

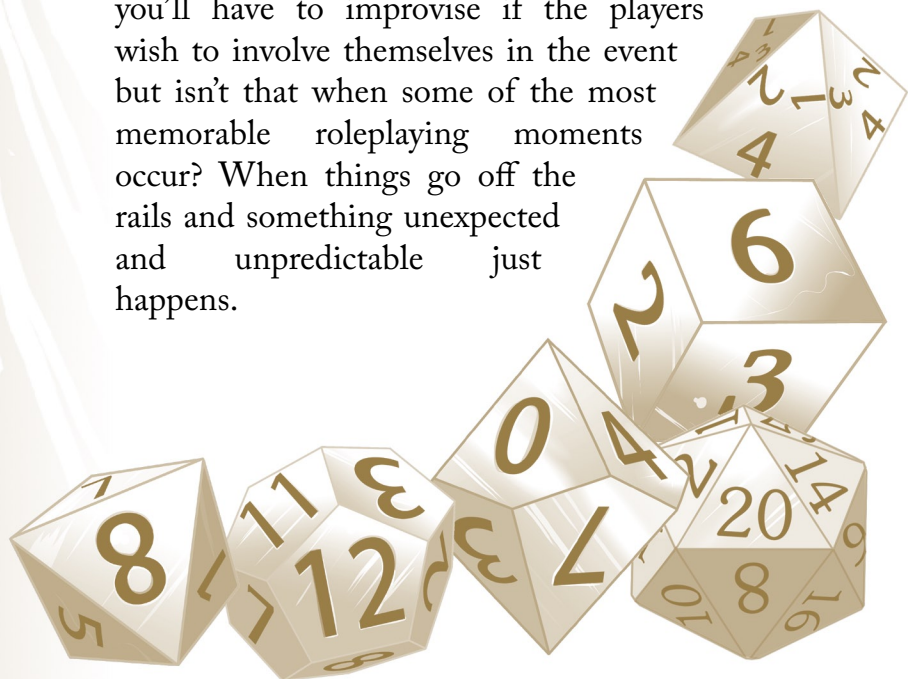
GM's Cookbook

Random Events #2

Random and unexpected events can help give your campaign a realistic verisimilitude. It gives the players the idea their characters exist in a real breathing world and things are occurring outside the scope of their limited perceptions. They can experience unexpected weather, witness strange actions that make little sense when you don't know their context, or encounter other travelers all over the campaign world.

These random events should be used judiciously; you don't want to derail the adventurers while they're doggedly pursuing clues in their quest to uncover the location of the Harem of the Concubines of the Rakshasha. But you do want to add some spice when the action slacks off, or the adventurers are kicking their heels trying to figure out what their next move should be.

The random events listed in this installment of the GM's Cookbook take place on the road while the adventurers are traveling from location to another, or traveling overland through the wilderness. These events are left open-ended; you'll have to improvise if the players wish to involve themselves in the event but isn't that when some of the most memorable roleplaying moments occur? When things go off the rails and something unexpected and unpredictable just happens.



ON THE ROAD

The following ten entries are appropriate for random events on and well-traveled road or trail.

- 1 There is an abandoned wagon in the road ahead. It is stuck in a muddy rut and has lost a wheel. It is full of rotting fruit that is being picked over by insects and small animals from the nearby wood.
- 2 The bodies of several gnolls strung from the high branches of nearby trees sway in the wind. The bodies are all riddled with arrows with bright red fletchings. A large puddle of congealed blood lies below the bodies.
- 3 A bridge ahead that crosses a small gorge is completely covered in thick, stringy webs. As the adventurers approach they see an enormous web extends below the bridge, between both sides of the gorge. The web contains the bodies of several dead horses, a few saddles, and several partially smashed crates, but no people. There are no spiders large or small to be found. The adventurers can easily hack through the webs covering the top of the bridge.
- 4 A column of chanting monks passes going the opposite direction. They chant in a strange guttural tongue and march under a cloud of incense that pours from their censers.
- 5 A haggard and bedraggled halfling approaches along the road from the opposite direction. She tells a sad story of being chased by bandits who rode out of the wood. Her horse went lame after she eluded them and she was forced to put it down. She cut some meat from the horse to help her on the remainder of her journey but has now run out of food and water. She asks the adventurers if they can spare anything to help her complete the last leg of her journey.
- 6 The adventurers catch sight of a fierce looking orc staring out from the wooded perimeter at the side of the road. He has wild, hate-

filled eyes and holds a spear over his head. Closer inspection reveals the “orc” is actually an expertly carved statute made from the remainders of a fallen tree. It is painted just as brilliantly and looks realistic even up close. At a distance it is indistinguishable from the real thing.

