

Dragon Scales at Morningtide

A One-round D&D Living Greyhawk Adventure

by Sean K Reynolds

Strange black currents and droves of beached fish are being linked to a strange new cult in the city of Greyhawk. Are the cultists responsible, or just part of a larger danger? An adventure for beginning characters, using 3rd edition D&D® rules. For characters levels 1-4.

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This is a standard RPGA Network tournament. A four-hour time block has been set aside for this event. It is a good idea to ask each player to put a name tag in front of him or her. The tag should have the player's name at the bottom, and the character's name, race, and gender at the top. This makes it easier for the players to keep track of who is playing which character.

The actual playing time will be about three hours. Make sure you use the last 20 to 30 minutes of the event time block to have the players capsule their characters for each other and vote. The standard RPGA Network voting procedures will be used. Complete the Judge's Summary before you collect the players' scoring sheets. This way you will not be influenced by their ratings and comments.

The players are free to use the game rules to learn about equipment and weapons their characters are carrying.

A note about the text: Some of the text in this scenario is written so that you may present it as written to the players, while other text is for your eyes only. Text for the players will be in **bold italics**. It is strongly recommended that you paraphrase the player text, instead of reading it aloud, as some of the text is general and must be adapted to the specific situation or to actions of the player characters.

Living Greyhawk Tier System

To determine the party's tier, add the total levels of all the characters. In addition, add the levels of any companion creatures that have one or more classes, and half the hit dice of any animals (animals are defined as creatures with an intelligence less than low) which can enter combat on the side of the PCs. Compare the total to the chart below to find the tier.

Characters of a level higher than the highest tier of the scenario are not allowed to play the scenario. For example, a scenario for tiers 3-7 cannot be played by characters over 14th level.

	<u>4 players</u>	<u>5 players</u>	<u>6 players</u>	<u>7 players</u>	<u>Level Cap</u>
T1:	4-12	5-13	6-14	7-15	4 nd level
T2:	13-22	14-24	15-26	16-28	6 th level

Note that the adventure itself is not tiered, but we want you to be used to seeing the tier chart.

Lifestyle in Greyhawk

PCs in Living Greyhawk events must pay a lifestyle cost associated with the economic level of the place where the adventure takes place. Lifestyle costs include expenses incurred during the time between this adventure and the last one, and all training costs associated with advancing in levels. It does not cover cost of adventuring equipment. PCs must pay for things bought during the adventure (from equipment to drinks and meals and lodging) at the prices stated in the scenario, or the *Player's Handbook* if the scenario does not specify.

The lifestyle costs are divided according to the economic level that the PC wants to maintain, and there are Charisma-related penalties and bonuses for maintaining certain lifestyles.

- **Destitute:** You have no living space, and must carry all your gear everywhere. You stink and are undernourished. You suffer a -3 on Charisma-related skill checks.
- **Poor:** You sleep in the common room of an inn, or perhaps the loft of a stable. Your clothing is generally worn and patched. You suffer -2 on Charisma-related skill checks.
- **Low:** You rent a small room at a tavern, perhaps shared with one or two other individuals. If you own a home it is a one-room shack. It wouldn't be wise to leave anything of value laying around. You suffer -1 on Charisma-related skill checks.
- **Medium:** You are moderately successful, and your equipment is plain but sturdy. You have your own room in an inn or boarding house, where you can leave items of moderate value without worrying about them disappearing.
- **High:** You rent a roomy house or apartment, or own a nice home. You own clothes for many occasions, and can entertain anyone without feeling overly ashamed. You receive a +1 bonus on Charisma-related skill checks.
- **Luxury:** You have the best of everything – spacious living quarters, exotic food, expensive clothes. Your success is the envy of many. You have a +2 bonus on Charisma-related skill checks. Equipment left at home is generally quite secure.

Penalties or bonuses to CHA-related skills should be applied at the DM's discretion, and can sometimes backfire – for example, a PC with a poor lifestyle would not have a penalty when talking to a beggar, but would when talking to a city official. A PC with a high lifestyle should have a penalty when dealing with a group of street thugs, where a PC with a destitute lifestyle might not. You are encouraged to roleplay these reactions whenever possible.

Have the players deduct the lifestyle costs for their characters before play starts, noting the lifestyle on the log sheet.

<u>Lifestyle</u>	<u>Cost</u>	<u>Charisma-related mod</u>
Destitute	0	-3
Poor	2	-2
Low	10	-1
Medium	50	0
High	200	+1
Luxury	1000	+2

Judge Introduction

The rise of the orcish warlord Turrosh Mak in the Pomarj resulted in the deaths of thousands as his humanoid armies marched northward along the Wild Coast in search of loot, slaves, and glory. Little is known about his origin, but he is said to have strange advisors from far lands or odd religions.

What is not known outside of the Pomarj is that not all of the humanoids are happy with his rule. The orcs are the dominant creature, and smaller beings such as goblins, kobolds, and the oft-forgotten xvarts are forced to do the tedious labor and are often little more than slaves to their bigger allies. One tribe of xvarts has sent a group of clerics to the city of Greyhawk with a dual purpose: recruit worshippers for their god Raxivort, and encourage the people of the city to take arms against the orcish hordes so that the Pomarj may be free again. They plan to accomplish these tasks by using their affinity toward rats to clean out some of the infested buildings in the city, using the fame and goodwill for such acts to increase the public awareness of their cause and hopefully push the leaders of Greyhawk into action.

Meanwhile, the cult of the Earth Dragon (a group allied to Turrosh Mak) has sent its own representatives to sow panic and fear among the populace. Two clerics of the Earth Dragon, accompanied by two disguised animated skeletons, have taken over three of the sturdier buildings in the poor part of Greyhawk known as Shack Town, converted them to a single large building, and are using it as a base of operations. They have extended a narrow pipe through the floor of their shack, the other end opening underwater over a hundred feet away upriver, and through this they have been pouring a strange poison into the water. This poison causes portions of the river to turn black at times, and fish that breathe to the water die and wash up on shore, and people that drink from the black water become sickened. The clerics are now ready to begin preaching the glories of the Earth Dragon and promise that he can turn back this dark tide—they have the antidote which cures sick people and returns the water to its normal color.

