

Dungeons & Dragons: Chapter 1: The Expendables.

ALIX, BAZAG.

All players are standing in the street looking at the same piece of parchment, reading: "Wanted: Expendables. The Stormrider. Nightfall. 30 gp per person, ~5 days of work." Sun is 30 minutes to setting on a warm fall Monday in the 19th year of the Council, the moon rising, 3 days until a full moon. The Stormrider is a large adobe building with an entrance in the center. A door to the left leads to the inn/restaurant, to the right is the casino entrance: a Magic Attraction arch. Above the entrance to The Stormrider is an illusion of a cloud with a gauntleted hand holding a sword upright, with occasional flashes of lightning emanating from the cloud. Weapons and armor must be discarded on the rack prior to entering the inn, and magic items are not allowed in the casino.

A man named Mizrak will offer to answer any questions about Alix for 5 sp/day.

After talking with him, the greeter at the Stormrider, Baruno, will offer answer any questions about Alix for free and can direct them to Mr. Braeburn regarding the Expendables listing.

Mr. Braeburn is in the far corner of the restaurant area seated at a large round table. 2 young men with red tunics are sitting with him (Frelich and Frolich).

TESTS: Need to roll under one of three stats: CON, STR, DEX

CON: 1 minute as a punching bag and still stand

STR: Bench press a 120-lb bag 25 times

DEX: Run the knife between your fingers ('stabscotch')

If you fail you just need to tell him a little of yourself and he'll be ok.

Mr. B needs to retrieve a shipment of 2 chests from a man living in the forest west of Loncoll.

These chests are NOT to be disturbed. Pay is 30 gp total - group must pay any expenses beyond what is provided (transport and inn). Will provide up to 3gp per person in advance.

Provides directions to the man's cabin:

"Go south to the city of Loncoll, then cross the lake to the westmost point, where you'll find a very tall stone marker along the edge. Wait there for a messenger in black who will guide you to our man's cabin. Follow his directions to the letter."

Group is not to look upon the man in the cabin.

- May indicate failure of last trip. Last trip was attacked by bandits but luckily most of the contents were recovered due to Frelich; whose brother Fraelich and all others died in the attack.

- Mr. B can provide a Council's Office signed contract guaranteeing the agreement. Bruno can witness.

He has already paid for a wagon trip to and from Loncoll, and your lodgings at the Loncoll Inn for two nights (one going out and one coming back). He has a playing card (Prince of Wands) you can present to verify your party's identity. He also gives the group a Potion of Light Healing that has 3 swigs in it. You'll need to pay for any water vehicle rentals on Lake Loncoll.

If they ask too many questions he will say, look this isn't 'wagon science.'

Mr. B will provide rooms at the Stormrider for the night.

Baruno will approach you and ask if you can check on his mother in Loncoll. She is frail and he just wants to know how she is doing. She lives 3 blocks from the Loncoll Inn.

There are 2 ways to Loncoll, which is 60 miles away: walk (3mph), taking 2 days, or horse-driven cart (8mph), 1 day.

Cost of cart is 1 gp/person/day and seats 8 humans/cargo slots.

The road passes through immense fields of wheat. It's above eye level if sitting in the cart, but you can see above it if you stand up.

WIS: Almost all the children they see working in the fields are tall and have straight blond bowl-cut hair and blue eyes.

A little before halfway the group stops at a homestead with a watering trough for horses.

MIDROCK

At the midpoint to Loncoll is a patch of stony ground. 3 human bodies are found and a demolished wagon, the humans mostly stripped of clothing and belongings. Miss Barge identifies one of these as a companion wagoneer, who was scheduled for a Northbound trip today from Loncoll to Aliz. "Bandits!" she cries. "We must bury the poor rascals!"

? Check to see who stays in the cart, who helps bury, investigates, etc. Frelich stays with Miss Barge.

COMBAT

5 Trained Dogs - 2 HD

Dogs rush the group, spooking the horses. Miss Barge is thrown from the cart and incapacitated.

DEX: anyone in the cart must beat DEX to keep from being damaged by the cart as it is thrown (1d4 damage). Frelich pushes anyone remaining from the cart. The back panel breaks off. The horses are lost running South down the road.

END COMBAT

Closest home was the homestead 1 mile back. The group approaches the house.

Three children form a defensive stance with pitchforks. Mrs. Feld calls off her nephews and says they are protective when her husband is out working. Harold will be back by evening. The nephews are her sister's children helping her with the harvest. Her sister lives about 8 miles east of the road.

WIS: (beat 18) There are many small orc footprints around the house.

