

DF1.5

Bonus Module

THE FOLIO

Mini-Module



THE HIDDEN VALORIA CAMPAIGN

Ratmen of Dead Oak

Mini-Adventure DF1.5

by Scott Taylor

Ratmen of the Dead Oak is a fully 1E & 5E compatible adventure for characters levels 1-3 and contains all information needed to run an excursion against the famed Dwarven Forge race.

You haven't truly been inducted into the culture of Valoria unless you've had dealings with the mysterious Ratmen. Now, a problem has emerged from an infamous tree in the Patina and only the characters have the unique skills required to deal with it both diplomatically and martially.



Ratmen of the Dead Oak

Synopsis:

The Dead Oak is a well-known landmark in the Patina, and there are hundreds of stories concerning it told by the locals. However, the most consistent of these urban legends revolves around the infamous Ratmen of Valoria, and folks insist that a secret entrance into their warrens lies within the tree, although no such entrance is obvious to anyone searching the trunk, which few take the time to do. Last night, though, a young determined boy name Lucious was dared by his friends to go to the tree and find the entry, only to disappear. Now, a worried neighborhood is looking to solve the mystery of the tree once and for all.

All ‘grey blocks’ are for 5E conversions in this section.

Dungeon Master’s Notes

This adventure revolves around the characters entering the Dead Oak and will likely require the services of a good thief and possibly a magic-user. Diplomacy can also be useful, especially if the party would prefer to have a clan of Ratmen that are seen as allies instead of enemies. Remember that this is a delicate mission where a boy’s life hangs in the balance,

so keep playing on the party’s growing loyalty to the people of the Patina Court. If successful in saving Lucious, the party’s prestige will grow, helping in future investigations in the Patina. Also, in Part One, there is no exact order to ‘the hunt’, and as the GM you should bend to the will of the party as they decide how to handle the situation and begin the search. Also, concerning maps, this is a basic small dungeon and I thought I’d allow for my Dwarven Forge players to create rooms in the shapes and sizes that suit their sandbox, so have fun!

The Dead Oak

The Dead Oak is much more than a large skeletal tree. Enchanted by one of the long forgotten spell casters of the Patina in its height, the tree once served as a secret meeting area for the spell caster and his illicit lovers. The tree has a secret entrance that can only be breached by a Knock spell, or by a series of pressure points that have to be pushed in quick succession (that the Ratmen know, and the boy unluckily stumbled upon). Once inside, there is a small collection of rooms once meant for entertaining, but now used by the Ratmen as a place of refuge.

Ratmen of the Severerd Paw

This small clan of Ratmen was a reclusive sect until recently when a change in leadership

brought about a greater willingness to explore the surface. Led by Rava Shaar, the Ratmen of the Severed Paw began utilizing the Dead Oak's entrance to scout the Patina on dark nights and thief the easiest targets. They were planning to launch an assault against Bret Bozeman the Boatmaker since he is rumored to have a large cache of coins in his shop, but then the boy, Lucious, found his way into their lair and has put their plans on hold. Rava certainly understands that releasing Lucious will reveal the entranceway into the Tree and cannot decide whether to kill him or continue to hold him prisoner. Thus, he's being kept in the lower hall of the lair, and with each passing day the Ratmen grow more anxious and want to be rid of him.

Retrieving the Boy

This mini-adventure begins with the disappearance of Lucious into the Dead Oak. The party is asked to investigate by either a friend or parent of the boy (someone the party has previously encountered), or possibly by Bret Bozeman, who fears a greater threat is manifesting against him. Whatever the case, the party will have to deal with entering the tree, then move against the Ratmen, and finally come to either a deadly or diplomatic conclusion.

Part One

The Hunt

1.

The two boys, Petra and Avaran, sit before you, both pensively looking at the ground, their hands tucked between their knees as is often requested by the city guard when talking to civilians.

