



PRIMROSE PATH

A Short Adventure for Four
6th-Level Player Characters

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Primrose Path is a short adventure for 6th-level characters. The scenario is designed as a gamut that offers the PCs few options. While such a setup involves a certain amount of "railroading," both the players and their PCs are well aware that they are on a prescribed path.

This adventure is set in the wilderness, between a small village on the edge of civilization and a major temple. Though the scenario requires all of these elements to work, it can be set on the outer edge of any kingdom in any campaign world. The adventure also makes use of a map-of-the-week (http://www.wizards.com/dnd/images/mapofweek/Jan_104DT4x.jpg). As always, feel free to adapt the material presented here as you see fit to make it work with your campaign.



PREPARATION

You (the DM) need the D&D core rulebooks—the *Player's Handbook*, the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and the *Monster Manual*—to run this adventure. This scenario utilizes the D&D v.3.5 rules.

To get started, print out the adventure. Read through the scenario at least once to familiarize yourself with the situation, threats, and major NPCs (particularly their motivations). The Adventure Synopsis details the order in which the events occur.

Text that appears in shaded boxes is player information that you can read aloud or paraphrase for the players at the proper times.


ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The village of Holtston has been clinging to existence on the edge of civilization for many years, despite the storms, monsters, bandits, and other calamities that have nearly destroyed it on several occasions. Its people have always drawn on the strength of their faith to carry them through hard times. Though they have no church of their own, they send offerings to and receive guidance from a temple of Pelor located 100 miles away, beyond a wild forest.

This unusual custom began 102 years ago, when a combination of blizzard, blight, and orc raids nearly wiped out the town. A wandering wise man named Versivious arrived in Holtston and suggested that a wagonload of goods be sent to the Temple of Pelor as a sign of the village's faith.

Though the villagers could scarcely spare a wagonload of goods, they agreed. Versivious himself took the wagon through the woods to the temple. Orcs attacked him along the way and wounded him badly, but he managed to get the offering to the temple before expiring. Shortly afterward, Holtston experienced a rash of good luck. The blight ended, a group of heroes drove off the orcs, and a particularly rich crop came in. The town was saved, and Versivious became a local saint.

The offering to the Temple of Pelor has now become an annual tradition. Although a few priests and wizards have offered to simply teleport the goods safely to the temple, Holtston's tradition requires that the wagon bearing the tribute travel the same route that Saint Versivious used a century ago. The date is more flexible—the goods can be delivered any time after the fall harvest and before the first snow of winter.



In the 102 years since that first offering, the goods have been delivered every year except one. Forty-seven years ago, the shipment was lost in a forest fire. That winter, a terrible blizzard nearly destroyed the town, and a blight struck the crops the following spring. Because of these events, the villagers believe their prosperity depends on following the tradition of the offering to the letter.

This year, the first wagonload of goods never made it to the temple, and its escort never returned. A second wagon was sent, but it also disappeared somewhere in the woods. The village has now lost two wagonloads of goods, as well as the best and bravest of its young people, and the remaining villagers can only barely afford to put together a third wagonload. The temple has offered to send help, but the people of Holtston believe that the goods must arrive without direct aid from the temple. Outsiders can help, in the tradition of Saint Versivious, but no one from the temple may do so.

Unbeknownst to the villagers, a green dragon named Wyrmoode was responsible for the loss of the previous two shipments. He has been watching the annual shipment for a couple of years, and through his mentor and his animal companion, he has pieced together the history behind this odd custom. This year, he has decided to advance his own plans by waylaying the wagon.

The dragon is after more than just treasure—he also wants respect and territory. He intends to force the village of Holtston to pay him regular tribute, and diverting the annual offering is part of that plan. Wyrmoode assumes that the villagers will become so desperate to get an offering through before the snow hits that they'll agree to anything. Until then, he just needs to keep their wagons from reaching the temple.

