Frugal GM's
Danger in Drakesville
Introductory HackMaster Basic Adventure

* GAMEMASTER'S EYES ONLY *

A Warning to Players

What the hell do you think you're doing? What are you thinking? The information contained in these pages are for GameMaster's (GM) Eyes Only! Reading any further will result in harsh penalties and possible banishment from the HackMaster Association (HMA). Be a man (or a woman as the case may be) of honor and leave this page NOW! And should you choose to ignore this friendly warning then a hex on thee, you scoundrel — A GM's Curse on your dice!!! May they fail you and consign you to an endless cycle of untimely Player Character deaths! May misfortune hound your every step in the game 'til the end of time.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Forward

I wrote this adventure in the spring of 2009 in preparation for the upcoming convention season because I had been tasked to manage the organized play that year at the Origins Game Fair. The old version of HackMaster, commonly referred to as 4th Edition HackMaster was out of print and the new ruleset was going to debut at the con. Working from a photocopy of the HackMaster Basic book that had gone to press I worked to make a quick and simple adventure that could be coupled with what we called a Learn-to-Hack. A Learn-to-Hack is basically a convention demo that is designed to show off the character creation for the game and take new players out for a quick spin of the ruleset. I pulled the idea for this adventure from a beta-test session of the rules that I ran for my players, who came with me to Origins to help run the Learn-to-Hacks. My players affectionately refer to this introductory adventure as "The Feast of Steve" for reasons which will become obvious later. Eventually I plan on making the subsequent Drakesville adventures available, but not until after this convention season.

This version of the adventure can be played with either HackMaster Basic, which covers levels 1-5, or HackMaster, which will contain rules for higher level (up to 20) play. Some think that HackMaster Basic is not a "complete" game because it only goes up to level 5, but we've gotten a couple years of use out of it as-is. One thing that may be of interest to you and/or your group is that there isn't that much of a difference in the knowledge needed to be a player or a Game Master. At this adventure's debut at Origins we had many more players show up than what we had scheduled for. Two of my players who had never GM'd before simply slid over to an empty table and started up with the character creation portion of the adventure.

It is my hope that you and your group will enjoy this adventure and decide to play HackMaster as one of your regular games. HackMaster is a great game with an old-school feel that just seems to "get it" when it comes to keeping the game moving and keeping things enjoyable for everyone. Of course I'm biased, but if this game interests you, feel free to pick up HackMaster or HackMaster Basic from the fine folks at Kenzer & Company. If you end up liking the game, which I'm confident you will, head on over to the Kenzer & Company Forums and say "hi".
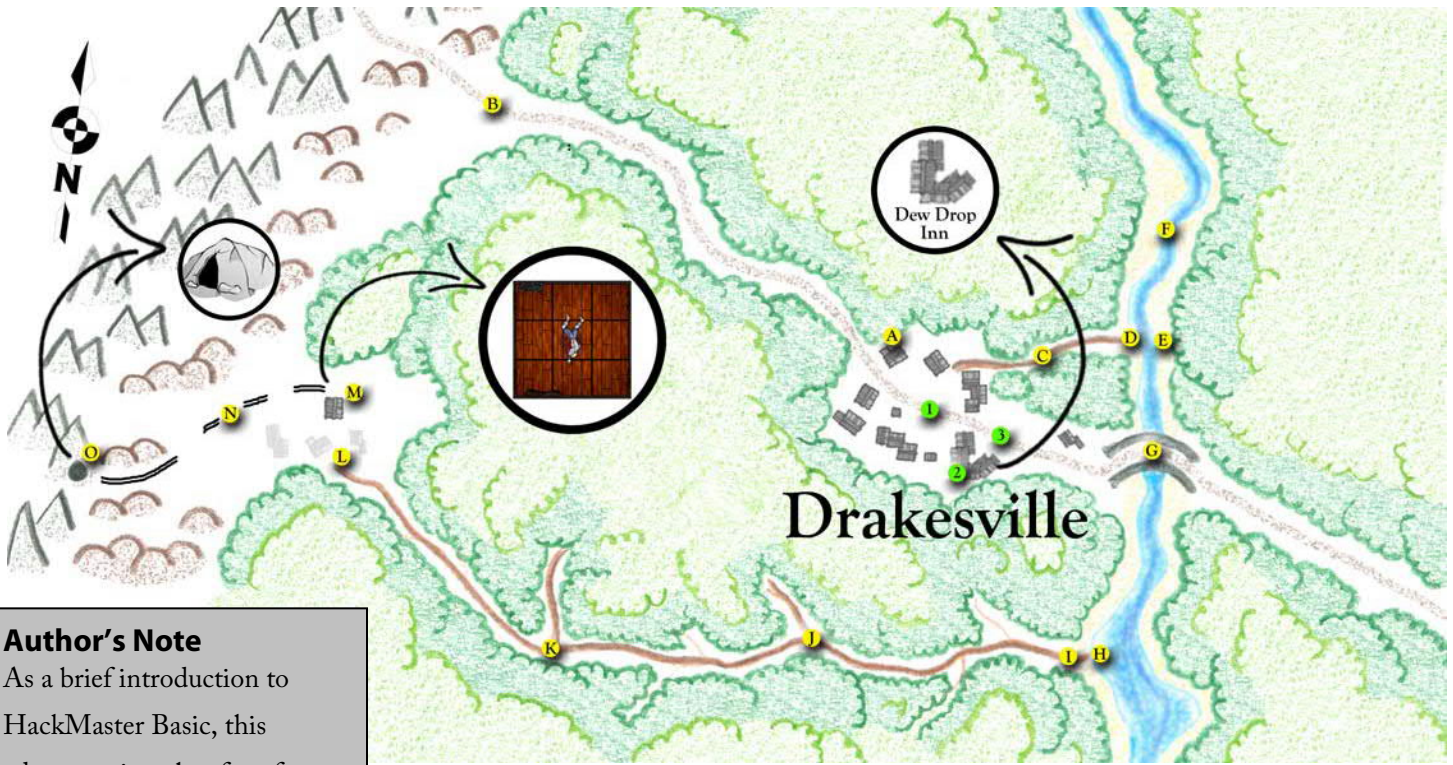
–Christopher "Face" Stogdill

