

Border Watch

Session 6 10-6-02 Murder!

Next Session Tuesday 17-5-02 At Brian's place

The road goes ever on

The caravan leaves Batlet on its eight-day journey. After all of the excitement of the previous few days, the pace settles down somewhat as they proceed alongside the mighty Veng river enroute to Barduk. Most of the eight days pass uneventfully peppered with pithy banter from our coolly confident caravan guards. Mayaheine is tempted several times, Bod's horse somehow gets a false beard and ribbons (he doesn't like the ribbons but finds the beard quite fetching), and we are even treated to Solipsis' fascinating ritual, the remarkable "Thank you Zagyg" song. Lulled by this easy pace Rufus complains about the boring trip however everyone remains alert enough to spot the frequent campfires on the far side of the river and the occasional night-time investigations of some sort of pack creatures. By Day 5 Rufus is so bored he suggests changing the watch patterns just for fun, however Bod is so horrified by this disorderly idea that they decide to keep the same seemingly successful rota.

Fording the Crystal

Late on the eighth day they round a curve in the road and spot the Crystal River ford, currently being forded by a two-wagon train of Orcs, apparently so engrossed in the crossing that they have not yet noticed the party.

Snatch takes cover and hits with slings as Ryan sits tall on horseback striking the surprised monsters with arrows. Against his better judgement Bod charges into melee quickly disposing of the nearest orc but realises that he is more than knee deep in a fast-running stream and disengages to get to the bank for bow fire. James' horse is shot from under him by a group of well-coordinated orc archers. Ryan and Rizla provide covering fire as Solipsis uses his horsemanship proficiency to spectacularly dismount and dither about, mumbling about casting some sort of spell. Suddenly Ryan is hit by several arrows from the same group of Orcs, as simultaneously a snarling Orog appears from behind the wagons drawing his weapon, as he advances on Rufus who has been absent-mindedly disposing of lesser foes.

James loses his footing and falls into the river and is swept inelegantly 60 ft downstream. Bod is hit by arrows as two of the Orcs start to run away. Solipsis finally casts Magic Missile as Ryan and Rizla polish off the two runners, James staggering awkwardly to his feet further downstream. In a furious melee, Rufus finishes off the Orog almost single-handedly as the remaining five Orcs throw down their weapons and surrender (2 armed with bows, 3 armed with swords).

Solipsis casts CLW once on Bod and twice on Ryan as Bod ties up their prisoners using his expert rope skills and Jasmalus positively scribbles into his little black book. Carefully searching the wagons they find a large stock of food, drink, supplies and orcish weapons. They also discover a large chest which Snatch discovers is trapped. With the help of a metal plate and some brute force from Rufus he manages to disarm a deadly poison trap revealing, much to the Dwarves' delight, 1000gp in crudely cast gold ingots. Since they are so close to Barduk Malin decides to go for it, to at least make civilisation for the night. And so they continue in torchlight, with Malin and Emerald driving the captured orc wagons for another half hour or so until they arrive at the village. It is pretty similar to Batlet except it has an earthen wall instead of a stockade. It is also centred upon a defensive tower. There is a large Inn called the Bloody Axe and a decent stable available.

Barduk

Arriving at town they are met by Captain Rilldillian, the commander of a small garrison of refugee Shield Landers. Since one of their two-man patrols is missing the Captain is more than happy to take the Orcs into his lawful custody against the somewhat peculiar opposition of James. Rilldillian has to insist that he is the appointed Marshal of Law here and will not be taking orders from some itinerant Paladin! As the Orcs are led away the party receive a note asking them urgently to a meeting in Jasmalus' room at the Inn. Off in their respective sulks both James and Rufus do not attend.

Jasmalus' Story

He seems to study each of you carefully as you enter the room. Closing the door he begins to speak. "I know how odd this must seem and I realise that I do not present my friendliest face to the world but my privacy has its reasons. Events on this trip however force me to reveal myself. I am a special agent for Count Artur Jakartai, knight commander of the Furyondian defence forces. The count sent me with this caravan, posing as a merchant, to secretly scout the border and track Luz's troops movements." He takes out the small book you have seen him writing in during the course of the journey. "My information concerning these troop movements is contained in here. It points to one invariable conclusion: that Luz has manned a secret humanoid base within Furyondy itself. Moving troops and supplies in during the dead of night, he has used these not-so-random border raids to cover his true intent. The caravan we stumbled across an hour ago could mean nothing else. A secret Luzian base hidden within our borders could spell doom for Furyondy. I must warn Jakartai immediately. To do this I must deliver this book. I have a problem, however. I believe someone has betrayed my position, someone within the Furyondian command. The Orcs attacked a similar caravan to ours and murdered a man with a passing resemblance to myself. Only a few knew of my mission, it can only mean we have a traitor in our midst. But it also means I cannot deliver the book myself. With the fate of Furyondy at stake, I cannot endanger this information. I have contacted one of Jakartai's scouts in the area, a trustworthy agent named Jeremiah. You can find him at a safehouse in the woods nearby. I will give you directions. He... well, you will know him when you see him."