To that end, Wyrmoode has cut a deal with a worg pack leader named Thorn, who speaks Common and is slightly more intelligent than most of her kind. In return for waylaying the wagons, Wyrmoode has promised her a position of importance once he rules the woods. Thorn assumes that in addition to elevating her status, the dragon can protect her pack from rangers and other villagers seeking retribution for the attacks. Wyrmoode has told Thorn what route the wagon is required to take, and she and her pack destroy any that travel it.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

Primrose Path is essentially a series of encounters that occur on the road between Holtston and the Temple of

Pelor. When the adventurers arrive in the village, the people are saying goodbye to Elten Harper, a young ranger who's about to take a wagonload of goods on a 100-mile journey through the woods. Unless the PCs offer to help, the young man will be the next to die.

If the PCs do escort the wagon, they face the normal random encounters for a wild wood, and they are also attacked by a pack of worgs led by the vicious she-worg Thorn. After defeating the worgs, they must face the creature behind the disappearance of the wagons—the green dragon druid Wyrmoode. Even if Wyrmoode is driven off, he'll pose a continuing threat to the region unless the heroes hunt him down and face him in his lair.


ADVENTURE HOOKS

As DM, your first priority is to get the heroes to the town of Holtston. If desired, you can use the following hooks to spur your imagination, modifying them as necessary to fit your campaign or the characters.

- The heroes are invited to Holtston by people they met here in a prior adventure.
- One of the PCs who has family or friends in Holtston receives an urgent request for aid from them.
- The characters pass through Holtston on their way back from another adventure.
- An item the PCs seek is hidden in Holtston.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

Primrose Path is an encounter-based adventure in which most of the action occurs in the woods. The adventure begins when the characters reach the town of Holtston (see encounter A, below).

 **Holtston (Small Town):** Conventional/Magical; AL LG; 800 gp limit; Assets 3,688 (currently depleted to 621 gp); Population 922; Mixed (humans 79%, halflings 9%, elves 5%, dwarves 3%, gnomes 2%, half-elves 1%, half-orcs 1%).

Authority Figures: Riddin Harper (LG human ranger 3/expert 5), mayor; Eason Maax (LG human cleric 4 of Pelor), village priest.

Important Characters: Neres (LG human warrior 2/expert 3), blacksmith and head of the town council; Akur Galak (LG human adept 2/expert 2), assistant

priest; Ameson Howe (LG human warrior 5), captain of the militia.

Militia: Warrior 3 (2), warrior 2 (2), warrior 1 (8).

A. HOLTSTON

Holtston is a small town on the edge of civilization. Read or paraphrase the following when the characters arrive.

Ahead is a picturesque small town of the sort usually found in frontier areas. Several people, mostly children and elderly folk, are clustered in the town square. Many are crying, though no fighting or disagreement is apparent.

A young man, no more than a boy really, is hooking two horses up to a tarp-covered wagon. An older woman holds his shoulder with one hand and cries inconsolably. A few guards, a young man in the garb of a blacksmith, and a priest stand nearby.

The villagers are preparing to send out their third wagonload of goods.

Creatures: The young man is Elten Harper, the eldest son of the mayor, Riddin Harper. Elten's mother, Elisa, is the woman crying.

The whole town has turned out to wish Elten well as he sets out alone to take the goods to the temple. Elten is the only person left in town who knows the route besides his father, and the villagers have agreed that his father is too old to make the journey. The village has already lost two wagonloads and the twelve escorts that went with them, and sending anyone with him would leave the village unguarded.

When the villagers spot the PCs and realize that they are adventurers, their mood brightens considerably. They ask whether the characters would be willing to either escort Elten or take the wagon themselves. When Elten's father realizes that someone might be able to accompany his son, he explains the purpose of the journey and the wagon's route, and admits that two previous wagons have been lost this year. He offers to pay the PCs as much as the village can spare (600 gp). Elten is willing to take orders from the PCs, or simply tell them how to follow the trail through the woods (a DC 15 Survival check, or DC 10 with the Track feat).

