



# THE ACOLYTE SURVIVOR

BY LANDO LAGANNA - VOLOTHAMP GEDDARM'S APPRENTICE

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ADVENTURE PRIMER</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>PART 1: THE WRECKED WAGON</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>NOTES</b>	<b>14</b>
A. Sighting the wagon .....	5	<b>EPILOGUE</b>	<b>15</b>
B. The glade .....	6	<b>APPENDIX A: CREATURE STATISTICS</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>PART 2: ON THE KIDNAPPERS TRAIL</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>APPENDIX B: MAPS</b>	<b>17</b>
A. Following the trail .....	8	<b>APPENDIX C: PROPS</b>	<b>21</b>
B. The ambush .....	9		
<b>PART 3: THE TOWER RUINS</b>	<b>10</b>		
A. The exterior .....	10		
B. The cellar .....	11		
C1. The cave alcove .....	11		
C2. The cave main area .....	12		



# ADVENTURE PRIMER

**W**hile my most honorable Master, Mr. Volothamp Geddam, the highest among the book writers, was struggling finding reliable sources of information about the awful race of the Gnolls, I was resting at the Way Inn along the Trade Way. The day after I would have pursued my way to Daggerford, where Mr. Volo was waiting (impatiently and in front of a cup of wine) my return. I was sitting at my table while having my breakfast when I heard voices from a close group of dwarves about an attack to a caravan perpetrated along the road to the North. I pricked up my ears (yes, elves and half-elves do it too!) And opened up my notebook... — Lando LaGanna's Diaries.

This adventure is designed for 4 to 6 1st-level characters and to be ran in 2-3 hours. The adventure takes place in the Sword Coast, on the Trade Way south of Daggerford, along the trail connecting Daggerford to the Way Inn. As usual, nothing prevent you to just pick an area of your own campaign and transpose events and places to match your specific needs.

The three D&D pillars (Exploration, Social and Combat) are quite balanced, with a slight tendency to exploration and combat. It can be ran as a stand alone adventure even if it is designed to be the first of a series of three that will lead the party to level 3.

Eventually, it can be used to introduce the party to most of the official WoTC campaigns, since I saw lot of DMs struggling starting the official campaigns with level 1 characters. In this way you can give your players the chance to grow their character trough the rank 1 (the most exciting among the ranks, in my opinion) instead to force yourself and them to start the official campaigns directly at 3rd level.

## BACKGROUND

The events recounted in this adventure took place someday in late summer 1491 DR. The Sword Coast and the whole continent of Abeir-Toril were still trying to restart after the extraordinary events of the past years. Several rumors are spreading from the Far North, Neverwinter, Waterdeep and Baldur's Gate. Adventurers, hundreds of caravans, expeditions to the deep South by land and sea, were all indications of great excitement and great events to come. Daggerford and a few others cities were either consolidating or starting their allegiance to the Lords' Alliance.

## OVERVIEW

The adventure begins when the party is on the way to Daggerford or to the Way Inn. The reason why the party is traveling is totally at DM discretion, however, in the following section, some adventure hooks are provided. The DM may want to tailor the hook according to his own campaign or to specific character backgrounds.

The main goal of the adventure is to rescue an acolyte of the Daggerford Church of Lathander that was traveling together with other companions along the Trade Way and whom convoy has been attacked by a pack of wild creatures and humanoids. The trail will lead the party at the foot of the hills close to the Misty Forest and then to investigate a ruined tower at the edges between the hills and the forest itself. The adventure is divided in the following three parts:

- **Part 1 - The Wrecked Wagon:** The party spots a man surrounded by a pack of hyenas while several corps of humanoids lie to the ground. The man is the only survived from a group of acolytes traveling along the Trade Way. Some humanoids kidnapped one of them and carried him away half an hour before, heading towards the hills to the northeast.
- **Part 2 - On the Kidnappers Trail:** The party follow the trails of the kidnappers up to the foot of the hills. There is a path circling the hills heading towards the Misty Forest. They will be then ambushed by a pack of hyenas led by two gnoll hunters.
- **Part 3 - The Tower Ruin:** The trail continues towards the forest. It will lead the party to the ruins of an ancient watchtower that hides a cellar behind it. Investigating the cellar, the characters will find the kidnapped acolyte under the clutches of some Yeenoghu would-be cultists.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

