

AN EVENING'S ADVENTURE #1

The Beast of Briar Creek

A FANTASY ADVENTURE

By J

NRP

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THE BEAST OF BRIAR CREEK

Trouble has come to the village of Oakstead. The weather has turned foul and the crops are rotting in the field. In places, even the water has gone bad. And there are rumors, whispers in the smoky taverns when the fire burns low, of monsters prowling the night and encounters with strange creatures. And then there is the ever present threat of humanoids raiding from across the border.

The village council have decided to seek the aid of the enchanter, Tyrion. The players' characters, all locals, have volunteered to make the journey to Tyrion's tower, carry the news to the magic-user and request his aid and advice. The journey to Tyrion's tower is not long, but the fledgling heroes' adventure may be over shortly after it has begun when they are forced to face the Beast of Briar Creek.

The Beast of Briar Creek is a short adventure for five to seven 1st level characters and suitable for use with Labyrinth Lord (tm) and similar Old School games. The adventure details the beginning of the character's journey from their hometown of Oakstead to the tower of the enchanter, Tyrion. The adventure can easily be adapted to be played independently or, when combined with the rest of the series, as part of a lengthy campaign.

Background:

Trouble has come to the village of Oakstead. The weather has turned foul and the crops are rotting in the field. In places, even the water has gone bad. And there are rumors, whispers in the smoky taverns when the fire burns low, of monsters prowling the night and encounters with strange creatures. And then there is the ever present threat of humanoids raiding from across the border.

The village leaders held council throughout the night behind the closed doors of the village hall. This morning the doors opened and they announced their decision to the gathering of anxious citizens. They would send a message to the enchanter, Tyrion, requesting his aid and advice. The reclusive, but kind-hearted, magic-user had brought his craft and wisdom to aid the community in the past and they could surely use it now.

The elders called for volunteers to carry the message. You volunteered.

The tower is fifteen miles to the northwest along the Weatherstone Road. Normally the journey is not long or particularly difficult, but these are far from normal times and the council cautions the characters to be careful and prepared for danger. After a short breakfast and time to pack their equipment, the characters have gathered at the northwest edge of the village square, at the beginning of Weatherstone Road.

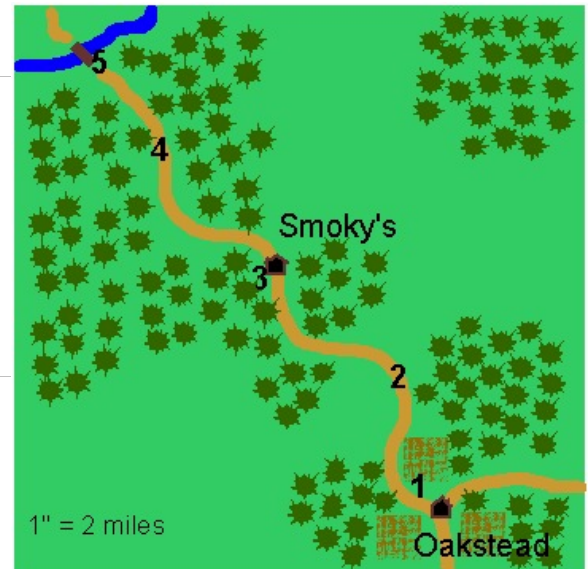
Playing the Adventure Independently

You can play the adventure independently of the campaign. To do so, you'll need to alter the background and start sections and the overall objective of the adventure will change as well. For example, the characters may be traveling through the area, stop at Smoky's and learn about the beast or they may be at Oakstead and learn about the absence of travelers along the Weatherstone Road and be hired, or set out on their own, to investigate the situation. You can also adapt the adventure to fit your current setting and campaign.

1. Start: Weatherstone Road

As the last of your party arrives you shoulder your packs and make final adjustments to your gear. Behind you a crowd of friends and neighbors have gathered, their hopes, fears and worries reflected in their eyes. At the top of the stairs behind them the village council stands before the doors of the village hall. Ahead of you, nearly hidden by an early morning mist, the Weatherstone Road winds across the surrounding farm fields, disappearing into the distant trees.

