (rounding .5 or greater up; .4 or less down). This is the group’s average party level (APL). To approximate the **party strength** for the adventure, consult the table below.

Determining Party Strength

Party Composition	Party	Strength
3-4 characters,	APL less than	Very weak
3-4 characters,	APL equivalent	Weak
3-4 characters,	APL greater than	Average
5 characters,	APL less than	Weak
5 characters,	APL equivalent	Average
5 characters,	APL greater than	Strong
6-7 characters,	APL less than	Average
6-7 characters,	APL equivalent	Strong
6-7 characters,	APL greater than	Very strong





