



# 100 Roadside Encounter Ideas

Inspiration for your game's travels

**By Roleplaying Tips Publishing**

# 100 Roadside Encounter Ideas

## Inspiration for your game's travels

**By John Four**

Based on ideas submitted by the awesome readers of Roleplaying Tips

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Roleplaying Tips Presents: *100 Roadside Encounter Ideas*

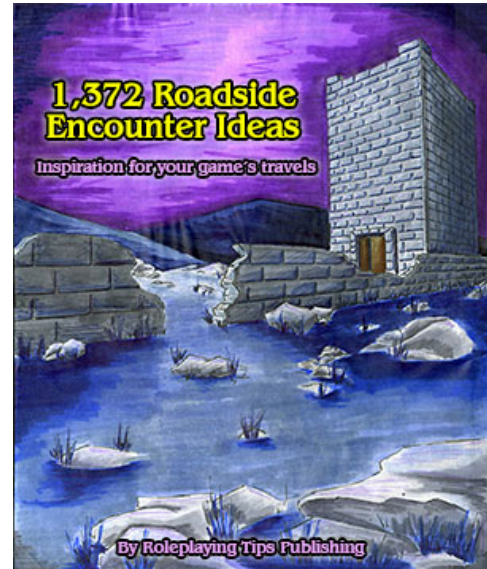
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Thanks so much for being a GM and for keeping this awesome hobby alive. Have more fun at every game!

Cheers,

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## 100 Roadside Encounter Ideas

1. A passing mail-courier's horse gets spooked and throws courier. The courier dies in the fall, and the mail bag has the seal of the King's Head of Intelligence.
2. A travelling blade-sharpener offers a special deal to the PCs to improve their magic weapons, but later the PCs discover the magic in the blades seems to be gone.
3. On a large road, a ship on wheels manned by eccentric road-pirates assaults the party.
4. The group comes across a three-way traffic jam at a fork in the road, and three arguing wagon masters refusing to give way.
5. A desperate man offers to sell the group a "magic" acorn for a pittance. If the PCs buy it, the man runs away laughing madly, shouting "I'm free! Free at last! You poor fools!"
6. After sleeping on the roadside, the party wakes to find their entire camp surrounded by dew-spangled spider webs, yet they are unharmed.
7. The road surface starts to buck and writhe, trying to throw the group off. Is it an earthquake or a territorial elemental?
8. Very small kobold/goblin/not-really-threatening humanoid wearing an old carpet as a cape leaps into the path and demands tribute as King of the Road.
9. An enormous dragon lands on the road in front of the group. It asks for directions to the capital, gives them a generous tip and then flies off with a loud proclamation of intending to raze it to the ground.
10. The group passes an old farmer and his nag heading toward the same town the PCs are heading toward. He gives them a wave and a gap-toothed smile. A little while later they pass him again. And then again....
11. Flowers by the roadside turn their heads to follow the party, and they're getting larger.
12. A white stone road cuts neatly through a festering swamp. The stones are carved with protective sigils and regular dire warnings not to leave the path. Then in the middle of the swamp the road ends, the stones shattered and blackened.
13. A winding path through a swamp leads repeatedly to stinking black pools and treacherous mud-pits.
14. On an icy slope, someone has poured water down the trail turning it into a near-frictionless slide into a gulch/chasm/pit/cavern.

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15. In a mountain pass, someone has built a high wall across the path the party was following, forcing them instead into the mouth of a nearby cave.
16. Fog across the road hides a sudden drop into a chasm.
17. A huge nest has fallen from a tree on the side of the road, and the strange-looking eggs within seem on the verge of hatching.
18. An earthquake drops the group and a large section of road into a sinkhole or chasm.
19. The group comes to a wilderness trading post on the trail. The cantankerous old-timer who runs it offers a bounty for scalps.
20. An otherwise empty stretch of highway, with two rival taverns facing each other across the road. The publicans try to outdo each other loudly on the discounts and benefits of their respective establishments to the party. Both seem desperate for customers.
21. A robed figure on a runaway contraption, yelling for help.
22. A wayfarer's tavern with the windows and doors boarded up from the inside and horrible claw-marks on the outside.
23. A huge road sign at a crossroad giving distances and directions to hundreds of places, some the party has never heard of.
24. In dense wilderness where only the road is passable, the group finds the trail covered in increasingly thick slime. The PCs eventually find themselves stuck behind an enormous and slow-moving snail.
25. A knight bearing the crest of a local lord is found rusted into his armour, in an uncomfortable position, by the side of the road.
26. A belligerent drunk wanders into the group's path demanding alcohol, money and to marry their horse.
27. A meteorite crashes to earth in the middle of the road.
28. The party find a child at the base of a tree trying to rescue a cat caught high in the branches. While the party's attention is diverted upward the little pickpocket goes to work.
29. A pleasant and polite gentleman in a smart carriage stops the party for directions and news of the road. But in the trunk lashed to the back the party hear children crying.
30. A group of bandits arguing and blaming each other over the chest of something useless they just stole (feather dusters, mouse-traps, fishing weights).