As soon as the characters are ready, they can start traveling on the road and begin their journey to Tyrion's tower. The road passes farm fields that, a few weeks ago, were full of orderly rows of plants, healthy and green beneath the early summer sun. Now, puddles of half-frozen stagnant water lay between rows of withered brown or slimy green plants. As the characters pass, a few farmers wrapped in their winter garb halt their hopeless struggle to save their crops to watch the party pass.



2. Muddy Vale

The road turns northwest, falling under the shadow of dozens of trees and the last of the fields outside Oakstead slip from view. Many of the branches of the trees are pale green and drooping and the grass and brush are withered and brown. Ahead the road dips down into a shallow, muddy vale before climbing up a short slope and vanishing into the trees once more.

The vale is 180 yards across and pockmarked with dozens of puddles of foul, murky water. The road is exceptionally muddy and movement is reduced by one-third. The vale is devoid of life. The few trees are barren, rotting stumps and the brush, and even tufts of grass, have collapsed into decaying masses.

Halfway across the vale, two brown blobs lurk on each side of the road. At this point there are also four zombies buried under several inches of mud on the road. While the characters most likely deal with a surprise attack from the blobs, the zombies will rise from the mud, taking a full round to come to their feet.

4 Brown Blobs [AL N; MV 90' (30'); AC 7; HD 1+2; HP 8, 6, 6, 5; #AT 1; DG 1d3 + Constitution drain, Surprise 1-4; SV F 1; ML -; undead, radiate cold].

4 Zombies [AL C; MV 120' (40'); AC 8; HD 2; HP 14, 12, 12, 10; #AT 1; DG 1d8; SV F 1; ML 12; undead, always lose initiative]. One of the zombies still carries a short sword and a purse containing 33 sp and 15 gold. Another wears a plain gold ring worth 35 gold pieces.

3. Smoky's Tavern

The road widens into a large clearing beneath the shade of several large oaks and maples. On the north side of the clearing rises a low mound. Smoke drifts from a pair of chimneys atop the mound and a pair of round windows sit a few inches above the ground on either side of a large green door. A sign above the door reads *Smoky's Tavern*.

The mound is the location of Smoky's Tavern, a popular stop for travelers and locals alike. Beyond the door, a flight of stairs leads down to the floor of a large, neat and clean taproom, lit by several oil lanterns that hang from chains that can be raised and lowered as needed. A dozen round wooden tables are spread across the front of the taproom, while a long bar with stools stretches across the north side. A pair of archways and a closed door lead back to storerooms, the kitchen and the private rooms of Smoky and his three cousins that help him run the place.

When the characters arrive they will see Smoky sitting alone at the bar, smoking his pipe, which he is never long without. At the eastern end of the taproom sits a man dressed in woodsman's garb and with a hand axe and stout short bow leaning against the chair beside him. At the opposite end of the room, a trio of locals sit quietly huddled around a table.

Smoky's is open 8 am to midnight and always has a fair sized crowd. This absence of patrons is unusual. If the characters remark on this to Smoky, he will make no effort to hide his disgust over the situation and blame the recent bad events and a strange creature, the Beast of Briar Creek, that is said to be prowling the road from here to the bridge and perhaps beyond.

The three men sitting together are a teamster, shepherd and a farmer. All are drowning their sorrows. Most of the shepherds flock has died of a strange disease. The farmers crops have failed. The teamster can find no goods to haul.

The man in woodsman's garb claims to be a hunter named Eben Stoutbow, but is actually a spy for the evil forces that are secretly behind much of the recent troubles in the area. He is gruff, taciturn and says little, but he looks and listens. If he overhears the characters discussing their quest, he will finish his beer and leave. Once outside, he will disappear into the wilderness to inform his masters of the group's composition and plans.

Rimlynn "Smoky" Silverdown [Halfling 3, AL L; MV 120' (40'); AC 8; HP 12 ; #AT 1 Dagger; DG 1d4 +1; SV H 3; ML -; S 11, I 10, W 11, D 14, C 13, Ch 9; carries a +1 dagger, a souvenir of his old adventuring days.]

