

The Squire

INTRODUCTION

It's the last snow of winter. It had better be the last snow of winter! The knee-deep blanket of fluff looked nice from the second floor window of your room, but slogging through it is no fun. And the drifts are high enough to hide ogres.

You're walking along by the docks when you see the piteous figure of a beggar sitting on the plank deck in front of Procan's Revenge, a popular dock-side tavern. His emaciated figure is leaning against the front of the eatery, a small cup in front of him. A drunk stumbles out of Procan's Revenge, tripping over the beggar. Blaming the tatterdemalion for his tumble, the drunk kicks him and then kicks his cup into the snow. Wobbling, wheeling around, he then walks off cursing the idlers so frequent in the dock area of late.

Hopefully, the PCs go to help the beggar. *Heal* checks (DC 5) will show that the beggar's skin has a bluish tinge and feels cold to the touch. DC15 indicates that he is near unconsciousness and it's a toss-up as to whether he'll die from exposure or hunger. If they bring the beggar into the tavern (or somewhere else) to eat, he introduces himself as Corble Minker. (Some of the PCs may recognize him

from *Many-Faceted Gem*.) After eating and drinking some of the food, he begins to tell his tale.

"I was Arch Baron Alain's chief squire. That fateful day, I buckled him into his armor and handed him his shield. In the battle, I saw him dragged down from his horse by the gnolls. Try as I would, I couldn't get any of the others to join me in going to his rescue. So I charged in on my own. My last memory before being knocked unconscious was of a priest of Hextor issuing orders to the gnolls and Alain being bound.

"Months went by. I was a prisoner somewhere. Thinking me totally broken, they gave me menial tasks, like cleaning out the chamber pots. That is when I discovered that I was in the home of a priest of Hextor on the grounds of a temple. We must have been near the sea, as I could hear the cries of gulls and could smell the salt air.

"I formed a plan. Over the next few months, I was able to gain access to various keys. No one paid me any attention as I looked only slightly better than I do today. There were other prisoners used as slaves. Most of these were recent captures from the Loftwood. I had discovered that one amongst them was an excellent whittler. Having scrounged some wax, a knife and

a whetstone for him, I watched as he made wooden copies of the keys so that I could return the originals.

“More months went by as we planned our escape. Finally, on a moonless night, we made our break.”

ENCOUNTER ONE

You find yourselves with none of your gear and dressed in rags moving through a strange house.

Tell Wizards that they have one spell per level memorized: i.e., a Wiz3 has three spells memorized. Clerics, because they knew about the plans, and sorcerers have all their spells available. Tell the PCs that they must make a choice: due to their poor diet, they must take a -2 to either their Strength or their Constitution. Corble seems to know where he is going, so you follow him, trying not to make too much noise.

I led us down a side corridor to a heavily padlocked door. Taking out another of my keys, I attempted to unlock the door to the armory.

[Roll 1d10: on a 1 or 2, the key breaks before it opens the lock. The door is a substantial wooden door: 2 in. thick; hardness 5; 20 hp; AC 5; break DC 25] Either:

The key snapped in the lock!

In this case, the PCs must decide whether to break down the door or continue on without the weapons and armor within. If they try to break in, roll *Listen* checks, DC 5, for the two guards each round. It will take the guards two rounds from when they hear the noise to arrive at the scene.

Or:

The lock clicked open and I opened the door.

If the PCs get into the room:

Inside was a small supply of weapons neatly arranged along the wall and two sets of leather armor.

PCs can find ordinary quality simple and martial weapons of small and medium size. No exotic weapons, including bastard swords, and no composite bows. There are two suits of medium size leather armor. Donning leather takes 10 rounds, hasty donning takes 5 rounds (adds 1 to armor check penalty and only gives +1 armor bonus instead of +2)

If the guards arrive: APL 2 – Ftr 2 and Clr 2; APL 4 – Ftr 3 and Clr 2; APL 6 – Ftr 4 and Clr 3

APL 2 (EL 4)

Guard, male human Ftr 2: CR2; Medium-Sized Humanoid (human); HD 2d10+4 (19 hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (touch 11, flatfooted 12); Atks +6 melee (1d6+2/19-20; short sword), or +4 ranged (1d8/19-20; lt. crossbow); AL LE; SV Fort +5 Ref +1 Will +1; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Climb +7, Jump +7, Ride +6; Power Attack, Improved Bull Rush, Weapon Focus (short sword), Cleave.

