

Trouble at Troublewater

This scenario uses D&D 3.5, but can easily be used with any set of rules, in any fantasy game where the characters are traveling the countryside. Generally, this is for medieval-ish fantasy (set in the Grand Duchy of Karamaikos of the D&D world Mystara, year 992 AC), but it can be adapted to any sort of game. This is designed as the first adventure for a group of fresh adventurers, but it works just fine with more experienced characters as well.

Warning: this adventure contains some adult elements, and is not recommended for players under 18 years old.

There are two parts in this little adventure: first, “The Arrival”, introduces the PCs into the village, and they get a task to clear a rat-infested cellar.

Second, “Honor Among Thieves”, presents a situation where they have several choices of what to do. This second part can be resolved in many ways, with or without combat. I have run the second part of the adventure, in different game worlds, for four times so far. What’s interesting is that every group that has played the scenario has found a different solution and tactics.

At each point, I suggest variations and complications to the adventure. The scenario can be run as anything from a little encounter to a side quest to a start of a great adventure. I also give many tips for more adventures within and around Troublewater, and how to modify the adventure. At each point, I give a **Boost** to make the scenario tougher for tougher adventurers, a **Twist**, which you can use to add a surprising element and **Horror** for a tip on how to add a horror element.

The places and people have generic fantasy names, and it should be trivial to change the names and adapt this to your game world. You can easily modify, remove or add more NPCs (Non-Player Characters).

The scenario has been playtested and it took roughly the four hours it was supposed to.

Introducing the Player Characters

If this is their first adventure, tell the players that their characters went recently through the Shearing ceremony. It is a Traladaran custom, where a young adult is dressed in traveling gear by his or her family. The bottom of his or her cloak is

sheared off, leaving it ragged like that of an impoverished traveler. From now on, the character must make his or her own way until the family decides he or she is worthy to be a full member of the clan.

Some characters stay near their home, just living apart of their family, but some take on adventuring for a few years. This is what the player characters are doing.

In any case, the characters recently met at Radlebb Keep and decided to form an adventuring band together. Or maybe they already knew each other – let the players tell about their characters' backgrounds and contribute to their backstory.



While things near Radlebb keep are currently peaceful, there is a city called Lun nearby. There, it is told, are always opportunities for adventures. There are also several ruins and dungeons in the wilds around the city, and if you need to know more, Lun is the place to ask from.

So, currently the player characters are taking a well-known shortcut to Luln, a path going straight over the hills which shortens their way for over ten miles. A few miles north from the main road rain started pouring down. The path is quickly turning into a quagmire, and the characters are cold, wet, hungry, and generally miserable. It's late autumn (or early spring, if you like), so rain as such isn't unexpected. The PCs should be equipped properly, lest they want their spellbooks and other important things to get wet.

Now, there aren't any suitable caves, shelters or even farmhouses or barns nearby. Troublewater village is the closest place where they can find good shelter.

It is wiser to just keep going, but of course they can build a hut or huddle under a tree. But it will still be wet, cold, gray, and miserable. A Survival check, DC 17 (adjusted for difficulty) is required to find a comfortable, dry place to camp in.

If they do decide to camp now, there will be a hostile encounter: an angry dire badger (an animal, CR 2) has decided the PC's camp is its territory, and will try to drive them away. At first, it will only hiss and threaten them. If it takes any damage, it goes into a berserk rage and fights to the death.

Troublewater – an Active Growth Centre in the Bosom of Mother Nature¹

The small village called Troublewater where the characters are arriving to is along a trade route and a popular rest stop for travelers. At least for those travelers those actually *leave* the great Western Road, and hike ten miles north along a smaller road. This is technically a shortcut from Radlebb Keep to Luln, though it takes a higher and more difficult pass through the hills. Also, there be dragons – or, if not dragons, at least monsters. This makes the route actually more popular among adventurers.