The wagon holds enough foodstuffs for sixty meals, plus two barrels of beer, a dozen warhammers, one masterwork warhammer, and 215 gp.

✦ **Elten Harper:** Male human ranger 1; CR 1; Medium humanoid; HD 1d8+1; hp 5; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.;

AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +1; Grp +3; Atk or Full Atk +3 melee (1d8+3/19–20, longsword) or +4 ranged (1d8+2/×3, masterwork composite longbow [+2 Str bonus]); SQ favored enemy animals +2, wild empathy +0; AL NG; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +1; Str 14, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Climb +5, Heal +5, Hide +5, Jump +5, Knowledge (nature) +4, Move Silently +5, Survival +5; Dodge, Power Attack, Track.

Favored Enemy (Ex): Elten gains a +2 bonus on his Bluff, Listen, Sense Motive, Spot, and Survival checks when using these skills against animals. He gains the same bonus on weapon damage.

Possessions: Studded leather armor, longsword, masterwork composite longbow (+2 Str bonus) with 20 arrows, *potion of bull's strength*, *elixir of swimming*.

2. PACK ATTACK (EL 6)

Read or paraphrase the following when the wagon is a few hours out from the town.

The underbrush is thick, as is the canopy of leaves above. The wind whistles through the trees, and small insects chirp in the weeds. Suddenly, a pack of black wolves jumps out of the undergrowth, fangs bared and red eyes gleaming with malevolence.

Creatures: Thorn and her pack have awaited the wagon in hiding. Thorn is a cunning leader, and she does her best to guide her pack carefully in combat.

✦ **Thorn:** Female worg; CR 2; Medium magical beast; HD 4d10+8; hp 34; Init +2; Spd 50 ft.; AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +4; Grp +7; Atk or Full Atk +7 melee (1d6+4, bite); SA trip; SQ darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; AL NE; SV Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +3; Str 17, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 6, Wis 14, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Hide +4, Jump +11, Listen +6, Move Silently +6, Spot +6, Survival +4; Alertness, Track.

Trip (Ex): If Thorn hits with a bite attack, she can attempt to trip her opponent (+3 check modifier) as a free action without making a touch attack or provoking an attack of opportunity. If the attempt fails, the opponent cannot react to trip Thorn.

✦ **Worgs (5):** hp 28, 30, 30, 32, 33; see *Monster Manual*, page 256.

Tactics: Thorn has set an ambush, hoping to take the wagon's defenders by surprise. She sends her worgs to take down healers and foes that obviously have access to ranged attacks first. The worgs are smart enough not to risk attacks of opportunity to reach the designated targets; instead, they maneuver around the group.



Thorn barks orders (in the worg language) for them to trip intervening targets and use their faster movement to maneuver for flanking. If three or more worgs fall, Thorn orders a retreat and gives up on her deal with Wyrmoode. If Thorn dies, the remaining worgs attack the nearest foe and fight to the death.

Treasure: Thorn has a *ring of protection* +1 on her left front paw.

3. WYRMOODE (EL 8)

If his worg agents have failed, Wyrmoode pays the PCs a visit himself. He has a clearing picked out for such a confrontation—an open space 120 feet in diameter. The trail enters from the south and exits to the north.

Wyrmoode does not appear on a day when the PCs have already had an encounter. The dragon simply doesn't bother to roust himself on any day that he's sent agents. When he does decide to head toward the PCs, all other creatures flee the area, thus negating the possibility of a random encounter. Wyrmoode approaches the PCs openly rather than ambushing them because he assumes that anyone not obviously very powerful will give him what he wants rather than fight him.

Ahead is a large clearing covered in short grass and wild flowers. The woods have gone quiet—no birds chirp, and no animals rustle.

Moments later, the winged form of a dragon dives from the sky and lands on the opposite side of the clearing. The creature is as tall as a man, but its body is covered in green scales. A moment's inspection reveals that its hide is ragged and mottled, its wings are jagged, and its head is slightly lopsided. The dragon stretches once, like a cat. Its wings slowly work back and forth, and a strong, acrid smell wafts across the clearing. Despite its size, the beast leaves no marks in the grass beneath it.