She tends to the injured. Has soup that, with supporting care, can heal 2 HP/person. Will answer basic questions about the previous day's attack. Says the group can stay in the barn loft for free, if they all spend one hour chopping wood. Seems a little nervous about the group meeting Mr Feld. If asked about the children looking alike, she will speak of the 'children of the wheat' phenomena after the war 20 years ago.

As the sun sets and the group prepares for a modest dinner, Harold enters cautiously. He is an orc dressed in farmer's clothing. Mrs. Feld will intervene if anyone threatens Harold. Harold doesn't know human language and makes spitting noises Mrs. Feld interprets as "Welcome to our humble home." Mrs. Feld says Harold must work only in the back fields because he is an orc

and might be seen from the road otherwise. After any more conversation the group is taken to the loft to sleep. Frelich doesn't like cows and so will just sleep outside behind the barn..."What's the worst that could happen?" There are two cows in the barn and a small stack of straw on the ground.

? Ask if the group wants to do shifts.

WIS: (beat 16) if not, then check to see if anyone notices lights.

Around midnight, small blue lights are circulating around the first floor near the haystack.

- if watched silently, these will coalesce into the form of a young woman humming to herself on the haystack, but the humming comes out as the light peal of bells

- if disturbed, the lights will not coalesce until she is comfortable with the intruders

L - 2HD Haystack Faerie - may only be damaged by magical weapons, or if straw is burnt

L's native language sounds like bells. Her energy is dwindling with the size of the haystack, but is expecting to grow power with the coming harvest of wheat under the new moon in 2 days.

She will answer most questions about goings-on in the immediate area. She will tell about seeing a strange man in the barn almost two weeks ago, spying from the barn onto the Feld's house.

CHR: (beat 16) if asked about the children looking the same, she will cautiously reveal to knowing about a bard who "visits" the women without husbands. To summon him a woman must sing a lonely song.

Jack Thornheart knows nothing of the previous days' raid, or of dogs in the area. L says that she does remember that about a fortnight ago she'd seen a man spying about the homestead.

Jack then says he would like to look at the attack site to see if he can spot anything of value.

? Check to see if people want to go now, and if so who goes with him.

Either way, once the group goes, Frelich stays behind cautiously. The group reaches the road and suddenly hears the desperate clanging of many bells. They turn back to see the barn ablaze.

WIS: (beat 14) Frelich is not with the group.

WIS: (beat 14) Frelich is entangled in the wheat field, the stalks binding him to the ground.

Water from the well can be used to abate the fire - if a chain gang is formed of 7 or more, otherwise the fire will spread.

As Frelich is released by cutting the stalks, he is yelling "Curse Her!" and similar cries. The stalks of all nearby wheat plants reach out to grab him. It takes a few moments for him to calm down. If he has time he will deny what he said.

CHR: (beat 14) if he is lightly interrogated he will say "she had it coming!"

- if he is mortally threatened he will cry out "Frulich! Fraelich! Fraelich! Why won't you help me!!!"

If he is close enough to wheat stalks ever again he will be grabbed and whisked away

STR: (beat 18) if someone is close they can try to grab him back.

After any dealings with Frelich, if Frulich is questioned he will take a swig of his flask and admit to knowing nothing. No check can detect a lie. He has a 'flick-flask' that has whiskey on one side and the philter of glibness on the other.

The bard apologizes but says he must depart as there is a lady waiting, but that he remembered something and he'll have to tell them later.

Harold can lend you a hunting bow, as long as you bring it back.

LONCOLL

The trip to Loncoll by foot is uneventful. The group arrives at dusk. At the gates they are routinely checked for merchandise. Boats can be had in the morning at the docks. The Loncoll Inn offers pleasant rooms for 2gp/room/night.

Baruno's mom is old, hunched, wears a grey tunic and purple shawl. "Whatever you're selling I don't want it" she says. She wants to tell Baruno that she is proud of him.

There is a trivia night at the pub that is a 5 sp team cover charge for unlimited drink and for the pot to win (5gp). The quizmaster says there is only one rule: (pardon my Orcish: don't F with the quizmaster). There you can meet a guy named Delph that is pretty good at trivia.