After a brief discussion the quorum of party members decide to help him. He hands over the book, saying, "Thank you my friends, for today you serve the noble kingdom of Furyondy." They seek out Rufus and James eliciting the usual Rufus response of, "How much do we get paid?" Bod explains that they will be doing it for Furyondy and of course the 1000gp of gold ingots they found. Rizla is offered a cut and agrees to come along and after some persuasion from James, Rufus reluctantly joins in, considering that there might at least be some Orcs to fight.

Mr Iggy and the Leaf Lady

The party follow Jasmalus' directions with little effort, making use of Ryan's tracking and the good direction sense of the party in general. Eventually they arrive at the rendezvous. After a few minutes they hear a rustle in the bushes and a frightened little girl appears regarding their weapons with obvious fear. The party sheath weapons and a look of relief passes over the little girl's face. "I'm lost," she says. The party talk to her for a few minutes, with especially James' easy manner winning her trust. She explains that her name is Sarah and she lives in the forest with "Mr Iggy" and the "The Leaf Lady."

Suddenly, a shadowed humanoid figure bursts through the bushes, seemingly out of nowhere. Its jagged teeth flash in the moonlight as it sweeps away the brush with a powerful sweep of its thick scaly tail. Before you realise it, the creature has a bowstring pulled taut, a gleaming arrowhead aimed at you at point blank range. (DM Note 1). Bod moves forward as the others draw weapons and Solipsis prepares a spell, when suddenly the lizardman speaks. "Unhand the girl, banditsss, ssshe iss under my proteccssion!" The party realise that this doesn't sound like the action of a murderous monster, so wisely Bod stays his hand and Solipsis reluctantly lets his spell fizzle out. Sarah shouts out "Mr Iggy" and runs to the creature and hugs his leg.

The lizardman lowers his bow and fondly picks up the little girl, saying, "I told you to stop calling me that, you little rascal, my name is Jeremiah." He then invites the party to follow him to the safehouse where after a short journey along an almost invisible trail they encounter a log cabin hidden behind a thorny wall of brush. Once inside you see a small fire that lights the cabin's interior from a hearth on the wall opposite the door. Near the fireplace a woman in a light green gown smiles at Jeremiah and welcomes you. Sarah rushes off to the woman but soon you see several other children quickly pop their heads out of hiding. They eye you cautiously for a moment, then head over to the young girl to excitedly pepper her with questions about you and her adventure in the woods.

Jeremiah smiles at the children and then motions you toward some benches. "Pleasssse take a sseat", he says. "I may need to assk you sssome questionsss about thiss." He taps a finger on the book, and then sits down to quickly begin reading it. As Jeremiah reads, the woman introduces herself as Alexia, a Druid who along with Jeremiah shelter a number of Shield Land children, orphaned in the Greyhawk wars. The party are offered food and drink and the curious children talk and play with them, James especially, being popular.

After a while Jeremiah closes the book and says, "I believe Jasmalus's conclusions are correct. I cannot think of any other reason for Orcs to take supplies into Furyondy, other than to stock a fortress within. And, indeed there appears to be a traitor in our ranks. Have you any idea who it is? Solipsis and James suspect Sergeant Krayquer because of the false information about the state of the road and the instruction to kill all lizardmen. Jeremiah says that Krayquer occasionally runs missions to him and thus is familiar with the area. Also a little boy pipes up saying he saw the scar-faced man that visited us give a book just like Jasmalus' to the nasty pig men. He also tells them that there was a dark, pointy-eared boy there as well. This is enough to convince Jeremiah and Alexia and indeed the heroes. Jeremiah gathers his things hurriedly as Alexia casts a spell over the book to waterproof it. They depart quickly, James waving to the children, taking the hidden trail to the river's edge. Jeremiah tucks the book into a belt pouch and after thanking the Adventurers, slips into the river disappearing below the flowing waters.

Barduk revisited

As they arrive back at Barduk, the Party are greeted with a familiar sight, buildings on fire and people rushing around desperately attempting to quench the flames as soldiers chase off a marauding orc attack. Anxious to join in the fun Rufus, James and Bod rush off after the rapidly retreating Orcs, although it seems that garrison has repelled the attack with no problem. Ryan is the only one clever enough to think to investigate the wagons and as he approaches the stables he is alarmed to find Malin slumped against a wall, an arrow in his leg. He shouts at Ryan to check the cargo and the Elf rushes into the stables and is surprised to see Jasmalus convulsed in pain upon the ground, an arrow in his back. His lips have turned blue and his eyes are wide open and dilated. He attempts to speak dying words to the Ranger but his purpled tongue swells inside his throat. His end is particularly horrible and agonising.

