

BIS6-03

Back Taxes

A One-Round D&D® LIVING GREYHAWK™ Bissel Regional Adventure

Version 1.0

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A clerk at the Department of Tax Collection has discovered that the makers of Barrier Brew haven't paid their taxes in years. During the Ketite occupation records were misplaced and this oversight is just now coming to light. How will the Medigkin clan react to this news? How will you fair as a tax collector? A Bissel regional adventure for APLs 2-12, and Part 3 of the *Rebuilding the March* series.

Based on the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® rules created by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson and the new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game designed by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Richard Baker, and Peter Adkison.

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For questions specific to this document and your region please e-mail your triad point of contact (POC) at jay@viceandvillainy.org. For LIVING GREYHAWK campaign questions email rpgahq@wizards.com.

RPGA SANCTIONED PLAY

Most likely you ordered this adventure as part of an RPGA even from the RPGA website, or you received it from your senior gamemaster. To play this adventure as part of the LIVING GREYHAWK campaign—a worldwide, ongoing D&D campaign set in the GREYHAWK setting—you must sanction it as part of an RPGA event. This event could be as elaborate as a big convention, or as simple as a group of friends meeting at the DM's house.

To sanction an RPGA event, you must be at least a HERALD-LEVEL gamemaster. The person who sanctions the event is called the senior gamemaster, and is in charge of making sure the event is sanctioned before play, runs smoothly on the date sanctioned, and then reported back to the RPGA in a timely manner. The person who runs the game is called the table Dungeon Master (or usually just DM). Sometimes (and almost all the time in the cases of home events) the senior gamemaster is also the table DM. You don't have to be a HERALD-LEVEL GM to run this adventure if you are not the senior GM.

By sanctioning and reporting this adventure you accomplish a couple of things. First it is an official game, and you can use the AR to advance your LIVING GREYHAWK character. Second player and DMs gain rewards for sanctioned RPGA play if they are members of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS REWARDS program. Playing this adventure is worth two (2) points.

This adventure retires from RPGA-sanctioned play on December 31, 2007.

To learn more about the LIVING GREYHAWK character creation and development, RPGA event sanctioning, and DUNGEONS & DRAGONS REWARDS, visit the RPGA website at www.rpga.com.

PLAYERS READ NO FARTHER

If you are planning on playing this adventure, stop reading now. The rest of the information in this adventure is for the DM only. If you read farther than this section, you'll know too much about its challenges, which kills the fun. Also, if you're playing this adventure as part of an RPGA-sanctioned event, reading beyond this point makes you ineligible to do so.

PREPARING FOR PLAY

To get the most out of this adventure, you need copies of the following D&D books: *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and the *Monster Manual*.

Throughout this adventure, text in ***bold italics*** provides player information for you to paraphrase or read aloud when appropriate. Sidebars contain important information for you, including special instruction on

running the adventure. Information on nonplayer characters (NPCs) and monsters appear in abbreviated form in the adventure text. Full information on NPCs and monsters are given in the *Appendices*.

Along with this adventure you'll find a RPGA Table Tracking sheet. If you're playing this adventure as part of an RPGA-sanctioned event, complete and turn in this sheet to your senior GM directly after play. You'll also find a LIVING GREYHAWK Adventure Record (AR).

LIVING GREYHAWK LEVELS OF PLAY

Because players bring their own characters to LIVING GREYHAWK games, this adventure's challenges are proportionate to the modified average character level of the PCs participating in the adventure. To determine this modified Average Party Level (APL) follow the steps below:

1. Determine the character level for each of the PCs participating in the adventure.
2. If PCs bring animals that have been trained for combat (most likely dogs trained for war), other than those brought by virtue of a class ability (such as animal companions, familiars paladin's mounts) or the warhorse of a character with the Mounted Combat feat, use the sidebar chart to determine the number of levels you add to the sum of step one. Add each character's animals separately. A single PC may only bring four or fewer animals of this type, and animals with different CRs are added separately.
3. Sum the results of step 1 and 2, and divide by the number of characters playing in the adventure. Round to the nearest whole number.
4. If you are running a table of six PCs, add one to that average.

Throughout this adventure, APLs categorize the level of challenge the PCs face. APLs are given in even-numbered increments. If the APL of your group falls on an odd number, ask them before the adventure begins whether they would like to play a harder or easier adventure. Based on their choice, use either the higher or the lower adjacent APL.

APL also affects the amount of experience and gold a PC can gain at the end of the adventure. If a player character is three character levels or more either higher or lower than the APL at which this adventure is being played, that character receives only one-half of the experience points and gold for the adventure. This simulates the fact that either the PC was not challenged as much as normal or relied on help by higher-level characters to reach the objectives.

Furthermore, a PC who is four or more levels higher than the highest APL supported by the adventure may not play the adventure.

Mundane Animals Effect on APL		# of Animals			
		1	2	3	4
CR of Animal	1/4 & 1/6	0	0	0	1
	1/3 & 1/2	0	0	1	1
	1	1	1	2	3
	2	2	3	4	5
	3	3	4	5	6
	4	4	6	7	8
	5	5	7	8	9
	6	6	8	9	10
	7	7	9	10	11

LIVING GREYHAWK adventures are designed for APL 2 and higher. Four or five 1st-level characters may find the challenge of an APL 2 adventure difficult. Suggest the following to these groups to help increase their chances of success:

1. Enlist a sixth player.
2. Advise characters to buy riding dogs to help protect them, and fight for them.

TIME UNITS AND UPKEEP

This is a standard one-round Regional adventure, set in Bissel. Characters native to Bissel pay one Time Unit per round, all others pay two Time Units per round.

Adventurer's Standard Upkeep costs 12 gp per Time Unit. Rich Upkeep costs 50 gp per Time Unit. Luxury Upkeep costs 100 gp per Time Unit. Characters that fail to pay at least Standard Upkeep will retain temporary ability damage until the next adventure, must buy new spell component pouches and healer's kits, and may suffer other in-game penalties (or possibly gain in-game benefits) as may be detailed in this adventure.

A character who does not pay for at least Standard Upkeep may also avoid the above-described penalties by living off the wild. If the character possesses four or more ranks in the Survival skill and succeeds at a Survival check (DC 20), the character will heal temporary ability damage as if he or she paid for Standard Upkeep, may refill spell component pouches and healer's kits, and may restock up to 20 arrows or bolts if the character has at least four ranks in Craft (bowmaking). The player is allowed to Take 10 on this roll.

More information about Lifestyle and Upkeep can be found in the "Lifestyle and Upkeep" section of Chapter 3 of the LIVING GREYHAWK Campaign Sourcebook.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

In CY 591 a group of adventurers were instrumental in quelling a civil war among the Dwarves of Medig's Hill, makers of Barrier Brew. In so doing, the adventurers were able to deliver the much needed Barrier Brew to the Pick and Shovel, a tavern in Ebbernant, just in time for Brewfest.

Since that time the Dwarves have been able to expand their distribution of Barrier Brew throughout Bissel and beyond. It seems the adventurers who helped the Dwarves fancied the dark, bitter beer and asked for it wherever they went. Barrier Brew is no longer a local micro-brew found only in Ebbernant. The dwarves of Medig's Hill, clan Medigkin, have grown very wealthy from their endeavors.

Before the occupation by Ket, taxes were collected annually from the dwarves of Medig's Hill. Their mining and brewing operations provided a reasonable profit from which taxes were paid. But during the occupation, tax records were lost and no one has been sent out to Medig's Hill in years.

With the move of the Bissel government back to Thornward a clerk at the Department of Tax Collection has found some old tax records, leading to the discovery that the dwarves of Medig's Hill owe Bissel years and years of back taxes.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The PCs respond to a request for help from the Department of Tax Collection. They are briefed on the situation, sworn in as officials, and sent on their way.

The trip to Medig's Hill is filled with interesting events: They find a forgotten wayside shrine in the mysterious forests of Nightwatch, they encounter some trolls guarding a river bridge, and they pay a visit to the Pick and Shovel tavern.

Arriving at the dwarven halls, they find the doors locked. They wait out their time with the monks of the Medig's Hill Monastery.

Entering Medig's Hill, they find the dwarves in the middle of choosing a new leader. They may even be able to influence the outcome.

The return trip is quiet until they reach the Nightwatch forests, where the caravan is attacked by unusual animals.

Introduction: Why Don't You Get a Job?

Estimated Time: 15 minutes

While in Thornward, the PCs learn of a job at the Department of Tax Collection. They are sworn in as tax collectors and given the task of collecting back taxes from the Dwarves of Medig's Hill.

Encounter 1: A Familiar Thornward Patrol

Estimated Time: 5 minutes

The PCs encounter a roving Nightwatch patrol in Thornward.

Encounter 2: The Sound of Silence

Estimated Time: 10 minutes

Only a few days outside Thornward, the PCs stop at an eerie wayside clearing, possibly finding a lost shrine to Fharlanghn.

Encounter 3: A Bridge over Troubled Water

Estimated Time: 30 minutes

The PCs encounter a Troll Booth at the stone bridge over the Realstream, and must deal with the inhabitants.

Encounter 4: On the Road Again

Estimated Time: 15 minutes

The PCs make their way to Dountham and then Ebberrant. They reach the Pick and Shovel in time for dinner and a song.

Encounter 5: Behind Closed Doors

Estimated Time: 5 minutes

Reaching Medig's Hill by mid-afternoon, the PCs find the entrance to the dwarven stronghold locked up tight.

Encounter 6: The Wind Beneath My Wings

Estimated Time: 15 minutes

The PCs visit the Monks of Medig's Hill and find an alternative way into the dwarven fortress.

Encounter 7: It's Five O'clock Somewhere

Estimated Time: 10 minutes

The PCs gain entrance to the Dwarves stronghold and can join in a drinking contest to determine the leader of the clan for the next five years.

Encounter 8: Breakin' the Law

Estimated Time: 15 minutes

The PCs meet the new leader of Medigkin clan, whom is inclined to pay the taxes. The PCs negotiate for payment of the back taxes.

Encounter 9: Standing Tall

Estimated Time: 15 minutes

The PCs meet the new leader of Medigkin clan, whom doesn't want to pay the taxes. The PCs negotiate for payment of the back taxes.

Encounter 10: Dire Straights

Estimated Time: 45 minutes

The caravan is attacked by dire animals during the night. A teamster is carried off into the woods.

Encounter 11: Mama, Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up To Be Dire Squirrels

Estimated Time: 40 minutes

Following the animals' tracks, the PCs encounter a much more vicious creature deeper in the woods.

Conclusion: The Boys Are Back In Town

Estimated Time: 5 minutes

The PCs catch up to the wagons and return with them to Thornward.

PREPARATION FOR PLAY

This is a role-play heavy adventure. It is important that you pay attention to the flow of time, so that you will have enough time to complete the entire scenario. As well, some role-play sections may appeal differently to particular players. Feel free to place different emphasis on different encounters to accommodate them.

Some sections will be of particular interest to players that took part in BIS1-08 Barrier Brew. Knowing this bit of information may help you know what sections to put emphasis on, to get the best response from them.

