

# The Sound of Drums

There are rumblings in the background. A slow build of events spaced out as random happenings and a minor story that evolves over time into the coming of war.

A series of mini-adventures for 1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> level characters  
For the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of our favorite role playing game.

by G Christopher Dyson



# The Sound of Drums

## Level of play

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The modules are designed to be played by various level characters and should be inserted into existing adventure arcs. As such, each may need to be adjusted.

## Adaptability

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If played as a League of Rats game, this module would be set outside the [Golden Kingdom](#) town of Vollenchia. A mostly human city on the southern coast with a long stretch of elven lands to the north west, dwarven hills to the north and gnomish lands to the south.

It is a fairly dry city, so long periods of rain are unusual.



The module could be adapted to be set in any location such as a city near deep water in realms that have been forgotten.

It could also be placed in any large city in a world of your own device.

## Background

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The city of Vollenchia sits on the eastern coast of a great land. It is surrounded by fertile farmlands. To the north their dwarven trade partners work the mines of Andoora. To the west, the wood elf tribes live in peace and to the south large packs of gnolls have made their home. Scattered across the land have been a number of orc tribes, living in small numbers. In recent months the orcs have been banding together but without a place to live. One of their leaders has earmarked Salamanka as a future orcish homeland, but fears Vollenchia would come to their aid.

Trouble has been stirring up across the lands with both elves and gnolls running afoul of orcish troops.

Vollenchia's multi racial population also houses a number of orcs and half orcs, some are sympathetic to the cause of their brethren. One such group has organized for shipments of orcish weapons to be smuggled into the city so that they may assist should the day come. The weapons have been moved along with trade goods in regular caravans and some of these have fallen into the hands of bandits. Bandits now use orcish steel in their raids. Racial tensions across the land are intensifying. Orc agents are searching for their lost shipment and orc thugs sit like a terrorist cell in Vollenchia waiting for the right time to strike.

## Outline

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Part 1 was first published in an adventure called the [Old Frog and Toad](#) in which characters come across bandits on the road. Following the battle they should discover the bandits using orcish weapons.

Part 2 was first published in [Rats in the Rain: Beneath the Storm](#) in which characters become aware of racial tensions in town and experience a classic bar brawl

Part 3: Published in What to do with Prisoners, the party encounters a small band of orcs on the road. The orcs are looking for their lost shipment. This is not immediately apparent, but the orcs are carrying maps of trade routes and caravan routes which should raise suspicions.

Part 4: A standalone adventure in which a merchant becomes aware that his stolen goods are being sold in town. Characters track down the source of the sales and find a bandit camp with a stockpile of stolen goods including some crates of orcish weapons.

Part 5: Following leads the characters track down the destination of the weapons within Vollenchia. The subsequent battle prevents Vollenchia from becoming involved in the coming orc/elf war.

Sometimes a story arc works best if it unwinds slowly. In RPGs we often build modules that run one after the other to have the story roll out as one epic.

If you watch the way story arcs unfold across a TV series, you'll see they often have just a minute here scattered amongst regular episodes.

The Sound of Drums works like that. The first few parts are just a scene inserted into another module here or there so you can't just play this alone, you actually need another story arc or series of modules and then fit the parts in as best you can.

The idea is that as the characters go through their normal adventures, there will be hints building to the story, so that when the story really starts, the players already know the background. You won't need to tell them there is racial tension in town as they will have already seen it.

Spacing the parts out also prevents two things:

- Boredom. Nobody wants the same enemy week after week.
- Rorting. If players know what to expect they will prepare for it. A party of orc slayers would be a little too effective.

## Part 1: The road to trouble

Part one of this arc is written to serve as part two of [Old Frog and Toad](#). This can be inserted into any adventure where the party are travelling with a wagon of trade goods.

At this point, players should be totally unaware of any issues involving orcs, it is not even necessary that they make a connection to a possible orc invasion. All that is required is for the players to see one part of a larger puzzle and it is not necessary to even realise its part of a puzzle. That will come later when more pieces are present

To set up this encounter, the party travels with a wagon loaded with fruit and grain bound for Andoora. It will be driven by two Halflings named Keggsy and Syrronia. If playing Old Frog and Toad, there is a specific objective, but if played as a stand alone adventure all that is necessary is that they are travelling together.

They could be employed as guards or they could be just sharing the road. Any excuse will do.

Should Keggsy become involved in any battles he is a commoner. Syrronia is a sorcerer.

Stats for both are in the back of the module.

Read Aloud:

On the second day out of town, the wagon is on the road a few hundred yards from the river. Syrronia is keeping an eye out in that direction, though the view is often obscured by trees.

The road runs by the side of a hill which has been cut to a cliff to build the road. Clumps of trees are scattered about on the right. Keggsy looks a little nervous and with good reason as this would make a good place for an ambush. The water in the distance seems calm though.

Suddenly there is movement from one of the trees and two men leap down from them. Two archers appear on the slope to the left and a black scaled dragonborn steps out on the road in front.

"We'll be taking your goods!" the dragonborn spits.

The party is under attack from 5 bandits.

During the first round, the leader will breath acid on the driver of the wagon (and anyone else in the same line). This should reduce him to zero hit

points. He will be unconscious and will need to make death saving throws each round as though he were a PC.

**Tip:**

Don't roleplay with yourself!

In this scenario, you control 5 bandits and 2 NPCs. The players have one character each, so you'll be very busy and you will spend time hitting yourself.

This is hard work for you and boring for everyone else.

Take Keggsy out in the first round and don't roll for Syrronia's attacks, just describe them.

The bandits each have leather armour and a scimitar. The archers have a light crossbow each. They each carry 5gp, the dragonborn has 10gp.

The dragonborn is wielding a silver scimitar of orcish manufacture. Make sure the players hear that the blade is not common in this region.

## Wrapping Up

Following this encounter, characters should continue on with their existing adventures.

## Rewards

Award the characters 25 XP for each bandit defeated, to be divided amongst the characters

The following bonuses can be added to this.

Keeping Keggsy alive	100XP each
Keeping Syrronia alive	100XP each

The leader carries 10gp  
Other bandits carry 5gp

The leader carries a silvered scimitar

## Part 2: Beneath the Storm

Part two was written to be part 1 of Rats in the Rain: [Beneath the Storm](#). It can take place in any tavern in Vollenchia, regardless of why the characters are there. As with the first part, the players should not already be aware of racial tensions. This scenario is where they start to learn that issues are about.

There should be no obvious link between this adventure and the previous one, unless a character is carrying the blade picked up previously.

**Read Aloud:**

The Old Crow is its usual busy self. There is still rain falling and the clouds over the ocean suggest a storm is on the way. It looks like nobody will be in a hurry to leave. You have come here to meet with Jasper Grain who sent word via a talking lizard that he wished to meet to discuss business.

Looking around the tavern, you see no sign of Jasper.

Sitting by the fire are three dwarven traders who have come in from Andoora to sell their wares.

By the window sit a group of Salamankan elves, identifiable by their tribal top-knots.

The usual host of locals sit at the bar or at tables. Mostly humans, there are a few half elves present while Morrow Crane is at the bar with a drink.

Characters may know Morrow Crane from the first part of [Rats in the Rain](#). Morrow is a half orc thug working for Kendra the Mouse.



If the players are eager to talk to the other patrons, they can learn the following before Morrow approaches them:

- The dwarves are from the small dwarven kingdom of Andoora which sits in the mountains to the north. They are here to trade metals but have an interest in purchasing supplies of fruit.

