

HIG1-06

Power of Choice

A One-Round D&D LIVING GREYHAWK®

Highfolk Regional Adventure

Version 1

Round One

by Chris Tulach

The murder of councilman Telvest Lorewin at this year's Harvest Festival has the town of Highfolk fearful that the escaped assassin will strike again. When the mysterious killer is sighted once more, heroes are needed to bring him to justice. Will you succeed where other stalwart adventurers once failed? Recommended for sneaky and intrigue-oriented PCs. A two-round event, for characters levels 1-6.

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This is a RPGA Network adventure game. A four-hour time block has been allocated for playing the game (or this round of the game), but the actual playing time will be about three hours.

It is a good idea to ask each player to put a name tag in front of him or her. The tag should have the player's name at the bottom, and the character's name, race, and gender at the top. This makes it easier for the players to keep track of who is playing which character.

Scoring the game for RPGA points: The RPGA has three ways to score this game. Consult your convention coordinator to determine which method to use:

1. *No-vote scoring:* The players write their names and numbers on the scoring packet grid, you fill in the top of the grid. That is all. No one is rated. This method is used for people who are just playing for fun.
2. *Partial scoring:* The players rate the game master and the scenario on their player voting sheet, and provide personal information, but don't vote for other players. The game master rates the scenario and completes personal and event information, but does not rate the players as a team or vote for players. This method is used when there is no competition, but the convention coordinator wants information as to how the game masters are performing, or the game master wants feedback on his or her own performance.
3. *Voting:* Players and game masters complete the entire packet, including voting for best player. If this method is used, be sure to allow about 15-20 minutes for the players to briefly describe their characters to the other players, and about 5-10 minutes for voting. This method is used when the players want to know who played the best amongst them, or when the adventure is run in tournament format with winners and prizes. Multi-round adventures usually required advancing a smaller number of players than played the first round, so voting is required for multi-round adventures.

When using Voting, rank the players in order of your voting choice while they are completing their forms, so that you are not influenced by their comments on your abilities.

The players are free to use the game rules to learn about equipment and weapons their characters are carrying.

Some of the text in this scenario is written so that you may present it as written to the players, while other text is for your eyes only. Text for the players will be in ***bold italics***. It is strongly recommended that you paraphrase the player text, instead of reading it aloud, as some of the text is general and must be adapted to the specific situation or to actions of the player characters.

LIVING GREYHAWK Tier Structure

To determine the tier, add the character levels of all the characters. In addition, add the levels of any henchmen or animals according to the values on their certificates. Compare the total to the chart below to find the tier.

	<u>4 players</u>	<u>5 players</u>	<u>6 players</u>	<u>7 players</u>	<u>Lvl Cap</u>
T1:	4-12	5-13	6-14	7-15	4 nd
T2:	13-22	14-24	15-26	16-28	6 th
T3:	23-32	25-35	27-38	29-41	8 th

The level cap indicated the highest level of character allowed to play this adventure. Characters of levels higher than the highest level shown for the highest tier cannot be played.

Lifestyle

At the beginning of every scenario, each PC is required to pay upkeep costs matching the level of lifestyle they wish to maintain. The cost of each lifestyle will be indicated at the beginning of the **scenario**. The lifestyles, and the effects that each has on play, are:

Destitute	You have no living space, and must carry all your gear everywhere. You eat poor quality food. You wear a peasant outfit, your only change of clothes.
Poor	You sleep in poor accommodations, and eat poor quality food. You wear a peasant outfit, and have two sets of clothing.
Common	You have common lodgings, and eat common quality food. You have normal clothing for your profession (adventuring); nothing fancy. You probably have two or three sets of clothing.
High	You stay in good quality lodgings, and eat good quality food. You wear anything in value up to courtier's outfits, and generally buy a new set of clothing every two weeks.
Luxury	You have luxurious accommodations (twice the cost of good accommodations), and you eat excellent foods. You can throw a banquet for your friends every day, and frequently do. You wear clothing up to the value of noble's outfit, and buy a new set of clothes every week.

Lifestyles come with bonuses or penalties to Diplomacy, Intimidate, Disguise, and Bluff skill checks. These penalties, shown below, should be applied at the DM's discretion, and can sometimes backfire—for example, a PC with a

poor lifestyle would not have a penalty when talking to a beggar, but would when talking to a city official. A PC with a high lifestyle should have a penalty when dealing with a group of street thugs, where a PC with a destitute lifestyle might not.

DMs are encouraged to role-play these reactions whenever possible.

Lifestyle	Cost	Skill Modifier
Destitute	14 sp	-2
Poor	43 sp	-1
Common	12 gp	0
High	250 gp	+1
Luxury	500 gp	+2

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Judge Introduction

Well over a month ago, during the Highfolk Harvest Festival (held during Brewfest each year), Councilman Telvest Lorewin was poisoned. An assassin placed a potent poison (known as kolturan) in the ceremonial wine that Telvest, as head of the Vintner's Guild in Highfolk, drank to officially open the festivities.

Paxana Eventhil, the town constable, reacted quickly, closing the four gates of the town. She then recruited adventurers to augment her town watch (known as the Home Guard) and aid in the search for the killer. After narrowing down various leads, a large group of adventurers cornered the assassin at a tree house in the Elven District, waiting at the base of a dysimar tree (a rare willowy tree with distinctly blue-veined leaves), and developed a plan to bring him in.

The assassin, having none of that, attempted to escape. He used his limited spells and knowledge of the lay of the town to thwart the heroes many times during the chase. Eventually, he hid in the forested area to the north of town, and after a while, fled to parts unknown. These events took place during the Highfolk Interactive, *A Bitter Harvest* (Dan's Con of the Vale, October 6-8, 2000). Many characters (over forty) were involved in the search, and twelve heroes were present in the final confrontation with the assassin. Those heroes are looking for justice to be served (and will need no other reason to participate in this adventure).

In addition to the assassination, the Knights of the High Forest have been alarmed as of late at other matters. The Shadowclaw, a network of spies, assassins, and saboteurs working for Iuz, have spread their malicious activities to Highfolk. The Knights, after years of attempts, planted an agent in the cell in Highfolk. The agent did not last long, but gave the Knights some information before disappearing. All that is really known by the Knights at this time is that the Shadowclaw exist in Highfolk, they are sometimes persons of influence, and that more information is needed to begin to put a stop to their activities.

It is now Ready'reat, and once again time for Highfolk Town Council contests (elections). Many seats are up for contest, including the empty Vintner's Guild seat once held by Telvest Lorewin. Two prospects (candidates) vie for the seat: Jelvan Thaenmill (a half-elven male) and Nelia Gertrand (a human female). Both are respected members of their guild, and seem to be appropriate heirs to Telvest's seat (which he held for many years). Both however, have some skeletons in their closets, and are being watched by the Knights for suspicious activity. Politics, intrigue, and danger await the heroes as they attempt to begin to put together pieces of a much larger puzzle.

Note to Judge: Find out which, if any, characters participated in *Bitter Harvest* (Highfolk interactive at Dan's Con of the Vale, October, 2000). That information may become important later in the adventure.

Highfolk Town Government

It is somewhat important to understand the body that governs Highfolk to accurately depict the events that play out in this adventure. Here then, is a short primer on the nature and function of the Highfolk government.

Highfolk's leader in matters of state is a man named Tavin Ersteader, the Mayor of Highfolk town. He often meets with the Lord of the High Elves, Kashafen Tamarel, to discuss important issues that impact the good folk of the town, the Highvale (the verdant farmland found in-between the Clatspurs and the Vesve Forest), and the great wood known as the Vesve. While Kashafen considers himself (and the ruling high elf clan, Shandareth) protector of the forest and Highvale, most matters in the town are under Mayor Ersteader's purview. The Highfolk Town Council elects the mayor for life (or until retirement).

However, due to Highfolk's chaotic nature, the mayor does not simply issue decrees and decide the fate of the community on his own. Rather, the mayor defers most administrative issues to the Highfolk Town Council, a large and relatively disorganized body designed to represent the will of the town at large. This method of government is fairly ineffectual, but it does keep the people of Highfolk happy knowing that their wishes are being represented in Council Hall.

Council Hall, one of the few all-stone structures in the town, is the site of the frequently occurring (but not always frequently attended) Council meetings. There, the 486 men and women of the Council meet and discuss issues of both importance and triviality throughout the year. It is a very common sight for townsfolk to see Council Hall occupied by various representatives, but it is incredibly rare for more than one-third of the Council to actually be present during discussions and voting. Many

members of the Council actually live miles away in the Highvale, and only get to meetings once every few months.

Whereas organization in the Council is sorely lacking, representation is one of its stronger attributes. The seats for the Council are made up of individuals representing their brethren in almost any profession or walk of life in the town. Certain groups, such as the commoners and merchants, have many representatives (distinguished by their trade or area of residency). Other groups, such as the elves of the Elven District and the temples (lead by the faith of Ehlonna), have fewer members but wield considerable influence in town affairs. Regardless, most issues in the town of Highfolk see a long period of bickering, squabbling, and disinterest before any new decrees are issued (which is preferable to many of the people in the town anyway).