The expected running time of this adventure is 3 hours, 30 minutes. If this is running during a standard 4-hour convention slot, this allows 25 minutes for marshalling, and 5 minutes for paperwork distribution.

INTRODUCTION: WHY DON'T YOU GET A JOB?

Estimated Time: 15 minutes

This adventure begins on the 10th day of Wealsun CY 596, in the capital city of Thornward.

A traditional Istan proverb is carved into the façade of the otherwise unadorned High Temple in Thornward: "The waves will come and go, but the pond remains unmoved."

The early months of CY 596 have brought with them an air of rebirth, as the chaotic waves of recent history have begun to settle out across the March. The government has made great strides towards restoring stability, relocating the capital to the ancient metropolitan cliffs of Thornward and petitioning to join the Court of the Land. For the most part, the citizenry of Bissel seems complacent, with a few exceptions highlighting a desire for progress: The barony of Kynneret was embroiled in tense riots, until a new Baroness was appointed to fill the vacant seat. Further north, tales have

surfaced of conflicts between Great Army soldiers and refugees, displaced from the regions torn asunder in the later days of the war.

The PCs may wish to gather some information and rumors before beginning the adventure. The following are rumors they can pick up with a Gather Information check that beats the DC listed. The truth or falsehood of each rumor will be revealed with the passage of time.

DC 15

- Following the fall of Evard, the Bissel government has rapidly moved the capital back to the city of Thornward.
- Many of Evard's agents escaped from Thornward, and are living among the common citizenry. All spellcasters are required to sign an Oath of Loyalty, stating that they are not necromancers.

DC 20

- Thornward Keep is being repaired extraordinarily quickly. Full effort is being made to restore the capital to its former glory.
- The government received a delegation from the Court of the Land in the first few months of the year. The ball was attacked by a horde of undead creatures. The motive is still unknown.
- The Barony of Nightwatch has grown thick, primeval forests in the span of a few short months. This is clearly not natural.
- A number of citizens have contracted some unknown malady – they've developed odd black marks on their skin, and several have died. Accusations are flying that it is some sort of mishap that occurred while messing around with forbidden magic during Evard's reign.

DC 25

- A number of vicious animal attacks have been reported in the Nightwatch forests in the last few months.
- Lady Constance Lendel was appointed as the new baroness of Kynneret. This comes immediately after her husband died in suspicious circumstances.
- Several large refugee settlements have sprung up in northern Bissel. There have been reports of tense conflict with Great Army patrols.

DC 30

- Many of the Barons would like to seize the vacant Margrave's seat, which will be voted upon at the next Council in Sunsebb of CY 596. The wheels of politics have already begun turning, though no one can predict who will come out on top.

When they are finished with rumors, continue:

The early summer sun pours down upon the cobblestones of Thornward as you make your way through the streets of the capital. All about you are the lingering signs of reconstruction and the prospect of work seems likely.

Earlier in the day, you spotted a notice tacked to the wall of the Cock and Bull Tavern. "Seasoned Adventurers Needed", the notice read. "Apply in person, Department of Tax Collection." You read the rest of the notice, noticed the words 'travel' and 'heroic' and 'Barrier Brew', and knew that this could be the job for you.

The directions on the advertisement take you to the central square of Thornward, towards one of the many large municipal buildings that flank Thornward Keep. Arriving at an office on the 3rd floor, you are directed to a waiting room. It looks like you're not the only one who read the notice, as a small crowd is already present.

After a short wait, an impeccably-dressed woman enters, pen and ledger in hand, and begins interviewing each of you on your exploits and qualifications.

At this point, allow the PCs a few moments to briefly introduce themselves to each other. When they are finished, continue:

One of your colleagues is in the middle of recounting an anecdote from his adventuring career when a booming voice issues from the next room.

"Anise!? Are you finished with those candidates, yet?"

Your interviewer curses under her breath, and quickly scans her list before pointing to several individuals around the room.

"You... and you. Let's go..." Finally, she points at you. "And you, one more. Hurry, now!"

Entering the interior office, you see a rotund, red-faced man with a thick, waxed moustache. He is standing behind a desk glowering at the woman.

"Are these them!?! Hrmph. Very well. Close the door on your way out!"

If the PCs played BIS6-02 Seeking Refuge, they recognize this man as Colin Aurus, their employee from that adventure.

The woman leaves and gently closes the door. With an exasperated sigh, Colin Aurus collapses into a chair that threatens to crumple with every squeak.

"Now then, I am Colin Aurus, CHIEF Undersecretary to the Minister of the Exchequer. It would seem that you are the best of the best... at

whatever it is that people like you do. However, I must tell you upfront that I wary of using “outsiders” on such a sensitive matter. Never the less, it seems I must - so here is what we want from you.

I’m sure you all know of the Medig’s Hill dwarves, makers of Barrier Brew. Well, with our move to Thornward, we’ve been airing out some of our dustier records... and come to find out, the beer masters haven’t paid taxes for many years now.

The sale of Barrier Brew has become quite substantial and the reconstruction of Thornward grows more costly every month. We’d like you to travel to Medig’s Hill as representatives of the Exchequer and collect some back taxes. We’ve calculated that five wagon loads of gold ingots should just about cover what the dwarves owe – compounding interest, late charges, and various fees of course. We will provide wagons, work horses, and handlers... you just need to get them there, collect, and return.

We’d appreciate it if you could resolve this matter quickly – you know, before certain undesirable groups learn of this. Discretion is of utmost importance. We don’t want any... complications.

Do you think you can accomplish this?”

The undersecretary can relate the following information, if questioned:

- The Department will pay the PCs 50 gp each, upon successfully returning with the due back taxes.
- The project to restore Thornward as capital of the March needs the funds to continue.
- The Department has not been in touch with the dwarves, yet.
- The handlers that the Department will provide are not experienced adventurers. If they were, the department wouldn’t need the PCs.

Once the PCs agree to take on the task, continue:

Colin Aurus looks moderately pleased.

“Good. Now I’ll just need to swear you in as temporary tax collectors. Please raise your right hand and repeat after me:

I, state your name... swear by, ah, whatever god you people believe in... that I will faithfully, swiftly and accurately...carry out the duties assigned to me...by the Exchequer of Bissel... on this 10th day of Wealsun.

Colin gestures for you to lower your hand. He continues, “By the power vested in me, I now declare

you temporary tax collectors of the Department of Tax Collection.”

He hands you your traveling papers and bids you profitable endeavors.

Give the party Player Handout #1 – Notice of Assessment.

Once the PCs are done speaking with Colin, continue with Encounter 1.

All APLs

🔱 **Anise:** Female human Com1 (Bluff +0, Sense Motive +2); AL LG.

🔱 **Chief Undersecretary Colin Aurus:** Male human Ari4 (Bluff +2, Sense Motive +1); AL LN.

ENCOUNTER 1: A FAMILIAR THORNWARD PATROL

Estimated Time: 5 minutes

You and your group leave the government complex. As you make your way across the central square you note a curious group of figures approaching from the other end. They are a group of Bissel soldiers; at their head is a young captain in white clerical robes with gold trim. Clutching a pendant shaped like a face in a sunburst, the priest utters an incantation and begins to stare intently at the nearby buildings.

If the PCs can succeed at a Knowledge [religion] check (DC 10) they can identify Pelor as a Flan deity of the sun, healing, and strength. Known as the Sun Father, his clerics are popular as healers and undead hunters. His faith is popular ever since the Insurrection, when Evard’s necromancers attacked Bissel.

This is a patrol of Bissel soldiers who have been empowered to act as peacekeepers within the city of Thornward. Leading this patrol is a member of the Nightwatch, a group dedicated to hunting and destroying undead.

PCs who succeed at a Spellcraft check (DC 16) will recognize that the priest has cast a *detect undead* spell and is scanning the nearby buildings. As the PCs are about 40 feet away from the patrol, the priest will scan them also. If any PC detects as undead or carries an item with them that detects as undead, read of paraphrase the following:

The captain’s gaze lingers on you for a moment, and by the look on his face you know that his spell has found something about you he dislikes. “Stop right there,” he cries out – and he and his men begin to approach. When the patrol is close enough, the priest speaks to you. “In the name of the laws of Thornward, I charge you to answer truthfully! How long have you been in the necromancer’s service?”

Roleplay the stern questions of the Nightwatch patrol leader, but the patrol leader will be both forgiving and understanding if the PC explains that he has acquired an undead aura as a “scar” in the cause of fighting evil.

As the questioning occurs, a paladin in the patrol will use his *detect evil* spell-like ability to scan the PCs. Any PC who detects as evil or carries items that detect as evil will be questioned. Treat this the same as if the PC detected as undead.

Finally, any arcane casters will be asking to provide proof of their registration. Any PC with levels in an arcane casting class must present the judge with a signed “Oath of Loyalty” Bissel regional document. Those that refuse or have no “Oath of Loyalty” will be punished accordingly: 1st offense – 25 gp fine and 1 TU in the stocks. 2nd offense – 50 gp fine and 2 TU in the stocks. 3rd offense – loss of 50% of total character wealth and 12 TU imprisonment and interrogation on the PC's possible connections to Evard. Judges should record the infraction in the play notes section of the AR.

If no PC detect as undead or evil, the patrol will greet the PCs amiably. Then they will ask arcane casters for their proof of registration.

When the PCs are done interacting with the patrol, continue with Encounter 2.

All APLs

🔱 **Nightwatch Captain:** Male human Clr9 (Bluff +3, Sense Motive +7); AL NG.

🔱 **Nightwatch Paladin:** Male human Pal4 (Bluff +4, Sense Motive +10); AL LG.

🔱 **Nightwatch Patrolmen (6):** Male or female human War1 (Bluff +0, Sense Motive +0); AL NG.

ENCOUNTER 2: THE SOUND OF SILENCE

Estimated Time: 10 minutes

Outside of the government complex, a number of wagons are being assembled and supplied. A teamster estimates that the caravan will be prepared within an hour.

The PCs have an hour to make any special preparations. If they wish to purchase equipment or services, they are in luck – Thornward is the heart of trade in the March. They can purchase anything from the following PHB tables: Table 7-3: Trade Goods, Table 7-5: Weapons (small & medium sized), Table 7-6: Armor and Shields, Table 7-8: Goods and Services (except they can't have spells cast by NPCs). They may purchase any potion, oil, or scroll from the DMG Tables 7-17, 7-23, or 7-24 with a market price of 750 gp or less, and any standard spell components up to 2000 gp in value.

Once they have made any preparations, continue:

When you return, the caravan is prepared and waiting. A number of mounts have been prepared for those that need them. Climbing atop his own horse, the wagon master leads you out through the Watchtower Gate. Within minutes, you are on your way.

At this point, ask the PCs what their nightly watch schedule will be (i.e. who will stay awake and on guard duty, while the others sleep). Record this information, as it will come into play in Encounter 10.

The wagons each come with a teamster and two mules. On the way to Medig's Hill they each hold ten empty barrels and have a canvas covering.

The rest of the day passes quickly. You travel west through the lowlands of the Fals river valley, along the Ward Way towards Dountham.

As the sun creeps low on the horizon, you leave the valley and enter the plains of Nightwatch. As you progress further, the grassy plains give way to dense forest. The teamsters look around with looks of trepidation – these woodlands were not here just a few months ago.