www.frugalgm.com

PS Be careful with the Dragon's Breath. We lost most PCs to players thinking it'd be cool to down a pint of grain alcohol.

PPS Have fun!

Dragon's Breath:

This drink can be deadly. If a PC tries to down a whole pint, they need to make a Poison (30) save to keep it down. If successful, they need a second Poison (30) save to keep from dying.

People, Places, Things (PPT)

1) Drakesville: Ore was found in nearby caves and this tiny hamlet along a secondary trade route prospered briefly. Caravans still risk the wilderness trade route in order to shave a couple days off of their transit time. The miners decedents have created a diverse population: 35% Human, 30% Dwarven, 20% Gnome, and 15% "Other".

2) Dew Drop Inn: Drakesville's only "real" business, this establishment serves as a community center, tavern, "hotel" and employment center. They brew a potent drink here (think Cinnamon Everclear) called Dragon's Breath. Dragon's Breath is a clear liquid that turns red when watered down (the strength of the color is disproportionate to the strength of the drink). A good portion of the hamlet's residents are employed in producing this liquor. The still operates 24/7 and the distillation pipes run through the floor of one large room that serves as a heated common sleeping room for transient workers/travelers.

Services:

Lodging	Stabling 5 cp/day	Private Room 5 cp/day	Common Room 1 cp/day
Meals	Common meal 1 cp	Good meal 2 cp	
Drink	Good wine (pint) 1 sp	Heavy Beer (pint) 1 cp	Dragon's Breath (pint) 2 sp

3) Johan Glitterbum: Gnome proprietor of the Dew Drop Inn. Johan fancies himself the unelected mayor of Drakesville and is very protective of the people under his "charge". He is a shrewd businessman and friendly ambassador for the hamlet. If the players are looking for temporary employment he will gladly hire just about anyone to help at the Dew Drop Inn. PCs with botany[HMb51] can search for ingredients in the woods, cooking/baking[HMb59] can work in the kitchen, and unskilled PCs can just do general labor (mostly chopping wood and cleaning). Pay is simply common room sleeping & common meals.

Adventure Introduction

You find yourselves in the backwater hamlet of Drakesville[PPT1]. It is barely noon on this spring day and for some reason there is a small trade caravan stopped in front of what appears to be the only business among the small huts, shacks, and barns that make up this community. People are coming out of their homes and there is a fair amount of trading going on.

PCs can "top off" any required equipment purchases at the prices listed in Chapter 6[HMb79]. After a while they will be approached by Johan Glitterbum[PPT2], who will inquire as to how long they are staying and offer the services of his establishment, the Dew Drop Inn[PPT3]. Johan can answer most questions about the hamlet and the surrounding area.

