

Scene 2: Brinestump

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SITUATION

Brinestump Marsh. Southwest of Sandpoint. The Licktoad village is behind them. The ship is somewhere ahead.

NARRATION

The village celebration noise drops away fast. Marsh absorbs sound that way — one moment there are torches and cheering, the next there is mud and the smell of standing water and the dark pressing in from every direction.

Eight goblins. One direction: forward.

The path to the shipwreck runs along the south bank of a creek. One mile, roughly. An hour, if nothing happens.

Nothing in Brinestump is interested in letting nothing happen.

[BEAT: departure — village behind them, marsh ahead]

NARRATION

The route is known in the broad sense: follow the creek, find the coast, find the ship. The details are the problem. Brinestump's details are: knee-deep water where the ground pretends to be solid, trees that close overhead until the sky is just a suggestion, and the specific quality of silence that means something heard you first.

Sneaky Scorch moves differently out here. Less waiting, more watching.

Frizzel Brizzel ranges ahead — close enough to stay in contact, far enough to be useful.

Bubble Bomb's vials have stopped rattling. She's holding them still by hand.

[BEAT: the marsh, moving through it]

[GAMEPLAY: Marsh approach traversal. Environmental hazards and navigation to the spider encounter.]

NARRATION

Halfway to the coast, the treetops stop being just treetops.

Something very large has built a home up there — a deadfall of old trees 200 feet south of the creek, webbing thick enough to hold weight that isn't supposed to be held. Things wrapped and hanging. Some of the things are goblin-shaped.

She comes down when she is ready.

Her name, if spiders have names and this one definitely has a name, is Lotslegs Eat Goblin Babies Many.

She has opinions about goblins using this path.

[BEAT: the spider descends]

[GAMEPLAY: Lotslegs Eat Goblin Babies Many encounter. Giant spider, CR 1. Her lair — the deadfall, 200 feet south of the creek — contains wrapped bodies and salvageable valuables.]

NARRATION

Shvub-Mah moves through the fight the way he moves through everything: with an awareness of exactly where the floor is and exactly how far each leap carries. The spider loses track of him once.

That is the last mistake she makes.

Bubble Bomb contributes something that explodes. This is also true of most situations.

The spider loses.

[BEAT: Lotslegs dead — the deadfall lair visible]

[GAMEPLAY: *Optional — search the lair. Wrapped bodies, valuables.*]

NARRATION

The creek continues. So do they.

The next problem is the water.

The creek, which was a creek, has widened into something that doesn't have a convenient name and requires a decision. The current is present. The bottom, where there is one, is not visible. Going around would add time and marsh the route doesn't provide a good way around.

Rrrahah Bäähh is in the water first. This is how it goes.

[BEAT: the river crossing]

[GAMEPLAY: *River crossing — skill checks. Rrrahah Bäähh assists another character. Someone nearly drowns. Not a fight — navigation.*]

NARRATION

Everyone gets across.

Getting across is not the same as getting across cleanly. The marsh notes the difference.

Then the crocodile.

The crocodile does not ask questions or announce itself. It is simply present and interested, and then it is a fight, in brown water, with the mud giving way underfoot at the worst possible moments.

[BEAT: crocodile]

[GAMEPLAY: Crocodile encounter. In-water or shoreline. Original campaign content — no module source.]

NARRATION

The crocodile also loses.

At some point, the marsh opens up. The trees pull back. The ground goes from mud to sand and the smell changes — salt instead of rot, open instead of closed. The coast.

The ship is out there somewhere. The sun is gone.

[BEAT: emerging onto the coast — dark, open, the sea ahead]

NARRATION

They make camp on the beach.

No walls. No roof. The dark off the water moves in a way that marsh dark doesn't. Out here things come from the open rather than from behind trees, which is a different kind of problem.

They post no real watch. This is consistent with being goblins.

Things come out of the dark anyway.

By morning all eight are still present.

This counts.

[BEAT: night camp — morning]

[GAMEPLAY: Beach camp — night encounter(s). Original campaign content. Scope and number of encounters at Game Designer's discretion. Scene hands off here. The ship is the next scene.]

[END OF SCENE — transitions to: the Kaijitsu Star]

Scene Notes for Downstream Agents

Art Director:

- Departure beat: the village torchlight behind them, swallowed by marsh within a few steps. The transition from warm light to wet dark should happen fast — one image does it.
- The spider: treetop web silhouette visible before she descends. The wrapped hanging shapes in the trees read before the spider does. Her lair, the deadfall, is a pile of old timber and web 200 feet south of the creek.
- River crossing: brown water, no visible bottom, eight goblins at various stages of crossing. Rrrahah Bäähh's teeth and size are visible in the water. This is ugly movement, not graceful.
- Crocodile: it arrives from below, not from the bank. The water and footing are part of the fight.
- Beach emergence: hard tonal shift — open sky, sand, the sea visible for the first time. The compressed marsh dark gives way to open coastal dark. It should feel like breathing out.
- Night camp: figures on sand, nothing around them, the sea at one edge and open dark everywhere else. The things that come out of the dark are silhouettes first.

Composer:

- Marsh traversal: low, wet, ambient. Rhythm underneath rather than melody. Tension that does not resolve.
- Spider arrival: sudden, not telegraphed. She comes down fast. The music should match — no build, just presence.
- Spider fight: chaotic, brief, resolved. The explosion moment (Bubble Bomb) has a comedic spike.
- River crossing: slower, effortful. The near-drowning moment should pull the tension out of comedic register into something briefly real.
- Crocodile: back to chaos. Water sounds physically present in the mix.
- Beach emergence: tonal release. First open air, first sea sound. The relief doesn't last.
- Night camp: sparse, coastal, wide. The camp fire small in a lot of dark. Whatever comes out of the dark — the music knows before the goblins do.

Game Designer:

- This scene contains three encounter slots: spider, river crossing, crocodile. Each is a discrete gameplay beat with a narration frame before and after.
 - The spider lair is an optional exploration beat — flagged for loot if the player chooses to search.
 - River crossing is a non-combat skill challenge, not a fight. Rrrahah Bäähh's assist mechanic should have a narrative hook here (he saves someone).
 - The beach camp is an open encounter block — number and type of night encounters are Game Designer's call. Scene hands off fully at that point.
 - Pacing note: three encounters in one traversal scene is the maximum before it feels like a slog. If the beach camp runs long, consider treating it as its own scene.
 - The spider's name (Lotslegs Eat Goblin Babies Many) should appear somewhere the player can read it — enemy nameplate, bestiary entry, something. It is too good to leave in the background.
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