

ADVENTURES ON THE POWDER RIVER #4

CASTLES & CRUSADES

GOLDEN SHINGLES



STEPHEN CHENAULT

Peter Bradbury 2007 ©

GOLDEN SHINGLES

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An overland adventure designed
for characters for 3-5 Characters
Mid-Level



OGL

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GOLDEN SHINGLES

Golden Shingles is an encounter area for 3-5 characters in the mid-level range. It is designed as a plug and play encounter; either run by itself for a few hours of fun or as an encounter inserted in an ongoing campaign. Golden Shingles is part of an ongoing series of encounter areas, Adventures on the Powder River. Check out the other titles in the series: To the Damenheit Bridge, Thorns for Beer, and River Walk. As with all these adventures they are portable to any locale but is designed for use in the Darkenfold Forest in the world of Aihrde.

USING GOLDEN SHINGLES

Golden Shingles stands on its own as a simple encounter area designed to plug into your ongoing campaign. The adventure takes place in the woods. Any wooded environ serves the Castle Keeper for this purpose. Simply skip over to the section titled Cobbled Way and begin playing.

If you are coming from River Walk in the Adventures on the Powder River series, the Cobbled Way begins about 1 day south of the village of Willowbreak. The adventurers may have discovered the cobbled roadway in their encounter with the cyclops, or if not they can learn about it in the town at Greelys. The characters, assuming they have rescued the totem and returned it to Oyvind Pal and rescued Greely from his curse are welcome in the tavern where they have been rewarded a lifetime's worth of drink and food.

GREELYS

If the characters know about the cobbled way to the south they may ask about it at Greelys. If they do not, allow them to overhear someone in the tavern speaking about it and the Stair to Nowhere. Gil Sandburn is in the tavern (as he usually is when not on a hunt) and is speaking of his many adventures. He answers questions about the cobbled way if the characters overhear him speaking.

Read or paraphrase the following:

Oh Aye. I've been down that cobbled road a few times. Leads to an old ruined building. They say it was a temple once, built to the forest gods, the Og Aust. To none other than Nunt Lord of Waters and Master of Fish. All that's left is the shell of a building and the stair.

The stair? I've never been to it, nor even seen it, but from afar. It juts out of the forest tops, easy to see from any rise or tree top. It just sits there, always has, always will I suppose. The odd thing is the gold. The staircase, the top of it leastwise, shines in the sun, reflects gold. Like to be the building's last golden shingle. That's what draws men to it.

Its a cursed place don't you know? Any that have ever climbed it have never come back. I've been told by the water hags that dwell along the river banks that it is a stairway to the gods long ago. But now it leads men only to their doom.

Gil Sandburn gives these directions to any who ask.

It's easy enough to find on the land. It's about 30 miles south on the western bank. Follow the trail along the river south for about 15 miles. It'll end in a great heap of rocks. Skirt the river for a few more miles until you get to the rapids, those the giant made. From there look for his trail that leads inland, it's only a few hundred feet in and there'll you find his old tree cellar. The cobbled way begins there.

If they ask about traveling by river these are the directions:

You can take the river as easy as the trail, a bit easier I might add. Follow it down by canoe until you get to the rapids. That should be mid day of your first day out. Keep following it for another half day or so until you come to the ruins of an old wagon. The wagon is in the middle of the river . . . some fool tried to cross it in the shallows and got buried up and broke an axle. But where the wagon is, the bank is easy to climb and the forest is open. Follow the open terrain until you come to some bottoms. From the bottoms you can look up and see the stair.

BY BOAT

Travel downstream by boat is relatively easy. The wide, deep water makes passage fast. Traveling at a normal speed, the boat can cover about 20 miles per day. This takes into account normal stops and starts on a river. If the conditions are right, the characters can move much faster, up to 36 miles per day.

BY LAND

Overland is much more difficult. The country is old, broken, and filled with natural obstacles. These obstacles include fallen trees, deep ditches, huge thorn patches, creeks, etc. These hazards are not encounter areas, but do serve to slow the party down. Make the party aware of why their travel is slow.

When on a trail, covering 10 miles a day is normal. Otherwise 5-6 miles is a good day. Roll a d4+4 to see how many miles the party makes that day; this should give a fair average distance. The trails leading out from Willowbreak are few, and those that do exist are narrow. The main southern trail ends entirely after about 8 miles or so.