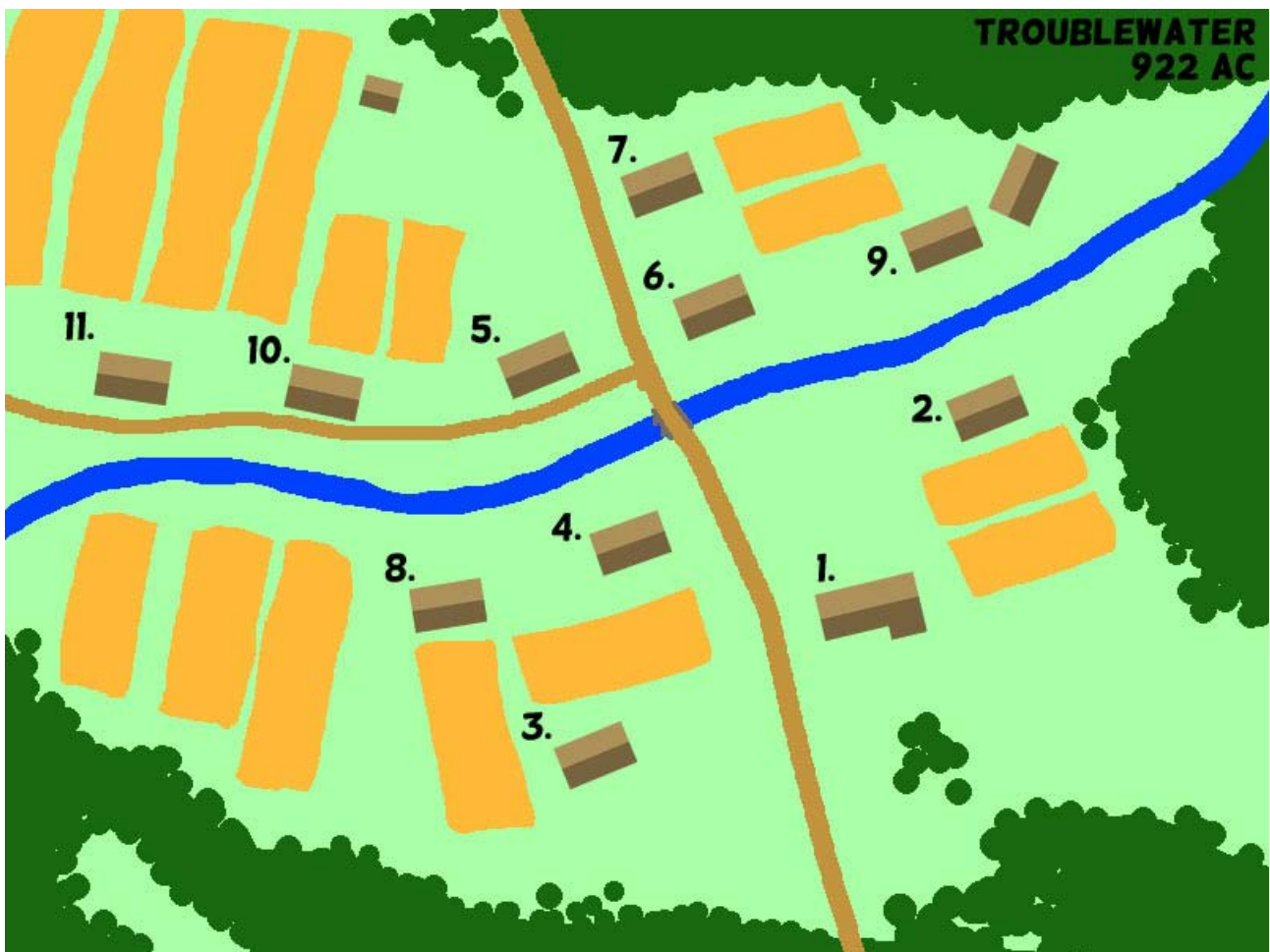


Troublewater is located within Radlebb Woods, in between Radlebb Keep and Luln, and 11 miles south from the infamous Koriszegy Keep. To the west, beyond the ramshackle town of Luln, is the equally infamous Black Eagle Barony. 8 miles north from Troublewater, the path to Luln leaves the road to the west. The road itself continues, albeit unused and partially overgrown, 3 more miles to the north where it ends, at the ruins of Koriszegy Keep.

Troublewater has little fields, but the surrounding forest is rich with game and fur animals. Travelers are another source of income for the locals.

Troublewater is known throughout the parish for its great bridge over Troublewater river. In truth, the river is a small stream running to the south from the hills, and the bridge is a little, old, rickety wooden bridge. But it's the only attraction they have.

Troublewater also has a Grand Hotel; also old, rickety, and lousy, and it only has two large guest rooms, each with six bunks. Bedbugs and fleas attack customers at night. The meals are bland – same stuff the locals eat. A stay for a night (no choice over roommates) costs 5 silver coins per person; an entire room, 2 gold. Meals (cost about 3 silver) are not included. For adventurers, the prices are doubled, because, adventurers are assumed to be rich.



1. Grand Hotel
2. Brokkr's House (Blacksmith)
3. Andre's House
4. Pasternaks (1)
5. Anya Romanov's House and Local Temple
6. Karpovs

7. Ohotnikovs
8. Pasternaks (2)
9. Bevis' House
10. Gardners (1)
11. Gardners (2)

There are also a few more farmsteads and hunting and lumbering cabins within a day's trip from Troublewater.

Boost: Change house #4 to be the home of **Gaius Galerius**, a wizard who moved into this village two years ago. He's a generous, hospitable, charming, and blatantly homosexual man, who loves to discuss fashion, decór, gourmet cooking, literary classics, and poems, and to serve tea and cake to his guests. He is also the local agent to baron Hendricks of the Black Eagle Barony, and reports all interesting local news to him. Gaius sells scrolls and *identify* services; but if he identifies an item he likes, he will tell the PCs false information and offers to buy the item – for much cheaper than it is actually worth of.

Twist: Before the day of the robbery (see Honor Among Thieves, below), Borka orders his men to kidnap Sonja Pasternak, bring her into their hideout, and put her into the cage for now. Borka is afraid he will have to leave this region for good after the big gig, and can't bear the thought of leaving Sonja behind. He genuinely doesn't want to hurt Sonja and treats her well, but the kidnapping complicates things and increases the risks. The PCs might be asked to investigate Sonja's disappearance and thus become involved – at first unaware of the bandits and their plans.