Allow the players to role-play as much as they want getting to know each other and wandering about the village as they like. For the night's lodging they can stay at the Dew Drop Inn, try to sleep in a pole barn, or out in the woods. The night will pass by uneventfully with the caravan pulling out of town some time well before dawn-without the PCs (regardless of any made arrangements).

You are roused just before dawn by the obnoxious sound of a bell ringing. The clanging noise pollutes the tranquility of your sleep and is soon followed by a series of shouts and yelling from the center of town.

If the party investigates they will find what appears to be a small human girl pulling the rope for a small village bell. She is hysterical and only stops when actually pulled from the rope by fellow villagers. If the PCs patiently try to communicate with her and speak Gnome they can manage to obtain the following information. Otherwise the party can try to overhear the villagers talking or wait for Johan to approach them and fill them in as he requests their help:

- Her name is Sonya and she is a Gnome that lives here in Drakesville.
- Her husband Steve, who operates the still for Johan, was beaten and taken from their home.
- She caught a glimpse of the attacker and it was the "Bogeyman"

Eventually Johan will ask for the group's help in finding Steve. His initial offer will be free room & board (private room and good meals) for a week. He's willing to go up to adding in 10 silver pieces per person, but he'd prefer to bargain up to that with bartering for Dragon's Breath.

Main Adventure

Let the PC's decide what course of action to take. As they wander about the map, key areas are denoted by a letter on the map which corresponds to a brief description and some information they may be able to discern with appropriate skill checks. Keep track of successful skill checks that garner information so at the end of the adventure you can award the party 1 XP per bit of useful information learned.

Area A

This quaint home is constructed of plastered wattle and is obviously made for a smaller race. The door has been busted in and a couple of chunks of plaster and wood have been ripped from the frame. There is a small pool of blood and "meat" on the floor.

As the party uses the appropriate skills and makes skill checks they can learn the following clues:

- Carpentry/Woodworking: It was a large creature that tried to bust in. Larger than a human.
- First Aid (difficult-no modifier [HMb50]): That "meat" with the blood is actually some brain matter.
- Observation: There is a tuft of fur wedged in the broken door frame near the top.

- Tracking: There are tracks for a larger creature outside and smaller creatures (maybe 3 or 4) inside. The tracks co-mingle outside and travel out of the hamlet.
- Survival (easy, -80 to roll [HMb50]): The trail/tracks lead East out of the hamlet.

Area B

> The main trail leads out of Drakesville and is quickly swallowed by the surrounding forest. Way off in the distance you can see yesterday's caravan winding its way up the mountain pass.

There is no useful information to be gained here except for how to leave town using the secondary trade route.

Area C

> There is a small path of sorts leading out of the hamlet. You can tell that it is used by the locals often and it appears to ring around the outskirts of the buildings.

PCs looking for track may be able to follow a set down to the river to the East.

Area D

> The small footpath ends at a shallow river. The water is cold and fast, but only about a foot deep.

There are no visible tracks here. The PCs can cross the river or walk up or downstream. Aside from this ford, there isn't good access to the river for a while, so PCs will have to walk in the riverbed. Have them make a simple DEX check to keep from slipping as they traverse this obstacle.

Area E

> The river bank is easily scaled and you're glad to be out of the cold water. Several animal paths converge at this point of entry to the river and you can see where people and animals have been on this bank.

The PCs can attempt to discern if anyone has recently come ashore here, but nobody has. There is some fresh deer sign, but that is about it.

Area F

> You slog your way up the river. The water gets deeper and colder as the riverbed narrows.

Have the PCs make another DEX check with a -2 penalty for the frigid water. The banks are much steeper here and there is no sign of anyone having scaled the bank. If the PCs wish to continue upstream, paraphrase the text and have them make another DEX check at a -4 penalty.

Area G

> The path downstream is relatively easy, but cold. The fast-moving water quickly scrubs the bed clean of any footprints you leave behind. Eventually you have to squeeze under the small bridge that allows the caravan trail to snake up into Drakesville.

If the PCs look for any clues, they may be able to find a small tuft of hair not dissimilar to the one pulled from Steve's home (assuming they discovered that one).

Area H

> The stream widens out even further as one side transitions from a well defined rocky riverbed to a marshy and sandy riverbed.

If the PCs search the Western bank they can easily[HMb50] (-80% modifier to Observation or Tracking roll) see where several creatures, one large one and an unknown number of smaller ones have slogged through the sand and mud to scramble up the bank. Unless they wish to attempt a difficult[HMb50] Climbing check to climb a different section of riverbank, the PCs have to cross the same swampy area. Have each PC attempting to cross the sandy bank make a Feat of Strength[HMb16] (10) to keep from getting stuck in the deep mud and sand.

