

FANTASY AGE

ENCOUNTERS



CHILDREN'S CRUSADE

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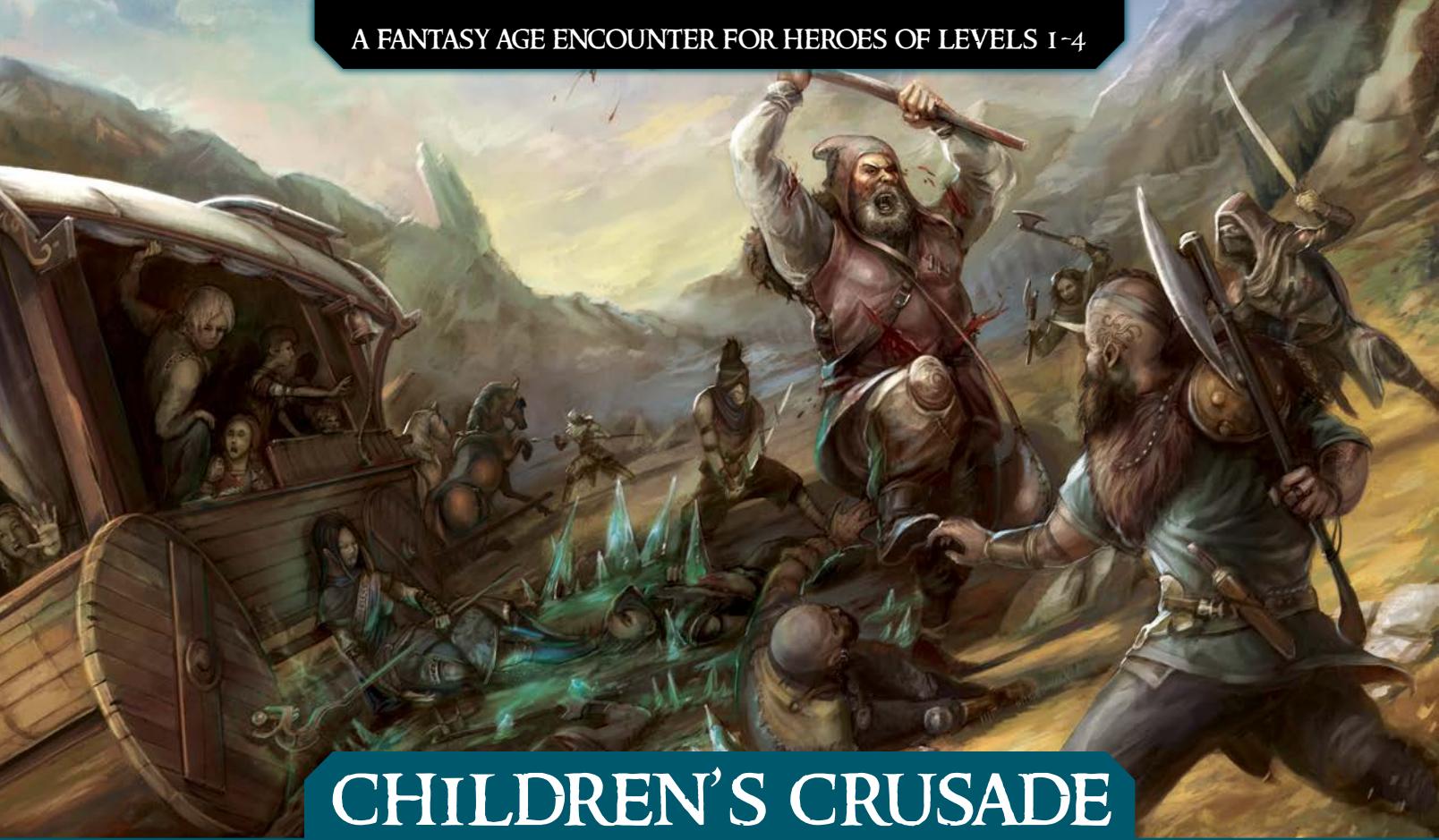
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CHILDREN'S CRUSADE

WHERE ARE THE CHARACTERS?