Questions:

1. How many heads does polycephalic fire hydra have? 10
2. Which hero of Bazag has a casino as his namesake? Stormrider. Bonus, name of dragon that killed him? Kira
3. Who was the first mayor of Loncoll: Henrik Hannes. Bonus, how did the first mayor of Loncoll die? killed by a swamp sucker. (smashed his canoe, then sucked him under)
4. Anger heats, Envy eats. Old Man fails, Lover Jails (heart)
5. What is the creature that lights swamps and leads man and beast astray? Will O' the Wisp
6. What creature turns to stone in the light of day? Troll (body of a lion, head of a man...manticore)
7. What was the name of the leader of the undead army that was sent back to the ground after the great war? Lord Necromar. Knight of the Living Dead
8. What was the weight of the largest fish caught in Lake Loncoll? 611 lbs. (fight with fisherman about weight due to harpoon in it or not)
9. quick as a sneeze, above the breeze, in dark of night shines its light (falling star)
10. What is the fastest hawk in Bazag? The Razor Hawk (used to hunt dragons)
11. "Wail, Wail, my ship will take sail, bye, bye, a good day to die" -- The Loncoll Lovers
12. "Under the rocks, under the waves, under the trees, under the glades" -- Bury me dead

Delph will tell you that if you ever really want to know anything, talk to a crazy old cleric named Linnus.

Toren died in a crucial battle in the far north, the land of the Great Creatures. A fortress was poorly defended by the lizard-men, so Toren's men raided the fortress, which had strong defenses against dragons. The enemy planned a trap: knowing the fortress would fall, they collaborated with Kira the Red Dragon to gain admittance through a retractable canopy at the top at the last minute as the army broke the gate and started to man the station, then would flood the entire fortress with fire. But a friendly spy let Toren in on the plan minutes into the start of the raid. Knowing it was now too late to turn his men back to the hills, he scrambled to the highest peak, an hour's climb, to where he could see the dragon lying in wait. He then

proceeded to taunt and enrage the dragon, first by observing its foul odor, then insulting its intelligence, speaking ill of its treasure, all in such a voice as for the whole valley to hear. The dragon, forgetting its petty arrangement for the torching of the fortress, engaged in a verbal spat with Toren that went on for over half an hour, the dragon's rage continuing the whole time, until at last, Kira let out a fiery blast that torched Toren for over two minutes. By this time the men had not only broken into the castle but had secured the defenses. Kira, thinking nothing of the reward nor of the fortress, flew back to her lair and has been stewing ever since. Xepheles renamed the Double-Edged Sword to The Stormrider in Toren's honor.

At the docks, canoes can be had for 1gp/2 day. Each canoe can hold 4 humans/cargo. The canoes will take the larger part of the day (8 hours) to go to the rock along the west side of the lake described in the map. Next to the canoe rental booth is a man who rents magic carpets. They may be had for 3gp/24 hours and hold 5 humans/cargo. The only note is that they do not operate after midnight until sunrise, only on Lake Loncoll, and if they are not returned in time they will fly home ready or not. They will take about 2 hours to get to the rock. The day is warm and sunny, no chance of rain.

The magic carpet man says they are spun of threads of the reeds from the swamps in west Lake Loncoll.

The group can race magic carpets if they want. If the group elects to use canoes they will be occasionally passed by people riding the magic carpets.

Teams must pick the 'lead' or driver for each vessel and describe exactly where each individual is placed.

Racing: vessels can race. Goal is 100 units. Each vessel gets 4 points to start, plus 1d4 additional. If one team tries to 'leap' the other, instead of rolling they choose a number, 1-4, ahead of time, then the other team rolls. If the guess matches, then the team 'leaps' the other and doubles the other team's total gain. Otherwise they get no additional gain (just 4). If both teams elect to leap then they deadlock and both only advance the base four spaces. The first team to exceed 100, or to exceed 100 the most in the same turn, wins.

COMBAT

When the party reaches the swampy area on the west of the lake, they encounter three Swamp Suckers. They appear as depressions immediately in front of the party. If flying/canoeing side by side, the left one will be sucked into a left one, the right one must choose quickly if they want to go into the same depression or into the right one. Each vessel will have one turn of melee and one of ranged attack as the vessel moves from the inside to outside and back. You can swoop and melee while coming by, or you can try to run them down. Running over the monster will negate all its attacks unless it's attempting a suck, and will do 2d8 damage with the carpet, or 1d8 with the canoe.

DEX: beat 18 to run over.

DEX: roll under your DEX to stay on the vessel when sucked under. If off the vessel, may fight one-handed at -3 to hit/damage, or get back on vessel when it is back in range

They can break the canoe with a strong hit with both hands (canoe is 8hp).

After fighting the first one, if both vessels are still functioning, roll dexterity to evade and fight one-on-one.

END COMBAT

The forest is too thick to fly through...would require a driver's DEX roll each turn and failure would inflict 1d4 damage to each member on the carpet.