Elections (known as contests) are held twice annually, during Ready'reat and Flocktime. Each seat on the Council is held for one year; therefore, half of the Council seats are up for contest at each contest period during the year. The candidates, known as prospects, nominate themselves to fill the positions. As is custom, there are only (and always) two prospects for each seat on the Council. If more than two people desire to run for a specific seat, they decide amongst themselves which two will run for the position. Those that do not run in this circumstance either step down from pursuit of a Council seat, or attempt to run for another open seat that they qualify for. Seats for Council members that pass on or are relieved of their position remain vacant until the ex-Council member's term would be finished.

The townsfolk may only vote for prospects that represent them. However, representation is defined in a very broad sense, and many folk vote for many prospects. Commoners typically vote for many commoner prospects. Merchants do so as well. Other positions on the Council, such as the temples' seats, are practically appointed (they always field two prospects for their seats, but only for show). The Town Militia (composed of the Home Guard and the Defense Force) oversees the voting process, which is simple. Throughout the town, voting tables are set up outside of shops, offices, and homes. Each table represents one particular contest, and there is a small pile of parchment scraps along with a quill pen sitting next to a wooden vote box. Tacked to the front of the box, for all who can read, is the name of each prospect and a number "1" or "2" next to the name. A voter simply walks up to the box, grabs a piece of parchment, puts down a "1" or "2" on the scrap, and stuffs it into the box. At least one member of the Militia is present to assist those who cannot read, question suspicious voters, and to ensure fairness.

Direct tampering with the voting process has happened in the past, but is not common; it is far

more likely that townsfolk will vote at tables of prospects that do not actually represent them. The people of Highfolk are proud of their right, and generally are very honest when it comes to voting.

Adventure Summary - Round 1

While returning from relatively mundane caravan duty, the heroes stop in Weeping Willow for a night's rest and some good food. As they walk into the Shady Leaf Inn (the only such establishment in the small village), the villagers are abuzz with talk of the assassin. The characters quickly find out that a man in a dark cloak has been seen not far from Weeping Willow, over at Jelvan Thaelmill's home.

Heading to the home, the heroes find that there is indeed someone spying on the place from the bushes. The mysterious figure sees the heroes, and approaches them cautiously. After an initial tense beginning, it is revealed to the characters that this half-elven man is Varian Greenpath, a Knight of the High Forest.

Just as they begin to relax into a conversation with Varian, a group of shadowy men attack the party. They fight to the last man, and reveal nothing if captured. Varian suspects that they are allied with the Shadowclaw, and probably were here to murder Jelvan when they noticed the heroes and Varian. The Knight gives the PCs some important information about the infiltration of the Shadowclaw in Highfolk, and rewards the heroes for their bravery. He also asks the heroes to report this attack to the constable in Highfolk.

If the heroes wish to be bold (or if they have an interesting plan), they may head up to the home and request to speak with Jelvan. The prospect mentions the upcoming contest, and talks a bit with the PCs about the other prospect, Nelia Gertrand.

At some point along their journey back to Highfolk, the heroes are attacked by beasts that are hungry, malicious, or both. The encounter is random, and is designed to give the adventure a different feel for each group that participates in it.

A few hours from the gates of the town, the PCs run into a situation that requires true heroes. A farming family's barn is burning, and it's up to the characters to save the animals and farmhand trapped inside.

Upon reaching Highfolk, the heroes note that the gates are closed, and there is a much larger contingent of Town Militia manning their posts. At the gate, the characters are told that the assassin has struck again, and they are not allowed to let anyone leave the town until Paxana orders otherwise. Apparently, another Councilman (this time a gnomish baker named Rigert Bertleblom) was slain; his body was found just a couple of hours ago. The PCs are allowed to enter Highfolk, a town gripped by fear of a

mysterious killer. Round 1 ends, and round 2 begins.

Player's Introduction

It is a bright, cool Ready'reat morning as you continue your journey along the Quagflow Road, heading back to Highfolk town. The caravan escort mission you took to Schwartzenbruin in Perrenland proved to be an uneventful and safe journey. Several other adventurer-types went along with you, and with your mission completed, you've decided to share their company on the trip back.

The PCs have recently completed an escort of Olerer Greybuck's leather goods to Schwartzenbruin, and are currently in the Highvale, along the Quagflow Road, heading back to the town. They have all spent a fair amount of time together, and should introduce themselves to the others. When describing their PCs, players should also make mention of any personality quirks or habits that others would have picked up on a long journey together.

The characters have journeyed south, and are now a couple of days past Verbeeg Hill, the last town where they stopped and rested. Each character spent the 25 solars (gp) they received from completion of the mission in the rowdy town. Characters that live more modestly may keep the gold and record it on their log sheet. After introductions have been made, and the players are ready to proceed, read the following:

Nearing dusk, you enter a small farming village with a large concentration of willow trees. You find out quickly that the name of the community is Weeping Willow. Tired from your long day of travel, you make your way to the Shady Leaf Inn, the only such rest spot nearby.

The inn is a two-story timber structure, with signs bearing its name and "Welcome." Around the side of the building, you spot a stable for horses. Entering the place, it is cozy and inviting inside. A crackling fire staves off the outside coolness, and many local farmers are sitting about, warming themselves before making the long trudge back to their fields. The locals turn to acknowledge you as you enter, and then go back to their discussions. You can sense that something has the folk here concerned, as everyone seems to be engaged in tense conversation. A curly-haired, bearded halfling male stands behind the raised bar, and smiles as you enter.

Many of the PCs may well know this community from A Grave Disturbance. If that scenario is still available during the time in which the judge runs this event, be sure to inform players that have played that event not to divulge details of it to other players that have not yet participated in it.

The halfling's name is Corbeen Pickerwin (male lightfoot halfling Exp3; hp 9; Profession (innkeeper) +7), and he (and his family) runs the Shady Leaf. His two daughters, Tilda and Milly, serve food and drink to the patrons. Mirten and Rook, his sons, clean up the rooms and common area, tend to the stabled animals, and tend bar when Corbeen isn't around. All of his children are in their early to late twenties. Corbeen's wife, Fillinda, is the cook, and makes sumptuous meals.

Corbeen is more than happy to talk to any PCs that enter his establishment. He knows any of the PCs that were previously in his establishment, and he welcomes them heartily. He loves to hear tales of adventure, and recounts other tales he's heard from other travelers. His daughters and wife roll their eyes whenever he begins telling another's tale, as he's sure to forget important details, or the outcome of the story.

The innkeeper charges one solar (gp) a night for staying at the Shady Leaf. He also suggests that for an additional solar, meals can be provided. There are 10 rooms available upstairs. Corbeen is more than happy to share the following information with PCs that patronize him:

- A couple of halfling friends told Corbeen that they were out near Jelvan Thaenmill's estate. They said they saw a man hiding in the bushes that fit the description of the Highfolk assassin.
- If asked to describe what the assassin looks like, Corbeen lets the heroes know he is an incredibly tall elven man, taller than most humans, with a face all marred up from some animal attack. He has a cloak as dark as midnight, and carries a wicked knife that could only be forged in the pits of the underworld. (This information is somewhat accurate, but it is quite an embellishment.)
- If told that he exaggerates by a hero that has seen the assassin (at the interactive), Corbeen only remarks "that's what I heard, anyway".
- Corbeen can provide the heroes with the location of the home of Jelvan (and directions from here), but advises to spend a night in the inn, filling their bellies and warming their bones before going on such a dangerous lark.

The farm folk in the common room here are quick to affirm what Corbeen has said, citing similar outlandish descriptions for the assassin. They also echo Corbeen's sentiments regarding going to the home and having a look around; obviously, something only fools would do.

In any case, the heroes can spend the night here if they wish. Otherwise, they may depart for the home of Jelvan, a few hours to the south and east of Weeping Willow.

Encounter 1: Spies Like Us

After a few hours of travel down the Quagflow Road and off a well-worn path, the heroes come to Jelvan Thaenmill's home. It is a nice affair, a two-story wooden structure that is cloaked in the trees near it. It is obvious that Jelvan does very well for himself; there is an *everburning torch* on the front porch of the home to provide a little comfort at night, and a small coach house with a stable for the horses around the back. You may wish to reference Map 1 for the starting positions of the heroes and Varian.

Searching the perimeter of the house may allow the PCs to spot the spy. Varian Greenpath, a Knight of the High Forest, watches the estate of Jelvan from the bushes out about 100 feet from the front the door. If the characters are looking about the perimeter, have them each make a Spot check (DC 24). If successful, they notice a humanoid crouching in the bushes, observing the house. The creature appears to be armed with both sword and bow.

Let the PCs approach the situation as they wish. Varian is quite tense, and after the characters notice him, he notices them (unless they take substantial measures to remain unseen). If Varian notices the PCs, read the following:

The well-concealed figure rises from its position behind the bushes, with an arrow nocked and drawn back in a bow. The stranger is dressed in a midnight blue cloak, a dark green shirt, and matching pants. Speaking in a male voice and high elven accent he says, "Who is there? Identify yourselves!"

If the party identify themselves, he gives his name, and tells them he is a Knight of the High Forest. He begins to relax, and start up a conversation with the heroes. Go to Encounter 2.

It is entirely possible that the heroes attack Varian for a variety of reasons. If this happens, have each hero engaged in melee make a Spot check (DC 10). If successful, the hero notices that the gloves the man wears bear the symbol of the Knights of the High Forest (a pair of antlers on a field of green). In the combat, Varian tells the heroes he is a Knight of the High Forest, here on a reconnaissance mission. If the heroes press on the attack, it is entirely likely that they may take him out of the subsequent fight (see Encounter 2).

