

# RANSOM AT FALCON'S CREST

BRING HER HOME ALIVE

Bandits have kidnapped the eldest child of one of Timbertown's prominent citizens. If you bring her home alive, your rewards will be great, and your standing in the town increased. But if you fail...

**A 5e adventure for 4-6 characters of level 3-5.**

BY **R P DAVIS**

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# WELCOME!

**Ransom at Falcon's Crest** is an adventure for experienced players with low-level characters. It is set in Timbertown, a barony in Impiltur, a kingdom on the Sea of Fallen Stars in the Forgotten Realms. For more about Impiltur see the [Forgotten Realms Wiki](#). For more about Timbertown, click [here](#).

The adventure is suitable for convention play, and can be easily dropped into any setting, though it is specifically designed for the Forgotten Realms setting [Timbertown](#).

## MECHANICS

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This adventure is designed to be played using only the D&D 5<sup>th</sup> Edition Player's [Basic Rules](#) Version 0.3, the Dungeon Master's [Basic Rules](#) Version 0.4, and the [System Reference Document](#). Of course the Player's Handbook, Dungeon Master's Guide, and Monster Manual contain all the information required and more, and you are encouraged to use them to their fullest extent.

Damage is listed thus: 4 (1d6) - this means you can either simply impose 4 points of damage or roll 1d6.

Monsters are highlighted in **bold**, e.g., **wight**. Full monster stat blocks are included in an Appendix at the end of the adventure for your convenience.

Magic items, spells, and magic effects are highlighted in *italics*. New magic items and spells, if any, are included in an Appendix at the end of the adventure for your convenience.

Important game terms are given in bold italics, like ***Inspiration*** or ***difficult terrain***, to ensure you know when a game term is being referenced, and so you can look up that particular rule before play begins so as to familiarize yourself with it.

## WARNING!

The encounters in this adventure have been calculated assuming a well-balanced party of five 4<sup>th</sup> level adventurers. The encounters are designed to reward clever play and punish the

unwary. If your players are used to heedlessly rushing headlong at problems, their characters will very likely be quickly slain.

It is assumed that "well-balanced" means the core party roles of Warrior, Arcane magic-user, Rogue, and Divine magic-user are filled. The adventure is specifically designed to have something for every role to do. A party which lacks any of these roles **will** have a tough time.

If your party is larger or of a different level than that indicated, the adventure is likely still useful. Simply consider increasing or decreasing the amount of foes the characters will face - if the encounter calls for 2 monsters, for instance, add another. Alternately, add a second wave of foes to a battle.

Non-combat encounters are also provided. They are crucial to the successful completion of the adventure. You may judge success without reference to die rolls, of course, though success/fail mechanics are provided should you wish to use them. The mechanics are listed as "DC [number] [skill] check," e.g., "**DC18 Wisdom (Perception) check**."

## GENERAL NOTES

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- Please familiarize yourself with the adventure by reading it **thoroughly** before play. The wise DM knows what is going on so she can improvise if need arises.
- To assure ease of use in play, print the pages containing the adventure proper double-sided, and print the pages with monster statistics, maps, and player handouts single-sided.
- Maps, important NPCs, new and unique magic items, and new and unique monsters are found in Appendices at the end of the adventure.
- Mini-maps with DM-specific information are provided in-line with the adventure text.
- Feel free to embellish read-aloud text as you see fit.

## ENJOY!

# RANSOM

*"She doesn't even have shoes on." He was trying to reconcile something in his head while talking to Luke.*

*"In all the time you spent in that shack, you forgot to pack her shoes?" Luke asked rhetorically, shaking his head in both wonder and disappointment.*

*"Look, we're in the boonies. I am sure shoes are optional, as are a full set of teeth."*

– Jenna-Lynne Duncan, *Hurricane*

## SUMMARY

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The daughter of a prominent local citizen has been kidnapped. The characters are hired to trade money for the girl. The citizen, however, plans to double-cross the kidnapers, the girl wants revenge, and the characters get caught in the middle.

## BACKGROUND

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Banditry is a fact of life in Faerûn. Even in settled lands in times of peace, circumstance can drive men to lives of crime. Where lands are wilder, the rule of law is even less in evidence.

So it is in the Barony of Timbertown, in the northeast of the Kingdom of Impiltur. Since the loss of the King, and the ebbing and waxing of the Sea of Fallen Stars, the central government of the Kingdom has suffered setbacks. On the frontier, Timbertown, with its vast areas of the Dunwood, suffers badly from bandits. Farms which lie much farther from the town than a mile as the crow flies are small fortifications of their own, and the hamlets which of which Baron Ferrand has encouraged settlement by hardy souls are always installed on walled hilltops.

One of the Barony's most successful farms, owned and controlled as virtually a fief unto itself by a man named Ogdan Deg, is a morning's walk upriver from the town. A tenday ago, Ogdan's oldest child, his daughter Evi, was kidnapped. A gang of bandits and slavers operating in the area of Degsthorpe happened on the 16-year-old Evi Deg as she was hunting rabbits in the Dunwood accompanied by a servant. The bandits cruelly slew the servant and took the girl, though she badly wounded one of the ruffians with an arrow from her slender bow.