A ring of small trees and light undergrowth about 30 feet wide surrounds the whole clearing—except where the trail enters and exits. Each of the trail mouths is 20 feet wide. Movement costs in the undergrowth are doubled, and the DC for any Tumble or Move Silently check increases by +2. Characters with the woodland stride class feature (including Wyrmoode) move through the undergrowth at normal speed. The undergrowth also provides concealment (see page 87 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for details).

Creature: Wyrmoode is a young green dragon of only 24 years. He weighs a mere 300 pounds and measures only 6 feet from claws to crest.

Wyrmoode is an exceptional example of his kind in most respects. He is strong, tough, and cunning, but he lacks the sleek good looks and the natural force of personality that make dragons so impressive. His clutchmates teased him mercilessly about his ragged physical appearance during the years that they banded together for survival, and this experience gave him a strong drive to overcome his faults and achieve. Wyrmoode was the first of his clutch to strike out on his own, and he quickly sought out a mentor to train him in magic that others of his kind did not possess. He located a gnoll druid who was willing to serve as his mentor and studied under him for a few years. Wyrmoode's druidical studies cooled his natural ardor for law, but he remains something of a megalomaniac.

In a little more than a year, Wyrmoode will become a juvenile, gaining a size category and 3 racial Hit Dice. His current growth spurt has made him crave both treasure and territory. Though he is still prone to simplistic thinking and to throwing tantrums when foiled, he is certainly no child. Despite his youth, he is already an experienced, advanced planer capable of careful plotting and extreme cruelty.

Wyrmoode: Male young green dragon druid 3; CR 8; Medium dragon (air); HD 11d12+44 plus 3d8+12; hp 140; Init +1; Spd 40 ft., swim 40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor); AC 22, touch 11, flat-footed 21; Base Atk +13; Grp +17; Atk +17 melee (1d8+4, bite); Full Atk +17 melee (1d8+4, bite) and +15 melee (1d6+2, 2 claws) and +15 melee (1d4+2, 2 wings); SA breath weapon; SQ animal companion (eagle; evasion, link, share spells), blindsense 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., immunity to acid, paralysis, and sleep, low-light vision, nature sense, trackless step, water breathing, woodland stride; AL NE; SV Fort +14, Ref +9, Will +13; Str 19, Dex 12, Con 19, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +14, Concentration +14, Diplomacy +14, Intimidate +16, Jump +8, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge (nature) +15, Listen +14, Search +8, Sense Motive +14, Spellcraft +3, Spot +19, Survival +9, Swim +12; Ability Focus (breath weapon), Combat Casting, Hover, Improved Natural Armor, Multiattack.

Breath Weapon (Su): 30-ft. cone, every 2d4 rounds, damage 6d6, Reflex DC 21 half.

Animal Companion (Ex): Wyrmoode has an eagle named Blackwing as an animal companion. Wyrmoode and Blackwing enjoy the link and share spells special qualities.

Link (Ex): Wyrmoode can handle Blackwing as a free action. He also gains a +4 circumstance bonus on all

wild empathy checks and Handle Animal checks made regarding his eagle.

Share Spells (Ex): Wyrmoode may have any spell he casts on himself also affect his animal companion if the latter is within 5 feet at the time. Wyrmoode may also cast a spell with a target of “You” on his animal companion.

Trackless Step (Ex): Wyrmoode leaves no trail in natural surroundings and cannot be tracked.

Water Breathing (Ex): Wyrmoode can breathe underwater indefinitely and can freely use his breath weapon, spells, and other abilities while submerged.

Woodland Stride (Ex): Wyrmoode may move through natural thorns, briars, overgrown areas, and similar terrain at his normal speed and without damage or other impairment. However, thorns, briars, and overgrown areas that are magically manipulated to impede motion still affect him.