The following hooks can be used as they are written or tailored to the characters backgrounds or to the DM's specific campaign. The DM may even want to have different hooks for subgroups of characters. For example, if one of the character has a noble background, is most likely that the Duchess of Daggerford reach out to him or to other nobles that know him.

- The characters have been hired in Daggerford to bring a wagon of wine supplies to the Way Inn. They have been asked to stop to the hamlet of Bowshot to unload part of the supplies;
- At the Way Inn, an acolyte taking care of the little chapel of Lathander in Bowshot is seeking for an escort to the hamlet since he heard rumors that recently the way to Daggerford is becoming unsecure due to wild beast attacks;
- The characters are traveling for personal reasons along the road to Daggerford or the the Way Inn while they spot the wrecked wagon;
- The Duchess Morwen of Daggerford requested a personal favor to one or more characters. She asked to investigate reports came from the Way Inn regarding attacks from wild beasts to both commercial and private caravans. Usually, wild beasts roam far away from the main road or from the small settlements along the Trade Way.



## FORMAT

To write this adventure, I adopted the format from [Eran "Sabre Runner" Arbel](#) that I found on [GMBinder](#) with very slight modifications. I discovered that it's extremely useful for quickly reach out to the right information at the right time during the game. However, I decided to include, at the beginning of each part, a brief summary of the events written in the classic adventure's style. This is because some DMs may find themselves more comfortable with a *narrative* style and may wants to be able to set up the their game based on a classical structure.

From my side, even if I appreciate a lot the *narrative* style, I always end up writing dedicated notes to run my sessions that every time end up to look like exactly how this format does. Moreover, I found out that this methodology helps the philosophy of "prepare just what is strictly needed and let the characters tell the story", which is totally awesome.

Here is how the adventure format is structured: As mentioned in the overview, the adventure is divided in parts. Each part is divided into **Scenarios** while each scenario is composed by several sections: **Environment, NPCs traits, NPCs motivation, Information, Treasure and Pillars**. If any of the sections makes no sense for a specific scenario, you will not find it in its description.

An example of *Scnario* could be a location in which something is happening or will happen, mostly the actual situation in which the characters are in. A dungeon room or corridor are examples of scenarios as well.

- **Environment** describes the scenario itself with Sight, Sounds, and Odors (sometimes even Feels and Tastes).
- **NPCs traits** describes the prominent characters the party might encounter, who they are, and how they look.
- **NPCs Motivations** describes what the NPCs in the scenario want, what their goals are, and what their purpose is in that scene.
- **Informations** describes the possible sources of information in the scene that the party might explore, and what they hold.
- **Treasure** describes any material the party might find and what they have to do to get it.
- **Pillars** describes the three pillars of D&D (Exploration, Social, and Combat) and suggestions of how the scene might change or react if the party choose one way or the other. If this section is empty, either the scene is not meant for intricate interaction or there are no different ways to interact but only one.
- **Difficulty** explains how to make the scene slightly easier or harder if you feel the need to.





# PART 1: THE WRECKED WAGON

## A. SIGHTING THE WAGON

When the party is two miles from Bowshot, an hamlet along the Trade Way between Daggerford and the Way Inn, they can spot from the distance a wrecked wagon 300 ft away from the main road. The wagon lies on a glade close to the Misty Forest while a indefinite number of four-legged creature seems threatening somebody standing in front of them.

### ENVIRONMENT

#### SIGHT

**Daytime:** If the party are traveling during the daylight, they can spot from the distance a wagon that is almost destroyed and overturned on one side and a pack of four-legged creature circling about. A humanoid figure seems to be threatened by those creatures. The wagon lies in what seems a glade close to the Misty Forest.