The leader of the bandits, who styles himself "Sir Hamond," sent a ransom note to Ogdan Deg. The note, accompanied by a lock of the girl's hair, demanded a large sum of money. Ogdan plans to send the treasure chest to the bandits as instructed, but does not wish to send his own men-at-arms. Thus he sent word to Timbertown to hire a group of adventurers to deliver the ransom.

Ogdan Deg does not wish to use his own men because he is less than sincere about getting his daughter back. He is unsure of Evi's parentage, due to the circumstances of her birth and having given too much ear to whispered rumors from the lips of his servant, Tren Kordred.

Ogdan's first wife has been dead for many years. His second wife, Zalra, was a young woman suddenly widowed when her husband was slain clearing forest in Ogdan's employ. Ogdan was smitten by Zalra, and married her within weeks of her first husband's death.

Evi was born nine months later. She looks like neither of Zalra's husbands; Evi strongly favors her mother.

Ogdan had doubts about Evi's paternity from the girl's infancy. As his firstborn, she stands to inherit Ogdan's holdings. Ogdan, however, treats his other two children, a daughter and toddler son, with far more tenderness and appreciation, due to his misgivings as to Evi's parentage.

Further straining their relationship, Evi is a headstrong girl who refuses to marry the man Ogdan has selected for her, a neighboring landowner of advanced years but great wealth. She finds the old man revolting. But it is Ogdan's great wish to expand Degsthorpe exponentially, solidifying his status and etching his name in Timbertown's history.

Tren Kordred's whispers also do their part. Tren has been in Ogdan's employ for the past ten years, and Ogdan trusts Tren. Tren has given Ogdan excellent advice over the years, so Ogdan sees Tren as an advisor as well as manservant. Tren Kordred, however, is not all he seems. He is not merely an agent of the Fraternity of Tharos, the once-mighty secret society of fiend worshipers who held great sway in Impiltur; he is himself an incubus. The Fraternity, seeking to regain its former prominence, is seeding doubt and discord wherever it can, and Degsthorpe is just one thread in its twisted skein.

Tren has been trying for years to convince Ogdan that Evi is not his true heir. From the instant Tren took service with Ogdan, Evi has mistrusted and deeply disliked Tren Kordred. Tren knows she would oppose any suggestion he might make, so he only wishes her gone. With Evi out of the way, Tren hopes to marry Ogdan's other children to candidates selected by the Fraternity. The kidnapping has been a golden opportunity for Tren to suggest that Evi isn't worth recovering. He also sees a golden opportunity to turn Degsthorpe into an enclave of the Fraternity.

Why, he asks his master, spend a fortune for a daughter very likely not of his issue? Are there not two other children who are unquestionably his? Best ignore the demand, Tren advises. Let the kidnapers sell her off to slavers.

As far as Tren can determine, this whispered advice has not quite worked, as Ogdan knows that rumor of such a decision would reach prying ears in Timbertown. At best it would very negatively affect his business interests in the Barony. At worst it would involve an uncomfortable interview with the Baron and the captain of his Warsword. As far as Tren knows, Ogdan is planning to ransom his daughter.

Ogdan Deg, however, is determined to do no such thing. He has no intention of paying most of his fortune for a child he's not certain is his and who greatly annoys him. He wants to be rid of her. He is also furious at the sheer gall of the bandits, walking free under the sky in his lands. He wants to be rid of them. He thinks he has devised a plan which will satisfy both desires. That's where the heroes come in...

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## SETTING THE HOOK

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The clever DM will set up this adventure by foreshadowing. Mention the bandit problem, how they've been a nuisance to outlying farms and hamlets, in NPC gossip. Mention a scene where a local youth escapes slavery and returns home. Whatever you choose, insert it during play at least one adventure before this.

The party can get wind of this mission through gossip in one of Timbertown's watering holes, or take note of a poster advertising for adventurers. As a last resort, Ogdan Deg will send an invitation by courier to the leader of the party requesting the heroes visit him to discuss the matter.

If the heroes want to gather some background on their potential employer, it is common knowledge that Evi has been kidnapped, and that Ogdan is a wealthy, prominent landowner and businessman who has a reputation of remembering his friends to their profit, and of ruthlessly exploiting his tenants and workers.

If the PCs decide to accept the invitation, that man will lead them to the office Ogdan Deg keeps in the town from whence he conducts his business. Usually his business is done through an agent. For this matter, however, he has made the trip to town himself to size up his prospective employees.

When the Heroes are ushered into his office, they see Ogdan Deg and Tren Kordred.

Deg is a heavily-built, strong man, medium in height, with a thick beard under a shock of grizzled hair. He is richly dressed in a tunic embroidered with precious-metal threads and a cape of rare furs. Tren Kordred is rail-thin and tall, with a pronounced, jutting nose parked over a drooping, scraggly mustache. Deg is seated behind an ornate wooden desk, and Kordred stands behind him.