The *Living Greyhawk Gazetteer* is a useful book for running this scenario, but is not required. *Greyhawk: The Adventure Begins* can be used to provide information on the surrounding areas if the characters go wandering far afield, but is also not essential for this scenario.

Adventure Synopsis

During a good meal at a restaurant in the River Quarter of the city of Greyhawk, the heroes hear a disturbance outside. Investigating, they find a pair of short blue humanoids arguing with three clerics of Pholtus. The adventurers can defuse the situation before it turns into an actual fight or just delay them until the Watch arrives. If questioned by the adventurers, the xvarts explain their mission. The heroes hear rumors of portions of the river turning black, fish dying, people getting sick from the

water, and a new cult that claims it can prevent the sickness.

Investigation of the cultists reveals that they are active in Shack Town, where most people have to drink directly from the river because there are no wells. Later, the adventurers can watch a cleric of the cult—the Earth Dragon cult—heal someone sickened by the water and extol the virtues of his god ... and possibly notice there is something strange about the cult's methods.

The heroes again run into the odd blue humanoids (xvarts), who are again preaching in the River Quarter. They witness a demonstration of the xvarts' clerical power as the creatures lead all of the rats out of a warehouse, asking only that prayers of thanks be made to Raxivort for his help.

The heroes continue to hear about the sickness and dead fish caused by the black currents. Investigating, they find that the current has not been seen upstream of Shack Town, and many people in that place attest to seeing it start in one particular section of the water. The heroes may find the source of the poison—a metal tube extending from the riverbed about a hundred feet from the shore. The heroes are ambushed by a bunch of poor thieves in Shack Town.

Having disposed of the thieves, the party is avoided by most people in Shack Town. Wandering among the buildings close to where the tube originates, they come across the Earth Dragon cultists again, who have been acquiring followers among the poor. If confronted, the cultists direct their new minions to chase off the unbelievers.

Should the confrontation turn into an outright fight, the cultists flee into their “temple” and dump all of the remaining poison into the river. They hold the antidote hostage, threatening to smash it if they aren't allowed to go free. The cultists also set their “temple” on fire, which threatens to spread to other parts of Shack Town. The timely arrival by one of the xuart clerics may help the adventurers turn the tide and save the lives of dozens of people, whether by rescuing the antidote or stopping the spread of fire.

Player Introduction

The Low Seas Tavern in Greyhawk's River Quarter is spoken of by many as a place with good food and excellent drinks, and caters to adventurers and other unusual people. It also has a standing policy of no weapons larger than daggers, making it a place where the occasional fights aren't likely to become too bloody. Its owner, One-Eye Halloran, is a retired adventurer missing one eye (covered by a patch) and sporting a wooden leg and many scars; he tells outrageous stories about his exploits, although the details vary as to whether he was a thief, knight, wizard, or cleric, if not all of the above. At the moment Halloran is not present, and the lunch crowd has mostly disappeared.

The characters may be separate or together at this point as they see fit (if they know each other and want to sit together, they can, if they don't know each other, there is

plenty of room for them to spread out). The **Low Seas Tavern and Environs** map gives a rough layout of the interior of the place.

Encounter One: Religious Conflict

Loud noises like shouting outside break the contented quiet of the end of lunch. Two sets of voices are becoming increasingly louder, with one half of the conversation spoken by someone with an odd accent.

If the people in the tavern investigate (the employees ignore the commotion unless it actually enters the building), they see a small crowd gathered. Note that anyone coming from the tavern won't be carrying a weapon larger than a dagger unless they spend a round to claim their weapon from the employee watching the weapons locker. At the center of the crowd are three humans dressed in white robes and bearing long staves with a sun-symbol on top. The two men and the woman are berating a pair of figures standing on crates, calling them "heathens" and "followers of chaos." The elevated figures are 3 ft. tall, with bright blue skin, fierce orange eyes, and chain shirts. Each of these thin, bald creatures carries a dagger at its side and wears an iron amulet in the shape of a hand blazing with flame. The blue figures have their hands raised at shoulder's height, as if trying to calm the robed figures, explaining that they "mean no harm" and "have a permit to be here."

The robed figures are clerics of Pholtus, a particularly intolerant bunch of people and particularly so this close to their temple (it's about 600 ft. away to the southeast). The blue people are xvarts, small feisty humanoids from the Pomarj. The clerics of Pholtus have little tolerance for other religions or creatures of a chaotic or evil bent. While the xvarts do serve an evil god (Raxivort), they themselves are not evil and do have the permission of the city watch to be in Greyhawk.

The Pholtus-worshippers continue to verbally attack the xvarts, who grow frustrated and anxious to leave without a fight. The crowd looks content to see what happens. The city watch arrives in 3d6 minutes to separate the two groups.

- If the heroes don't intervene, the clerics of Pholtus attack the xvarts, who try to flee immediately (using their *change self* spells to disguise themselves as halflings to evade pursuit).
- If the heroes attempt to calm the clerics of Pholtus, have them make Diplomacy checks (DC 15); a success indicates the clerics restrain themselves at least until the city watch arrives, a failure means the clerics launch an attack on the xvarts (primarily) and any PC that attempted to influence them (secondarily), striking to subdue (as they hope to subject anyone caught to some questioning, and hope for a conversion to the One True Path). If the characters are particularly persuasive or abusive, modify the DC by ± 2 . The xvarts try to flee as soon as possible, as above.

Statistics for the xvarts, clerics of Pholtus, and city watch are in the appendix. Note that taking items from fallen clerics of Pholtus is likely to bring about accusations of stealing, for while the clerics themselves aren't very popular, letting an armed gang of adventurers attack people in the street and take their money is a bad precedent.

When the watch arrives, they force apart anyone fighting. Their attitude conveys that they have had to deal with the Pholtites before, but the xvarts are a new problem. If any of the xvarts are present and conscious, he presents a paper to one of the guards, which is signed by a captain of the watch and says that the xvarts are known humanoids and are allowed within the city limits for a period of one week as long as they commit no evil. The xvarts insist they were simply telling of the oppression of Turrosh Mak and hoping to generate sympathy for their cause, and the human clerics began accosting them for no reason (any observers in the crowd can verify this story). Given this information, and being familiar with how the followers of the Blinding Light operate, they escort the clerics of Pholtus away and let the xvarts go.