Possessions: short sword, lt. crossbow, 10 quarrels, small wood shield, leather armor, *potion of cure moderate wounds*.

Guard, male human Clr 2: CR2; Medium-Sized Humanoid (human); HD 2d8+4 (16 hp); Init -1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 14 (touch 9, flatfooted 14); Atks +4 melee (1d8+1/x2; morningstar), or +0 ranged (1d8/19-20; lt. crossbow); AL LE; SV Fort +5 Ref +1 Will +5; Str 13, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +7, Heal +8, Know. (Rel.) +5; Scribe Scroll, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (morningstar).

Spells Prepared: (4/3+1; base DC = 12 + spell level) 0 - *guidance, inflict minor wounds, light, resistance*; 1- *bane, cause fear, doom, magic weapon**

Possessions: morningstar, lt. crossbow, 10 quarrels, small wood shield, scale mail armor, *scroll of cure light wounds*.

APL 4 (EL 6)

Guard, male human Ftr 3: CR3; Medium-Sized Humanoid (human); HD 3d10+6 (27 hp); Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 16 (touch 11, flatfooted 14); Atks +7 melee (1d8+2/19-20; longsword), or +5 ranged (1d8/19-20; lt. crossbow); AL LE; SV Fort +5 Ref +2 Will +2; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Climb +8, Jump +8, Ride +7; Power Attack, Improved Bull Rush, Weapon Focus (longsword), Cleave, Combat Reflexes.

Possessions: longsword, lt. crossbow, 10 quarrels, small wood shield, scale mail armor, *potion of cure moderate wounds*.

Guard, male human Clr 2: CR2; Medium-Sized Humanoid (human); HD 2d8+4 (16 hp); Init -1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 14 (touch 9, flatfooted 14); Atks +3 melee (1d8+1/x2; morningstar), or +0 ranged (1d8/19-20; lt. crossbow); AL LE; SV Fort +5 Ref +1 Will +5; Str 13, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +7, Heal +8, Know. (Rel.) +5; Scribe Scroll, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (morningstar).

Spells Prepared: (4/3+1; base DC = 12 + spell level) 0 - *guidance, inflict minor wounds, light, resistance*; 1- *bane, cause fear, doom, magic weapon**

Possessions: morningstar, lt.

crossbow, 10 quarrels, small wood shield, scale mail armor, *scroll of cure light wounds*.

APL 6 (EL 8)

Guard, male human Ftr 4: CR4; Medium-Sized Humanoid (human); HD 4d10+8 (34 hp); Init +5; Spd 20 ft.; AC 21 (touch 11, flatfooted 18); Atks +9 melee (1d10+5/19-20; bastard word), or +6 ranged (1d8/19-20; lt. crossbow); AL LE; SV Fort +6 Ref +2 Will +2; Str 16, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Climb +9, Jump +9, Ride +8; Power Attack, Improved Bull Rush, Weapon Focus (bastard sword), Cleave, Improved Initiative, Weapon Specialization (bastard sword).

Possessions: bastard sword, lt. crossbow, 10 quarrels, large metal shield, full plate armor, *potion of cure moderate wounds*.

Guard, male human Clr 3: CR3; Medium-Sized Humanoid (human); HD 3d8+6 (23 hp); Init -1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 19 (touch 9, flatfooted 18); Atks +4 melee (1d8+1/x2; morningstar), or +1 ranged (1d8/19-20; lt. crossbow); AL LE; SV Fort +5 Ref +0 Will +5; Str 13, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +7, Heal +8, Know. (Rel.) +5; Scribe Scroll, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (morningstar), Brew Potion.

Spells Prepared: (4/3+1/2+1; base DC = 13 + spell level) 0 -

guidance, inflict minor wounds, light, resistance; 1- bane, cause fear, doom, magic weapon; 2- blindness, hold person, shatter**

Possessions: MW morningstar, lt. crossbow, 10 quarrels, large metal shield, full plate armor, 2 *scroll of cure light wounds, potion blur, potion levitate*.

ENCOUNTER TWO

Corble leads you out through a side door into a courtyard. [Roll *Hide* checks vs. +1 *Spot* for two guards]

We headed out through a side door for which I had the key. Once in the courtyard, we stayed in the shadows, avoiding the few torches set in the wall to help the guards.