Read or paraphrase the following:

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*Ogdan Deg's gray eyes are bloodshot, and there are dark circles under his eyes. He has a very minor tic under his left eye, and his movements are slightly erratic.*

*As soon as you're all in the room, he speaks: "I thank you for answering my call. As you likely know, my daughter Evi has been taken into the hills by wild men. They want money." His eyes flash. "I'll send them their gold. But I need someone to take it there and fetch back my Evi. I'd send my own men, but I can't trust them."*

*Tren Kordred nods in approval at that last statement. "Very wise, my lord," he pipes in a reedy tenor. "They would be tempted with that much coin."*

*Deg looks up at Kordred then at you, sizing you up. "I've heard good reports of you," he says. "You won't risk my girl's life with those men. You're experienced adventurers. You'll bring her back safe and whole. I offer you each 150 gold to take the chest with the ransom and bring back my Evi. But..." He pauses and smiles. "...payable on the girl's safe return. Of course."*

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If the heroes accept, he offers a cart to carry the ransom, to be picked up at his freeholding of Degsthorpe. The heroes are on their own to get there.

If the heroes attempt to haggle a higher price for their services, Ogdan can be talked up to 200gp per PC, but no higher, as he says he cannot pay them more as well as scrape together the cash for the ransom. His involuntary movements get worse the higher the heroes haggle.

If the heroes decline the mission, Ogdan Deg glares at them for a long moment. Then a frightening rictus of fury fills his face and he roars at them to "Get out." If they don't leave at once, he begins throwing items.

If the heroes ask to see the ransom note, show them Handout #1.

**Roleplay Note:** Ogdan Deg suffers from a mental illness: Paranoia. He is not quite schizophrenic, but close. He is naturally prone to this condition, and Tren Kordred has been pushing him closer to the edge.

According to WebMD and other sources, people with paranoid delusions are unreasonably suspicious of others. They believe that others are persecuting them. They mistrust others and remain often in a state of suspicion. They believe that other people will exploit, harm, or deceive them, even if no evidence exists to support this expectation. They perceive hidden demeaning or threatening meanings into benign remarks or events. They perceive attacks on their character or reputation that are not apparent to others, and are quick to react angrily or to counterattack. They have recurrent suspicions, without justification, regarding the fidelity of their spouse or sexual partner.

Please take careful note of your players! Playing this character to his full extent may be a trigger for them. As his condition is crucial to the plot, altering or removing it is problematic for the successful running of this adventure. But your players' healthy enjoyment of the game is **always** more important than any other consideration, so tread carefully.

Make sure the players pick up on the physical manifestations of Ogdan's growing madness. Depending on which skill they wish to use, they may discover information:

- A successful **DC14 Wisdom (Insight) check** reveals Ogdan isn't revealing everything about the situation. Succeeding at **DC18** reveals he's deliberately holding back something important. If taxed with this, he will in no case reveal what that is (his plan to double-cross everyone).
- A successful **DC14 Wisdom (Medicine) check** reveals Ogdan has a mental illness. Succeeding at **DC18** reveals he suffers from paranoia.

The players may also wish to discover information about Tren Kordred:

- A successful **DC10 Wisdom (Perception) check** reveals Tren is not from around here. He has features which are clearly Mulhorandi.<sup>1</sup>
- A successful **DC14 Wisdom (Perception) or Wisdom (Insight) check** reveals that Tren Kordred is manipulating Ogdan Deg.
- A successful **DC18 Wisdom (Perception) check** reveals that Tren is making small, surreptitious hand gestures. Those who notice the gestures who also succeed on a **DC20 Intelligence (History) check** recognize the gestures as a special sign language used by agents of the Fraternity of Tharos.
- A successful **DC20 Wisdom (Perception) check** reveals the slight smell of brimstone from Tren Kordred.

If the characters question Ogdan or Tren about the bandits, they reveal:

- Bandit activity has picked up since spring. Travel these days is much more dangerous than last year.
- The man who styles himself "Sir Hamond" is of no order of knights in Impiltur, though rumor has it he is a man of breeding and principle.
- Sir Hamond's lieutenants are truly bloodthirsty.
- Sir Hamond's gang has been taking and selling people into slavery.
- The gang operates out of a disused hunting lodge deep in the Dunwood called Falcon's Crest.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Ogdan will tell them to seek him the following evening in his house at Degsthorpe. He will ride ahead and greet them when they arrive.

<sup>1</sup> See here for more information:  
<http://forgottenrealms.wikia.com/wiki/Mulan>

# THE ROAD TO DEGSTHORPE

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The characters must first journey to Ogdan Deg's petty fiefdom. Ogdan rules his holding from a motte-and-bailey settlement he calls Degsthorpe. From there they can journey to fulfill their mission. Unless the heroes have mounts, it will take a full day to walk from Timbertown to Degsthorpe, leaving at dawn and arriving at dusk.

The characters will encounter a bandit raid on the way. After the characters set out from Timbertown, read or paraphrase the following:

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*You left Timbertown early in the morning. Since then, you traveled through well-ordered farms. As you have reached The Downs - the lower foothills of the Giantspire Mountains - the farms became interspersed with rolling hills, with pastures of sheep and goats. Farmers and shepherds waved to you as you passed.*

*An hour ago, you entered the eaves of Dunwood, and the atmosphere immediately changed. The refreshing autumn breeze died, and the air became still and stuffy. Now, the well-traveled road follows the contours of the wooded hills beneath your tired feet. You cannot see much more than a few yards into the thick forest growth. There is a stream splashing in a mossy bed to the west of the ancient road, with the forest rising sharply to either side.*

*You've been hearing twigs snap and animal noises, though you haven't been able to see anything. There is a tension in the air. It's as though the forest is waiting for something to happen.*

*The road bends around the base of a hill, and a dozen yards ahead a small stone bridge arches over the stream where it cuts across the road. A lone figure stands on the bridge.*

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The figure is Edmonde Evyngar, a lieutenant of Sir Hamond, who is leading a squad of Hamond's gang on a robbery spree.

