

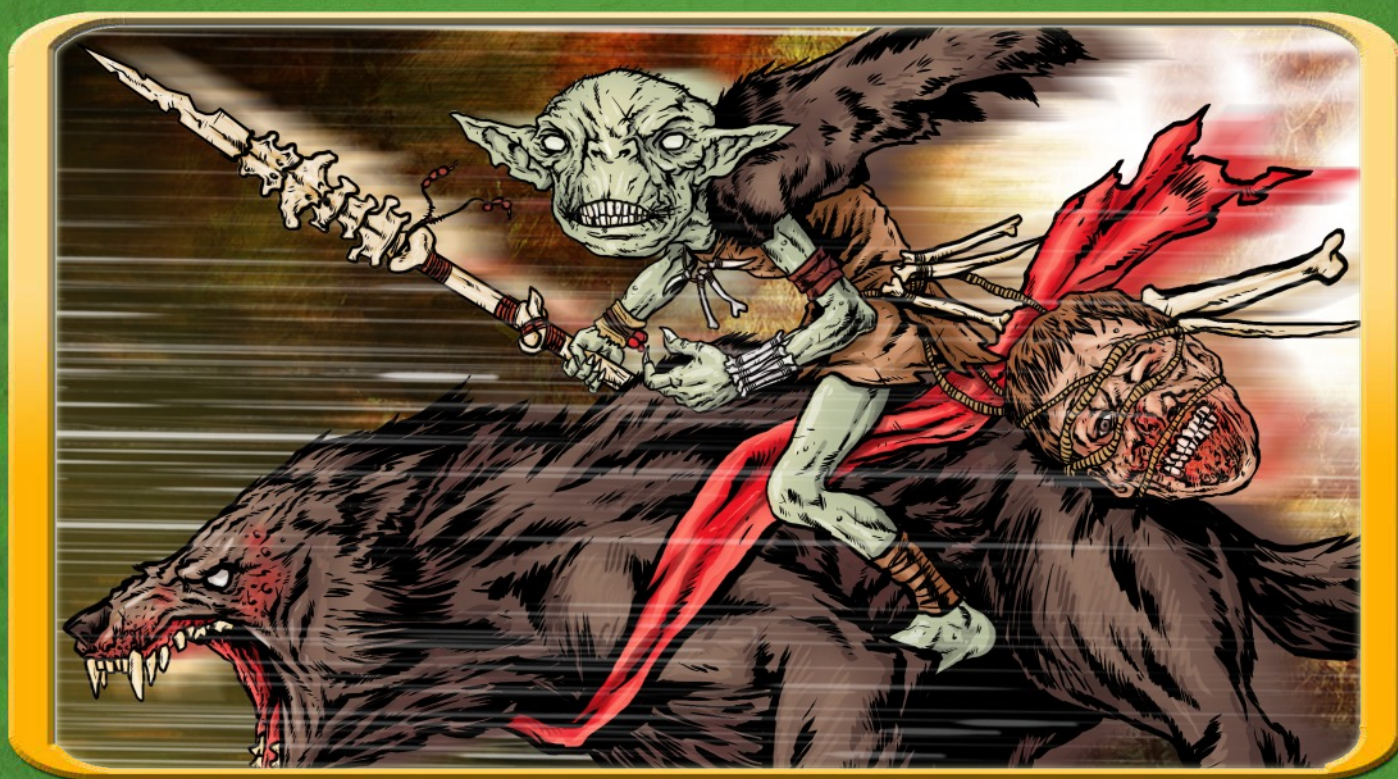
WB1

Wor Briefs

Tales from the world of Alia-Wor

Gobs o' Trouble!

A short adventure for a party of low-level characters.