If the heroes incapacitate the clerics of Pholtus, they should remain at the scene until the watch arrives so they may explain the situation, otherwise the clerics (who are *not* evil) are likely to be beaten or robbed while they cannot defend themselves (as the haughtily superior Pholtites aren't well-liked by the common folk of the River Quarter). The guards are inclined to accept the word of the adventurers over the NPC clerics, especially if a paladin or cleric of a good deity is in the group. The watch carries the clerics back to their temple and suggests the adventurers make themselves scarce before the church decides to retaliate.

If either of the xvarts were knocked unconscious during the fight, he is taken by the watch to the jail until he recovers, unless the PCs volunteer to care for him until that time. When the xvert comes to his senses, he introduces himself as Harsk, a cleric of the xvert god Raxivort, and says that he appreciates their help but really needs to find where his friend Jurg ran off to. If questioned about his reasons for being here, he explains.

"My homeland, the Pomarj is ruled by the half-orc warleader, Turrosh Mak. He is very powerful, and is respected and feared by the major tribes. However, most people outside the Pomarj do not know that he is not supported by all. The orcs are the dominant creature, and smaller beings such as goblins, kobolds, and xvarts are forced to do the tedious labor, and are often little more than slaves to their bigger allies. My tribe has sent a small group to this city with a dual purpose: recruit worshippers for our god Raxivort, and encourage the people of the city to take arms against the orcish hordes so that the Pomarj may be free again. I understand that if your people attacked the Pomarj, you would not be doing it to help us, but to destroy a threat to you, but it helps us, and both of our peoples would rather have it the way it used to be, with small tribes ruling small places and no big armies everywhere."

"We plan to accomplish these tasks by using our affinity toward rats to clean out some of the infested buildings in the city, using the fame and goodwill for such acts to increase the awareness of our cause and hopefully push the leaders of Greyhawk into action. We do not wish you any harm, and could not harm you if we tried—my tribe is nearly a month away by foot and has no interest in coming here."

After this explanation, the xvirt takes his leave of the adventurers to go find his friend, who is supposed to rendezvous at a point outside of town if separated. The third member of their group is also waiting there; the xvirt declines any escort to the rendezvous point, for he wishes to keep the location secret to protect himself and his fellows (the site is at a particular tree in a small grove half an hour from on the western shore).

Proceed to **Encounter 2: A New Cult**.

Encounter Two: A New Cult

After dealing with the xvarts, the adventurers are free to return to their meals and then go about other business. A few blocks from the Low Seas Tavern, they come across two clerics making a speech. The clerics are dressed in brown robes embroidered with gold thread in the shape of a coiled dragon. The female is taking a more active role in the speech while the male is wearing a face of serenity and hope. A small crowd of dirty and dejected people, many of which look like they live in Shack Town, are gathered around the clerics, listening intently. When the PCs pass by this area, the woman is saying:

"Strange currents of black water bring disease to the people of Greyhawk! Fish killed by the hundreds wash up on the shore, reeking of death and causing sickness in the people who find them. Yet the clerics and the city oligarchs do nothing, for these things are only harming the people in Shack Town! I, Haleer, and my colleague Konten have heard of these troubles and have come to the city to help you! With the power of the Earth Dragon, our great and powerful god, we will cure the sickness caused by these dark currents and help the little people of Shack Town when others would not. For if the sickness is not stopped now, it may spread to the rest of the city. If whatever causes the black currents has not abated by then, we will root out its source and destroy it!"

The speech gets scattered cheers from the people in the crowd. Haleer announces that the two of them will begin treating the sick people at **noon** the next day; from an open area in the center of Shack Town. If the heroes try to talk to the clerics of the Earth Dragon, they can only do so for a short while—Konten insists that they have to speak in other parts of the city and make preparations for tomorrow's work. They can take the time to explain that the Earth Dragon is a powerful spirit who lives under a mountain to the south, he watches over his people and makes their land fertile, and is very generous to those who praise and worship him.

If there is an obvious paladin or cleric in the group, the heroes can make Sense Motive checks (DC 15) to

realize that both of the NPCs are disdainful of the PC cleric or paladin.

Statistics for the clerics of the Earth Dragon are in the appendix.

Proceed to **Encounter 3: Saved By the Rat God**.

Encounter 3: Saved By the Rat God

The next day the heroes are witness to an unusual demonstration of the power of Raxivort. Six members of the city watch are keeping a crowd of curious onlookers from approaching a warehouse in the River Quarter. The people in the crowd are jockeying for positions where the warehouse can be seen, but they are not pressing toward the building, so the watch's job is easy and they are relaxed. A warehouse guard (a man in leather armor with a club) and a skinny dark-haired man in expensive clothes stand near the main door.

A blue figure—one of the xvarts—steps through the open door of the warehouse. Raising his hands, he speaks to the crowd. "People of Greyhawk! As proof that my people mean you no harm, and as a demonstration of our ability, my fellows and are going to rid this warehouse of rats."

"The god of my people, Raxivort, has an affinity for rats, and his clerics may speak to them like the gnomes speak to the burrowing creatures. We have spoken to the rats that live here, and they have agreed to leave this warehouse where you store food. We will take the rats across the river and release them in the fields there, where they will eat insects that attack human crops. If you wish us to perform a similar service for your home or business, we ask only a small payment and a word of thanks to Raxivort. See this feat, and know that our peoples can live in peace!"

With the conclusion of his words, the xvirt steps out of the doorway and begins walking in the direction of Zagy's Bridge. Trailing behind him is a pack of nearly three dozen rats, which elicits gasps of surprise. After the rats comes another xvirt with a similar entourage. Once the gang has passed, the warehouse guard closes the door, and two of the watch step over to lead the xvarts so they aren't disturbed by passersby. The crowd begins to applaud lightly, gaining some momentum after a few seconds.

