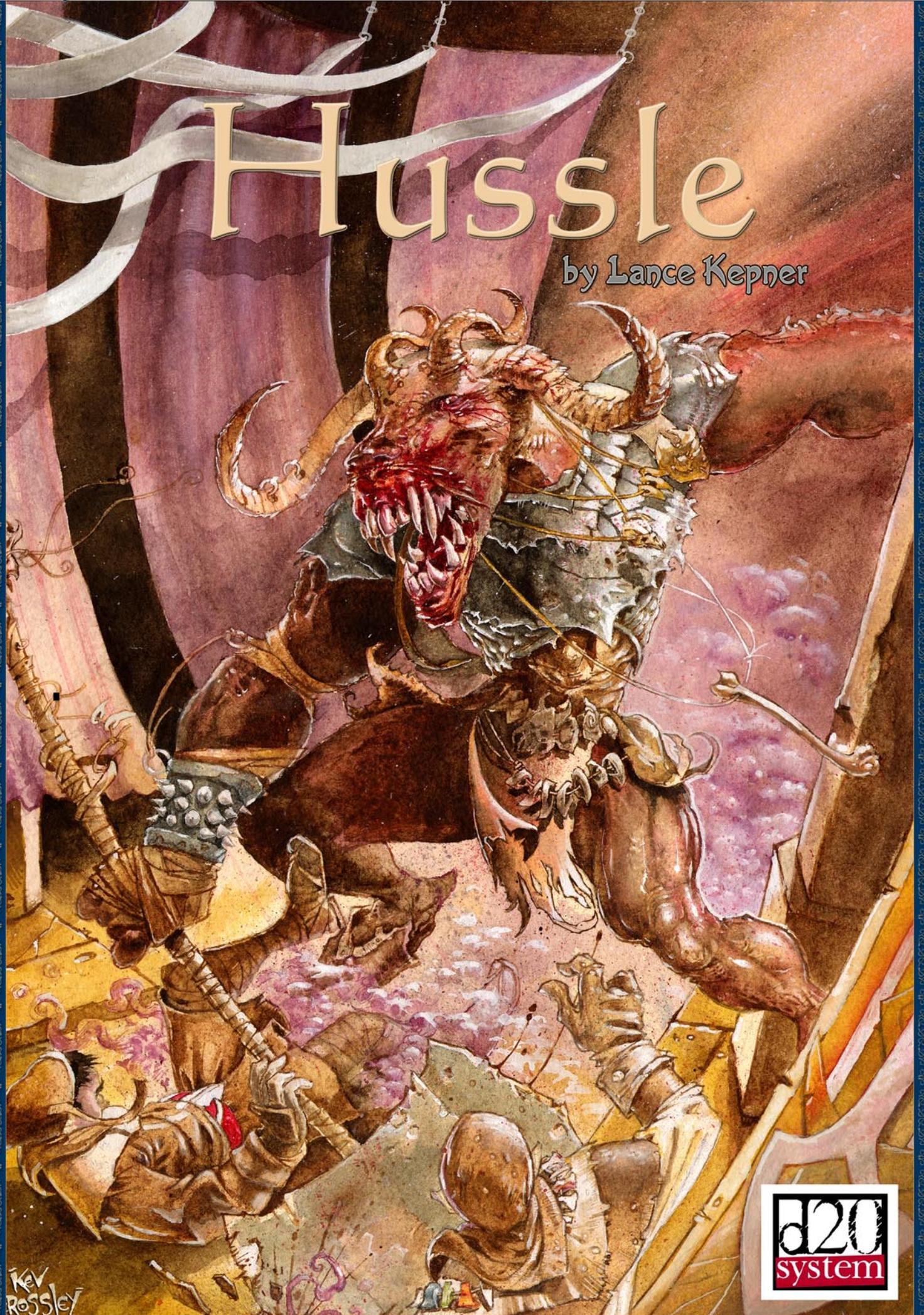


Hussle

by Lance Kepner

The Adventure Foundry : Hussle

by Lance Kepner



Key Rossley



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*Requires the Dungeons & Dragons® Core Rule Books,
published by Wizards of the Coast, Inc.
This book utilizes updated material from the v. 3.5
revision.*