Druid Spells Prepared (caster level 3rd): 0—*detect magic*, *detect poison*, *guidance*, *know direction*; 1st—*entangle* (DC 14), *magic fang*, *obscuring mist*; 2nd—*barkskin*, *bull's strength*.

Possessions: *Eyes of the eagle*, *pearl of power* (1st-level spell), *silversheen* (1 dose), *brooch of shielding* (101 points remaining).

Tactics: Wyrmoode is a very dangerous opponent for a group of 6th-level characters, and he qualifies as an extreme encounter.

Wyrmoode begins by demanding that the PCs leave the wagon and flee back to Holtston. He makes this demand while preparing spells (see tactics, below). He's willing to negotiate, but he insists that at least part of the shipment be left behind, since his ultimate goal depends on making Holtston desperate enough to pay him tribute to let future shipments through.

Wyrmoode negotiates for as much as a minute, as long as the PCs don't attack him in any way. If the characters ultimately refuse to give him even a portion of the treasure and depart, he attacks.

Wyrmoode fights logically. If possible, he casts *bull's strength*, *barkskin*, and *magic fang* (to augment his bite) before attacking. If need be, he takes wing briefly to give himself time to cast. Then he opens with *entangle* and follows with *obscuring mist* (which does not hinder his blindsense). Anytime he can hit multiple targets with his breath weapon, he employs it. He uses his Hover feat to stay out of melee range whenever he is casting or breathing on foes.

When he engages in melee combat, he targets the most dangerous-looking combatant that has a ranged attack and keeps attacking until that character goes down. (He doesn't care if it's dead or not at this point, as

long as it's temporarily out of the action.) If the PCs put up a good fight, Wyrmoode retreats into the undergrowth around the clearing, where he can get some concealment and the PCs' movement should be hampered.

Wyrmoode does not fight to the death unless he has to. He's an intelligent dragon, and he wants to live. Once he's down to 50 hit points, he flees.

Development: If forced to flee, Wyrmoode tries to smash the wagon before he departs, though he won't risk an attack of opportunity to do so. He then makes a foolish mistake—he flies straight for his lair. Wyrmoode hasn't been defeated since he gained his druidic powers, and he panics if the PCs prove more than he can handle.

If Wyrmoode manages to steal or smash any portion of the shipment, he's satisfied and doesn't risk himself again until a new wagonload comes through. If he fails to ruin the offering, Wyrmoode gives up for this year and makes plans to try again next year, when he'll be considerably tougher.

If the PCs decide to hunt down the dragon either before or after delivering the wagon, they face a difficult and dangerous task. Because of his woodland stride ability, Wyrmoode leaves no tracks, and he can both fly and swim. He does, however, have to eat. A character with the Track feat can find sufficient signs of the dragon's hunting to track him back to his lair with a DC 20 Survival check. If the character already knows the direction of Wyrmoode's lair, the DC is only 15.

Treasure: If the characters encounter Wyrmoode outside his lair, the only treasures they find are those he carries with him.

4. WYRMOODE'S LAIR

Wyrmoode's lair is a massive treehouse built decades ago by a retired half-elf ranger. The place was abandoned when Wyrmoode found it, and for the time being it suits him well. (When he grows larger, it won't work so well for him.) The house is 30 feet off the ground and well camouflaged (DC 15 Spot check to notice it). The dragon's animal companion (an eagle) watches over the lair at night and warns him of any intruders. The eagle also stays behind to keep an eye on the lair when Wyrmoode is out. Climbing up to the treehouse takes a DC 10 Climb check.

Except for Wyrmoode's nest (of animal pelts and broken foliage) and the treasures in area 2, the interior rooms contain nothing of interest. The rest of the treehouse is empty except for a few smashed pieces of furniture and small animal carcasses.

Creatures: If Wyrmoode is out, his animal companion Blackwing is watching over the treehouse. Otherwise, both the dragon and his eagle are here.

✦ **Wyrmoode:** See encounter C for statistics.