The party, upon reaching the stone by the side of the lake, must wait until a crow comes by and alights upon the stone (about half an hour). It will then lead them through the woods to the cabin, taking up to two hours. Part way through the crow flies across a stream. There is a waterfall to the left, and a cave that passes underneath--you can see from one end to the other--to the right is a cliff and another waterfall. Or you can ford the stream, which is rushing and about 16 feet wide and 40 feet from the base of the waterfall to the cliff. No heavy material can be carried this way. DEX and STR rolls at -2 must both be met or you slip 10 feet and have to try again. If you go through the cave, only single file is allowed. Halfway through they can (WIS (-2 unless they state they are searching), for each as they walk by) spot a glinty bit in a passage off to the left. [this should lead to something cool?] Three characters must beat 17 STR (modifiers apply) to open up cave.

CABIN

The group follows the directions to the cabin and arrives just as the sun sets and the full moon rises. The cabin is 20' x 40'. When they enter, at the far end of the room is a fireplace with a roaring, crackling fire. A man sits in a chair facing the fire, with a large table set behind so you can only see the back of his head. It is a human head that appears to be of a man in his 50s. His voice is rough and rugged, folksy. To his left is a large axe with its head stuck in a log stump.

He first advises the group not to approach him, but then greets them heartily. He does not give you a name, just asks if you can call him Sir. He is friendly and asks the group about their travels, intently. He indicates to two rusty, unremarkable chests in the NE (front right) corner of the cabin. One has scrawled on it "Granpa's Things." He mentions that this appearance is not its true form, that this is a temporary illusion that is made by twisting the handles. In a minute, he says, the illusion will pass. As it does, the rust fades and the chests reveal themselves to be new-looking. However, one is wrapped all about with what appears to be antler, so as to make a seal so it cannot be opened normally. The other chest is similar but wrapped with strong binds of ivy. He informs you that the chests may in fact be broken, and are not protected with any magic per se. They are simply sealed to indicate whether the contents have arrived safely. The illusion caused by twisting the handles is active for 30 minutes and is only to be done so that the inspectors at Loncoll and Alix may disregard the chests are unremarkable. He instructs that they must receive the inspection notes from the Loncoll and Alix handlers and present them along with the chests to Mr. Braeburn upon completing the mission. He then says that it is best for the group to sleep inside, and that he will find accommodations elsewhere for the night. He will talk further with the group, although evasively about himself, and informs them that they should not expect to see him in the morning. He asks the group to turn their heads, and for one of them to count to ten, before turning around again. He is gone when the group is done counting (and actually before if anyone peeks).

WIS: (beat 10) the man's chair is still imprinted from him sitting upon it, and it appears that there is only one leg depression.

LONCOLL

if the group is curious about the man, they can talk to Linnus, a cleric who asks for 10 gp for his knowledge, although he says that if he leaves the conversation learning more he will give the gp back. If he is confronted with each of the following: 1 leg, woodsy, he will be disturbed and give the gp back. He will advise caution for now and to just do as the man requests...but to please check back within a few days.

? Decide whether to use a cart or to go on foot. Cart is 1gp/person.

When the group goes to the city gates and are asked if they have anything to declare, they must have turned the handles ahead of time before handing them to the inspectors. The inspectors will look nonchalantly at the crates and not even open them.

MIDROCK

Nothing of value is found at Midrock.

HOMESTEAD

At the Feld homestead the family is very busy working the fields.

Fulrich states that he sees something in the stalks to the west and begs some of the group to follow him.

WIS: (beat 18) notice that the horses are being cut loose from the wagon by an invisible agent

? Determine who follows him and what the others do

COMBAT

The group is attacked by the Red Tunic Clan, including Fraelich who is initially invisible.

Henchman #3 provides cover for 2 rounds as the other two henchmen run toward the wagon

As Fraelich attacks he loses the ring into the Felds' well.

WIS: to notice that something splashed into the well

END COMBAT

If the well is inspected the invisibility ring will be found.

ALIX

At Alix the group must declare the chests, have turned the handles, and give them to the inspectors. The inspectors disregard the chests and ask why the group bothers them with such crap. Returning to The Stormrider, Bruno looks troubled. If asked, he will admit that there has been an unfortunate event - Mr. Braeburn has suffered a most horrible fate - the worst. He was carousing at the Braggards' Brawl and choked upon an olive. Sadly, his debts cannot be obligated and so the group cannot get paid. If the group checks their mail, they will find a message. The message states: "For your trouble, please return the valuables intact for the reward of 50gp each. The Skunk Hole, when the Centaur is high in the sky." The centaur is a constellation that should be high in the sky a little before midnight. The group can investigate the Skunk Hole before then, but it is locked. It is found in an alleyway, at the bottom of a stairway inset into the alley leading to the basement level. If approached at night, a thick fog about the alley, so thick the party must move very slowly. Any magic items or effects glow. In the fog all talking is muddled. A note on the door of the Skunk Hole instructs them to leave the

chests at the bottom of the stairs, in front of the door, and to exit the alley and cross the street where they will be given their money by a half-orc beggar. They find the beggar passed out, with 7 (?) pouches of gold, each with 50gp in them.