Questioning the kids requires a Charisma check **[Charisma DC 12]**, and for each successful check, the following pieces of information will be retrieved.

1.

Lucious often said that he was going to be an apprentice to Bret Bozeman at the boat shop.

2.

Of all the street boys in the Patina, Lucious had the best 'fingers', and could lift a purse (just playing around) off any other kid.

3.

The day that Lucious disappeared, they had found a half-drunk bottle of spirits and consumed it before the dare.

2.

Bret Bozeman wipes a fine layer of sawdust from his hands as he turns away from the hull of a slim rowboat.

Bret is more willing to talk than the boys, and characters receive a +3 to all Charisma checks **[Charisma DC 9]**. Each success will gain an additional piece of information.

1.

He had offered Lucious an apprenticeship on more than three occasions, but something seemed to be holding the boy away from his service, and he suspected it was a gang affiliation.

2.

A week ago, he caught Lucious looking over his cash box while doing odd jobs for him around the shop. He didn't call the boy on it, but since then, he'd not offered him another job.

3.

Lucious wasn't a 'nameless' boy of the Patina, his father was rumored to have been Bryce Teller (the dead founder of the Teller Gang).

4.

He's heard recent rumors that his shop might be the target of a thieving attack, but no one seems to know who is truly the threat.

3.

The Dead Oak stands before you, a fifty-foot-tall skeletal remnant of lost natural glory. Its bark is now dark, its limbs reaching high into the sky, yet not a single leaf remains. The trunk, which is some eight feet round, is gnarled and scarred, knots the size of a grown man's hand standing out in several locations.

Investigation of the Dead Oak (with a detect magic) will reveal it has magical properties. A thief can attempt a find and remove traps **[DC 15]** to discover that some of the knots can be depressed. Another check using pick locks/open doors **[DC 15]** is needed to properly press the knots in sequence for a door to open, revealing a stair. Also, a Knock spell cast on the trunk will open the secret door.

Part Two

The Descent

1.

A twisting stair leads down into darkness, walls changing from polished wood to carved stone. At the base of the stair, which has descended more than twenty feet, a single wooden door awaits.



The door is not trapped, but it is locked [DC 13]. Beyond the door is a single twenty by twenty room.

The door opens to reveal a dimly lit chamber with a single lantern placed on a round table in the northwest corner. An old rug decorates the floor, and a single flat sofa rests against the west wall. Two Ratmen face the door, short blades drawn and yellow teeth bared.

These are two of the three guards that normally are stationed in the room. The third was dispatched as soon as noise of the

picking of the door was heard and is rousing a greater defense. The guards will not talk, and will attack immediately.

Ratmen: [AC 5, HD 3, HP 18, #AT 1, D 1-6 (shortsword)]

TREASURE

NONE.

2 Ratmen [AC 15, HD 4d8+8, HP 32, #AT 2, Hit +5, Dam Shortsword 5 (1d6+2), Multiattack]

2.

Your footfalls echo through the arched entry into another large square chamber that has been doused of all light. (If the party has a light source, read the following.) The couches and chairs of a casual sitting room have been hastily rearranged to provide cover for five Ratmen, each armed with a crossbow.

Once the party enters, the Ratmen will fire, three then reloading their crossbows and two drawing out shortswords to take on any charging party fighters.

5 Ratmen: [AC 5, HD 3, HP 18, #AT 1, D 1-8 (Longsword) or 1-6 (Light Crossbow)]

TREASURE

NONE.

5 Ratmen: [AC 15, HD 4d8+8, HP 32, #AT 2, Hit +5, Dam Longsword 6 (1d8+2), or Light Crossbow 6 (1d8+2), Multiattack]

3.

Beyond the makeshift barricade, another archway opens into a salon chamber filled with peg hooks on the walls and a wooden plank floor. Four

more Ratmen in heavy armor are here standing guard at the entrance to a stair in the eastern wall.