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31. A prison work-gang and their guards are rebuilding part of the road. The convicts use the arrival of the party as an opportunity for escape.
32. A cave next to a mountain trail has a merry fire crackling and a pot of stew bubbling away, but no sign of occupants.
33. The party find a trail of gold coins leading off the path.
34. A majestic elk sprints past with something golden caught in its antlers.
35. On a wooded trail, just around a turn in the road, a rope has been strung between two trees high enough to catch a mounted rider. A horse, still saddled, grazes nearby and there's blood smeared on a nearby tree.
36. The party starts finding neatly severed body parts discarded on the road. An ear, then a finger, then a tongue.
37. A table on the roadside holds a large basket of fresh vegetables. A sign reads "1 copper a bunch: honesty is a virtue!"
38. On a desert trail, an oasis appears with several recently-dead animals lying around the water hole.
39. At a river with slightly submerged ford, a sign reads "Ware the Greenteeth."
40. At a rushing river, a ferry can be seen midstream with a vicious battle happening on deck.
41. At a river, a sign reads "Bridge out" but the bridge is still there and seems intact.
42. In an area of volcanic springs, clouds of venting steam and jets of boiling sulfurous water burst from the ground.
43. When at the bottom of a steep sloping road, there is a rumble and a large boulder comes rushing toward the PCs. When the rock finally stops, the group spots old bloodstains and a kill-score carved into the side.
44. After camping for the night on the roadside, the party wakes to find a field of sweet-smelling flowers has grown up around them.
45. A mud slide threatens to sweep the party into a swollen river.
46. A sudden rain of fish, frogs, worms or other creature.
47. A young dog or other creature decides to playfully follow the party.
48. A large, iron-banded chest lies half buried in mud, as if it fell off the back of a wagon.
49. A small group of kneeling, lifelike statues, frozen in fear or supplication.

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50. A toll-booth with guard and an official Inspector who wants to confiscate something strange or valuable.
51. A sign says, "Kittens: Free to Good Home" with a box beneath. There is one kitten left.
52. A row of severed heads on spikes and a warning sign claiming, "Dis Rode Belong Garg"
53. A stand-off between a squad of soldiers and a band of political rebels.
54. A band of children, hungry and footsore, who earnestly claim to be on a crusade to the Holy Land.
55. Unusually verdant and overgrown patch of road, with bandits wrapped up in vines begging to be let free.
56. The road is filled with giant potholes. Sounds of scratching and scuffling come from one of the pits.
57. A roc/dragon/flying carpet speeds overhead and drops something glinting into the wilderness near the road.
58. A dancing cloud of will-o-the-wisps or fireflies leads a hypnotized traveller.
59. An old woodsman, with a broken axe nearby and a hastily bandaged and bleeding leg, slumps against a tree trunk.
60. A travelling salesman and his gaudy cart, complete with fast-talking snake-oil offers and a dancing monkey.
61. A large chunk of ornate (and possibly foreign) masonry blocks the road, with signs it recently fell out of the sky.
62. A new sign pointing down a narrow path off the road saying, "Fresh Berries - Pick Your Own."
63. A wagon bogged in the mud, with a cursing merchant and harried teamsters.
64. The road forks around a monolith, statue or war memorial. The stone has been recently daubed with occult symbols in fresh blood.
65. A pile of discarded clothing and equipment on the verge, and laughter coming from the trees nearby.
66. A lost child cries on the side of the road.
67. A pack of starving wolves fights over the body of a lone traveller.
68. A band of lepers or plague-carriers on their way to a nearby spring with supposed healing properties.