- One of the dwarves' priorities is to ensure their metal does not fall into the hands of orcish smiths who craft second rate weapons. If he sees one of the characters carrying an orcish weapon he will laugh at it and recommend a dwarven made one (probably an axe or hammer)
- The Elves travelled from Salamanka in the west. They are in town to meet some fellow tribesmen who will be arriving by boat. In the west there have been a number of orc war bands attacking merchants.
- One of the locals is telling a story about a giant rat in the sewer that turned out to be a gorilla. He is getting most of the details wrong.

Read Aloud:

Upon seeing you arrive, Morrow signals you with a slight wave and then tosses some coin to the bar. He speaks to the wench and points your way, presumably to shout you a round of drinks.

As he passes by the three dwarves, one of them speaks a few harsh words in dwarfish. The exact words can't be made out, though the intent and meaning are clear.

Morrow pauses, responds with a threatening grunt and moves to your table, though he keeps his eyes on the dwarves.

If the players want to interfere, let them. It will probably just involve harsh words, but could move on to a full on bar fight.

Once Morrow has passed the dwarves, the elves approach. They also speak harshly to Morrow and if any of the player characters is a half orc, they are addressed as well.

"You there!" starts one of the elves, "You been out west raiding off decent folk eh?" The elves shake their heads looking angry and then he continues, "Town like this is rubbish if animal folk like you let in."

Morrow's hand goes to his axe handle as he splashes his ale on the elf. Two other patrons get to their feet ready for trouble.

If the PCs intercede, a bar brawl may be avoided, particularly if they can encourage Morrow to leave. He will not leave alone though. The PCs will have to accompany him.

If not, a classic brawl starts out.

For the sake of simplicity, during the brawl, each character takes 2d8 damage. Half if they succeed in a DC 12 dexterity save or they have the tavern brawler feat.

If any character wants to take advantage of the situation, they could attempt to pick a pocket. A DC 12 sleight of hand roll will net them 15gp.

After the brawl, they find themselves on the street.

Tip:

Everybody loves a good tavern brawl. In fact, I recommend "The Spoilers" starring John Wayne as one of the best of all time.

The problem is that these are hard to run. You have too many NPCs, so the best way to handle it is to switch to a cinematic style. A few good descriptions, forget about initiative. Have some flavor and then just hit everyone with the final results.

## Wrapping Up

Following this encounter, characters should continue on with their existing adventures.

## Rewards

Each character receives 50XP if the brawl is avoided.

Characters may gain 15gp during the brawl.

## Part 3: What prisoners?

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Part 3 is intended for third level characters and can be inserted into any module or adventure set on the road outside of town. By now players should be aware that racial tensions exist. This module will escalate those and for the first time players may start to link pieces together.

This is written to be part of "What to do with Prisoners" but it is not necessary to play it during that adventure.

This comprises two scenes, the first is a meeting on the road with some elves who carry a warning about orcs.

The second is an encounter with a small warband that is looking for their lost shipment.

### Part 3.1 Sunset

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Read Aloud:

After a long day on the road, your group is ready for a rest and looking for a suitable place for the night.

Ahead on the road you spot two other travelers, a pair of elves. They pause in their travel looking suspiciously at you.

The two elves are Tazon and Quionda, a pair of wood elves travelling the road between Vollachia and Salamanka.

If the party ignores them, there is no need to press the encounter, but should they engage in a conversation they can learn the following:

- A band of orcs is terrorizing travelers on the road up ahead.
- They experienced bullying by aggressive orcs that asked questions but didn't wait for answers.
- The orcs are looking for trade caravans to attack as they kept asking about trade routes.
- They will report that their hometown is preparing for an attack by orcs.

### Part 3.2 Warband on the road

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During the next day, the party will come across a small band of orcs that are on a mission to find the lost shipment.

Read aloud:

Despite a few light showers in the morning, the day is quite sunny and warm.

Early in the afternoon, as you travel, you spot a pair on the road up ahead. From the distance they appear to be orcs.

The two orcs are aiming to ask questions, but if there is trouble they have two allies skulking nearby ready to charge in and assist.

If the party approaches, they will easily notice the two extra orcs as they are not really hiding, but rather putting on a show of backing up their allies.

These two are wilderness runners preparing to charge in and use their blitz attacks. (See new rules)

The two on the road will try to stop the party and ask questions. They will be rude and aggressive. The questions will be about wagons and caravans.

If the characters do not initiate conflict, these two will.

They two at the front will begin with direct attacks while their backup will strike with blitz attacks during the first round.

As well as their weapons and armour each orc is carrying 10gp. The leader has a document that shows a schedule of merchant wagons with notes on their routes. One particular one is underlined. It went through here over two weeks ago.

If captured and questioned the leader of the band will claim they are looking for shipments to ambush, but a DC 12 insight roll will reveal this to be a lie.

If sufficiently intimidated, he will admit they are looking for a shipment that went missing that they had supplies on. He might admit that the shipment contained weapons, but he will not admit that the intention was to smuggle them in to the city.

**Tip:**

Why do we roll intimidate checks? Players love role playing out their threats. Reducing it down to a roll tends to be an anticlimax.

Diplomacy and deception work well with the roll, but intimidate is not so good. Just listen to the players and if they sound threatening enough, roll with it.

Should the party ever follow up on this (when they return to town) they can learn that the particular wagon was attacked by bandits with everything lost.

What they will not learn is that the wagon that was attacked was carrying a shipment of orcish weapons being smuggled into Vollenchia is the guise of a regular shipment. Any manifest or records will mention pottery, leather goods and foodstuff.

## Wrapping Up

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Following this encounter, characters should continue on with their existing adventures.

## Rewards

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The party receives 100XP for each orc defeated to be split between the party.

Award a bonus of 100XP each if characters learn the orcs' objective.

Award a bonus of 100XP each if this is reported to the authorities in Vollenchia.

Each orc carries 10gp

## Part 4 Backtracking the hoard

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Part 4 is a standalone adventure for 5<sup>th</sup> level characters.

Unlike the previous parts of this story, it is not published as part of any other adventure. It could be placed between any stories you are already working on when the characters are 5<sup>th</sup> level.

Sat this point, players should know that racial tensions with orcs are escalating. Here they learn more about the issues between orcs and elves and they find the source of the silver weapon they may have picked up in the first scenario.

The story has four parts:

Part 4.1 the party is contacted to investigate the loss of goods.

Part 4.2 The party investigates locally and get information leading them to a bandit camp outside of town

Part 4.3 The party encounters a pair of manticores along the way

Part 4.4 The party takes on the bandits to recover the stolen goods. In doing this they discover a large supply of orcish weapons amongst the cargo.



## Part 4.1 A job is a job

If the players have done Old Frog and Toad they will already know Jondath Footfall, if not he can quickly introduce himself.

Read Aloud:

After weeks of heavy rain, the weather is starting to clear and business at the Old Crow is picking up again.

More wagons are hitting the road and travelers are arriving in greater numbers.

Familiar to many is Jondath Footfall, Halfling owner of the Footfall Wagoneers. Today he is talking at the bar to a human businessman of some kind. He buys a few drinks and then the pair of them approach your table.

"This is Harban Kayne," Jondath says introducing his new associate, "A good friend I've worked fer. He's in need of some trouble shooters. I'm recommending you all."

Harban nods to the group, "I am a seller of art objects," he explains, "special ones crafted by the dwarves of Andoora. I provide them with pearls taken from Palna. They craft, I sell. It's a good business."

He then takes an ear ring from his pocket and shows the group, "This was bought by a friend of mine two days ago, which is funny since it was in a shipment that did not make it to Vollenchia."

Harban is looking for someone to investigate and find the source of stolen goods. He has lost quick a small fortune to the bandits and he wants them dealt with. He especially wants his good back. In this case he is willing to pay 100gp for bringing the bandits to justice and a further 200gp for the return of his goods.

