

Introduction

During a walk through town, a man approaches you with a desperate look in his eyes. He tells you he came from an expedition sent to explore some ancient ruins nearby. Several groups of explorers entered the ruins and never returned, and now they are seeking capable adventurers to help investigate. He offers you each 500 gold if you can confirm the fate of the previous groups and remove any threats that might be within the ruins.

With the promise of gold, and of course the desire to help in this dangerous situation, you accept the man's offer. You prepare your supplies and set off to find the expedition base camp.

(introduce characters)

Traveling through the Forest: Exploration, Combat Encounters

The map you received from the man in town leads you to a barely discernible trail near the entrance of a nearby forest. Having left at dawn, you should be able to follow this trail and arrive at the base camp by night. The trees in the forest are dense, but enough light peeks through the leaves to light your path. The dappled sunlight, the crisp air, and the crunch of leaves and branches beneath your feet set the tone for an uneventful, perhaps even pleasant, hike through the woods.

Roleplay Prompt: what are you talking about, what are you doing?

You continue along the path until you reach a particularly dense patch of forest. The trees blot out the sun, and between the darkness and the thick brush on the ground, it's impossible to see the trail. Looking at the map, you can estimate the general direction of the camp, but it seems to lead through thicker, darker layers of forest. You also notice sunlight from another direction that may indicate a clearing in the trees, where it may be easier to see where to go.

Exploration Prompt: which way do you go?

If the players choose option 1: All players roll survival check, DC10. If any fail, add 1d6 hours to travel time.

The trees and brush grow thicker as you proceed, and you draw your weapons to cut a path. You have now completely lost the trail, and can hardly see more than a few inches in front of you. As you chop your way through, you begin to notice different colored mushrooms crunching beneath your feet.

Players may roll a nature ability check. 10 or higher will identify the green mushrooms as poison, but not the others. 15 or higher will identify the effects of all three.

Green Mushrooms - roll constitution check.

- 1-10 take 5 poison damage and player is poisoned
- 10-15 take 5 poison damage
- 16 or higher no effect

Red Mushrooms - gain 5 temporary hit points. You may not gain more than 10 temporary hit points through this method.

Purple Mushrooms - recover 1d4 spell slots, in any combination. Roll constitution check DC

- 1-5 take 2d10 poison damage, you fall asleep, and you do not gain spell slots
- 6-10 take 2d10 poison damage and you fall asleep
- 11-15 take 2d10 poison damage
- 16-19 take 1d10 poison damage
- 20 no effect

The players may choose to collect the mushrooms. They may gather any combination of 1d10 mushrooms before needing to move on.

You proceed a little further through the brush and eventually rejoin the trail, which appears to have wrapped around the thicker area of the forest.

If the players choose option 2: *you push through the brush for a short distance into a small clearing, where see the trail begin again. In this clearing, you also see a large stone object that appears to be a statue of a human. The statue has the likeness of the town guards, wearing armor and a spear. Around its neck is a crystal amulet tied with a leather string.*

The players may take the amulet, which has no effect at this time. Later, when they encounter live stone guards in the ruins, the amulet will allow them to control up to two guards.

After completing option 1 or 2:

As the sun starts to go down and the speckles of light through the trees turn gold, you begin hearing more than just the crunch beneath your own feet. You can't see them, but you can hear the noise of other forest creatures scuttling through the leaves in short bursts. Some sound far away, others seem almost within inches of the trail. Eventually, you find yourself entering a large clearing in the trees.

Combat: Blights

Have all players roll perception against 10 difficulty. Passive perception over 15 automatically succeeds. Failure grants surprise to enemies.

Having slain the blights, you pause for a moment to catch your breath. The sun has set, leaving you in near total darkness. You can no longer see the trail, and can just barely make out the treelines surrounding the clearing.

Exploration Prompt: light source

Ask the players how they would like to proceed in the darkness. If they choose to proceed without a light source or some other solution, have them roll 1d6, the results being the number of hours they are delayed from arriving at camp. You may role play the impact of this delay in any way you choose. For example, perhaps one of the potions of healing the characters were going to receive was used while waiting for the players to arrive.

Expedition Base Camp: Social Encounter

The expedition camp is located in a clearing right at the entrance of the ruins. It is brightly lit by a large bonfire located in the center of four tents, which form a semi-circle around it. You make out the figures of three people milling about the camp, who stop and stare as you emerge from the forest trail.

Social: Meeting the expedition team

Ron will greet the players and answer any questions he can. He will also provide 2 potions of healing to each player. The players may choose to speak to the other NPCs, and when all interactions are finished they take a long rest.