Area I

> The path before you seems to be a well-used game trail. Multiple smaller paths converge onto your position, but the main path leads straight out from the river.

If the PCs try to search for tracks they will be unable to find any. They may be able to discern that some nearby branches have been cut and that whoever they are following is deliberately trying to conceal their tracks by dragging the leafy branched behind them. It is possible to follow this swept path along the game trail just as easily as it would be to follow the specific set of footprints.

Area J

> The game path snakes along the forest floor narrowing the further you travel from the river. Smaller trails branch off periodically but you stay on the main path until it forks off into two paths of the same size.

This location is the first of two traps. The party may be able to discover that the trail is no longer swept clean and some footprints continue to the North. They may also discover the cut branches used to sweep the trail clean thrown off to the side on the Northbound path shortly after the fork. The footprints end suddenly and a difficult[HMb50] (no modifier) tracking check reveals the quarry cut across and took the Northwest path.

If the party continues Northwest from the fork they will set off a swinging log trap which is only discovered with a successful Identify Trap[HMb65] check. The log is strung up between two sturdy trees and may hit the first two party members (assuming they are in single file and following each other closely) for d6p-1 damage. This damage is not reduced by armor, but the first PC can make a DEX check at half for ½ damage (rounded up) and the next in line can make a regular DEX check for ½ damage (rounded up). Award the party 40 additional XP (on top of the 10 XP for a successful check) if they circumvent the trap.

Area K

> The path continues to narrow, and is barely discernable except for the semi-regular patches of missing grass or leaf litter that cover the rest of the forest floor. You finally do lose the trail for good as it pass underneath a small copse of trees at the edge of a large clearing. You can see what looks to be a simple shack on the far edge of the clearing.

Just before the PCs is the second trap. If the PCs decide to search around for clues, have each one make an Observation[HMb69] check. The first successful check allows the PC to notice that the ground under these trees is covered in leaf litter, but there is no grass growing underneath it. A Botany[HMb57] check will reveal these particular trees are some sort of walnut that kills off the rest of the local vegetation. A second successful Observation check[HMb69] will reveal that there is a fowl stench in the local vicinity. The source of the stench is some rotting vegetable matter in the 10' pit trap before the PCs. If the PCs carefully search for the source of the odor, or make a successful Identify Trap[HMb65] check, they can find and avoid the pit trap. Otherwise a random PC will accidentally fall into the trap and take d6p-1 damage[HMb127] and face the 4 Giant Centipedes[HMb153] that are inside. If a centipede hits in combat, roll d20p+5 versus the PC's d20p+CON to see if the poison takes effect. The poison's effect is to do d6 HP damage at a rate of 1 HP per 10 seconds until all damage is taken. The wound will also become inflamed. If the party is aware of the trap and bypasses is, award them an additional 40 XP and half XP for the Giant Centipedes (28 XP).

- Giant Centipedes[HMb153] (4): Init -1, Spd 5, Short Reach, Atk 0, Dmg 0, Spc Atk Poison (virulence factor 5)[HMb176], Def +1, DR 0, HP 1d4, ToP Save NA, Size T, Move 5, EPV 14.

G. Centipede 1 (3HP)	G. Centipede 2 (2HP)	G. Centipede 3 (1HP)	G. Centipede 4 (4HP)
☐☐☐	☐☐	☐	☐☐☐☐

Area L

This clearing looks like it used to be a large encampment of sorts. Hidden in the grass you can see what appears to be the burnt remains of several small building foundations. There is one solitary structure left and you can also make out the remnants of a road crossing the far edge of the clearing. There are some severe wagon ruts worn down into the large slabs of rock that the road traverses, as of many heavy carts used this path some time ago. There are some foothills that seem to jut into the far edge of the clearing and you think you can make out a large cave entrance.

The road leads roughly West to the mouth of the cave and then East and eventually leads back towards Drakesville, stopping about a half mile from the hamlet. It hasn't been used in ages and except for where it crosses over stone it is completely overgrown.

Area M1

This rundown shack sits on the edge of the road and looks like it has been repaired just enough to keep it from collapsing. The windows and rear door are covered up with some type of animal skins or blankets and roughly boarded up. There is a faded sign hanging loose on the front of the building and the front door is covered with another thick blanket.