**Nighttime:** characters without darkvision can't spot the wagon until they approach it (from 300 ft they can start to hear the beasts growling and chuckling). Characters with darkvision will hear sounds from 300 ft but will start to visualize the situation according to their darkvision line of sight (as per information in daytime).

#### SOUNDS

From the distance the only sound that the characters can hear is the one they themselves are provoking. It could be the clatter of their horses' hooves, the clatter of their armor, a light gust of wind moving the leaves of the forest trees.

**Daytime:** Birds can be heard singing from nearby Misty Forest. The chant will fade as they approach the disaster site.

**Nighttime:** Singing cicadas and the cry of an owl from the forest deeps. The chant will fade as they approach the disaster site.

#### ODORS

No specific smell here, just a slight perceivable scent of wine coming from the barrels they are carrying (if the hook was this). All other perceivable smells are the one coming from things that the characters are carrying with them or from themselves.

### INFORMATIONS

#### CREATURES

- Six Four-legged medium beasts circling about (Wisdom (Perception) check CD 15).
- They seems waiting patiently for something (Intelligence (Investigation/Nature) or Wisdom (Insight) check CD 13).
- The creatures are hyenas (Intelligence (Nature) check CD 15).

#### WAGON

- No horses can be seen from the distance. If somebody looks for horses presence close to him (maybe because he thinks they flew away), nothing is spotted.
- The wagon is destroyed and overturned on one side.

#### THREATENED FIGURE

- A short, squat creature that wields what looks like a piece of wood.
- The creature is a dwarf (Intelligence (Nature) CD 13)
- The dwarf appears to be in a defensive position but he stands still (Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Insight) check CD 15)

### PILLARS

The scenario is quite straightforward, no complex interaction are expected.



## B. THE GLADE

If the characters approach the glade, they can see a dwarf wielding a club threatened by a pack of six hyenas that growl and circle around, waiting for the right moment to attack or for the man to die alone from his wounds. The surroundings are covered with corpses of hyenas, other humanoids and two horses. The attack was fierce and fast and at a quick glance it doesn't seem anything is missing from the carried goods even it is all overturned to the ground. A group composed by gnolls, some humans and hyenas attacked four acolytes of Lathander Church that were traveling along the road. The acolytes tried to resist as much as possible defeating two humanoids and one gnoll but eventually two of them have been killed and one has been kidnapped by the remaining attackers. The kidnappers ran away into the forest.

### ENVIRONMENT

#### SIGHT

- The glade is in front of the border between the hills and the forest.
- The wagon is destroyed and the goods are scattered on the ground. Some arrows and a spear are stuck in it.
- Six **hyenas** surround a dwarf who wields a club in his right hand and a small mirror in his left (he is going to cast *sanctuary* on himself). He is looking the mirror, holding the club limply on his right side, and looks exhausted.
- The dwarf has an arm and a leg covered in blood. He looks badly injured.
- A man and a woman lie dead at his feet, two clubs in hand. They are dressed like the dwarf.
- Two men lie near the corpses. They wear a mix of a long tunic and leather armor.
- A gnoll lies dead on the opposite side, next to the wounded dwarf.
- The clearing is covered in blood.
- The hyenas threaten the dwarf but do not attack him. A couple of them are ravaging the horses' bodies.

#### SOUNDS

- Growlings and animal chuckling.
- A broken chant whispered from the dwarf.
- No sounds from the Forest.

#### ODORS

- Carrion stink
- Blood odor

### NPCs

#### GRAHIN HOLDERHEK

##### DESCRIPTION

- A young hill dwarf, bald, olive eyes and a short brown beard.
- Wears a knee-length white tunic closed at the waist by a leather gold colored belt and a necklace with a pendant in the shape of a sun.