The only lead he can offer is the name of the seller his friend bought the jewelry from: Mantess Tindwell; a half elven trader of no fixed address working in the northern part of town.

## Part 4.2 Private Investigations

The party may ask around about Tindwell. Have them make a diplomacy roll (associates of Kendra the Mouse gain advantage on this roll). Eventually they will be able to find the seller. As expected he operates in the northern part of town selling wares from under his hat. He works in the company of a white scaled dragonborn named Quistargian. The two of them are fences often on the wrong side of the law and rivals of figures such as Kendra the Mouse and Reggie the Axe.

Tracking Tindwell down should not be easy. Have the players talk to a fence who sends them to find and talk to a pick-pocket who suggests they talk to a smuggler who sends them back to the original fence. Each will give part of a description and part of a location. After several hours of game time have passed move on to the scene where they find Tindwell. Reduce the time if anyone has the urchin background.

Quistargian will not be with him as the dragonborn is currently incarcerated. The lack of his sidekick makes Mattess more nervous than usual.

If needed, Tindwell has the statistics of a spy.

Read Aloud:

After several hours of frustrating tracking through town, you spot a gentleman matching Tindwell's description. He wears a long trench coat and is talking to an elf of dubious social standing.

After completing a transaction he turns, spots your group and casually approaches.

"Is there anything I can do for you?" he asks casually, though from his posture it looks like he is ready to run

Tindwell is used to dealing with the middle class looking to make an impression. It is unlikely the party will match this description, so he will assume they are either allied with law enforcement or a rival. In either case, he expects trouble.

He will flee at the first sign of a threat. Characters can prevent this by surrounding him before they approach. If he gets away, they will need to track him down again which will take a few more hours and possibly some bribes.



Should the characters prevent him from escaping (either by capture or by not threatening) he can be pressured into revealing the sources of his goods.

He will respond to threats, promises, bribes, lies or whatever the players come up with. Have them make diplomacy, intimidate, deception checks, but accept any reason to give them advantage.

He will claim (accurately) that he legitimately purchased the wares and had nothing to do with any theft. His source is a dwarven woman named Thordrin Darkforge who imports good into the town through routes that he doesn't question. As far as he knows there is nothing illegal going on.

The characters should let him go when they are done, but they might instead choose to hand him over to authorities or criminal rivals, or they may choose to maim or kill him. Tindwell carries 25gp (from his recent sale) and three pieces of jewelry.

If his wares are taken from him and returned to Harban with thank them, but let them now this is only a small portion of the stolen goods. He will be prepared to pay 40gp for recovering some of the goods and will promise the remaining 160gp when the rest is recovered.

Should the characters ask around, they will learn that Thordrin Darkforge is currently out of town. Her wagon is doing a run out to the Callera port and is expected back tomorrow.

This gives the party enough information to track her down and possibly ambush her wagon themselves.

**Tip:**

When the party sets up an ambush, they get to choose where they do it and they can search many miles to pick a good spot. Rather than have them ask what is out there. Ask them to draw a map of what they are looking for.

The bonus in this, is you don't have to draw a map.

Thordin will be driving a small wagon pulled by a single horse. She is accompanied by two dwarven foot soldiers.

Should the party simply meet with Thordin, she will not admit to any involvement in illegal activities and will want to move on at the first mention of bandits.

The guards have passive perception 14. Characters setting up an ambush will need stealth rolls that exceed this.

In an ambush, the two guards will rush forward and gang up on a single opponent while Thordin will stay on the wagon using her crossbow to target any spell casters.

Thordrin is a veteran accompanied by two spies. In addition to their weapons and armour, the spies carry 10gp and Thordrin carries 40gp.

The goods on the wagon are two barrels of fish, ten coils of rope, a barrel of camel jerky and a large jar of olive oil.

If the dwarves are defeated and captured, Thordin will, if intimidated, admit that she has, from time to time, sold possibly stolen goods she received from a dubious merchant she met on the road to Salamanka. She can be pushed into revealing his name and the location of his hideout.

She describes a place in the hills along the road to Salamanka about thirty miles west of Vollenchia. The hideout is in a small cave system.

The bandit gang is led by Gentle James Joran, who is not by any report to be considered gentle. His gang is mostly human, but he also has a few gnolls working as scouts.

## Part 4.3 Monstrous trouble

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The party will no doubt head out to the designated location which will be a long journey.

On the way, the party will cross paths with a pair of manticores.

The party can take a long rest both before and after this battle, so they should be able to win easily. Make sure the players know they won't be at their destination until tomorrow. That will help with their resource management.

**Tip:**  
Every long journey should have one random encounter.

It is good to break up the plot a bit. It is good to add variety to the encounters, but most players only have enough patience for one random encounter. Any more than that and they will lose the sense of an overall plot, so place battles like this carefully.

There is treasure in the manticores' lair, but characters will have no means of tracking that location down.

## Part 4.4 The cave

Characters will eventually make their way to the bandits' cave.

Two gnolls have are patrolling outside. These will either be encountered before reaching the map or will move in to assist the guards at location A.

One gnoll and a human are guarding the entrance. The gnoll is at location A, the human at location B ready to assist.

Three gnolls and three humans are inside the cave along with Gentle James. All will be at location C, though may move to assist if battle at the entrance is noisy.

All humans in the gang are bandits. Gentle James is a veteran



In the back of the cave at location D are a number of crates and bags of non-perishables taken by the bandits.

This includes a box of jewelry of dwarven design. There is gold and gems to the value of 180gp. One crate contains weapons: 12 orcish glaives and 18 orcish scimitars, one of which is silvered. These were clearly manufactured by orcs. Along with these is a consignment sheet identifying this as the shipment the orcs from part 3 were looking for.

## Wrapping Up

Harban will happily pay the promised reward for the return of the stolen goods.

If the character attempt to sell the weapons on the open market or to an established weaponsmith, it will draw attention from local authorities, but the sale will go through earning the characters 50% of retail price.

If the characters sell the weapons through a fence such as Kendra the Mouse or Reggie the Axe, they will avoid questions but only get 40% of retail price for the sale.

## Rewards

Experience Points to be divided among the characters:

Manticore	700XP each
Gnoll	100XP
Bandit	25XP each
Gentle James	700XP
Thordin	700XP
Wagon guards	200XP
Tindwell	200XP

Award a bonus of 50XP each if characters deal with Tindwell peacefully.

Award a bonus of 100XP each they successfully ambush Thordin.

Award a bonus of 100XP each if this is reported to the authorities in Vollenchia.

Monetary rewards are listed with the encounters. Note the different amounts that may be collected for the weapons.

## Part 5: The hidden Cell

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Like Part 4, this is a standalone adventure not published anywhere else. This should be played with a party of seventh level characters.

At this point, players should be aware that orcish weapons are being smuggled into the city. They should know that tension between orc and elf in the west is increasing.

In this module they finally get involved directly by ferreting out an underground cell of half orcs and orc that are preparing to assist in an attack on the city.

### Outline

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Part 5.1 the party is employed to seek out the purchasers of the orcish weapons or to check up on their associate Morrow Crane.

Part 5.2 The party invades a warehouse occupied by orcish freedom fighters in which they learn the cell is to assist a band of orcs coming by sea

Part 5.3 The party captures a fishing shack being used as a staging point for an invasion

Part 5.4 The party gets to use a ballista to take on the ship. Optionally the party may get involved in direct combat.

### Part 5.1 About that...

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The hook for this adventure depends on what the characters did with the weapons in part 4. They should have done one of the following

1. Sold them through a fence
2. Sold on open market
3. Left the lot in the cave

Regardless of the history, the adventure begins in the party's regular tavern and the mission will work out the same, so as the GM you may choose a different hook or combination of these if that will work better.

