

A FORGOTTEN REALMS CAMPAIGN SETTING ADVENTURE

BY SEAN K REYNOLDS

FANG, BEAK, AND CLAW

preparation

To run this adventure, you need the new edition *Player's Handbook*, *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*, and *Monster Manual*.®

Monster statistics noted in each encounter are abbreviated, but provide the *Monster Manual* page number for full statistics of common monsters.

background

Fang, Beak, and Claw involves an evil druid of Malar, his cronies, and a tamed owlbear. Living in a sheltered grove altered by the druid's spells, they are using the beast to harass loggers in the woods and help in their cruel hunts.

Two years ago, a druid named Jorren saw his favorite portions of the forest become despoiled when settlers moved into the area and began felling trees. They ignored his requests to stop and his offers of guidance as to how they could acquire wood without causing so much damage to the wilderness. Angered, he turned to worshipping

Fang, Beak, and Claw is a short DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® adventure for four characters of about 8th level, one of whom should be a ranger or have some skill at tracking. The number of creatures at the end of the adventure can be increased or decreased to accommodate more or less powerful characters.

Although this adventure was written to be used with the new edition of the FORGOTTEN REALMS® Campaign Setting, it is also suitable for use in most other medieval fantasy settings, including those of the Dungeon Master's own creation.

credits

This layout intentionally begins on page 2. There is no page 1.

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Based on the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson and on the new edition of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game designed by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Richard Baker, and Peter Adkison.

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Malar instead of the more benign nature deities, and eventually succumbed to evil, nursing his anger with plots of revenge upon the encroaching towns.

After liberating an owlbear egg from a nest deep within the forest, he raised the chick-cub and managed to tame it somewhat. Now, from the shelter of his forest home, he sends his pet to kill small groups of loggers, explorers, and remote farmers. Sometimes he enhances it with some of his long-lasting spells, or he and his half-orc ranger cohorts join the beast in attacking small homesteads, their skills leaving few tracks and much fear over what is responsible.

Adventure synopsis

The heroes are called in to investigate several grisly murders or animal maulings near a remote forest village. Some of the murder sites have large bear-like and bird tracks (some adventurers may realize this means an owlbear is responsible), while some have no tracks whatsoever. The locals have limited skill in tracking and are unable to follow the prints back to their source. Attacks continue to occur while the heroes are on the job, and eventually they can follow a trail from one attack until they reach the creature's lair, which is an overgrown section of the forest.

The owlbear is a pet of an evil druid, who is accompanied by a couple of evil rangers and several guardian and sentry animals. The druid is orchestrating the attacks to punish settlers for destroying the forest. He can be convinced to stop the attacks if the villagers agree to use methods that are more friendly to the wilderness.

Character hooks

Reward: A local noble, mayor, or other leader learns of the attacks and offers a reward for whoever destroys the creature and ends the attacks (this is the default hook assumed for this scenario).

Investigation: Church superiors or a druidic society (who may suspect a druid is involved) could assign a nature cleric, druid, or ranger in the group to investigate the attacks and discover who or what is responsible.

Aid: The heroes are going to or returning from an adventure and pass through or near the most recent attack site, finding tracks and possibly a survivor needing aid.

On Commission: A powerful NPC with a guardian owlbear (alternatively, a spellcaster seeking unusual material components) wishes to add to her collection. She hires the PCs to track this rampaging owlbear to its nest and see if there are any eggs or chick-cubs.

Druid of Malar

The first two encounters represent the investigation leading up to the third or main encounter.

A. Homesteaders

This simple wooden home is the residence of a family of seven (a married couple, four children, and the husband's elderly father). In the most recent attack, the door to their home was broken down while all but the old man were out gathering wood or food. The grandfather was killed and partially eaten. The cause of death is several large claw marks and birdlike bites. The creature's tracks have been somewhat covered up (Track DC 17), but although after 100 yards the attempts to cover them end. From this point the trail is normal (Track DC 14). The heroes do not find the more obvious trail unless they miss the first one and try searching a wider area for tracks.

B. The vanishing

After about a mile, the tracks simply stop (the owlbear returned to the druid, who cast *pass without trace* on it, and the two of them returned to their home). The only feature nearby is an outcropping of rock, but the tracks end more than ten yards from it (nothing is unusual about the rock).

This encounter lets the heroes know that the thing they follow is not just a simple animal. They can attempt to follow it magically, or they can wait for another attack to occur. The trail from the next attack or and the one after that don't vanish (the druid needed to prepare other spells that day) and the heroes can track it (Track DC 14) all the way to the druid's grove.

C. Grove (EL 8)

Jorren has used *plant growth* spells to increase the amount of vegetation in the area, creating a dense grove of trees, saplings, and shrubs that conceal his home and are difficult to pass through. From this base, he sends the owlbear out to attack, counting upon the concealment of the grove and the abilities of his allies to keep them from being discovered. If they are attacked, see the general tactics section below.