If the heroes try to talk to the xvarts, the city watch asks them to keep their distance, but one of the xvarts (who was present at the altercation with the clerics of Pholtus the day before) interjects that they would welcome the company, at which point the guard shrugs and lets them approach. If the heroes volunteer to take over the escort duty, the guards accept and head back to their unit; the heroes should make sure the xvarts get across the bridge unmolested, otherwise any news of trouble or dereliction of their agreed-upon duty gets back to the watch and may result in negative consequences later (mainly cooler attitudes from any watchmen they meet). Note that the xvarts still avoid allowing the heroes to discover their rendezvous point.

The xvarts are pleased with how the rat-removal proceeded. The rats scamper about, never straying more than about five feet from one of the xvarts, acting more

like pets than scavenging vermin. The xvarts are telling the truth about releasing the rats on the other side of the river; they have no intention of letting the rats come to harm or letting them infest another place in the city. They realize that they cannot hope to solve all of the city's rat problems (and have no real intention of doing so), but they feel that their actions can convince people to listen to them and possibly help with their quest to overthrow Turrosh Mak.

The xvarts tamed the rats with the *animal friendship* ability of their Animal domain. The xvarts are not exploiting the animals and will feed them before dismissing them once the fields on the other side of the Selintan are reached.

When the heroes, xvarts, and rats reach the bridge, have the characters make Spot checks (DC 10). Those who succeed notice several dozen dead fish floating in the calm parts of the shoreline of the river, and a thin streak of black water in the middle of the river, winding its way downstream. The streak is no more than a foot wide and about ten feet long. The current time is about two and a half hours before noon (and thus the same time before the demonstration by the clerics of the Earth Dragon). Proceed to **Encounter 4: Black Currents**.

Encounter 4: Black Currents

The dead fish all have a bad smell (in addition to smelling like fish) and a grayish coloration on their fleshy parts (as opposed to their scales, and in addition to wherever they normally have a grayish coloration), particularly the gills. Cutting open a fish reveals that it hasn't eaten anything unusual. The use of a *detect poison* spell reveals that the fish have been poisoned (see below for the poison statistics). Anyone who handles a fish for more than one round gets a small (and undetectable without magic) amount of poison residue on their hands; unless the character washes thoroughly after handling the fish, the next time he eats he needs to make a Fortitude save or be affected by the poison. However, because the amount is so small, the DC is only 5 instead of the usual 13.

If the heroes investigate the black current, they need to travel fast as the poisoned area has an effective speed of 6 ft. per round, and will be difficult to locate once it passes out of view. Once a character is in the water, the current pulls them downstream at a speed of 6 ft. per round as well. The water is calm, and so any Swim checks made are DC 10 (characters can take 10). Remember that a character suffers a -1 penalty on Swim checks for each 5 pounds of gear carrying or wearing.

The black current appears to be normal water except for its coloration; there is no oil or debris causing the streak, although discolored water would normally mix fairly quickly in a river (the poison has a moderate-strength chemical affinity for itself, making it slow to dissolve into the main part of the river). Although the river starts to become clouded after a depth of 5 feet, the top is clear enough to determine that the black water is 1-2 feet deep. The streak detects as poison with the

appropriate spell (such as *detect poison*) or skill (such as Alchemy).

Touching the black water has no immediate ill effect, but a character who touches it or whose face enters it runs a risk of ingesting it later from remnants left on the hands or lips if it isn't thoroughly washed off (use the same DC as if the character had handled a poisoned fish). Any creature inhaling or swallowing the water suffers the normal effects of the poison (which is why the fish are dying—they can't handle the Con damage).

Black current poison: ingested DC 13, 1 Con, 1d8 Con, 100 gp (available only from the church of the Earth Dragon).

After the heroes have examined the fish and/or the black current, they may want to investigate where the current might be coming from. Thorough questioning of local cityfolk (or the use of a Gather Information check, DC 15) allows the heroes to find that the black current has always been spotted first in the northwestern part of the city, if not in Shack Town, then very close to it.

Continuing their investigation in Shack Town, the heroes find the place to be dismal and depressing. The place is the poorest part of the city, and not even within the city walls. The buildings here are ramshackle, made of thin wood, and are barely enough to keep out the weather, let alone afford any privacy. Some peoples' homes are little more than canvas lean-tos erected against the city wall or a shack. The people here are hungry, sullen, and poor. Scrawny children run loose in the area, but animals (mainly chickens and goats) are much less frequent, and dogs are driven off. The only source of water is the river itself. Some supplement their food by hunting in the nearby North Hills Park, but doing so is illegal and punishable by labor. Just over the city wall is the High Quarter—the place where the most affluent of the city live and conduct business, and the contrast between their dull lives and the lives of those within the city makes the people of Shack Town that much more bitter. Some people beg in the streets, while others glare menacingly at any visitors who appear more well off than they. The one truly permanent building is the shrine of St. Cuthbert, a small brick building inhabited by an older cleric, Nicholai [Clr3 (St. Cuthbert): hp 15; Heal +10]. the city watch almost never comes here, more out of disregard for the inhabitants than fear of the criminal element.

Questioning the people who live near the water (or making a DC 15 Gather Information check) reveals that the black current has been appearing only in the vicinity of Shack Town, never upstream of it. Although the exact location varies, it is usually in a particular 200 ft. span of the river. If the heroes decide to search that portion of the river and upstream (as the material has to be moving downstream, and therefore the source is either directly below or upstream of the location the current is spotted), let all searching characters make a Search check (DC 20) every hour. Keep track of how long they search, especially if they plan to see the Earth Dragon clerics in

action (if they take too long, they have to wait until tomorrow to see them work).

The water starts to become cloudy with silt and debris by the time the bottom of the river is reached (30 ft. depth), and with the slight decrease in illumination at that depth and the need for frequent trips to the surface for air, this is a lengthy and difficult task. Unless characters find something stable to which they can tether themselves and rest occasionally, they are also going to have to make Swim checks (DC 20) each hour of swimming or take 1d6 points of subdual damage from fatigue. They can rent a beat-up but seaworthy six-person canoe from a nearby family of refugees for 10 sp per day, which includes an anchor attached to a 50 ft. rope (the canoe is sufficient to negate the need for checks to avoid fatigue).

