ENCOUNTER E1: ILYANA’S PLIGHT

Encounter Level 2 (650 XP)

Setup
4 Iron Circle brigands (B)
2 gray wolves (W)
Ilyana, intrepid homesteader (I)

Fold the “Steading” battle map in half so that the half featured in this encounter is facing up. Place the brigands and wolves where indicated. The characters begin the encounter on the road near the map’s edge.

Whether from Falkreast, Hammerfast, or some other place, the characters enter Harkenwold from the north, roughly in the area of Ilyana’s farm. Ideally, they are traveling the King’s Road. If not, modify the readaloud text below as appropriate.

As the heroes travel, read:
You arrive in Harkenwold in the middle of the day. It’s a broad, lightly settled valley between two arms of the Harken Forest. You haven’t traveled more than a mile or two into the valley before trouble appears. Rounding a bend in the road, you spy a pillar of smoke climbing into the clear blue sky. The source, hidden by rolling hills, is roughly a mile along a dirt track that intersects the road.

The player characters should be interested in investigating this encounter on the road near the map’s edge. If they hesitate, tell the players that, at best, the smoke is purely accidental. If they are interested in investigating, tell them that the smoke is roughly facing up. Place the brigands to ensure they are traveling in this direction, and they are setting the tone for the encounter.

The player characters should be interested in investigating if they hesitate, tell the players that, at best, the smoke is curious; at worst, someone could be in trouble. If the characters ignore the smoke and proceed to Albridge, you must bring them to Reithann or Dar Gremath’s attention by other means. Word of Ilyana and her sons’ grisly deaths must bring them to Reithann or Dar Gremath’s attention. If they hesitate, tell the players that, at best, the smoke conceals the truth of Ilyana’s farm and her sons’ gruesome deaths.

When the characters investigate, read:
You see a half-elf woman of middle years coming out of a farmhouse. The humans all wear black cloaks with a gray ring embroidered on the bodies.

The windows are shuttered, and the farmhouse door is barred. Characters inside can fire missile weapons into contact with more enemies.

The player characters should be interested in investigating the farmers’ reaction to the encounter. If they hesitate, tell the players that, at best, the smoke is curious; at worst, someone could be in trouble. If the characters ignore the smoke and proceed to Albridge, you must bring them to Reithann or Dar Gremath’s attention by other means. Word of Ilyana and her sons’ grisly deaths must bring them to Reithann or Dar Gremath’s attention. If they hesitate, tell the players that, at best, the smoke conceals the truth of Ilyana’s farm and her sons’ gruesome deaths.

When the characters investigate, read:
You see a half-elf woman of middle years coming out of a farmhouse. The humans all wear black cloaks with a gray ring embroidered on the bodies. They’re preparing pitch-soaked torches, laughing and taunting whoever’s inside. They’re already burned a small outbuilding—the source of the smoke column.

The ruffians are focused on the farmhouse. Sneaking up on the brigands and wolves requires the characters to make a DC 12 Stealth check; if at least half of the characters succeed, the villains are surprised. If alerted, the brigands attempt to scare off the adventurers.

Read:
The wolves growl a warning, and the brigands face you. One of them scowls and waves his arm. “Move on, you!” he snarls. “This is Iron Circle business!”

From inside the farmhouse, you hear a woman’s voice shout angrily. “Business? It looks like robbery and murder to me!”

The brigands attack if the adventurers ask questions or don’t retreat immediately.

Tactics
The Iron Circle brigands are bullies who aren’t expecting a tough fight. They move up to engage the adventurers at the first opportunity, and use drive back to force an adventurer into contact with more enemies.

The wolves are trained to flank enemies and drag them down. They attack any character the brigands are fighting. When only one brigand remains, he breaks off and tries to run for it. The wolves fight to the death.

Ilyana and her sons hide inside the farmhouse until the fight is over. The Iron Circle bandits ignore them.

Features of the Area
Illumination: Bright light—this encounter takes place during daylight.

Burned Outbuilding: The thatch roof of this storage shed is burned away, and the walls are charred and weakened. Nonetheless, it’s basically intact.

Farmhouse: The windows are shattered, and the door is barred. Characters inside can fire missile weapons through loopholes in the shutters and door, gaining improved cover against attacks from outside. Opening the door or windows requires a DC 18 Strength check.