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69. A widow/widower and children planting a tree/flowers for their loved one, who died on the road.
70. A group of drunk young noblemen pass the PCs, racing their expensive horses.
71. A group of pilgrims travel to a holy site.
72. A memorial avenue of trees commemorates a long-forgotten war.
73. A burnt-out toll-station, with the murdered bodies of the toll inspectors still scattered around.
74. A fallen-tree bridge over a stream turns out, while the group is halfway across, to be a mired treant.
75. The group meet an uncannily similar party of adventurers going the opposite way.
76. The group is followed from the last town by a band of children who want to go on adventures with them.
77. A battle-scarred and seasoned warrior crashes from the undergrowth and screams, "Run! For the love of the Gods! They're coming!" and races terrified down the road.
78. A zombie or other mindless undead is stuck in a hole on the side of the road. It is wearing the signet ring and other identifying equipment of a nearby ruler's only child the party knew and liked.
79. After defeating a large but perfectly mundane animal on the road, the corpse hisses steam and opens up and a rather sweaty and oil-streaked gnome crawls out.
80. A paved road recently rebuilt with stone from nearby ruins. The group notices some stones are carved with odd patterns. Put together, the patterns make up a mural showing the location of a valuable treasure/dungeon/great monster.
81. The road widens at the top of a hill into a large, paved plaza covered with stone statues. Two nearby giants ask the group if they'd mind stopping for a while and being a part of their chess game, as they're missing some pieces.
82. A surly man with a crossbow sits at the mouth of a covered bridge, the only river crossing for miles. He offers to guide the group safely through the short, straight, empty tunnel of the bridge for a fee.
83. A ranger stops by the group's camp one night and gives them advice on the trail ahead, places to camp and a tavern where they can get good rates if they mention his name. All his advice is good, but when they mention his name at the tavern, they're told he died years ago on that very road.
84. A pompous noble stands in the road, flogging and shouting at his injured horse.



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85. The party see a mass of crows circling above a known safe haven/tavern/camping spot that lies just ahead, and the smell of smoke and roast meat hangs in the air.
86. A tall rock overlooks the road. As the group passes, a filthy hermit babble prophecies and throws rotten food at them.
87. An elderly woman wanders the verge of the road, bent double and carrying a basket of foraged produce. She asks the party for a ride on their wagon to ease her tired feet.
88. A pay-wagon heading for a nearby army trundles past, with not quite enough guards to challenge the party.
89. A rider stops to ask for hurried directions. The rider thanks them and races ahead. When the PCs reach the next town, fresh Wanted posters are being nailed up with the group's faces sketched on and accusations of heinous crimes in the last town back. The locals all stare at the PCs.
90. The group arrives late at night at a tiny village straddling the road. They secure accommodation and food from the friendly locals and fall asleep. In the morning the village is empty and ruined, as if abandoned years ago.
91. The group leaves a town they've helped/saved/rescued and head off down the road. Just out of town the grateful locals jump out and surprise them with an unexpected picnic celebration.
92. A voice from the bushes by the road shouts, "We have you surrounded, Torvik! Your villainy ends here!" But who's Torvik?
93. A young woman with a crying baby wrapped in a shawl is hotly pursued by a band of rough-looking men.
94. The group comes upon the scene of a recent grisly carriage accident, or witnesses it ahead of them on the road.
95. After one of the group treads in something sticky, animals start following the character with curious interest.
96. A beehive buzzes angrily on a branch overhanging the road, and beneath it a figure lies gasping and puffy with dozens of stings.
97. A band of foreigners/non-humans in garb the group don't recognise halt the PCs and ask urgent questions in a language nobody understands.
98. A member of a hostile race flags down the group with a white cloth and offers to surrender to them and reveal secrets in exchange for protection from its own people.
99. Someone has scattered caltrops across the road.

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100. The road is rigged with an obvious and clumsily/hastily made trap. The PCs can hear drunken giggling from the undergrowth.

### **Bonus: d100 More Ideas**

Hey, here's another 100 just because you can never have enough ideas!

101. A burned cart rests in the center of the road. On the body of the driver (or rider) is an urgent message for one of the PCs.

102. The party falls in with a group traveling to a religious shrine. Eventually, the party becomes aware these are actually members of an opposing religion who plan to desecrate the shrine.

103. The party takes down a stag for venison, but the stag is protected. It is one of the deer kept by a group of druids and their worshipers, who begin to hunt down the party with plans for dealing with them.

104. A group of people stand around a burned corpse nervously looking at each other, then in the PCs' direction. Some try to quickly leave the scene while the more brave and curious continue to wait for the PCs' approach.