Additional Credits

Editing: Dana Driscoll

Cover Illustration: Kevin Crossley

Interior Artwork Credits: Kevin Crossley, Kosala Ubayasekara

Layout and design: Kosala Ubayasekara

<<http://www.silven.com>>

About the the Author

When not writing for food, Lance Kepner can be found running sessions of D&D at local Gamer's Anonymous gatherings. Powered by the esoteric and motivated by the phases of the moons he also heads the Project: Crossroads open-world building project hosted by Silven Crossroads, as well as freelance writes for ENWorld

About the Editor

In addition to working on several Silven Publishing projects, Dana Driscoll is editor-in-chief of the *Silven Trumpeter*. The *Silven Trumpeter* is a monthly PDF magazine devoted to all things related to RPGs. She is also currently graduate student working on her PhD in linguistics at State University of New York: Stony Brook. While she currently resides on Long Island in New York, she grew up in the wooded Appalachian mountains of Western Pennsylvania.

About the Artists

Kevin Crossley is Silven Publishing's lead contract artist and works out of the UK. You can see his online home at:

<http://www.kevcrossley.com>

Kosala Ubayasekara is the founder and site admin of Silven Crossroads and Silven Publishing and when not working on these, he can be found honing his pool skills in the local poolhall or volunteering for public service in the local townhall.

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Abbreviations

PHB = Players Handbook

DMG = Dungeon Master's Handbook

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"Hussle" is a mini-adventure designed for the Dungeons and Dragons 3.5 edition role playing game, and is suitable for four characters of 4th level.

Adventure Summary

This adventure takes place solely within the quaint, remote town of Elysburg. The adventure begins with the player characters (PCs) simply entering the town. They can be coming from a recent adventure or on their way to a new one. The gracious people of Elysburg greet the party with respect and admiration and see to their every need. The PCs are lavished with grooming, baths, clothing, and entertainment—everything they could possibly need or want—for a price.

The fair town of Elysburg has learned that agricultural income is far inferior to the influx of money adventurers can bring in. So the town has devised a method of sapping every hard earned coin from their adventuring guests. The town, lead by the beautiful half-elf Cleric of Trickery, Ariadne Moonsleight, traps incoming adventurers in a tale of horrific plights and terrible monsters. No good adventurer can stand idly by and watch the poor defenseless town be ravaged by such foulness. But, unbeknownst to the townsfolk and our fair adventurers, the town's invocations of a false god have the attention of the demigod Mardax, and his scorn could tear the town asunder.

Adventure Background

The small town of Nordburg (now Elysburg) has had its hardships. The local cave systems in the nearby hills are ripe with orc and goblin raiding parties. For two hundred years, the orcs and goblins have raided the small town, taking what provisions they could from the agricultural community. They would frequently make off with bundles of food, barrels of water, livestock and occasionally a few slaves.

Many adventurers came to Nordburg in the past to try and halt the orc and goblin raids, and they almost always succeeded, at least for a while. It was too expensive on the town's coffers to keep calling in adventurers every five or six years to take care of their reoccurring problem. The town tried to build defenses against the raiding parties but the walls always fell, the village ransacked, and even more slaves were taken. For countless years the citizens of Nordburg lived in fear. That is, until ten years ago, when a young half-elven cleric was traveling through the town.

Ariadne Moonsleight was a wandering Cleric of Trickery, simply trying to pass on the word and stay out of trouble. When the townsfolk approached her, she felt compelled to help them. She devised a means to bring them a source of income that wouldn't rely solely on the fallowing fields—a nearly bottomless resource that replenished itself over and over with little maintenance—the wealth of adventurers. The town was overjoyed, and accepted the proposal, and Nordburg became Elysburg, named after the perfectly peaceful place and state of being.