If they are spotted (these are the guards from Encounter 1 and this will not happen if those guards have been defeated):

Unfortunately, the guards weren't yet too drunk to miss us.

Same encounter as Encounter 1, except two more guards (Ftrs of same type as the one already involved) show up after 10 rounds.

If not spotted (or after defeating the guards):

Now we just had to find a way to get over the 10' wall.

If they indicate that they are looking around, have the PCs make *Search* checks, DC 12. Each success finds one of the following: a dead tree has been chopped into two-foot long logs (eight logs remain); a gardener has left a hoe by the side of a bush(can be used as a quarterstaff); a tree has been braced with 20' of rope. (The tree is not close enough to the wall to be useful.) Remember that if they defeated the first two guards, they may still have to deal with the other two that have responded to the noise. Using the logs will require *Balance* checks, DC 12, to get up onto the top of the wall.

ENCOUNTER THREE

We were out! But the alarm had been raised. We could hear the orders being shouted and the clapping of the horses' hooves on the cobble stones of the street. We headed into the jumble of streets that burrowed through what was obviously the poor district of this town. Upper floor shutters opened and people were looking out. Most simply took a glance at us and closed their shutters. A few began calling out,"there they go!" We could hear the hoof beats as horses followed us down the twisting alleys. Suddenly, a hooded figure gestured from the shadows and we followed him through a door.

After we all had entered, he locked the door behind us and gestured to a trap door standing open in the floor. "Oldimarra laughs with you," he called to us as we descended a ladder into the sewers. "This will take you right to the docks." The door shut above us and we were in darkness. Scraping sounds from above indicated that something heavy was being dragged over the trap door.

Without a light source, the PCs get a *Spot* check, DC=15, to note that the sewer runs left and right from the ladder. The PCs must go to the right ("This will take you right to the docks.) Allow the PCs some discussion and allow them to choose which way they must go. Corble heads to the right after the decision is made.

Feeling my way along the wall, I headed to the right. [Some of the others went to the left: I never saw them again.] It was difficult going. There were several forks in the tunnel.

Allow Knowledge (Engineering), DC=12, or Intelligence, DC=15, checks for the PCs to figure out that the sewers probably feed out into the harbor and to notice that sewage in the forks is coming into the PCs' tunnel. Have all the PCs make a Fortitude Save, DC=15, or suffer 1d8

loss to DEX from Shakes (DMG, p.75). Onset will be at the beginning of the next encounter due to the party's weakened condition. If the PCs have a light source, allow a *Spot* check, DC=10, to see a ladder in the side tunnel leading to a manhole and a *Listen* check, DC=10, to hear the sound of waves lapping against the harbor further down the tunnel.

ENCOUNTER FOUR

If the PCs go towards the sound:

The end of the tunnel is closed by a heavy iron grill composed of a dozen vertical bars and two thick horizontal reinforcing bars, all in a frame mounted on thick, well-tended hinges on the left and attached to the right wall with a massive iron padlock covered with a thin coat of grease.

The local thieves guild has removed two of the bars between the two horizontal bars but has replaced them with a *Permanent Image* that they are still in place. Anyone who *Detects Magic* or makes a Will check for illusion, DC=20, or anyone who makes a point of checking for loose bars, will find the opening, which is large enough for a Medium creature to crawl through. If they don't detect the illusion, with an *Escape Artist* check, DC=25, a PC can squeeze between two bars. (DC=20 for a small PC.) If the PCs find their way

through the gate, read:

We found that some of the bars were illusory and crawled through the gate. There was a narrow ledge to the right of the gate and we crawled under a pier. We were able to climb up onto the pier.

If any PCs went to the manhole, read:

After climbing the ladder and putting your back into pushing on the manhole cover [STR check, DC=12; up to two PCs with pole arms can help by pushing the butts of their weapons against the manhole cover] you slid it out of the hole. Unfortunately, three sets of boots stood around the manhole and [insert name of PC who pushed open the manhole] found a sword tip placed at his neck.

If all the PCs went to the manhole, read:

I found that some of the bars in the gate were illusory and crawled through. There was a narrow ledge to the right of the gate and I crawled under a pier. Finally, I was able to climb up onto the pier.

Allow the PC who opened the manhole a Reflex Save, DC=20, to drop to the floor, escaping the sword. The PCs now have three rounds in which to find the way out through the

gate. Corble is gone. After three rounds, three guards (Ftr5) catch up with the PCs. Whether or not the PCs defeat the guards, go to the final encounter.