Horror: All the buildings are ramshackle; the village is dirty and fly-infested. Many houses have one or more vicious, deformed and ugly guard dogs, which drool profusely and bark at any strangers, tugging at the end of their chains as they try to get to the "intruder". There are rotting meat and bones around the doghouses; whenever a villager needs to feed a dog, they grab a bow and shoot a sheep or a cow, and fling it at the dogs. (Use a normal dog; CR 1/3.) To spice it up even more: there's currently a rabies epidemic raging among the dogs. Maybe one of the villagers gets infested as well and runs amok...

¹In Finnish, this is "Vireä kasvukeskus keskellä luontoa."

People of Troublewater

Majority of people living in Troublewater are Traladarans, superstitious human natives of the duchy, comparable to medieval Russian peasants. Then there are

Thyatians, the noble (or not so noble) humans from the Empire which conquered Traladara around a hundred years ago. They are somewhat similar to Ancient Romans. Several Hindul (Halflings) – close to the stereotypical hobbits as described by Tolkien, but less conservative and more willing to travel – also live in the village. No Callarii (Elves) have settled in Troublewater, but they often travel through.

Commoners are initially suspicious of strangers, especially adventurers. They particularly dislike fire spells and people who draw weapons at them. If the visitors behave well and treat them with respect – and are generous with cash – they quickly become friendlier. This village is still more accustomed to strangers than most rural villages of the Duchy, where magic-using characters might be treated as witches to be burned at the stake.

Pavel Filippov: 45-year old Traladaran male human, single, owner of Troublewater Grand Hotel. Somewhat chubby, twitchy, and nervous man. He is a superstitious person, who is very interested in prophecies, astrology, palmistry, and other methods of fortune-telling. Yet, he represents the growth, development, and how the village connects to the world. For he is surprisingly connected, with his two brothers (**Jaska Filippov** and **Onisim Filippov**) running large inns in Luln and Specularum, respectively, so he would be a valuable friend to any adventurers.

Anya Romanov: 68-year old female Traladaran human, village priestess. She reveres the Traladaran Immortals: Halav, Petra, and Zirchev. Beset by rheumatism and old age, she's cranky and prone to snap at people. Still, she's a good, honest, caring, and above all, religious person. She has a small repertoire of divine (cleric) spells, up to 2nd-level spells, and sells potions such as *cure light wounds*.

Brokk: 161-year old male dwarf, village blacksmith. Badly scarred and missing his left leg – he has a wooden peg leg. He keeps his beard shaved, which (Knowledge (geography) or Knowledge (local/Highforge) DC 20) is something deeply shamed dwarves do. A quiet, hard-working man, who talks little. He represents the failed and retired heroes. Brokk isn't his real name.

Andre Jusupov: 28-year old male mixed blood (Traladaran/Thyatian) human. Presumably the richest man in the village, and a self-appointed "leader". Everybody hates his guts, though. Andre is a fur trader, which doesn't quite explain why exactly he is so rich. Andre is basically uncharismatic; not very clever, rather ugly, rude, and overweight man, who has criminal connections (see **Borka**). He is not in league with Galerius. Andre is often accompanied by two bodyguards (Borka's brigands).

Bevis "Battle-Axe" Kolodin: 40-year old male Traladaran/Thyatian lumberjack, with three adult sons (**Pyotr**, **Ivan**, and **Sergei**) and several hired men helping him with lumbering. His wife is named **Ecatrina**.

Gardner family: A large halfling family, about 30 people living in two houses. They represent the hard-working, rustic peasants. They own nearly all the fields in and around Troublewater, and produce most of the grain and vegetables for the village. Family is lead by **Old Grim**, a 105-year old but still strong man. Gardners like to arrange big parties for the entire village. Of the commoners, they are probably the quickest to accept strangers.

Pasternak family: A large Traladaran farmer family with several grandparents, their children, and grandchildren living together in two houses. Pasternak family specializes in livestock; they own cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, and chickens. **Sonja Pasternak** is a remarkably beautiful 16-year-old girl – sadly, she’s also somewhat mentally retarded and childlike.

Karpov family: A Traladaran family of fishermen; in addition to Troublewater, there are many smaller streams, ponds, and little lakes in the woods which they use.

Ohotnikov family: A Traladaran family of hunters.

Borka: 30-year old male Traladaran huntsman. A stranger who came to Troublewater a year ago. “Friend” of Andre, and living in his house whenever he’s here. Feared by the locals; he’s actually extorting protection money from both the Gardners and Pasternaks, and wants to “marry” Sonja. Borka is a highwayman, a hard-boiled criminal, who has even spent a few years in the prison at Specularum. (Rogues and the like might know him as a criminal, with Knowledge (local) checks: local/Specularum DC 20, or local/Grand Duchy of Karameikos DC 30.) Borka is a low-level ranger who carries two hidden short swords (in D&D terms, he has chosen two-weapon combat style), and a composite longbow when he goes hunting. His band of brigands has about ten members. Two of them work as **Andre’s** bodyguards most of the time; while on duty, these wear no armor but carry clubs hidden under their cloaks. They avoid killing locals, but can give a nasty beating (doing nonlethal damage with their clubs).

