

RESCUING EMELIA by Scott Marcley

A TROPE-FILLED ADVENTURE FOR NOVICE HEROES

SETUP: The lord of *Brackleborn Keep* summons the heroes for an urgent mission. Two days ago, his 10 year-old daughter *Emelia* and three loyal guards departed for a neighboring province. Bandits ambushed her palanquin, killed all the guards (save one), and kidnapped the girl. The surviving guard awoke later and returned to the keep. The lord sent more guards to the ambush site, where they followed the bandits' tracks to an old trail into the *Gloomy Forest*. The guards pursued, but were chased away by a pack of vicious wolves.

MISSION: The lord hires the heroes to enter the forest, find and rescue *Emelia*, and (if possible) kill those who kidnapped her. He equips them from the keep's meager stores (their starting equipment), and will pay them 150 gp each if they return the girl safely. If there are fewer than (4) heroes, *Lord Brackleburn* assigns *Perry*, the surviving *guard*, to guide them to the site.

INTRO: After departing the keep, you follow the road east for most of a day until you come to the ambush site. Looking around, you quickly locate the trail—a dusty path leading north to the forest. As the sun sets, you head down the trail and soon spot several thugs beating another man senseless. [area A]

H) GOBLIN AMBUSH: The trail peters out here, where the heroes are ambushed by (5) **goblins**. When three are killed, the rest flee up a secret path to the hobgoblin's lair. Each goblin has 1d6 gp and 3d6 sp.

G) BANDIT CAMP: (4) **human bandits** (plus any that fled here from area A) and a **goblin** sit around a campfire. They kidnapped *Emelia* and sold her to the goblin's boss. The bandits use short swords and crossbows. Each has 1d6 gp and 3d6 sp.

D) OLD GRAVES: The trail continues to become darker and scarier until it finally opens into a fog-shrouded meadow. Dozens of stone grave markers poke out of the tangled weeds. In the center of the meadow is a crumbling mausoleum. Disturbing a grave causes 1d3+1 **skeletons** to emerge from the ground and attack. Within the mausoleum, a pit descends into a crypt. Disturbing the sarcophagus below causes (4) **skeletons** to emerge from niches and attack. The sarcophagus contains bones, three jeweled rings worth 50 gp each, a **golden headband** (+1 to AC), and a +1 **weapon**.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS: Roll 1d10 for each hex travelled. On the path, a result of 1-2 indicates an encounter. Off the path, the chance is 1-4. If an encounter occurs, roll 1d6:

- 1) 1d3+1 **wolves**
- 2) an **elf scout** looking for his friend
- 3) 1d3+1 **goblins**
- 4) 1d3 **black bears**
- 5) 2d4 **thorn sprites**
- 6) 2d4 **stirges**

I) HOBGOBLIN'S LAIR: The secret path is 5 ft. wide and difficult terrain. It leads to a series of three caves in the side of a hill. Within is the lair of a band of goblins and their hobgoblin boss. Each goblin has 1d6 gp and 3d6 sp.

c) Short ledges climb to (f). Moving across a ledge has a 1-in-3 chance of (noisily) springing a **hidden giant rat trap**. A lone **goblin** from (f) soon arrives to collect the "rat" for dinner.

b) (6) **giant rats** scurry from holes and attack.

a) The tunnel opens onto a 10-ft. high ledge above area (b). Stepping on 'x' causes the shaded section to collapse into (b) for 1d6 damage.

h) This small room is closed off by a thick door. Inside are a small cage and a stout chest. *Emelia* sits in the cage sobbing and clutching her doll. The cage and chest are padlocked. *Gurd*'s key opens both locks. The chest contains 200 gp, 300 sp, 500 cp, (5) gems (50 gp ea.), a *potion of invisibility*, and a crude map clearly marked with *Emelia*'s route. A message scrawled in goblin reads: *"Human girl leave sire's fortress at dawn of six days. Keep girl alive. NO EAT!! Master will send for."*

g) The passage is blocked by a timber door. The rough-hewn cave beyond is the chamber of *Gurd*, the hobgoblin boss. If he was warned, the door is barred (20 hp). *Gurd* can fire arrows through the door when it has 10 hp or less. He wears a chain shirt and a *belt of +1 dexterity*. A key hangs around his neck.

f) (5) **goblins** camp here. If the heroes enter from (d) or (e), one goblin runs to (g) to warn the boss.

d and e) Each cave entrance has a hidden tripwire across it which triggers a *pots-n'-pans noisemaker*, alerting the goblins at (f).

F) ANCIENT FONT: The path ends in a moss-carpeted glen. The air is still and quiet. In the center is a weathered stone font, carved with elven designs and filled with crystal-clear water. From the treeline, the heroes are observed by an invisible **faerie dragon**. If a good-aligned cleric or paladin is present, or if a good-aligned hero mentions the quest and/or rescuing the girl, the faerie dragon becomes visible and flutters down to perch on the font, where it dips its snout in the water. The font now contains magical water that heals a hero for 10 hp (any excess become temporary hp for 24 hours). Drinking multiple draughts has no additional effect. Good-aligned heroes may also roll a d20; on a '20', the faerie dragon becomes attached to the hero and follows them everywhere. Otherwise, it turns invisible and returns to the treeline.

C) WHICH WAY? The trail splits into three paths here: the path to the west is dark, and the trees appear dead and withered; the path to the east appears verdant and lush; the path to the north narrows to 10 ft., with thick brambles to either side. Searching reveals numerous tracks coming and going on the north path. The tracks are human bootprints; some appear child-sized (goblin).

B) GLOOMY FOREST: A 15 ft. wide trail continues off into the forest, which is deeply shadowed during the day (visibility 60 ft.) and pitch black at night. Off the path, the terrain becomes difficult and the chance for random encounters increases.

A) FOUR BANDITS accost a hapless commoner named *Durl*. If two bandits are killed, the others flee to their camp. In gratitude, *Durl* gives the heroes (2) *healing potions*. The group can rest here (no encounters) and resume the adventure the next day.

CONCLUSION: When the heroes return to the keep with *Emelia*, her grateful father gives them their reward along with any treasure they recovered. *Emelia* gives each of the heroes a kiss, which inspires them. If any hero bonded with *Emelia*, she offers them her doll, which acts as a *good luck charm*, allowing them to call upon a *bless spell* (1/day). If the heroes give the lord the hobgoblin's map, he regards it gravely and asks them if they would consider another mission...

1 mile
N
To Road