Near an inland village or settlement that has recently experienced war, natural disaster, or other calamity. Basically anywhere religious fanatics can be found hunting down refugees that's a few days from a coastline or port will work.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

A wagon filled with young boys and girls is being smuggled out of the area to a ship waiting to take them to a refugee enclave far away. The children, ages six to sixteen, are believed to be "marked by corruption" by a local order of religious fanatics, The Fists of Arminar. The order's enforcers have gotten wind of this effort and are seeking to capture the children and deliver them to their temple for sacrifice. They believe the sacrifices will appease their gods and ease the suffering in the region from the recent calamities. The characters find themselves in the middle of the whole affair.

WHAT DOES THE PARTY NEED TO DO?

The children can't be left to wander about unprotected. Doing so leaves them open to abduction and murder.

To further complicate matters, some of the children do exhibit signs of magical talent or unusual parentage, making it arguably dangerous to leave them to their own devices.

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

The fate of a dozen orphaned children at the very least is at issue. Also, if abducting the children is not discouraged, future actions could be undertaken by the Fists of Arminar against other innocents.

THE SETUP

The PCs come across a wagon being attacked by bandits. A dozen or so children ranging from five to fifteen are inside the wagon and two adults are trying to protect them and the wagon. One of the adults, a middle-aged woman in robes and clutching a staff, already lies dead. She is surrounded by several dead bandits who have been frozen or burnt, evidence that she was a mage. The other adult is the wagon driver, a portly old man who's already taken several nasty wounds but is swinging his walking stick like a crude club.

There are three bandits for every two PCs. Unless the PCs announce themselves, the bandits are surprised the first round of combat, as they've been focused on the wagon. Use the Bandit statistics from *Fantasy AGE Basic Rulebook*, p. 105.

After the battle, presuming the PCs are victorious, the mortally injured wagon driver, Herod, will tell them of his task to take the children to a ship waiting for them. He will also inform them that the children are believed "marked" by a local "cult" who seek to sacrifice them to their gods. The coast is four days' travel away. The old man will tell the PCs they can expect to be rewarded for their service if the soulful eyes of several scared and needy children aren't enough to motivate them. Herod will then succumb to his wounds. He also asks that even if the PCs won't take the children away, they will at least deliver them to the nearby orphanage run by the Daughters of Bastiluna, bitter rivals of the Fists of Arminar and their extremist tactics.

The wagon driver, his mage companion, and the bandits don't have much on them—a few coins and some rations with possibly a small trinket of more significant value if the GM wants to reward the PCs a bit for their trouble.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

| 2D6 ROLL | EVENT |
|----------|---|
| 2-5 | Nothing happens – a peaceful day's travel. |
| 6 | The PCs come across a peddler selling various supplies and wares for 90 percent their standard rate. Has most common adventurers' gear. Magic items or particularly expensive gear are present on a 5-6 of a d6 roll (GM's discretion if a particular item is available at all.) |
| 7-8 | A small group of goblin raiders attacks. There are 2 goblins for each PC. (See <i>Fantasy AGE Basic Rulebook</i> , p. 108.) |
| 9-10 | A group of Fists of Arminar Enforcers seek to seize the children. Use the Arminar Enforcer stats located at the end of this Encounter. There is one Enforcer for every PC. If any Enforcers escape this encounter, the PCs will automatically encounter twice this number the next day instead of rolling. |
| 11 | One of the children is ill. A TN 11 INTELLIGENCE (HEALING) test will soothe the child's sickness and help them recover. Failure will add another day to the journey as the PCs need to stop and let the child rest. |
| 12 | The PCs cross paths with barbarian hunters who are traveling through the area. They are not innately hostile, but are of a local tribe distrustful of outsiders. A successful TN 11 COMMUNICATION (PERSUASION) test will result in a good interaction. If the dice show doubles on this check, the PCs can spend 2 SPs to take -4 to their next day's encounter roll due to the barbarians giving them good directions through the wild. If a fight breaks out, use the Bandit statistics (See <i>Fantasy AGE Basic Rulebook</i> , p. 105), increasing Strength to 2 and adding the CONSTITUTION (STAMINA) focus. There is one hunter for every PC. |

DECISION POINT: SHIP OR ORPHANAGE?