VARIOUS ADDITIONAL

Jack Thornheart realizes something is strange, that a particular 'regular' lady friend of his has not called him since the night of the first attack. He can direct you to the house. This house is the bandit lair. The bandits had been the first group of expendables, and had accidentally discovered a ring of invisibility that slipped through a knot hole in one of the chests. On the next haul from the woods took over the house and killed the inhabitant (Mrs. Feld's sister) to make it look as though they had been attacked at midrock. They then looted the chest. The attacked the party's cart with the dogs in an effort to gauge the party's capabilities and to possibly break up the party. The plan was to steal this last couple of chests and then begin a crime ring based on the magical items found therein.

The Red Tunic Clan's compound was destroyed in a fire. No known survivors.

The barkeep at the Braggard's Brawl will be evasive about Mr. B's death. A drunk will tell you information for a top-shelf drink (1gp). He'll tell you that something else was up, he saw him as he was choking and his mouth was all frosty and frozen, and the olive just fell out of his mouth after he'd died...he hadn't choked on it. There was a robed man in the corner who left shortly afterwards, and he noticed that the guy's drink was frozen solid. He ordered a Silver Slinger.

Frelich killed L because she'd seen him when he had been spying around for a house to loot.

18 days before Fraelich and his group headed out (expedition 3).

15 days before was when Fraelich discovered the ring.

13 days before they returned to Alix with the load seemingly intact. Fraelich talked with Frelich about it and hatched a plan to get some of the red tunic clan together to rob the chests.

12 days before Frelich went scouting around for a house to take over.

9 days before was when the last group started out (expedition 4).

4 days before this started was when the fake ambush occurred, and they took over the house. The ambush the day the party left was basically "practice" of their plan to attack the group on their return.

Antler Smuggler's Chest (4' wide) 40 lbs

Sword+4 Damon's Bane (2000xp)

Potion of Speed (200 each) x3

Potion of Healing (200 each) x3

Scroll - Protection from Elementals (1500)

Ring of Speed (DEX +2, Initiative+5, tracking, freeze upon command word)

Vine Smuggler's Chest 40 lbs, 'sticky'

Elixir of Madness (--)
Sphere of Annihilation (bocce ball enshrouding) (4000xp)
Potion of Shadow Control (700) x1
Boots of Elvenkind (1000)
Dagger of Dragging (--)

Chest (expedition 4):
Philter of Glibness (Whisky) (500) x4
Gem of Insight (Ruby) (3000)
Pouch of Accessibility (1500)
Knife+1 (500)
3 Scrolls of Magic Missile (200 each)

Chest (expedition 3):
Ring of Invisibility (Gold band) (1500)

Other background information:

After the war ended, The Heroes fought off the Ghorrian control of the King and displaced the King in doing so. A council was formed to protect Bazag and retain law and order; however the Heroes soon found that a vast host of enemies were building in all corners of the world to threaten the diminished powers of Bazag and the Orcish empire. Within two years of the Great Change they split up to lead armies to fight off each of the uprising powers: Toren to the far north to battle the Great Creatures; Linnus to the near north to put down Lord Necromar's undead army; Paisley to the Elvish lands to raise a defense against the Western Army; Xepheles to the First Underworld to pursue the Ghorrians. Mandar stayed behind to maintain the rule of law in Alix and sat as a council member. At this time Phillon Occio rose to the council, and the council has since followed his rule. After successfully staving off the foreign invasions, the Heroes returned to find that the Council had degraded their names, calling them war-mongers who had cost the empire precious money and lives. Their roles diminished, they politely retired from public view (for the most part). Xepheles sold his share of the Stormrider (seemingly).

- 0 - War & end of king
- 1 - Founding of Council - FuFu, Xepheles, Mandar, Paisley
- 2 - Border Wars - FuFu, Occio, Mandar, ...
- 6 - Heroes slandering begins
- 8 - Toren Dies, Double-Edged Sword renamed to Stormrider
- 10 - FuFu, Occio, ..., ...
- 12 - Xepheles sells shares of Stormrider
- 19 - Today