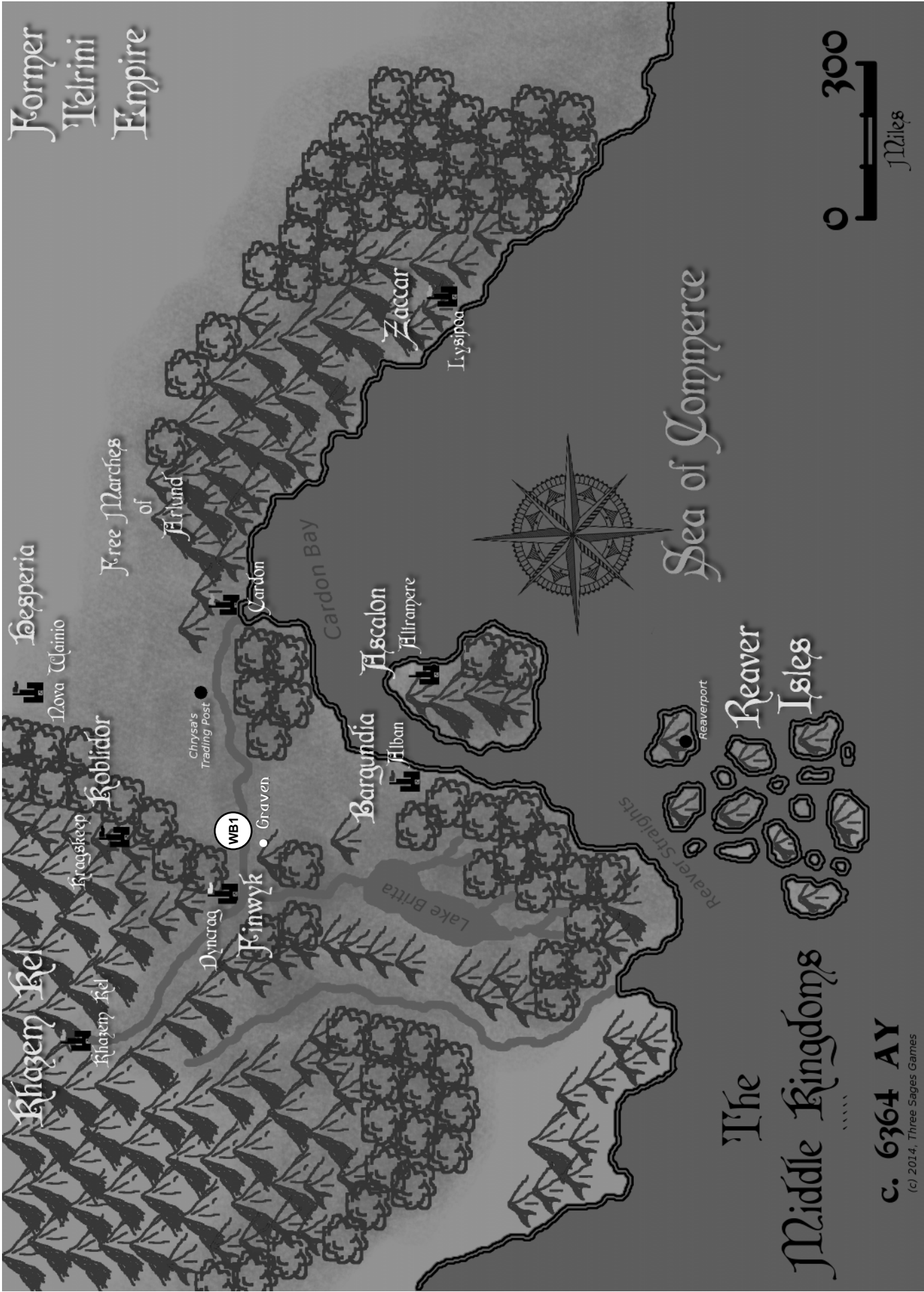


A chance encounter along the road turns out to have a more nefarious story behind it than at first meets the eye...

Wor Story Briefs™ are designed to be short adventures or encounters that can be dropped into an existing campaign or storyline without a lot of hassle. They are suitable as one-off adventures, or as catalysts to other adventures.

Are you up to the challenge?

For use with the *Swords & Wizardry*™ rules system



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Empire

Besperia
Zova Qainio

Free Marches
of
Ertund

Fragskeep
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Khazem Kel
Khazem Kel

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Trading Post

WB1

Dyncrag

Jsinwyk

Graven

Bargundia

Alban

Ascalon

Hlrampere

Zaccar

Lysipoo

Cardon
Bay

Lake Britta

Sea of Commerce

Reaver
Isles

The
Middle Kingdoms

300
Miles

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Wor Briefs

Gobs o' Trouble!