Eben [Thief 3, AL C, MV 90' (30'); AC 7; HP 7; #AT 1 sword or 1 bow; SV T 3; S 12, I 11, W 10, D 13, C 10, Ch 11; wears leather armor and carries a sword, dagger, short bow, 12 arrows, a potion of *invisibility*, and a purse of 23 cp, 15 sp and 10 gold. A pouch inside a hidden pocket in his tunic holds 4 50 gpv gems.]

4. Ambush

If Eben learned of the characters' mission, he will have arranged for the group to be ambushed by a band of kobolds. Half the kobolds will attack from either side of the road. Half of the kobolds are armed with short bows and daggers. The remainder have spears and short swords.

12 Kobolds [AL C; MV 60' (20'); AC 7; HD 1/2; HP 4, 2 x 3, 9 x 2; #AT 1; DG by weapon -1; SV F 0; ML 6]. Each carries 4d6 cp. The leader has a silver dagger and a silver neck chain (25 gcv).

5. Briar Creek Bridge

The sulfurous stench of foul water and rot drifts toward you. Ahead the trees thin and a wooden bridge spans a slow-flowing creek. Ten yards of muddy field separate the tree line from the banks of the creek. The road continues on the other side of the bridge.

Slime and dead fish float down the creek and strands of sickly yellow seaweed can be seen growing from the bottom. Hidden in a deep pool near the bridge is a merscral, the beast of Briar Creek Bridge.

Merscral [AL C; MV 90' (30'), Swim 150' (50'); AC 6; HD 3+2; HP 15; #AT 3; DG 1d3; SV F 4; ML 9; immune to sleep and charm].

The creature will lurk in the water, rushing out to attack when the characters are within thirty feet. The monster has accumulated a small amount of treasure, which it keeps among the mud and leaves at the bottom of the pool. The treasure includes 420 cp, 280 sp, 180 gp, 4 gems (2 x 10, 1 x 25 and 1 x 50 gpv) and a +1 *ring of protection*.

NEW MONSTERS

Brown Blob

No. Enc.:	1d4 (1d4)
Alignment:	Neutral
Movement:	90' (30')
Armor Class:	7
Hit Dice:	1+2
Attacks;	1
Damage:	1d3 + Constitution drain
Save:	F1
Morale:	-
Hoard Class:	-

These blobs of brown slime grow to diameters of five feet or more. These seeping horrors are undead, the side affects of necromantic magic. They radiate a bone-chilling cold and all living things in a ten-foot radius must save vs Death or take 1 point of cold damage. A hit from a blob's slimy pseudopod drains 1 point of Constitution. Those drained of constitution or slain by a brown blob rise as zombies. Drained constitution returns at a rate of 1 point per hour. Brown blobs are turned as zombies and immune to cold, mind-affecting magic, poison, disease and illusions.

Merscral

No. Enc.:	1d3 (1d3)
Alignment:	Chaotic
Movement:	90' (30')
Swim:	150' (50')
Armor Class:	6
Hit Dice:	3+2
Attacks;	3
Damage:	1d3 each
Save:	F4
Morale:	9
Hoard Class:	XXI

Merscrals look like a foul combination of river troll and fishman. They are man-sized, with large, clawed and webbed, hands and feet and their fish-like mouths are full of sharp, pointy teeth. Their appearance varies greatly. Some have fins on their backs and the backs of their arms and legs. Others have narrow fish heads, while others appear more humanoid. They are creatures of dark faerie, greatly corrupted by the powers of Chaos. They are amphibious and drawn to stagnant or corrupt water, and their presence, over time, makes it more so. They hate most other forms of life and delight in seeing other living things suffer. They have a low intelligence, but can be very cunning. They are immune to sleep and charm. Their skin is wet and slimy and the creatures must periodically return to water or begin to dry out, a process which is incredibly painful and would eventually result in the creature's death. Merscrals heal 1 point per 3 turns while immersed in water, except for damage from fire or lighting, which heals at normal rate.

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