- **Acolyte** of Lathander (when met, he already spent two 1st level slots to cast *sanctuary* to himself)
- A calm, neither deep nor high voice. He often refer to Lathander as the Dawnbringer.

### MOTIVATION

- He wants to survive hyenas attack.
- He wants to save the companion that has been kidnapped.
- He needs to bring supply to the local Lathander chapel in Bowshot and then continue to the south.

### INFORMATIONS

#### GRAHIN HOLDERHEK

- He is an acolyte of the Church of Latander.
- He was traveling with four companions, two male and one human female, also acolytes. They had to stop in Bowshot to bring some supplies to the priest of the local Lathander chapel, a human male named Randal Longlish.
- They were attacked by a group of gnolls and hyenas. There were also four freak humans with them. He tried to escape but the wagon was very heavy and the attackers forced him off the road heading towards the edge of the forest.
- Two companions were killed by the gnolls but succeeded killing two freak humans before to die.
- He managed to kill one gnoll but at some point during the battle they escaped taking with them the last of his companions, a human named Kenneth Denton.
- The gang left and the hyenas were waiting for him to die to feast on him.

#### GLADE

- Dead gnoll. A DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check can identify him as a **gnoll hunter**.
- Dead humans. One is without an arm, the other has a prominent hump. Both wear leather armor over a tunic covered with fresh blood: a DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that there is also dried blood in it.
- They have ear and nose piercings and a tattoo painted with blood on their shoulder.

#### WAGON

- Two dead horses lie next to the wagon. Someone has started eating their bodies while a couple of hyenas are still feasting on the remains.
- Some arrows and a spear are stuck in the side of the wagon. A DC 11 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals that both are common weapons.

### TREASURE

- Two clubs (dead acolytes).
- A quiver with 7 arrows (dead gnoll hunter).





## PILLARS

---

### EXPLORATION

- A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Nature/Religion) check can reveal that dead humans could be cultists. On a roll of 20 or more, a character may remember something related to the cult of Yeenoghu and that some non-gnoll creature might be accepted into the ranks. This can be explained by the physical appearance of the dead: some cultists of Yeenoghu have bodily malformations and wear fetish piercings and pendants.
- With a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check it is possible to find and follow the trail of blood left by the kidnappers. On a roll of 15 or more, the character knows that the group is made up of three humanoids and a pair of hyenas.

### SOCIAL

- If the PCs offer to save Kenneth, Grahin will thank them and, before heal the most injured among them with his last 1st-level slot.
- If the PCs ask Grahin to heal everyone, he will tell them that he needs to rest for long time (a long rest) and to spend time praying Lathander to grant him the power to do so. However, he is very worried about his companion and does not want the track to get cold.
- If requested, Grahin will join the group to save Kenneth, but he will warn the PCs that he is very weak and cannot be as helpful as he would have liked. However, he will not hesitate to join the rescue.
- Grahin may also suggest that they can quickly reach Bowshot and ask for a rescue team to be sent for Kenneth. Local chapel priest, Father Randall, will help. However, it will take time and he is worried about Kenneth's life.
- If the PCs ask for rewards, Grahin will say that he doesn't bring anything of value with him but promises to reward them with something of value collected from the local Bowshot chapel regardless of whether he joins the party or not.

### COMBAT

- Hyenas generally do not attack large groups but they are part of a gnoll gang and are more aggressive. They will attack the party if they interfere and use their pack tactics as much as possible.
- The wagon is destroyed but can grant half cover.
- Grahin will join the fight by attacking in melee or providing support with his spells.
- When the ranks of the hyenas are decimated (2 left), they will flee to the hills and eventually try to rejoin the gang.

### DIFFICULTY

---

#### EASIER

- Grahin joins the fight and has all his spell slots or
- Reduce the number of hyenas from 6 to 4.

#### HARDER

- Grahin can't join the fight because of his wounds and,

- Increase the number of hyenas to 10 or make sure the dead **gnoll hunter** is still alive when the PCs arrive to the glade.





## D. THE RUINED TOWER