#### Option 1 Read Aloud:

The Old Crow tavern is busy as usual, but perfect for unwinding after the last journey. A bard has taken the spot by the fire and is regaling listeners with a tale of airship pirates.

You try to listen but the ridiculous nature of the story leaves your attention to wane.

Mercifully, your old associate Kendra the Mouse approaches and takes a seat. She brings with her a jug of wine which is usually the price for a few minutes of your time.

"Questions are being asked about the weapons," she explains, "not to me yet, but they will sooner or later. We are going to need to do a little work to cover ourselves properly. It seems they were hotter than I'd thought."

Kendra will be prepared to offer 200gp for sorting out the mess, plus the knowledge that this won't come back to bite the party.

#### Option 2 Read Aloud:

The Old Crow tavern is busy as usual, but perfect for unwinding after the last journey. A bard has taken the spot by the fire and is regaling listeners with a tale of airship pirates.

You try to listen but the ridiculous nature of the story leaves your attention to wane.

Mercifully, a young gentleman from the city watch approaches your table.

"Gentlemen," he says as he takes a seat, "My name is Breaker Malone, I am investigating recent weapon sales in the city, nothing illegal, but a problem none the less. I think we have an issue and since you are already involved, I thought perhaps I could employ you to finish the job"

Malone will offer 100gp reward, but can move as high as 200gp if necessary. If pushed he will suggest that the party could be seen as guilty by association and that doing this job would go a long way to keeping their name clean.

### Option 3: Read Aloud

The Old Crow tavern is busy as usual, but perfect for unwinding after the last journey. A bard has taken the spot by the fire and is regaling listeners with a tale of airship pirates.

You try to listen but the ridiculous nature of the story leaves your attention to wane.

Mercifully, your old associate Kendra the Mouse approaches and takes a seat. She brings with her a jug of wine which is usually the price for a few minutes of your time.

"I'll be quick," she says, "My man Morrow is in deep. He and his brother have fallen in with the wrong crowd and are going to get into trouble. We owe it to him to get him out of there"

In the third scenario she won't offer money, but as the characters will have already left valuable goods behind, the odds are they will not be very money focused and will respond better to a personal plea for help.

Regardless of which hook is being used, all roads lead to Rome, as the band Morrow is hanging with also happens to be the band that is stock piling weapons.

#### Tip:

The easiest way to run a story is to rail road it, but players hate this, so try to let them choose the way they follow the train-tracks.

If they don't respond to one hook use another, they look different, but lead the same way.

Characters should proceed with the investigation, probably with starting tips from their hook character. What they need to do is either:

- Find Morrow Crane or
- Find the purchasers of the weapons

In either case, asking around, making persuasion skill checks, paying a few bribes will help.

#### Tip:

7<sup>th</sup> level characters do not waste time doing urban investigations. They are above that, so don't push. There is no need for a random encounter. Anything that happens in a city, they can deal with. Just take them straight to the warehouse the terrorist cell is based in.

The terrorists are based in an old warehouse near the port (actually only one street away from the Old Crow Tavern.)

## Part 5.2 Local fire

On the outside, it looks like a regular warehouse; a large ground area, two stories high. There are two doors in: a large goods door at the front and a small office door at the side as well as a number of windows around the building. The windows have crates stacked in front of them obscuring the view and preventing entrance.



Depending on the hook used and the temperament of the characters there are several approaches that may be taken:

- Wait and watch for Morrow Crane to leave the warehouse
- Knock on the door and talk to them
- Sneak in
- Launch a full frontal assault

These are all valid approaches.

**Tip:**

By 7<sup>th</sup> level, the characters really are above the law. There is no realistic way you can build an army of local guardsmen that can take the party into custody. A full frontal assault on any establishment should result in minions quickly falling or fleeing so that only the bosses remain for the fight.

The ground floor of the warehouse has a large number of crates, many of them hold weapons. There will be six orcs and two orc guerillas in the room.

Two more orc guerillas are upstairs and will join quickly if trouble starts.

If the party watches and waits they can enter when two of the orcs are gone. Half of the orcs are actually half orcs, but use orc statistics.

One of these orcs will be Morrow Crane. Even if combat erupts, he will try to negotiate.

If the party approaches peacefully, Morrow will speak to them first and explain he is helping some family out with their business shipping wood working supplies. A DC 14 insight check will suggest he is making the story up. He will not willingly betray these orcs.

If they find Morrow in the streets there will be much the same result.

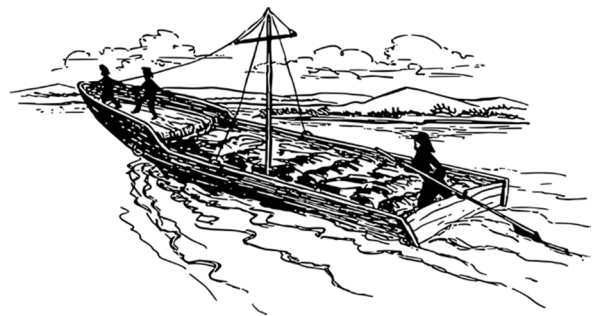
The basement is not occupied, but the chest down there stores 200gp kept to support the cause as well as documentation on future shipments. There is a map of the coastline and some notes indicating a meeting with an incoming boat to be held at an old fishing shack.

Most of the cell's activities are not documented. If captured the orcs will not willingly reveal their secrets, but if pushed hard enough or if magic is used, they know the following:

- Orcs are preparing to move against the Salamanka elves.
- There is to be an attack on the city of Vollenchia to cause a distraction.
- There is going to be an attack on the elves' embassy in Vollenchia.
- After Salamanka falls, Vollenchia is the next target.

- The attack on Vollenchia is dependent on orcs and half orcs already inside the city.
- The attack will be happening tonight.
- Some of the orcs were going to the fishing shack to meet the invaders while the others (including the guerillas) were to move on the embassy.

If the party reports back to Malone, he will ask the party to go to the boat house and see what they can do there, while he gets local troops to protect the embassy and the harbor. He will arrange for the incoming boat to be intercepted.

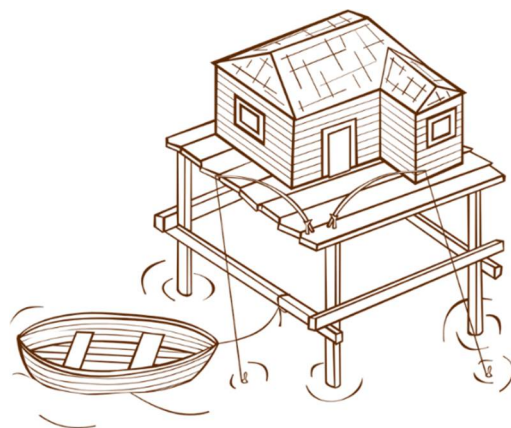


The fishing shack is located a short distance up the coast and has a view of the harbor. The characters will need a boat to get there, but this should be easily organized.

The shack has a small jetty at which a small row boat is already tied.

It belongs to the orc guerilla stationed here. He is currently on watch and accompanied by a pair of sea hags. All will be hostile to any invaders.

The hags actually dwell in a cave beneath the shack.



The main room of the shack contains a heavy ballista pointed out across the main entrance to the harbor.

The back of the shack is open to allow the weapon to be aimed at ships.

If the players wait around they will see two vessels approaching, one from the north (the orcs) and one from the harbor (local guards).

The characters may assist in two ways:

- Firing the ballista
- Taking their boat out and joining the battle.

Taking the boat out will take too long as the characters should work out, but if they take control of the ballista and land three successful hits on the orc boat, the local marines will be able to defeat them.