In any case, as soon as the situation is calming down, the real threat rears its head. Move on to Encounter 2.

Encounter 2: Don't Even Catch Your Breath

The heroes may make brief introductions to Varian at this point. Consult Map 1 for the lay of the land during the fight.

As the stranger lowers his hood, it is obvious he is of half-elven lineage. He smiles broadly, and lowers his bow.

"Lower your bow and sheath your blade. My name is Varian Greenpath. I am a Knight of the High Forest. My business here...what?"

A mysterious group of attackers has moved into position while the PCs were talking or fighting with Varian. Have each hero make a Listen check (DC 15). Those that make their checks hear movement in the nearby bushes (Varian made his check, as noted in the text above). They are not caught flat-footed. Roll initiative for the characters that act in the surprise round (including all the bad guys). Please note that since all of the attackers have levels in rogue, they receive sneak attacks against flat-footed characters, and may receive a second sneak attack during the normal combat round if heroes don't win initiative. Of course, higher level rogues and barbarians may be exempt from being sneak attacked.

Varian Greenpath, male half-elf Rgr1/Rog6: Medium humanoid (5 ft. 6 in. tall); HD 1d10+1 + 6d6+6; hp 39; Init +3; Spd 30; AC 15 (+3 Dex, +2 bracers of armor); Atks +7 melee (1d8+2 [crit 18-20], +1 elven thinblade), +4 melee (1d4 [crit 19-20], dagger), or +8 (+9 within 30 ft.) ranged (1d8 [crit x3], composite longbow); SA Favored enemy (giants), sneak attack +3d6; SQ Favored enemy (giants); AL CG; SV Fort +5, Ref +8, Will +5.

Str 12, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 12.

Skills: Bluff +10, Diplomacy +10, Gather Information +10, Hide +13, Languages (Common, Elven, Sylvan), Listen +12, Move Silently +13, Search +10, Sense Motive +10, Spot +12, Wilderness Lore +2. **Feats:** Ambidexterity (in light or no armor), Exotic Weapon Proficiency (elven thinblade), Point Blank Shot, Track, Two-Weapon Fighting (in light or no armor), Weapon Finesse (elven thinblade).

Equipment: Bracers of armor (+2), +1 elven thinblade, masterwork elven thinblade, dagger, composite longbow, 20 arrows, coinpurse with 20 solars (gp).

Personality Traits: Cautious, quick-witted, irreverent, trustworthy.

Tier 1 (EL 6)

Leader of the Gang, male human Rog4: Medium humanoid (5 ft. 10 in. tall); HD 4d6; hp 18; Init +3; Spd 30; AC 15 (+3 Dex, +2 leather armor); Atks +4 melee (1d6+1 [crit 19-20], short sword), +4 melee

(1d6 [crit 19-20], short sword), or +6 ranged (1d8 [crit 19-20], light crossbow); SA Sneak attack +2d6; SQ Evasion, uncanny dodge (retains Dex bonus to AC); AL NE; SV Fort +1, Ref +7, Will +1.

Str 12, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 12.

Skills: Balance +6, Bluff +8, Disable Device +7, Disguise +8, Escape Artist +10, Forgery +9, Hide +10, Innuendo +7, Move Silently +10, Open Lock +6, Read Lips +9, Search +6, Sense Motive +7, Tumble +10. **Feats:** Ambidexterity, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse (short sword).

Equipment: Leather armor, 2 short swords, light crossbow, 10 bolts, 50 ft. hemp rope, 2 flasks of oil, hooded lantern, flint and steel, waterskin, 2 days' rations.

Spellcaster, male high elf Rog1/Sor1: Medium humanoid (5 ft. 8 in. tall); HD 1d6 + 1d4; hp 9; Init +8; Spd 30; AC 18 (+4 Dex, +4 mage armor); Atks -1 melee (1d6-1, sickle) or +4 ranged (1d8 [crit 19-20], light crossbow); SA Sneak attack +1d6, spells; SQ Spells; AL NE; SV Fort +0, Ref +6, Will +2.

Str 8, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 15.

Skills: Bluff +6, Disguise +6, Escape Artist +8, Hide +8, Innuendo +6, Move Silently +8, Sense Motive +4, Spellcraft +4, Use Magic Device +6. **Feats:** Improved Initiative.

Equipment: Sickle, light crossbow, 10 bolts, waterskin, 2 days' rations

Spells (5/3 (one mage armor already cast)): o—daze, detect magic, ray of frost, read magic; 1st—mage armor, sleep.

Rogue Attackers, male human Rog1 (4): Medium humanoids (height varies); HD 1d6+1; hp 7; Init +3; Spd 30; AC 15 (+3 Dex, +2 leather armor); Atks +1 melee (1d6+1 [crit 19-20], short sword), or +3 (+4 within 30 ft.) ranged (1d8 [crit 19-20], light crossbow); SA Sneak attack +1d6; AL LE; SV Fort +1, Ref +5, Will +0.

Str 12, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills: Bluff +3, Disguise +3, Escape Artist +7, Hide +7, Innuendo +4, Move Silently +7, Pick Pocket +7, Read Lips +4, Search +4. **Feats:** Combat Reflexes, Point Blank Shot.

Equipment: Leather armor, short sword, light crossbow, 10 bolts, waterskin, 2 days' rations.

Tier 2 (EL 8)

Leader of the Gang, male human Rog6: Medium humanoid (5 ft. 10 in. tall); HD 6d6; hp 26; Init +3; Spd 30; AC 15 (+3 Dex, +2 leather armor); Atks +6 melee (1d6+1 [crit 19-20], short sword), +6 melee (1d6 [crit 19-20], short sword), or +7 ranged (1d8 [crit 19-20], light crossbow); SA Sneak attack +3d6; SQ Evasion, uncanny dodge (retains Dex bonus to AC, can't be flanked); AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +8, Will +2.

Str 12, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 12.

Skills: Balance +7, Bluff +10, Disable Device +8, Disguise +10, Escape Artist +12, Forgery +11, Hide +12, Innuendo +9, Move Silently +12, Open Lock +7, Read Lips +11, Search +7, Sense Motive

+9, Tumble +12. *Feats*: Ambidexterity, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse (short sword), Weapon Focus (short sword).

Equipment: Leather armor, 2 short swords, light crossbow, 10 bolts, 50 ft. hemp rope, 2 flasks of oil, hooded lantern, flint and steel, waterskin, 2 days' rations.

Spellcaster, male high elf Rog2/Sor2: Medium humanoid (5 ft. 8 in. tall); HD 2d6 + 2d4; hp 16; Init +8; Spd 30; AC 18 (+4 Dex, +4 *mage armor*); Atks +1 melee (1d6-1, sickle) or +6 ranged (1d8 [crit 19-20], light crossbow); SA Sneak attack +1d6, spells; SQ Evasion, spells; AL NE; SV Fort +0, Ref +9, Will +3.

Str 8, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 16.

Skills: Bluff +8, Disguise +8, Escape Artist +9, Hide +9, Innuendo +7, Move Silently +9, Sense Motive +5, Spellcraft +6, Use Magic Device +8. *Feats*: Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes.

Equipment: Sickle, light crossbow, 10 bolts, waterskin, 2 days' rations

Spells (6/4 (one *mage armor* already cast)): o—daze, detect magic, flare, ray of frost, read magic; 1st—*mage armor*, sleep.

Rogue Attackers, male human Rog2 (4): Medium humanoids (height varies); HD 2d6+2; hp 12; Init +3; Spd 30; AC 15 (+3 Dex, +2 leather armor); Atks +2 melee (1d6+1 [crit 19-20], short sword), or +4 (+5 within 30 ft.) ranged (1d8 [crit 19-20], light crossbow); SA Sneak attack +1d6; AL LE; SV Fort +1, Ref +6, Will +0.

Str 12, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills: Bluff +4, Disguise +4, Escape Artist +8, Hide +8, Innuendo +5, Move Silently +8, Pick Pocket +8, Read Lips +5, Search +5. *Feats*: Combat Reflexes, Point Blank Shot.

Equipment: Leather armor, short sword, light crossbow, 10 bolts, waterskin, 2 days' rations.

Tier 3 (EL 10)

Leader of the Gang, male human Rog8: Medium humanoid (5 ft. 10 in. tall); HD 8d6; hp 34; Init +4; Spd 30; AC 16 (+4 Dex, +2 leather armor); Atks +9/+4 melee (1d6+1 [crit 19-20], short sword), +9 melee (1d6 [crit 19-20], short sword), or +10/+5 ranged (1d8 [crit 19-20], light crossbow); SA Sneak attack +4d6; SQ Evasion, uncanny dodge (retains Dex bonus to AC, can't be flanked); AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +10, Will +2.

Str 12, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 12.

Skills: Balance +9, Bluff +12, Disable Device +10, Disguise +12, Escape Artist +15, Forgery +13, Hide +15, Innuendo +11, Move Silently +15, Open Lock +9, Read Lips +13, Search +8, Sense Motive +11, Tumble +15. *Feats*: Ambidexterity, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse (short sword), Weapon Focus (short sword).

Equipment: Leather armor, 2 short swords, light crossbow, 10 bolts, 50 ft. hemp rope, 2 flasks of oil, hooded lantern, flint and steel, waterskin, 2 days' rations.