If the PCs succeed at a Knowledge [nature] or Survival check (DC 10) they realize that this growth is clearly unnatural. If they succeed at a Knowledge [arcana] check (DC 15) they know that druids and rangers can influence the growth of plants, but the sheer scope of the growth here would require an impossibly large and powerful group to accomplish.

The sun rapidly disappears behind the tree cover, and the teamsters locate a suitable clearing to camp for the night. The moon is full, but barely penetrates the forest ceiling, casting a plethora of eerie shadows. As you huddle around your campfire, you can't help but feel that something is watching you.

Suddenly, there is a sound in the nearby bushes to the east – something large moving about in a hurry.

Ask the players for actions, and drum up a little paranoia. The sound was created by a pair of ordinary raccoons that are long gone by the time the PCs move to investigate.

However, there is something to find. If the PCs search around the south edge of the clearing, and succeed at a Search check (DC 20), they find a stone marker:

Hidden in the overgrown brush is a large stone marker. At the top of the marker a circle is carved into the stone. A horizontal line cuts the circle in half and there is a small crescent in the upper half.

If the PCs succeed at a Knowledge [religion] check (DC 10) they realize that this was a wayside shrine to Fharlanghn, the Oeridian deity of roads and travel.

Known as the Dweller on the Horizon, his clerics act as guides, caravan guards, and nomads.

If the PCs spend two hours clearing out the brush and overgrowth, they can restore the shrine to usefulness. They earn the *Shrine of Fharlanghn* item on the Adventure Record:

A few hours later, you stand back and admire your work. All of the brush has been cleared away from the forgotten shrine. It can now be seen clearly from the road.

Your work complete, and with no further noises in the woods, you return to your bedrolls. The rest of the night passes quickly. You sleep very soundly, and wake feeling completely refreshed.

Once the PCs are ready to proceed, continue with Encounter 3.

ENCOUNTER 3: A BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATER

Estimated Time: 30 minutes

The next morning, your caravan continues down the Ward Way. After a few hours, the primeval forest gives way back to grassy plains and hills.

Around noon, you catch your first glimpse of a stone bridge that crosses a narrow river. The teamster in the lead wagon brings it to a stop, effectively halting the caravan, and signals you to move forward. He looks confused, and is staring at something on the bridge.

Once the PCs decide to take a look, continue:

As you get closer, you see that someone, or some thing, has set up a crude shack at the edge of the bridge. It is really nothing more than some logs and branches tied together with vines, about 7 feet high. A large flat stone set on its side at the base of the structure has the following words in Common crudely scratched into it: "trul booth".

As if on cue, a tall, lumbering form emerges from the shack. The troll moves up to the front of the bridge and looks you over. Then it extends a massive clawed hand.

"Dis bridge mine. You go by, you pay troll."

The troll can be negotiated with, if the PCs can communicate adequately with it. It speaks only rough Common and Giant. It is particularly interested in shiny valuables, but doesn't know the value of civilized currency – a thousand gold coins, or a few metal shields are equivalent in its eyes. A few sacrificed mules or horses are also enough tribute to get by.

If it seems that the PCs are trying to sucker the troll, he will not hesitate to fight them. He knows that he is

bigger than the PCs and can have all of their belongings easily enough.

APL 2 (EL 3)

 **Adolescent Troll:** hp 48; see Appendix 1.

APL 4 (EL 5)

 **Troll:** hp 72; see Monster Manual, page 247.

APL 6 (EL 7)

 **Trolls (2):** hp 72 each; see Monster Manual, page 247.

APL 8 (EL 9)

 **Trolls (4):** hp 72 each; see Monster Manual, page 247.

APL 10 (EL 11)

 **Troll Hunter:** hp 144; see Monster Manual, page 247.

APL 12 (EL 13)

 **Troll Hunters (2):** hp 144 each; see Monster Manual, page 247

Tactics: The troll will straightforwardly attack, charging the nearest opponent, and attacking him until he falls. The trolls are aware that fire and acid can kill them, and will handle PCs that use them as appropriate – targeting them if they seem weak, or shying away from them if they seem unbeatable.

At APLs 6, 8, and 12 there are additional trolls hiding below the bridge.

If the PCs are using fire and acid, and it looks like the trolls will be killed, they will attempt to flee.

Treasure: Below the bridge is a small cache of treasure that the trolls have accumulated:

APL 2: L: 210 gp, C: 109 gp, M: dwarvencraft warhammer (51 gp), mithral heavy shield (85 gp).

APL 4: L: 160 gp, C: 109 gp, M: +1 mithral heavy shield (168 gp), dwarvencraft warhammer (51 gp).

APL 6: L: 110 gp, C: 109 gp, M: +1 dwarvencraft warhammer (217 gp), +1 mithral heavy shield (168 gp).

APL 8: L: 0 gp, C: 0 gp, M: +1 dwarvencraft warhammer (217 gp), +1 mithral heavy shield (168 gp), minor circlet of blasting (540 gp).

APL 10: L: 0 gp, C: 0 gp, M: +1 animated mithral heavy shield (835 gp), +1 bane (elf) dwarvencraft warhammer (717 gp), belt of dwarvenkind (1,241 gp), minor circlet of blasting (540 gp).

APL 12: L: 0 gp, C: 0 gp, M: +1 animated mithral heavy shield (835 gp), +1 bane (elf) dwarvencraft warhammer (717 gp), belt of dwarvenkind (1,241 gp), dwarven plate (1,375 gp), gauntlet of the dwarven forge (2,000 gp), minor circlet of blasting (540 gp), rod of metal and mineral detection (875 gp).

Developments: If the PCs can bribe, drive off, or kill the trolls, the caravan can bypass the river. If not, they will have to detour several days out of the way to find a fordable point. In this case, it will cost them each an extra TU on the Adventure Record.

Once the PCs bypass the river, continue with Encounter 4.

ENCOUNTER 4: ON THE ROAD AGAIN

Estimated Time: 15 minutes

An hour after your encounter at the river bridge, you arrive in the independent township of Dountham. The wagon masters stop in the Merchant Quarter to re-supply, giving you a chance to do the same.

If the PCs need to purchase mundane supplies or seek clerical aid, they have ample time. Once they are ready to move on, continue:

The next morning you make your way out of the city and head northwest along the March Road to Ebbernant. Except for some light rain, the journey is uneventful.

On the fourth day since you left the capital, the Barrier Peaks slowly grow on the horizon until they tower high above the open plains before you. A few more miles up the road the township of Ebbernant comes into view just as the sun sinks slowly behind the mountains. Just a few hours from your destination, you head into town, seeking lodging for the night.

If the PCs took part in BIS1-08 Barrier Brew, they may specifically wish to visit the Pick and Shovel. If so, continue with the following. Otherwise, continue with Encounter 4.

In the fading light, you make your way through the Merchant Quarter to a large, three-story, wooden structure with an adjoining stable and fenced yard in the back. A large shield painted with a split field of red and white with a black tower in its center is mounted just above the entranceway. A real pick and shovel are mounted on either side of the shield. You enter and find the air inside filled with the aromas of simmering stew. It appears you are just in time for dinner.

An attractive young woman in her mid-20s with long black hair leads you to an open table.

"Welcome to the Pick and Shovel. What'll it be?"

If the PCs ask for the owner, Elhadib, Opal will tell them that he is too busy to speak with them during the dinner rush.

If asked about the entertainment Opal will explain that her stepmother Asmerah will be singing a new song tonight. It is an Ode to the Fall of Evard.

Opal will encourage the PCs to order food and drink. And if any PCs are wearing the bronze Bissel Stew judge medallion from BIS1-08 Barrier Brew she will automatically bring them a large stein of Barrier Brew and a bowl of Bissel Stew on the house.

Once the PCs have interacted with Opal and their food has been served, continue with the following.

An extraordinarily beautiful Baklunish woman of about 30 years steps onto a small stage in the center of the room. The din of conversation falls away into an expectant silence. She speaks.

If any of the PCs have the bronze medallion read the following paragraph:

"Before I begin, I want to introduce you to some visiting dignitaries." She gestures towards your table. "These honored guests were here five years ago to judge our annual Bissel Stew contest. They were also instrumental in saving our shipments of Barrier Brew for Brewfest. Please, a round of applause for our heroes.

Continue for everyone with the text below:

"Tonight I will sing of the Battle under the Dome, of the heroes who fought and died, and of the vile necromancer:

What nave is this who seeks to tread upon the graves of Bissel's dead?

Who digs them up and sends them out against old friends - that lousy lout!

This, this is the Evard. The foe in black. Be on your guard!

To arms! To arms! To fight the foe. O Bissel your March is bleeding.

Evard's undead. The March runs red with blood from souls a plenty.

By valor's light we brought the fight into the walls of Thornward.

A voice rang out. That lousy lout! To ask for cowards and weaklings.

To cross the lines to join instead the evil villain's dead.

Not one brave soul, not one at all, did listen then, did heed the call."

If the PCs succeed at a Knowledge [local – Sheldomar Valley Metaregion] or Knowledge [history] check (DC 20), or Bardic Lore check (DC 24) they realize that this is revisionist history – a number of Great Army

soldiers did cross the lines and joined the necromancer during that battle.

"And as those words fell on deaf ears the dome fell on our city.

With no escape, nowhere to go, they turned the tide and laid 'em low.

Evard is dead as dead can be, no more to raise an army.

But at what cost? Who could foresee? The loss of so many, so brave and free.

They fought and flew. Their blows struck true. The soldiers and their fury.

Those who fell – forever gone, accept their fate and now move on.

To their rewards they are now led. The heavens rejoice – good times ahead.

I'll drink to them and you should too. The soldiers and their fury."

Asmerah bows and the crowd applauds.

Once the PCs are done at the Pick and Shovel, continue with Encounter 5.

All APLs

❖ **Opal Raminz:** Female human Rog5 (Bluff +4, Sense Motive +1); AL CG.

❖ **Asmerah:** Female human Brd2 (Bluff +4, Sense Motive +4); AL NG.

ENCOUNTER 5: BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

Estimated Time: 5 minutes

Waking early and getting back on the road, it is not long before Medig's Hill comes into view. More of a mountain than a hill, you are certain the wagon path and nearby stream will lead you to it directly.

By mid afternoon you are standing before the entrance to the dwarven stronghold. It is a stone fortress set into the side of the mountain. The stream you have been following flows from a metal grate set below large silvery metal doors.

For PCs that have played BIS1-08 Barrier Brew include the following paragraph:

It is obvious that the Dwarves have made some improvements in the last 5 years. Back then this entrance was little more than a rough hewn tunnel.

Continue for all PCs with this:

A stone plaque at the side of the doors reads as follows:

The Medig's Hill Brewing Company. Brewery tours available Waterday through Moonday. Closed Godsday.

One of the teamsters notices you looking at the closed doors and says, "Ah yup, them there doors is something, huh? Ah guess when ya sells as much beer as those Dwarves do, ya kin affords ta be showy."

A confused look slowly moves across his face. He scratches his head and looks at the massive closed doors. Then he looks at the wagons, and then back at the doors.