A successful Search means they find the end of a clay pipe that moves toward the eastern shore (toward Shack Town). If forced (Strength check DC 10) the pipe can be pulled free—it is a 4 ft. segment in a series of segments leading toward the shore. If the pipe is pulled free, a small amount of black water seeps from the far end, identical to the black current they saw earlier (with the same dangers if someone touches it, as described earlier). They can uproot a dozen more clay pipes before they become buried too deep to access. However, they continue to point toward the shore, and it's likely that the heroes realize that whoever responsible must be living in or near that part of Shack Town.

When they are finished searching, they need to return (or stow) the canoe and have to pass through Shack Town regardless of their plans (looking for the other end of the pipe, watching the Earth Dragon cultists, or even returning to the city). During this trip they are due to be waylaid by some hungry thieves. Make sure you know if they put their armor back on and organize their gear as normal, or if they remain unarmored after their underwater excursion (intending to dry off or take a bath first, for example). Proceed to **Encounter 5: A Motley Band**.

Encounter 5: A Motley Band

The activity of the armored and (comparatively) wealthy adventurers has attracted the attention of some of the worse elements of Shack Town. Seeing their opportunity when the heroes are worn out from swimming (and possibly unarmored as well), the thieves set up a simple ambush against the heroes. There are a total of six thieves in this ambush, all weak from hunger. They have all suffered subdual damage from lack of food and are -2 to Strength and Dexterity from fatigue (these modifiers are included in the statistics below). Knowing the layout of Shack Town better than the heroes, two of the thieves act as lookouts, directing their friends to a position along the path of the heroes. Two of the thieves pretend to be sleeping beggars, two hide in nearby shacks, and the two lookouts jump in from between nearby buildings.

As the thieves are not trying to be silent (it's a noisy place) or hidden (they're completely out of sight), all the heroes have to help them realize they're about to be attacked are Sense Motive checks with a DC of 20 to realize the "sleeping" beggars are just acting (the characters may make Wisdom checks if they don't have the Sense Motive skill). Characters who make their check may act in the surprise round (taking a partial action), those who fail cannot act until the first regular round. All of the thieves take partial actions in the surprise round, with two of them actually able to make attacks.

Tactics: The "sleeping" thieves stand up from their prone positions (a move-equivalent action that does not draw an attack of opportunity) when a hero enters a square adjacent to them. The thieves in the homes make a partial charge (a partial action; see the *Player's Handbook*, Table 8-3 on page 127) from their hiding places and attack (charge while the lookouts approach with a regular move (a partial action) but cannot attack in the surprise round. If there are more thieves than there are characters, they double up on the weakest-looking hero, hoping to knock that one out quickly. Their main goal is to acquire some money. If an adventurer is knocked unconscious, one of the thieves uses his next turn's action to steal the fallen character's money pouch, call to his friends that he has the loot, and flee; once a thief has fled with stolen money, the others use the full move action to get away from the fight without drawing attacks of opportunity. They try to position themselves to get sneak attacks if possible. Note that the watch frowns on lethal fighting, even in Shack Town, and characters that strike for normal damage with their weapons might be reported to the authorities (or at least earn the dislike of the people in Shack Town).

The thieves also respond to bribes or thrown money. A 1 gp offer requires a Sense Motive check (DC 20) from the targeted thief; success means the thief takes the money and runs, failure means the thief hopes for a better bargain and continues to fight. Every additional gp offered beyond the first decreases the DC by 5 (so 2 gp has a DC of 15, 3 gp has a DC of 10, and so on). In this situation, the other thieves do not flee the scene once a friend gets money—they stick around, hoping for a similar offer or opportunity. Statistics for the thieves are in the appendix.

If three or more of the thieves are slain or rendered unconscious, the rest flee at the first opportunity. The fallen can be dropped off at the nearest watch station (within the city walls) or left where they are (if they're not dying). Once the thieves are dealt with, the heroes can get on with their plans. If they go watch the clerics of the Earth Dragon perform their healing, proceed to **Encounter 6: Preaching The Faith**. If they try to find which building conceals the other end of the pipe, proceed to **Encounter 7: The Dragon's House**.

Encounter 6: Preaching the Faith

As noon approaches the next day, a crowd begins to gather in the center of Shack Town, a place where a few

larger shacks once stood but were accidentally burned down. Now the black earth in this area is often used as a meeting-place, and is considered neutral ground by the people of Shack Town. The open area is a rough circle with an approximate diameter of 20 ft.

Of the forty people gathered here, at least a third of them appear to be ill. All of the ill people have a grayish complexion, especially in the corners of the eyes and inside the mouth (a symptom of the black current poison). All of them fell ill after drinking from the Selintan or eating fish recently caught in the river. They feel weak and barely alive.

Just before noon, the two clerics arrive. Eschewing any formalities, they praise the Earth Dragon and ask people to bring forth those affected by the black water sickness. Their healing procedures involve prayers to the Earth Dragon, chewing of sacred herbs, waving sticks of burning incense, and placing rock crystals on certain parts of the afflicted's body. Every person brought to the clerics begins to feel better once the ritual is over.

Characters with Spellcraft can attempt to determine what spells are being used as part of these rituals (DC 15). Those that succeed realize that the only spells these clerics are using are 0- and 1st-level spells, none of which have any ability to negate disease (*cure minor wounds*, *resistance*, *bless*, *protection from chaos*, and so on). It is possible that the clerics of the Earth Dragon are using the Heal skill to treat the disease, but such an action usually takes a while and rarely has an immediate visible effect.

What the clerics are actually doing is administering the poison's antidote, which has been smeared onto the "sacred herbs" and counteracts all effects of the poison. Only a small amount of the antidote is needed to treat a single person, and if enough antidote was introduced to the water at the same place where the poison was being introduced, it would almost completely negate the effects, even if introduced up to a minute later.

Unfortunately for the heroes, there are no other spellcasters on-hand to back up any claims of fraud, and as the victims of the "disease" are recovering, the crowd is happy enough with the results, whether or not some unknown adventurers claim the clerics aren't really casting spells. If confronted, the clerics point at the recovered victims and say that the proof is obvious to anyone, and that the heroes must be agents of a rival faith, out to discredit and defame the good works the Earth Dragon is trying to do.