Spellcaster, male high elf Rog3/Sor3: Medium humanoid (5 ft. 8 in. tall); HD 3d6 + 3d4; hp 23; Init +8; Spd 30; AC 18 (+4 Dex, +4 *mage armor*); Atks +2 melee (1d6-1, sickle) or +7 ranged (1d8 [crit 19-20], light crossbow); SA Sneak attack +2d6, spells; SQ Evasion, spells; AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +10, Will +4.

Str 8, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 16.

Skills: Bluff +9, Disguise +9, Escape Artist +10, Hide +10, Innuendo +8, Move Silently +10, Sense Motive +6, Spellcraft +8, Use Magic Device +9. *Feats*: Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Spell Focus (enchantment).

Equipment: Sickle, light crossbow, 10 bolts, waterskin, 2 days' rations

Spells (6/5 (one *mage armor* already cast)): o—daze, detect magic, flare, ray of frost, read magic; 1st—*mage armor*, magic missile, sleep.

Rogue Attackers, male human Rog3 (4): Medium humanoids (height varies); HD 3d6+6; hp 20; Init +3; Spd 30; AC 15 (+3 Dex, +2 leather armor); Atks +3 melee (1d6+1 [crit 19-20], short sword), or +4 (+5 within 30 ft.) ranged (1d8 [crit 19-20], light crossbow); SA Sneak attack +2d6; AL LE; SV Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +1.

Str 12, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills: Bluff +5, Disguise +5, Escape Artist +9, Hide +9, Innuendo +6, Move Silently +9, Pick Pocket +9, Read Lips +6, Search +6. *Feats*: Combat Reflexes, Point Blank Shot, Toughness.

Equipment: Leather armor, short sword, light crossbow, 10 bolts, waterskin, 2 days' rations.

Tactics: The attackers fire missile weapons on the surprise round. They use their positions behind the bushes to give them three-quarters concealment (30% miss chance). After firing missiles, they close for melee (except for the spellcaster). The toughest of the bunch takes on Varian; the others go after the PCs. The spellcaster focuses on neutralizing enemy wizards and sorcerers. In the lower tiers, Varian should be able to take out his foe fairly quickly and move to help out the PCs; however, characters in tier 3 may wind up helping him out during the battle.

Treasure from the combat:

- Weapons and other equipment from the attackers sells at the standard rate (half the listed value in the *Player's Handbook*). If all the gear is taken back to Highfolk and sold, the heroes fetch 190 solars (gp) for it.
- Varian Greenpath (if still alive) may have a special reward for a valiant elven or half-elven hero. See Encounter 3 for details.
- No matter what the circumstances, if Varian is slain, the PCs may not permanently keep any of his gear. Paxana Eventhild visits any heroes that keep Varian's items at the end of the scenario. She demands the knight's gear, letting the PCs know that it is custom

for a Knight of the High Forest to be buried as he or she died.

Encounter 3: Let's Talk

After the combat is over, Varian and the heroes have a chance to talk once again. Any of the attackers that survived the combat do not talk. They know that they stand to suffer a far worse fate if they reveal anything to the PCs. Varian is willing to share the following information with the PCs following the battle:

- I am here to keep an eye on Jelvan Thaenmill. He is a member of the influential Vintner's Guild in Highfolk, and is a prospect (candidate) for Telvest Lorewin's seat on the Town Council.
- Through various sources, it has been revealed to me that Jelvan's life may be in danger. There are those that are opposed to his bid for a Council seat. Some of these people may be in league with the Shadowclaw.
- Telvest was a town councilman that was murdered at the Harvest Festival over a month ago. The assassin that poisoned his wine was tracked down, but the adventurers that found him were unable to bring him in. The Knights believe that he was a member of the Shadowclaw.
- The Shadowclaw is a network of spies, infiltrators and assassins that work alongside the vile fiend Iuz. They seek to spread his sickly grasp throughout the Flaeness. In the past, they have been very active in Furyondy, but it seems as if a cell has wormed its way into Highfolk.
- A few months ago, one of the Knights found out that there could be a possible Shadowclaw element in the city. He attempted to infiltrate their organization to learn more.
- The Knight was killed before getting too deep. He did manage to get one piece of information out before he died. He told several Knights that it seemed as though the Shadowclaw had worked their way into the government, and had a few sympathizers on the Town Council.
- The attack here only confirms my suspicions. These men were most likely Shadowclaw, and probably sought to harm Jelvan when they noticed our presence. Since I was watching the house, they knew that they couldn't leave any witnesses.
- The contests (elections) for Council positions are taking place in one week's time. Jelvan's opponent is Nelia Gertrand, a vintner that lives in Highfolk. Perhaps she may be involved in this, or may be another target.
- While it is my duty to watch over Jelvan's home, it would be good if someone were to

pay a visit to Nelia. If you could head back to Highfolk, warn Paxana about what has transpired here, and check in with Nelia, that would be very helpful.

- Tell Paxana Eventhil (the Constable of Highfolk) about our scuffle here, and that I am remaining here to watch over Jelvan. Perhaps she can help out by sending some men to back you up if you decide to head over to Nelia's home.
- Nelia lives in a fine two-story house on the eastern end of the Merchant District.
- I wouldn't recommend speaking with Jelvan right now. I will wait here and watch for any suspicious activity. Please, help out the Knights and Highfolk by telling Paxana what has transpired here.
- I will take care of any of our attackers that have been captured. Just let Paxana know that they are in the custody of the Knights.

If an elf or a half-elf was present during the battle, and fought valiantly, Varian has a gift to bestow before the heroes depart. He gives one PC his extra blade, a masterwork elven thinblade. Choose one of the PCs, based on the criteria listed below:

- The character is an elf or a half-elf. If there are no elves or half-elves in the party, Varian does not give his gift.
- The character fought valiantly in battle. If there are no elves or half-elves that fought valiantly in the battle (in the judges' opinion), no one receives the gift.
- Non-spellcasters have preference over spellcasters. Varian is a rogue, and favors skill over magic. However, he still gifts a PC spellcaster that meets the above criteria.
- Of course, if Varian died in the battle (or at the hands of the heroes), *no one* receives the elven thinblade. Paxana confiscates it along with the rest of Varian's items.

Read the following to the chosen player:

Varian turns as you are about to depart, pulls a rapier-like blade out from a scabbard on his back, and speaks. "Here!" He tosses the blade at you, and you catch it by the hilt. It is a fine weapon, well balanced, and intricately designed. The craftsmanship is extraordinary.

"When you learn how to fight well with that, I will return. Perhaps then you will be ready to take your first steps to serve a greater cause. May cold iron avail you, my friend." Varian smiles, and looks to the whole group. "Now, be off! There is much to be done."

Treasure awarded to a PC by Varian:

- Masterwork elven thinblade (first described in *Dragon* #275). This weapon requires the user to have the Exotic Weapon

Proficiency (elven thinblade) feat to use effectively. Value: 400 gp.

Encounter 4: Meeting Jelvan

The heroes may wish to ignore the advice of Varian, and meet with Jelvan to talk to him for a while. Alternatively, the heroes may decide to break into the home.

If the PCs walk up to the house and try to discuss things with Jelvan, read the following text:

You approach the well kept home, with its two stories, spacious front porch, and couch house around the back. The yellow-orange flicker of the everburning torch dances your shadows across the porch deck as you knock upon the iron-reinforced wooden door. A high-pitched voice from within answers moments after. "I'll be right there! Hold on!" The voice sounds female in origin.

After a brief wait, the door opens, revealing a gnome woman in a cleaning apron. "Well, what do we have here?", she exclaims. "State your business, and I'll let the master know he has visitors."

The gnome servant is Gilma (female gnome Com2; hp 7). She was in the middle of her cleaning chores when the heroes knocked on the door. She didn't expect Jelvan to have visitors, and Gilma's a little upset that he hadn't informed her earlier. Of course, Jelvan doesn't even know he has visitors.

Gilma leaves the characters out on the front porch, and goes to tell Jelvan that several well-armed persons are at his front door. A couple of minutes later, she reemerges, and leads the PCs into the home and seats them in the study. Before departing, she asks the heroes if they would like her to bring them some water. After a few more minutes, Jelvan enters.

Jelvan's study is modest but well furnished. There are two couches and several comfortable chairs in the room. A small bookshelf reveals several books on winemaking and vineyards throughout the Flaeness. The glowing embers of a log smolder in the fireplace on the south wall. After a few minutes of surveying the room, a large half-elven man, easily in his forties, walks into the study.

"Good day, adventurers. I am Jelvan Thaenmill. What brings you to my humble home today? Please, introduce yourselves."