There is no underlying reason for the presence of the hags other than being unexpected for the players. Most likely the orcs have paid for their cooperation.

## Wrapping up

---

Prevention of the attack will go largely unnoticed in the city, though any promised rewards will be paid and the city watchman Breaker Malone, will thank the party and promise them a favor.

Should the orcs be defeated without Morrow being harmed or causing harm, he will return to work for Kendra. If he is injured, or he causes injury to a PC he will leave the city to join the orcs in the west.

## Rewards

---

Experience points from defeated enemies to be divided among the players:

Orc	100XP
Orc Guerilla	1100XP
Sea Hag	450XP

Bonus XP:

Keeping Morrow out of trouble:	500XP each
Sinking the orc ship	500XP each

## Character Directory

---

**Gentle James Joran:** Leader of a group of bandits.

**Harban Kayne:** A human businessman importer of dwarven art and jewelry.

**Jondath Footfall:** A Halfling caravan master operating out of Vollenchia

**Kendra the Mouse:** A half elven fence operating from an underground warehouse of Vollenchia

**Mantess Tindwell:** A half elven trader of stolen good. Operates as a street vendor.

**Morrow Crane:** A half orc thug hired by Kendra the Mouse.

**Quistargian:** A White Dragonborn works with Mantess Tindwell.

**Reggie the Axe:** A dwarven warrior, former mercenary, now boss of a criminal gang operating from the sewers of Vollenchia.

**Thordrin Darkforge:** A dwarven importer of goods. She also works as a smuggler and often deals with stolen goods.

## What happens next?

---

What happens next is up to you.

- The invasion of the city could still take place
- The orc attack on Salamanka will still take place
- War will start in the west, but will it affect the city of Vollenchia?
- Will the characters head west to warn Salamanka?
- Will they aid Salamanka?
- Will the coming of war affect trade in the region?
- Will it inspire the gnoll packs to invade Vollenchia?
- What will happen to Morrow Crane?

These are all questions that you and your players can answer or ignore. Its all up to you.

## NPC / Monster Stats

**Bandit** *Medium humanoid (any race),*

**Armor Class** 12 (leather armor)

**Hit Points** 11 (2d8 + 2)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

**Senses** passive Perception 10

**Languages** Common, Draconic

**Challenge** 1/8 (25 XP)

**Actions**

**Scimitar.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) slashing damage.

**Light Crossbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 80 ft./320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage.

**Breath weapon:** The dragonborn bandit uses a breath weapon, a 30' line of acid doing 7(2d6) and half damage on a successful DC 12 dexterity save.

**Commoner** *Medium humanoid*

**Armor Class** 10

**Hit Points** 4 (1d8)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

**Senses** passive Perception 10

**Languages** Common, Halfling

**Challenge** 0 (10 XP)

**Actions**

**Club.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage.

**Gnoll** *Medium humanoid (gnoll), chaotic evil*

**Armor Class** 15 (hide armor, shield)

**Hit Points** 22

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

**Languages** Gnoll

**Challenge** ½ (100 XP)

**Rampage.** When the gnoll reduces a creature to 0 hit points with a melee attack on its turn, the gnoll can take a bonus action to move up to half its speed and make a bite attack.

**Actions**

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

**Spear.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage, or 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

**Longbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage.

**Manticore** *Large monstrosity, Lawful evil*

**Armor Class** 14 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 68 (8d10 + 24)

**Speed** 30 ft., fly 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	16 (+3)	17 (+3)	7 (-2)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

**Languages** Common

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Tail Spike Regrowth.**

The manticore has twenty-four tail spikes. Used spikes regrow when the manticore finishes a long rest.

**Actions**

**Multiaction.** The manticore makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws or three with its tail spikes.

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage.

**Claw.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage.

**Tail Spike.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 100/200 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage.

**Orc** *Medium humanoid (orc), chaotic evil*

**Armor Class** 13 (hide armor)

**Hit Points** 15 (2d8 + 6)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	7 (-2)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

**Skills** Intimidation +2

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft, passive Perception 10

**Languages** Common, Orc

**Challenge** ½ (100 XP)

**Aggressive.** As a bonus action, the orc can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature that it can see.

**Actions**

**Scimitar.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d6 + 3) slashing damage.

**Javelin.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

**Blitz:** Once per turn, this orc can deal an extra 2d6 damage to one creature it hits with an attack if they have moved their full base movement rate and are using a melee weapon with two hands. This does not apply if they have disadvantage.

**Orc Guerrilla** *Medium humanoid (orc), chaotic evil*

**Armor Class** 16 (chain mail)

**Hit Points** 104

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	12 (+2)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)

**Skills** Intimidation +5, Stealth +2

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft, passive Perception 10

**Languages** Common, Orc

**Challenge** 4 (1,100 XP)

**Aggressive.** As a bonus action, the orc can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature that it can see.

**Actions**

**Multiattack:** The orc makes two weapon attacks with its scimitar or glaive

**Scimitar.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) slashing damage.

**Glaive.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d10 + 4) slashing damage.

**Javelin.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

**Spy**

**Armor Class** 15

**Hit Points** 19

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)

**Saving Throws:** Int+3, Dex +5

**Skills** Deception +3, Insight +2, Investigation +3, Perception +3, Persuasion +3, Sleight of Hand +7, Stealth +7, thieves tools +5

**Senses:** Passive Perception 14

**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

**Actions:**

**Cunning Action.** On each of its turns, the spy can use a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

**Sneak Attack** (1/Turn). The spy deals an extra 7 (2d6) damage when it hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the spy that isn't incapacitated and the spy doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

**Rapier:** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 7 (1d8+3) piercing damage.

**Shortbow:** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 5 (1d6+3) piercing damage.

**Sea Hag** *Medium fey, chaotic evil*

**Armor Class** 14 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 52 (7d8 + 21)

**Speed** 30 ft., swim 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

**Languages** Aquan, Common, Giant

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Amphibious.** The hag can breathe air and water.



**Horrific Appearance.** Any humanoid that starts its turn within 30 feet of the hag and can see the hag's true form must make a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the creature is frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, with disadvantage if the hag is within line of sight, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the hag's Horrific Appearance for the next 24 hours. Unless the target is surprised or the revelation of the hag's true form is sudden, the target can avert its eyes and avoid making the initial saving throw. Until the start of its next turn, a creature that averts its eyes has disadvantage on attack rolls against the hag.

**Actions**

**Claws.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage.

**Death Glare.** The hag targets one frightened creature she can see within 30 feet of her. If the target can see the hag, it must succeed on a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw against this magic or drop to 0 hit points.

**Illusory Appearance.** The hag covers herself and anything she is wearing or carrying with a magical illusion that makes her look like an ugly creature of her general size and humanoid shape. The effect ends if the hag takes a bonus action to end it or if she dies. The changes wrought by this effect fail to hold up to physical inspection. Otherwise, a creature must take an action to visually inspect the illusion and succeed on a DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check to discern that the hag is disguised.

**Sorcerer** *Medium humanoid*

**Armor Class** 14

**Hit Points** 6

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)

**Senses** passive Perception 10

**Languages** Common, Halfling

**Challenge** ½ (100 XP)

**Actions**

**Club.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage.

**Magic Missile:** 2 slots: Does 9 (3d4+3) force damage

**Fire Bolt:** +4 to hit, 1d10 fire damage

**Veteran**

**Armor Class** 17 (splint)

**Hit Points** 58

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

**Skills** Athletics +5, Perception +2

**Senses** passive Perception 12

**Languages** Common, dwarven

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Actions**

**Multiattack.** The veteran makes two longsword attacks. If it has a shortsword drawn, it can also make a shortsword attack.