Embankment: This steep, dirt road embankment is difficult terrain.

Tree: The square occupied by the tree’s trunk is impassable but provides cover. Climbing the tree requires a DC 10 Athletics check, and a creature up the tree gains concealment.

Wall: The fieldstone wall stands 4 feet high and provides cover against attacks that cross it. It costs 2 squares of movement to cross the wall.

Well: This 15-foot-deep well is surrounded by a low stone wall (+2 bonus to the saving throw to catch yourself). Climbing out of the well is difficult (DC 20 Athletics check).

Roleplaying: Ilyana’s Plea
When the adventurers defeat or drive off the Iron Circle attackers, Ilyana emerges from her house. The remainder of the encounter involves roleplaying.

You hear the rasping sound of a heavy bolt being drawn back, and the farmhouse door opens. A half-elf woman of middle years steps out. She’s carrying a battered old cradle. Two boys of fifteen or so follow after her. The woman looks around the farmyard, frowning at the bloodied, and sighs.

“My thanks, strangers,” she says. “Those Iron Circle jackals came to rob us. I’d bar my door, but they said they’d burn the house down with me and my boys in it. You saved our lives—but who are you?”

Conclusion
When the adventurers have no more questions for Ilyana, she suggests that the party rest up at her home, or press ahead to Albridge (page 7) and seek out Dar Gremath or Reithann (pages 10 and 11) for guidance.

ROLEPLAYING ILYANA

Ilyana knows most of the story laid out in the “Adventure Background” section (page 2), although she doesn’t know anything about Lord Vhennyk—she thinks Nazin Redthorn is the leader of the Iron Circle. She’s a tough, frontier woman, bowed but unbroken. Talking about the Iron Circle makes her mad enough to sputter and shake her finger.

Who are you? “My name is Ilyana, and these are my sons Jarek and Jarl. This is our farm. The reavers killed my husband Karthen when they invaded the dale. My boys and I have been trying to get by ever since.”

Who attacked you? “Who is the Iron Circle?” The Iron Circle is full of self-righteous and cruderath who seized Harkenwold over a month ago. They’ve got Baron Stockmer imprisoned in his own keep, and they’ve plundered the land ever since. They say they’re collecting taxes, but it’s robbery, pure and simple.”

How can we help? “The folk of Harkenwold are ready to rebel—we just need a spark to set things off. I think you should talk to old Reithann, the druid, or maybe Dar Gremath. They’ll know what needs doing. Reithann lives in the Druid’s Grove to the southwest; you can find Dar just down the road in Albridge. But go carefully!”

Where should we go? “I would avoid Harken Village. There are too many Iron Circle soldiers there. But Albridge should be safe enough.”

Why should we help? “Out of plain civil decency. If that won’t do, I’d wager Baron Stockmer will richly reward you if you drive away the reavers and free him. Good-bye.” Take care, strangers. My boys and me’ll hide those who fell here. With luck, the Iron Circle won’t learn what happened here or about you any time soon.”

The brigands attack if the adventurers ask questions or don’t retreat immediately.

4 Iron Circle Brigands (B)
Level 1 Soldier

HP 28, Bloodied 19
AC 17, Fortitude 14, Reflex 13, Will 12
Speed 5

1d6 1 damage.

1d8 + 3 damage.

1d8 + 1 damage.

Relentless Assault (At-Will)
Trigger: An enemy adjacent to the brigand makes an attack that doesn’t include the brigand as a target. Effect (Free Action): The triggering enemy takes 3 damage.

Drive Back (At-Will)
Trigger: One creature within 1 square of the brigand makes an attack against the brigand. Effect (Free Action): The target takes 3 damage.

1d6 + 3 damage.

Bloodied 19

1d8 + 1 damage.

1d8 + 1 damage.

1d8 + 1 damage.

1d6 + 1 damage.

Initiative 13

Perception +0

Initiative 14

Con 14 (+3)

Int 2 (+3)

Cha 10 (+1)

Languages—

Effect (Free Action): The triggering enemy takes 3 damage.

Alignmentunaligned

Languages—

1d6 + 1 damage.

1d8 + 1 damage.

1d8 + 1 damage.

1d8 + 1 damage.

1d8 + 1 damage.

1d8 + 1 damage.

1d8 + 1 damage.