Jelvan Thaenmill (male half-elf Exp6; hp 26; Diplomacy +10, Profession (vintner) +11) listens to the PCs as they inform him of their purpose. Jelvan does not attempt to discern if the heroes' story is true or false; he is merely making conversation. Information that can be gleaned from Jelvan includes the following:

- I am currently a prospect for Telvest's seat on the Council. I only hope I can do more than just merely fill his position. He was a good man, and his passing was a shock to us all.
- As you may know, the contests are scheduled for next week. If any of you are members of the Merchants' Guild, I would ask for your support in the upcoming contest. I am looking to reform some of the city's codes on trade. Opening up new routes with Perrenland, Furyondy, and perhaps even Ket would help out the Highfolk economy greatly.
- My opponent is another vintner named Nelia Gertrand. She seems to be out of touch with the people of the Fairdells. She is always out doing business in foreign lands. I try my best to be accessible to those who wish an audience with me.
- If the heroes mention the Shadowclaw: Shadowclaw? Never heard of it. Is it a religious group or something? Sounds particularly nasty.
- If the PCs tell Jelvan what they know of the Shadowclaw: Oh, my. That sounds very serious! You say some of these people have moved into Council positions? You should notify Paxana Eventhil, the Town Constable, as soon as you can! Do you think I should hire some guards? Am I in danger?
- If the characters mention Varian and his mission: So, he's here to watch over me? I don't know what to say. It's an honor to have a Knight of the High Forest looking after my welfare! If you see him again, please thank him for his services.

Any player that specifically states they would like to have their PC perform a Sense Motive check on Jelvan may roll the die. Do *not* inform them what DC they are shooting for. If they roll DC 25 or better, they get a sense that there is something amiss during their conversation with Jelvan. However, he is a politician, and is prone to be somewhat of an embellisher. It could mean nothing, after all.

If the PCs decide to take the nefarious route into the home, the doors are locked. The DC on both the front door and back door lock is 20. The couch house and stable area are unlocked. If the characters search the house and wake up Gilma and Jelvan (they are fast asleep at night and need to be physically awakened), they plead for their lives. If the heroes decide to talk, use the conversion above, noting that Jelvan is very upset about the whole situation he's been put in. He threatens to go to Paxana with the whole matter.

Searching the house, couch house, and stable reveals nothing unusual or out of the ordinary. In fact, doing so may jeopardize Varian's mission. Only time will tell what happens as a result of the heroes' brash actions.

Encounter 5: On the Trail Home

It is a three-day journey back to Highfolk Town. On the first night, the heroes get an opportunity to share the campsite with a couple of performers heading towards Verbeeg Hill. Read the following to the players:

You have spent the day on the trail heading back to Highfolk. The chill of the coming evening makes you wrap your clothing a little tighter around you to stave off the cold. Near dusk, you approach a Wayfarer's Stone, a marker left by clerics of Fharlanghn to denote a campsite. As you head off into the road in the direction of the wayside, you hear the sounds of a beautiful elven tune being played on a recorder. The sounds seem to be coming from the site up ahead.

Let the PCs react however they wish. If they continue to move closer, read the following:

From within the clearing you can see, hear, and smell a campfire. A wagon is evident through gaps in the tree line. Moving in to get a closer look, you can see a Suloise man, dressed in orange, red, and yellow. He is wearing a kerchief on his head, and sports a long mustache. He is cutting up vegetables and tossing the bits into a kettle. Nearby, the origin of the tune is evident, as a comely black-haired Suloise woman, wearing an outfit of the darkest blue, sits on a rock, playing her instrument. Two horses mill about behind the wagon, which seems to be just large enough to live inside. A composite short bow leans against a wagon wheel.

If the heroes approach and hail them, read the following:

"Hail travelers! I am Garend and this is my sister, Emerilda. Won't you share our fire?" The garishly dressed man puts down his knife and approaches with a broad smile upon his face. The woman stops playing, and gets up from her seat.

Garend takes a good look at all of you as he approaches. "Are you folks adventurers? If not, you certainly look the part. Come, I'll make some more stew, and we can tell stories together."

Garend (male human Ftr4; hp 31; Profession (cook) +4) and Emerilda (female human Rog1; hp 6; Perform +6, Sense Motive +5) are friendly folk that wish only to have some company while out on the road. They have the following information to share with the heroes:

- We are performers on our way to the Smiling Halls of Good Fortune in Verbeeg Hill. It's a temple to Norebo and a gambling hall. It seems they pay well for good acts, and ours is one of the best!

- I am an expert marksman. In fact, a few years ago I was in the Furyondian army. I was promoted to sergeant very quickly, but after many months of campaigning against Iuz in the Shield Lands, I grew tired of bloodshed.

- After my time in the military, I went home to Emerilda. I decided to put my skills to use, and Emerilda was brave enough to be my assistant.

- Our act consists of me shooting arrows through small moving rings, splitting fruit off of Emerilda's head, and generally pleasing the crowd with my talent at archery. Emerilda has the tough job, though. It's fortunate I love my sister so much; I never miss when it matters.

- In fact, are any of you archers? Perhaps we could have a little competition. If you want, I'll go set up the target back against those trees over there. We'll get going on the contest now, and by the time we're done, the stew should be ready.

Emerilda tends to the stew while any PCs that wish to take Garend's challenge may do so. In the morning, the pair breaks camp, gives wishes of a safe journey, and makes their way towards Verbeeg Hill.

Garend's Marksmanship Challenge

Each person gets five shots. They may use whatever piercing missile weapon they wish (bows or crossbows). Garend uses his masterwork short bow. The firing line is set 30 feet from the target, which is a standard bull's eye. The PC is allowed to shoot first. The feat Point Blank Shot can be used for the shots. The firers alternate shots. Have the PC roll an attack roll, then Garend, and so on until all shots have been taken. Add up the total point value of each shot to determine the winner.

Garend sets up the bull's eye target about 30 feet away from you. It stands about 5 feet high, and is 3 feet wide. He draws a line in the dirt, and says, "Here's where we'll fire from. We each get 5 shots. If you hit the outer circle, you get a point. The inner circle gives you two points, and hitting the bull's eye gives you five. The winner is the one with the most points. We'll alternate shots. Since you are my guests, I'll go last."

Garend has a ranged attack of +10 (+4 base attack bonus, +4 Dexterity, +1 Weapon Focus, +1 Point Blank Shot). Here is a breakdown of the scoring needed:

Outer Circle:	AC 12 (1 point)
Inner Circle:	AC 17 (2 points)
Bull's Eye:	AC 22 (5 points)

If a critical hit is scored, and another arrow has already hit the bull's eye, that arrow is split by the critical hit!

Garend comments throughout the competition, praising PCs for good shots and consoling them for bad ones. After all the points have been scored, Garend commends any of the participants. He gives great praise to anyone that manages to best him or tie. Read the following to the players if a PC ties or beats him:

Garend smiles at you and shakes his head. "You're amazing! Your shots were incredible! You know, you should come up to Verbeeg Hill sometime. Perhaps we could fit you into the act. Your mastery of the art would drive the crowds crazy!"

If the PCs have acted in a positive manner since approaching the campsite and speaking with Garend, he states the following:

"It's been so long since I've seen such a good shot. You know, you folks have been such good campfire companions...and since you're adventurers and all..."

Garend steps up into his wagon and quickly returns with a small cedar box in hand. "Why don't you take these with you?" He hands the box to the winner of the competition. "I'm sure the dangers you face are far greater than those of a performer. An officer in the army gave them to me. He said they're magic, and they'll chill their mark straight to the bone. I'm not really much for combat, and part of my whole act is based on the fact that I use no magic. So...you'd be much better off with them than I."

Opening the box reveals two white-fletched arrows; the arrowheads themselves look much like jagged icicles. You can see the runes of power inscribed upon their shafts. They are truly a gift worthy of a great archer.

Emerilda's Challenge of the Heart

During the archery competition, and at the meal, Emerilda eyes up a PC in the party. She is enamored of adventurers, and if there are any human males with a "positive" Charisma score (12 or better), she may take a liking to them. She is particularly fond of chivalrous types, as she knows they're generally honest about their feelings. If a PC possesses all of the above traits, and over the course of the evening shows a good nature towards Emerilda, she takes them away from the group to share something personal with them.

This can happen at any point during the heroes' stay at the camp. Pick the PC that seems the most interested in Emerilda (and that met the above criteria). This "encounter" does not have to occur; in fact, it should develop naturally through roleplaying.

Emerilda grabs your hand, and says, "Come with me...there's something I want to show you." She smiles as she leads you off near the tree line.

Pull the player aside and read the following:

"You seem like such a good fellow, so I wanted to show you this." She reaches around her neck, and pulls off a gold chain with a locket attached. She hands it to you, and grins. "Open it."

As you open the locket, you hear a soft tinkling sound, like wind chimes blowing in a breeze. "My mother gave this to me when I was very young. I don't remember much of her. She died when I was four. I never knew my father. My aunt and uncle in Chendl raised me from then on, and Garend was their son. They told me to think of Garend as a brother, and I always have. We've been close ever since. Read the inscription."

Give the player Handout 1. The inscription reads:

*I am a warm blanket on a cold winter's eve
I am the sun shining through a dense forest's
leaves*

*I am always with you, even through darkest days
I can make great warriors weak, and a scoundrel
mend his ways*

*Please know, Emerilda, I will always exist
Someone knows the answer, and can give you
your wish*

She asks the hero if he knows the answer, and waits for it from him with trepidation. Emerilda knows the answer, which is love. She is waiting to see if the PC can answer correctly. If he does, she collects her locket, gives him a kiss on the cheek, and returns to the campfire. Later in the evening, Emerilda asks where the hero lives, and states that she may call on him again someday.

Treasure gained if a hero wins or ties Garend in an archery competition:

- +1 arrows of frost (2). Value: 332 gp (for both).

Encounter 6: Fire in the Barn!