If the PCs take up the task of delivering the children to the ship, they will need to survive four days of hard travel through the wilderness to the coast. If they seek to turn the children over to the orphanage, they can do so by traveling a much safer route three days in the opposite direction. The children are terrified of going to the orphanage for fear of the Fists finding them there, but they are unable to stop the PCs if this is the course they wish to take. They will, however, cry and whimper the whole way, and the older children will fix the PCs with withering stares of betrayal.

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

For every day traveled, roll once on the following table to see what happens along the way.

THE FINAL SCENE

Once the PCs have traveled for the necessary number of days, they either reach the orphanage and can turn the children over to the Daughters of Bastiluna, or they will need to face the Fists of Arminar Enforcers waiting to keep the children from boarding the ship. The ship is a modest-sized transport called the *Sea Dragon*. Its captain is a grizzled old dwarf named Jonas. He and his crew of fifteen skilled sailors have little skill in battle. Treat the crew as having 0-2 in all their abilities plus the focuses Accuracy (Brawling) and Dexterity (Sailing). Jonas is the same, but with Communication 3 and the Leadership focus.

If the PCs are sending the kids to the orphanage, their encounter ends here, though there might be long-term problems (see Further Adventures).

If the PCs decide to deliver the kids to the ship, they will face 2 Enforcers for every three PCs. These are seasoned but not exceptionally dangerous members

FISTS OF ARMINAR ENFORCERS

| ABILITIES (FOCUSES) | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|--------|
| 0 | ACCURACY | |
| 0 | COMMUNICATION | |
| 2 | CONSTITUTION (STAMINA) | |
| 1 | DEXTERITY | |
| 4 | FIGHTING (HEAVY BLADES, BLUDGEONS) | |
| 1 | INTELLIGENCE (RELIGIOUS LORE) | |
| 1 | PERCEPTION (SEARCHING) | |
| 2 | STRENGTH (INTIMIDATION, MIGHT) | |
| 1 | WILLPOWER (DISCIPLINE) | |
| SPEED | HEALTH | |
| 9 | 38 | |
| DEFENSE | ARMOR RATING | |
| 11 (13 w/ SHIELD) | 5 | |
| WEAPON | ATTACK ROLL | DAMAGE |
| LONGSWORD | +5 | 2d6+2 |
| MACE | +5 | 2d6+2 |
| SPECIAL QUALITIES | | |

FAVORED STUNTS: Knock Prone, Pierce Armor, Stunned Silence

TALENTS: Armor Training (Novice), Single Weapon Style (Novice), Weapon and Shield Style (Novice)

WEAPONS GROUP: Axes, Bludgeons, Brawling, Heavy Blades, Spears

EQUIPMENT: Light Mail, Longsword, Medium Shield

THREAT: MINOR

of the order. For more dangerous and skilled PCs, add more Enforcers or make them Elite or Heroic (see *Fantasy AGE Basic Rulebook*, p. 104) to provide more of a challenge. For an easier fight, reduce the number of Enforcers to 1 per PC.

The ship's captain and his crew won't become involved in this fight, though if a creative PC can get the kids to the ship they will weigh anchor and attempt to depart while the PCs hold off the Fists of Arminar. If the PCs really need help, one of the older children might even throw a wild burst of magic at the Enforcers. This won't take them out, but it might distract them long enough for a PC to gain an advantage.

CHILDREN OF THE REVOLUTION

There are a dozen refugees, and you can use them to create roleplaying opportunities for the PCs. Some of the children might even become long-term allies or significant NPCs in the campaign under the right circumstances. Remember, all these kids are considered “marked” by the Fists of Arminar. While this could be religious delusion, it is possible one of more of these children is destined for some great or terrible fate. Descriptions of the children follow.