"Dag-nabit!" he exclaims. "Today's Moonday. These doors should be open." He shrugs his shoulders. "Well, what do we do now?"

This encounter can proceed in two ways:

Waiting It Out

The PCs may decide to simply camp outside until the doors are opened again. In this case, read the following:

You set up camp outside the dwarven fortress. Night passes without any change. The next morning, the huge doors creak open, and a surprised-looking dwarf looks over your group.

"Ah, All-Father keep me! You startled me – wasn't expecting anyone to be out here... what d' you want?"

If the PCs ask about the doors being closed, the dwarf will explain that the clan just elected a new leader - Medib Medigkin.

If they identify themselves, the dwarf will nod, and take them to meet with the clan leader.

When the PCs are ready to speak with the clan leader, continue with Encounter 9.

Another Way In

It is quite possible that the PCs search for another way inside. Continue with the following text:

Following the path around the mountain to the south, you find stables and a long staircase climbing the hill, leading up to a large stone building.

A robed man pokes his head out of the stables, and nods at your approach.

PCs that played BIS1-08 Barrier Brew may recognize this man as Wandering Mist, the monk they rescued from goblins five years ago.

The monk will speak with the PCs in only whispers, and pauses silently for at least three seconds before saying anything. He can provide the following information, if questioned:

- The stairs lead to the Medig's Hill Monastery.
- His peculiar speech is part of a vow he has taken, to speak no louder than the whistling wind. He will not elaborate.
- He was not aware that the dwarven fortress was closed off. The monks have particularly close relations with the dwarves. Perhaps one of the brothers can shed some light upon the situation.
- If the PCs would like to visit with the monks, they may leave their pack animals at the stables.

When the PCs are ready to head to the monastery, continue with Encounter 6.

All APLs

 **Wandering Mist:** Male human Mnk6 (Bluff +0, Sense Motive +0); AL NG.

ENCOUNTER 6: THE WIND BENEATH MY WINGS

Estimated Time: 15 minutes

The stone steps extend up into the mist that covers the mountain top. It takes quite a while to reach the temple at the summit, where the fog is heavy and the air is cool.

The temple is a large stone structure with a walled courtyard where monks train. Inside a large hall with a wooden floor allows training to continue during bad weather.

You are led to a dining hall where many monks are already seated. You are afforded seats, and food and drink are brought to each of you – a plain broth, fresh bread, and a mug of ale.

One of the robed monks makes his way over to your table, bowing deeply.

"My greetings to you, travelers. I am known as Insatiable Thirst amongst my brothers and fellows. How have you come to share life with us?"

This brother can provide the following information, if questioned:

- The monks have a close relationship with the dwarves. They often trade various sundries and crafted goods for beer and worked metal and stone items.
- The dwarves are currently going through some sort of politic issue, and closed their doors until they've sorted it out. It could be some time before the PCs could get in.
- There is another entrance to the fortress that the monks use for trading with the dwarves. After the meal, he will gladly take the PCs there. He will not

help the PCs unless they honor them by dining and drinking with them, first.

- The beer, called Medig's Hillside Heather Ale, is brewed by the dwarves from a unique flower that the monks cultivate on the mountainside. So far there has only been enough made for the monks' use, but it should be available in Ebbernant in time for Brewfest this year. This product placement is brought to you by the Medig's Hill Brewing Company, makers of Barrier Brew and soon other fine liquid refreshments. Remember, ask for the best: Medig's Hill brand beers.

These monks are very fond of the beers that come from the dwarven brew masters, and it is part of their way of life. Feel free to spice up their conversation with zen words of wisdom, such as:

- "If you don't drink in the morning, you can't be drunk all day."
- "Now that I can see two of you, you're twice as talented."
- "The optimist sees the glass half full. The pessimist sees the glass half empty. The wise man says, 'Are you going to drink that?'"
- "My friends never knew I drank until I made the mistake of showing up sober."
- "You know you've had too much when you need to lay down, lest you fall off the earth."

In particular, if a PC tries the ale, describe it as tasting nutty, with a sweet aftertaste. The ale is also remarkably potent. Have the drink make a Fortitude save (DC 20). Failure means the imbiber gags a bit while drinking it. If this happens, read the following:

Brother Insatiable Thirst smirks and shakes his head as you struggle to drink the potent beer.

"How do you expect to make any headway with the Medigkin? To them, beer is the center of the universe. If you expect to have them listen to you, you'll need to earn their respect."

He looks you all over with a careful eye. "There is much we can teach each other. When you have completed your task, I invite you to come and stay with us. We will help you find meaning in life... clarity, if you will."

By partaking of the monk's brew, the PCs now earn the Zen of the Drunken Masters item on the Adventure Record.

Once the PCs are finished with the meal, continue with Encounter 7.

All APLs

☛ **Insatiable Thirst:** Male human Mnk7 / Drunken Master4 (Bluff +3, Sense Motive +3); AL NG.

ENCOUNTER 7: IT'S FIVE O'CLOCK SOMEWHERE

Estimated Time: 10 minutes

The monks lead you down into the wine cellar of the monastery. A large, unadorned stone door fills a dusty alcove near the back of the room.

Brother Insatiable Thirst hefts a mallet, and knocks on the door three times. After a minute, the door grinds open, and several dwarves peer through the portal.

The monks and dwarves exchange greetings, and trade goods. The monks pass several stocked baskets and bushels to the dwarves, whom then roll several ale kegs into the cellar. As the Medigkin head back into the passage, your guide speaks up.

"These folks also wish an audience with your elders. They have business to discuss."

The dwarves turn to face you, and await your explanation.

Give the PCs a chance to explain themselves. As long as they don't do anything stupid, the dwarves will accept them. Continue with the following:

The dwarves nod and wave you through the door, shutting it behind you.

You find yourself in a rough-hewn cavernous tunnel paved with smooth stone blocks. The polished blocks fit together so well the surface is as smooth as glass.

One of the dwarves speaks to you as you proceed deeper into the mountain.

"We've been expecting you. I am Mede Medigkin, youngest son of Medig who is now with All Father. We've been expecting you, but there has been no consensus on what to do with you, once here."

You follow the dwarf down the passage for what must be half a mile, eventually coming to a large chamber with many stone buildings set into the walls. A pool of water gurgles near the entrance.

You are led to a massive banquet hall with tables running its full length. It seems as if every dwarf in the Medigkin clan is seated here. Mede leads you up the center of the hall to the far end where a head table is positioned under the back wall. The wall is a masterpiece of carved images and runes, but before

you have time to study it a dwarf seated at the center of the head table speaks.

"We welcome you to our clanhome. You have arrived on the Day of Endurance. Under our united clan I, Medor Medigkin, have served as clan elder for the past 5 years.

The clan must now decide whether to continue under my leadership or to install another. It would seem that my... younger... twin brother, Medib, wishes to become clan elder. He would take the clan in a different direction.

As in the before-time, the long-long-ago, we shall decide who is fit to rule our halls. We shall begin shortly, so make yourselves at home."

The elder glares across the room at his brother. "In fact, as is still my right... I welcome you to take part, as guests of the clan."

At this statement, the crowd of dwarves around his brother issue cries of outrage. He stands, and looks defiantly at the elder.

"So be it. Have Bissel's lackeys on your side. It will prove my point all the more – we don't need them, and we don't need Bissel."

This scene will play out with or without the PCs influence. Before the contest starts, the PCs can speak with both sides.

All APLs

☛ **Mede Medigkin:** Male mountain dwarf Com2 (Bluff +1, Sense Motive +1); AL LG.

The Expansionists – Medor Medigkin

Medor has been Clan Elder through the golden days of the brew master's recent history. His views can be summarized as follows:

- He was born a few minutes earlier, so technically he is THE elder.
- He believes that a single religious elder should rule the clan. Since he is the oldest and highest priest, it should be him.
- He believes that the clan should branch out and diversify their offerings, selling more than just Barrier Brew.
- He believes that the clan should employ outsiders to distribute and ship their beer. It will allow them to focus more on the beer production, and not the incidentals of doing business.
- As well, employing outside distributors will mean wider distribution, and more profit for the clan.

- He believes that some of their wealth should be spent bettering the local area, rather than spent on beautifying their halls.
- He believes that the clan should freely pay their taxes, so they will be seen as upstanding and positive citizens.

The Reactionaries – Medib Medigkin

Medib has lived in the shadow of his brother all his life. His views can be summarized as follows:

- So what if Medor was born first? They are TWINS!
- The clan should be ruled by a Council of Elders. (Sense Motive DC 15 – This is just rhetoric, he doesn't really mean this.)
- He believes that the clan should concentrate on just Barrier Brew, their traditional product. Less specialization will mean that their effort will be spread thin, and quality will decrease.
- He believes that the clan should not employ outsiders. Outsiders will not take the same care that the dwarves do in all aspects of their operation.
- As well, not employing outside distributors will mean narrower distribution, and less profit for the clan – but profit is not the most important thing in life.
- He believes that all of the clan's wealth should remain in the hands of the dwarves.
- He believes that the clan has no obligation to pay their taxes. After all, what has Bissel done to deserve a share in their profits?

The Contest

The contest consists of each member of the clan siding with one of the two candidates. Rounds of Barrier Brew are brought out, and the side with the last dwarves standing elects its candidate.

At the start, Medib easily has more dwarves on his side and will win. The PCs may wish to try and talk some of the dwarves into joining Medor's side. If they succeed at a Diplomacy check (DC 25), they can shift enough dwarves over to Medor's side such that he will win. Multiple PCs may assist on this check.

Of course, other PCs may try to convince Medor's supporters to join Medib's side. Treat these PCs as if they were assisting the above Diplomacy check, but assign a -2 penalty, instead of the normal bonus.

The PCs can also directly take part in the contest. To overcome the heartiest of the dwarves, they must succeed at ten Fortitude saves. The DC for these checks is 13 + the number of drinks previously imbibed. If the PC fails a check, they take 1d4 points of temporary ability damage

to both Dexterity and Wisdom. If either ability score reaches 0, the PC is unable to continue in the contest.

The dwarves will drop out of the contest after ten rounds. Any PCs that survive ten rounds earn the *Dwarven Drinking Stein* item on the Adventure Record. If PCs are competing on opposite sides, and outlast the clansmen, they compete until only one side remains.

It is possible for PCs to avoid the negative effects through use of magic. If the beer doesn't appear to be affecting a PC, the dwarves will notice and disqualify them for cheating.

Regardless of the winner, if a PC works to support Medor, they earn the *Favor of Medor Medigkin* on the Adventure Record. If they support Medib, they earn the *Favor of Medib Medigkin*. Neither of these favors should be given out unless that PC actively tried to influence the election. In either case, if the PC's candidate is elected, they also earn the *Influence with Medigkin Clan* item, as well.

Feel free to roleplay some dwarves passing out, throwing up on their brethren, and breaking into song. Regardless of the winner, continue with the following:

Cheers go up from the dwarves as the contest finishes, and a new Clan Elder has been declared. Mede, the youngest son, your guide from before, makes his way through the crowd to find you again.

"My brother... I mean, the new Elder... would have an audience with you, now. I am to escort you to his chambers."

If Medor Medigkin won the contest, continue with Encounter 8.