Scaling the Adventure

"Hussle" is designed to challenge four 4th level characters, but it can easily be modified for parties of different sizes or levels. Consider the following:

2nd-3rd level PC's: The town may not take so much money from the young adventurers, or they may rob the inexperienced travelers blind. In the final showdown with Gu'uldak, remove the 2 barbarian levels and run him as a standard Minotaur.

5th-6th level PC's: The town will need to be wary to not tip their hand to the PC's. Give Ariadne Moonsleight 2 more rogue levels with bluff and diplomacy max ranks. Also give Gu'uldak 4 levels of barbarian.

7th+ PC's: The town will need to be extremely wary that the PC's do not catch onto their scheme. The PC's at this level have many items to part with but also much magic to use. Make Ariadne Moonsleight have 1/2 the party's level in rogue and +1 the party's level in cleric. Gu'uldak as one opponent may not be the best option for the powerful PC's. Make Gu'uldak have as many barbarian levels as the party level, and consider adding multiple regular Minotaurs into the fight accompanying Gu'uldak.

Remember that scaling the encounter means scaling the treasure. A higher-level Gu'uldak may possess more magical equipment, and possibly a magic weapon.

Soon the town had a plan, they would lure the adventurers in with a tall tale of a vengeful Minotaur that appeared in the mist every week at nearly the same time. If it was not appeased by massive amounts of food it wreaked havoc, tearing the poor town apart. Only the person known as "The Deliverer" could put an end to the beast once and for all.

Of course, it is all a lie, there really is no Minotaur, it is merely a costumed towns person. And the elaborate Prophecy is a script that will keep the adventurers interested and spending money in the town until the final climactic conclusion.

The stories and disguise also worked on the orcs and goblins, for they have not raided since the Minotaur stories have been circulating.

But the God of Minotaurs, the Horned One, deity of power and strength, Mardax has been informed as to the towns' invocations against his children. Mardax's intentions are clear; he will destroy the town showing no mercy. The device he will use to accomplish this task is not only raw destructive force, but also brutal irony. The townsfolk have invoked one of his children, the Minotaur, and Mardax will grant them their desire.

THE HAMLET OF ELYSBURG



N

0 10 20 30

MAYOR'S HOUSE

Tavern/INN
(HAS 2 FLOORS)

STABLES

TAILOR

GENERAL GOODS

SMITHY

SMALL TOWER

THE HAMLET OF ELYSBURG



TAVERN/INN
(HAS 2 FLOORS)

STABLES

MAYER'S
HOUSE

TAILOR

GENERAL
GOODS

SMITHY

SMALL TOWER



Prophecy

The Prophecy of the town is not actually written down. It exists as verbal lore. It is changed every time a new adventuring party enters town, and a new Deliverer must be chosen. The words or phrases in brackets are often changed.

"In the mist it comes by the week,
A hulking mass to feed upon the meek.
It's eyes glow red as coals in a fire,
The town has a plight of utmost dire."

"Look to the road, a figure will come,
A [traveler] by trade to see thy will done.
Dressed in [cloak] and [sword] of unmistakable light,
The Deliverer arrives to end the plight."

"Dressed in the garb of old,
[He] is to be bold.
Aiming the arrow true,
From the Bow Valoo,
Striking the heart of the beast,
Ending the plague with a feast."

The Prophecy is almost never recited in full. Ariadne made it up and isn't the best at poetry, but neither are any of the other townsfolk. If sections need to be read, they are read with great embellishment.

The Adventure Begins

Have the party approach the town at or near sunset, then read or paraphrase the following to the players:

The setting sun is shining, ready to end a beautiful day as you round the last bend and catch glimpse of a quaint farming village. A warm bed and a hot meal are on your thoughts as you enter the town. You don't see too many townsfolk about, but the ones that you do witness seem to be overjoyed when they see you.

Soon you are approached by numerous townsfolk, all of them talking excitedly and touching your clothes, weapons, and packs. They do not seem to be trying to steal but rather are doing so in admiration of your splendor. The crowd grows to mass quicker than you could imagine, and it soon seems as if the entire town is surrounding you.

