

HUNTERS OF HERON'S VALE PASS

A SAVAGE WORLDS FANTASY ONE-SHEET ADVENTURE

Hunters of Heron's Vale Pass is a Savage Worlds Fantasy adventure designed for heroes with a few adventures already under their belts. A group of four characters of Seasoned Rank would do well here, though a larger group of Novice heroes or a smaller group of Veterans could manage just as well.

Though this adventure is quite short and designed for a single session of play, it should be more than just a linear series of fights. A large number of skills and tactics can be brought into play, from combat and traps to problem solving and even diplomacy.

The Setup

Recently, strange sounds have been heard in the low hills along the north edge of Heron's Vale Pass. Locals use the pass as a short route between the village of Perrin's Ford and the farm communities nested along the fertile valley of the Gorm River. While travelers rarely pass through Heron's Vale at night due to hill cats and other wildlife roaming the hills, volunteers were mustered from the neighboring communities to investigate. What they found was not hill cats, but armed Ratlings camped in an old set of ruins on the northern slope. Though the Ratlings have not been aggressive, the locals worried that their presence in the ruins overlooking such a well traveled path would only invite disaster. Unwilling to press a fight themselves, the locals decided to hire professionals to make sure the Ratlings leave and don't come back.

The reward is far from modest, a hefty 500 pieces of silver, though not a lot of adventurous folk tend to congregate in such a quiet and placid region. The Player Characters are the most qualified heroes in the area, though 1d6 able-bodied young men can be *Persuaded* to step up to the challenge, provided they get a cut of the reward.

Young Warriors: d6 in all Attributes, plus Climbing, Driving, Fighting, Notice, Riding, Stealth, and Throwing at d6. They have leather armor and carry spears.

What's Really Going On?

The Broken Fang Ratling clan has found a new hunting ground despite being so close to several human communities. The ruins are partially collapsed and a network of tunnels cuts its way into the hills. These tunnels were created by masses of slug-like Rockgrubs, whose sawing teeth and acidic secretions make short work of earth and brittle stone. The Ratlings are hunting these creatures, which they find nourishing, delicious, and rather intoxicating, collecting them by the hundreds and keeping them stuffed in specially treated oiled sacks. The Ratlings plan to return home with enough Rockgrubs to last through the upcoming winter. However, the Ratlings won't approach the Rockgrub Queen, or take too many Rockgrubs at once, lest their hunt become too dangerous. Once riled, Rockgrubs are relentless. Additionally, the Ratlings hope to come back next year and hurting the Queen would impair her ability to produce more Rockgrubs.

Note: *Ratlings are neither mindless nor suicidal. Provided the heroes have not killed any of them, the Ratlings may be open to parlay and willing to explain why they are in the area. It should be obvious that the Ratlings made an effort to keep their distance from Humans, though the ruins were simply too fruitful a hunting ground to ignore. There is no doubt that whether driven out or convinced to leave of their own accord, the Ratlings will return next year unless more drastic steps are taken.*

Heron's Vale Pass

The journey to Heron's Vale Pass takes little more than an hour from Perrin's Ford. The ruins are accessible up the northern slope, either by taking an old path or by climbing the slope itself.

A *Tracking* roll confirms that of a large number Ratlings traveled up the old path to the ruins. A raise reveals that there were probably a dozen Ratlings, maybe a few more.

Approaching the ruins with a measure of stealth will keep the Ratling guards (Area 1) from *Noticing* the group's approach. The Ratlings expect that anyone who approaches will do so from the path, and will gain a +1 to Notice tests since they are mostly watching that direction. Characters may *Climb* the slope and gain +1 to *Stealth* rolls to avoid being seen, but must make their Climbing roll at -2 if they do not have gear.



Entrance (Area 1)

A handful of Ratlings guard the entrance to the ruins, but they are not very diligent and may be asleep on the job (a Vigor roll for each of them). If awakened by an approaching party, or if they spotted the heroes, the guards attempt to drive them off with their slings. If the heroes persist, the ranged assault will continue until the PCs close to Melee Range. If the Ratlings are engaged in melee or reduced to a single guard in a ranged battle, one Ratling will run into the ruined hall, tripping the alarms to warn his fellows in the main camp. Six Ratlings will advance to the entrance and engage the PCs. It takes them three rounds to arrive – Quick enough to reinforce the guards in a ranged battle, and soon enough to arrive and witness the heroes looting the bodies of any fallen Ratlings.

Ratlings (1 per PC): See *Fantasy Companion* (under Rat Men, page 144), but add Slings and Shooting d6.

Ruined Hall (Area 2)

The ruin of a vast open pavilion has collapsed upon itself, leaving little more than pocked marble floors. Sounds in this chamber echo loudly (-1 to Stealth rolls). The Ratlings use this area as secondary ward against intruders and much of the hall is marked with graffiti depicting this as the territory of the Broken Fang clan. Several low strung wire traps (a *Notice* roll finds all within MBT area; Raise locates all within LBT) crisscross the area, making passage through the Hall difficult unless you know the proper path. There are both alarm and debris traps, as marked. These traps are all easily

disarmed (+1 to *Lockpicking* or *Repair* skill checks) or avoided normally with an Agility roll (provided they are detected).

Alarm Traps inflict no damage, but alert all Ratlings in the ruins of the heroes' arrival.

Debris Traps inflict 2d10 Damage within SBT (Agility Check to avoid).