**Longsword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage, or 8 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage if used with two hands.

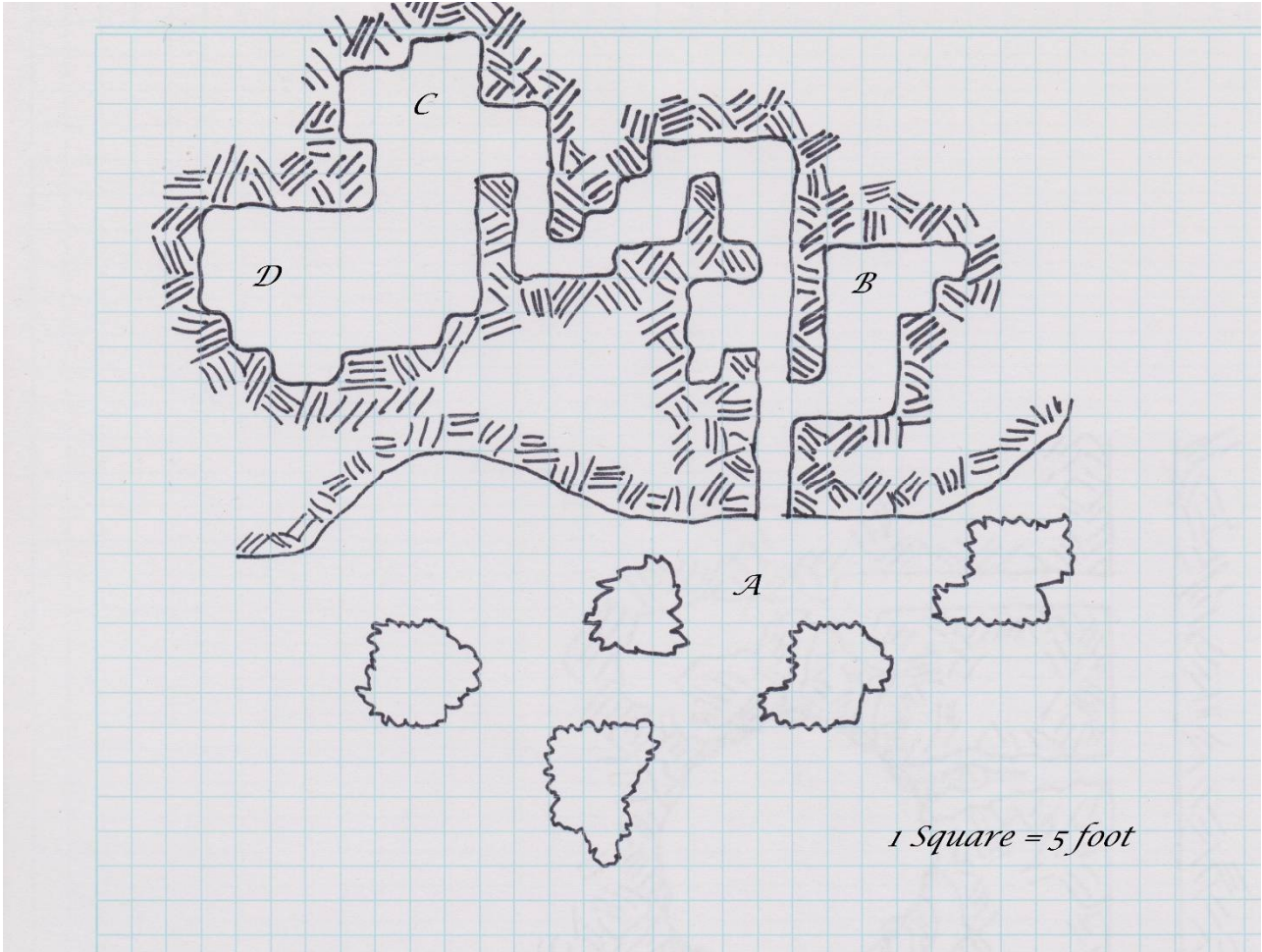
**Shortsword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

**Heavy Crossbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit Range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d10 + 1) piercing damage