✦ **Blackwing:** Male eagle companion; CR —; Small animal; HD 3d8+3; hp 16; Init +3; Spd 10 ft., fly 80 ft. (average); AC 16, touch 14, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +2; Grp -2; Atk +6 melee (1d4, claw); Full Atk +6 melee (1d4, 2 claws) and +1 melee (1d4, bite); SQ evasion, link, share spells, tricks (attack, come, defend, fetch, guard, seek, stay, track); AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +3; Str 11, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 2, Wis 14, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Hide +7, Jump -12, Listen +5, Spot +17; Alertness, Weapon Finesse.

Evasion (Ex): If Blackwing is exposed to any effect that normally allows him to attempt a Reflex saving throw for half damage, he takes no damage with a successful saving throw.

Link (Ex): Wyrmoode can handle Blackwing as a free action. He also gains a +4 circumstance bonus on all wild empathy checks and Handle Animal checks made regarding his eagle.

Share Spells (Ex): Wyrmoode may have any spell he casts on himself also affect his animal companion if the latter is within 5 feet at the time. Wyrmoode may also cast a spell with a target of “You” on Blackwing.

Skills: Blackwing has a +4 racial bonus on Listen and Spot checks. These bonuses are lost if his blind-sense is negated.

Tactics: If Wyrmoode is present when his companion spots PCs near the lair, the dragon flies out in a rage and attacks immediately. He doesn't give characters that hunt him down a second chance. He fights until he reaches 50 hit points (see Tactics in encounter C, above), then flies back to his lair and tries to collect his treasure and escape. All of his loot except the composite bow and greatsword (see Treasure, below) fits in his treasure chest. If pressed for time, Wyrmoode just grabs the chest and leaves. If reduced to 15 or fewer hit points, Wyrmoode abandons his treasure and flies away.

If the PCs manage to attack Wyrmoode while he's still inside his lair, they may be able to surprise him. He still fights to the best of his ability, but he doesn't leave PCs in his lair unless he has to escape. Remaining in the lair prevents Wyrmoode from flying because the cave isn't big enough to accommodate his wingspan, but the close quarters also tend to clump PCs close enough together for his breath weapon to affect several of them at once.

Treasure: Ornate black lacquered chest with silver fittings (55 gp), diamond dust (500 gp), silk (100 gp), cloth of gold (300 gp), masterwork darkwood composite longbow (+4 Str bonus)(830 gp), masterwork cold iron greatsword (400 gp), 545 gp, 1,000 sp.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

After the PCs have dealt with Thorn's pack and Wyrmoode, they can continue on to the temple of Pelor on the far side of the woods. No other encounters occur except for the typical random encounters. If the characters prevent Wyrmoode from ruining the offering, they don't have to face him again to finish their mission—they can just take the wagon to the temple. That option, however, leaves Wyrmoode free to cause trouble again next year and deprives the PCs of his treasure. But they do earn full experience for defeating him if they manage to deliver the wagon intact.

A senior priest named Father Usten (use the 7th-level pregenerated cleric on page 115 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*) meets them at the door. The temple lacks the resources to help the PCs hunt down Wyrmoode (if they haven't already slain him), but the priests do their best to heal the heroes now and after any further fights with the dragon.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

If Wyrmoode is still alive, he makes another attempt to carry out his plan again in a year, when he's bigger and tougher. Since the people of Holtston are strong believers in tradition, they're sure to send for the heroes when that happens.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Owen Kirker Clifford Stephens was born in 1970 in Norman, Oklahoma. He attended the TSR Writer's Workshop held at the Wizards of the Coast Game Center in 1997 and moved to the Seattle area in 2000, after accepting a job as a Game Designer at Wizards of the Coast, Inc. Fourteen months later, he returned to Oklahoma with his wife and three cats to pick up his freelance writer/developer career. He has author and coauthor credits on numerous *Star Wars* and *EverQuest* projects, as well as *Bastards and Bloodlines* from Green Ronin. He also has producer credits for various IDA products, including the Stand-Ins printable figures.