Edmonde is all smiles, full of confidence, a shock of curly auburn hair above a youthful face above a body wrapped in a green cloak. When the heroes approach, Edmonde will wave, casting his cloak aside to reveal his left hand resting loosely on the hilts of his scimitar. Read or paraphrase the following:

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*"Hello, friends!" calls the fellow. "I'm delighted to meet you, and I'm very much afraid this is a toll collection."*

*He waves dramatically at the bridge. "This bridge," he says. "Was erected at very great expense by friends of mine, and they have entrusted me with the power to collect a toll of all those who would use it."*

*"That's the bad news, friends," he says with a grin on his face that could light a room. "The bad news is the toll is rather steep. 100 gold coins of your choice, Waterdeep, Baldur's Gate, Sembian, it matters little, per person, in the little chest there." He points at a chest off to one side of the path.*

*Then his face becomes grave. "I should note, in case you might be thinking you can pass without paying the toll, that there are chaps in the bushes very nigh at hand with dirty great shiny crossbows aimed right at you. 'Twould be a pity were they forced to practice their marksmanship."*

*He brightens again. "So pay up, there's good lads, and nobody gets hurt. What say you?"*

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The bridge, of course, has been there for several hundred years, and looks exactly like a bridge that's been there for several hundred years. This is Edmonde's racket. Treat Edmonde as a **bandit captain** who commands eight **bandits**.

The bandits are hidden in the bushes on the slopes of the hills above the bridge, stream, and path. If combat is joined, they will fire their crossbows unless directly engaged in melee. They enjoy **half cover** from their prepared positions, and are camouflaged; creatures spot these positions with a successful **DC16 Wisdom (Perception) check**.

Once the bandits are spotted, getting at them is harder than it looks. The wooded slopes are covered with loose leaves and debris like fallen limbs and stones, making the slopes **difficult terrain**. The bandits' positions are 40' away from the road.

If the fight goes against the bandits, for example if half their number is slain, they will flee. If Edmonde is slain, they will flee.

Should the heroes capture and question a bandit, they will not reveal information except under pressure. A successful **DC16 Charisma (Intimidation) check** or a bribe of at least 200gp will convince a bandit being questioned to reveal their allegiance.

**Treasure:** In the chest is 25gp, 382sp, and 582cp.

# DEGSTHORPE

A few hours after the bandit encounter, the characters arrive at Degsthorpe. Read or paraphrase the following:

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*The sun's last rays highlight plumes of wood smoke over the trees ahead. As you round the bend, the trees give way to a clearing about a half-mile across. The clearing contains an area of cottages and farm fields surrounding two tall hills on which stands a motte-and-bailey fortification. The road winds through the cottages and gardens to the lower bailey. This must be Degsthorpe.*

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A motte-and-bailey castle is a fortification with a keep situated on a high raised earthwork called a motte, accompanied by an enclosed courtyard, or bailey, all surrounded by a protective ditch and palisade. Degsthorpe has a large bailey which contains a small village. A stream running south from the Downs has been diverted to provide a moat surrounding both motte and bailey. A bridge wide enough to admit an ox-drawn cart crosses the moat on the south side.

There is a small area, such as that which a merchant caravan might find useful as a camping ground, just outside the moat, next to the bridge to the bailey.

Show the players the Degsthorpe map page.

1 - Ogdan Deg's House. A two-story dwelling, the first level of which is dressed stone and the second timber. The roof is slate shingle.

2 - Nanny Alys. The elderly Nanny Alys brews fine ale. This is the only place in Degsthorpe a visitor who isn't a guest of the Deg family can find a bite to eat and a drink. Those rare visitors requiring a place to sleep can bed down in the stables to the rear of Nanny's.

3 - Blacksmith. Deg has employed Turgun, a dwarf from the Redforge clan, for the past decade. Characters can have simple armor repairs made, and buy arrows and bolts here. No other armor or weapons are available.

4 - General Store. Jaralath Daven is a half-elf and a member of the Timbertown Merchant Venturers. He keeps the Degsthorpe settlers supplied with the dry goods they need to wrestle a home from the Dunwood. He does not carry a large selection of adventuring gear, though he has such necessities as rope and lamp oil.

The other buildings pictured on the map are simple peasant dwellings. All buildings save Deg's keep are whitewashed timber

with thatched roofs. Most have small kitchen gardens, filled with herbs and vegetables such as beans and carrots.

Degsthorpe is peopled by 40 souls. Save Turgun and Jaralath, all the denizens of the motte and bailey are human. Some of the shepherds are halflings, but the rest of the outlying farmers are human as well.

If the heroes ask the way to Deg's house, any Degsthorper will briefly point up to the motte before immediately going about her business.

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**Roleplay Note:** Every un-named NPC the PCs meet in Degsthorpe is curt and dour, communicating in monosyllables. Jokes are met with snorts of derision. The only people who might laugh are the PCs.