Swords & Wizardry
edition



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Welcome to *Wor Story Briefs!*

One of the things we've run into as gamers is the need for "filler" adventures... Side quests and other things to keep players and characters busy in between the big things, or traveling from point A to point B. Wandering Encounter tables are all well and good, but require the Referee to either be very prepared, or stop the game and roll dice for monsters and treasure. Even then, there's sometimes no real rationale for the appearance of... say... a bunch of goblins.

We conceived of "Wor Briefs" as a means to address that ~ both for ourselves as gamers, and our fans, who might have similar thoughts. This Brief is the first such short adventure: A sort of mini-adventure that can be used to fill space, or be completed if the gaming group only has a limited amount of time (such as at a gaming convention).

"Gobs o' Trouble!" is technically designed to plug into a campaign that's started in the region of Gravenshire in the Middle Kingdoms of Alia-Wor, but there's no reason it couldn't be placed elsewhere. Or that the hobgoblins can't just be bigger, meaner goblins. Or any number of things. In fact, while it was written to follow WSI "The Beast that Waits", it could go before, or not even be a part of the bigger picture. As is always our philosophy, this is your game... Do what you want with it.

And above all, enjoy your gaming!

—Curtis Lyon
Creative Director
Three Sages Games



How To Use This Adventure

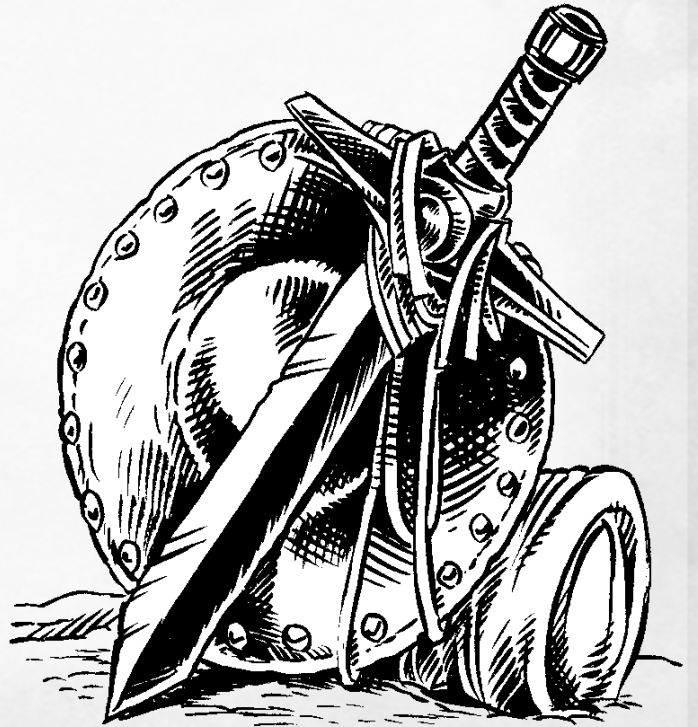
"Gobs o' Trouble" is a short adventure designed for a party of about four 3rd-level characters. For weaker or stronger groups, the encounters should be scaled accordingly (Tips for scaling the adventure can be found on page 7).

The adventure starts on a road in a wooded and slightly hilly area. It can easily be inserted into any locale fitting that description, or slightly modified (for terrain) to fit anywhere else the Referee might need it.

This adventure can be used as a stand-alone adventure or a filler adventure for an existing campaign. It also makes a good follow up adventure for "The Beast That Waits", since it works well for characters leaving Gravenshire and on the road to... wherever it is they're going.

The "default" location for this adventure is at a fork on the Trade Road that runs east about three or four days' travel to Dyncrag (the capitol of the kingdom of Finwyk) and west about five weeks' travel to Cardon (a major port city serving the kingdom of Ascalon). To the south, maybe two or three days' travel, is the village of Graven (the baronial seat of Gravenshire). More information about Graven can be found in "The Beast That Waits".

