

Credits

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Introduction

BY MICHELLE A BROWN NEPHEW

Your party has just vanquished the Evil Wizard and looted his mage tower, and now they're all off to the nearest city to cash in their piles of treasure. No! They're NOT there yet! First they have to make their way across the countryside looking much like a travelling buffet to any nasties who take a shining to them ...

That's where this sourcebook comes in. *En Route* is a collection of twenty-one short encounters that GMs can easily insert into longer adventures of their own design, or use as transitions between published modules. It offers a host of obstacles to complicate your PCs' journey, ranging from quick combat scenes to plot-oriented sidelines to mini dungeon crawls. Whatever situation your characters find themselves in, *En Route* is ready with a variety of fully fleshed-out encounters designed to be played at a moment's notice. With *En Route*, you won't be wasting valuable game time searching for monster stats and drawing perfunctory maps; everything you need to run the encounter is included in the text, leaving a minimum of work for the GM to do. And *En Route* even makes finding that perfect encounter or your favorite crunchy bits fast and easy with quick-reference appendices arranged by rules material, encounter location, and Encounter Level.

But can't I just keep using my handy wandering monster table, you ask? No, we reply, and here's why: because after a few months, roaming hordes of goblin warriors get to be routine, and lurking kobolds somehow lose their aura of menace. Lets face it, even the most dense players eventually catch on to the notion that a well-placed spell can charm the viciousness out of

any ravaging beast of the forest. *En Route* goes beyond glorified battles with random monsters; the encounters strive to be innovative concepts that can stand on their own merits, and that can be played in about one hour's time or less. Won't your players be surprised when the "dungeon" they unearthed by the side of the road turns out to be the inside of a crashed alien spaceship; when they stumble upon a camp of goblins attacking each other with handfuls of feathers as a result of the hallucinogenic effects of ergot poisoning; when one of the PCs is possessed by a drunken poltergeist; or when they discover that the local circus is using magic to create its freaks from unwilling patrons. Try to find that on a random encounter chart!

And despite the compactness of its encounters, *En Route* doesn't filch on providing new rules material for GMs to scavenge for their own adventures. *En Route* features new magic items and artifacts like *fairy gold* and the *spirit mine*; poisons and potions from ergot to *liquid sunshine*; weapons both magical and mundane, some even with extraterrestrial origins; magic traps, monsters, and special abilities like Permanent Invisibility, Rebirth, Engulfing Slam, Poltergeist, and Drunk; new rules for dealing with a shaken faith; and a bevy of NPCs ready to enthrall your players on short notice.

So once your characters have scoured the dungeon, looted the dragon's horde, and lived to tell the tale of their brave deeds, crack open your copy of *En Route* to give them a rude awakening. Even more fortune and glory await ... but they have to get there first!

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All That Glitters

BY MICHELLE NEPHEW • ILLUSTRATED BY HELENA WICKBERG

Encounter Level: 3

Setting: Forest

Summary: The PCs come across a tree with leaves of gold and fruit made of gems. When they come too close, they are compelled to battle with each other, as the mischievous forest gnome responsible for the illusion laughs at them from the boughs of the now quite mundane tree.

Phase One

As the characters make their way down the forest path on their way to the next village, they hear a faint “tinkling” sound. It’s as if a hundred wind chimes were stirred by the same breeze.

As they walk further, the sound grows louder, and a Listen check DC12 can determine that it is coming from a dense spot in the woods about 100 feet off of the path to the left.

If the PCs investigate, they find the dense underbrush soon thins into a cleared glade, with a single tree situated prominently in the center of the open space. This tree, however, is quite a sight to behold. The tree itself is about 20 feet tall and has branches stretching out about 8 feet from the trunk. The trunk and branches are made of ebony, and the leaves they bear glint pure gold in the sunlight, chiming as they brush against each other in the light wind. A multitude of deep red fruit dangles enticingly from the boughs of the tree, and the characters can see that each one harbors the familiar sparkle found only in the heart of a flawless ruby.

The tree is actually a *minor image* illusion. If a character touches the tree or otherwise interacts with it, he gets a Will save DC 15. A successful save lets the subject ignore the effect, revealing a very ordinary oak tree beneath the figment.

On one of the lowest boughs — about 10 feet above the ground — lounges a hugely grinning forest gnome. The gnome is a bit under 2 1/2 feet tall, with

gray-green skin, dark hair, and green eyes, and is wearing a simple but finely-made commoner’s costume decorated with intricate stitching.

A Wilderness Lore roll DC 10 can identify the creature more specifically as a forest gnome; this is a shy and elusive race known for its tendency to avoid contact with other peoples unless their forest homes are in danger.