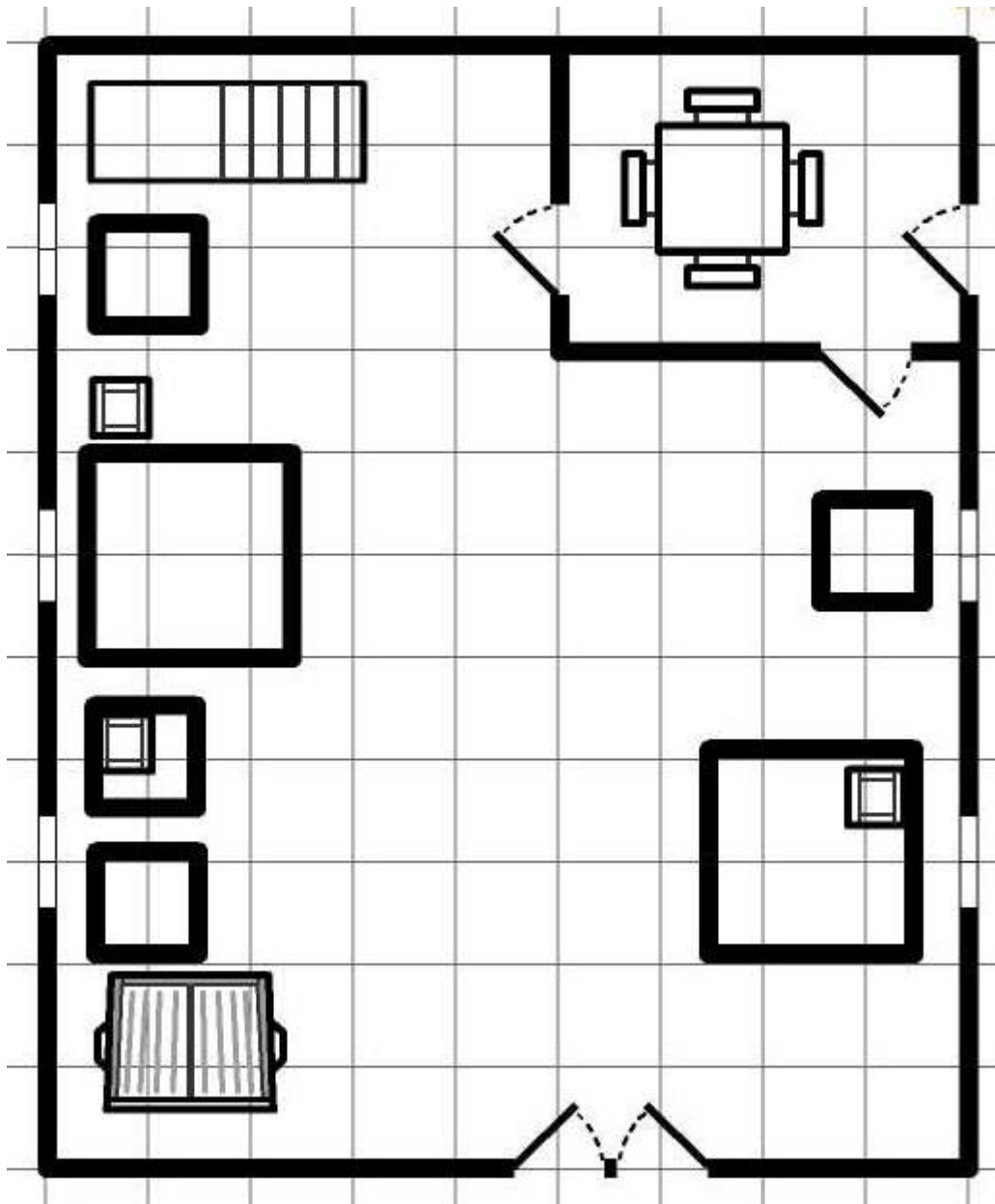


# Maps and Handouts

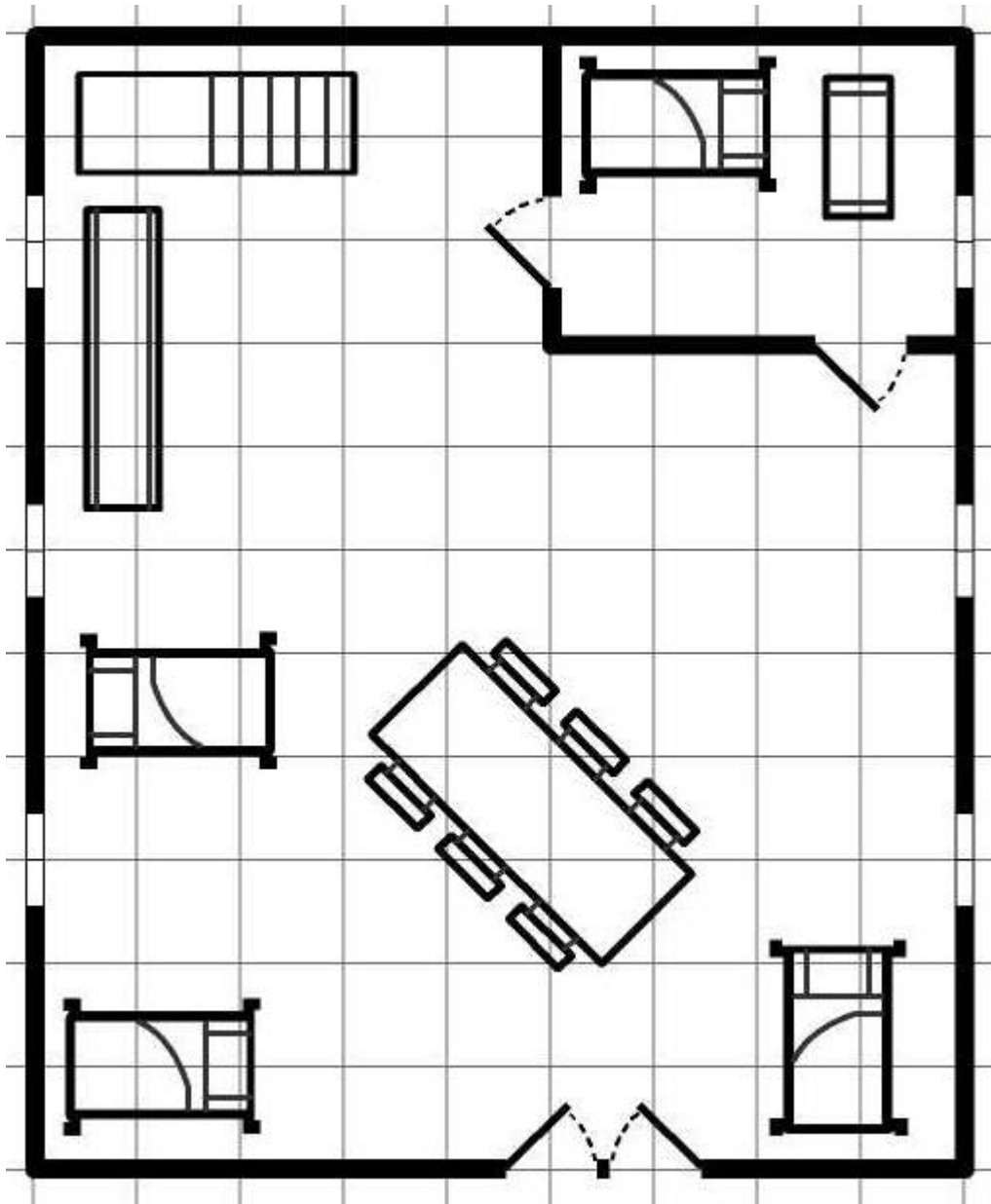
## Part 4: Bandit's Cave



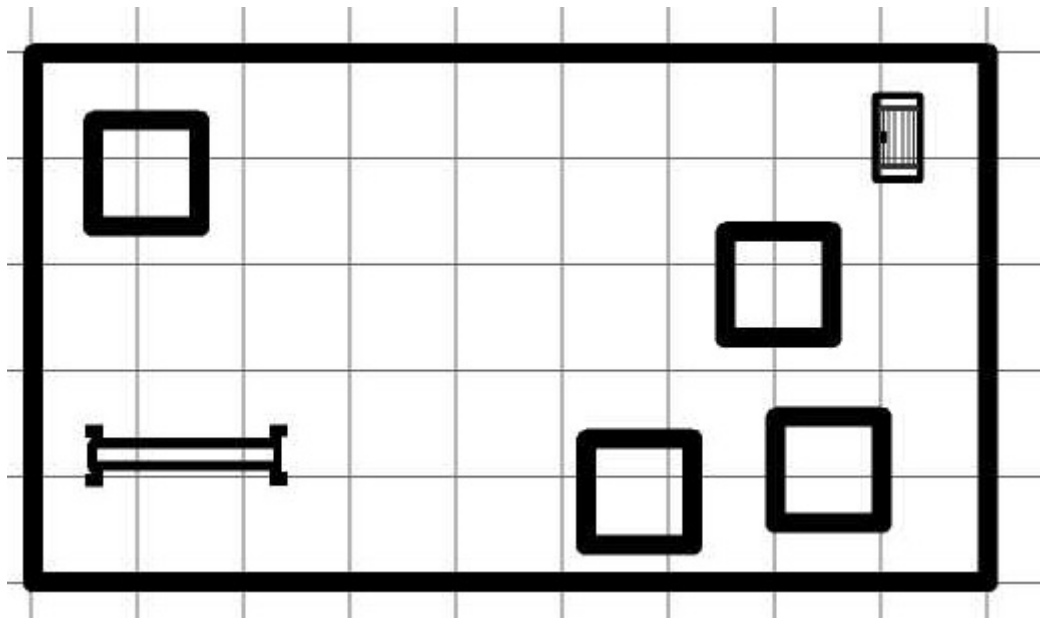
Part 5: Warehouse ground floor



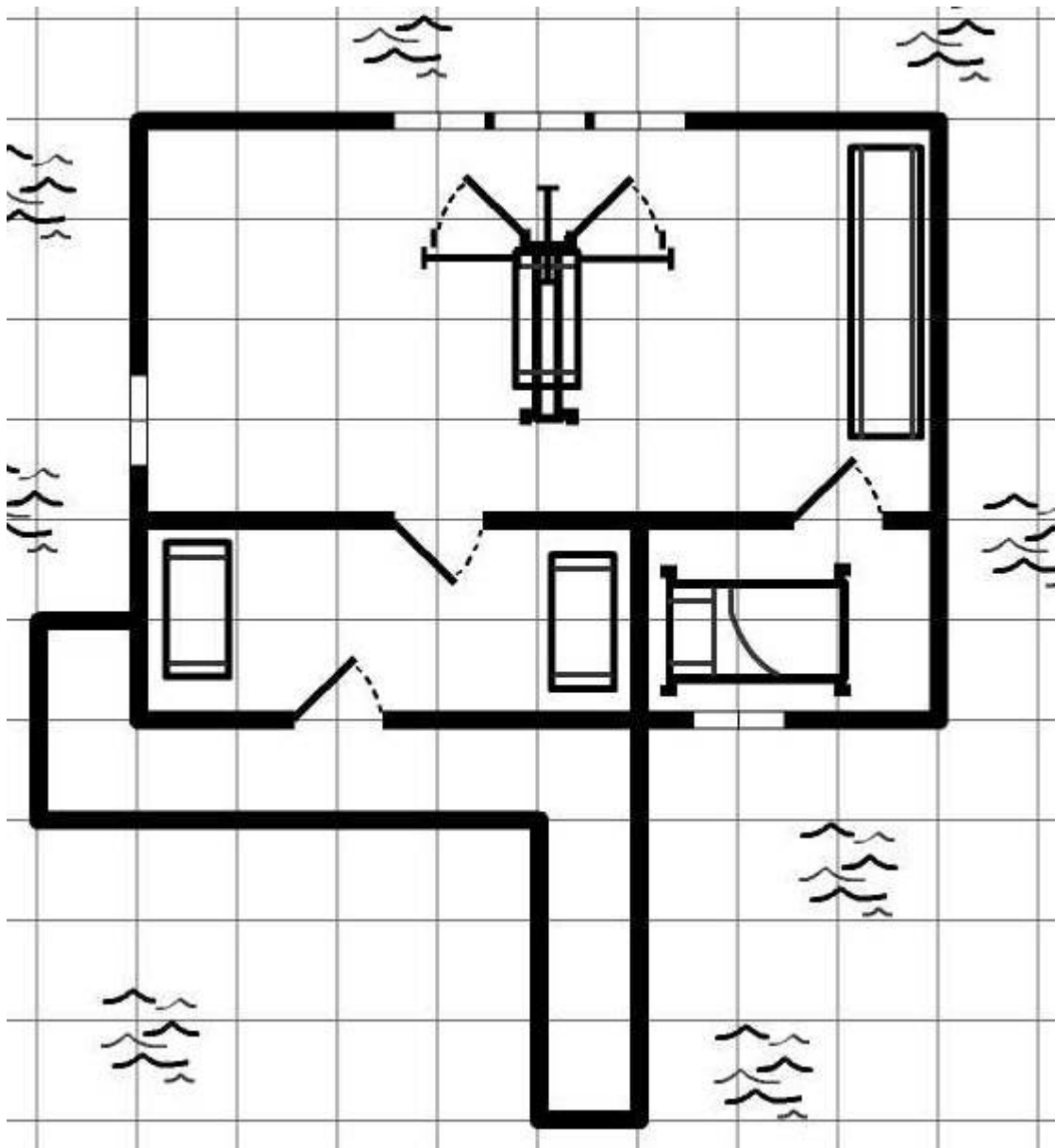
Part 5: Warehouse Upper Level



Part 5: Warehouse basement



Part 5: Fishing Shack



## New Rules

### Wilderness Runner

An unarmoured dwarf arrives at the gates of the stone hold; his run has taken him eighteen miles along the underground highway to bring word of the coming trolls.

Deep in the forest, an orc warband hears one of their own fall as an elf dashes from the between trees, strikes hard and keeps running.

The green scaled dragonborn watches the bandits attack the wagon, but with little more than a moment's though. He barrels down the hill and slams into the leader like a juggernaut.

#### On Swift feet

The wilderness runner is a specialist at moving on their own feet, striking hard and fast and then moving on. They often focus on stealth through the wilderness, but sometimes are willing to abandoned all pretences of stealth to be seen as fearsome chargers. Their main weapon is speed.

#### A chariot of fire

Not every character that runs is a wilderness runner. This is a special role for the elite message carrier or wilderness ambusher. Within their roles, a wilderness runner can be relied on to operate alone and to get from start to finish quickly. Within a party the wilderness runner may serve as a backup travelling near, but not within the group ready to charge in at a moment's notice. Others may travel with company ready to charge out and distract the enemy.

Their stock in trade is light armour, fast movement, heavy weapons.

#### Creating a wilderness runner

As you create a runner, consider what makes this character different to a ranger or barbarian.

##### Quick Build

To quickly build an effective runner, dexterity should be the highest ability score followed by Constitution. Wisdom is the next most important ability. Choose the outlander background

##### Class features

As a Wilderness Runner, you have the following class features.

##### Hit Points

Hit Dice: 1d10 per wilderness runner level

Hit Points at 1<sup>st</sup> level: 10 plus your constitution modifier

Hit Points at higher levels: 1d10 (or 6) plus your constitution modifier per wilderness runner level after 1<sup>st</sup>

##### Proficiencies

Armour: light

Weapons: Simple, Martial

Saving Throws: Strength, Dexterity

Skills: choose three from acrobatics, athletics, insight, intimidation, perception, stealth, nature, survival.

##### Equipment

You start with the following equipment, in addition to the equipment from your background:

- any versatile melee weapon
- two handaxes or any simple weapon
- An explorer's pack and four javelins
- Leather Armour

Level	Proficiency	Blitz damage	Features
1 <sup>st</sup>	+2	1d6	Blitz Attack, Natural Explorer
2 <sup>nd</sup>	+2	1d6	Fighting Style
3 <sup>rd</sup>	+2	2d6	Archetype