- 7 A large boulder blocks the road ahead. Inspection reveals that it either fell from a great height or was driven into the ground by tremendous force.
- 8 An unexpected cloudburst has caused a nearby stream to overflow and floods the road ahead. The hard rain and soaked terrain not only makes for hard traveling but may make it hard to stay on the road.
- 9 The adventurers notice there are several freshly dug holes in the road ahead. These are large enough to cause problems for a cart or wagon and need to be navigated around by those on horseback. After another ten minutes of travel the adventurers round a bend in the road and discover a dirt-covered dwarf is busy digging up the road with a shovel and pick. He eyes the adventurers suspiciously. He’s convinced an ancient treasure cache is buried here and is afraid someone may be trying to beat him to it.
- 10 A fork in the road bears a moss-covered stone marker indicating directions to the next destinations along either path. The marker has been defaced and the names have been chiseled off. Hung from the tree branch above the marker is a holy symbol of the god of death.

IN THE WILDERNESS

The following ten entries are appropriate for random events while traveling overland or through the woods.

- 1 The adventurers happen upon a woodsman digging a grave. Another woodsman lies dead



with an arrow in his chest. The woodsman will panic upon seeing the adventurers and immediately begin to explain himself. He claims he shot his friend accidentally while the two were hunting in this wood. They are several days from home and he couldn't possibly carry his friend, a much larger man, all that distance.

- 2 The adventurers are trekking through a wood when several frogs drop from the sky around them. A few moments later a Fortean rain ensues as frogs begin falling from the sky.
- 3 A massive tree falls nearby. The adventurers spy, through the thick cover of trees, a giant beaver pulling the fallen tree towards a river in the distance.

- 4 In a clearing ahead stands the remains of a burned-down cabin. Several charred bodies can be found inside, but anything valuable has long since been picked over. The cause of the fire is not evident, and the trees and grass around the area have either grown back or were left unmarked by the fire.
- 5 The adventurers encounter several snares and traps in the overgrown woodland ahead of them. Fortunately these traps have been here for years and the ropes have rotted and the metal components have rusted, rendering everything inoperable and harmless. Inspection of the traps by a character with the appropriate knowledge or skills will reveal that the traps were designed to catch either large animals, or possibly humans and humanoids.

- 6 The adventurers witness a meteor come crashing down on the planet. This can happen during the day but would be much more spectacular at night. The meteor punches through the side of several trees, sets some bushes and undergrowth alight and cuts a jagged rut in the ground. The meteor offers no danger or great mystery to the adventurers (other than being red hot for several hours after impact). If the characters can haul it along with them they could sell it to a blacksmith who could use the metal to make weapons and armor.
- 7 A small clearing is covered in short dark green grass. In the middle of the clearing stands a ring of toadstools, a fairy ring. Depending on your campaign this could be a mundane coincidence, an ill omen, or something with true magical significance (turning those entering the ring blind, cursing them, or transporting them to the kingdom of the faefolk).
- 8 The adventurers nearly trip over the pommels of rusty broken swords and the edges of rusted shields that are all protruding from the muddy ground. This was the site of a great battle decades ago and there is ruined weapons, rusted armor, and skeletons embedded in the soft soil.
- 9 Gusty winds start whipping through the trees, kicking up dust and leaves. The trees bend and creak. The adventurers are nearly knocked over every time a gust cuts through the woods. It makes for rough going as the characters are buffeted by the wind and battered by whipping branches. The winds carry strange sounds, which may or may not be a trick of the weather.
- 10 From overhead the adventurers hear someone calling down to them. An elf is perched in a tree forty feet above the ground. He has a large longbow in his hand and his quiver hangs from a branch close at hand. He quietly explains that he's been perched there for days waiting

for a dire creature that's been terrorizing that part of the woods. He urges the characters to move on quickly so they don't spoil his hunt or accidentally encounter the dangerous creature themselves.

GM'S COOKBOOK: RANDOM EVENTS #2
By Michael Todd

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