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The characters are free to explore Degsthorpe, but there isn't much to see. It's likely they'll immediately go to meet with their sponsor, Ogdan Deg.

## GOING TO SEE OGDAN DEG

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When the heroes approach the gap in the palisade which gives onto the causeway up to the motte, they will be stopped by guards. Read or paraphrase the following:

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*As you walk up to the causeway entrance, two men in chain mail and helmets, bearing spears - all rusty and ill-maintained - bar your way.*

*"Where be you a-goin'?" asks the one on the left, a tall, rangy man with three days growth of salt-and-pepper stubble. The other, a short, stout fellow of far fewer winters, looks less irritable but still bars the way.*

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These men, Loric and Gerung, are **guards**. Loric, the tall, stubby one, does all the talking. He is surly and insolent. The guards are under orders to permit no one entry into the motte until further notice. He doesn't care who the heroes are or what they tell him. Nobody's getting into the motte until morning.

If the heroes ask what they're supposed to go or where they're supposed to go, Loric tells them that as far as he's concerned, they can go straight to the Nine Hells. But they might be able to find a place to sleep at Nanny's, down by the bailey gate.

No amount of pleading or reasoning will change Loric's mind, and Gerung defers to Loric. **Charisma (Persuasion)** or **(Intimidation) checks** to get past the pair succeed on **DC25**.

A successful **DC12 Wisdom (Insight) check** reveals that Loric is mostly bluster, and that Gerung looks less sure of himself. Gerung is much more amenable to **Charisma (Persuasion)** or **(Intimidation) checks**; if he can be spoken to separately from Loric, characters attempting those checks on Gerung enjoy **Advantage** and the checks are reduced to **DC18**.

Any PC who manages to get past Loric and Gerung will have to deal with another pair of guards at the top of the causeway ramp who have the same orders. Any PC who manages to get past *those* guards will have to deal with six more who come rushing out of the house to see what all the fuss is about.

The only other place to get overnight lodging is Nanny Alys's. Asking a Degsthorper where they can sleep will tell them to go to Alys's first.

## WAITING UNTIL NIGHTFALL

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The players may decide to wait until nightfall and infiltrate the motte. If a PC manages to get inside the motte's wall, the door to the Deg family residence is locked and all windows are shuttered. Two guards rove the yard and gardens which surround the house, and will attack any intruders while sounding the alarm. The alarm draws two more guards every round until the invaders escape, are captured, or slain.

Any attempt to infiltrate the motte, whether by getting past the guards in the daytime or sneaking in at night, will result in Tren Kordred appearing, tearing up the contract, and having the PCs arrested. They will then be transported to Timbertown, hauled before the Baron, and charged with burglary, housebreaking, and spying for the goblinoid tribes which plague the Giantspires. This, of course, ends the adventure.

## PLACES TO SLEEP

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If the heroes decide to camp outside the bailey's walls, they can do so securely at the caravan campground. The bailey's gates will be closed and locked at nightfall, to be opened again tomorrow at dawn. There is plenty of space to spread out bedrolls around a fire-pit, or to set up tents (should the heroes have those). The only water source is the outflow from the moat, however; creatures who drink the water must succeed on a **DC12 Constitution saving throw** or become **poisoned** until the disease is cured. Every 24 hours that elapse, the creature must repeat the saving throw, reducing its hit point maximum by 5 (1d10) on a failure. This reduction lasts until the disease is cured. The creature dies if the disease reduces its hit point maximum to 0. Boiling the water before drinking prevents this entirely.



# NANNY ALYS'S ALEHOUSE

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If the heroes decide to visit Nanny Alys's alehouse, read or paraphrase the following:

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*The gravel before the alehouse is neatly raked. There are two benches, one on either side of a brightly-painted red door. A fir-tree branch is stuck in a sconce near the window, signifying a fresh batch of ale has just been tapped. The window's shutters are open, and you can hear the sound of conversation from within.*

*As you open the door and step within, however, that conversation abruptly ceases. Seven pairs of eyes stare at you. The eyes say, "Strangers. What do **they** want?" without a word being spoken.*

*Most of the eyes belong to human men, hardworking men of the land. One pair belongs to a beardless, young-looking man with slightly pointed ears. He winks at you.*

*The silence is broken by a small, wrinkled old woman, who bustles into the small, smoky room from a curtained doorway at the back.*

*"Well then, children, come in, come in," she says. "Have a cup, have a sup, and tell us a story."*

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The little old lady is Nanny Alys. She is a cheerful, but no nonsense, woman of about seventy winters, her winter-apple face topped with a bright blue hood from which strays a wisp or two of silver hair.

She offers the heroes a simple meal of goat stew and vegetables, with fresh brown bread and butter, excellent cheese, and fruit tart to finish, all washed down by her excellent home brew.

Alys bustles and fusses over the heroes as well as the other customers, treating them like children. She peppers her bustling with observations of how thin her customers are, does no one feed you, goodness, I'll have a word with your wife, here have another bit of bread and cheese, you're wasting away.

This is clearly a kind of game to the men in the room. In fact, the heroes note the men in the room are wearing the first smiles they've encountered in Degsthorpe.