Boost: Many of the men at the village have served in Duke’s army and have a few experience levels of Warrior or even Fighter. Consequently, they own more weapons and armor than peasants usually do. You can also add more levels of experience to the bandits and boost their gear.

Twist: Borka is actually an agent of the Duke, sent to infiltrate brigands and lure them into a trap. The caravan (see below) is followed closely by a troop of soldiers and rangers. The PCs involvement may spoil everything. **A Different Twist:** Borka is actually an agent of Baron Hendricks of the Black Eagle Barony, and all the cash is going to him. Borka plans to betray the brigands to the authorities (giving them directions to the Hideout) while he and his two trusted men escape to the Black Eagle Barony with all the loot.

Horror: After several generations of inbreeding, and never marrying outside this village, the Pasternaks, Karpovs, and Ohotnikovs have odd features such as a snub nose, gap-teeth, and bright yellow hair. They are extremely xenophobic and often mentally retarded – but they have the cunning of a wild beast. Strangers to the village have sometimes mysteriously disappeared without a trace. Reasons for this are up to the DM, but they are sure to be sinister.

The Arrival

As the PCs arrive, they are hoping to get indoors soon. If they don't like the look of the "Grand Hotel", they can knock on other peoples' doors and ask for lodging. But since they are strangers, the villagers will tell them to go to the hotel.

When they eventually go to the hotel, they find the innkeeper (read the description above) wringing his hands and pacing back and forth on his porch. "Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I am Pavel Filippov, nice to meet you. I see you are travelers? Adventurers, even? I wish I could offer you a room in this dreadful weather, but there's a problem. I can't even get dry firewood from the cellar to heat the place up!"

He expects the PCs to greet him and tell him their names; he won't be easily offended, though, having seen all sorts of "adventurers" passing through his village during the years. But the prices might mysteriously get higher if the PCs don't behave. Being a businessman, Pavel doesn't have any sort of a price list hanging on the wall – the prices are negotiable.

If the PCs ask what the problem is, Pavel explains that his cellar is infested with rats. Huge, aggressive, nasty rats. When he tried to investigate, they ate his dog, and he himself was barely able to get out alive.

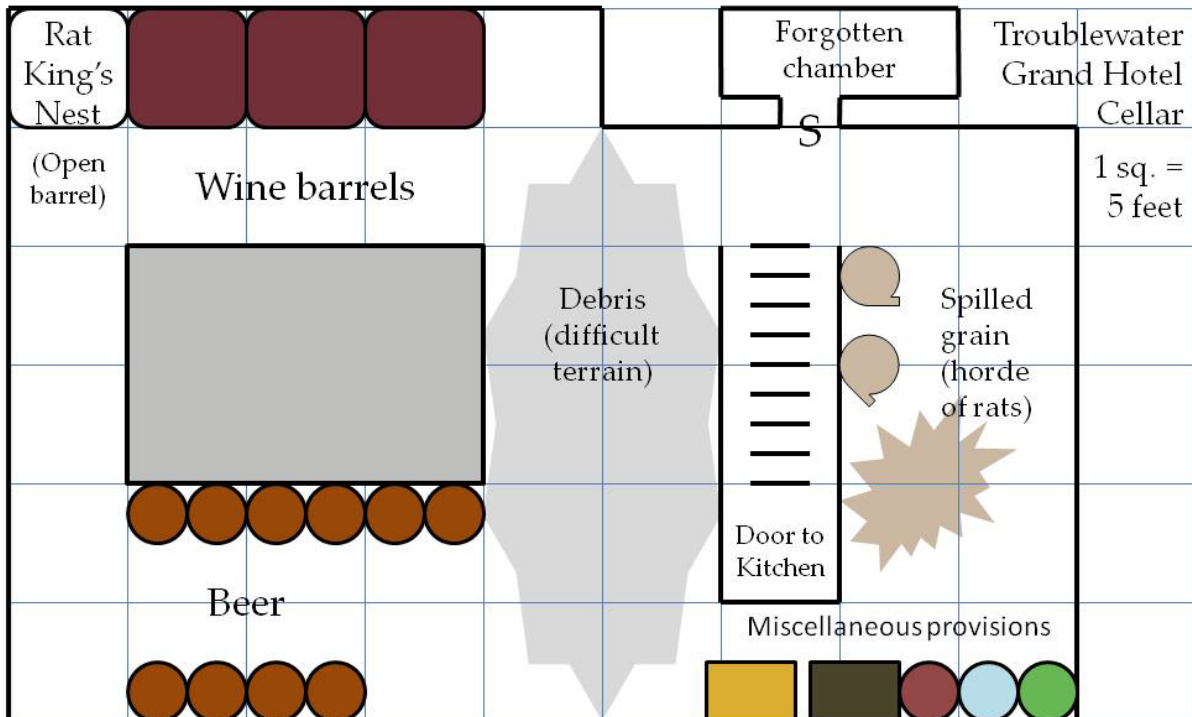
"I'll offer you a discount!" he exclaims, if the PCs want some sort of a reward. That's about the best he will offer. But if the PCs don't offer any help, they won't be getting a room. He will keep the hotel closed.

