

Border Watch

Session 1 29-4-02 Not Caravan Guards again!

Next Session Tuesday 7-5-02 At Brian's place

Greatwall – 30th September

Early evening in the Behir & Beholder Inn and our friends sit around quaffing ale. Arkell turns up and regretfully informs them that he has family business elsewhere, something to do with a religious icon, The Tankard of Infinite Drinking or something. He leaves in a hurry and soon after, a round of Ale is deposited on the table by a pretty barmaid who hurries off into the throng. Some of the more charitable party members assume that it's a parting gift (or blessing even) from Arkell however Snatch wants to make sure and asks at the bar. Before the ill-mannered git can offend the barman too much, Solipsis takes a pull on his tankard, revealing a folded note beneath. They call Snatch back and read a message proposing that they proceed immediately to the garrison and present themselves to Captain Gillmore to hear of something that will profit both Furyondy and themselves. Scenting profit and adventure they leave, finding themselves expected at the Garrison. They are shown into a hall and after Solipsis rather spontaneously detects a secret door, the Captain enters.

Greatwall has a problem. Due to the after effects of the Greyhawk Wars most of the essential trade routes to supply Furyondy's northern border towns have fallen into disuse. The result is one of inflation (The party had already noted the *3 book prices) and shortage in these towns. Gillmore has been charged with proving that the Grabford-Critwall-Willip trade route is a viable one again and to that end he intends to send a three wagon caravan along this route with a reasonably light guard. He has invited you here this evening because he would like you to be those guards. His terms are 1000 gp for the job, 250 gp payable in advance. He claps his hands and a sergeant enters bearing sacks containing 250 gp for each party member. The party are pretty happy with all of this and it certainly sounds more fun than the 30 gp job they've just finished so they accept the contract. They will get the hire of riding horses with standard tack for the book price (refundable). The Captain departs on urgent business leaving Sergeant Krayquer to brief them. Krayquer, a scar-faced, grizzled old veteran gives impression of thinking this is really an Army matter and not the sort of thing that should be entrusted to Adventurers however he hands over the sacks of gold and a map of the area and offers to answer any questions related to the military situation along the border.

He informs you that the trail has not been used in some years and some parts of it are in a pretty bad state however work has been done on the Mursten – Fort Belvor section to make the going easier. Most of Luz's forces have withdrawn further into annexed Horned Society territory and he expects this stretch of the journey to be much safer now than it was. One very important piece of information is the use that Luz has been making of Lizard Men as spies. Krayquer says the Amphibians use the Veng river as a means of easy transport to spy upon the forces of good and report back to their evil master. As such, he strongly advises the party to kill, on sight, any Lizard Men that they encounter.

After the briefing the party leave for the Inn where they are to meet the merchants. A quick enquiry at the bar and they find themselves sharing a quiet corner with the trio of merchants Malin, Emerald and Jasmalus. They are immediately taken by the beauty of the female half-elf Emerald, although it is quickly evident that Malin is the leader of the three and Jasmalus, well he doesn't say much. They discuss the journey and Malin details the route he intends to cover, basically from Greatwall to Willip via Mursten, Fort Belvor, Fendrelan, Batlet, Barduk and Critwall. Malin, a dark-haired (probably dyes it) paunchy man in his mid fifties is very concerned with opening the trade route for business. He appears to use Emerald as a calculating machine and store of inventory knowledge, a skill that she seems to have an amazing ability with. Jasmalus, also in his early to mid-fifties but in somewhat better shape, despite sporting snow white hair and beard seems to be the local contact, mentioning that he has at least acquaintances in most of the towns they will pass through. All three are dressed for travelling and armed with daggers. They discuss the route and Bod checks that the wagons are carrying spare wheels – he also suggests spare horses, something which the merchants were apparently trying to cut costs on, however they agree to bring two extra heavy horses to supplement the six. There will also be three drivers, two of which are well known to the team. All retire early to bed ready for the dawn start.