After you've roleplayed through this for a bit, read or paraphrase the following:

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*After you finish your meal, Alys raps a wooden spoon on the plank set upon two ale barrels which serves as a bar.*

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*"Now, children," she says. "Give us a song or a poem or something. Come on, then, don't be shy. Who's first?"*

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This is a chance to award **Inspiration** for amusing performances. Poems, songs, interpretive dance, encourage your players to try it. Make it clear that simply rolling dice will not do.

Once all the players have had a chance to perform, select the character you think Jaralath would consider the most urbane and refined. Then read or paraphrase the following:

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*During the last song, the half-elf man nudges your elbow. "Have you a moment?" he asks, betraying a much more refined accent than the locals. "Let us retire outside and fill our pipes. I would have news from civilized lands."*

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The man, Jaralath Daven, is desperate for company of higher quality than the rubes which comprise his customer base. He is much better spoken than the humans of Degsthorpe. He will ask about the latest news from Timbertown. He will settle for tales of the heroes' exploits, of course.

Being an inveterate gossip, Jaralath is also a fount of information on Degsthorpe and the kidnapping. If he is comfortable with the character with whom he's talking – you can simply make this decision or make it a successful **DC12 Charisma (Persuasion) check** – he will reveal the following:

- Ogdan and Evi Deg have an uneasy antagonistic relationship.
- There is considerable doubt about Evi's parentage.
- Evi is headstrong and extremely intelligent.
- Evi has refused to marry the man Ogdan has chosen for her; Ogdan is furious.
- Zakra Deg is a pleasant woman, but not very bright.
- Tren Kordred manipulates Ogdan Deg; he's very good at it.
- Tren is dishonest; he's clearly working in someone else's interest, but Jaralath doesn't know whom.
- The bandits have been getting worse in recent months. Ogdan Deg has tried to do something, but can't seem to rid the Thorpe of them.

If asked why Degsthorpers are so negative, he says:

*"Life on the frontier is hard. Life in the Dunwood is worse. Life on the frontier in Dunwood under an oppressive landlord like Ogdan Deg – or rather his steward – is enough to turn anyone to drink."*

According to Jaralath, Ogdan Deg is not a nice man at all. He is a harsh master, demanding, and greedy. He taxes his tenants too harshly. He enriches himself and gives his tenants little in return.

Nanny Alys knows the same rumors as Jaralath. Should the heroes avoid Jaralath, they can get the same information from her, just with a more grandmotherly delivery.

Moreover, she knows Ogdan Deg isn't Evi's father. If pressed for evidence, she says with a twinkle in her eye something on the order of, "Some of us was there when she was a-borning, child."

Drinks and meals at Nanny Alys's cost each PC according to the **Food, Drink & Lodging** rules. She offers accommodation at the **Modest** level in the stables behind her establishment, which are clean and dry, well stocked with warm straw.

## THE NEXT MORNING

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The heroes wake to a dreary, overcast morning. It's not quite rain, but close; it feels like it could rain any minute, and the dampness seeps through clothing as soon as they dress and go outside.

Whether they spent the night camping or at Nanny Alys's, as soon as they go outside, read or paraphrase the following:

---

*It's a damp, cold, misty morning. Tendrils of fog wind writhe through the fields which surround the Thorpe, issuing from the forest a bowshot away. The chill began to seep into your bones the minute you left your warm blanket.*

*You take a deep breath, yawn, and stretch. When you open your eyes, you see a disheveled young man in the maille and stained tabard of one of Ogdan Deg's guards limping toward you.*

---

If the heroes met Loric and Gerung the previous evening, they recognize Gerung. Gerung sheepishly apologizes for any altercation or disappointment yesterday, and asks the heroes to come with him once they get themselves together. If the heroes dally, he will become increasingly agitated, noting that Master Ogdan is already "upset," and delays won't make him any better.

Observant heroes who succeed on a **DC12 Wisdom (Insight) check** will note Gerung is very worried about something. If questioned, he is reluctant to answer, but if pressed will admit there's "summat wrong" with his master. Gerung observes "He don't talk right sometimes," that he often "thinks folk done him wrong when they ain't," and that "he had one o' his fits last night."

If the heroes ask why Gerung has a limp, he will shyly tell them he had an accident one day three years ago. He was cutting lumber with a team of foresters deep in the Dunwood when he missed the mark with his axe and hit himself in the leg. His friends rushed him back to the Thorpe, but by then it was too late for Nanny Alys's curative herbs to take full effect. He didn't lose his foot entirely, but he's had a limp ever since. The only employment available to him since the accident has been as a guard for the Deg family.

All of the other guards are street toughs, little better than bandits, newly hired by Tren Kordred. Gerung is the only native Degsthorper, and the only one hired by Ogdan Deg himself;

Zalra begged Ogdan to find Gerung a position. This worries Gerung, for it is against the tradition of hiring guards from the local population of farmboys.

Though Gerung doesn't know it, Tren Kordred has been hiring mercenaries who care little about the habits of Ogdan Deg, ensuring by high salaries they remain loyal to Kordred alone. When the time comes to discredit Deg and place himself in charge of the fief, he will have a cadre of well-bought retainers to supplement the Fraternity of Tharos members he plans to bring in to supplant the people of Degsthorpe and make a base of operations for the Fraternity.