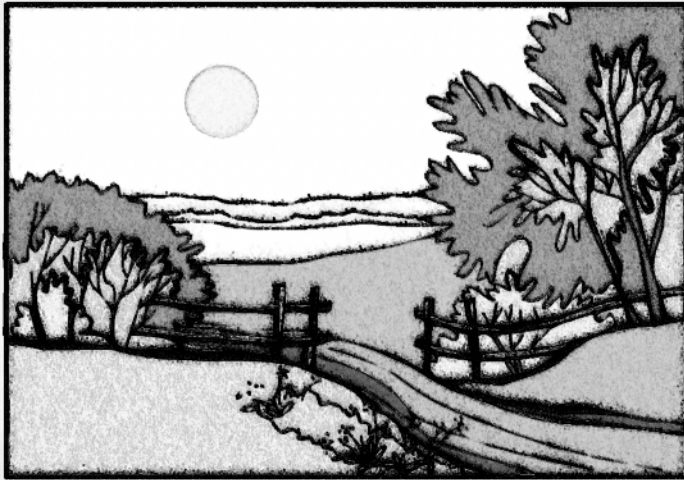
Questions or comments can be directed to
Heidi@ThreeSagesGames.com.



P.M.



Refugees on the Road



The characters are following the road while traveling on their own business. Although this highway is usually pretty well traveled, it's been fairly quiet... At least until they see a handful of people looking a little worse for the wear near the side of the road.

There are five of them—a man, a woman and three children—resting near a small wheelbarrow with a few meager belongings. The youngest, a boy, looks to be about eight, while the oldest is a girl in her early teens. The man and the other boy (a preteen) look pretty badly wounded. The woman also appears injured, though not as badly, and she carries a pitchfork.

The girl notices the characters first, and says something to the woman, who stands up and calls out, "*Well met, travelers! Do you have any medical supplies?*"

The woman introduces herself as Selma Dunger. The wounded man is her husband, Bergen, and their children (from oldest to youngest) are Avon, Blair (the wounded boy), and Cabell. The characters are free to choose their response (although killing the family out of hand earns the enmity of the gods*... On the other hand, the family hasn't got much to offer, but helping the family without asking a reward earns each character 300 XP).

Selma can explain their plight: The Dungers have—well, *had*—a farm a few miles off the main road, to the north. Last night, Goblins suddenly emerged from the surrounding woods and attacked without warning. Bergen managed to kill a couple with a hand ax, but was badly injured in the process... Blair was hurt when he tried to save his father. Avon fetched the wheelbarrow, and Selma managed to hold off the Goblins with her pitchfork until they could get Blair onto it and flee. As a result, the family had to leave almost everything else behind, but fortunately the Goblins didn't pursue them.

Blair really just needs to be bandaged up, as he's only down about a Hit Point. Bergen, on the other hand, is in pretty bad shape, hovering in and out of consciousness, with no Hit Points remaining.

**If you have "Gods of War - The Middle Kingdoms", the most offended deities would likely be Cuthan, Mathus, Messinia, Mitra, and Shendor.*

Selma and Bergen Dunger (2 Human Farmers): HD 1d6 (hp 4), AC 9 [10], Atk 1 pitchfork (1d3), Move 12, Save 18, AL N, CL/XP: B/10, Special: Selma currently has 6 hp; Bergen has 0 hp remaining and is on the edge of death; only Selma has a pitchfork.

The Dungers technically live on a freehold, and owe no fealty to anyone in particular, although the land belongs to the kingdom of Finwyk. Both are pushing about 30 years old (Bergen is a couple years older than Selma), and normally in pretty good health. Selma is pretty in a homey sort of way, with a mane of thick, brown hair, while Bergen has rugged looks and scruffy, blond hair.

Avon, Blair, and Cabell Dunger (3 Human Children): HD 1d4 (hp 2), AC 9 [10], Atk 1 stick or stone (1d2), Move 12, Save 18, AL N, CL/XP: A/5, Special: Blair has 1 hp remaining, the children need to gather improvised weapons to fight.

The children have inherited bits and pieces of their parents' looks. Avon and Blair both have their father's blond hair, but only Avon has her mother's darker complexion. Avon is quiet, but feisty, Blair is brave and hot-headed, and Cabell is shy and introspective.

All of the Dungers will be grateful to the characters if given assistance, and can be counted on as good friends—they'd even be willing to put the characters up for an indefinite period of time, if necessary. None of them would make good hirelings right now, although the children (particularly Avon and Blair) may develop a case of hero worship and go on to become adventurers later on, depending on how the adventurers act around them.

