

# WINTERBLIGHT'S CHALLENGE™

PRESENTS

# BETRAYAL

# AT

# TARSUS MOR

AN OSR ADVENTURE FOR  
LEVEL 1 CHARACTERS  
WRITTEN BY ALLEN FARR

*WBCAM 01*

DESIGNED FOR USE WITH  
**OLD-SCHOOL  
ESSENTIALS**

# WHO AMONG YOU DARE BRAVE THE VALLEY OF LONG SHADOWS?



Each year, Lafaddius Eversweet leads the Caravan of Fools through the Valley of Long Shadows. To the small towns and villages, Lafaddius is a lifeline, bringing much needed news and trade. For most, it is a time of joy and celebration, but for a few, it is a time of sadness. Lafaddius recruits from among those that have come of age since his last visit. Offering a fair wage and a chance to see the great city of Tarsus Mor, it is a once in a lifetime opportunity young men and women of the valley can't resist. For those left behind, however, it is often the last time they see their loved ones, for few care to give up the opportunities in the city to return to the danger and poverty of the valley.

There is, however, a sinister side to Lafaddius Eversweet. Often recruiting more labourers and guards than he can possibly pay, Lafaddius honours a long standing agreement with the slavers of Tarsus Mor. Betraying those he considers excess cargo, Lafaddius delivers them directly to the slavers using an elaborate con. When the player characters sign on to the Caravan of Fools they learn that harsh truth when they themselves face betrayal at Tarsus Mor.

Do the player characters find themselves in chains, destined to compete in the combat arenas beyond the Black Dune Sea, or do they heed fate's warning, but face a stark choice – save those they travelled with from a similar fate, or confront Lafaddius Eversweet before the Caravan of Fools travels beyond their reach.

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Commissioned by?

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# Betrayal At Tarsus

## Mor

*Come, join the Caravan of Fools. It's time you stopped hiding behind the fears of old men, wooden fences and your mothers' skirts! Yes, the world is a dangerous place, but that makes it all the more worth seeing.*

*~ Lafaddius Eversweet,  
Recruitment Speech~*

### **Betrayal At Tarsus Mor**

... This adventure presents a series of events and scenarios set within a background story, their outcomes often open-ended. While the adventure tries to cover any likely outcomes, it is not possible to cover every possibility. It is the responsibility of the Game's Master to keep the player characters on track within the adventure framework. To be able to do this effectively the Game's Master should carefully read and familiarise themselves with the entire adventure before running the game.

### **Running the Adventure**

... This section gives an explanation of the structure of the adventure and what various game terms mean. This book uses the following terms: Game's Master (The person running the game), NPC (Non-Playing Character), PC (Player Character),

**Adventure Background~** This section describes the people, places, and events that are responsible for the situation in which the PCs find themselves caught up in. **Plot Synopsis~** This section describes the current situation and how the adventure plot evolves.

Each main encounter has the following subsections: **Overview~** This section gives a brief overview of the main encounter, which itself may consist of one or more smaller encounters. **Setup~** This section contains any opening text to be read aloud to the players to set the overall scene and if appropriate foreshadow later events. **Encounter Themes~** This section describes any background themes the Game's Master should convey to the players as they run the encounter. **Running The Encounter~** This section provides Game's Master information required to run each encounter including background information and any text to be read aloud to the

players. **Smoothing The Road~**

This section gives advice to the Game's Master about any potential pitfalls the encounter may present and suggests ways of avoiding or dealing with them.

At the end of the adventure, there are the following subsections: **Legacy~** This section gives hints and tips on how to tie up any loose ends for the overall adventure and suggests some possible consequences for the characters' decisions and actions. Finally, this section gives the Game's Master hints and tips on how to use any fallout from the adventure to create further adventures. **Appendix~** The appendix has three subsections. **Tools Of The Trade~** Contains player handouts and maps if appropriate. These are props that can be copied/printed for use during the game and given to the players to enhance the story. Alternatively, these props can be described or read verbatim by the Game's Master. **Persons of Renown~** Offers detailed descriptions of the most important characters in the story, including their background.