On water, roll a d20 six times a day for wandering monsters. On land, roll a d12 six times a day for wandering monsters. On a roll of a1, consult the following:

NOTE: Scale monsters to fit level of party. Lower hit points and hit dice as needed. Consult your own wandering monsters or refer to River Walk for wandering monsters.

2 CASTLES & CRUSADES

THE WAGON

The wagon sits in the middle of the river, impossible to miss. It was a huge wagon, 18 feet long, with a wide wheel base and four iron rimmed wheels. It took a great number of ox to pull it. It entered the water on the eastern bank, heading toward the deeper woods. An opening in the forest, on the west bank clearly invited the wagon master to cross, but it never stood a chance. The river bottom is entirely too rocky.

The wagon itself sits fairly high, just above the water line. When the river runs very high, it surges over the top of the wagon, though it is normally dry inside. The cover is long gone and all that remains are the high walls of the wagon and the water barrel.

If anyone investigates the wagon, they discover broken off arrows in the back and side. The wagon master was running from something. Anyone experienced in wood craft, tracking or weapons might be able to determine (CL 3) that these arrows belong to the wild men of the Darkenfold (the Eschl). They pursued the wagon and killed the wagon master.

AN OPEN PATH

By following the direction the wagon is pointed, the characters can discern an opening in the forest. It lies along the base of a gentle rise, is about 30 feet wide and heads north by north west into the trees.

It leads without much fuss through a wet bog a few hundred yards wide (this alone would have stopped the wagon) before it begins to rise. After a few hundred feet the opening ends with a boxed-in gulch.

Climbing out is not difficult, a successful dexterity check (CL 5) brings one to the top. If the party searches, a deer trail is easy enough to find (CL 2).

At the top of the cliff is the Cobbled Way.

COBBLED WAY

The road begins quite abruptly. The path is 4 feet wide and consists of flat cobbled stones. It begins in the ruin caused by the roots of an old tree. The tree clearly grew up in the middle of the road, destroying it. North of the tree the path has almost completely vanished; traces it may be found if a detailed search of the northern side of the tree are made (CL 6 for a ranger, CL 12 for anyone else). A trick of fate left the south bound path clear and the Cobbled Way winds through the forest for many miles.

Twenty miles of uninterrupted cobbles lead from the tree to a ruined building. Occasional trees grow over the path. Some of the road is rippled by tree roots, but for the most part, the road is smooth and easy enough to walk on. Many creatures use it as a path way to move up and down the river banks.

ENTISH VINES

Some distance down the road, the characters come to a massive patch of vines clinging to a monstrous tree. Here the path snakes very near the shore so that the tree itself grows in the water and on the banks. The vines themselves are all over the place.

What the characters have encountered is a treant besieged by a host of assassin vines. The tree is old and rooted to the ground. The vines are fast growing, and slowly choking this father of the forest.

NOTE: Where this encounter occurs is entirely up to the Castle Keeper. If placement is needed, then choose the morning of the second day's travel.

Before you looms a massive vine covered tree, its roots tangled into the soft earth of the river bank. Near the river, the roots have been exposed by water erosion. The tree itself appears to be very old, squat, and extremely thick. Much of the tree is covered by a monstrous growth of vines that hangs from the tree, crawls across the ground, snakes up the path, and slips into the water. Passage around the vines is almost impossible; the vines appear to have crossed the river to the far bank.

There are three assassin vines stems near the treant. The vines have been working on the treant for some time and have weakened the creature tremendously. The vines are very hungry and welcome the character's passage.

The characters encounter the vines whether they are on the road or in a boat. Unless the characters have encountered assassin vines before, the chances of them being surprised are 7 in 8. They are not allowed a perception check.

The vines attack aggressively, pulling characters in across the ground. If they are on the water, the vines coil up around the boat and attempt to pull them out. Each vine has 4 attacks per round, as they are also attacking the treant.

Each vine that is destroyed diverts a vine that holds the treant. As soon as 4 vines divert their attacks, the treant groans, shakes, and attempts to move into the river. The treant is allowed a strength check (CL equal to the number of vines holding it).

If it breaks free, it immediately sets to pounding the vines with its massive trunk-like limbs, shouting curses in its ancient tongue and the Vulgate. It does not attack the characters. It aids which ever character is in the worst predicament.