After healing all of the "disease" victims present, the clerics ask the crowd to join in a group prayer of thanks to the Earth Dragon, after which they excuse themselves, stating that they will continue in two days after they recover their power through rest and prayer.

By now the adventurers should suspect that the clerics of the Earth Dragon are up to something suspicious, if not outright involved in the origins of the black currents. Should the heroes decide to delay until the next time the clerics perform these "cures," remind them that the currents have continued to appear, and any delays are likely to result in more people becoming ill and

even dying. Now would be a good time to speak to the clerics privately, perhaps at their residence.

Encounter 7: The Dragon's House

Konten and Haleer have set up shop in Shack Town very close to the river. Having acquired three shacks in close proximity, they nailed boards to the outer walls to enclose the central area, roofed it, and divided the rooms to suit their needs. All of their building's walls are made of 3/4 in. wood (hardness 5). Each 3 ft. by 3 ft. section has 15 hit points; a small character can pass through a hole this big as a move-equivalent action, while a medium-size character needs two adjacent holes this size to get through using a move-equivalent action (they could use a full-round action to get through a single hole that size).

Their home is guarded by two animated skeletons dressed in padded armor (their faces and hands are wrapped so none of their bones show), which have been ordered to attack anyone that enters except Konten and Haleer. The skeletons were animated by *animate dead* spells in potion (oil) form, given to Konten; they obey only his orders. Any outsiders who ask questions about the skeletons are told that they are monks sworn to silence in the service of the Earth Dragon.

The main door to their home has no lock, but Konten orders the skeletons to stand in the entryway as he closes the door, physically blocking the way into the house (the skeletons only attack if someone enters the house or if they are attacked, so opening the door just shows them standing threateningly). When they are at home, the clerics have the skeletons stand in area C.

Note that the people of Shack Town have learned to leave well enough alone. Unless they are threatened directly, they ignore sounds of fighting and pleas for help, although some of the more curious might peek from their doorways or lean-tos to see what's going on. At no point do they get involved with the heroes' battle with the Earth Dragon cultists.

A. Entryway

This small entryway has no features except for the two large nails pounded into the eastern wall, each of which holds a brown traveling cloak. Most of the north wall of this former shack has been cut away to allow access to the central area.

B. Bedroom

This room holds nothing more than a pair of normal bedrolls.

A fairly large knothole in the north wall of this room makes it easy to look into this room from the outside. However, nothing of interest occurs in this room but sleep, and the clerics usually keep the door to area D closed.

C. Pipe and Skeletons

This is some sort of storage room, mainly for about 20 stacked clay pipes, each a few inches in diameter and about 4 ft long.

The pipes are identical to the clay pipe extending from the floor in area **D**. If the clerics are present, this room also contains the two animated skeletons, although it is unlikely that the adventurers will make it into this room before the skeletons are commanded to attack.

D. Main Living Area

This trapezoidal room has two doors, two wood barrels, two simple wood chairs, a clay pipe extending from the floor, and a large clay flask in the northwest corner.

The clay pipe is a few inches in diameter. The pipe connects with other pipes in a series, all buried underground with the use of a few *stone shape* spells on scrolls that were given to Konten. The barrels contain the poison (made from a plant that grows only in the mountains of the Pomarj) that has been causing the “sickness.” The flask holds the poison’s antidote; a few drops will cure a poisoned person in 1d4 rounds.

There is a secret door in the wall behind the barrels—little more than two of the wall-boards that are supported by a pair of thin nails, easily pushed free of the crossbeams to make an exit.

If the clerics are home, they refuse to allow anyone in, claiming that they have blessed the earth of their humble dwelling in the name of the Earth Dragon, and it is a blasphemy to allow people not of the faith to tread upon it (not true, but it deters most would-be visitors). They do not allow anyone into their home without a fight.

Should a battle occur, Konten orders the two skeletons to attack the intruders. Note that he does this verbally unless restricted from making noise (commanding undead can be done mentally as a standard action). He does *not* call them skeletons out loud, as he wishes to preserve the “monk” façade. Meanwhile, Haleer casts *bane* against the heroes. The clerics use their spells and weapons as they see fit, allowing the skeletons to take the front rank, and using their prepared healing spells to aid each other if need be.

If both of the skeletons are destroyed and Haleer is injured, Konten dumps one of the barrels of poison in area **D** into the pipe (a move and a standard action). On his next action, Konten grabs the vial of antidote in area **D** and threatens to smash it, using it as a bargaining chip to allow himself and Haleer to escape. If the fight turns into negotiation, proceed to **Encounter 8: Hard Choices**.

If Konten is the only one left standing, he grabs the antidote, leaps out the secret door in area **D**, and throws his flask of alchemist’s fire at the shack, setting it aflame (and drinking his *potion of expeditious retreat* the next round). At this point, the heroes can try to apprehend him, but also need to pay attention to the fire, which begins to consume the shack and may spread to other nearby shacks and therefore threaten much of Shack Town. Any reasonable precautions (pouring water from waterskins onto nearby shacks, hauling water from the river, throwing dirt on smoldering areas, casting *create water*, and so on) taken by the heroes prevent the fire

from spreading, although the exact methods used may draw the ire of nearby residents (dumping water on a leaky roof, even to stop a potential fire, is going to annoy the people under that roof).

It is the evil cleric’s hope that the adventurers are too distracted by the fire to pursue him. Should they continue the pursuit, he throws the flask of antidote into the shallows of the river, betting that the hero is more interested in keeping the antidote from being carried away than chasing after him.

Encounter 8: Hard Choices

With the poison dumped into the water, the cleric explains that if the antidote is poured in after it within a minute, its effects are negated. Any later than that, the best you can hope for is a partial result. He is willing to turn over the antidote if he and Haleer are allowed to go free; he will wait until Haleer can leave the house, will place the antidote on the ground, and leave himself. If pursued, he throws his alchemist’s fire at one of the nearby shacks, causing it to catch fire and threaten to expand to other nearby shacks, as described above.

Remember the one-minute time limit!