**Arcanum~** This section provides details on major magical items, spells and new creatures

## **Adventure Background**

... Once a year, as part of an annual circuit, the Caravan of Fools braves the Valley of Long Shadows to trade with the small towns and villages along its length. Each year, malcontents and have-a-go-heroes sign on as guards and labourers hoping to arrive in the city with enough coin in their pocket to make something of themselves, and perhaps explore the world beyond.

## **Plot Synopsis**

... The journey through the Valley of Long Shadows to the City of Tarsus Mor is dangerous but profitable. Each year, Lafaddius Eversweet, owner of the Caravan of Fools, recruits guards and labourers along the way. The rates Lafaddius offers are good, but every so often, more people enlist than he can afford to pay. In these 'summers of discontent' as Lafaddius likes to call them, those he cannot afford to pay, he sells into slavery, earning him considerable profit. Unfortunately for our heroes, it is a summer of discontent.

Lafaddius, using an elaborate con to gain their confidence, sends the player characters, unsuspecting to their fate. Fate, however, has other

ideas, and the player characters are warned just in time to avoid capture. They then have a dilemma on their hands. Rescue those who have been similarly tricked, or pursue Lafaddius who has already sold his goods at auction in Tarsus Mor, and has left for Creegan's Pall, the next city in the circuit.

## **A Brave New World**

### **...Overview**

A Brave New World describes how the player characters become involved in the adventure, and offers the theme of excitement and change, which belies the dangerous predicament the player characters ultimately find themselves mixed up in. **A Bird Called Migraine** gets the player characters invested in the story as they come to know the wagon master Lafaddius, and more importantly, his rather odd pet bird, Migraine. **Confidence Trickster** describes the daily charade Lafaddius uses to ensure the player characters believe just how valuable he considers his bird to be.

### **Setup**

Read the following aloud to the players.

*“Drawing water, hauling lumber, threshing corn, just one of the many exciting duties expected of you. Bored with the humdrum of village life, you crave excitement. Even a different tavern would be a welcome change. “Be careful what you wish for” the village elder had said. What would he know? Like you, the man has never been beyond the fence at the bottom of the cornfield, but all that is about to change as the Caravan of Fools rolls into town.”*

### **Encounter Themes**

It is the height of the summer in the Valley of Long Shadows, and it is a time of expectation, excitement and change, especially for the young. Yet, for some, it is also a time of sadness as their sons or daughters choose to join the caravan and travel to the city of Tarsus Mor.

### **Running The Encounter**

The Caravan of Fools is a lifeline for the villages and brings much-needed trade, news and entertainment, and for some, it is an opportunity to see the wider world their elders seem so afraid of.

In this encounter, the player characters sign on to Lafaddius'

caravan and begin the journey to Tarsus Mor. The Game's Master should describe the dust cloud in the distance as the massive wagon train rumbles through the dry valley as it arrives at their village. This is not a small caravan consisting of a dozen wagons, but a logistical nightmare with over one hundred wagons, each one brimming with trade goods, entertainers, and supplies.

Once the wagon train arrives, Lafaddius introduces himself to the crowd, even though everyone already knows who he is. Then the entertainment begins. Acrobats, musicians, magicians, feats of strength and games of chance are all part of the show. The next morning, correspondence and parcels are delivered to their recipients and the trade stalls are erected for the day. That evening Lafaddius agrees trade terms with the village elders for the following year, which is followed by his well-recognised recruitment speech where he bids anyone wanting to see the wider world and broaden their horizons to join him on the adventure of a lifetime.

Read this aloud to the players once Lafaddius' speech is over.

*The excitement is palpable in the air. A long queue forms at the wagon master's tent, much to the dismay of many parents. One by one they step through the opening, exiting a short time later, some grinning ear to ear, others with disappointment clearly written on their face. Then it's your turn. Lafaddius Eversweet sets you at ease right away. After some haggling, the wagon master makes you an offer you can't refuse. You sign on to guard his wagon train for the duration of the journey to the legendary city of Tarsus Mor*

### **A Bird Called Migraine**

The first weeks of travel are taxing, and the player characters find themselves being drilled by veteran guards, with little time to survey their new surroundings. Exhausted, and safely within the stockade of Adderstrike, a small village on the road to Tarsus Mor, the player characters share a campfire for the first time. Eating their first meal together is a good opportunity for the characters to formally introduce themselves and get to know each other. It is also a good opportunity for Lafaddius to begin working his con.