4 <sup>th</sup>	+2	2d6	Ability Score Improvement
5 <sup>th</sup>	+3	3d6	Fast Movement
6 <sup>th</sup>	+3	3d6	Natural Explorer Improvement
7 <sup>th</sup>	+3	4d6	Feral Instinct

##### Blitz

Beginning at 1st level, you know how to strike powerfully with speed. Once per turn, you can deal an extra 1d6 damage to one creature you hit with an attack if you have moved your full base movement rate and are using a melee weapon with two hands. This does not apply if you have disadvantage.

The amount of the extra damage increases as you gain levels in this class, as shown in the Blitz column of the Wilderness Runner table.

##### Natural Explorer

You are particularly familiar with one type of natural environment and are adept at traveling and surviving in such regions. Choose one type of favoured terrain: arctic, coast, desert, forest, grassland, mountain or swamp. When you make an Intelligence or Wisdom check related to your favoured terrain, your proficiency bonus is doubled if you are using a skill that you're proficient in.

While traveling for an hour or more in your favoured terrain, you gain the benefits described for the Ranger on page 91 of the Core Rules.



### Fighting Style

At 2nd level, you adopt a particular style of fighting as your specialty. Choose one of the following options.

You can't take a Fighting Style option more than once, even if you later get to choose again.

- Archery: You gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls you make with ranged weapons.
- Evasive Dash: When you use a dash action, you gain +2 to your armour class for that turn
- Great Weapon Fighting: When you roll a 1 or 2 on a damage die for an attack you make with a melee weapon that you are wielding with two hands, you can reroll the die and must use the new roll, even if the new roll is a 1 or a 2. The weapon must have the two-handed or versatile property for you to gain this benefit.

### Archetype

At third level, you may choose an archetype, either the heavy charger or the spell wright runner.

### Ability Score Improvement

When you reach 4th level, and again at 8th, 12th, 16th, and 19th level, you can increase one ability score of your choice by 2, or you can increase two ability scores of your choice by 1. As normal, you can't increase an ability score above 20 using this feature.

### Fast Movement

Starting at 5th level, your speed increases by 10 feet while you aren't wearing heavy armour.

### Feral Instinct

By 7th level, your instincts are so honed that you have advantage on initiative rolls.

Additionally, if you are surprised at the beginning of combat and aren't incapacitated, you can act normally on your first turn, but only if you move your full movement before doing anything else on that turn.

Abilities beyond 7<sup>th</sup> level and archetype details are published in [Heroes of the Dawn](#).

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- [Roshan Pietersz](#) for the Rats in the Rain logo
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