NPC: Ron Mundkrub

Human, use Bandit stat block

Appearance: about 55 years old, slightly below average height and thin build. He has a bald head surrounded by long, stringy gray hair that goes to his neck. He is dressed in leather armor that has seen better days.

The players will recognize Ron as the man that approached them in town. He will act friendly and appreciative toward the players, but if they ask too many questions he will try to direct the conversation back to the task at hand.

NPC: Mukrad Stormbraid

Human, use Bandit stat block

Appearance: about 35 years old, tall and athletic build. He has dark hair covered with a bandana and a chin strap beard. He wears leather armor with several daggers sheathed on his leg.

Mukrad is a man of few words and is here to do a job. He will try to be professional and avoid being rude while also directing most questions to Ron.

NPC: Dorpos Whistlecrag

Gnome, use Bandit stat block

Appearance: about 40 years old, average gnome height and build. He has messy brown hair covered by a cap, and is usually seen smoking a pipe. He wears leather armor tailored for a gnome.

Dorpos is a bit chatty and will do his best to answer questions, although he does not know much about the expedition or the ruins. Or anything, really.

Navigating the Ruins: Exploration, Combat Encounters

The entrance to the ruins covers a large stone stairway that descends underground. The stone has been covered in moss and lichen and the stairs have been partially eroded from centuries of exposure to the elements. You can see unlit lanterns lining the walls surrounding the stairs and into the initial corridor, but it appears to be total darkness below.

At the bottom of the stairs is a long corridor that leads to a large door. Along each side of the corridor is a line of stone statues. (the statues are identical to the one found in the forest, if the players did not find the statue use the same description) The floor is made of stone tiles that form a walkway to a door.

Exploration: Trap tile

If players walk on a trap tile, it will trigger an optional combat encounter. Players may identify the tile with a DC 10 perception or investigation check and disable with DC 15 tools check. They may attempt to jump over the tile with a DC 10 athletics or acrobatics check.

Combat (optional): Guards

Two will attack for each row of trap tiles that are activated. If the players have the amulet from the forest, only two total guards will activate and they players may issue commands. The guards do not speak but they will obey verbal commands to move or attack.

Exploration: Ball Puzzle

You enter the door and see a long hallway that slopes downward toward another large door. Down the slope are two prominent grooves in the floor that lead to corresponding circular tiles. Interrupting the grooves are large pits that are too deep to see the bottom. To your right and left you see several corridors leading to other areas of the hall.

In order to open the door at the end of the hall, there needs to be sufficient weight on the two tiles next to it. This can be achieved by rolling stone balls down the hallway onto the tiles.

The balls are located in the nearest paths to the hallway, following the course of the grooves. At the end of each path is a switch on the wall. Pressing the switch will open a door in the ceiling and drop the stone ball. If a player is standing under the ball, they must make a DC 10 dexterity saving throw. On failed save, they take 3d10 bludgeoning damage and are knocked unconscious. There is no limit to the amount of balls that can be dropped.

After dropping from the ceiling, the ball will follow the path of the grooves until it reaches the tile and settles. If one of the pits is in the path of the groove, the ball will fall down the pit. To get the ball on the switch, the pits will need to be closed.

The switches for the pits are at the end of the furthest hallways. At the end of each hallway is a wall switch. Pushing the switch will close a pit, however the button must stay pressed for the pit to stay closed. This will require one player to hold the button, or find some other means to do so.

The Trap is Sprung: Combat Encounter

The door opens and your eyes are immediately filled with glittering light. As your vision adjusts, you see it's the reflection from a massive hoard of treasure. Gold in coins, bars, and statues, dozens of precious gems, fine jewelry and textiles, all enough to make someone rich many times over.

Roleplay Prompt: what are you doing with the treasure? what about the missing explorers?

As you turn to leave, you hear a terrible shrieking sound. Blocking your exit is a giant Owlbear, with Ron mounted and riding it. Mukrad and Dorpos stand beside him, with their crossbows aimed directly at you.

Combat: Owlbear

The Owlbear wears a crown that Ron uses to control it. The crown has 10 HP and AC 14. It is a small object and is difficult to target, but it is possible to remove by other means at DM discretion.

If the crown is destroyed or removed, the Owlbear will locate Ron and attack him. If Ron is incapacitated or killed, it will continue to attack the players.

Combat: The "Expedition" Crew

There was no expedition. Ron hired the adventurers to find the treasure, then dispose of them after securing it. They will attempt to attack the players with ranged attacks until the Owlbear is freed from its control or otherwise incapacitated, at which point they will attempt to run.

Ending

Let the players decide what to do with the treasure. The findings should be the legal property of the town government, but they may decide to take it for themselves.