When dealing with this encounter, remember that the clerics would rather escape and continue in their mortal service to the Earth Dragon than die as martyrs. If their only option is surrendering, they take it, although they hold out as long as possible with the antidote before handing it over. If they can, they drink their *potions of expeditious retreat* during the negotiations.

Conclusion

They can tell the watch what was going on and explain that it’s a poison. If they have the antidote, they can pour some in the pipe and save some to treat people. The people of Shack Town are happy.

Experience Point Summary

Sum the experience award values for the objectives that the PCs accomplished. For items with value ranges, assign a value in the range based on how well the PCs accomplished the stated item. For any item with a value range, you may award different amounts within the range to different PCs. Give the total value to each PC.

Defeat the hungry thieves	100 xp
Prevent a fight with the clerics of Pholtus	100 xp
OR	
Defeat the clerics of Pholtus	75 xp
Defeat the padded skeletons	50 xp
Defeat the clerics of the Earth Dragon	150 xp
Provide antidote to cure the poison affliction	50 xp

Roleplaying—award for consistent character
portrayal that adds to the fun of the game 0-50 xp
Total possible experience: 500 xp

Treasure Summary

PCs may keep items from the scenario which are listed on the treasure list or which meet the following conditions:

1. The item must be non-magical and specifically listed in the text of the adventure (e.g armor on foes). If it is not listed in the text, the PCs cannot keep it. Items of this nature can be sold for 50% of book value, or recorded on a log sheet.
2. Animals, followers, monsters, henchmen, and so forth (any living being, basically) may not be kept from a scenario for any reason unless the treasure summary lists the being specifically. It is okay for the PC to form relationships with NPCs, but these will not be certified and cannot bring material benefit to the PC. Contacts (sources of extra information) must be specifically certified.
3. Theft is against the law, but may be practiced by some PCs. Items which are worth more than 5,000 gp, which are of personal significance to the owner (including family heirlooms), and magical items will be discovered in the possession of the PC by one means or another. The PC who stole them must return the item and pay a fine equal to three times the value of the item stolen. In addition, the PC caught receives one Infamy point for being a known thief. For other items which meet the criteria in #1 above, use your judgment on whether a PC thief gets away with the theft or not.

Any item retained according to these rules which does not have a certificate will not ever have a certificate issued for it.

The campaign staff reserves the right to take away any item or gold acquired for things which it later finds unreasonable but which were allowed at the time.

- 2 suits of scale mail (value 50 gp each, can be sold for 25 gp each)
- 2 heavy picks (value 8 gp each, can be sold for 4 gp each)
- 2 steel holy symbols of the Earth Dragon (value 10 gp each)
- 2 slings (no value)
- 20 sling bullets (no real value)
- 2 *potions of expeditious retreat* (value 50 gp each)
- *potion of cure light wounds* (value 50 gp)
- vial of alchemist's fire (value 20 gp)
- 125 gp
- 75 sp.

Appendix 1: NPCs

Xvarts:

Harsk, Jurg, and Nesk, male xvirt Clr2 (Raxivort): CR 2; Small Humanoid (3 ft. tall); HD 2d8; hp 15; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 16 (+1 size, +4 chain shirt, +1 Dex); Atk +0 melee (1d4-1/crit 19-20/x2, dagger), +2 ranged (1d4-1/crit 19-20/x2, dagger); SC darkvision 60 ft., rebuke undead, spells; AL CN; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +4.

Str 8, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 10.

Skills: Diplomacy +6, Heal +6, Hide +5, Knowledge (Religion) +2, Listen +2, Move Silently +3, Speak Language (Common). **Feats:** Toughness

Special Characteristics: Speaks goblin (native language). Bonus language: draconic. Animal domain: Can cast *animal friendship* once per day (up to 16 HD of animal friends at a time). Trickery Domain: Bluff, Disguise, and Hide are Class skills. Domain spell is marked with an asterisk. *Speak with animals* once per day (rodents only, as a 1st-level caster).

Possessions: Chain shirt, iron holy symbol, dagger, 4 days of dried rations, waterskin, large sack, 5 gp, 10 sp.

Spells Prepared (4/4): o—*cure minor wounds, detect magic, light, resistance*; 1st—*bane, cause fear, change self*, cure light wounds*.

Clerics of Pholtus:

Corrin, female human Clr2 (Pholtus): CR 2; Medium-size humanoid; HD 2d8; hp 12; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Atk +1 melee (1d6, staff); SC spells, turn undead; AL LN; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +7.

Str 10, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 14.

Skills: Heal +7, Intimidate +4, Knowledge (Religion) +6, Sense Motive +4, Spellcraft +2. **Feats:** Combat Casting, Iron Will

Special Characteristics: Law domain: Casts Law spells (marked in the spell list with (L)) at +1 caster level. Sun domain: Can do greater turning once per day, destroying undead that would normally be turned. Domain spell is marked with an asterisk.

Possessions: Staff, silver holy symbol, 35 gp, 20 sp.

Spells Prepared (4/4): o—*guidance, light, mending, resistance*; 1st—*command, detect chaos, protection from chaos*(L), shield of faith*.

Tosh and Veloth, male human Clr1 (Pholtus): CR 1; Medium-size humanoid; HD 1d8; hp 8; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +0 melee (1d6, staff); SC spells, turn undead; AL LN; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +5.

Str 10, Dex 11, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 12.

Skills: Heal +5, Intimidate +2, Knowledge (Religion) +4, Sense Motive +2. **Feats:** Iron Will

Special Characteristics: Law domain: Casts Law spells (marked in the spell list with (L)) at +1 caster level. Sun domain: Can do greater turning once per day, destroying undead that would normally be turned. Domain spell is marked with an asterisk.

Possessions: Staff, silver holy symbol, 10 gp, 10 sp.

Spells Prepared (3/3): o—*guidance, light, resistance*; 1st—*detect chaos, protection from chaos*(L), shield of faith*.

City Watch:

City Watch, male or female human Ftr1 (6): CR 1; Medium humanoid; HD 1d10; hp 10; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (chain shirt, small shield, Dex); Atk +2 melee (1d8, longsword), +2 ranged (1d8, light crossbow); AL LN; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +0.