## THE MASTER'S HOUSE

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Gerung escorts the party up the causeway to the motte. At the gate to the motte, the guards there insist the heroes divest themselves of weapons and armor, if they choose to go to this meeting. If they argue, Tren Kordred appears on the house's porch. Read or paraphrase the following:

---

*Friends, it is by Master Ogdan's order that no gear of war be worn or carried in his presence. We may not proceed until you remove such armaments and raiment. Please. Time is of the essence.*

---

Heroes who doubt Tren's intentions and succeed on a **DC16 Wisdom (Insight) check** note he is suppressing a smile. He appears pleased that the heroes will come into the house unarmed.

Once the characters have doffed their weapons and armor – yes, even aged wizards will be forbidden to lean upon their sticks – they will be permitted inside. Read or paraphrase the following:

---

*Most of the ground floor is a great hall, dominated by a huge hearth in the north wall. Windows of expensive, imported glass fill the room with a faintly green light. Ogdan Deg sits at a table before the hearth, a banquet of food and drink laid out before him. A middle-aged woman, Deg's wife Zalra, sits next to him, eyes rimmed red from weeping. Tren Kordred stands at Deg's other side, and two guards with spears flank the door through which you just entered.*

*"Welcome, friends," says Kordred. "Master Ogdan insists you join him in this meal in your honor." He waves to benches opposite Ogdan Deg.*

---

Observant players will note that Deg isn't talking. Characters who succeed on a **DC12 Wisdom (Perception) check** note that Deg's eyes never rest on any one place for long; they dart around the room, and his tic is working overtime.

If the heroes ask Deg a direct question, Kordred intervenes smoothly, excusing his master as slightly unwell. Indeed, after a few minutes, Deg abruptly rises and flees upstairs. The woman rushes after him, pausing only to look at you beseechingly and say, "Please, bring my baby home."

Kordred briefs the party on their mission:

- Take a chest full of money to a rendezvous with the bandits and make the exchange.
- The chest is a magical heirloom with a lock which opens only to the touch of a family member. The lock can be picked, but immediately snaps shut again.
- There are no mounts available for the party to buy or hire. There is, however, a mule and cart to carry the chest, which is very heavy.
- Falcon's Crest is an ancient, ruined hunting lodge deep in the Dunwood on the slopes of the Giantspires.
- No one in Degsthorpe knows the way to Falcon's Crest other than a vague "Somewhere to the north you'll find a road. The road follows a stream."
- The party will be met by a member of the gang later that same morning. That person will guide them to the rendezvous.

After delivering the above, Kordred insists the characters eat and drink their fill. On the surface he appears pleasant, but characters who succeed on a **DC16 Wisdom (Insight) check** note that he's not being perfectly transparent; he's hiding something.

If they haven't already seen it, Kordred shows them the note (see Handouts, below).

Should the heroes ask for them, he agrees to supply dry rations and basic supplies like rope, spears, and crossbow bolts from the thorp's stores.

After the heroes finish their meal, Kordred sees them to the door, where they collect their valuables. Two guards wait outside with the mule and cart; two others carry the heavy chest to the cart, place it into the back, and cover it with a canvas tarpaulin.

Kordred tells them to wait outside Nanny Alys's for the bandit representative to make contact.

Read or paraphrase the following:

---

*As soon as you drive the cart back down the hill and pull up outside Nanny Alys's, you see a pale-skinned, red-haired man covered in freckles ride in the bailey's main gate.*

*He wears a heavy cloak, though the hood is thrown back to show his shock of flaming hair.*

*"You must be the ones I've been sent to find," he says. "Good. You're on time. I'm Gavyn. Let's get underway."*

---

Characters who wish to discern more about this man and succeed on a **DC12 Wisdom (Insight) check** note that though he appears non-chalant and friendly, he is tense and his eyes are stony dead. He is clearly a man with whom it is unwise to trifle.

# FALCON'S CREST

Falcon's Crest is a crumbling, overgrown fortified house about a day's walk from Degsthorpe. The track leads north from Degsthorpe, deeper into the Dunwood and toward the Giantspires proper. Gavyn will lead the way.

The party will not experience any random encounters while traveling to Falcon's Crest.

## GAVYN

---

Gavyn should clearly be a threat to the party. Before the group sets out, read or paraphrase the following:

---

*You're about to snap the reins and get the mule moving when Gavyn turns in his saddle to glare at you. "You might be thinking about doing something unpleasant to me," he says. "Forget it." He pulls aside his cloak to reveal an assortment of cutlery.*

*"Remember, my pretties," he hisses. "Even if you do manage to do me harm, there's slavers we can easy sell the girl to. 'Course, that'd be after she was...friendly...to us. For a week or so. Keep that in mind if you daydream about being in charge here."*

*He looks each of you up and down. "Come no nearer to me than ten paces. Let's go."*

---

If the heroes attack Gavyn, he will try to use his Cunning Action to give them the slip rather than fight.

If the heroes slay or drive off Gavyn, they can attempt to follow the track to Falcon's Crest themselves; a successful **DC16 Wisdom (Survival) check** shows the way.

## SKILL CHALLENGE

---

The forest track which the party must use in order to make use of the cart is disused and partially overgrown, making travel difficult. The mule will not like it at all.