Currently, the family has little in the way of wealth (particularly if the adventurers are asking for pay)... Between them, they currently have the pitchfork Selma is carrying, the wheelbarrow, 2 small woolen blankets, an iron pot, a bronze lamp (with no oil), a flint and steel, a small sack (containing about 2 days' worth of food for the family), some miscellaneous extra clothing (5 GP worth), and a leather purse (containing 10 CP, 3 SP, 1 GP, and 1 small opal worth 10 GP). Selma also has an enamel locket worth 25 GP. If pressed, Selma offers the locket as payment (currently she plans to use it to buy some food when they get wherever they're going).

If the characters don't want to help the Dungers with their plight (or just go deal with some Goblins), the adventure is over, and the characters continue on with their journey. The Dungers travel toward either Dyncrag, which would be safer, or Graven, if the south road has been cleared (see "The Beast That Waits" for more information), since it's slightly closer. Oh... And then a minor Hobgoblin invasion begins.

If the characters choose to help, go on to...

Goblins on the Farm



Following Selma's directions, it's easy enough to find the Dunger farmstead, where the characters find about a dozen Goblins celebrating their conquest.

The bad news (for the Dungers) is that they're Goblins, and tend to be destructive of anything they get their hands on; the good news is they've so far only managed to smash up some furniture to make a big fire, bust open a couple kegs of the Dungers' alcohol, and begin roasting one of the goats... Most of the rest of the farm is still intact, relatively speaking (Goblins aren't particular about what they use as a restroom).

There are a total of 12 Goblins, along with their "Big Goblin" (leader), Zog. Most of the Goblins are busy being drunk and rowdy, although Zog has two sentries positioned near the northwest of the house to keep an eye out for Hobgoblins... Zog knows the humans can't bring reinforcements back for nearly a week, so he's not too worried about the south right now.



Zog (Big Goblin): HD 1 (hp 5), AC 5 [14], Atk 1 Battle Axe (1d8+1), Move 9, Save 18, AL C, CL/XP 1/15, Special: -1 to hit in sunlight, Zog's axe is stolen (and a +1 magical weapon).

Goblins (12): HD 1d6 (hp 3 each), AC 6 [13], Atk 1 Weapon (1d6), Move 9, Save 18, AL C, CL/XP B/10, Special: -1 to hit in sunlight. Most of the Goblins wield Short Swords or Heavy Maces, although 4 of them managed to get away with Bows (with 12 Arrows each).

A good chunk of the Goblins' "treasure" consists of various belongings the Dungers left behind when they fled... 50 GP worth of food and provisions, and another 50 GP worth of goods and gear (largely in the form of farming and cooking implements). It's up to the characters if they want to keep these things or make sure they go back to their rightful owners.

But there's also a few things in the Goblins' possessions that obviously didn't come from the farmers. Chief among them is Zog's +1 battle axe, which looks to have Northern origins, and bears the runic inscription *Lemja* (which roughly translates as "to strike and make lame"). They also have 10 short swords, 2 maces, 4 bows, and 48 arrows (less however many the Goblins manage to fire off in combat). Finally, Zog has a pouch containing some old bones, half of a jerked rat, and a silver ring, set with a malachite carved to resemble an eagle, and the inscription "*For my little Angel*" on the inside of the band (worth 35 GP of its own accord, but possibly worth much more to some people... The crest on the ring belongs to House Bracius, a powerful mercantile family from the city of Cardon).

Smart characters might wonder why the Goblins came to the farm in the first place. While Goblins are known to raid, they don't usually stick around afterward if there might be the threat of reprisal... A Ranger immediately knows the Goblins are acting "odd".

The fact is, Zog and his Goblins are in a similar boat to the Dungers. The night before they struck the Dungers' farmstead, a gate opened up in the middle of their own cave, and a small horde of Hobgoblins spilled out. Zog and his Goblins are the only survivors—they fled early on in the fighting, and didn't stop until they stumbled onto the Dungers' lands.

There are several ways the characters might figure out what's going on (and that there's a bigger threat than a rogue band of Goblins): They can gain the information directly from them if they leave any Goblins alive to interrogate (and can communicate—Zog is the only one of them that speaks the Common tongue, the others only speak Goblin); They can choose to track the Goblins back to their "lair" (which might happen once they realize the Goblins don't have a lot of valuable treasure on hand); They can realize the Goblins aren't behaving like a typical raiding party and decide to investigate further.

