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Cartography by Diesel

“One Winter’s Night” is an AD&D® SideTrek adventure designed for a party of 4–6 characters of levels 1–2 (about 8 total levels). The adventure takes place as the PCs are either returning to or leaving from a stronghold or small town. The adventure occurs during a winter storm and can be dropped into any campaign set in a northern wilderness during harsh winter. The PCs must be equipped for cold weather traveling. A copy of *Aurora’s Whole Realms Catalog* provides several ideas for such equipment. A generous DM might provide the PCs with the rudimentary items. It is also recommended that the PCs have horses.

Adventure Background

The Tiernach Forest is a desolate land of dark, endless pine trees and thick marshes. The forest sits on the northern edge of a temperate zone. Few people reside outside of the northern villages, clinging to urban life. Packed earthen roads link these small communities, but travel upon them is rare especially in the fall and winter. Those who dwell outside the communities are a tough breed of hunters and loggers for whom hardship is a fact of everyday life. Goblins also inhabit the Tiernach Forest. Swift raiders mounted on wolves, they hunt and raid to survive. In the eyes of most villagers, to be caught outside the walled northern towns when the goblins are “on the warpath” spells certain death!

Beginning the Adventure

The town of Jonfinn is provided as a starting point for the adventure but can easily be changed to fit any campaign world. The party might be returning to Jonfinn from a recent adventure or traveling onward to the next challenge. Through no one’s fault, the PCs have gotten a late start on the day’s travel. During the winter months, the sun sets early, and the temperature drops quickly. If any PC has the weather sense proficiency, that PC senses that it will snow

heavily by nightfall (no proficiency roll necessary). The PCs must hurry to find shelter for the night.

As it nears dusk, the PCs hear something crashing through the pine forest. Between the trees, the PCs see a black steed and a rider. The PCs should roll initiative as the rider and mount break from the forest and ride past them. The steed is a large black mule, and riding it bareback at breakneck speed is a blonde boy. The wild-eyed rider is dressed in a woolen shirt, buckskin pants, leather boots, and a tattered cloak. His only weapon is a large hunting knife. The mule is lathered, and its breath is a cloud of steam. As the mule reaches the path, it stumbles in the snow and throws the rider. The boy hits the snow hard with a grunt.

Emory Fitzgrey: AL LG; AC 10; MV 12; 0-level; hp 4; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type (1d4 with hunting knife); S 12, D 14, C 12, I 10, W 9, Ch 11; ML 15; knife, tinder kit, whetstone, ceramic bird whistle, 5 cp.

Mule: AL N; AC 7; MV 12; HD 3; hp 15; THAC0 17; #AT 1 or 2; Dmg 1–2/1–6; SZ M; ML 5; MM/194.

Emory is shaken but unhurt from his fall. He looks about 13 years old and stands just over 5 feet tall. He has a skinny, haunted look about him. His hands show that he is used to hard physical work.

Emory urgently explains to the PCs that he must hurry back to Jonfinn to get help. He was cutting wood with his uncle at a deadfall of trees about two miles back in the forest. A trunk split at an odd angle and fell upon his uncle, trapping him beneath its weight. Near the deadfall, they had sighted the tracks of wolves and goblins, which is even greater cause for concern.

Plan of Attack

Around the time the PCs encounter Emory, it begins snowing. If the PCs agree to help the lad, they enter the forest with about three hours before the sun sets. The snow, combined with the shadows underneath the pine trees, creates a dull

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haze. Most of the pine trees have few if any branches under the 8' mark. Even though the trees have grown close together, snow does reach the forest floor in large amounts. The snow and the bed of pine needles make travel almost silent. Branches overhead block much of the wind.

The PCs can ride through the forest on horses without any penalties to movement. With Emory on his mule, it takes the group about 30 minutes to locate the trapped woodcutter. Should the party leave the horses behind and walk, it takes them over one hour to navigate the dense forest to find the trapped man. PCs with tracking skills realize that, at the current rate of snowfall, the party's tracks will be obliterated within an hour, making it nearly impossible to retrace the party's steps. Marking trees would prove helpful.

Emory leads the PCs to his uncle by the fastest route. The trail ends amid a deadfall of twisted and toppled trees. (Emory explains that a summer storm ripped through this part of the forest and downed this small cluster of fir trees.)