As the player characters talk around the campfire, Lafaddius

arrives. He carries with him a caged bird. The bird has the ability to mimic human speech and is one of many that Lafaddius picked up in a market several years ago. Lafaddius is off to visit the village council to agree to trade terms for next year's trip, and the bird, which he calls 'Migraine', is entrusted into the care of the player characters. He tells them the bird is precious, and he expects them to protect it with their lives.

The bird is bright and colourful, but other than its mimic abilities has no special powers. The bird has several favourite phrases that Lafaddius uses regularly, such as 'Y'ar having a laugh' and 'That's a deal, friend.' It also has a few phrases that even Lafaddius has never heard, such as 'Off with his head,' and 'Yes, milord.' The bird is a social creature, and at some point tries to mimic something the player characters say. The bird usually mispronounces phrases at first, which should encourage the player characters to interact with it and try to correct it. The more the player characters interact with the bird the more it talks.

Later, Lafaddius returns to collect the bird and thanks the player characters for taking care of it.

The Game's Master should have this encounter play out several times over the course of the journey to Tarsus Mor.

### **Confidence Trickster**

At some point, the player characters witness Lafaddius interacting with Migraine. He keeps asking the bird to repeat what it just said. The player characters hear various snippets of the conversation, mostly the bird squawking 'Treasure, treasure, X marks the spot,' or something else that the Game's Master thinks might pique their players' curiosity.

Lafaddius has, of course, ensured that his little charade has been witnessed. As per **A Bird Called Migraine**, have this encounter play out a number of times. Each time the player characters witness it, Lafaddius seems to be getting more and more information from the bird. He even brings out a map on several occasions. If the player characters approach, Lafaddius quickly stuffs the map in his pocket and puts a blanket over the cage.

If the Game's Master wants to liven things up, have Lafaddius attacked just as the player characters are trying to listen in to



one of the conversations he is having with the bird. Lafaddius has more than one bird and is working the con on several groups, and perhaps someone has decided to take the bird for themselves.

### **Valley of Long Shadows**

The Valley of Long Shadows is home to dozens of small towns and villages, and the Caravan of Fools stops at each and every one. The player characters could face any number of dangers along the road. Exactly what those dangers are should be up to the Game's Master.

A typical encounter in the Valley of Long Shadows would be an attack by bandits, or perhaps some terrifying creature stalking the caravan, picking off stragglers as the darkness falls.

### **Bandits**

AC 6, HD 1 (4hp), Att 1 × Hand Axe (1d6), THAC0 19, MV 120' (40'), SV D13 W14 P13 B16 S15 (T1), ML 8, AL Neutral, XP 10, NA 1d8, TT U

### **Smoothing The Road**

As written, there is not a lot that can go wrong on the journey to Tarsus Mor. The encounter focuses on Lafaddius gaining the trust of the player characters by letting them believe he is

entrusting them with his most precious treasure. Other than the player characters becoming suspicious, there is not much danger of derailing Lafaddius' plot. The Valley of Long Shadows is a dangerous place, which is why the villages remain isolated and Lafaddius travels with such large numbers. The Game's Master should challenge the player characters to give them a sense of danger, and if they get into difficulty have other caravan guards close by. Once the player characters reach Tarsus Mor, let the dice fall where they may, for the player characters are on their own.

### **Tarsus Mor**

#### **... Overview**

Tarsus Mor is the final act in this short adventure. In **Betrayal**, the player characters arrive in the city with a sense of wonder and excitement, only to have their world turned upside down when they learn Lafaddius has sold them to a group of slavers. Fate may have intervened to save the player characters, but in **Choices**, they are stranded in a hostile city and must make their own fate, starting with some tough decisions. Do they chase after Lafaddius before he travels beyond their reach, or do they do what fate has done for

them and stop another group of Lafaddius' caravan workers falling into the hands of slavers.

### **Setup**

Read this aloud to the players once they have reached the city of Tarsus Mor.

