

Encounter Spotlight: Trouble At The Crossroads





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Introduction

Trouble at The Crossroads is a small encounter designed for low-level parties in fantasy or historical campaigns. It provides a short encounter with multiple resolutions depending on your player's decisions and can be resolved both with and without combat. There are no specific requirements for party level to run this encounter, but it will be easier to run and make more sense for lower leveled parties or games.

This encounter is written to be system agnostic to be able to be applied to the largest number of gaming systems. For that reason, no stats or rules are given. It is up to the Game Master, Dungeon Master, or whoever runs the game to place appropriately challenging foes and gauge skill checks. In some instances, the relative difficulty of the roll is provided.



McNeal's Farm

The McNeal's Farm is a quaint farm owned for several generations by the McNeal family and is about a day's journey from the nearest town. It's from here the family grows wheat that is routinely sold to the city to feed its citizens.

The family currently consists of:

Joseph McNeal - Father and heir to the farm. A tough, hard-working man.

Tabitha McNeal - Joseph's wife and caretaker of the home and children.

Jed and Mary McNeal - Their son and daughter. Jed is 12 and helps his father work while Mary is 3 and too young for all but the simplest tasks.

The farm is situated near a crossroads where two major rural roads connect which has led to the nickname "The Crossroads Farm". It's often used as a landmark for travelers in the area as the roads are relatively high in traffic. Unfortunately, this has also led to a fair share of unsavory folks also passing through.

Encounter at the Crossroads

8 Bandits have come and are extorting the family. Each week they return and demand gold as payment under the threat of violence. The party can become involved if they visit the farm, as they're interacting with the family the bandits arrive and demand payment from the family. Or, they can hear some commotion as they are passing by and can investigate the source further.

The bandits will attempt to intimidate the party as well, but will let them be if they don't cause any trouble. The party now has a decision, do they protect the family or stay out of it?

Protect The Family

If the party steps up they're in for a fight. They can try to intimidate the bandits, (very hard) if they succeed the bandits leave without a fight. Otherwise, the bandits ready for a fight and attack. The McNeal patriarchy will aid in the combat, but he is a poor fighter and of little help. Should the party prove victorious the McNeals will thank them profusely, offer any meager reward they can, and also spread words of their heroism to nearby towns which may prove useful.

Stay Out of It

If the party stays out of it the McNeals are saddened but understanding. They lament the fact that they won't be able to make payments for much longer and send the party on their way. The party always has the option to track down the bandits if they wish, doing so nets them the same rewards as if they had originally protected the family.

The Aftermath

While the encounter can end here, you may also want to have longer-term consequences depending on the party's decisions.

If the party helped the McNeals then perhaps the news of their good deeds have reached the next town. This could lead to discounts at shops, free drinks and cheers and the tavern, or even the local leaders seeking their aid with new troubles.

On the other hand, the exact opposite might happen if the party helps the bandits. Services might be closed off to them, townsfolk may shun them, and they might see that criminals are often disliked.

Area Map