The thick vegetation created by the *plant growth* spells slows creatures passing through it to a speed of 5 feet (10 feet for Large or larger creatures). Within the grove are several open areas, used by Jorren, his ranger allies, and animal companions (two wolverines, three owls, and six weasels), and the owlbear. Jorren can pass through the tangled vegetation at normal speed because of his druidic woodland stride ability. The wolverines have a few squat tunnels that PCs can crawl through, although they are not easy to notice (Search DC 20). The other animal companions can either fly or are small enough to crawl through the growth unimpeded. The rangers access the open areas by means of elevated stout branches tied together to form 12-inch-wide catwalks, climbing the trees (Climb DC 15) to reach them. Small platforms tied high in the tree trunks overlook the interior open areas and key positions along the outer perimeter of the grove, allowing a stable place to sit, stand, or fight.

The open areas within the grove are either exposed to the sky or partially covered with sparse high branches from the surrounding trees. The ground in these areas is cleared of leaves and debris to prevent unwanted noise. Any fires made are small and built within a circle of damp earth to prevent accidental fires. The druid leaves no tracks (due to his trackless step ability) and the rangers take great care to leave no signs of their travels within 100 yards of the grove. As a result, the only tracks visible are those of animals and the owlbear.

1. OWLBEAR NEST

The owlbear drags its kills to its nest and uses one end as a sleeping area. The PCs may find one fairly fresh corpse of a creature here (typically a deer or one of the slain loggers), although the intelligent residents carry them away before they stink enough to attract too much attention. The owlbear has no treasure of its own.

➤ **Owlbear:** hp 52; see *Monster Manual* page 148.

2. COOKING AREA

The humanoids cook their meals on a small fire in the center of this area. Nearby is a small area of flat stones that keeps a wooden chest from contacting the ground. The chest holds cooking supplies, some dried vegetables and fruit, and some wooden bowls and utensils. A small open barrel stands nearby to collect rainwater.

3. DRUID

Jorren spends about half the day or night in this area, planning attacks or fortifying the grove. Because of his animal companions and the owlbear, he is very difficult to surprise, and the animals alert him (either with physical contact or with noise) when strangers approach.

Jorren, male human Drd6 of Malar: CR 6; Medium-size humanoid; HD 6d8+6; hp 37; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (touch 12, flat-footed 15); Atk +5 melee (1d6/18—20, masterwork scimitar), or +8 ranged (1d4, sling); SA spells; SQ animal companions, nature sense, resist nature's lure, trackless step, wild shape (2/day), woodland stride; AL NE; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +8; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 13, Wis 16, Cha 13.

Skills and Feats: Animal Empathy +8, Concentration +8, Handle Animal +8, Heal +6, Knowledge (nature) +8, Swim +6, Wilderness Lore +10; Dodge, Scribe Scroll, Track, Weapon Focus (sling).

Possessions: +1 leather armor, large wooden shield, masterwork scimitar, sling, 10 masterwork sling bullets, scrolls (3 cure light wounds, 2 pass without trace, 2 barkskin, 2 chill metal, delay poison, warp wood, 2 greater magic fang, neutralize poison, 2 protection from elements, 2 water breathing), potion of blur, wand of cure light wounds (5 charges), 50 gp.

Spells Prepared (5/4/4/3; base DC = 13 + spell level): 0—cure minor wounds, detect poison, know direction, light, mending; 1st—entangle, faerie fire, obscuring mist, summon nature's ally I; 2nd—charm person or animal, summon swarm (2), tree shape; 3rd—cure moderate wounds, poison, summon nature's ally III.

4. ANIMALS

The druid's animal friends make their lair here, and 1d3—1 wolverines, 1d3 owls, and 1d4+1 weasels are present in the vicinity when

the PCs arrive. The wolverines have dug themselves a small den in this area (barely larger than the two of them). The weasels have small tunnels along the far end, and the owls nests in the nearby trees. The animals are loyal to the druid and attack any stranger who enters the area.

➤ **Wolverines (2):** hp 24, 26; *Monster Manual* page 204.

➤ **Owls (3):** hp 4, 4, 6; *Manual* page 199.

➤ **Weasels (6):** hp 2 each; *Monster Manual* page 203.