On the road again

Dawn at the east gate and the party meet up with the caravan. They note the sturdy covered wagons, jam-packed with tightly roped down crates and bundles as they roll slowly out of town. On the road they leave the flat grassland behind, gradually moving into hillier tree covered terrain. The days pass and after the third day they catch sight of the Veng river in the distance. The party maintain a wary watch however and all is well until the morning of the fifth day when ahead of Ryan and Rufus a man dressed in green and brown steps into view and commands them to "Stand and deliver!" The party pause until he gives it a little straighter. "Drop your weapons and surrender, you are surrounded!" Aha! This they understand and the fellow, seeing the party reaching for all manner of weaponry brings his outstretched arm down while shouting and running back into the forest. The immediate response is a hail of arrows from the right side of the caravan, one of which strikes a driver. Ryan & Rufus charge after the man as Bod rides straight into the direction of the arrow fire while James and Solipsis remain behind shielding Emerald and the injured driver as Malin begins to circle the wagons.

Huzzah!

Rufus and Ryan charge into three camouflaged bowmen skulking through the undergrowth and engage them in combat. Bod's charge brings him into melee with two more bowmen, while in the meantime Snatch has disappeared into the cover of the heavy ferns that cover the forest floor. More arrows rain down as the caravan creaks agonisingly slowly into a circle, James straining at the leash to leave his defensive role and battle the forces of evil. Rufus sets to, swinging his battleaxe and starts to make one of the three opponents wonder whether this was such a good idea as Ryanair manages a promising early couple of hits with his bow.

Bod crashes through the undergrowth and again the two in melee with him start to consider whether they shouldn't have stayed at home as he deals some serious damage. Sneaking through the ferns Snatch notices two men creeping past (actually intending to attack Bod from behind). A wicked grin crosses his little halfling face as he emerges silently from cover, unsheathing his dagger before bringing it down in a vicious blow that finishes his opponent and really puts the willies up the other guy who spins and with a very lucky wild slash cuts a nasty wound into the little fellow. With a roar of Lawful Good vengeance Sir James Foad urges his mount forward in a mighty jump over the bushes, narrowly missing Snatch as he tumbles away into the undergrowth. Back at the wagons Solipsis decides to head into the fray as yet another volley of arrows rain down. Hearing Bod's shouts he rides toward him.

In the meantime Ryan and Rufus have been making heavy work of their opponents as Ryan's promising start is not followed by much else. Fair enough, the bandits don't seem to be able to hit Rufus but Ryan is starting to look like a pincushion. Bod is giving a good account of himself as one of his opponents drops and the other starts to look worried. James catches sight of a movement to his right and spontaneously attacks it. Fortunately for him it's not one of the party but a couple of the villains, one armed with a bow and one with a long pole-arm, which he uses to attempt to unseat our hero. Two arrows find their way home but James' sword is there to dispense justice to the bowman before the other guy thinks better of it and makes a break for it with James in hot pursuit.

It's getting sweaty for Snatch hiding in the bushes as a bandit tries to skewer a small dextrous guy he can't see, however Solipsis arrives on the scene waving his mace while shouting out "Does anyone need a cure?" Plenty of takers among the bad guys as Snatch lets his opponent have two expertly thrown daggers in the chest. Amazingly the bandit is still standing but rather pathetically tries to run away. With another wicked grin Snatch creeps off after him.

Back at the R&R fight Ryan is down as Rufus, finally, manages to kill the last of the three. Bod decapitates his enemy and with amazing feats of horsemanship, James manages to run down and capture his. Solipsis rides to Rufus' anxious call for help and CLW's Ryan back to walking wounded, just in time to hear the shouts for help from the caravan. Suddenly desperately worried that they have left their charges undefended all head back at speed, except Snatch who is busy retrieving his nice daggers from the body of a very dead bandit.

No more arrow fire from the routed foe, however back in the wagon circle both Emerald and Jasmalus have been hit. Solipsis rides to attendance as with typical Paladin flair (and foolhardiness) James drives his horse to leap the ring of wagons and rear up in suitably theatrical manner. Solipsis CLW's Emerald and Jasmalus and attends the injured driver. Meanwhile Bod drags bandit bodies back to the camp and relieves them of their possessions. Snatch appears with his tokens of victory as silence descends upon the trail.