105. An old man in outdated-looking armor approaches the party on horseback. He accuses a PC of being a half-orc and challenges them to a fight. Closer inspection reveals some of his kit to be fake - his helm is just a bowl.

106. It appears travellers here have two choices. The high road (plagued by giants) or the low road (plagued by lizard men).

107. At the head of the valley, a dam bursts, giving the party only moments to find safety before the flood waters arrive.

108. A nearby summoning ritual has gone awry and a demon rampages across the road.

109. The road goes through a canyon bog filled with toxic, flammable gas.

110. Just ahead, a huge tree trunk flies across the road and crashes down on the other side. A giant dog chases after.

111. Two groups of pilgrims from rival faiths block the road as they engage in aggressive debate. Each side appeals to the heroes for help.

112. A noble, disguised as a filthy beggar, tests the party's compassion and generosity. If they pass whatever standard he's set, then he becomes a source of various quests that require personal sacrifice to accomplish.

113. Two precocious children offer to buff shields or dust boots for money. They follow PCs at a distance calling them names if rebuffed.

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114. A tearful family of wandering merchants block the road. Their youngest son has run into the "haunted forest" and are too scared to rescue him.
115. A band of travelling minstrels challenge the wisest looking member of the party to a storytelling contest.
116. A group of nomadic vagabonds approach in brightly painted wagons. A cousin of one of the PCs travels with the nomads. The cousin wants to see the world, but the PC knows her family would want her back.
117. A wandering soothsayer demands a contest of will before revealing a prophecy.
118. A scared group of travellers huddle on a small bridge. The group explains that bandits in the woods beyond the river have stolen everything they have. As the PCs cross the bridge, they are ambushed by bandits hiding under the narrow bridge. The "scared" group are part of the bandit gang.
119. An impossibly tall ladder rests against the branch of a tree, its top vanishing into the low clouds.
120. A lost child sobs beneath an oak tree.
121. Two ranks of royal guard form between you and an oncoming procession, allowing the large entourage and perhaps the king himself - difficult to say with all the covered carriages - to pass by.
122. Two score ragged men and women file by, dirty, eyes cast down, necks chained together in a line, as a slave driver and his men drive them forth to the next city.
123. Eying you warily, another party of adventurers allows you wide berth as they try to make their way around you.
124. A man in rags walks listlessly towards you, trailing a three foot chain locked to one of his ankles. If questioned, he relates a sad tale of injustice at the hands of his soulless captors.
125. A beautiful woman, adorned in the robes of an enchantress, emerges from hiding near the road and implores you to lend her aid.
126. A mass of small birds swoop from the sky and begin murderously pecking and slashing your faces.
127. At least three days from anywhere, your party finds a huddle of colorful tents and wagons, with gypsies about them, observing your approach in an appraising fashion.
128. A structure looms above the trees as you pass. A guard tower formed of rough hewn timber breaks above the treetops.

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129. Near the road is a mound the size of a grave, obviously of recent excavation, marked at its head by an upright stake.
130. Smoke starts billowing up from just over the next hill.
131. A necromancer uses his talents to animate animal and human corpses and forces them to perform in a roadside circus. The creepy part is townsfolk from a nearby village seem to enjoy the show a bit too much.
132. A damaged slaver wagon sinks swiftly into the marsh. Tethered hostages struggle frantically to escape.
133. The broken hull of a lost ship beckons absurdly from the forest edge.
134. Wayward pilgrims stand enthralled on an old church road as two epic bards have a musical duel.
135. Elemental storms churn ceaselessly around the battle-scared ruin of an ancient shrine.
136. As bandits attack, the PCs realize a friend of theirs is among the robbers.
137. As you get the roadside campfire going and put on the pot of beans, the party is surprised by the manifestation of a number of ghostly travellers, silently staring into the fire and attempting to warm their extended, translucent hands.
138. The party finds dozens of poor souls buried up to their necks in the road. So dense are these heads crowded together that should the party attempt to pass through, the heads assault their ankles and feet with bites.
139. A great number of frogs appear from the heavens and crash down among the party members. If examined closely, the party finds a gold piece in the belly of each frog.
140. A great green djinn sits dejectedly upon a rock alongside the road. When pressed or plied for favors, the djinn instead tells the party a story of his part in an ill-fated love triangle.
141. In a slight depression in the road, the party hears a sudden rushing noise, and looks up to see a seven foot high flash flood bearing down upon them.
142. The road leads through a tunnel. Halfway through, the party finds a major wall and roof collapse revealing a large passage running adjacent to the road, with flickering lights visible further in.
143. The road cuts through a mountainside by means of a tunnel. Partway through, an underground river has broken through to cut across the path, its strong current challenging your progress with roaring rapids in the darkness.