If Medib Medigkin won the contest, continue with Encounter 9.

ENCOUNTER 8: STANDING TALL

Estimated Time: 15 minutes

Your guide leads you to a room deep in the dwarven complex. It contains a long table with chairs on either side. He motions for you to sit along one side of the table.

After taking a seat opposite you, several other younger dwarves enter the room and sit beside him. Yet another dwarf enters with a keg of Barrier Brew and before a word is spoken all participants have a full mug placed before them.

As the last mug comes to rest, the new Clan Elder, Medor Medigkin stands.

"Now, I understand you have some urgent business with us – what do you need from our people?"

Allow them the chance to explain, before continuing:

Medor reads the Notice of Assessment, stone-faced and then hands it to an associate. "Five wagon loads!" he says. "This is a very serious matter, but not one that comes as a surprise to us. There have been rumors. And we are not without means to pay. But this is a tremendous amount of gold. How can we be sure you can deliver it to Thornward intact and what of its use when it gets there?"

Medor is happy to pay the back taxes. Before agreeing to it, though, he wants to make sure that the money is going to a legitimate government with the people of Bissel as its chief concern. Give the PCs a chance to assure him... but even if they can't, he will still pay.

When the PCs are finished with the clan leader, continue with Encounter 10.

All APLs

☛ **Medor Medigkin:** Male mountain dwarf Clr12 (Bluff +3, Sense Motive +3); AL LG.

ENCOUNTER 9: BREAKIN' THE LAW

Estimated Time: 15 minutes

Your guide leads you to a room deep in the dwarven complex. It contains a long table with chairs on either side. He motions for you to sit along one side of the table.

After taking a seat opposite you, several other younger dwarves enter the room and sit beside him. Yet another dwarf enters with a keg of Barrier Brew and before a word is spoken all participants have a full mug placed before them.

As the last mug comes to rest, the new Clan Elder, Medib Medigkin stands.

"Now, I understand you have some urgent business with us – what do outsiders want from our people?"

Allow them the chance to explain, before continuing:

Medib reads the Notice of Assessment, stone-faced and then hands it to an associate. "Five wagon loads!" he says. "This is an outrage... but not one that comes as a surprise. There have been rumors. And we are not without means to pay. But this is a tremendous amount of gold. What do we get for our money? What does a fortune like that buy us?"

Medib is not happy to pay the back taxes. Before agreeing to it, he wants to hear that the dwarves will gain some sort of power in the new Bissel government. Give

the PCs a chance to convince him. But if they can't, he will turn them away, empty-handed.

When the PCs are finished with the clan leader, continue with Encounter 10.

All APLs

☛ **Medib Medigkin:** Male mountain dwarf Clr7/Ftr4 (Bluff +2, Sense Motive +2); AL CG.

ENCOUNTER 10: DIRE STRAIGHTS

Estimated Time: 45 minutes

Within the hour, the wagons are laden with a fortune in gold ingots, and you are on your way back home. The return trip is relatively quiet for the first day. Then dark clouds appear on the horizon, and a fierce storm buffets you with wind and rain.

The foul weather persists even as you prepare to leave Dountham, and the plains of Nightwatch offer no shelter from the wind and rain. As you once again enter the strange primeval forests of this area, the irony hits you: as creepy as this shadowy realm has become, the miniscule refuge it provides from the elements are comforting.

The rest of this encounter proceeds depending on the PCs' actions earlier in this adventure. If they found and cleaned up the shrine in Encounter 1, proceed to 'At the Shrine'. Otherwise, continue with 'Unprotected'.

At the Shrine

Due to your diligence in restoring the abandoned wayside shrine of Fharlanghn, you are able to find it again with ease. It appears that other travelers have made use of it - more of the overgrown brush has been cleared away, and a small pile of dry firewood is waiting for you beneath a discarded traveling cloak.

Your night is amazing. Your hunters quickly catch enough food for everyone, and also report that they found a natural spring nearby. You sit around a roaring campfire, enjoying a good meal and good company. When you bed down for the night, you find the ground oddly comfortable, and drift off into a deep slumber. Even the guards, trying to keep watch over your camp, are soon dozing.

In the middle of the night, you all suddenly sit bolt upright in your beds. You'd swear that someone just jostled your shoulder, and you thought you saw an older man crouched next to you. Now that you are awake, you see no one else.

You do, however, hear the sound of several creatures, moving around in the brush at the edge of the clearing. Something in your instincts tells you to reach for your weapons.

Ask the players for their actions – these will be their surprise round actions. Remember that the PCs are all prone, and likely without weapons, armor, or spell components.

During this surprise round, the creatures will move into the clearing. The combat will begin with the creatures 30 feet away, at the edge of the clearing.

Unprotected

As the sun sets below the trees and the storm continues, it is difficult for you to find a suitable place to camp for the night. The only wood you are able to find is wet, and proves unsuitable for lighting a fire. You huddle together beneath your makeshift shelter, and choke down the rations you have brought with you. Tomorrow, you should see the walls of the capital again, and that thought tides you over.

Sleep does not come easy. The ground is hard, and the pounding wind and rain only get worse.

The party is attacked shortly after 3 am. If any PCs are awake, have them make Spot and Listen checks (DC 15). Success indicates that the PC in question may act during the surprise round. At APLs 4-12, these checks are made with a -4 penalty due to the storm.

Sleeping PCs may also attempt this check, but with a -10 penalty.

Remember that most of the PCs will be prone, and likely without weapons, armor, or spell components. Also, waking up a sleeping PC is a standard action.

Take the best skill check result from above. The combat begins with the PCs 10 feet away from their opponents, per point that the check beat the DC.

The Combat

At APLs 4-12, the ELs of this combat are adjusted by +1 to account for the environmental conditions due to the storm. The combination of wind and rain reduces visibility ranges by three-quarters, and imposes a -4 penalty on Spot, Search, and Listen checks and on ranged attack rolls. Unprotected flames are automatically extinguished, and protected flames (such as those of lanterns) have a 50% chance of being extinguished.

APL 2 (EL 5)

🐭 **Dire Rats (16):** hp 7 each; see *Monster Manual*, page 62.

APL 4 (EL 7)

🐭 **Dire Squirrels (8):** hp 14 each; see *Appendix 2*.

APL 6 (EL 9)

🐭 **Dire Badgers (8):** hp 33 each; see *Monster Manual*, page 62.

APL 8 (EL 11)

🐸 **Dire Toads (12):** hp 30 each; see *Appendix 4*.

APL 10 (EL 13)

🐍 **Dire Snakes (12):** hp 63 each; see *Appendix 5*.

APL 12 (EL 15)

🐻 **Dire Bears (12):** hp 123 each; see *Monster Manual*, page 62.

Tactics: The beasts will straightforwardly attack, charging the nearest opponent, and attacking him until he falls. The wagon crew will not fight in this combat.

Developments: If the animals manage to incapacitate a PC, and the remaining PCs retreat, the animals will not pursue. Instead, they will drag the incapacitated PCs back to their lair, where they will be slain and devoured.

Once the PCs have defeated the animals, continue to Encounter 11.

ENCOUNTER 11: MAMA, DON'T LET YOUR BABIES GROW UP TO BE DIRE SQUIRRELS

Estimated Time: 40 minutes

With a final blow, the strange beast before you falls. Others have been scared off or killed, the survivors fleeing back into the woods as fast as their legs will carry them.

Suddenly, you hear a scream from the direction they fled. The teamsters look around at each other in terror.

"They got Jorn... they got one of us! We have to save him!"

If the PCs succeed at one of the following checks, they can follow the animals to their lair:

- Search check (DC 20): They can find the drag marks from where the victim was hauled off into the woods.
- Listen check (DC 20): They can follow the sound of the victim's screams well enough to find the lair.
- Track check (DC 15): Judging from the lay of the land, and the direction of flight, they can surmise the direction that the victim is being taken.
- Scent check (DC 18): They can follow the scent of blood from one of the wounded animals.

If the PCs do not immediately head after the animals and victim – because they can't immediately make one of the checks, they stop to heal, or they otherwise act before

following – the animals will kill the victim. The PCs should be penalized XP, as noted in the Experience Point Summary.

Once the PCs manage to follow the animals back to their lair, continue with the following:

Despite the heavy rain, you manage to make your way through the woods. The sky is illuminated briefly by a flash of lightning, and you see a large gorge cut through a rocky face. A number of the strange animals glare at you from its shelter, teeth bared. Behind them, you can see the broken and unmoving form of the teamster. It is unclear if he is still breathing.

Then, the ground shakes, and another of the creatures emerges from the gorge. This one is gigantic, and it glowers at you hatefully, the look of a mother protecting her young.

The combat begins with the PCs 25 feet from their opponents. Neither side is surprised.

At APLS 4-12, the ELs of this combat are adjusted by +1 to account for the environmental conditions due to the storm. The combination of wind and rain reduces visibility ranges by three-quarters, and imposes a -4 penalty on Spot, Search, and Listen checks and on ranged attack rolls. Unprotected flames are automatically extinguished, and protected flames (such as those of lanterns) have a 50% chance of being extinguished.

APL 2 (EL 4)

🐾 **Advanced Dire Rat of Legend:** hp 24; see Appendix 1.

🐾 **Dire Rats (4):** hp 7 each; see *Monster Manual*, page 62.

APL 4 (EL 6)

🐾 **Advanced Dire Squirrel of Legend:** hp 24; see Appendix 2.

🐾 **Dire Squirrels (3):** hp 14 each; see Appendix 2.

APL 6 (EL 8)

🐾 **Advanced Dire Badger of Legend:** hp 108; see Appendix 3.

🐾 **Dire Badgers (3):** hp 33 each; see *Monster Manual*, page 62.

APL 8 (EL 10)

🐾 **Advanced Dire Toad of Legend:** hp 105; see Appendix 4.

🐾 **Dire Toads (4):** hp 30 each; see Appendix 4.

APL 10 (EL 12)

🐾 **Advanced Dire Snake of Legend:** hp 208; see Appendix 5.

🐾 **Dire Snakes (4):** hp 63 each; see Appendix 5.

APL 12 (EL 14)

🐾 **Advanced Dire Bear of Legend:** hp 309; see Appendix 6.

🐾 **Dire Bears (4):** hp 123 each; see *Monster Manual*, page 62.

Tactics: The beasts will straightforwardly attack, charging the nearest opponent, and attacking him until he falls.

Treasure: Just within the gorge, the PCs can find the following treasure – remnants of other victims:

APL 2: L: 290 gp, C: 91 gp, M: wand of enlarge person, 9 charges (11 gp).

APL 4: L: 240 gp, C: 91 gp, M: arcane scroll of animal growth (93 gp), ring of climbing (208 gp), wand of enlarge person, 9 charges (11 gp).

APL 6: L: 190 gp, C: 91 gp, M: arcane scroll of animal growth (93 gp), earth elemental gem (187 gp), headband of conscious effort (333 gp), ring of climbing (208 gp), wand of enlarge person, 9 charges (11 gp).

APL 8: L: 0 gp, C: 0 gp, M: arcane scroll of animal growth (93 gp), earth elemental gem (187 gp), goggles of night (1000 gp), headband of conscious effort (333 gp), improved ring of climbing (833 gp), wand of enlarge person, 9 charges (11 gp).