There's one final thing which could well persuade the PCs to help him: all the beer and wine is in the cellar. If they don't do anything, they will be drinking water.

The Cellar

Here's the map of the cellar. Behind the Rat King's Nest, there's a burrowed, winding tunnel which leads outside into some bushes near the hotel (Search DC 25 to find the

outside entrance, *only if* the PCs happen to search the correct bush). It's too narrow for most people. A Small creature can squeeze through (See Squeezing; each square of movement counts as 2; -4 on attack; -4 on AC).



The rats are actually dire rats (CR 1/3); there's a suitable number of them to challenge a party of young adventurers (3 dire rats for CR 1). There are two groups of rats (e.g. two groups of 3 rats); one lurks in the pile of spilled grain on the east side of the cellar, and the other group generally stays near the Rat King in the west part of the cellar. Two huge piles of firewood have toppled over and make movement on that area difficult.

The Rat King is an old, nasty, and strong dire rat. (As dire rat except: CR 1; Small Animal; HP 20; HD 3d8+3; Bite +6 melee; added Toughness feat.)

There is no treasure in the cellar, except for food and provisions which belong to Mr. Filippov. In addition to the aforementioned firewood, there's plenty of wine – hundreds of gallons – and ten 15-gallon barrels of beer, several sacks of grain (some of them spoiled, though), two large dry-cured ham, a big barrel of salted herring, and plenty of vegetables and various dried provisions. Of course, honest PCs won't steal things belonging to someone else.

However, there is also an old secret door leading to a room which even Mr. Filippov doesn't know about. It is not easy to find (Search DC 20, if the PCs search the correct section of the wall).

The Forgotten Room: Another owner of the inn, several decades ago, kept his valuables in this room. He died without heir, and never told anyone about the room. Feel free to put any sort of treasure into the room. I suggest a pouch of gems, not very valuable but nice, a suit of masterwork armor and a masterwork weapon, probably a sword. There could also be some minor magic trinket and two potions of some sort. It's unlikely that the room is trapped.

Boost: It's easy to boost this place with any sorts of monsters. Anything from a rust monster to undead to dragon(s)! Or maybe a *lich* has decided to settle down into this very cellar. Anything is possible.

Twist: One of the village residents is actually a wererat, who considers these rats as his bellowed pets. Tonight, that person is away from the village, but when he returns, and finds out that his "pets" have been exterminated, he will start plotting against the PCs, determined to see them dead. (The person can of course be female.)

Horror: When the PCs arrive, Pavel has just finished burying someone on the yard. He rants on about how Sasha was so good, loyal, and hard-working, and how he never had to spank her. Eventually they find out that Sasha was a dog. However, the dog isn't actually buried in here because the rats ate her. The rats are in fact Cranium Rats (found in D&D 3e Fiend Folio). They control Pavel with *charm person*, forcing him to bring them meat. When the PCs enter the cellar, Pavel bolts and locks the door behind them. If they kill enough rats, he comes to his senses and lets them out. Possibly.

Honor Among Thieves

After the PCs have cleared the cellar, Pavel Filippov is very thankful. Exactly how thankful, depends on what they did:

- If they have stolen any of Pavel's property, he will be disappointed, but not very angry. After all, that's what expected of *adventurers*. He will ask them to return his property, and charge them the full (adventurer) costs for meals and lodging.
- If they tell Pavel about the secret room, he is amazed. He didn't know about it.
- If they honestly tell him what they found in the room, he asks to have the gems but lets the PCs keep all the rest.

- Legally, *everything* in the secret room belongs to Pavel, whether or not he knew about it. So he's actually being *very* generous letting them keep everything but the gems.
- If the PCs refuse, and keep all the things they found, or steal anything from cellar, that's a crime (it's debatable, how serious crime it is, though), and a chaotic act. Pavel will be disappointed, as above.
- If they give him the gems, their meals and lodging are free, at least for two days.
- In any case, unless the PCs are *really* rude, the festival will be arranged.

The Festival

Pavel asks them to stay in Troublewater for a couple of days. He says he wants to arrange a festival in their honor, and to invite everyone in the village to participate. He asks the Gardner family to arrange a party, because they love parties. Most of the others in the village certainly don't object having a festival either.

Incidentally, having the village hold a festival saves quite a bit of money for Pavel, since he feels he doesn't have to pay the PCs any extra reward. He is a businessman, after all.

The festival will be held tomorrow, on the open area between the hotel and the river. The villagers bring several long tables and they will be groaning with roast meat, vegetables, and beer. There will be eating, drinking, dancing, eating, some more drinking, and dancing. Oh, and more drinking.

Boost: The villagers also bring local moonshine. It is quite effective: anyone drinking a cup has to make a Fortitude save, DC 13, or become terribly drunk (getting something like -4 penalty to Dexterity, Intelligence, and Wisdom, and generally acting like a totally wasted person). Drinking anymore means the save is against passing out.

Twist: Bevis "Battle-Axe" Kolodin is the local wrestling champion. He will challenge one of the PCs to a wrestling match, offering a bear skin (worth 90 gp) if he or she wins. Of course, the PC will also have to make a bet of some kind. Bevis has Strength 18, and a Base Attack Bonus of +3 or more.