PELLAC, AGE 15

One of the oldest children, Pellac has become a “de facto” leader among them. A local human farmboy who dreamed of the “glamorous” life of a soldier until recent events have disillusioned him, he lost his parents and siblings in the recent calamity and has come to see the other kids as a sort of replacement family. He’s not the brightest of the children, but he’s far from stupid and most respect his natural charisma and ability to keep a cool head.

HALAYA, AGE 14

The second-oldest of the children, Halaya is bitter and angry at the turn her life has taken, and tends to take it out on the other children, snapping at them when they cry. She is very solicitous of the good will of the PCs, though, and will soften her treatment of the other children, though she is quick to point out that she’s not their mother and resents being asked to care for them in any way. Halaya is an olive-skinned human, with dark eyes, and black hair plaited down her back. She will make a point of getting on the good side of one of the PCs (particularly one that demonstrates cunning, charisma, or distinct skills), finally working up to asking them to not make her stay with the Daughters of Bastiluna or the orphanage, but to let her accompany that PC as an apprentice. She hasn’t the talent for either fighting or magic, but she might one day become a Rogue of some note.

IVEN, AGE 13

This young orc male was raised in a local human village and was often teased for his mature appearance and size compared to the other children. Since the recent troubles, this has changed, with many of the younger children coming to see Iven as a surrogate adult, and thus a protector and authority figure. This leads many of the younger kids to push for Iven to either take charge in various situations or for them to expect him to act as their advocate. Unfortunately, the sort-hearted and confused Iven really isn’t suited for this role—he’s content to follow older children like Pellac and any adults who seem trustworthy and sensible. Iven is very protective of his little sister, Gosha.

PETYR, AGE 12

Shifty-eyed Petyr was the blacksmith’s apprentice. He’s a small boy for his age, unfortunately underfed and overworked by the blacksmith, who was prone to fits of drunkenness. In truth, the boy is glad the Fists killed his loutish master, though he is careful to not show it (mostly because the Fists are so hated by the other children). He doesn’t truly know what is going to happen next, and generally just assumes it’s only a matter of time before he and the others die. He has taken to making sure that little Wuldeen eats something now and again, and won’t let Ovis pick on any of the younger kids. Petyr is quick to try and solve problems with a swift right hook, for all his small size.

ROLEPLAYING TIPS

Making the children real, likable, and sympathetic is a big deal here. If the PCs are going to unload them at the orphanage, they should have to face down some doe-eyed pathetic young faces while they do it. Alternatively, defending children from various threats is super-heroic, and could help grow the PCs’ reputations as great heroes and valiant adventurers.

The Enforcers in this encounter truly believe they are acting to save lives and heal the land, but they are blinded by their own beliefs. Also, it’s possible these beliefs aren’t completely crazy. One or more of the children could be corrupted by some evil power, cursed by the gods, or otherwise potentially very dangerous.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

After the children are delivered to either the ship or the orphanage, this encounter is over, but the adventure can still continue. Some ideas for how to use the events here to fuel later adventures are:

- The underground movement which rescues other children and similarly targeted innocents has heard of the PCs’ actions and wish to hire them for even more dangerous endeavors against the Fists of Arminar.
- One of the children the PCs delivered actually has become possessed by a demon and returns as a powerful and deadly threat.

For extra fun, this could even happen right as the kids are delivered.

- The sibling of one of these children, an enthusiastic but inexperienced young warrior, seeks out the PCs and pledges to their service in gratitude.
- The Fists of Arminar put a bounty on the PCs’ heads, labeling them as heretics and threats to the divine order. Finding shelter and safety will be difficult in the areas where the order holds sway.
- A powerful witch, mage, or noble might take special interest in the PCs based on their actions, involving them in their next scheme.