This encounter takes place as the PCs are about half a day's march back to the gates of Highfolk. Read the following to the players:

Your journey for the past two days has been uneventful, but pleasant. Soon, the wooden walls of Highfolk will greet you. As you journey along Quagflow Road, passing by modest homes and farmland, you notice a tendril of smoke rising from up ahead. It seems to come from just over the hill, only a longbowman's shot from where you stand.

As you crest the hill, you see the source of the curiosity—a barn is on fire! The roof is clearly

aflake, and you can hear the popping and crackling of the wooden timbers as they are consumed by the conflagration. A ramshackle one-story home sits nearby. A well-tended field lies not far from the buildings.

At this time, have each player make a Listen check (DC 15) and a Spot check (DC10) for their hero. Any PC that succeeds in the Listen check can hear the sounds of panicked cows from inside the barn. Characters that made Spot rolls can see a humanoid form lying on the ground just outside of the barn.

Here is the situation. Herken, a farmer in the Faidells, left a day ago to get supplies and news from Highfolk town. While he was away, his son, Thallus (male human Com1; hp 4 [currently 0]), was to take care of the chores and look after Thallus' mother, Syrdina (female half-elf Com1; hp 4 [currently 0]). Only a short while ago, Thallus went out to the barn to feed the cows, and found that he had left the lantern burning inside the barn from earlier in the day. When he went to snuff it, a beam from inside the barn collapsed, knocked him unconscious, and started a fire. Syrdina woke from her nap and saw flames coming from the barn. She went to go find out what had happened, and realized that her son must be inside the barn. By this point, the fire had spread to the ceiling of the barn. Smoke and flames were pouring from the building. She attempted to find Thallus inside, but her lungs could not bear the choking air and incredible heat. She exited the barn to go around the back way, but collapsed as soon as she made it back out.

The heroes have little time to act before Thallus and the livestock are killed in the blaze. Consult Map 2 for a layout of the interior of the barn. Thallus is near the back door of the barn, and unconscious.

The smoke inside the barn is thick, and the heat is unbearable. Once a hero enters the building have him or her roll a Fortitude save, DC 15. If successful, the character may act normally for the round. If unsuccessful, the character takes 1d6 points of subdual damage, and can only take a 5-foot step this round, as they are choking from the air. Each subsequent round spent in the barn requires another Fortitude save; the DC is equal to 15 + the number of previous rounds spent in the fiery building. In addition, all characters inside the barn take 1d2 points of real damage from the heat each round.

In order to locate Thallus, a hero must come within 10 feet of him. If a PC is close, secretly roll a Spot check (DC 8). A successful roll locates Thallus. It requires a move-equivalent action to pick him up.

Thallus dies in 6 rounds unless pulled from the blaze. Even then, he dies in 5 minutes unless magically healed (anything from *cure minor wounds* and up works), or a Heal skill check (DC

18) is made. If kept from dying, he regains consciousness in about an hour or so.

There are also three cows inside. They are much easier to find (moving to within 10 feet of one locates the animal). One is lying on the ground, unconscious. To get that animal out, two PCs with a combined Strength score of 24 need to lift the animal. They can only move at half speed, and if a Fortitude save is failed for the smoky conditions, the character affected must make a Strength check (DC 15) or drop their end of the animal. Picking up the cow is a move-equivalent action. Alternatively, one PC with a Strength score of 14 or higher can drag the cow at a movement rate of 10. The other two cows are still conscious and upright, but incredibly panicked. They can be lead out, but in order to get them to move, a round must be spent on each animal, and a Handle Animal skill check (DC 15), must be made. If this is done, then they can be lead out at a speed of 20. Alternatively, a Strength check (DC 20) can be made to push them in the right direction. This takes a round, and the animal moves at a speed of 10 after the successful roll.

The unconscious cow dies in 8 rounds if not pulled out to fresh air. The other cows fall unconscious inside the barn in 4 rounds; and die 10 rounds after they fall over. Any unconscious cows can be treated as above, but the Heal skill check to revive them is DC 22. Heroes that have 5 or more ranks of Handle Animal get a +4 circumstance bonus to the roll.

The fire may also be put out with the use of spells, but it is large enough to warrant the casting of at least four *create water* spells. Other interesting plans should be given a reasonable chance of success.

Syrdina is unconscious, but is not in danger of dying. She awakens a few minutes after the ordeal. If Thallus is revived, he tells the heroes that he dropped his lantern, and a beam fell on him as he went to pick it up. The remains of the barn reveal no foul play involved. Syrdina and Thallus are both grateful and highly appreciative of the heroes' actions. They offer free milk to the PCs whenever they manage to stop by in the future.

Encounter 7: A Town in Crisis

A few more hours down the road, the heroes reach the town of Highfolk. Read the following as they approach the east gate:

Ahead of you, home awaits. You approach Highfolk from the east gate. The forested walls of the town hide archer platforms and wooden catwalks concealed in brown leaves and branches. At the gate, six guards stand ready, ever alert to dangers from without or within. You notice the gates to the town are closed.

Characters that make Spot checks (DC 15) notice that many of the archer platforms are manned, and there is much activity along the top of the wall. Most are paying more attention to the inside of the town, rather than looking out into the countryside. All the PCs notice that the guards from the Defense Force on the ground are decked out in chain shirts, shortbows, and short swords. Heroes native to Highfolk know that something is not right with the town. The Defense Force has been put on alert.

At the gate, the guards (led by Sergeant Felsten, male human War3; hp 25) ask the heroes to state their business, and begin to search them. If there are citizens of Highfolk in the bunch, the guards strike up a chat with the heroes. Otherwise, they do a good search, ask the PCs to state their business, and give them a modicum of information from the list below.

- The town's locked down. No one is allowed to leave. Those that wish to enter must be subjected to a search. The Defense Force has the right to deny anyone entrance to the town.
- All entrances and exits in the town are heavily guarded, and all Home Guardsmen have been called to duty. Heavier armor and deadlier weapons have been passed out to the militia.
- Paxana Eventhil ordered the heightened security. It appears that another town councilman has been murdered.
- Rigert Bertleblom, a gnomish baker, was killed in his shop only a short time ago. Screams could be heard from inside his shop, and the constable's guards found him dead when they went in to investigate.
- The assassin has struck again. He may still be inside the town. So far, no one has seen him, but Paxana's fairly certain that her quick thinking prevented an easy escape for him.

End Round 1

Experience Point Summary

To award experience for this adventure, add up the values for the objectives accomplished. Then assign the discretionary roleplaying experience award. The roleplaying award should be given for consistent character portrayal and contribution to the fun of the game. You can award different roleplaying amounts to different characters.

Award the total value (objectives plus roleplaying) to each character.

Encounter 2

Defeating the attackers	150 xp
Keeping Varian alive (Tier 3 only)	50 xp

Encounter 4

Heeding Varian's advice and not questioning Jelvan	25 xp
Questioning Jelvan without mentioning the Shadowclaw	25 xp

Encounter 6

Saving Thallus	75 xp
Saving the cattle (per cow)	25 xp

Discretionary roleplaying award	0-50 xp
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Total possible experience 375 xp

Total possible experience (Tier 3) 425 xp

Treasure Summary

Player characters may keep items from the scenario that are listed on the treasure list below or which meet the following conditions:

1. The item must be non-magical and specifically listed in the text of the adventure (e.g. armor on foes). If it is not listed in the text, the characters cannot keep it. Items of this nature can be sold for 50% of book value, or recorded on a log sheet.
2. Animals, followers, monsters, henchman, and so forth (any living being, basically) may not be kept from a scenario for any reason unless the treasure summary lists the being specifically. It is okay for the player characters to form relationships with NPCs, but these will not be certified and cannot bring material benefit to the character. Contacts (sources of extra information) must be specifically certified.
3. Theft is against the law, but may be practiced by some player characters. Items that are worth more than 500 gp, that are of personal significance to the owner (including family heirlooms), and all magical items, will be discovered in the possession of the character by one means or another. The character must return the item and pay a fine equal to three times the value of the item stolen. Alternatively, or if the character cannot afford the fine, the character may be incarcerated for a period of time dependant on the region and value of the theft. In addition, the PC caught receives campaign-decided penalties for being known as a thief, such as Infamy. For other stolen items which meet the criteria in #1 above, use your judgment and the circumstances within the game to determine whether a PC thief gets away with the theft or not.

Any item retained according to these rules, which does not have a certificate, will not ever have a certificate issued for it.

The campaign staff reserves the right to take away any item or gold acquired for things it later finds unreasonable but which were allowed at the time.

Encounter 2

- Various gear from the attackers (see the listing in the encounter). Value: 190 gp.

Encounter 3

Varian Greenpath's masterwork elven thinblade (see *Dragon* #275) (3 lbs., fine steel, 400 gp, rarity: unusual): This finely worked sword was given to you by Varian Greenpath, a Knight of the High Forest. Possession of this sword shows that you have been recognized as a trustworthy ally of Varian and the Knights of the High Forest.

The elven thinblade is a rapierlike weapon, both very sharp and very strong. To use it properly, the character must possess the Exotic Weapon Proficiency (elven thinblade) feat. In addition, the Weapon Finesse feat may be applied to this blade, allowing you to use your Dexterity modifier instead of your Strength modifier on attack rolls with the weapon. This particular elven thinblade is considered a masterwork weapon, and grants a +1 non-magical bonus to hit.