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144. Uneasily, you pass a moonlit graveyard far out in the countryside. You travel in silence until a plaintive child's wail pierces the night, coming from among the gloomy tombstones.
145. You travel at night under a new moon. Your party's scout points up at the sky, where traditionally stationary constellations swirl about as if stirred by a cosmic spoon.
146. You traverse a darkened path through light woods, a glowing chariot appears above the trees to one side.
147. Golden eyes follow the party in the distance and a howl is let loose as either a warning or a beckoning.
148. The PCs wake up to find their campsite has been ransacked. None of their normal gear is missing but their items are strewn everywhere (perhaps an important quest item is missing). A search reveals tiny fey footprints all over the campsite, and fairy laughter is heard nearby. This side quest would involve no combat, but would be rife with traps and dangerous illusions that would cover deadly traps.
149. A crazy backwoods secessionist has made up his own country, with its own legal system and economy only he uses. He's a fairly powerful hedge wizard, and demands the PCs obey his laws.
150. A startled and disheveled merchant approaches and warns you to be careful of the road up ahead. He tells you a large number of locals have taken to harassing and, in some cases, robbing all who travel the new road that bypasses their town. Apparently, they are upset about the dwindling trade from people bypassing their town and have decided to take matters into their own hands.
151. The road becomes a crumbling spiral staircase that scales a cliff.
152. The road before you becomes paved with smooth, shiny cobblestones. A tremor runs the length of the road and too late you realize what you mistook for cobblestones are actually the scales of a giant serpent.
153. A leathery-faced farmer asks for help. He runs a successful bee farm and produces the best honey in the land...or he did. Yesterday he purchased a new queen bee, but after gorging herself on the farmer's existing honey overnight, the queen has grown into a giant bee and gathered the farmers' bees into an aggressive swarm that attacks anyone in the vicinity.
154. A traveler warns you to turn back as a dragon has been terrorizing the local populace. Forewarned, you slip off the road and cautiously advance. It is then you find dragon tracks heading east, but strangely, after each dragon print lies a small puddle of oil.

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155. A tree of local renown, the Old King, stands atop a nearby knoll. The ancient tree is withered and gnarled, but legend says the boon of the gods is granted to any who offer it a blood sacrifice.
156. You decide to camp not far from the roadside, but while setting up, a ghost rises up and tries to possess you. (If successful, the PC runs off into the night, leading the party to a cave-in that claimed the ghosts' life, hoping the party will complete his long forgotten quest and allow his spirit to rest. If the possession fails, he beckons the party to follow. If they do not, he flies into a rage and attacks.)
157. A couple has chosen a small glade along the road for their wedding. However, the bride is weeping and the wedding party is frantically scouring the grassy area, for it seems the ring has been lost or maybe stolen.
158. A disreputable merchant has set up a road stall that sells pies. Unfortunately, the pies are made with rotten meat, and whilst the pies taste fine, all who eat them become violently ill.
159. Outside the entrance to a silver mine, a group of protesters wave signs and shout racial slurs about dwarves stealing human jobs. As you watch, a group of dwarves entering the mine is set upon by some of the protestors.
160. A young couple feverishly digs alongside the road, bickering all the while. It seems they're after something valuable buried by the road.
161. Off to one side of the road you see a patch of glowing, flowering plants nobody recognizes.
162. The PCs encounter the corpse of a rare monster.
163. A traveler with the PCs slowly becomes undead.
164. A vampire hunter seeks to temporarily join the team, warning of the dangers of his prey. Is the hunter actually the vampire?
165. A military force tracks a fugitive and insists on searching the PCs' retinue.
166. A small community in the middle of the hostile wilderness looks like a good place to stop. The morale there is kept high by a preacher. It is unknown what motives the preacher has.
167. The PCs encounter a cattle stampede. The stampede is nearby but no threat. The PCs are blamed for causing the stampede by the chasing cowboys.
168. The PCs come to a rough and crumbly road. The ground was disturbed recently by a bulette and the PCs may fall into an empty tunnel, an occupied tunnel (by the bulette or something taking advantage of the tunnel), or just find the road travel difficult.