Returning the farmstead to the Dungers gives the characters a 500 XP group bonus, however if the Hobgoblins aren't dealt with, there's going to be a minor Hobgoblin invasion in the near future (and the Dungers won't last for long in the face of that).

Assuming the characters decide to follow through, they...

Trek to the Cave



Following the Goblins' trail back to where they used to lair is pretty easy for a Ranger—the trail is only a day or two old (unless the characters have been loitering), so the chance is 70-80%.

If the party doesn't have a Ranger, it might be a little tougher. The cave is only about a day out from the Dungen farm, but it still might take the characters several days of trial and error to locate it. In that case, they stumble upon the wrong cave first, and find a Hydra's lair!

(The Referee can also throw this encounter in if she feels the characters are having too easy a time, or wants to extend the adventure a bit... In which case, treat the Hydra as a wandering monster that must be tracked back to its lair if the characters want its treasure.)

Signs of the Hydra are evident for anyone paying attention: Grass and small trees have been trampled, and the creature's smell is everywhere at its lair.

Hydra (8-Headed): HD 8 (hp 32, 4 per head), AC 5 [14], Atk 8 bites (1d6), Move 9, Save 8, AL N, CL/XP 10/1,400, Special: If all the heads are "killed", the body dies as well.

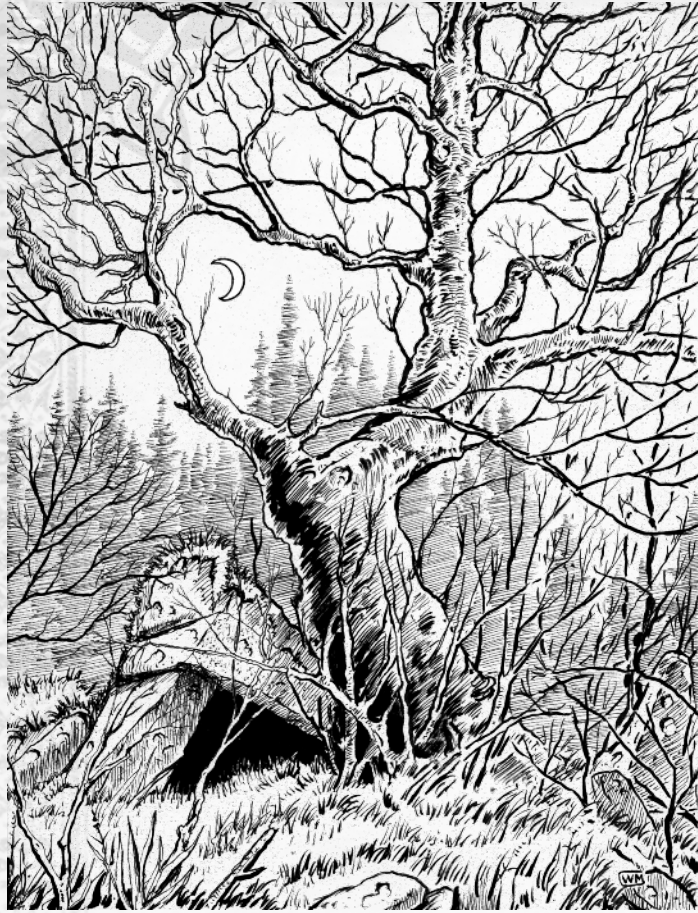
Unlike the hoard of a Dragon, the treasure is simply scattered around the Hydra's lair, mixed in with the remains of its victims (mostly in the form of bones). But a diligent party of characters can find a lot in the debris: Among the remains are 4 wooden chests and a small sack, up to 540 GP worth of weapons and armor, 530 GP worth of other gear and equipment, 180 GP worth of food and provisions, a single silver earring (still worth 125 GP), a leather pouch containing an amethyst (5 GP), a small purple sapphire (50 GP), a large opal (100 GP), and a black opal (1,000 GP), 162 GP, 2,268 SP, 15,120 CP, and a pair of *Gauntlets of Ogre Power*.

Regardless of their side (or mis-) adventures, the characters should eventually arrive at their goal and find...