ASSASSIN VINE X 3 (*This neutral creature's vital stats are HD 5d8, HP 29, AC 15. Its prime attributes are physical. It attacks with vines doing 1d4 damage each, with a failed strength save by the victim indicating constriction. Constriction means the victim blacks out in 3 rounds and strangled to death in 3 more if not freed. Its special abilities are constrict, improved grab, camouflage and resistance to cold and fire.*)

YOWLINGWOOD, TREANT (*This chaotic good creature's vital stats are HD 7d8, AC 20, HP 43. Its primary attributes are physical. It attacks with 2 slam attacks for 2d8 points of damage each. It can instead choose to trample for 4d4 points of damage. This particular treant cannot animate other trees due to its current state of exhaustion. It is vulnerable to fire.*)

Once the vines smashed to pieces the treant relaxes. It turns to the characters and offers a mighty thank you. It asks if there is "ought I can do for you in compensation."

The characters may ask it questions. It knows a bit about the ruins. He knows the history of the House of Anduel and recounts it as written below. He offers them protection if they seek it, but the treant will soon need to go into the deeper wood for healing. Once done, Yowlingwood takes his leave and lumbers west into the wood.

THE HOUSE OF ANDUEL

Mithelex built the house long ago, even before the Age of Men. He paid homage to the old gods, but his specific patron was Anduel, the eagle Spirit of the Air. Mithelex built and dedicated his House to Anduel. He constructed a great hall for all those of like mind as a place to gather and feast. But the Ethvold (the great wood) was a dark and hidden realm, and no place for the Lord of Air. So Mithelex constructed a stair that wound up from his hall through his chambers and high above the House. He employed dwarven craftsmen to construct an iron stair, scribed with the magic of keeping that only the dwarves understand.

The forest tops were breached so that Mithelex and his acolytes could climb the stair, see the open sky, and call to Anduel. They named the stair the Eagle's Walk.

Eventually, the house of Mithelex fell into ruin. Only the stair remains. It shines when the sun hits it, but few have seen it because the way is blocked by wild spirits and keepers of the old ways.

THE OPEN

Whether the characters walk down the Cobbled Way or the canoes down the Powder Rive, they come to the Open. The Open is quite large, about two or three hundred feet long and thousand feet wide; it runs parallel to the river. It is bottom land and very rich in grass where no trees grow. It is open to the sun and moon.

If daylight or even in the halting light of the moon the stairs are plain to see.

The forest looms upon the rise in front of you, dark, still, brooding. Branches tangle with thick leaves and blacken bark already dark. The sky contrasts sharply with the folds of darkness. Breaching the gloom however, silhouetted against the heavens, stands a circle of iron. A stair that winds itself up and out of the wooden host.

NOTE: If the game session is in need of some action, an encounter the Open is a perfect place for an ambush. A hunting monster, or a tribe of humans, or a tribe of humanoids would be appropriate.

It is about a half day trek from the Open to the House of Anduel

HOUSE OF ANDUEL

The Cobbled Way gives way a dozen or so feet from the ruins. Whatever it connected with is long gone. The first thing the characters encounter is the porch. It once graced the north and east (river facing) sides of the building, but now stands attached to a mangled ruin.

4 CASTLES & CRUSADES

The House of Anduel was a four walled structure but tall of the east and north walls are gone and most of the south wall. Only the east wall remains intact. It joins the remnants of the south wall.

The House was large, almost 100 feet long and 60 across. It had at least two floors when it flourished, perhaps three, but none of the higher walls remain. A huge tree grows up in the middle of the floor now, its trunk has made a mockery of the floor, pushing up flag stones, crushing others, and absorbing some into the soil. The stone work of the collapsed lies buried in the forest soil. Digging reveals only a few blocks. Otherwise there is little left.

AREA 1 THE FIRST FLOOR: The old beach tree is 6 feet in diameter with a massive canopy that pushes into the remains of the south wall and covers the remnants of the second floor. Bark flakes and lies about the ground.

There is evidence of the building everywhere however. When the upper floors collapsed, some of them landed in this hall. Whatever wood bound them together is long gone, but the remnants of stone floors and walls lies in heaps. Only about 30 square feet of the ceiling (the floor to the second floor) remains in the south-west corner.

AREA 1A THE STAIRS: The stairs stand in the south-west corner. They are iron, black and circular. They coil up into the remnants of the ceiling above. What lies on the second floor is impossible to see without magic or at least climbing the tree, for the canopy of the beach tree is simply too thick. The stairs are solid, they do not shake or move. They have no rust nor any signs of age. If there is a dwarf or a runemaster in the party, they might detect very small runes, written into the stairs everywhere. If a detect magic is cast upon the stairs, they radiate magic.