The old man has been pinned under a huge fir tree with a split trunk. He has been trapped on his back with both legs under the tree. Although he is conscious, he's in a great deal of pain and lapses into periods of unconsciousness. He thanks the PCs upon their arrival and reminds them of the danger, both from the elements and the goblins. "I heard 'em drummin' and howlin' a while back. They're gonna tear through here like wildfire. If you can't yank me free, take the boy an' head for the fort!"

Uncle Gearad Fitzgrey: AL LG; AC 10; MV 12 (0 while trapped, 6 until healed and rested); R8; hp 44 (29 currently); THAC0 12; #AT 2; Dmg by weapon type; SA attack with two weapons; S 14, D 14, C 15, I 14, W 15, Ch 16; ML 17; axe, hunting knife.

Gearad wears a thick quilted shirt and heavy woolen pants. He's a stocky fellow with salt and pepper

hair, a short bushy beard, and bushy eyebrows. The PCs could guess his age at around 50 years. Gearad's nearest weapon, a hunting knife, is strapped to his belt (which is trapped under the tree). Nearby lies his equipment including: a drag sled half-filled with cut timber, 150 feet of hemp rope, a 20' square sailcloth tarp, leather saddle bags, a two-person rip saw, two iron wedges, a rough wool blanket, two shovels, a 10-lb. sledgehammer, a clay jar of grease, 10 torches wrapped in a bundle, a tinder kit, two large axes, three hand axes (hatchets), one cording mallet, two woolen coats, four pairs of leather gloves, a sharpening stone, three loaves of bread, and a yew long bow tied to a quiver of 20 flight arrows.

Freeing Uncle Gearad

Getting Gearad out from under the tree is difficult. The tree weighs about 850 lbs. and is roughly 75' long. The PCs can attempt to lift the tree, lifting up to their combined maximum press (*PHB/14*). Each lever adds 50 lbs. to the total maximum press.

- ❖ The mule can be used to help lift the tree with ropes and pulleys, up to 500 lbs.

- ❖ Horses can lift 340–520 lbs. depending on the breed and size (see *MM/194*).

- ❖ Cutting the limbs off the tree decreases the weight by 200 lbs, and cutting off sections of the tree reduces the load by 75–200 lbs.

- ❖ Digging around Uncle Gearad and rocking the tree requires a 600-lb. lift.

- ❖ A *levitate* spell reduces the burden by 100 lbs. per level of the caster. Cutting directly to Gearad is dangerous but could be attempted. The PCs might have other ideas.

Ultimately, the DM decides how well creative methods work to free the trapped woodcutter. Moving or shifting the tree might damage Gearad further. Regardless of the method used to free him, the woodcutter sustains 1d8 hp damage, but subtract 1 from the roll for every 200 lbs. of counterweight or "lift" applied to free him.

On the Warpath

As soon as the PCs start to work on freeing Gearad, they hear the distant drums of the goblins and the howls of their wolfen allies. A look of concern crosses Emory's face, and the PCs must work fast to free Gearad. The DM should keep a rough track of time. About one hour after nightfall, the howls stop. A half hour later, the PCs are ambushed by the goblin raiders. Once Gearad is freed, the party might choose to head for the nearby town or return to the Fitzgrey compound. If the goblins fail to attack the PCs while they are freeing Gearad, they follow the party's trail and attack the party en route to their destination. There are two goblins astride each worg, 14 total. They fire one arrow per round but suffer no penalties for mounted missile fire. Worgs without riders attack until they lose 10 hp or more, then flee. The goblins and worgs have no problem attacking the party's horses and mules. Due to their chanting, the goblins have a higher morale than normal; however, they retreat if seven or more of them are slain.

Goblins (14): INT average; AL LE; AC 6; MV 6; HD 1–1; hp 5 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (flight arrow or short sword); SZ S; ML 13; XP 35; *MM/163*; buckskin leather armor, short composite bow, short sword, 1d8 cp each.

Worgs (7): INT low; AL NE; AC 6; MV 18; HD 3+3; hp 18 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 2d4; SZ M; ML 11; XP 120; *MM/362*.

Concluding the Adventure

Upon the safe return of Gearad and Emory, the party discovers a secret. Gearad Fitzgrey was once the Royal Huntsman and Scout for the local king or lord. As a reward for the party's heroism, Gearad gives each PC a letter of introduction to his former regent. This could serve as a springboard for future adventures or help the PCs out of a particularly nasty situation in the future. In any event, the PCs will always be welcome at the Fitzgrey compound. Ω