Horror: The locals like to play strange games, and they might ask one of the PCs to join. This is their favorite game. The group of "players" goes dancing, and one of them throws a dagger high into the air. Nobody is supposed to look up. Anyone who is hit by the dagger when it comes down, is "it". If the dagger doesn't hit anybody, it is thrown again until it does. The one who was hit then gets a real good kicking from the others. They beat and kick him or her until unconsciousness, and then defecate

and urinate on him or her. All the villagers consider this sight hilarious and have a good laughter at the expense of the victim. Even the victim him- or herself thinks it was hysterically funny if he or she wakes up. (This isn't far from what was really considered funny at medieval times.)

Overheard

When **Andre Jusupov, Borka**, and Andre's two bodyguards arrive to the festival, many people stop talking and just glare at them. Some, on the other hand, go to greet them seemingly warmly. If the PCs gather some information (for example, using Gather Information skill, or talking with locals), they find out that a lot of people own Andre money. And that he takes a very high interest on his loans.

At some point of the evening, one of the PCs overhears Borka talking to Andre.

Borka: *"The boys want their pay in advance. This Radlebb job is a big one. And a risky one."*

Andre: *"I don't like advance payment. I don't like it at all."*

Borka: *"Whether or not you like it, this is how it goes."*

Andre sighs deeply. *"Very well. Tell the boys to come to my house after midnight. And tell 'em to keep it quiet!"*

The "boys" are Borka's ten brigands (which include Andre's two bodyguards). The "big and risky job" is to rob the soldier's payment in gold which is going to Radlebb Keep in two days. There should be at least 6,000 gold coins. Borka's brigands want 75 gold coins per person in advance. Fortunately Andre has enough in his house (around 1,000 gold coins in a chest which is bolted to the wall, locked, and reinforced; Andre carries the only key around his neck).

Borka's brigands are all Traladarans or Mixed Blood. There are eight men: **Aleksei, Dmitri, Evgeni, Grigori, Iosif, Slava**, and **Yuri**; and two women: **Lara**, and **Yulia**. All are 1st-level warriors, and, when doing business, they wear studded leather armor and carry clubs and short bows. Two of the men (or women) always stay behind and guard the hideout (see below).

This night, the brigands will have a meeting at Andre's house (see "The PCs Spy on Andre," below).

The brigands live in a camp within the woods, half a day's journey southwest from Troublewater, and just two miles north from Westron road (from Specularum to

Luln). All the brigands know the area very well; most of them hunt for meat and furs on their spare time. Only **Yuri** and **Yulia** are originally from Troublewater, they are Ohotnikovs.

Boost: Obviously, boost the brigands' levels and gear, and/or add more brigands. Make one of the brigands a ranger or rogue with maxed Listen and Spot skills; this makes it harder for the PCs to spy on them. Add a spellcaster or two.

Twist: Borka is actually a "Robin Hood" of sorts, and he and all the brigands are "chaotic good" in alignment. Change all the other facts to reflect this twist. Borka and his brigands use all the money they steal to help the poor and oppressed, especially in the Black Eagle Barony. If the PCs eliminate the brigands, in one way or another, one of the Gardner family (halfling) tells them what they have done: increased the suffering of hundreds of people in the Barony.

Horror: If the PCs crawl under Andre's house, they find scattered human bones and skulls. But most of these men have died years ago, naturally: Andre's house is simply built over an old cemetery. Undead encounters are still a possibility.

The PCs choose their course of action. Below is a list of some things they might do and how to handle it; but as we know, PCs usually do something completely unexpected.

They Ignore the Whole Affair

If the PCs don't do anything, Borka and his boys do manage to rob the gold. And in a few days, this area is swarming with soldiers who arrest all strangers for questioning. Including the PCs. Borka's boys withdraw deeper into the woods and are not caught. The PCs might actually be taken to Specularum as "prime suspects".

The PCs Spy on Andre

The PCs listen to Andre, Borka, and his boys, and possibly find out what is going on. In one version of this adventure, a PC crawled under Andre's house and he not only listened to everything but also managed to steal Andre's gold before he could pay the boys in advance.

Borka's boys have serious doubts about this gig. It's the biggest and the most dangerous one they have planned so far. That's why they want partial payment in advance. Andre, being a greedy man, doesn't want to pay, but eventually he will have to.

The brigands' plan for the robbery is straightforward: they will block the road with a cut down tree, and as the caravan stops, they will bring down another tree, already cut nearly through, behind it. Then, half of the brigands will threaten the guards with bows while the others take the money chest.

The brigands are actually very lucky; lately, the authorities have been thinking that nobody would be bold enough to even try robbing from the army, so they didn't bother to send enough guards. There are only three 1st-level soldiers, wearing chain mails, heavy iron shields, carrying bastard swords but no bows of any sort, and riding light horses; the two drivers are simple commoners.

The brigands take all the six horses the caravan has, but they don't take the soldiers' arms – they are too easily recognizable and not easy to sell. (Except in Black Eagle Barony, and the brigands avoid going there – because it's actually much harder to do brigand business in there and not to get hanged.)