*“Having survived the Valley of Long Shadows, the Caravan of Fools slowly winds its way up the twisting cliff-face path to Tarsus Mor. It’s difficult to get an idea of the scale of the city looking up at it, but it’s still beyond anything you ever imagined. Passing through the colossal gates, you can see the mountain itself has been quarried away to make room for the city, its tallest towers rising high above the peak. Within moments you are enveloped in the claustrophobic hustle and bustle of the city.”*

### **Encounter Themes**

As written, everything the player characters see and do from this point on is intended to be a new experience. The scale of the city compared to the towns and villages the player characters come from is beyond imagination and should instil a sense of wonder and amazement. The throngs of people just at the city gate should be enough to give the player

characters a sense of awe, and perhaps a little claustrophobia. The smells and sounds should be alien to them. The main theme, however, is betrayal. Hopefully, by this stage, the player characters implicitly trust Lafaddius and should be genuinely shocked at his betrayal.

### **Running The Encounter**

When the player characters arrive at Tarsus Mor, they are owed a good sum of money, but Lafaddius intends to betray them right away. He only has to unload his cargo at the auction house and be on his way, picking up his payment for last year's goods, collecting payment next year for the current cargo.

*“Struggling through the streets, the wagon train meanders into a courtyard belonging to a large house that looks the worse for wear. Lafaddius shouts a series of commands and the teamsters and labourers go about unloading the wagons.”*

Lafaddius throws one of the player characters a bag of coins, thirty of them, plus one for each of them.

*“Here, take this to the Strangled Cat, ask for Merrick at the bar, he is the innkeeper. The Strangled*

*Cat is where I run my business from in Tarsus Mor. What, you thought I lived in this run down pigsty? Pay off my outstanding line of credit, there will be more than enough left to get each of you a good hot meal, a tankard of ale and a fill from the tobacco barrel. I will be along as soon as this rabble unloads my wares. I will settle with you then and discuss another matter of business that you may find most rewarding.”*

Lafaddius then throws the player characters a polished key.

*“Here is the key to my room. Please ask one of the staff to prepare a fire and a hot bath. I am afraid my old bones can’t take much more of this lifestyle.”*

Lafaddius then hands one of the player characters his caged bird.

*“Keep a good eye on Migraine for me, this bird brings me more luck than any damn god you care to name. You can leave him in my room if Merrick objects to him in the bar, just be sure to lock the door”*

## **Betrayal**

Lafaddius has no intention of squaring up what he owes the player characters. He gives them some directions and sends them on their way, telling them to be wary of pickpockets. The Strangled Cat is a code word recognised by the slave gangs that operate out of Tarsus Mor. Anyone asking for the Strangled Cat identifies themselves as naïve, inexperienced and marked for the slave pens.

When the player characters ask for the Strangled Cat, most people just shrug and shake their heads, having never heard of it. Eventually, the player characters ask the wrong person, who directs them up a narrow winding street known locally as Blind Man’s Alley. From this point on the player characters are shadowed, the slavers biding their time to set up an ambush. A successful perception test alerts the player characters to the fact they are being followed. Just as the player characters are getting suspicious, they are approached by a young lad.

*“I hear you are looking for the Strangled Cat? Yes, I thought so! Come with me quickly, my Master, Oralon would like a word*

*with you. I promise it will be worth your while. Oh, there's no such place as the Strangled Cat"*

If the player characters continue on up the road looking for the Strangled Cat, they are set upon by the meanest, toughest bunch of thugs they have ever seen. The thugs don't talk. They just wade in, attempting to capture one of the player characters at a time, rather than fighting one on one.

### **Thugs**

AC 6, HD 1 (4hp), Att 1 × Club (1d4), THAC0 19, MV 120' (40'), SV D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (F1), ML 6, AL Neutral, XP 10, NA 8, TT U

### **Slave Pit Boss**

AC 5, HD 1 (6hp), Att 1 × Short Sword (1d6), THAC0 19, MV 120' (40'), SV D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (F1), ML 6, AL Chaotic, XP 10, NA 1, TT U

If the player characters turn around and follow the lad, he brings them to see his master, Oralon. As soon as the player characters turn around, the thugs that were following them melt into the doorways and alleys where they came from.