A strong woman's voice breaks through the clamor and you instinctively look around for her location. Standing near the edge of the mob, parting the crowd as she walks towards you is a beautiful woman wearing the robes of a holy person.

"Calm down my friends," she says addressing the crowd. "I too know why they have come, and I am here to confide in you that indeed the great Deliverer has arrived!" With an eruption of the crowd's applause and jubilation, the woman raises her hands in the air. "Be calm my fellows, be calmed! It is a great time for us all, prepare the feast, alert the town, the Deliverer has arrived!"

The eruption of the crowd is near deafening, but you are more curious about who or what this 'Deliverer' is. As the crowd disperses the woman, as if sensing your thoughts, approaches and says, "I know you have many questions, come."



It takes Ariadne two minutes to arrive once the crowd begins to gather. This is more than enough time for her to cast her line of detection spells. She tries to get a feel for the PCs at this point, knowing who is evil, good, and chaotic. She tries to recognize obvious characters first.

Clerics or paladins with shining armor and a holy symbol, rogues in blacks, rangers in green drab, druids with a companion, etc. Any visual clues to class can save her some spells and time. Her priorities are *detect evil*, and *detect good*, followed then by *detect chaos* to see which one is more suitable to be charged with the service of 'Deliverer.'

Ariadne has been doing this for ten years, and has gotten relatively good at picking out Deliverers who won't cause problems. She more than likely goes for chaotic and naive character. She will choose a halfling or half-orc first, playing to their strengths and weaknesses. Humans and gnomes followed by elves, half-elves, and dwarves. The latter three tend to be stubborn and able to thwart her plans more readily.

The town does not deal with evil persons. They will explain it was a misunderstanding, and bid them farewell. If the evil members insist, they will tell them of the orc or goblin caves in hopes that they depart.

When she is done assessing the party from afar, she enters the crowd.

1. The Mayor's House

If the party decides to follow, Ariadne uses this time to make up her mind about which party member will be the Deliverer. Read or paraphrase the following:

The woman takes you through the remaining crowd to a large house near the center of town. You are asked to take a seat in a very comfortable room. There are many chairs and even a couch to lounge upon. A warm fire crackles in the stone fireplace near the center of the room.

"I am Ariadne Moonsleight", the woman says entering the room and occupying a chair. "I will start with the basics. You are in the town of Elysburg, a quiet and peaceful village wracked by a terrible plight. Old legends of a prophecy tell of the coming of a traveler that will rid us of the evil befalling the town. This person shall be the Deliverer, and shall deliver us from evil. And," turning her head to look directly at the chosen one, "you are the prophesized. Of this I am absolute."

The party will undoubtedly have questions about what is plaguing the town and what the Prophecy is. (See the *Prophecy sidebar for information regarding questions concerning the Prophecy*). Ariadne will answer the questions the best she can; she found that giving information is the easiest way to earn trust. She tells the party that a huge hulking beast with horns and horse legs torments the town. She also will tell them that it shows up at the end of every week, at midnight, and in a cloud of mist. It demands food, animals, and an occasional slave. The requested items are produced and the beast vanishes into the same mist from whence it came. This constant plight is taking terrible tolls on the village stores and morale.

Ariadne Moonsleight, Female Half-Elf Rog2/Clr3: CR 5; Medium Humanoid (5' 5" tall); HD 1d6+3d8+6; hp 42; Init +1; Spd 30ft; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Atk +5 melee (Masterwork Rapier, 1d6+1), Atk +6 ranged (Masterwork Crossbow, Light, 1d8); SQ Immunity to *sleep* spells and effects, +2 vs Enchantment spells or effects, +1 on Listen, Search and Spot checks, +2 on Diplomacy and Gather Information checks, Elven Blood: Can use racially specific powers as if an elf, Sneak attack:+1d6, trapfinding, Evasion, Domain Power: Bluff, Disguise and Hide are class skills, Domain Power: Luck power, reroll one die once per day, Divine spells, Domain Spells, Spontaneous casting, Cannot cast opposed alignment spells, Turn undead: 6/day, AL CN; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +9, Str 12 (+1), Dex 12 (+1), Con 10 (+0), Int 13 (+1), Wis 17 (+3), Cha 18 (+4).