AREA 2 SECOND FLOOR: There is not much to see here, just 30 square feet of floor in the south-west corner around the stair. The rest is clearly fallen. The remains of a stone shelf mark the western wall just to the right of the spiral stairs that continue to coil up beyond the ruins and into the overriding forest above.

If the characters take a close look, they might discover how completely clean the remains of the floor is. There are no leaves, sticks, or even dirt. It is as if something has swept it. A successful spot check (CL 8) is required to notice this, unless they ask direct questions such as "Is the floor clean?" or something of that nature.

The second floor is clear of debris because the sylph that guards the stairs above cleans it regularly.

AREA 3 THE EAGLE'S WALK: The stair coils up into the foliage of the beach tree and beyond. The tree does not touch it nor cover the stair's climbing.

Standing on the second floor, looking up, you can see the coiling stair rise into the tree. It is free of any limbs or leaves, vines or another other growth. Its iron is black. It coils up another 70 feet, held up only by the pillar of black iron that is the center of the stair itself. The steps climb up, around and around, until they end. The stairs have no rail.

The Eagle's Walk 90 feet high from the ground to its end. It has one iron pole at the center to which all the steps are joined. It is black, solid, and does not move nor bend in the wind.

The Eagle's Walk is guarded, however. A sylph, a creature of the air, guards the climb. She dwells in the air above the stair, haunting the spaces, keeping the basin safe and clean. She served Anduel and serves the memory of him still. She does not take kindly to interlopers or any that she sees that do not pay homage to the Og Aust in general (and Anduel in particular).

YARALLA, SYLPH (*This chaotic neutral creature's vital stats are HD 8d8, HP 56, AC 19. Her primary attributes are physical. A sylph's primary form of attack is an electrical charge that causes 2d8 points of damage, dexterity save for half. A sylph can cause a windblast, shape change, remain incorporeal and draw the air out of a target with air drink.*)

Yaralla is not evil, but she does attempt to stop any who climb the stair. She uses her windblast first, attempting to stop the intruders. She continues to do this until they retreat or until they push past her. She will move up the stair rapidly to get ahead of them.

She becomes corporeal at this point, appearing as a woman in long, flowing robes, with hair blond, thick and long. She calls out to them:

Stop now. Come no further. This stair is not for the likes of you. Go back now. Do not force my hand.

Yaralla has no intention of allowing them to pass to dishonor the Basin above. However, there are several ways the characters can pass Yaralla without a fight:

If they are able to present the statue of the stag found in the cyclops' den (see River Walk) Yaralla gives way, seeing in them as true believers. If any of the characters worship the Og Aust she lets them pass.

If they call upon Anduel, she becomes confused and must roll an wisdom check; if she fails she gives way as she believes they are true believers. If she succeeds, she questions them to learn their motives.

Any mention of the treant above and his rescue convinces her that they are agents of the Og Aust; again she will let them pass.

Otherwise Yaralla fights the characters on the stair, one at a time if she can; she does everything she can to stop them from getting to the basin.

TREASURE: Yaralla has little of value, most of what she has taken from others she has killed or driven off. However, she keeps some items. These she has set upon the platform. They are there for anyone's taking. They consist of the following: a gem worth 500gp; a +2 shortsword; a scroll case with designs of elementals upon it (within is a scroll of elemental control), a talisman of the boar (when worn grants the wearer a +1 to his to hit rolls, armor class, and any strength and dexterity checks), a hunter horn with the likeness of all kinds of animals carved into it (sounding the horn summons the creatures, allowing the hunter easy prey).

AREA 4 THE GOLDEN SHINGLE: The Eagle's Walk ends in a small platform made of the same metal from which the stair itself is constructed. The characters are now standing 30 feet above the roof of the forest. The platform is about 6 x 6 feet. Standing upon it is a simple stone basin. The edges and inside of the basin is lined with gold and filled with collected rain water.

Standing upon the platform grants the viewer amazing sight, so that they can see across the Darkenfold. From the Eagle's Walk, the forest is always clear.

West: The forest tumbles for many miles, becoming ever darker and foreboding. In the distance a large rise in the land gives evidence to some hills.