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169. Gnomes decide to test a new contraption near your camp. It's not such a surprise on this side of the world, but this early in the morning? Time to put a crossbow bolt in a gnome's rear side.
170. A thin, elderly man hands out copper pieces to every child that walks by. Turns out he is the King. A small gesture to promote his good standing with the people. People who have started to think the old king is growing soft and cold hearted.
171. Three types of meat hang on a spit over a campfire in a makeshift camp. You try to convince yourself that it is indeed animal and not humanoid that sits above the open flames.
172. A militia practices their ranging with a local catapult. For fun, a few decide to launch themselves into the lake beside the road. Looks like fun, maybe they are willing to share their new toy.
173. The road is lined with criminals chained to stocks, with only hands and heads poking through. A visible punishment for wrongdoers. Many of the criminals shout they are innocent. Is this land corrupt or are the laws justly doled out here?
174. A coven of witches march along the hill's top path as the sun drops below the horizon.
175. An old witch collects herbs from the bushes along the roadside while her cat educates passersby about the dangers of herbal medicines.
176. A field of kites litter the sky, their strings streaming down into a valley hamlet below.
177. A trail of blood leads from the road to a nearby barn.
178. An elf of questionable morality offers free potions to all who pass through the elf woods.
179. A dirt dwarf crawls out from the local dump sprawling across the road. The smell is putrid.
180. In the distance you can hear the music and dancing of the local brothel. Home to the most beautiful ogres and bearded dwarf women in the land. Take your pick.
181. Footprints filled with burning flames cross your path. Fire giant?
182. Large, strong arms wrap around a tree beside you and rip it from the ground, roots and all.
183. An ogre strides from the wilderness, offering his services as guide and bodyguard on a dangerous stretch of road. If paid, he serves admirably and departs. If attacked, he signals others of his band hidden nearby and they swarm to attack.
184. Gnomes hold yard sale.

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185. A travelling peddler sells curses.
186. A path from the road leads to a collapsed house overgrown with foliage.
187. A collie stands in the middle of the road, it awaits the PCs and then tries to lead them somewhere. The dog leads them to an abandoned well in the woods. Ideas for the well: It leads to a dungeon with the collie's lost master trapped inside. Or "Timmy" is a troll using the dog to lead prey to his well.
188. It is dark and a commoner stands next to a wagon with a torch, yelling a woman's name and begging her to come back. After a fight over something stupid, like when to camp for the night, she stomped off into the dark woods. The twist: his wife is a visibly obvious monster (like a giantess or centaur).
189. As you turn the corner, a dwarf and elf are standing over a stack of goblin corpses. They argue over the kill count. For a twist, change to a hobgoblin and orc, standing over dwarf or elf corpses.
190. On the side of the road an old man and woman yell at each other about who forgot to pack lunch.
191. A knight of a holy church and his retinue have ridden out on a holy crusade against evil and demand others who serve the cause of good to join their cause on the spot.
192. Many years of spilled blood at a contested crossroads has lent the road itself a dark sentience. Those who camp nearby suffer nightmares and the attacks of evil ghosts.
193. You pass an inn at a crossroads when a sudden blast tears away the wall.
194. Kobolds attack a merchant's wagon. Two kobolds attack the door with hatchets. The door blows open and a kobold is thrown out of the wagon. A dwarf appears in the doorway, brandishing a hammer. The dwarven merchant has purchased some of the kobold tribes' eggs, which were stolen from their lair yesterday by an opportunistic rogue. The kobolds have tracked the eggs to the wagon, killing the rogue en route a few miles away.
195. Ahead, on the side of the road, sits a man, apparently a farmer. In his hands is a shredded blue dress, the size of a child and he clutches it to his chest, sobbing. Behind him is the smoldering ruins of a farmhouse.
196. A dead horse, in full tack, lies dead in a ditch. The saddle bags are full of adventuring equipment, a few gems, a gilded goblet, and a map to what appears to be a treasure trove. cursory examination shows signs of a struggle and drag marks leading further off the road.
197. A wagon ahead has overturned. It appears to have been carrying four large metal containers that are now scattered about. The driver lies dead, some wicked



pustules marking his exposed skin. One of the containers looks like it might be leaking some sort of liquid.

198. A wizard lies slain in the road, his insane Homunculus protects his body and belongings, swearing vengeance on all who disturb the corpse.
199. In need of food and shelter from the elements (or from enemies), the characters come to a ruined tower full of revelling adventurers. But the Rules of the House say no one may enter until they have entertained the rabble with a rousing tale.
200. Two young nobles recklessly race carriages along the road, heading straight for you.

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