*"The Strangled Cat, well that's something you don't want to find any time soon. You have been marked for slavery. I will explain why later, but you don't have much time. Right now I am going to give you some information of value. All that I ask is that you return to hear a business proposal and give it serious thought, and, if you accept I shall offer you a fair payment. How does that sound?"*

If the player characters agree

*"Ok then. As you are asking for the Strangled Cat I can only assume that you arrived with Lafaddius on the Caravan of Fools? Yes, I thought so. I suggest you go find him if you ever want to see your payment, I would guess by now he is already out of the gates and on the next leg of the circuit to Creegan's Pall. If you think you can't catch him by nightfall, turn back. The Valley of the Marked Serpent is not travelled by the ill-prepared"*

### **Choices**

As the player characters race to find Lafaddius they hear someone asking for the Strangled Cat. If they stop, they see one of the labourers they left unloading the wagons talking to a rough-looking woman. She points to a dark alley,

“Right there, love”. The player characters can clearly see another group of labourers up ahead carrying a birdcage just disappearing into the shadows of the alley. They now have a choice, save the labourers from slavery, or chase after Lafaddius. From their vantage point high up, the player characters can just make out the Caravan of Fools kicking up dust as it trundles down the Valley of the Marked Serpent, on the first leg of the journey to Creegan’s Pall.

If the player characters save the labourers, they have made valuable friends and contacts for life, and possibly enemies of the slavers. By the time they have defeated the slave gang, Lafaddius and the Caravan of Fools is beyond their range, for traveling the Valley of the Marked Serpent is best done in numbers. The player characters, however, have the foreknowledge that in a year’s time Lafaddius and the Caravan of Fools will once again arrive at Tarsus Mor.

Should the player characters catch up with Lafaddius, those loyal to him attack them. However, should it look like the thugs are losing, Lafaddius calls them off and pays the player characters what they

were due, including a little extra. Should the player characters try to kill Lafaddius, he defends himself, surprising everyone with his ability with a sword.

### **Smoothing The Road**

As written, the adventure assumes the player characters evade the slavers. Unlike the first half of the adventure, there is much more that can go wrong in Tarsus Mor. The player characters may ignore the boy trying to help them and fall afoul of the slavers. If they end up as slaves, that shouldn’t be the end of the adventure, but rather, the beginning of a new one.

Should the player characters choose to catch up with Lafaddius and simply try to kill him, he is prepared to stand and show them how to fight. While Lafaddius prefers a sharp wit over confronting a dullard with a blade, this doesn’t alter the fact that he was once an arena gladiator, and is neither as slow nor as decrepit as he pretends. Lafaddius only kills when it becomes unprofitable to do otherwise.

Should any of the player characters mention Oralon by name, Lafaddius looks visibly shaken, as if he’s just seen a ghost. This gives the player characters an

edge should they choose to negotiate.

### **Caravan Guards**

AC 6, HD 1 (4hp), Att 1 × Short Sword (1d6), THAC0 19, MV 120' (40'), SV D12 W13 P14 B15 S16 (F1), ML 8, AL Neutral, XP 10, NA (1d4 × 4), TT J

### **Legacy**

Depending on decisions made by the player characters, there are a number of situations the Game's Master can exploit to create further adventures. Oralon has promised work for the player characters but doesn't explicitly state what it is. This is an opportunity for the Game's Master to introduce their own adventure ideas by giving the player characters a patron.

If Lafaddius has escaped, the player characters may bide their time knowing that as he completes the annual trade circuit, his return to Tarsus Mor is all but guaranteed.

Should the player characters fall afoul of the slavers, they get to see the world, but perhaps just not as they intended. They might end up in some far off land as soldiers or gladiators in an arena, or perhaps eventually leading a slave rebellion against the slave lords. If the player characters rescued the

other labourers from slavers, they realise this isn't the first time Lafaddius has played this con, and they can become a thorn in the side of the local slavers, and maybe track down the slave lords, freeing more slaves in the process.

Lafaddius' bird, Migraine, is another source of adventure. When Lafaddius bought the birds, he was unaware they were once pets in the royal court. The birds are intelligent, and between them, they have memorised several private and damning conversations, which from time to time they like to repeat. Playing their own little game, each bird chirps in with their own part of the conversation until it is complete. The player characters might already wonder why Migraine says things like 'Yes Milord'. Should the player characters rescue the labourers, who also have a bird, the creatures repeat part of a conversation. It should be enough for the player characters to realise the importance of what the birds are repeating, and that Lafaddius has more birds. Indeed, the cages are numbered, and the Game's Master can have as many birds as required and have the player characters chase them down until they have enough of them to listen to an entire conversation

## Tools of the Trade

### Game's Master's Map ~ Valley of Long Shadows



Each dash on the map is equivalent to three days' travel by caravan. As such it takes many weeks for the Caravan of Fools to travel the length of the Valley of Long Shadows.