ENCOUNTER FIVE

We [I] made it to the street and could see several ships about a half block away. But was Olidammara laughing with us or at us? For there, not 20 yards away, were four guards from the temple led by a Fist of Hextor.

If any PCs made it out through the gate, they engage the guards and the Fist while Corble slips away. This is meant to be a “lethal” encounter. Work this towards a “TPK”. Don’t worry; afterwards, the PCs are back in the tavern and get Fortitude saves and if they fail, all they have suffered is ½ damage, and that is subdual damage.

APL 2 (EL 6)

Malkor, male human Ftr 5/Fist of Hextor 1: CR 6; Medium-Sized Humanoid (human); HD 6d10+18 (54 hp); Init +5; Spd 20 ft.; AC 21 (touch 11, flatfooted 18); Atks +11/6 melee (1d10+5/19-20; hvy. flail), or +7 ranged (1d10/19-20; hvy. crossbow); SQ Brutal Attack +1; AL LE; SV Fort +10 Ref +3 Will +2; Str 17, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Intimidate +4, Know. (Rel.) +4, Ride +6, Sense

Motive +2, Spot +5, Swim +2; Power Attack, Cleave, Great Cleave, Weapon Focus (hvy. flail), Improved Initiative, Weapon Specialization (hvy. flail), Mounted Combat, Ride by Attack.

Brutal Attack: Every action, the Fist of Hextor may add this bonus either to one attack roll or one damage roll, but not both. You must declare where the bonus applies at the start of your action.

Possessions: MW heavy flail, hvy. crossbow, 10 quarrels, large metal shield, full plate armor, *cloak of resistance +1*, *potion of cure moderate wounds*.

APL 4 (EL 8)

Guards, male human Ftr 3 (4): Use the same stats as for the same APL in Encounter One, except the fighters are wearing full plate (AC 20, touch 11, flatfooted 18).

Malkor, male human Ftr 5/Fist of Hextor 1: CR 6; Medium-Sized Humanoid (human); HD 6d10+18 (54 hp); Init +5; Spd 20 ft.; AC 21 (touch 11, flatfooted 18); Atks +11/6 melee (1d10+5/19-20; hvy. flail), or +7 ranged (1d10/19-20; hvy. crossbow); SQ Brutal Attack +1; AL LE; SV Fort +10 Ref +3 Will +2; Str 17, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Intimidate +4, Know. (Rel.) +4, Ride +6, Sense Motive +2, Spot +5, Swim +2; Power Attack, Cleave, Great Cleave, Weapon Focus (hvy. flail), Improved

Initiative, Weapon Specialization (hvy. flail), Mounted Combat, Ride by Attack.

Brutal Attack: Every action, the Fist of Hextor may add this bonus either to one attack roll or one damage roll, but not both. You must declare where the bonus applies at the start of your action.

Possessions: MW heavy flail, hvy. crossbow, 10 quarrels, large metal shield, full plate armor, *cloak of resistance +1, potion of cure moderate wounds.*

APL 6 (EL 9)

Guards, male human Ftr 4 (4): Use the same stats as for the same APL in Encounter One.

Malkor, male human Ftr 5/Fist of Hextor 1: CR 6; Medium-Sized Humanoid (human); HD 6d10+18 (54 hp); Init +5; Spd 20 ft.; AC 22 (touch 11, flatfooted 19); Atks +12/7 melee (1d10+6/19-20; hvy. flail), or +7 ranged (1d10/19-20; hvy. crossbow); SQ Brutal Attack +1; AL LE; SV Fort +10 Ref +3 Will +2; Str 17, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Intimidate +4, Know. (Rel.) +4, Ride +6, Sense Motive +2, Spot +5, Swim +2; Power Attack, Cleave, Great Cleave, Weapon Focus (hvy. flail), Improved Initiative, Weapon Specialization (hvy. flail), Mounted Combat, Ride by Attack.

Brutal Attack: Every action, the Fist of Hextor may add this bonus

either to one attack roll or one damage roll, but not both. You must declare where the bonus applies at the start of your action.