These are the heavy fighters of the Severed Paw, and will defend the hall to the lower level til death.

4 Heavy Ratmen: [AC 2, HD 5, HP 30, #AT 3/2, D 1-8 (Longsword)]

TREASURE

NONE.

4 Heavy Ratmen [AC 18, HD 6d8+12, HP 44, #AT 2, Hit +6, Dam Longsword 5 (1d8+3), Multiattack]

Part Three

The Resolution

1.

The stairs move downward again, these made of dark wood with a copper railing placed close to the fall of your right hand. Below, a soft yellow glow of a crystal sphere allows for easy visuals into a landing, another fine wooden door blocking any further progress.

The door is not trapped, but is again locked **[DC 14]**. Inside, what once served as a bedchamber has been converted into a pen for a terrible dire rat, the creature having recently been roused with spear and then loosed to defend the room.

1 Dire Rat: [AC 3, HD 5, HP 26, #AT 1, D 1-8 (bite)]

TREASURE

NONE.

1 Dire Rat [AC 17, HD 5d8+12, HP 44, #AT 2, Hit +5, Dam Bite 6 (1d8+2), Multiattack]

2.

Another door, this one marked with the scars of claws, stands on the west wall.

The door is both locked and trapped **[DC 15 on both]**, and the trap is a flame burst that causes 3D6 **[9 (3D6)]** to anyone within five feet of the door if triggered.

Beyond, a large chamber houses what was once a five-foot-deep and twenty by twenty pool that has been converted into a sleeping pit for the bulk of the Severed Paws. Behind a wooden pallet made to resemble a floor bed, a secret tunnel can be found that leads into the lower sewers of the Patina. The females and

young of the clan have already fled through this, hoping to reunite with those who remain after the conflict. There are no defenders here, and the door at the far end of the chamber is open. The sad drawling of a fiddle drifts out into the pool chamber.

3.

You enter what appears to be a grand bedchamber and study, a large Ratman sitting with a human youth before him, a wicked dagger at the boy's exposed throat. Beside the duo, another Ratman, this one with fully white eyes, plays a gold embossed fiddle.

Rava Shaar, current leader of the Severed Paw is ready to negotiate for the boy's release. He desires a promise to keep the location of his home and its entrance in the Dead Oak secret, but if denied, he will relent and ask only to walk free. If the party is determined to fight, he will kill the boy on round one while the blind bard throws fire from his Golden Hespawn Fiddle (think your bard in the old Bard's Tale game with his Fire Horn). A successful negotiation via Charisma check **[Charisma DC 14]** will free the boy, and if

the check is successful by 5 points or more, the Severed Paw Clan will move out of the Dead Oak (although they will return in a fortnight in greater numbers).

Rava Shaar: [AC 2, HD 8, HP 52, #AT 2/1, +3 Attack, D 1-4+5 (dagger), Weapon Specialization (Dagger)]

TREASURE

RING OF PROTECTION +2, DAGGER OF WOUNDING +2, 40 GP, 2 SMALL OPALS (15 GP EACH).

Rava Shaar [AC 18, HD 8d10+16, HP 66, #AT 2, Hit +7, Dam Dagger 10 (1d4+8), Multiattack]

Blind Bard: [AC 5, HD 3, HP 18, #AT 1, D 1-6 (shortsword) or 5D6 Fire (Golden Helspawn Fiddle)]

TREASURE

GOLDEN HELSPAWN FIDDLE (CAUSES 5D6 [15 (5D6)] FIRE DAMAGE IN A 10' AREA).

Blind Bard [AC 15, HD 4d8+8, HP 32, #AT 2, Hit +5, Dam Shortsword 5 (1d6+2) or Golden Helspawn Fiddle 15 (5D6), Multiattack]

Resolution

Once Lucious is returned to the surface, he will thank the party and run off, but he will be a great contact and informant in the future, increasing any of the player's investigation checks with a +2 bonus.

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