CHILDREN OF THE REVOLUTION

MODIN, AGE 11

Unfortunately, some of the children know a little too well what is going on. Modin was one of the first children marked as corrupted by the Fists of Arminar, because his own older brother is one of their number. The boy fervently believes that he and the others are, in fact, tainted, and though he's not foolish enough to want to die, he does weep piteously. He blames himself and his fellows' corruption for the deaths that come upon them, and during a battle with the Fists will beg a PC not to kill his big brother! (If his big brother dies, he doesn't run away or attack the PC; the boy simply collapses in grief, as this is proof to him that he is indeed ill-favored by the gods.) He is a shorn-haired, brown-eyed kid.

GEMI, AGE 9

A smart and generally talkative young human girl, the shock of seeing so many die during recent events and now being hunted by the Fists has made her unusually quiet. A careful and compassionate PC could possibly help her to cope. Gemi is beginning to show the earliest signs of magical talent, something a PC making an Intelligence (Arcane Lore) TN 13 test would detect. Right now the girl can't do much more than summon up some harmless lights and maybe start a small fire, but with proper training she could become a powerful mage one day. She doesn't seem to want anything to do with her brother — she feels guilty at the death of their parents, believing it is because of her magic.

OVIS, AGE 9

Gemi's twin is usually the quiet one of the two of them. Though he also has minor magical talents that could one day be cultivated into full-blown magehood, his are far subtler (focused around the Fate Arcana). He is taking Gemi's rejection of his company very hard — he is trying to figure out what he did wrong. His lonely suffering — and watching her suffer in solitude — doesn't make any sense to him, but he can't figure out why she won't let him console her, and she him. He can usually be found in Rosha's company.

ROSHA, AGE 9

Iven's little sister is a half-orc. Her hair is braided in pigtails, with a set of long bangs that hang down in her face, and she is a small, wary-eyed little waif in a torn and dirty sundress. Rosha became very attached to the staff-wielding mage who tried to get them to freedom, and is still mourning her. Rosha tries to console Ovis as best she can, though it's usually just a case of the two little ones being miserable in one another's company. She is very upset with Gemi over her treatment of Ovis.

DINNIA, AGE 8

Little Dinnia is angry. Her eyes smoulder with it, and she doesn't have time for any of the other childrens' suffering. She wants to see the Fists hurt, and badly, and makes a point of asking each of the PCs if they are going to kill the Fists. If they answer in the positive, she takes an immediate, fierce liking to them; anyone who demurs or gives conditional answers gets labeled "stupid." If the party should encounter the Fists, she climbs to a high point and shouts at them to "kill all the Fists!" in a bloodthirsty, frankly disturbing manner. The truth is that she somewhat scares the other kids; Modin is pretty sure that she's the "most corrupted" of them all, and avoids her entirely.

ADARA AKA "ADDY", AGE 7

This young human girl dreams of being a great hero and will likely decide to adopt one or more of the PCs as her role model depending on their actions. She carries her wooden training sword — little more than a toy — everywhere. The sword is the last thing she has from her burnt and ravaged homestead and she will thoughtlessly risk herself to retrieve it if it's lost or stolen. Astute PCs who pass an Intelligence (Military Lore) TN 15 may note that Adara actually shows the early signs of a talented fighter, though she has years of training ahead of her if these raw abilities are to properly develop.

KAROLAI, AGE 6

Little curly-haired blonde Karolai doesn't understand what is going on. Twice a day or so she asks where her mommies are, and asks if she can "play wif my puppy Tugger." She clings tenaciously to a small rag doll that has seen better days, and when someone tries to explain to her that her mommies and puppy are probably gone, she just wanders away from the speaker.

WULDEEN, AGE 5

Little Wuldeen is a stranger to the other children. His parents — a human woman and an elven man — were traveling merchants who made the mistake of coming into the village where the Fists were rooting out this corruption. They resisted, and were slain. Little Wuldeen, a chubby cheeked, pointy-eared little doll of a boy has big green eyes and a shock of curly hair. He is very fearful and alone, as he speaks nothing but Elven. He will immediately latch on to any PCs who are elves or of elven heritage, or who speak Elven to him.