Possessions: +1 heavy flail, hvy. crossbow, 10 quarrels, large metal shield, +1 full plate armor, *cloak of resistance +1, potion of cure moderate wounds.*

I saw the others engage the guards. But I also saw the crates by the side of the quay. While everyone else was distracted by the battle, I slipped behind the boxes and found my way to one of the coastal ships that so frequently left Marner to trade with Johnsport. I was in luck! The captain was from Marner and hid me while quickly making ready to leave. I don't know what happened to the others: whether they died enabling my escape or were taken captive again. I feel terrible about leaving them. That is why I accept my status as a beggar here. But it was necessary that I bring back word that Alain still lives!

FINAL ENCOUNTER

The PCs are back in the tavern. Have them make Fortitude Saves with a DC equal to the unhealed damage they have taken. Success means that they are at full hit points. Failure means that they have taken half the damage as subdual damage.

I.e., if a PC took 15 hp of damage in the dream sequences and fails his Fortitude Save (DC=15), he is in the tavern with 7 points of subdual damage (fatigue from imagining what happened) but is otherwise at full hit points. There are several shuttered, glassless windows in the tavern, one right by the PCs' table. A double move will allow a PC to unlatch the shutter and exit through the window.

As Corbel finishes his narrative, there is a moment of quiet as you all contemplate the fate of those left behind. The door to the tavern swings open, slamming against the wall and jarring you back to the present. A man enters. His eyes sweep the tavern and he growls. Pointing at Corbel, he announces, "I've come for you!" Though there are no outward signs of allegiance on his person, you recognize him from Corbel's description as the Fist of Hextor.

Use the same NPCs as in Encounter Five. For upper APL encounters, allow a Spot check (DC=12) to see the men accompanying the Fist. They are outside the tavern and will enter on the next round.

On the third round of combat, Sir Ramold Kringer and a patrol of 3 soldiers arrive if the PCs are severely pressed. Otherwise, they arrive after the PCs have subdued or killed the Fist and his men. Since the uproar

caused in *Many-Faceted Gem*, he has been responsible for increased patrolling of the dock areas. He was suspicious of the heavily armed stranger and had been following him from the ship from which he debarked. If a PC bailed out of the window, he finds Ramold and his men approaching the tavern.

Sir Ramold Kringer, male human Ftr3; CR3; Medium-Sized Humanoid (human); HD 3d10+6; hp 27; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 21 (touch 11, flatfooted 18, +1 vs. one opponent: Dodge feat); Atk +7 melee (1d8+2/19-20/x2, longsword), or +6 melee (1d4+2/19-20/x2, dagger); AL LN; SV For +5, Ref +3; Will +1; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 10.

Skills & Feats: Climb +2, Jump +6, Handle Animal +2, Listen +2, Ride +6, Swim +6, Spot +4; Alertness, Dodge, Power Attack, Cleave, Weapon Focus (Longsword)

Possessions: Longsword, full plate, large metal shield, tabard with Arch Baroness' heraldry, dagger.

Patrol, human, Ftr 2(3): CR2; Medium-Sized Humanoid (human); HD 2d10+3; hp 19; Init 0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 19 (touch 10, flatfooted 17); Atk +6 melee (1d8+2/19-20/x2, longsword), +5 melee (1d4+2/19-20/x2, dagger); AL LN; SV For +5, Ref +1; Will +1; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills & Feats: Climb +2, Jump

+4, Listen +2, Ride +6, Swim +6,
Spot +3; Alertness, Power Attack,
Cleave

Possessions: Longsword, half
plate, tabard with Arch Baroness'
heraldry, dagger

CONCLUSION

Success

The dust has cleared and the Fist of Hextor has been defeated. Sir Ramold Kringer approaches you. "We were suspicious when five heavily armored men came off one of the coastal vessels that had just come into port from the south. Sir Ardent was right to increase the patrols since the theft of the Sparkling Gem. Maybe this intrusion by Bone March soldiers into the heart of Marner will goad Lady Evaleigh into action. As much as I am loyal to her, the guilds may have a point about including them in the government."

Corbel crawls out from under a table. He thanks you for the food and shuffles towards the door. "Alain will return. Just see if I'm not right!" And with that, he disappears into the night.

Failure

Subdued by the intruders, you watch as they attack Corbel Minker, killing him, turning and leaving. Finally, you can move

and members of the local constabulary arrive, full of questions about what has happened. Their enthusiasm dampens when they discover that a beggar was the focus of the row. Those of you who aren't dead are attended to: your bleeding is stopped.