APL 10: L: 0 gp, C: 0 gp, M: arcane scroll of animal growth (93 gp), earth elemental gem (187 gp), goggles of night (1000 gp), headband of conscious effort (333 gp), improved ring of climbing (833 gp), wand of enlarge person, 9 charges (11 gp).

APL 12: L: 0 gp, C: 0 gp, M: arcane scroll of animal growth (93 gp), earth elemental gem (187 gp), goggles of night (1000 gp), headband of conscious effort (333 gp), improved ring of climbing (833 gp), wand of enlarge person, 9 charges (11 gp).

Developments: If the animals manage to incapacitate a PC, and the remaining PCs retreat, the animals will not pursue. Instead, they will slay and devour the fallen.

Once the PCs have defeated the animals, continue to the Conclusion.

CONCLUSION: THE BOYS ARE BACK IN TOWN

Estimated Time: 5 minutes

Leaving the bodies of the strange animals behind, you quickly return to the encampment near the road.

The rest of the journey back to Thornward proceeds without incident. You make your way back to the government square and the Department of Tax Collection. It seems news of your mission has gotten out - hundreds of townsfolk have turned out to welcome you back.

Chief Undersecretary Colin Aurus surveys the contents of the wagons with a satisfied smirk.

"Excellent, excellent. This will go a long way towards rebuilding the capital." He paws through one of the sacks of gold with plump fingers. "Come with me... we'll settle your payment. You've done well."

The adventure is now over. Colin Aurus gives each PC a bag of coins, containing their promised pay. As well, they also earn the *Favor of the Exchequer* item on the Adventure Record.

Treasure:

All APLs: L: 0 gp, C: 50 gp, M: 0 gp.

The End

EXPERIENCE POINT SUMMARY

To award experience for this adventure, add up the values for the objectives accomplished. Then assign the experience award. Award the total value (objectives plus roleplaying) to each character.

Encounter 3: A Bridge over Troubled Water

Defeat the toll collectors.

APL 2: 90 xp.
APL 4: 150 xp.
APL 6: 210 xp.
APL 8: 270 xp.
APL 10: 330 xp.
APL 12: 390 xp.

Encounter 10: Dire Straights

Defeat the dire animals.

APL 2: 150 xp.
APL 4: 210 xp.
APL 6: 270 xp.
APL 8: 330 xp.
APL 10: 390 xp.
APL 12: 450 xp.

Encounter 11: Mama, Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up To Be Dire Squirrels

Defeat the dire animals.

APL 2: 120 xp.
APL 4: 180 xp.
APL 6: 240 xp.
APL 8: 300 xp.
APL 10: 360 xp.
APL 12: 420 xp.

Story Award

Save the abducted caravan hand in Encounter 11 before he is killed.

APL 2: 22 xp.
APL 4: 33 xp.
APL 6: 45 xp.
APL 8: 56 xp.
APL 10: 67 xp.
APL 12: 78 xp.

Deliver the caravan safely to Thornward in the Conclusion.

APL 2: 23 xp.
APL 4: 34 xp.
APL 6: 45 xp.
APL 8: 56 xp.
APL 10: 68 xp.
APL 12: 79 xp.

Discretionary Roleplaying Award

APL 2: 45 xp.
APL 4: 68 xp.
APL 6: 90 xp.
APL 8: 113 xp.
APL 10: 135 xp.
APL 12: 158 xp.

Total possible experience

APL 2: 450 xp.
APL 4: 675 xp.
APL 6: 900 xp.
APL 8: 1,125 xp.
APL 10: 1,350 xp.
APL 12: 1,575 xp.

TREASURE SUMMARY

During an adventure, characters encounter treasure, usually finding it in the possession of their foes. Every encounter that features treasure has a "treasure" section within the encounter description, giving information about the loot, coins, and magic items that make up the encounter's treasure.

The loot total is the number of gold pieces each character gains if the foes are plundered of all their earthly possessions. Looting the bodies takes at least 10 minutes per every 5 enemies, and if the characters cannot take the time to loot the bodies, they do not gain this gold. If you feel it is reasonable that characters can go back to loot the bodies, and those bodies are there (i.e., not carted off by dungeon scavengers, removed from the scene by the local watch, and so on), characters may return to retrieve loot. If the characters do not loot the body, the gold piece value for the loot is subtracted from the encounter totals given below.

The coin total is the number of gold pieces each character gains if they take the coin available. A normal adventuring party can usually gather this wealth in a round or so. If for some reason, they pass up this treasure, the coin total is subtracted from the encounter totals given below.

Next, the magic items are listed. Magic item treasure is the hardest to adjudicate, because they are varied and because characters may want to use them during the adventure. Many times characters must cast identify, analyze dweomer or similar spell to determine what the item does and how to activate it. Other times they may attempt to use the item blindly. If the magic item is consumable (a potion, scroll, magic bolts, etc.) and the item is used before the end of the adventure, its total is subtracted from the adventure totals below.

Once you have subtracted the value for unclaimed treasure from each encounter add it up and that is the number of gold pieces a characters total and coin value increase at the end of the adventure. Write the total in the GP Gained field of the adventure certificate. Because this is a Regional adventure, characters may spend additional Time Units to practice professions or create items immediately after the adventure so this total may be modified by other circumstances.

L = Looted gear from enemy; C = Coin, Gems, Jewelry, and other valuables; M = Magic Items.

Encounter 3: A Bridge over Troubled Water

APL 2: L: 210 gp, C: 109 gp, M: dwarvencraft warhammer (51 gp), mithral heavy shield (85 gp).

APL 4: L: 160 gp, C: 109 gp, M: +1 mithral heavy shield (168 gp), dwarvencraft warhammer (51 gp).

APL 6: L: 110 gp, C: 109 gp, M: +1 dwarvencraft warhammer (217 gp), +1 mithral heavy shield (168 gp).

APL 8: L: 0 gp, C: 0 gp, M: +1 dwarvencraft warhammer (217 gp), +1 mithral heavy shield (168 gp), minor circlet of blasting (540 gp).

APL 10: L: 0 gp, C: 0 gp, M: +1 animated mithral heavy shield (835 gp), +1 bane (elf) dwarvencraft warhammer (717 gp), belt of dwarvenkind (1,241 gp), minor circlet of blasting (540 gp).

APL 12: L: 0 gp, C: 0 gp, M: +1 animated mithral heavy shield (835 gp), +1 bane (elf) dwarvencraft warhammer (717 gp), belt of dwarvenkind (1,241 gp), dwarven plate (1,375 gp), gauntlet of the dwarven forge (2,000 gp), minor circlet of blasting (540 gp), rod of metal and mineral detection (875 gp).

Encounter 11: Mama, Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up To Be Dire Squirrels

APL 2: L: 290 gp, C: 91 gp, M: wand of enlarge person, 9 charges (11 gp).

APL 4: L: 240 gp, C: 91 gp, M: arcane scroll of animal growth (93 gp), ring of climbing (208 gp), wand of enlarge person, 9 charges (11 gp).

APL 6: L: 190 gp, C: 91 gp, M: arcane scroll of animal growth (93 gp), earth elemental gem (187 gp), headband of conscious effort (333 gp), ring of climbing (208 gp), wand of enlarge person, 9 charges (11 gp).

APL 8: L: 0 gp, C: 0 gp, M: arcane scroll of animal growth (93 gp), earth elemental gem (187 gp), goggles of night (1000 gp), headband of conscious effort (333 gp), improved ring of climbing (833 gp), wand of enlarge person, 9 charges (11 gp).

APL 10: L: 0 gp, C: 0 gp, M: arcane scroll of animal growth (93 gp), earth elemental gem (187 gp), goggles of night (1000 gp), headband of conscious effort (333 gp), improved ring of climbing (833 gp), wand of enlarge person, 9 charges (11 gp).

APL 12: L: 0 gp, C: 0 gp, M: arcane scroll of animal growth (93 gp), earth elemental gem (187 gp), goggles of night (1000 gp), headband of conscious effort (333 gp), improved ring of climbing (833 gp), wand of enlarge person, 9 charges (11 gp).

Conclusion: The Boys Are Back In Town

All APLs: L: 0 gp, C: 50 gp, M: 0 gp.

Total Possible Treasure (Maximum Reward Allowed)

APL 2: L: 500 gp, C: 250 gp, M: 147 gp – Total: 897 gp (450 gp).

APL 4: L: 400 gp, C: 250 gp, M: 531 gp – Total: 1,181 gp (650 gp).

APL 6: L: 300 gp, C: 250 gp, M: 1,217 gp – Total: 1,767 gp (900 gp).

APL 8: L: 0 gp, C: 50 gp, M: 3,382 gp – Total: 3,432 gp (1,300 gp).

APL 10: L: 0 gp, C: 50 gp, M: 5,790 gp – Total: 5,840 gp (2,300 gp).

APL 12: L: 0 gp, C: 50 gp, M: 10,040 gp – Total: 10,090 gp (3,300 gp).

ITEMS FOR THE ADVENTURE RECORD

Special

☛ **Shrine of Fharlanghn:** You have found a forgotten wayside shrine in the middle of the mysterious woods of Nightwatch and spent some time restoring it. Any time you travel through this area, you can choose to rest at the shrine. A blessing upon the shrine prevents you from being surprised by enemies while you sleep there.

☛ **Zen of the Drunken Masters:** You have caught the eyes of the monks of the Medig's Hill Monastery. If you expend 2 additional TUs training and meditating with them, you gain a permanent +1 resistance bonus on all Fortitude saves against imbibed poisons. Afterwards, you may spend an additional 2 more TUS with the monks to satisfy the special requirement of the Drunken Master prestige class.

☛ **Dwarven Drinking Stein:** You have beaten the entire Medigkin Clan, brewers of Barrier Brew in a drinking contest – a truly impressive feat. The dwarves have presented you with this ornate pewter tankard as a souvenir.

☛ **Influence with the Medigkin Clan:** You have helped a dwarf become Clan Elder. This influence counts as a permanent Influence Point with the Medigkin Clan.

☛ **Favor of Medor Medigkin:** You have supported Medor in his efforts to become Clan Elder. Medor grants you shares in the Medig's Hill Brewing Company. After any adventure set in Bissel, roll 1d10 and consult the following table:

1. Dry Spell: Pay 100 gp to cover losses or lose this favor.
2. Rough Spell: Pay 50 gp to cover losses or lose this favor.
- 3-4. Break Even: No gain or loss.
- 5-7. Business Fair: Sales have been good; collect 50 gp.
- 8-9. Business Good: Sales have been remarkable; collect 100 gp.
10. Business Great: Sales have been outstanding; collect 200 gp.

☛ **Favor of Medib Medigkin:** You have supported Medib in his efforts to become Clan Elder. You may spend this favor to gain access (Frequency: Adventure) to any one mithral weapon from the PHB. Mark this favor as used when it is spent.

☛ **Favor of the Exchequer:** Due to the exemplary work you have done, the Exchequer has agreed to use his influence to your benefit. You may expend this favor after any adventure set in Bissel to earn 50% more gold from the items you have found during that adventure. You may not keep gold that exceeds the cap for the adventure, but you may spend the excess as over-the-cap gold, as per the LGCS. Mark this Favor as USED when it is expended.