Elven Thinblade
Damage: 1d8
Critical: 18-20/x2
Weight: 3 lbs.
Type: Piercing

Encounter 5

- +1 arrows of frost (2) gained by winning Garend's challenge.
+1 arrows of frost (2 charge boxes) (1/3 lb., 166 gp each, rarity: common): These arrows function as described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Handout 1

Inside the locket is an inscription. It reads:

I am a warm blanket on a cold winter's eve

I am the sun shining through a dense forest's leaves

I am always with you, even through darkest days

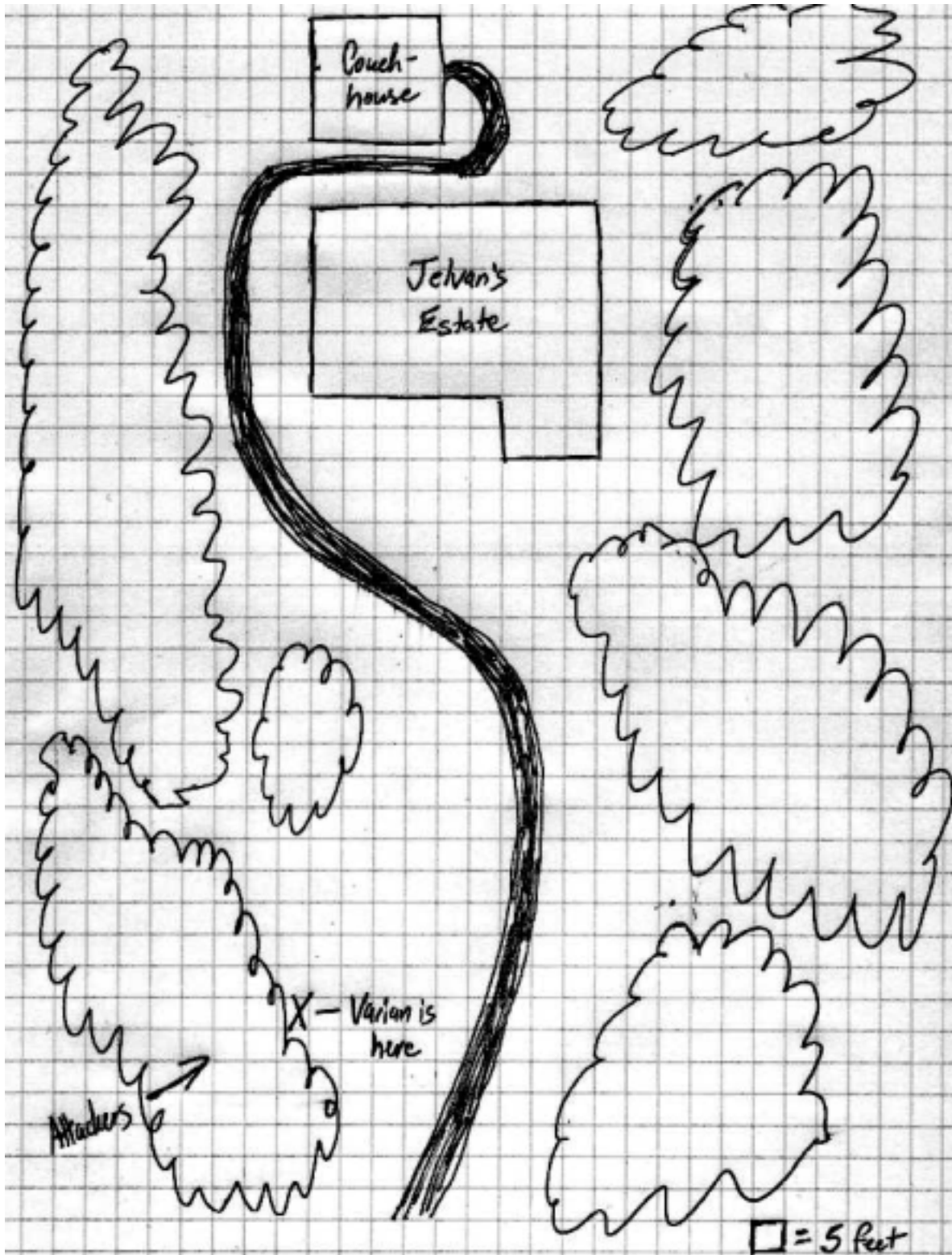
I can make great warriors weak, and a scoundrel mend his ways

Please know, Emerilda, I will always exist

Someone knows the answer, and can give you your wish

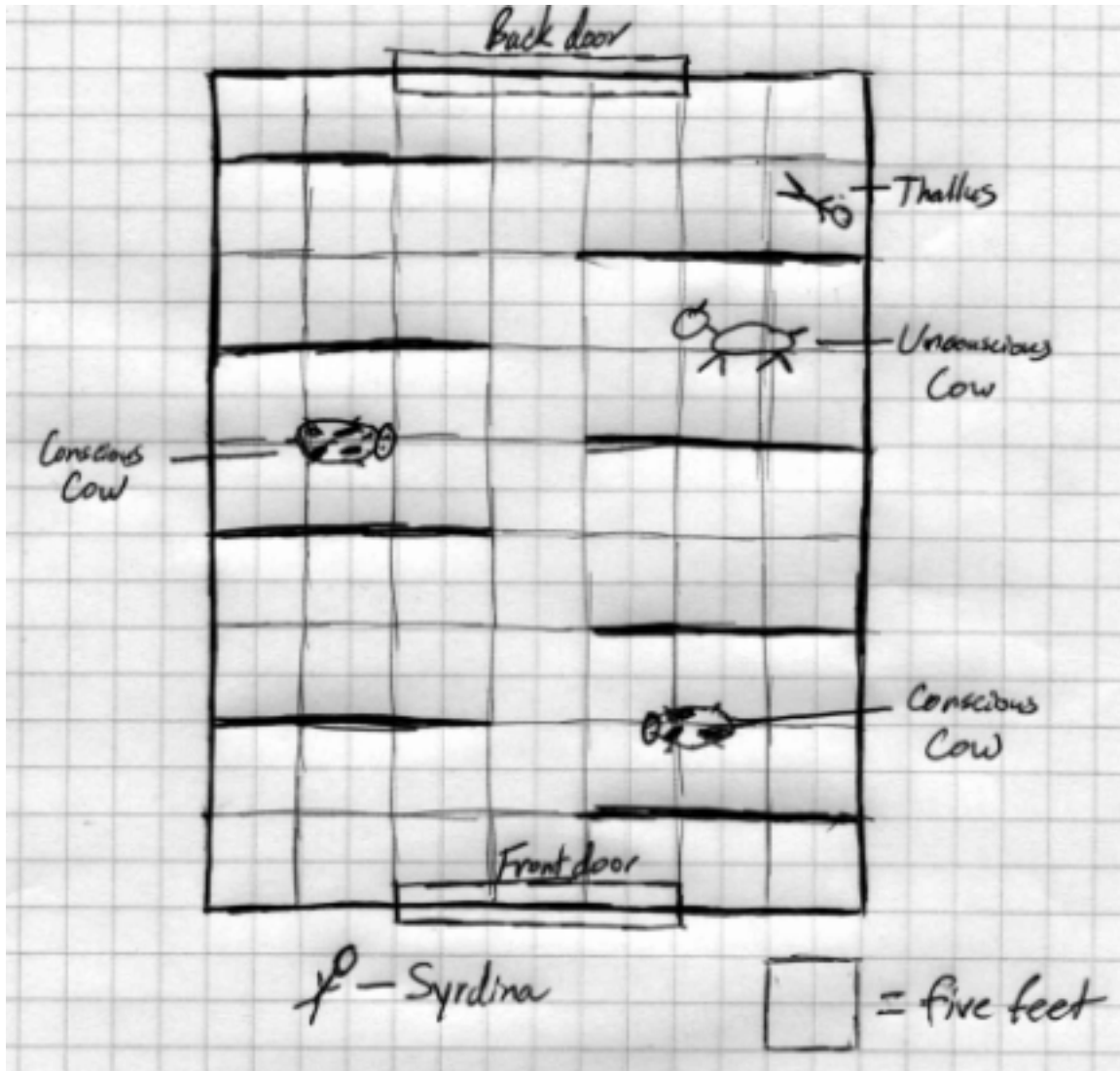
Map 1

This is a DM's map, useful to help set up Encounters 1 and 2.



Map 2

This is a DM's map, showing the interior of the fiery barn.



Appendix A: NPC and Monster Statistics

Encounter 1

Varian Greenpath, male half-elf Rgr1/Rog6:

Medium humanoid (5 ft. 6 in. tall); HD 1d10+1 + 6d6+6; hp 39; Init +3; Spd 30; AC 15 (+3 Dex, +2 bracers of armor (+2)); Atks +7 melee (1d8+2 [crit 18-20], +1 elven thinblade), +4 melee (1d4 [crit 19-20], dagger), or +8 (+9 within 30 ft.) ranged (1d8 [crit x3], composite longbow); SA Favored enemy (giants), sneak attack +3d6; SQ Favored enemy (giants); AL CG; SV Fort +5, Ref +8, Will +5.

Str 12, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 12.