Skills: Appraise +3, Bluff +12, Climb +3, Concentration +3, Diplomacy +16, Disguise +8, Forgery +3, Gather Information +5, Jump +3, Knowledge religion +3, Ride +4, Spellcraft +3, Swim +7,

Feats: Iron Will, Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Alertness.

Spells Prepared (4/3+1/2+1, base DC = 13 + spell level): 0 - *detect magic, light, mending, read magic*; 1st - *change self (D), detect evil, detect good, detect chaos*; 2nd - *invisibility (D), enthrall, zone of truth*.

Possessions: Masterwork rapier, masterwork light crossbow.

2. The Week

Elysburg (Hamlet): Conventional; AL NG 800-gp limit*; Assets 25,000gp; Population 390; Isolated (95% human, 3% halfling, 2% other).

Authority Figures: Acting mayor Ariadne Moonsleight, female half-elf Rog2/Clr3.

Others: Town guards, human War1(10); Exp3 (5); Exp2 (3); Exp1 (36); Adp3 (1); Adp1 (1); Com1 (344).

Notes: Elysburg's main industry is swindling from adventurers. The town does support itself with farms, smithies, and goods, which are sold to a relatively nearby city. The town has an old, worn down barricade that is no longer functional.

* The increased gold is specifically related to the town's function.

Have the party enter the town near or at the beginning of the week, so they have a full week to spend in town. The person chosen as the Deliverer is required to be at five special ceremonies. These ceremonies are disguised training for the final night. They are meant to keep the Deliverer into the con, and away from the outside influence of the other party members. The five ceremonies are conducted in order, take most of the day, and are seen to by an assortment of townsfolk. The ceremonies are:

- The Ceremony of Bathing - Where the Deliverer sheds all past wrongs and is cleansed in mind and body.
- The Ceremony of Dressing - Where the Deliverer is adorned in beautiful garments and lavish dress.
- The Ceremony of Insight - Where the Deliverer is put through a typical day in town.

- The Ceremony of Combat – Where the Deliverer is taught where to stand and how to use the Bow of Valoo (See the “Bow of Valoo” sidebar for more information).
- The Ceremony of Slaying – This is the final ceremony when the Deliverer destroys the foul beast.

The Deliverer must attend all ceremonies and will be begged to if they do not want to. The townsfolk use the excuse that the prophecy must be upheld or the beast will destroy them.

The rest of the party is free to relax in town for the four or five days. While relaxing has its benefits, if the townsfolk have their way, the party’s coffers and money pouches will be quite dry. Most of the townsfolk are excellent barterers by now. They will try to drive the cost up as much as the party is willing to pay for services or goods. The townsfolk will not, however, drive the prices up to a ridiculous amount so as to alert the players to their suspicious nature.

Generally, raise the prices of all mundane items by double. Masterwork items are also double priced. Real magic items are triple priced.

Below are a series of events, or cons, that can happen in town. Feel free to add in your own con.

- The inn charges each character two gold pieces a night for the common room, 5gp a night for single rooms, and 10gp a night for single rooms and 3 square meals.
- Stable boys request two gold a night per horse, and a five silver piece tip for them.
- The general store has double prices on all items.
- A local wizard, Darian, has been brought in the second day to cast *magical aura* on some weapons and armor. The prices on these “Artifacts of the Old World” are displayed are at or below market price. Thus a great deal is the +1 Holy Longsword for a mere 3000 gold pieces.
- All forms of rigged gambling takes place at the inn during the night. Rigged card games and dice games will try to net the house cash without leaving the PCs questioning. (If you want to do this in the open, and have a trick die, or know card tricks, feel free to play them out to gain trust.)
- Numerous townsfolk offering any kind of imaginable service, for a price of course, will approach each of the players. These services could range from doing their laundry, to cleaning their weapons and armor. Sometimes, the local blacksmith may even be involved in making a fake copy of a character’s magical weapon and having the wizard Darian create a magical aura on the fabricated weapon. The weapons are then switched.
- Local maidens will also ‘offer’ themselves to male party members for a night’s pleasure. Men of the town will also approach female party members for the same pleasures.
- Merchants will try and sell as many gadgets and foreign trinkets as they can well over market price. Merchants have found that adventurers like nifty gizmos and gadgets. They will stick to selling very obscure objects that people would rarely ever see. Sometimes these objects may be completely fabricated and non-magical. Some examples include:

Bow of Valoo

The Bow of Valoo is hailed as the mighty weapon that will fell the great foe plaguing the town.

In actuality, it is simply a masterwork shortbow with *nystul’s magical aura* cast onto it.

The bow is intricately carved out of a single piece of darkwood.

Just before the final ceremony begins, the local mage Darian casts a form of *true strike* upon the bow, making sure the fired shot hits the designated target exactly where it should.

Leviathan Teeth, 1000gp each (Ivory Carvings worth 50gp, Appraise DC 20 to determine actual price)

Authentic Dragon Scales, 50 gp each (Leather patches with dried and cured alligator or snakeskin, all varieties, 2gp, Appraise DC 22 to determine actual price)

Again, feel free to add your own con. Word travels fast around town, so if the party starts getting suspicious, the town backs off for a while. You should secretly keep track of all the money the town has been able to make off the players; it will come in handy later.

3. The Big Night

After the Deliverer is prepared for the night, a feast is held in the evening. The feast includes full of meats and vegetables, fruits and wine. There is a large celebration, as would be expected by a town believing they are about to be liberated. When the time approaches for the Deliverer to get into position, read or paraphrase the following:

As the long hours to midnight draw near, the celebration eases down and the towns’ anxiety grows. A little before midnight, Ariadne steps forward and says, “My fellow citizens of Elysburg, it is time, once and for all, that we are ridden of this foul evil. I present to you, your Deliverer and our savior!”

The Deliverer is asked to get into the position taught in the Ceremony of Combat, and await the arrival of the beast. Tense moments follow as the special arrow is knocked in the mystical Bow of Valoo, and all eyes are on the sacred spot.

From out of thin air, a mist begins to form around the spot where the beast should appear. Slowly it grows until a large ten-foot area is completely covered in a shroud of white fog. The crowd is utterly silent until a huge beast like form steps out of the fog. The being stands nearly ten feet tall, has a set of large protruding horns jutting from its head. Large hands extend from its weirdly shaped torso that is covered in mismatched and misshapen tufts of animal hair.

Upon command, the Deliverer fires the arrow true and smoke erupts out of the beast’s chest as it wails in despair.

The smoke fills the air until the beast is completely out of sight and is gone. The crowd cheers and the Deliverer is hailed a hero.

Allow the celebration to continue for a few seconds, but allow the PCs a Spot check (DC 14) and Listen check (DC 18) to see and hear the following.

Out of the corner of your eye, you see a purple glow in the smoke filled remnants of the beast's original location. Within moments, you are gazing at a similar beast, but this one has two sets of large protruding horns jutting from its massive skull and its hulking build supports two huge clawed hands and cloven feet. Above its head it holds what looks like the original beast, which is now clearly a man inside a makeshift costume. It looms in the mist, tosses the disguised man to the side, and then speaks in guttural common.

"I am Gu'uldak, Champion of Mardax. You have angered the Horned One and now must suffer. All shall know His might through me!" The raging beast glares at the Deliverer and runs forward, knocking townsfolk over as it charges!

Allow a Knowledge Religion skill check (DC 22) to know that Mardax is the god of Minotaurs.

Creature: Gu'uldak is very angry and will fight to the death. See "Tactics" below for specific combat notes.