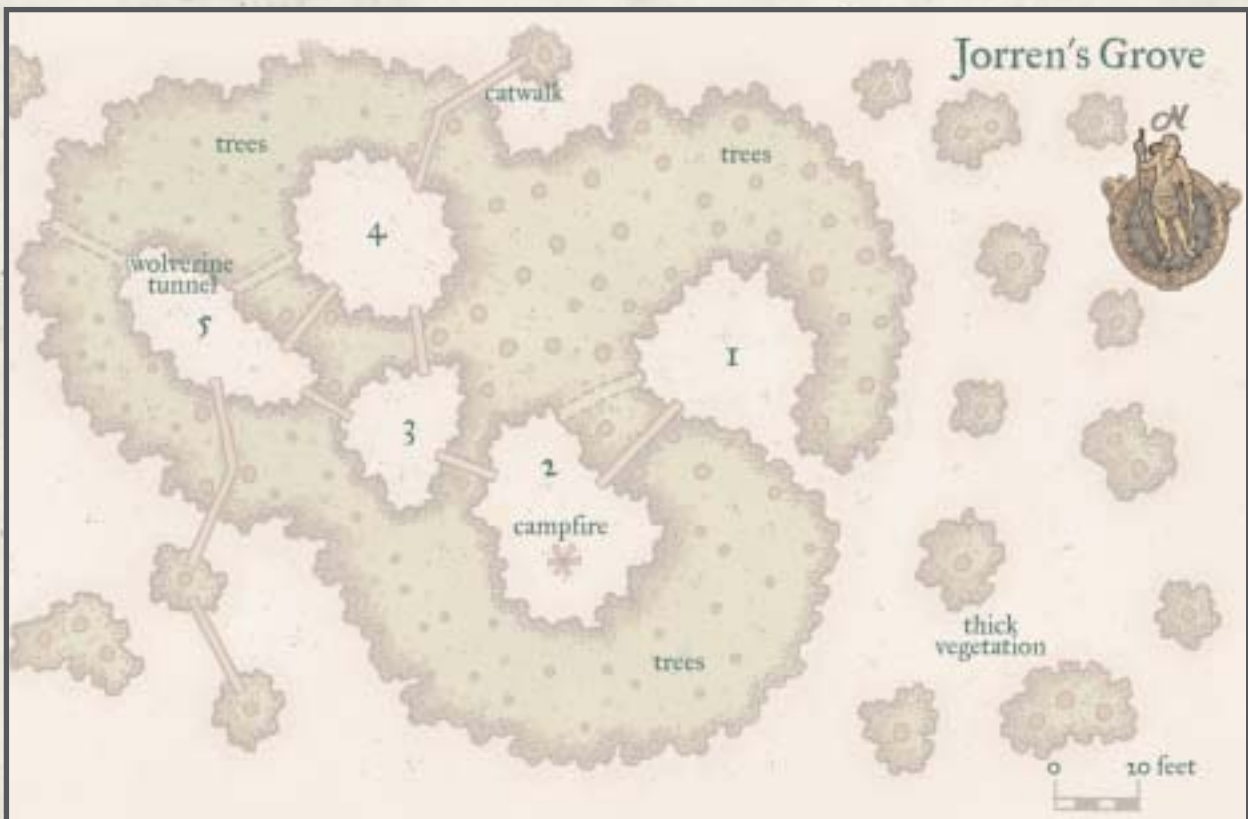
5. RANGERS

The two rangers claim this area as their own. The trees near the walkways have small pegs hammered into them to aid in climbing (Climb DC 12). The rangers stay alert for the signals from the animals and beast, so they are difficult to surprise as well.

Cogol and Harrik, female half-orcs Rgr2: CR 2; Medium-size humanoid; HD 2d10+2; hp 17, 20; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (12 touch, 13 flat-footed); Atk +3/+3 melee (1d8+3/x3, battleaxe) plus 1d6+3/19—20, short sword), or +5 ranged (1d6+2/x3, mighty composite short bow); SQ favored enemy (humans), darkvision; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 16, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 7.

Skills and Feats: Animal Empathy +0, Climb +7, Hide +6, Move Silently +5, Spot +3, Swim +4, Wilderness Lore +5; [Ambidexterity], Track, [Two-Weapon Fighting], Weapon Focus (composite short-bow).

Possessions (each): Masterwork studded leather, battleaxe, short sword, mighty composite short bow (+2 Str bonus), 20 arrows, tanglefoot bag, 2 smokesticks (each tied to a tindertwig), *potion of cure light wounds*.



Tactics

The druid and rangers prefer to defend their home from the catwalks and platforms (30 feet in the air) where they gain one-quarter concealment (10% miss chance). The druid uses his spells and sling against opponents. Since he can pass through the heavy growth at his normal movement rate, he might attack from the ground, springing from the brush long enough to attack, then retreating on his next action. During the combat he calls out that the adventurers must be punished, in a manner similar to those who ignored his pleas to protect the forest. The rangers deploy their tanglefoot bags at opponents, followed by arrow attacks. The wolverines attack anyone the druid specifies, while the owls and weasels are trained to harry spellcasters. The owlbear has to force its way through the thick brush to reach interior areas but attacks as soon as it can. If their lives are in danger, the rangers use their smokesticks to give themselves concealment and try to escape, while the druid uses wild shape to become an owl and fly away (possibly returning later for a retaliatory attack). The animals and owlbear fight to the death or until the druid retreats or calls them off.

conclusions

Should the heroes defeat the owlbear but the rangers and druid escape, it is likely that Jorren and the ladies they join or start a cell of the People of the Black Blood, who cause trouble in the area for a long time to come.

If the humanoids are defeated but the heroes have to retreat from the owlbear, it remains in the area and continues to harass nearby folk until it is disposed of.

If the heroes try to negotiate with Jorren, he is willing to talk. The druid wants what he has wanted all along—for the locals to practice conservation in the forest—although he is cynical about their willingness to do so. His attitude is currently Hostile (see the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide* page 149), and he needs to be influenced to at least Indifferent toward the PCs before he agrees to make peace and to teach the locals how to do better. He refuses to pay compensation for any injuries or deaths he has caused, but he does use his spells to help the community should they abide by his requests. It is likely that eventually he changes his alignment back to neutral.