Skills: Bluff +10, Diplomacy +10, Gather Information +10, Hide +13, Languages (Common, Elven, Sylvan), Listen +12, Move Silently +13, Search +10, Sense Motive +10, Spot +12, Wilderness Lore +2. Feats: Ambidexterity (in light or no armor), Exotic Weapon Proficiency (elven thinblade), Point Blank Shot, Track, Two-Weapon Fighting (in light or no armor), Weapon Finesse (elven thinblade).

Equipment: Bracers of armor (+2), +1 elven thinblade, masterwork elven thinblade, dagger, composite longbow, 20 arrows, coinpurse with 20 solars (gp).

Personality Traits: Cautious, quick-witted, irreverent, trustworthy.

Encounter 2

Tier 1 (EL 6)

Leader of the Gang, male human Rog4:

Medium humanoid (5 ft. 10 in. tall); HD 4d6; hp 18; Init +3; Spd 30; AC 15 (+3 Dex, +2 leather armor); Atks +4 melee (1d6+1 [crit 19-20], short sword), +4 melee (1d6 [crit 19-20], short sword), or +6 ranged (1d8 [crit 19-20], light crossbow); SA Sneak attack +2d6; SQ Evasion, uncanny dodge (retains Dex bonus to AC); AL NE; SV Fort +1, Ref +7, Will +1.

Str 12, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 12.

Skills: Balance +6, Bluff +8, Disable Device +7, Disguise +8, Escape Artist +10, Forgery +9, Hide +10, Innuendo +7, Move Silently +10, Open Lock +6, Read Lips +9, Search +6, Sense Motive +7, Tumble +10. Feats: Ambidexterity, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse (short sword).

Equipment: Leather armor, 2 short swords, light crossbow, 10 bolts, 50 ft. hemp rope, 2 flasks of oil, hooded lantern, flint and steel, waterskin, 2 days' rations.

Spellcaster, male high elf Rog1/Sor1:

Medium humanoid (5 ft. 8 in. tall); HD 1d6 + 1d4; hp 9; Init +8; Spd 30; AC 18 (+4 Dex, +4 mage armor); Atks -1 melee (1d6-1, sickle) or +4 ranged (1d8 [crit 19-20], light crossbow); SA Sneak attack +1d6, spells; SQ Spells; AL NE; SV Fort +0, Ref +6, Will +2.

Str 8, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 15.

Skills: Bluff +6, Disguise +6, Escape Artist +8, Hide +8, Innuendo +6, Move Silently +8,

Sense Motive +4, Spellcraft +4, Use Magic Device +6. Feats: Improved Initiative.

Equipment: Sickle, light crossbow, 10 bolts, waterskin, 2 days' rations

Spells (5/3 (one mage armor already cast)): 0—daze, detect magic, ray of frost, read magic; 1st—mage armor, sleep.

Rogue Attackers, male human Rog1 (4):

Medium humanoids (height varies); HD 1d6+1; hp 7; Init +3; Spd 30; AC 15 (+3 Dex, +2 leather armor); Atks +1 melee (1d6+1 [crit 19-20], short sword), or +3 (+4 within 30 ft.) ranged (1d8 [crit 19-20], light crossbow); SA Sneak attack +1d6; AL LE; SV Fort +1, Ref +5, Will +0.

Str 12, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills: Bluff +3, Disguise +3, Escape Artist +7, Hide +7, Innuendo +4, Move Silently +7, Pick Pocket +7, Read Lips +4, Search +4. Feats: Combat Reflexes, Point Blank Shot.

Equipment: Leather armor, short sword, light crossbow, 10 bolts, waterskin, 2 days' rations.

Tier 2 (EL 8)

Leader of the Gang, male human Rog6:

Medium humanoid (5 ft. 10 in. tall); HD 6d6; hp 26; Init +3; Spd 30; AC 15 (+3 Dex, +2 leather armor); Atks +6 melee (1d6+1 [crit 19-20], short sword), +6 melee (1d6 [crit 19-20], short sword), or +7 ranged (1d8 [crit 19-20], light crossbow); SA Sneak attack +3d6; SQ Evasion, uncanny dodge (retains Dex bonus to AC, can't be flanked); AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +8, Will +2.

Str 12, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 12.

Skills: Balance +7, Bluff +10, Disable Device +8, Disguise +10, Escape Artist +12, Forgery +11, Hide +12, Innuendo +9, Move Silently +12, Open Lock +7, Read Lips +11, Search +7, Sense Motive +9, Tumble +12. Feats: Ambidexterity, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse (short sword), Weapon Focus (short sword).

Equipment: Leather armor, 2 short swords, light crossbow, 10 bolts, 50 ft. hemp rope, 2 flasks of oil, hooded lantern, flint and steel, waterskin, 2 days' rations.

Spellcaster, male high elf Rog2/Sor2:

Medium humanoid (5 ft. 8 in. tall); HD 2d6 + 2d4; hp 16; Init +8; Spd 30; AC 18 (+4 Dex, +4 mage armor); Atks +1 melee (1d6-1, sickle) or +6 ranged (1d8 [crit 19-20], light crossbow); SA Sneak attack +1d6, spells; SQ Evasion, spells; AL NE; SV Fort +0, Ref +9, Will +3.

Str 8, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 16.

Skills: Bluff +8, Disguise +8, Escape Artist +9, Hide +9, Innuendo +7, Move Silently +9, Sense Motive +5, Spellcraft +6, Use Magic Device +8. Feats: Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes.

Equipment: Sickle, light crossbow, 10 bolts, waterskin, 2 days' rations

Spells (6/4 (one *mage armor* already cast)):
o—*daze, detect magic, flare, ray of frost, read magic*; 1st—*mage armor, sleep*.

Rogue Attackers, male human Rog2 (4):
Medium humanoids (height varies); HD 2d6+2; hp 12; Init +3; Spd 30; AC 15 (+3 Dex, +2 leather armor); Atks +2 melee (1d6+1 [crit 19-20], short sword), or +4 (+5 within 30 ft.) ranged (1d8 [crit 19-20], light crossbow); SA Sneak attack +1d6; AL LE; SV Fort +1, Ref +6, Will +0.

Str 12, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills: Bluff +4, Disguise +4, Escape Artist +8, Hide +8, Innuendo +5, Move Silently +8, Pick Pocket +8, Read Lips +5, Search +5. **Feats:** Combat Reflexes, Point Blank Shot.

Equipment: Leather armor, short sword, light crossbow, 10 bolts, waterskin, 2 days' rations.

Tier 3 (EL 10)

Leader of the Gang, male human Rog8:
Medium humanoid (5 ft. 10 in. tall); HD 8d6; hp 34; Init +4; Spd 30; AC 16 (+4 Dex, +2 leather armor); Atks +9/+4 melee (1d6+1 [crit 19-20], short sword), +9 melee (1d6 [crit 19-20], short sword), or +10/+5 ranged (1d8 [crit 19-20], light crossbow); SA Sneak attack +4d6; SQ Evasion, uncanny dodge (retains Dex bonus to AC, can't be flanked); AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +10, Will +2.

Str 12, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 12.

Skills: Balance +9, Bluff +12, Disable Device +10, Disguise +12, Escape Artist +15, Forgery +13, Hide +15, Innuendo +11, Move Silently +15, Open Lock +9, Read Lips +13, Search +8, Sense Motive +11, Tumble +15. **Feats:** Ambidexterity, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse (short sword), Weapon Focus (short sword).

Equipment: Leather armor, 2 short swords, light crossbow, 10 bolts, 50 ft. hemp rope, 2 flasks of oil, hooded lantern, flint and steel, waterskin, 2 days' rations.

Spellcaster, male high elf Rog3/Sor3: Medium humanoid (5 ft. 8 in. tall); HD 3d6 + 3d4; hp 23; Init +8; Spd 30; AC 18 (+4 Dex, +4 *mage armor*); Atks +2 melee (1d6-1, sickle) or +7 ranged (1d8 [crit 19-20], light crossbow); SA Sneak attack +2d6, spells; SQ Evasion, spells; AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +10, Will +4.

Str 8, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 16.

Skills: Bluff +9, Disguise +9, Escape Artist +10, Hide +10, Innuendo +8, Move Silently +10, Sense Motive +6, Spellcraft +8, Use Magic Device +9. **Feats:** Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Spell Focus (enchantment).

Equipment: Sickle, light crossbow, 10 bolts, waterskin, 2 days' rations

Spells (6/5 (one *mage armor* already cast)):
o—*daze, detect magic, flare, ray of frost, read magic*; 1st—*mage armor, magic missile, sleep*.

Rogue Attackers, male human Rog3 (4):
Medium humanoids (height varies); HD 3d6+6; hp 20; Init +3; Spd 30; AC 15 (+3 Dex, +2 leather armor); Atks +3 melee (1d6+1 [crit 19-20], short sword), or +4 (+5 within 30 ft.) ranged (1d8 [crit 19-20], light crossbow); SA Sneak attack +2d6; AL LE; SV Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +1.

Str 12, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills: Bluff +5, Disguise +5, Escape Artist +9, Hide +9, Innuendo +6, Move Silently +9, Pick Pocket +9, Read Lips +6, Search +6. **Feats:** Combat Reflexes, Point Blank Shot, Toughness.

Equipment: Leather armor, short sword, light crossbow, 10 bolts, waterskin, 2 days' rations.

Player Handout #X

[Player handouts go in this section. Use page breaks between each. If you don't have any handouts, remove this section by cutting from the title to the end of the section. Remove this paragraph.]