The gold chest is reinforced and locked (Open Lock DC 30), and the keys are in Specularum and Radlebb Keep – but it can be forced open.

Twist: If you don't want the PCs (or the brigands) to get their greedy little hands on so much gold, it turns out that the chest contains only stones. The authorities were actually aware of brigands in the area, and this was just a way to lure them out. A troop of soldiers from Radlebb Keep will soon arrive.

The PCs Storm the Brigand Hideout

This could be a difficult fight, because the hideout is more like a simple fortress and it's always guarded. Also, the brigands know the woods around here like their own pockets. See Brigand Hideout, below.

The PCs Warn the Authorities

They can go to Radlebb Keep or intercept the group which is bringing the gold. Here, the question is only whether they can convince them of the danger.

Boost: The PCs bump into some of the brigands on the way. They might try to rob the PCs, or maybe they just are highly suspicious of them and start asking a lot of questions. If there's a fight or their answers don't prove satisfactory, one of the brigands attempts to run away and warn the others about "adventurers" meddling with things on their turf.

Twist: Someone else from Troublewater has beaten the PCs to it! He or she went to Radlebb Keep, and is spilling the beans already. The PCs need to wait until he or she has told everything to Lord Korrigan (the commander of Radlebb Keep). This person will collect the reward as well. Make this person really annoying. Maybe he or she even gloats at the PCs. Good PCs will just grit their teeth, but neutral or evil PCs ... that's another thing. It could also be that this informer has given Lord Korrigan false information. His or her story is different from that of the PCs. Which one will they believe?

Horror: While they were away, the plague has struck Radlebb Keep. There are patients in high fever, coughing and covered in a rash everywhere. Even Lord Korrigan is ill. Did the PCs go inside already and catch it? Can they do anything about the brigands now – they might now be carriers, spreading the disease if they leave. Fortunately, the “plague” is actually a mild one, comparable to German measles (Fort save DCs 10). It looks much worse than it is, and nobody in the keep will die ... except that any pregnant women might later miscarry or give birth to horribly deformed children.

The PCs Rob the Gold

The PCs rob the gold themselves, or perhaps attack the brigands after they have done their deed. The result is the same as “They Ignore the Whole Affair”; the Duke sends lots of troops and guards to investigate. The PCs have better be gone before they come.

Boost: The duke has finally had it with banditry in this region. He sends a virtual army, several companies of cavalry, accompanied by priests, wizards, and expert rangers. Any strangers to the region will be hunted down and killed if they don't immediately surrender. They won't even be questioned; all their gear is taken and they are carted, in chains, to Specularum for a trial. Only hiding deep in the woods, leaving the duchy altogether, or a letter of recommendation from a noble would save the PCs from this treatment. Of course, they might be found innocent – later.

Twist: The reason why there were so little guards was that the gold was not going to Radlebb keep at all. Instead, this batch was a bribe, going to baron Hendricks of the Black Eagle Barony. The brigands had the wrong date; the real Radlebb gold is being transported later. Who is bribing Hendricks and why – that's up to the DM to decide. It might be some important person, whom duke Karamaikos trusts, in Specularum. The gold is likely to be magically protected and/or tracked in some way, and agents of the baron, and the one who is bribing him, will start looking for it.

Horror: In the woods, the PCs bump into a company of goblins from Black Eagle Barony, lead by a female thyatian human knight (or fighter, berserker, scout, or any class you'd prefer) named **Camilla Appia**. She sees the PCs are "agents of the Duke" and tries to have them captured alive, to be taken into the barony for questioning and brainwashing – the baron is always interested in having more adventurers under his service. (Goblins will grabble the PCs and attack with clubs, trying to do nonlethal damage.)