Jacob E. Blackmon

Hobgoblins in the Cave



The woods thin out near the hills where Zog's Goblins were previously lairing... It's not exactly open ground, so the cave mouth isn't visible from a great distance, but it isn't cloaked in trees and shadows, either. The rotting corpses of a dozen Goblins litter the surrounding area.

Two Hobgoblins stand sentry at the opening, so if the characters want an element of surprise, they'll need to be careful. The moment the Hobgoblins spot the characters, they open fire with their Lighters, and alert their comrades inside. As is always the case with Hobgoblins, they fight without mercy, and they fight to the death.

If the characters make it into the cave before the Hobgoblins are eliminated, they can see the gate in the middle of one of the cave chambers. It thrums with energy, and pulses with a violet-black light. It's also a one-way gate, and anyone trying to jump through it just bounces off and takes 2d6 electrical damage for their trouble.

Hobgoblin War Commander: HD 2+1 (hp 11, AC 4 [15], Atk 1 Ripper or Lighter (1d8+1), Move 9, Save 16, AL C, CL/XP 2/30, Special: If the War Commander is killed, its body and possessions "evaporate" into a yellowish energy that's sucked back into the gate, which collapses... Any surviving Hobgoblins are immediately (and messily) sucked back through the gate as it closes, dissolving into a fine spray of black ichor and electric sparks.

Hobgoblins (8): HD 1+1 (hp 6 each), AC 5 [14], Atk 1 Ripper or Lighter (1d8+1), Move 9, Save 17, AL C, CL/XP 1/15, Special: When a Hobgoblin is killed, its body and possessions "evaporate" into a yellowish energy that's sucked back into the gate. The Hobgoblins defend their War Commander fanatically, and focus all of their attacks on anyone who attacks the War Commander.

With the Hobgoblin War Commander's death, the gate closes, and the surrounding lands are once again safe... For the time being. This feat is worth a bonus of 500 XP for each surviving character.

Most of the Hobgoblins' treasure consists of things left behind by the Goblins. In the back chamber of the caves, 2 barrels and 5 crates hold 90 GP worth of weapons and armor, 100 GP worth of other gear and equipment, 30 GP worth of food and provisions, 30 GP, 414 SP, and 2,760 CP.

There are also human bones littering the chamber, and a wooden cage houses a single prisoner: a battered and bedraggled Human girl. This is Tarina Bracius—the owner of the ring Zog's Goblins had in their possession. Tarina is the only survivor of a caravan that was traveling to Dyncrag on behalf of House Bracius. Right now she's in bad shape, but if cared for and returned to Cardon, House Bracius will reward each character involved with a single boon worth up to 500 GP.

But all of that is fodder for another adventure...



Additional Notes

Goblins in Alia Wor

Myths about Goblin women and children are exactly that: Myths. Goblins don't mate and breed—at least not in the way most people think of it—since they're hermaphrodites and spawn based on necessity. In fact, most Goblin-kin (including Orcs) could be better compared to snails than any mammalian species (like Humans, Elves or Dwarves).

This is one reason why most people find Goblins to be disgusting—when they need to breed, one simply "impales" another with a sort of "pelvic proboscis"... Where doesn't really matter much, though they usually aim for the hips. The first one in becomes the "father"; the other spawns a clutch of new offspring and dies in the process.

This mating practice is also why Half-Orcs, where they exist, are viewed with such revulsion—Orcs breed in the same way, but are capable of using a human facilitator. If the father of a Half-Orc is Human, he's probably a very disturbed (and disturbing) person; if the mother of a Half-Orc is Human, she's probably dead, since she's unlikely to have survived the mating and the birthing. Half-Orcs in Alia-Wor are mules and asexual (meaning they can't breed, or have sex).

The "larval" form of a Goblinoid is smaller than its parent breed, but much more voracious.

Hobgoblins in Alia-Wor

There are a few people, and even whole races (like the Gaugur) who come from worlds and dimensions beyond the physical realm of Alia-Wor. Most, once they arrive, are here for good. In that, Hobgoblins are an exception.

No one knows much about the Hobgoblins. Throughout the history of Wor, they've come through gates into the world—sometimes in small raiding parties; sometimes in huge armies—from someplace else. The only thing known for sure is they don't seem interested in negotiating... They always attack to kill, and fight to the death.