Gu'uldak, Minotaur Barbarian: CR 6; Large Male Monstrous Humanoid; HD 6d8+24 (Monstrous Humanoid), 2d12+8 (Barbarian); hp 91; Init +1; Spd 40; AC 17; Atk +13 base melee, +8 base ranged; Attack: +13 (1d8+3, Gore) or +14 (2d8+9, Huge Greataxe Masterwork); Full Attack: +14/+9 (2d8+9, Huge Greataxe, Masterwork) and +13 (1d8+3 Gore); SA: Powerful Charge (Ex); SQ: Darkvision 60ft; Fast Movement (Ex), illiteracy, natural cunning (Ex), rage (Ex) 1/day, scent (Ex), uncanny dodge (Ex); AL CE; SV Fort +11, Ref +6, Will +5; STR 23, DEX 13, CON 18, INT 10, WIS 10, CHA 6.

Skills: Intimidate+9, Jump+7, Listen+15, Search+4, Spot+15, Survival+4. Minotaurs receive a +4 racial bonus to Listen, Search, and Spot checks (already added).

Feats: Great Fortitude, Multiattack, Power Attack.

Languages: Common, Giant.

SA-Powerful Charge (Ex): A Minotaur typically begins a battle by charging an opponent, lowering its head to bring its might horns into play. In addition to the normal benefits and hazards of a charge, this allows the creature to make a single gore attack that deals 4d6+6 points of damage.

SQ-Natural Cunning (Ex): Although a Minotaur is not especially intelligent, it possesses innate cunning and logical ability. This makes it immune to *maze* spells, prevents it from ever becoming lost, and enables it to track enemies. Further, the creature is never caught flat-footed.

SQ-Scent (Ex): A Minotaur can detect approaching enemies, sniff out hidden foes, and track by sense of smell.

Possessions: Huge Masterwork Greataxe, a *brooch of shielding* (absorbs 101 points of *magic missile* damage),

Potion of *cure moderate wounds*, and Masterwork Leather Armor (large).

Tactics: Raging immediately, Gu'uldak uses his Powerful Charge (Ex) ability to rush the Deliverer in the first round of combat. Gu'uldak takes down one enemy at a time, concentrating on injured party members or spell-casters first. If he is low on health, he will attempt to heal using his *potion of cure moderate wounds*. He prefers to pull out his huge greataxe after the initial charge to quickly cut through enemies.

Treasure: In addition to Gu'uldak's possessions, you should roll his treasure on the appropriate chart using standard loot.

Conclusion

If the party manages to slay Gu'uldak, the ground rumbles for a brief instant and then all is calm. The townsfolk come out of hiding to praise the party for being true heroes. A successful Diplomacy skill check (DC 15) will allow the players to get back any of their true items they may have lost and 25% of the money. A check result of 25 or more will give them back 75% of the money. If the party is friendly, Ariadne will approach the players and thank them and ask them to swear to keep the town's secret. If the players don't agree, she is willing to offer them free room and board for as long as they wish, and 1000 gold pieces.

If all the players die to Gu'uldak, he moves onto the townsfolk and begins burning the village until nothing is left.

Continuing the Adventure

If the players survive, it is possible to have further adventures. They could willingly assist Ariadne in conning new adventurers. The party could seek out Mardax and his minions and go on an epic quest to end his destruction. The party could also use this encounter with a Minotaur to jump-start their adventuring careers. They could go in search of other monsters. Alternately, if Gu'uldak manages to somehow survive and escape, he could return to wreak havoc on Elysburg, and other nearby towns. He could even raise an army of orcs, goblins and other minotaurs.

If the players die, new characters can be formed solely for the purpose of ridding the world of Gu'uldak who is now growing in power, doing Mardax's will.

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Hussle

Hussle is a mini-adventure designed for the *Dungeons and Dragons 3.5 edition* role playing game, and is suitable for four characters of 4th level.

Take a quick detour from your regular campaign to stop by the Hamlet of Elysburg, where festivities mix with deception and adventure awaits!

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