Ratling Camp (Area 3)

Through an old arched doorway at the Hall's south end, the Ratlings have set up their camp. It is well defensible, warm, and has easy access both to a water source and to the hunting grounds themselves. There are a total of fifteen Ratling hunters in the area, including those from Room 1, and any who have responded to calls from distress from those guards. If an Alarm was set off in Room 2, the Ratlings are ready to get The Drop on incoming PCs and cannot be surprised by them. Any Ratlings not yet encountered will be present at Camp. If the GM feels that there are too many for the PCs to handle, then he may adjust this total to a more manageable number and place the remainder as a possible encounter within the hunting tunnels (Area 4B). If the Ratlings are routed, they will flee the complex through the Ruined Hall and out through the Entrance. If blocked, they will run into the hunting ground and attempt to double back through the other entrance to the Hall.

Ratlings (Varies): See *Fantasy Companion* (as Rat Men, page 144), but add Slings and Shooting d6.

Cavernous Hunting Grounds (Area 4)

A maze of narrow rocky passages winds its way underground. Within the caverns the slug-like Rockgrubs can be found in many of the rock fissures. The Ratlings have taken to hunting the Rockgrubs as easy prey. Rockgrubs usually do not attack unless provoked, though there are exceptions. They will rush to defend other Rockgrubs being attacked if within an area equal to the MBT. Rockgrubs are quite stupid; attempting to move, poke, prod, or kick one aside is interpreted just the same as the attempt to stab, maim, or destroy them. That said, Rockgrubs attacked at range (via missile weapons or Magic) will attack the nearest non-Rockgrub, regardless of who is responsible, if they are within 30 feet. If no one is nearby, the Rockgrubs will move away, ambling off or even hiding. Dispersing Rockgrubs may even approach people outside the radius of hostility, a trait that the Ratlings use to their advantage.

Rockgrubs: See *Swarm*, Savage World Deluxe, page 141, but treat as a split swarm (SBT, -2 Toughness). Two hostile swarms may merge into a normal swarm.

4A: Rockgrub Clusters - a number of Rockgrubs are clustered in this area and it is not likely the PCs may pass without coming up with something violent or clever.

Rockgrubs: See *Swarm*, Savage World Deluxe, page 141

4B: Secondary Ratling Camp - If the GM decided that some Ratlings were hunting in the caverns, they are encountered here, hauling greased sacks of Rockgrubs. Otherwise, there is evidence that a handful of Ratlings have made camp here recently.

Queen's Chamber (Area 5)

The Ratlings stay away from this chamber because it is where the Rockgrub Queen lives (and they do not want to destroy the source of their food). She's a massively corpulent, slug-like creature with four pincer-arms and a set of massive mandibles. Every few seconds, she pops out another tiny Rockgrub slug and a plop of mucosal slime. Most of these larval Rockgrubs fall into crevices carved throughout the area, all of which are seething with squirming larvae. Around the chamber, many full grown Rockgrubs are toiling normally. Any Rockgrubs within an area equal to a LBT will rush to defend their queen if she is attacked. A *Smarts* roll lets a character realize that without the Queen there would be no Rockgrubs, and without the

Rockgrubs, no Ratlings would come around this area. Destroying the Queen may behoove characters seeking to curry favor with the locals, since it is a long term solution to the Ratling problem.

Rockgrub Queen: see *description*.

Rockgrubs (6): See *Swarm*, Savage World Deluxe, page 141, but treat as a split swarm (SBT, -2 Toughness). Two hostile swarms may merge into a normal swarm.

The area is slimy with birthing fluids; an Agility roll must be made if a character wishes to move at more than half their pace, -2 if they wish to run. Failure results in an embarrassing and potentially dangerous fall. Though no damage is inflicted, a full action is required to get up safely (an Agility roll to rise as a half-action).

Wrapping Up!

Once the Ratlings have been handled, the heroes are free to return to Perrin's Ford and collect their reward. If the Ratlings were driven off or convinced to leave, they will return next year (much to the ire of the locals). The Rockgrub Queen is the real problem; as long as she lives, Ratlings will return. If the heroes did not kill the Queen, but explain the Rockgrub-Ratling connection to the local authorities, then the Queen is the next target. If they did kill the Queen, then an appreciative local population celebrates the heroes' forethought.

Note: *This adventure can be a jumping off point for further action. Perhaps the seething masses in the larval crevices cover a door leading deeper into the hills? Maybe this was just the first encounter between the Broken Fang clan and the people of Perrin's Ford?*

New Creature

Rockgrub Queen (WC)

In every hive of Rockgrubs, a queen develops from the common slugs. She eats voraciously and constantly excretes new larvae and slimy biowaste to feed them. Gnashing teeth ring her mouth, which is framed by two mandibles that can tear a man in half. Her bulbous, rubbery body is massive, about fifteen feet long, and she has four spindly legs used for guiding her movement and fending off attackers. Unlike Rockgrubs who can slowly cut tunnels through the earth, the Queen has no such ability. When a Rockgrub becomes a Queen, her slime transforms into a nourishing sludge for the larvae and loses the acidity that makes burrowing possible.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d6, Strength d12+1, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Stealth d6

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 12 (2)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor:** Her Thick, rubbery hide grants her natural Armor (+2).
- **Bite:** Str+d6
- **Lowlight Vision**
- **Size +3:** She is about fifteen feet long and five feet across.
- **Slime:** She moves in a viscous slime she excretes from her back. Because her body is coated, she is difficult to Grapple or Bind (-2 to attempts). Somehow removing the slime reduces her Pace to 3.
- **Summon Children:** Rockgrubs within a Large Burst Template centered on the Queen immediately will rush to defend her, attacking and aggressively pursuing anything assaulting their queen.

Legal Information

Hunters of Heron's Vale Pass was written by Slaine Fullerton, 2011.

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