In spite of their name, Hobgoblins aren't related to Goblins (some etymologists attribute the name to a sarcastic extra-dimensional bard who referred to them as "Hobo Goblins"). They're almost as large as Orcs, muscular, and covered with mottled yellow and gray skin that's tough and almost seems to be scaly. They have thick, bristly shocks of black hair, and pupilless red eyes sitting beneath a bony brow ridge.

When killed, they invariably dissipate and seem to be pulled back through the gate from where they originated—generally taking their gear with them.

Hobgoblin Weapons

Hobgoblins wear a sort of leather harness, from which depend their two principal (and perhaps only) weapons: the Ripper and the Lighter.

The Ripper resembles a serrated longsword that curves downward (opposite the curve of a saber or katana). When

it strikes, there's a crackle of "electric" energy that helps cut through... Things. A Ripper counts as a +1 magic weapon—at least until the power runs out (after 20 such strikes)—and weighs 15 lbs.

The Lighter (sometimes called a "Flash Wand") is actually a form of energy carbine. Like a Ripper, the Lighter does 1d8+1 damage, and counts as a +1 magic weapon until the energy crystal is depleted (after 10 shots). A Lighter has a range of 100', and weighs 10 lbs.

Hobgoblins carry extra energy crystals to "reload" their weapons. No one's ever managed to snag one of those, but scholars postulate the Hobgoblin energy crystals are similar to the Mage Crystals found in Alia-Wor, but each one is charged up to the maximum 20 "levels" of spell power. An energy crystal provides enough power to give a Ripper 20 strikes or a Lighter 10 shots.

Since these things all dissolve with the Hobgoblin bodies when they die, it's very difficult to acquire a Ripper or a Lighter... But not impossible. If a character can wrestle the weapons away from the Hobgoblin before it dies, the weapon will remain when the corpse vanishes, along with the energy crystal within—less any charges expended by the Hobgoblin.

Scaling the Adventure

"Gobs o' Trouble" was written with the idea of a party of four 3rd Level Characters, but this is an ideal the Referee may not have at her disposal. So the following suggestions are for making the adventure either easier or tougher in order to accommodate various groups of characters.

The Farmers don't need to be scaled. If the characters attack them, they're going to have other problems, more than likely.

The Goblins and Hobgoblins should be scaled in terms of numbers. Besides the "Bosses", there should be 3 Goblins and 2 Hobgoblins per character.

Add another Goblin per character for every level he has above 3rd, and subtract 1 for every level below 3rd. Add another Hobgoblin per character for every 2 levels he has above 3rd, and subtract one for every 2 levels below 3rd.

Example 1: Against a party of three characters—a 3rd level Fighter, a 2nd level Magic-User, and a 3rd level Thief—Zog should have 8 Goblins, and the War Commander should have 6 Hobgoblins.

Example 2: Against a party of five characters—a 4th level Cleric, a 4th level Fighter, a 3rd level Magic-User, a 3rd Level Ranger, and a 4th level Thief—Zog should have 18 Goblins, and the War Commander should have 10 Hobgoblins.

The Hydra (if used) should have 2 heads per character, calculated just like the Hobgoblins. If it has less than 5 heads, consider ignoring the encounter; if it has more than 12, break it up into 2 Hydras of similar size.

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Gobs o' Trouble!

Journey into the realms of Alia-Wor,
where adventure and mystery await!

Within these covers you'll find 8 pages of adventure, perfect for either a one-off scenario or to drop into an existing campaign as a side quest. Inside you'll find:

- A complete adventure stemming from a single roadside encounter
- A campaign map showing the adventure location in Alia-Wor
- An area map detailing the main adventure locations
- An optional encounter to beef up the adventure if desired
- Notes on how Goblins and Hobgoblins fit in the world of Alia-Wor
- Information on Hobgoblin weapons (the Ripper and the Lighter)
- Tips on scaling the adventure for lower or higher powered parties

Gobs o' Trouble! can be used as is, or molded to fit the Referee's existing campaign. Also, being usable as a short scenario, it's great for convention play, and is an excellent way to introduce players to *Swords & Wizardry* or the *Realms of Wor!*

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