Inside the building are 4 Kobolds[HMb159] and if the party made attempts at Sneaking[HMb73] towards the building (within 25') make an opposed[HMb50] Listen[HMb67] check. Add the PC's percentile roll to their ability percentage and roll 1d100+1d20 for the Kobolds. The side with the higher percentage "wins":

If the PCs win they may discover there are multiple creatures inside the structure, and may be able to figure out what they are. If the Kobolds win, they will become silent and prepare for intruders. The Kobolds are feeding on Steve's dead body and will not take kindly to having their meal interrupted. The start out in the center of the shack and will rush out to attack savagely. When there is only one remaining Kobold, it will try to flee into the woods and hide.

If the PCs try to peek into a window or door the Kobolds get another opposed check[HMb50] to notice the light pouring into their dark and dank hidey-hole. The shack is a very simple 15 foot square building.

- Kobolds[HMb159] (4): Init 3, Spd 6, Short Reach, Atk +2, Dmg 2d4p-3 (dagger), Spc Atk None, Def +8 (small shield), DR 2 (armor & hide), HP 13+1d4, ToP Save 4, Size S, Move 5, EPV 17.

Kobold 1 (14HP)	Kobold 2 (16HP)	Kobold 3 (16HP)	Kobold 4 (15HP)
☐☐☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐☐☐
☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐	☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

The Kobolds are armed with small shields and daggers, all of which could be traded for up to 17 sp (1/4 the original sale value) to Johan or the next Caravan passing through Drakesville.

Area M2

The inside of this shanty is a dark and foul-smelling place. The air is heavy with the musty odor of decaying wood and the pungent aroma of rotting meat. There are remnants of blood sprays and entrails strewn about the room. In the center of the room appears to be a badly mangled body. The chest cavity has been torn open and there are large bite marks all over the exposed flesh.

This is Steve's body. The PCs may be able to determine that not only have the Kobolds been eating the body, but that several bite marks are much larger than what the Kobolds could manage. Most of the internal organs have been ripped out and one leg is missing.

Area N

> The old abandoned road has been reclaimed by the land. The only remaining clues to it's appearance are some deep gouges where it traversed solid stone, and the lack of mature trees in it's path. It appears to run into the mouth of a cave. You are unsure of where the other end leads.

There is little information to be gained, but a Survival[HMb73] check would verify that this old road does in fact lead back to the general area of Drakesville.

Area O

> The old road takes an easy turn uphill as it leads into the mouth of a large cave. The cave entrance it buttressed with large timbers and the ground is covered with small rocks.

The PCs may be able to determine that this was once and active precious ore mine. There are tool marks on a lot of the rocks. The cave seems unsafe and unused.

If the PCs decided to check out the cave, it is a dark and dangerous place. It is unwise for a party of 1st level PCs to traverse this natural cave turned into a mining complex. There is a bugbear couple residing in the cave with some Kobold minions. Have PCs investigating the caves make DEX checks or dislodge loose rocks which cause them d4p-2 points damage. If they persist in investigating the caves have 4 Kobolds hiding (use opposed[HMb50] Observation[HMb60] checks) and "borrow" the stats for the earlier Kobold encounter. The Bugbear[HMb152] is too much for the party to handle, but if the party still persists (unlikely scenario), pull the stats from the HMb guide and have him totally obliterate them.

Conclusion

Assuming the PCs defeat the Kobolds and find Steve's body, they can return to Drakesville to receive any payment they agreed to accept to undertake the mission. Johan will be very sad to hear of Steve's death and will personally break the news to his widow. If any PCs are injured he will arrange for a private room and common meals as well as call in a local herbalist/healer to assist in their recuperation. Add up all of the XP awards from skill checks and trap evasion and add 30 XP per surviving PC if all the Kobolds are defeated and an additional 30 XP per surviving PC if the party respectfully returns Steve's body to Drakesville for burial.

Add up all of the XP awards and divide by the number of surviving PC to determine how much XP to award to each PC. The maximum amount of XP awarded to any single PC should be around 100 XP. In certain cases it could be barely higher, but in no way enough to reach 2nd Level (400 XP).

Skill Check XP (1 XP per successful check)	☐☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐☐
Trap Evasion XP (30 XP)	☐☐
Giant Centipedes (14 XP each)	☐☐☐☐
Kobolds (17 XP each)	☐☐☐☐
Finding Steve's Body (30 XP per PC)	☐
Respectively Returning Steve's Body to Drakesville (30 XP per PC)	☐