Item Access

APL 2:

- Dwarvencraft Warhammer (Adventure; Races of Stone)
- Mithral Heavy Shield (Adventure; Dungeon Master's Guide)
- Wand of Enlarge Person (CL 1st; Adventure; Dungeon Master's Guide)

APL 4 (all of APL 2 plus the following):

- +1 Mithral Heavy Shield (Adventure; Dungeon Master's Guide)
- Arcane Scroll of Animal Growth (CL 9th; Adventure; Dungeon Master's Guide)
- Ring of Climbing (Adventure; Dungeon Master's Guide)

APL 6 (all of APLs 2, 4 plus the following):

- +1 Dwarvencraft Warhammer (Adventure; Races of Stone)
- Elemental Gem, Earth (Adventure; Dungeon Master's Guide)
- Headband of Conscious Effort (Adventure; Complete Adventurer)

APL 8 (all of APLs 2, 4, 6 plus the following):

- Circlet of Blasting, Minor (Adventure; Dungeon Master's Guide)
- Goggles of Night (Adventure; Dungeon Master's Guide)
- Ring of Climbing, Improved (Adventure; Dungeon Master's Guide)

APL 10 (all of APLs 2, 4, 6, 8 plus the following):

- +1 Animated Mithral Heavy Shield (Adventure; Dungeon Master's Guide)
- +1 Bane (Elf) Dwarvencraft Warhammer (Adventure; Races of Stone)
- Belt of Dwarvenkind (Adventure; Dungeon Master's Guide)
- Large Items: +1 Chain Shirt, +1 Battleaxe, Javelin (Adventure; DMG)

APL 12 (all of APLs 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 plus the following):

- Dwarven Plate (Adventure; Dungeon Master's Guide)
- Gauntlet of the Dwarven Forge (Adventure; Complete Warrior)
- Rod of Metal and Mineral Detection (Adventure; Dungeon Master's Guide)

ENCOUNTER 3

Adolescent Troll: Medium giant; CR 3; HD 4d8+24; hp 48; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14 (+2 Dex, +4 natural); Base Atk/Grp: +2/+6; Atk +5 melee (1d4+4, claw); Full Atk +5 melee (1d4+4, 2 claws) and +0 melee (1d4+2, bite); SA -; SQ Darkvision 90 ft., low-light vision, regeneration 5, scent; AL CE; SV Fort +10, Ref +3, Will +2; Str 19, Dex 14, Con 23, Int 6, Wis 9, Cha 6.

Skills & Feats: Listen +5, Spot +6; Alertness, Iron Will, Track.

Regeneration (Ex): Fire and acid deal normal damage to a troll. If a troll loses a limb or body part, the lost portion regrows in 3d6 minutes. The creature can reattach the severed member instantly by holding it to the stump.

Description: This bipedal creature is about the size of human, but is very thin. It has long and ungainly arms and legs. The legs end in great three-toed feet, the arms in powerful hands with short claws. The hide is rubbery, and its hair is thick and ropy, and seems to writhe with its own energy.

ENCOUNTER 11

Advanced Dire Rat of Legend: Medium Animal; CR 3; HD 2d8+12; hp 24; Init +10; Spd 40 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 23, touch 16, flat-footed 17 (+6 Dex, +7 natural); Base Atk/Grp: +1/+8; Atk +9 melee (1d6+8 plus disease, bite); Full Atk +9 melee (1d6+8 plus disease, bite); SA Disease, frightful presence; SQ Haste, low-light vision, reflective hide, scent; AL N; SV Fort +12, Ref +12, Will +7; Str 24, Dex 23, Con 22, Int 3, Wis 14, Cha 8.

Skills & Feats: Climb +15, Hide +11, Listen +5, Move Silently +7, Spot +5, Swim +15; Alertness, Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Weapon Finesse [bite].

Disease (Ex): Filth fever – bite, Fortitude DC 16, incubation period 1d3 days, damage 1d3 Dex and 1d3 Con. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Frightful Presence (Ex): When a dire rat of legend makes a loud sound, it inspires terror in all creatures within 20 feet that have fewer Hit Dice or levels than it has. Each potentially affected opponent must succeed at a Will save (DC 10) or become shaken – a condition that lasts until the opponent is out of range. A successful save leaves that opponent immune to that dire rat of legend's frightful presence for 24 hours.

Haste (Su): A dire rat of legend is supernaturally quick. It can make an extra attack during a full-attack action, as if affected by *haste* spell.

Reflective Hide (Su): A dire rat of legend has a silvery sheen to its skin and is permanently protected by a *spell turning* effect.

Skills: Dire rats have a +8 racial bonus on Swim checks. Dire rats have a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks and can always choose to take 10 on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened.

Description: This enormous rat looks bigger and more vicious than most dogs. It has coarse, spiky fur, malevolent eyes, and a long, naked tail. Its fur has a silvery sheen, and it moves with a supernatural quickness.

ENCOUNTERS 10 & 11

Dire Squirrel: Medium Animal; CR 1; HD 2d8+2; hp 14; Init +3; Spd 40 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 12 (+3 Dex, +2 natural); Base Atk/Grp: +1/+3; Atk +4 melee (1d6+3, bite); Full Atk +4 melee (1d6+3, bite); SA Attach, blood drain; SQ Low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +3; Str 14, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 4.

Skills & Feats: Climb +11, Hide +8, Listen +4, Move Silently +4, Spot +4; Alertness, Weapon Finesse [bite].

Attach (Ex): A dire squirrel that hits with its bite attack latches onto the opponent's body with its powerful jaws. An attached dire squirrel loses its Dexterity bonus to AC and thus has an AC of 12. An attached dire squirrel can be struck with a weapon or grappled itself. To remove an attached dire squirrel through grappling, the opponent must achieve a pin against the creature.

Blood Drain (Ex): A dire squirrel drains blood for 1d4 points of Constitution damage each round it remains attached.

Skills: Dire squirrels have a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks and can always choose to take 10 on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened. Dire squirrels use their Dexterity modifier for Climb checks.

Description: This enormous squirrel is about the size of a large boar. It has coarse, spiky fur, malevolent eyes, and a long, bushy tail.

Advanced Dire Squirrel of Legend: Medium Animal; CR 3; HD 2d8+12; hp 24; Init +10; Spd 40 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 23, touch 16, flat-footed 17 (+6 Dex, +7 natural); Base Atk/Grp: +1/+8; Atk +9 melee (1d6+8 plus poison, bite); Full Atk +9 melee (1d6+8 plus poison, bite); SA Attach, blood drain, poison; SQ Haste, low-light vision, reflective hide, scent; AL N; SV Fort +12, Ref +12, Will +7; Str 24, Dex 23, Con 22, Int 3, Wis 14, Cha 8.

Skills & Feats: Climb +15, Hide +11, Listen +5, Move Silently +4, Spot +5; Alertness, Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Weapon Finesse [bite].

Attach (Ex): A dire squirrel that hits with its bite attack latches onto the opponent's body with its powerful jaws. An attached dire squirrel loses its Dexterity bonus to AC and thus has an AC of 12. An attached dire squirrel can be struck with a weapon or grappled itself. To remove an attached dire squirrel through grappling, the opponent must achieve a pin against the creature.

Blood Drain (Ex): A dire squirrel drains blood for 1d4 points of Constitution damage each round it remains attached.

Haste (Su): A dire squirrel of legend is supernaturally quick. It can make an extra attack during a full-attack action, as if affected by *haste* spell.

Poison (Ex): A dire squirrel of legend delivers its poison (Fortitude save DC 17) with each successful bite attack. The initial and secondary damage is the same (1d6 points of Strength damage). The save DC is Constitution-based.

Reflective Hide (Su): A dire squirrel of legend has a silvery sheen to its skin and is permanently protected by a *spell turning* effect.

Skills: Dire squirrels have a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks and can always choose to take 10 on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened.

Description: This enormous squirrel is about the size of a large boar. It has coarse, spiky fur, malevolent eyes, and a long, bushy tail. Its fur has a silvery sheen, and it moves with a supernatural quickness.

ENCOUNTER 11

Advanced Dire Badger of Legend: Large Animal; CR 5; HD 5d8+78; hp 108; Init +9; Spd 30 ft., burrow 10 ft.; AC 25, touch 14, flat-footed 20 (-1 size, +5 Dex, +11 natural); Base Atk/Grp: +3/+18; Atk +13 melee (1d6+11, claw); Full Atk +13 melee (1d6+11, 2 claws) and +7 melee (1d8+10 plus poison, bite); SA Poison, rage; SQ Haste, low-light vision, reflective hide, scent; AL N; SV Fort +19, Ref +11, Will +9; Str 32, Dex 21, Con 34, Int 4, Wis 14, Cha 14.

Skills & Feats: Listen +8, Spot +8; Alertness, Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Toughness, Track.

Haste (Su): A dire badger of legend is supernaturally quick. It can make an extra attack during a full-attack action, as if affected by *haste* spell.

Poison (Ex): A dire badger of legend delivers its poison (Fortitude save DC 24) with each successful bite attack. The initial and secondary damage is the same (1d6 points of Strength damage). The save DC is Constitution-based.

Rage (Ex): A dire badger that takes damage in combat flies into a berserk rage on its next turn, clawing and biting madly until either it or its opponent is dead. It gains +4 Strength, +4 Constitution, and -2 AC. The creature cannot end its rage voluntarily.

Reflective Hide (Su): A dire badger of legend has a silvery sheen to its skin and is permanently protected by a *spell turning* effect.

Description: This squat, muscular creature is covered in wild, thick fur. Its stout legs end in clawed feet, and its pointed snout has a wide mouth full of sharp teeth. Its fur has a silvery sheen, and it moves with a supernatural quickness.

ENCOUNTERS 10 & 11

Dire Toad: Medium Animal; CR 3; HD 4d8+8; hp 30; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 13 (+2 Dex, +3 natural); Base Atk/Grp: +3/+3; Atk +5 melee (1d4 plus poison, bite) or +5 ranged (0, tongue); Full Atk +5 melee (1d4 plus poison, bite) and +5 ranged (0, tongue); Space/Reach 5 ft/5 ft (10 ft with tongue); SA Poison; SQ Low-light vision; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +6; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 15, Cha 7.

Skills & Feats: Hide +12, Jump +11, Listen +7, Spot +11; Weapon Finesse [bite].

Poison (Ex): A dire toad delivers its poison (Fortitude save DC 14) with each successful bite attack. The initial and secondary damage is the same (1d6 points of Constitution damage). The save DC is Constitution-based.

Improved Grab (Ex): If a dire toad hits an opponent that is at least one size category smaller than itself with a bite attack or a tongue attack, it deals normal damage and attempts to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it gets a hold, it can try to swallow the opponent. Alternatively, the dire toad has the option to conduct the grapple normally, or simply use its jaws to hold the opponent (-20 penalty on grapple check, but the dire toad is not considered grappled). In either case, each successful grapple check it makes during successive rounds automatically deals bite damage.