This particular forest gnome, however, considers heavily-armed barbarians and fighters tramping about near his burrow to be a definite danger, and is intent on teaching these intruders a lesson. If the PCs see through the illusion before getting within range for the second part of the trap (described below), he’ll talk ingratiatingly to them about what clever adventurers they are to see through his meager magics, and ask them questions about themselves and their journey until they get within 15 feet of the tree.

If the PCs don’t interact with the tree or fail the Will save, they aren’t able to see the gnome hidden behind the illusion in the mundane tree and the figment persists until two rounds after the caster (the gnome, whose name is Dimfoodle) becomes distracted and loses his concentration. This is likely to happen when the next stage of his trap is put into action ...

Phase Two

When the characters get within 15 feet of the tree, Dimfoodle uses his *ring of rage* to compel the PCs to fight with each other, while he remains safely in his tree.

When the characters start to attack each other, the gnome quickly progresses from his silent giggling to a stifled chortling, and finally isn’t able to contain his mirth any longer — he falls out of the tree when his belly-laugh overtake him. This means his illusion of the golden tree is broken, and the characters can now see their tormentor — if they’re not too

busy rough-housing. Dimfoodle takes cover behind the now very unexceptional trunk of the oak tree that is revealed.

When you think your players have done enough damage to each other's characters, or if one of the PCs manages to shake off the effects of the ring and starts to move menacingly toward the gnome, Dimfoodle gets bored (or scared) and makes a break for his burrow, which is about 10 feet behind the tree, and protected by some bramble bushes. When he gets more than 15 feet from the characters, the enchantment is broken — until they come within range again, that is. Unless the party has an abnormally small halfling or gnome among their number, they won't be able to follow the forest gnome underground. This is a good tactic for GMs to use to keep the party from gaining the ring as loot. On the other hand, the PCs might just manage to grab (or brutally slay) Dimfoodle before he can scurry back to his burrow.

In this case, taking the ring by force breaks the spell, but the characters will have to find someone with the Forge Ring feat to enlarge the ring before it will even be able to fit a halfling or gnome PC; there's no way that the ring can be refitted to a Medium-sized character without destroying it.



Dimfoodle, Hidden Trickster

Male Forest Gnome, 3rd-Level Wizard

CR 3; SZ S (humanoid); HD 3d4+12; hp 24; Init +3 (+3 Dex); Spd 20 ft. (x5 Run); AC 14 (+3 Dex, +1 Size); Atk +2 melee (1d4, dagger), or +5 ranged (1d4+3, sling with bullets); SA spells; SQ gnome traits, speak with animals, forest gnome traits; AL CG; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +7 (+2 Iron Will); Str 10, Dex 16, Con 18, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 15.

Skills: Appraise +5, Craft +8, Hide +11 (+15 in woods), Intimidate +4, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (religion) +9, Listen +2, Move Silently +3, Spellcraft +9, Spot +2

Feats: Scribe Scroll, Iron Will, Run

Languages: Dwarven, Elven, Gnome, Goblin, Orc, Sylvan

Gnome Traits (Ex): Low-light vision, +2 bonus to saves vs. illusions, +1 bonus to attack rolls against kobolds and goblinoids, +4 dodge bonus against giants.

Speak with Animals (Sp): Once per day gnomes can use *speak with animals* as a 1st-level druid to speak with a burrowing mammal.

Forest Gnome Traits (Ex): Forest gnomes can move over any kind of terrain without leaving footprints or a scent. Tracking them without using magic is impossible. (As for the spell *pass without trace*.) Also, +1 bonus to attack rolls against kobolds, goblinoids, orcs, and reptilian humanoids.

Spells: (4/3/2*)

0 Level — *daze, flare, light, read magic*

1st Level — *sleep, magic missile, spider climb*

2nd Level — *invisibility, minor image*

*Gnomes can also cast *dancing lights, ghost sounds, and prestidigitation* each once per day as a 1st-level wizard.

Possessions: 2,500 gp in basic gear and household goods (hidden in his burrow); includes a spellbook with all 0-level wizard spells and his memorized 1st- and 2nd-level spells plus *unseen servant, identify, and enlarge*. He has a dagger, sling with 20 bullets, and forest gnome-sized *ring of rage* (5,040 gp) on his person.

NEW MAGIC ITEM:

Ring of Rage

This is a ring made of red gold with a ruby chip mounted into its face. When activated by a command word, the gem glows darkly and the ring causes all living creatures within a 15 foot radius fight each other without noticing any danger they might be in, as in the spell *emotion (rage)*. The enchanted creatures get a +2 morale bonus to Strength and Constitution scores, +1 morale bonus on Will saves, and -1 penalty to AC. The ring does not affect the wearer. The effect lasts until a second command word is spoken, or the ring is removed from the wearer's finger. A Will save DC 16 (not including the morale bonus) negates the effect. The ring can be used once per day.

Caster Level: 7th; **Prerequisites:** Forge Ring, *emotion*; **Market Price:** 5,040 gp