## **Persons of Renown**

### **Lafaddius Eversweet**

To most, Lafaddius is a lifeline, a welcome visitor who brings news of the outside world and much-needed trade. Few, however, know anything about Lafaddius' background.

Often in trouble with the law, Lafaddius often languished in a cell until his parents paid for his release. However, one night, instead of a cell, he was bundled into a wagon. He soon found himself performing in a gladiatorial arena far from his home alongside hardened criminals. Lafaddius became an exceptional swordsman, but he also learned every trick in the book from the criminals he found himself surrounded by – he became adept at picking locks, pockets and other sleight of hand and excelled as a confidence trickster.

Despite his skill with a blade, Lafaddius realised that sooner or later his days in the arena were numbered. After months of planning, and on the eve of what would have been his greatest arena victory, Lafaddius escaped. During his escape, he came across the

Caravan of Fools, a small troupe of entertainers, under attack by creatures from the Poisoned Wastes. Helping to drive off the creatures, Lafaddius was given succour in the troupe. Eventually, Lafaddius became the head of the troupe and expanded it into the business it is today. Oddly, Lafaddius has no gripe with the slavers that took him or the arena pit bosses, for they made him everything he is.

Now in his late forties, Lafaddius no longer has the muscular build of a gladiator, but the expanding paunch of a rich merchant. His scarred, tanned face is purposely hidden behind a thick crop of manicured stubble and shoulder-length hair. Always dressed in loose-fitting robes, Lafaddius shuffles about with his walking cane, making him look much older than he is, only momentarily throwing off this disguise to become animated when giving his recruitment speeches.

### **Oralon**

Not only was Oralon a gladiatorial champion like Lafaddius, but he was Lafaddius' arena partner. Lafaddius' escape was a huge betrayal, leaving Oralon to fight alone in the arena. Although Oralon was victorious, he was



gravely wounded, ending his career. Dumped outside the city as carrion to bait the traps, Oralon survived. Returning to Tarsus Mor, Oralon prospered. A few years ago, on a trip to the auction house, Oralon recognised Lafaddius. Ever since, Oralon has kept tabs on him. When he learned of Lafaddius' scam he was horrified and has decided to put an end to it.

Unlike Lafaddius, Oralon does not fear to hide his arena scars and bares them openly. In his early fifties, Oralon still wears his greying hair short in the arena style he has become accustomed to. Bright-eyed and full of vigour, Oralon is still a capable man, but with only one arm and retaining a permanent limp from his final bout in the arena, he has his limits.

AC 7, HD 6 (24hp), Att 1 × Short Sword (1d6+1), THAC0 17, MV 120' (40'), SV D10 W11 P12 B13 S14 (F6), ML 10, AL Neutral, XP 50, NA 1, TT C

Oralon wields 'Rime Guard' a +1 magical short sword won in the arena. This sword produces an aura of cold. See **Arcanum**.

### **Lafaddius**

AC 6, HD 5 (20hp), Att 1 × Sword (1d8+2), THAC0 17, MV 120'

(40'), SV D10 W11 P12 B13 S14 (F5), ML 10, AL Neutral, XP 50, NA 1, TT C

Lafaddius wields 'Realm Guard' a Flaming +1 magical sword won in the arena. See **Arcanum**

### **Arcanum**

#### **Realm Guard**

This magical sword bursts into flames, on command. When flaming, it casts light in a 30' radius. Realm Guard is treated as a torch for purposes of setting things on fire and inflicts fire damage. The sword continues to blaze until commanded to cease.

#### **Rime Guard**

On command, his magical sword creates an aura of cold in a 15' radius. Creatures other than the wielder caught within the aura suffer 1d6+1 damage, with a successful save versus wands indicating half damage. The aura continues until commanded to cease.

If the story can be enriched by introducing more magic items, by all means, do. Lafaddius may have more than one magical treasure from his glory days in the arena or perhaps there is some magic treasure hidden in the base of one of the birdcages.