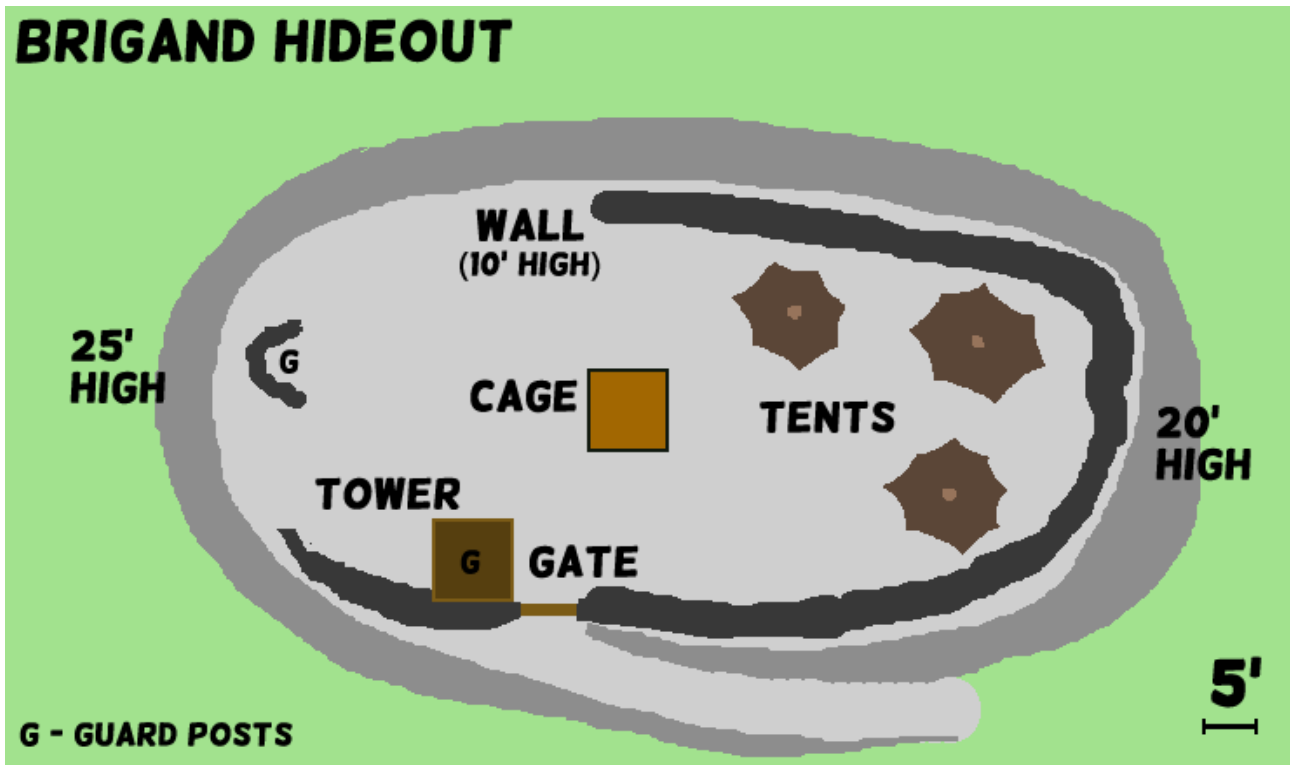
Camilla was an abused child of a depraved Thyatian family of the worst kind. She murdered her abusive father one night with a sharpened piece of thick iron wire which she kept hidden in a mousehole. It was assumed he died of cerebral hemorrhage (i.e. bleeding in his brain) and Camilla never got caught. She insisted on having a Shearing ceremony shortly afterwards, and left home, which she wasn't really supposed to be doing. After drifting a few months, she ended up in service of baron Hendricks. Camilla, considering herself a "soiled woman," developed an attraction to ugly, dirty, and evil males. Namely, goblins and the like. She has her way with male humanoids and kills them afterwards - unless they are especially pleasing, in which case she keeps them as her servants.

Camilla enjoys patrolling the wilds with her loyal goblins. Goblins, at least, are honestly evil. They do not hide behind a façade of being generous, polite, noble people like many Thyatians. Goblins (and Camilla) embrace their raw feelings and bestial nature. Goblins revere Camilla, they almost think she's some kind of a goddess. Many are fanatical followers to her.

Brigand Hideout

Brigands' "hideout" is clearly visible, since it's located on a roughly 75'x40' cliff top surrounded by an area (about 300' in diameter) cleared of trees.

West side is about 25' high and east side about 20'. (The cliff face has a Climb DC of 25.)



The brigands have piled up stones to form a rough wall around the eastern (lower) side of the cliff top. There is a steep path leading up to the top, ending to a heavy wooden gate on the wall. The brigands have also constructed a wooden guard tower, around 15' tall, and try to keep it manned at all times. Another guard is often posted behind a semicircular wall of piled stones on the western side of the cliff top.

The brigands sleep in three big tents inside the walled side of the cliff top. They have stored some food and there is a deep crack in the rock which leads down to a reservoir of water.

The brigands have a large, locked (Open Lock DC 27) iron cage, exposed to the elements, where they can keep prisoners (currently it's empty). The key is kept in the largest tent, which belongs to Borka. There is a secret niche in the rock under the wooden floor of this tent (Search DC 20) which holds a locked iron chest (Open Lock DC 27); key to this chest is hidden inside another very small niche on the other side of the tent (Search DC 30).

Boost: Brigands have a pet monster of some sort. A dire animal; or perhaps even something more exotic such as a wyvern or an owlbear.

Twist: In addition, the brigands can have a guard dog named **Fido** (a normal dog; CR 1/3; Listen +5, Spot +5, scent ability). If the PCs don't approach from downwind, the dog smells them and starts barking.

Horror: The brigands worship an immortal who demands human sacrifices; the hideout is full of body parts, flayed skins, bones, and items made of them. There's also a large pot of meat soup simmering in the middle of the camp. Human eyeballs and internal organs float on top. The cage contains a victim (or several victims) who have been tortured, disfigured, and/or mutilated but not yet killed.

Further Adventures

The infamous Koriszegy Keep is near; the PCs might use Troublewater as their base as they explore the ruins. For inspiration, you can google "Order of the Griffon;" it was an obscure console roleplaying game set in this area.

If Andre Jusupov is not captured, he will be the PCs enemy from now on. He has connections in Black Eagle Barony, and may claim that the PCs are "dangerous agents personally sent by Duke," and try to get them captured and brought into Fort Doom for further questioning. Camilla Appia might be given the task. See the Horror entry under "The PCs Rob the Gold".

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