East: The river is plain to see. Beyond that, the forest is much younger, rising in gentle slopes and hills until it climbs higher than the western Darkenfold.

North: To the north the faint smoke trails of Willowbreak spiral above the thick growth. Some miles beyond that, the Post Road cuts a gap through the forest, trailing west as far as the eye can see.

South: To the south, across the river, several miles down, columns of smoke trail into the sky. Near it, a dock juts out into the river. Many miles further on the Powder River spills into another river, the Mistbane. Not far beyond the confluence, a castle juts out of the forest; its walls are green, though no flag or symbol flies from its high tower.

This is the Castle of Green Wizard. Anyone looking at it for long attracts his attention. He casts out with his own magic to see who is watching. Upon a successful intelligence save, the one who has captured the wizard's attention realizes that they themselves are being watched.

THE GOLDEN SHINGLE: Any rain water that collects in the Golden Shingle becomes magically enchanted. Any who drink the water, even a small portion, become suddenly translucent and able to walk upon the wind. The affect lasts for 10 turns. When it wears off, the enchanted wind walker descend rapidly to the ground (roughly 60 feet per round) until they are safe. The affect acts much like the spell wind walker.

There is presently enough water in the Golden Shingle for 10 uses. The water can be put in a container and used later, acting as potions of wind walking.

If the party befriended Yaralla and then wind walks, she joins them in them in the skies above, inviting them high into the heavens.

NEW MONSTER

SYLPH

NO. APPEARING: 1

SIZE: See Below

HD: 6

MOVE: 50 ft. (fly)

AC: 15

ATTACKS: See below

SPECIAL: Air Drink, Electrical Charge, Incorporeal, Shape Change, Wind Blast

SAVES: P

INT: High

ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Neutral

TYPE: Elemental

TREASURE: 9

XP: 750+8

The sylph is an incorporeal creature. They dwells in the open air, generally avoiding underground or even surface level habitats. They has no form that is easily recognizable, though when they move, it turns the air a slightly bluish tint. The agitated air has no discernible shape or form. However, the sylph is able to change form into that of a waif-like human, male or female, or into that of a bird. The bird form is restricted to one specific type of bird per sylph. For instance, a sylph able to turn into a mocking bird is not able to turn into a blue jay. In their human form, they are uncommonly beautiful, and always adorned in blue and white clothing. They appear to possess a weapon, a long spiked whip.

The sylph is a form of air elemental found on the material plane. They are highly intelligent, immortal creatures. Because of this, they are able to speak a variety of languages. They prefer the tongues of fey and elves over others. The sylph is extraordinarily envious of humans and elves, desiring their corporal forms and longing for the touch of the corporal world. For this reason, when they shape change, they change into shapes that please them.

COMBAT: The sylph attacks from her incorporeal form first. They approach an intended target until they are almost upon them. Then they strike with air drink, attempting to disorient the victim. They follow up with a battery of wind blasts and electrical charges.

AIR DRINK: Once every three rounds, the sylph is able to suck the air out of a creature. The victim is momentarily dizzy and lightheaded. The target must be within touching range of the sylph. Once struck, they are entitled to a constitution save; if successful the air drink attack has no affect. If they fail they suffer a -2 from all combat related rolls and attribute checks.

CAMOUFLAGE: While the sylph is incorporeal, so long as she moves through the air and not through something such as fire, the creature is extremely difficult to see. When incorporeal they gain a +2 to their hide checks and a +6 to their surprise rolls.

ELECTRICAL CHARGE: The sylph's primary attack is an electrical charge. A chain of electrical energy arcs through the air in a 20 foot line, 2 feet wide. Anyone in the line is struck. It does not stop upon hitting the first target. Victims must make a successful dexterity save or suffer 2d8 points of damage. A successful save reduces the damage by half. When a Sylph assumes their physical form, this electrical charge appears as a spiked whip.

SHAPE CHANGE: The sylph's natural shape is incorporeal air. However, it is able to assume a more physical form when it chooses. Once a day, the sylph can change into its human form and back and once a day it can change into its bird form and back. When in these shapes (bird or the human form) they cannot interact with the physical world.

WIND BLAST: The sylph is able to strike with a wind blast, allowing it to knock targets over, move items, etc. The sylph chooses the intensity of the attack. Creatures of medium size or smaller must make a dexterity save to see if they are moved.

IN AIHRDE

These creatures are the spawn of the god Anduel.



6 CASTLES & CRUSADES