Str 11, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +1, Jump +1, Listen +2, Spot +2. **Feats:** Alertness, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Earth Dragon Clerics:

Konten, male human Clr2 (Earth Dragon): CR 2; Medium-size humanoid; HD 2d8; hp 14; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 14 (+4 scale); Atk +2 melee (1d6+1/crit 20/x3, heavy pick), +1 ranged (1d4, sling bullet); SC rebuke undead, spells; AL LE; SV Fort +6, Ref +0, Will +4.

Str 12, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Concentration +5, Diplomacy +1, Heal +6, Knowledge (Religion) +4, Spellcraft +1. **Feats:** Great Fortitude, Martial Weapon Proficiency (heavy pick).

Special Characteristics: Law domain: Casts Law spells (marked in the spell list with (L)) – none currently prepared) at +1 caster level. Earth Domain: Turn or destroy air creatures as a good cleric turns or destroys undead, rebuke or command earth creatures as an evil cleric rebukes or commands undead. Domain spell is marked with an asterisk.

Possessions: Scale mail, steel holy symbol, heavy pick, sling, 10 sling bullets, *potion of expeditious retreat*, *potion of healing*, vial of black current poison antidote, alchemist's fire, 70 gp, 40 sp.

Spells Prepared (4/4): o—*cure minor wounds, guidance, resistance, virtue*; 1st—*bles, cure light wounds, doom, protection from chaos**.

Haleer, female human Clr1 (Earth Dragon): CR 1; Medium-size humanoid; HD 1d8; hp 9; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +4 scale); Atk +1 melee (1d6+1/crit 20/x3, heavy pick), +1 ranged (1d4, sling bullet); SC rebuke undead, spells; AL LE; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +3.

Str 12, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 15.

Skills: Concentration +3, Diplomacy +6, Heal +3, Knowledge (Religion) +3, Spellcraft +1. **Feats:** Martial Weapon Proficiency (heavy pick).

Special Characteristics: Law domain: Casts Law spells (marked in the spell list with (L)) at +1 caster level. Earth Domain: Turn or destroy air creatures as a good cleric turns or destroys undead, rebuke or command earth creatures as an evil cleric rebukes or commands undead. Domain spell is marked with an asterisk.

Possessions: Scale mail, steel holy symbol, heavy pick, sling, 10 sling bullets, *potion of expeditious retreat*, 55 gp, 35 sp.

Spells Prepared (3/3): 0—cure minor wounds, resistance, virtue; 1st—bane, cure light wounds, protection from chaos[®].

Padded Skeletons (3): CR 1/3; Medium-size undead; HD 1d12; hp 6; Init +5 (Dex, improved initiative); Spd 30; AC 14 (+1 Dex, +2 natural, +1 padded armor); Atks +0 melee (1d4/1d4, claws); SD half damage from slashing weapons, immune to cold, no damage from piercing weapons; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +2.

Str 10, Dex 12, Con –, Int –, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Feats: Improved Initiative.

Hungry Thieves

Hungry thieves, male and female human Rog1 (6): CR 1; Medium-size humanoid; HD 1d6; hp 4 (normally 6); Init +5 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (Dex); Atk -1 melee (1d6-1 subdual, sap), +1 ranged (1 point, thrown rock); AL CN; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +0.

Str 8 (normally 10), Dex 12 (normally 14), Con 11, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Intimidate +2, Listen +4, Move Silently +5, Pick Pocket +3. *Feats:* Improved Initiative.

Possessions: Nothing of value other than their clothing and their saps (which are nothing more than dirt and stones tied up in a cloth).

Appendix 2: The Earth Dragon Cult

The Earth Dragon is an ancient deity of the Flanaess, a remnant of an era when spirits of nature were worshiped as gods. Unlike most of the gods of Greyhawk, the Earth Dragon is not a part of a sophisticated theology. It is just the spirit of Mount Drachenkopf, although it long ago spread its influence to all of the Drachensgrab Hills in the Pomarj. Worship of the Earth Dragon is limited to a relatively small geographic area where its power is strongest. Its relationship to its worshipers harkens back to a simpler time. In return for obeisance and sacrifice, the Earth Dragon protects its worshipers from harm and makes them prosperous. But it can also be an angry god, and it destroys as easily as it creates.

Although most gods live on the Outer Planes, because the Earth Dragon is a spirit of the world it remains on Oerth. Its domain is where it has always been, beneath Mount Drachenkopf. Legend says it lives in an expansive underground lair avoided by all the subterranean races. Especially faithful worshipers are sometimes brought to the Earth Dragon's lair to bask in their deity's glory. The temple of Mount Drachenkopf has a shaft of unknown depth that is used to drop sacrifices down into the god's realm. The magic of the shaft transports victims safely to its lair, where the god devours them.

Dogma: "The Earth Dragon provides. The great god is the spirit of the earth, and those who worship and obey it will be protected. The Earth Dragon knows all the secrets of the land, and favors its chosen with knowledge and power. Those who worship, sacrifice, and spread the faith please the god."

Clerics of the Earth Dragon wear brown robes embroidered with cloth of gold and gemstones. During ceremonies, they wear the bronzed skulls of young dragons on their heads. These skulls are gathered during initiation rites to become a high-level priest. Candidates must hunt and slay a young, good-aligned dragon to prove their worthiness.

Adventuring clerics of the Earth Dragon favor scale mail and shields emblazoned with the coiled dragon symbol of their god. They prefer to wear sturdy, reinforced garb more appropriate for forays into the mines and mountains rather than their ceremonial raiment.

Domains Earth, Evil, Law, Protection; **Weapons** pick (light or heavy).

Appendix 3: Xvarts

Xvarts are small (3 ft. high) blue-skinned humanoids, generally evil in nature, somewhere between the strength of goblins and kobolds. Xvarts worship the god Raxivort and favor short swords, daggers, and nets for catching and killing prey. They have an affinity for rodents (mice, rats, bats, and so on); once per day a xuart can *speak with animals* as a spell-like ability to speak with a rodent. This ability is innate to xvarts (and is similar to a gnome's ability to communicate with burrowing mammals). Treat the xuart as a 1st-level caster for those spell effects dependent on level (such as duration).