Swallow Whole (Ex): A dire toad can swallow a grabbed opponent that is at least one size category smaller than itself by making a successful grapple check. Once inside the toad, the opponent takes 1d6 points of bludgeoning damage plus 1d4 points of acid damage per round from the dire toad's stomach. A successful grapple check allows the swallowed creature to climb out of the stomach and return to the toad's mouth, where another successful grapple check is needed to get free. Alternatively, a swallowed creature can try to cut its way out with either claws or a light piercing or slashing weapon. Dealing at least 10 points of damage to the gizzard (AC 13) in this way creates an opening large enough to permit escape. Once a single swallowed creature exits, muscular action closes the hole; thus, another swallowed opponent must cut its own way out. A Medium-size dire toad's stomach can hold 2 Small or 8 Tiny or smaller opponents.

Skills: A dire toad receives a +4 racial bonus on Hide, Listen, and Spot checks, and a +8 racial bonus on Jump checks.

Description: This squat, blobby creature is about the size of a large dog. It has a bony ridge along its head, malevolent eyes, and a wicked, forked tongue.

Advanced Dire Toad of Legend: Large Animal; CR 7; HD 7d8+63; hp 105; Init +8; Spd 30 ft.; AC 23, touch 13, flat-footed 19 (-1 size, +4 Dex, +10 natural); Base Atk/Grp: +5/+18; Atk +15 melee (1d8+9 plus poison, bite) or +8 ranged (0, tongue); Full Atk +15 melee (1d8+9 plus poison, bite) and +8 ranged (0, tongue); Space/Reach 10 ft/10 ft (20 ft with tongue); SA Breath weapon, poison; SQ Haste, low-light vision, reflective hide; AL N; SV Fort +17, Ref +12, Will +11; Str 28, Dex 18, Con 29, Int 4, Wis 17, Cha 11.

Skills & Feats: Hide +14, Jump +21, Listen +9, Spot +13; Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack [bite], Multiattack, Weapon Finesse [bite].

Breath Weapon (Su): Every 1d4+1 rounds, a dire toad of legend can use a breath weapon (15-foot cone, 3d6 acid damage). A target can make a Reflex save (DC 22) for half damage.

Haste (Su): A dire toad of legend is supernaturally quick. It can make an extra attack during a full-attack action, as if affected by *haste* spell.

Poison (Ex): A dire toad delivers its poison (Fortitude save DC 21) with each successful bite attack. The initial and secondary damage is the same (1d6 points of Constitution damage). The save DC is Constitution-based.

Improved Grab (Ex): If a dire toad hits an opponent that is at least one size category smaller than itself with a bite attack or a tongue attack, it deals normal damage and attempts to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it gets a hold, it can try to swallow the opponent. Alternatively, the dire toad has the option to conduct the grapple normally, or simply use its jaws to hold the opponent (-20 penalty on grapple check, but the dire toad is not considered grappled). In either case, each successful grapple check it makes during successive rounds automatically deals bite damage.

Swallow Whole (Ex): A dire toad can swallow a grabbed opponent that is at least one size category smaller than itself by making a successful grapple check. Once inside the toad, the opponent takes 1d8 points of bludgeoning damage plus 1d6 points of acid damage per round from the dire toad's stomach. A successful grapple check allows the swallowed creature to climb out of the stomach and return to the toad's mouth, where another successful grapple check is needed to get free. Alternatively, a swallowed creature can try to cut its way out with either claws or a light piercing or slashing weapon. Dealing at least 10 points of damage to the gizzard (AC 15) in this way creates an opening large enough to permit escape. Once a single swallowed creature exits, muscular action closes the hole; thus, another swallowed opponent must cut its own way out. A Large-size dire toad's stomach can hold 2 Medium or 8 Small or smaller opponents.

Reflective Hide (Su): A dire toad of legend has a silvery sheen to its skin and is permanently protected by a *spell turning* effect.

Skills: A dire toad receives a +4 racial bonus on Hide, Listen, and Spot checks, and a +8 racial bonus on Jump checks.

Description: This squat, blobby creature is about the size of a large horse. It has a bony ridge along its head, malevolent eyes, and a wicked, forked tongue. Its hide has a silvery sheen, and it moves with a supernatural quickness.

ENCOUNTERS 10 & 11

Dire Snake: Huge Animal; CR 5; HD 7d8+21; hp 63; Init +5; Spd 30 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.; AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 13 (-2 size, +5 Dex, +5 natural); Base Atk/Grp: +3/+20; Atk +10 melee (2d8+10 plus poison, bite); Full Atk +10 melee (2d8+10 plus poison, bite); Space/Reach 15 ft/10 ft; SA Constrict 1d6+10, improved grab, poison; SQ Low-light vision, scent; AL N; SV Fort +8, Ref +10, Will +6; Str 24, Dex 20, Con 16, Int 1, Wis 13, Cha 11.

Skills & Feats: Balance +14, Climb +15, Hide +7, Listen +9, Spot +9.

Constrict (Ex): With a successful grapple check, a dire snake can constrict a grabbed opponent, dealing 1d8+10 points of bludgeoning damage.

Poison (Ex): A dire snake delivers its poison (Fortitude save DC 16) with each successful bite attack. The initial and secondary damage is the same (1d6 points of Constitution damage). The save DC is Constitution-based.

Improved Grab (Ex): If a dire snake hits an opponent that is at least one size category smaller than itself with a bite attack, it deals normal damage and attempts to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it gets a hold, it can try to swallow the opponent. Alternatively, the dire snake has the option to conduct the grapple normally, or simply use its jaws to hold the opponent (-20 penalty on grapple check, but the dire snake is not considered grappled). In either case, each successful grapple check it makes during successive rounds automatically deals bite and constrict damage.

Skills: A dire snake receives a +4 racial bonus on Hide, Listen, and Spot checks, and a +8 racial bonus on Balance checks.

Description: This creature looks like an enormous viper with dull green or brown scales and long fangs. Its head has two bony protrusions similar to horns placed just behind the eyes.

Advanced Dire Snake of Legend: Gargantuan Animal; CR 9; HD 13d8+130; hp 208; Init +12; Spd 30 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.; AC 28, touch 14, flat-footed 20 (-4 size, +8 Dex, +14 natural); Base Atk/Grp: +9/+40; Atk +24 melee (4d8+20 plus poison, 19-20, bite); Full Atk +24 melee (4d8+20 plus poison, 19-20, bite); Space/Reach 20 ft/15 ft; SA Constrict 1d8+20, improved grab, poison, raging blood; SQ Haste, low-light vision, reflective hide, scent; AL N; SV Fort +21, Ref +19, Will +13; Str 44, Dex 26, Con 30, Int 3, Wis 15, Cha 15.

Skills & Feats: Balance +17, Climb +24, Hide +12, Listen +12, Spot +12; Improved Critical [bite], Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack [bite], Multiattack.

Constrict (Ex): With a successful grapple check, a dire snake can constrict a grabbed opponent, dealing 1d8+20 points of bludgeoning damage.

Haste (Su): A dire snake of legend is supernaturally quick. It can make an extra attack during a full-attack action, as if affected by *haste* spell.

Poison (Ex): A dire snake delivers its poison (Fortitude save DC 23) with each successful bite attack. The initial and secondary damage is the same (1d6 points of Constitution damage). The save DC is Constitution-based.

Raging Blood (Su): Each time damage is dealt to a dire snake of legend with a piercing or slashing attack, its blood sprays outward in a 5-foot cone, dealing 1d4 points of acid damage to all within range (no saving throw). A dire snake of legend is not harmed by its own blood.

Reflective Hide (Su): A dire snake of legend has a silvery sheen to its skin and is permanently protected by a *spell turning* effect.

Improved Grab (Ex): If a dire snake hits an opponent that is at least one size category smaller than itself with a bite attack, it deals normal damage and attempts to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it gets a hold, it can try to swallow the opponent. Alternatively, the dire snake has the option to conduct the grapple normally, or simply use its jaws to hold the opponent (-20 penalty on grapple check, but the dire snake is not considered grappled). In either case, each successful grapple check it makes during successive rounds automatically deals bite and constrict damage.

Skills: A dire snake receives a +4 racial bonus on Hide, Listen, and Spot checks, and a +8 racial bonus on Balance checks.

Description: This creature looks like an enormous viper with dull green or brown scales and long fangs. Its head has two bony protrusions similar to horns placed just behind the eyes. Its skin has a silvery sheen, and it moves with a supernatural quickness.

ENCOUNTER 11

Advanced Dire Bear of Legend: Huge Animal; CR 11; HD 18d8+201; hp 309; Init +7; Spd 40 ft.; AC 26, touch 11, flat-footed 23 (-2 size, +3 Dex, +15 natural); Base Atk/Grp: +13/+41; Atk +32 melee (3d4+20, 19-20, claw); Full Atk +32 melee (3d4+20, 19-20, 2 claws) and Atk +29 melee (3d8+15 plus poison, bite); Space/Reach 15 ft/10 ft; SA Improved grab, poison; SQ Haste, low-light vision, reflective hide, scent; AL N; SV Fort +30, Ref +17, Will +16; Str 50, Dex 17, Con 33, Int 4, Wis 14, Cha 14.

Skills & Feats: Listen +13, Spot +13, Swim +25; Alertness, Endurance, Improved Critical [claw], Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Power Attack, Run, Toughness, Weapon Focus [claw].

Haste (Su): A dire bear of legend is supernaturally quick. It can make an extra attack during a full-attack action, as if affected by *haste* spell.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a dire bear must hit with a claw attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity.

Poison (Ex): A dire bear of legend delivers its poison (Fortitude save DC 30) with each successful bite attack. The initial and secondary damage is the same (1d6 points of Strength damage). The save DC is Constitution-based.

Reflective Hide (Su): A dire bear of legend has a silvery sheen to its skin and is permanently protected by a *spell turning* effect.

Description: This hulking bear has bony brow ridges and claws like sickles, with a wildness and destructive gleam in its cold, piercing eyes. Its fur has a silvery sheen, and it moves with a supernatural quickness.

PLAYER HANDOUT #1 – NOTICE OF ASSESSMENT

This note was given to you at the Department of Tax Collection.

Notice of Assessment

Be it known that this document establishes itself as an official notice from the Bissel Hall of Revenue.

To the Medig's Hill Brewing Company;

The records of the Department of Tax Collection indicate that you have an outstanding liability of five wagon loads of gold ingots that you owe to the March of Bissel for payment of back taxes assessed on the sale of Barrier Brew throughout the March. This amount includes tax, interest and penalties. Interest and penalties will continue to accrue until the balance is paid in full. To avoid additional interest and penalty charges, you must pay the total amount due upon receipt of this notice.

This amount has been determined by the Hall of Revenue and has been approved by the Margrave's Council including Baron Rashedra of Parulla who has transferred collection and all claims on these funds to the Bissel Ministry of the Exchequer, Department of Tax Collection. As such there can be no dispute or appeal of this assessment. The decision of the Margrave's Council is final.

You are hereby instructed to produce five wagon loads of gold ingots to be deposited into the wagons provided and to confer all means of hospitality on the representatives of the Department of Tax Collection while you complete this mandate.

Bissel Hall of Revenue