Malin immediately wants to head on however the party take the time to loot the bodies of their attackers finding the unusually good take of 81gp, 54sp and 45cp along with 10 gems. None of the party have the appraisal skill but Malin is happy to comply (providing they hurry up) valuing 5 at 100gp each and 5 at 30gp each. Quite a take! In addition they retrieve 36 flight arrows, 24 sheaf arrows, 9 longswords, 9 shortbows and one hook fauchard polearm. Not a bad day's work and far more fun than that other boring caravan from Rillwick!

The caravan moves on

After their cures, both Emerald and Jasmalus are in good shape however the party have a few war wounds except for Solipsis and Rufus (who's practically un-hittable anyway) so they decide to set off again leaving the pile of bodies, "As a warning to the others!" Solipsis has the prisoner on his horse and as the fellow moans and partially comes round he whispers threateningly into his ear. Whether this makes the prisoner any more frightened than he is already is anyone's guess but he certainly doesn't seem very happy with his situation, wounded, trussed up and slung over a horse, while that bloody Paladin goes on about trials and executions.

Malin drives on again until the very last possible moment before circling the wagons for the night. Solipsis props the prisoner against a wagon where he presents a very sorry sight after being transported for half a day slung over a horse with open wounds. Solipsis decides to bind his wounds in case he expires on the spot as the interrogation begins. His name, he says, is Rizla and he was working with this bandit gang under the command of one Bazza, who is now dead, about twice over if you count how hard Rufus hit him. He fully admits to his villainous occupation but insists that he is nothing to do with the forces of evil. Just a guy trying to make his way in the world, with his meagre talents, which incidentally are cooking, stealth, opening doors and relieving people of troublesome small change. This and the fact that he is from Greyhawk prompts Snatch, finally, to search him finding a set of thieves' tools. Perhaps this guy might be useful after all?

Interrogation

There follows an argument (that must have lasted half the night) over what to do with this scoundrel. Rizla that is, not Snatch. Sir James Foad has no doubt that the Rogue must face justice as soon as possible, perhaps even now, administered by his own righteous hand. Most of the rest, led by Bod think that Rizla could be useful and would be more use as a party henchman rather than a stretched neck stiff. Solipsis in particular seems to fancy the idea of a henchman but Sir J is implacable - The murderer will get no mercy. Things look bleak for Rizla until the case is rather neatly turned around by Bod's observation that James attacked Rizla first, thereby technically reducing the seriousness of his crimes to banditry and defending himself from a rabid Paladin.

This all goes on for some time with a great deal of persuasive argument from all until finally a compromise is reached. Rizla will serve as James' henchman until whenever he decides to release him, for the princely sum of 1gp per month, plus food and drink. Rizla agrees (gods help him) and his bonds are loosened so he can spend a more comfortable night as Solipsis casts his last cure on Snatch and James lays hands on Ryanair. Amazingly, Snatch's rope snares have caught a Deer. They decide to hang it on one of the wagons.

Hit Point Situation

Bod 17(24), Snatch 8(13), Solipsis Full, James 9(20), Ryanair 11(14), Rufus Full

Reason for XP	Bod	Snatch	Solipsis	James	Ryanair	Rufus
Opponents	60	60	45	60	60	
Spells			60	10		
Proficiencies		50	20			
Ideas	40	20	20	20	20	
Problem Solving						
Role Play	120	90	90	120	90	
Treasure						
Finishing						
Fun Factor	40	20	20	40	20	
Bonuses						
Penalties						
Total (This session)	260	240	255	250	190	
Total (This adventure)	260	240	255	250	190	
Grand Total	3394	3075	2628/2628	3568	2723	2960

DM Notes

1. I think about one of you has the horsemanship proficiency and yet I let you all happily charge into battle anyway. This was just a silly DM mistake. Don't expect it happen again. If you do not have the horsemanship proficiency I strongly advise you to dismount to fight.
2. Excellent play by all. If I wrote up all the philosophical argument it would be six pages long. I think you can see from the XP table that it has been taken into account.