Bod and James quickly realise that the attack has been driven off and return to the town where Solipsis is healing the wounded. As they are joined by Rilldillian and Ryan, Rufus manages to dispose of three more Orcs. Rilldillian explains the attack did not breach the walls, only that some buildings were set alight by fire arrows. He hurries off to supervise things as Ryan leads the others to the stables. Soli casts CLW on Malin and they enter the stables to investigate, finding the cargo undisturbed. Solipsis examines Jasmalus' body and notes that the arrow is like the orcish arrows they have seen, however the wound is not consistent with an arrow, having actually been made by a larger blade perhaps a dagger? It appears then that the attack may have been but a diversion from the real event of the night – murder!

Soli quickly comes up with the, "Thank Zagyg I was carrying the Neutralise Poison spell today, let's get this man to a bed, he's badly injured," ruse. Amazingly the party all catch on and carry the body up to Jasmalus' room past a hopping, enquiring Malin. They wonder whether Malin's wound could be self-inflicted but Solipsis says it was the real thing as far as he's concerned. Solipsis and Snatch quickly search Jasmalus' room and find that many of his possessions are missing. Rufus goes down to the bar meeting Borik the (luckily) Dwarven proprietor of the Bloody Axe. Asking about the other guest he is informed that he is called Celini, a mercenary half-elf that sometimes fights with the garrison. Bod searches the wagons and finds some similar black notebooks and sits in the bar very obviously, while Soli sleeps on Jasmalus' bed and the rest bunk up in the communal room.

They pass an uneventful night. Solipsis casts armour on himself as Bod wanders off to talk to Malin finding that he was shot from short range, close to the stables. A heavily cloaked Celini passes Solipsis in the corridor and Soli catches a glimpse of his skin colour, it looks like normal half-elf tone.

Bod heads off to the stables and questions Frakus the simple stable lad. He says he saw two little guys (everyone looks little to the hulking Frakus). He explains that one of them "just fell down" and the other one "just shot an arrow at the wall" and then ran away. Investigating the stable wall Bod finds a plank missing, and beyond, the place where they found the injured Malin. With suspicion firmly set on the mercenary, Snatch sneaks out to listen at his door. He hears nothing and the party break in, finding a couple of orcish arrows and some of Jasmalus' possessions. Unfortunately for Solipsis, there is no sign of a spellbook.

At this moment Celini returns and seeing the party tries to run for it. He is stopped with cold steel by Rufus and James and as he is quickly injured soon surrenders. James, in a very un-Paladin way, instantly punches him unconscious. Rilldillian arrives and demands an explanation, gets one and seems happy enough with it. He arranges for Jasmalus' body to be given a decent burial. After a short time Celini comes round. The fight with Rufus and James has disturbed his make-up and they can now clearly see the features and colouring of a Drow Elf! As they attempt to question their captive they find him to be brazen and arrogant freely admitting the murder of Jasmalus. However since he knows the location of the secret orc base in Furyondy he is confident that they will release him rather than risk the downfall of Furyondy and perhaps the entire Flanaess to luz.

The Drow says he is neutral in this conflict, working merely for coin and owes no loyalty to either side. He also informs them that he won't break under the torture that Rufus (DM note 2) so badly wants to hand out. Reluctantly, and against James and Rufus' major objections Rilldillian agrees to Celini's terms. He will be guarded at a safe location until the force attacking the base returns. He will then be released. The grinning Drow is led away by garrison guards after informing Rilldillian of the location of the base, The Cragson Mines, an abandoned mining complex about 10 miles to the southeast. Lacking the forces to conduct a full-frontal assault the Captain requests the party to undertake the job, of course they may keep any booty that they may find. He will provide them with four soldiers from his garrison but they must strike at once before luz learns of the base's discovery. They agree to undertake this dangerous mission for Furyondy... for honour, for profit and adventure but not necessarily in that order.

Next week - The Cragson Mines

Hit Point Situation

Bod 24(24), Snatch 13(13), Solipsis 9(9), James 20(20), Ryanair 14(14), Rufus 22(22), Rizla 10(10)

Reason for XP	Bod	Snatch	Solipsis	James	Ryanair	Rufus
Opponents	45		15	35	30	95
Spells			60			
Proficiencies	20		20	50	10	10
Ideas/clues	50		110	70	80	50
Problem Solving						
Role Play	70		40	50	30	60
Treasure	200		200	200	200	200
Finishing						
Fun Factor	20		20	30	30	10
Bonuses	50		50	50	50	50
Penalties						
Total (This session)	455		515	485	430	475
Total (This adventure)	1585	1215	2215	1700	1705	1605
Grand Total	6619	4725	4741/4741	6483	6093	5930

DM Notes

1. Fortunately the lizardman and the girl won initiative. I hate to think what might have happened if it had gone the other way.
2. Alignment warning Rufus. Torture is an evil or neutral act.
3. 50 bonus XP for accepting the mission to the mines in a generally heroic manner.