The character driving the cart must succeed on three **DC12 Wisdom (Animal Handling) checks** before suffering three failures. Another character can **Help** the driver.

Success in the challenge means the journey is completed without incident.

Failure in the challenge means the mule stubbornly refuses to go one step farther. The heroes will have to succeed on a **DC16 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check** to get the mule moving once more or devise some way to carry the 300-pound chest.

They may be tempted to simply have the strongest member of the party carry it. That character's stats may allow it. However, the chest is unwieldy as well as heavy. Warn the players that the character carrying the chest will have to take the first round of any combat to put the chest down and arm herself before engaging in combat. They won't have any encounters, of course; this is intended to be an exercise in how creatively the players approach the problem, should it arise.

The heroes approach Falcon's Crest from the south. As they approach, read or paraphrase the following:

---

*For the last few miles, you've been following an old road, curbed with stone. Much overgrown now, the road is centuries old, and weeds grow out of cracks in the cobbles.*

*About a half-mile back, the road joined course with a clear, cold brook which splashes through a rocky course downhill. You have been working steadily uphill ever since.*

*The road emerges from the forest's canopy and you pause to let your eyes adjust, as the sun is high and bright. A few dozen yards ahead, there is a steep embankment, easily 20 feet high. The stream tumbles over in a waterfall, collecting in a pool at the embankment's base.*

*A few yards to the east of the pool, the road follows a ramp to the top of the cliff. Atop the cliff, there is an ancient fortified manor house. The walls are mostly ruin, crumbled through centuries of neglect or wrecked by war, you cannot tell at this distance. There is a tall tower nearest the ramp, easily 25 feet tall with crenellated battlements on its top.*

---

What happens next depends on what the heroes did earlier.

**If the heroes attacked Gavyn and he escaped**, when the heroes arrive they find the place deserted. A disturbing note is prominently placed on the well: A severed finger in an envelope, along with another note. The envelope is addressed to Ogdan Deg. The note reads, "Here's a keepsake of your precious daughter. You have one more chance. Send better ambassadors. - Hamond."

If the heroes search around for more clues or information, they may trigger a **Collapsing Roof trap** in Area B. The trap is spotted with a successful **DC16 Wisdom (Perception) check**, and can be disabled with a successful **DC14 Dexterity check** by a character proficient with *thieves tools*. It can also simply be triggered by using a pole or rope to knock over a thin wooden prop.

When a creature searches the area without disabling the trap, the ceiling begins to collapse. Any creature in the area beneath the unstable section must succeed on a **DC 15 Dexterity saving throw**, taking 11 (2d10) bludgeoning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. In any case, they will find nothing which gives them a clue as to the gang's or Evi's location. Try as they might, the bandits have vanished.

---

If the characters fail in this way, when they return to Degsthorpe, a furious Ogdan Deg will throw them out, banning them from ever setting foot in his holding thereafter, and will ensure the tale of their incompetence reaches the taverns of Timbertown. The adventure is over.

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**If the heroes slew Gavyn**, add the following:

---

*For an instant, you see a figure atop the tower. Just as quickly, it disappears.*

---

Unless the heroes have been being very deliberate and careful, their approach has been noticed.

**If Gavyn remains with the heroes**, he pauses with them at the forest's edge. The heroes may wish to leave the road and try a different route up the escarpment.

Gavyn instructs them to avoid such foolishness. He trots his horse up the ramp, ordering the heroes to follow as before. When the party reaches the gap in the south wall, Gavyn orders the heroes to halt and wait, then trots his horse east, around the tower and out of sight.

If the characters fail in this way, when they return to Degsthorpe, a furious Ogdan Deg will throw them out, banning them from ever setting foot in his holding thereafter, and will ensure the tale of their incompetence reaches the taverns of Timbertown. The adventure is over.

#### FEATURES OF THE AREA.

**Light:** The sun is well up. Areas under roof are in deep shadow, granting creatures hiding advantage to stealth checks.

**Movement:** The crumbling walls are difficult terrain, either to climb over or move through a gap. The stream is also difficult terrain, and is 10 feet wide. The tower is covered with vines, granting advantage to Athletics or Acrobatics checks to climb. The escarpment is easily climbed, requiring no check, but the cart can only be driven up the ramp.

**Cover & Concealment:** The walls offer half cover and total concealment to anyone behind them.

## THE RUINS

**Warning: This encounter is deadly for a party of 5 3<sup>rd</sup>-level characters!** If you have a smaller, lower-level party, remove one or two bandits.

Hamond and his gang are cunningly hidden around Falcon's Crest, ready to spring a deadly ambush on any threat they perceive.

The gang consists of:

- Sir Hamond
- Wisgar
- Gavyn - a human male **spy**
- Ysac, Joskin, Aldus, and Americ, all human male **bandits**

Refer to the map. Ysac hides at A. Aldus and Americ hide at B. Joskin hides at C. Each is doing his best to remain out of view, but keep the heroes in the sights of their crossbows. Roll **Dexterity (Stealth) checks** for each and compare to the heroes' **passive Perception** scores. If the heroes detect the bandits, they know they bandits are there and behind cover.

Through the gap in the wall, the heroes can see into the courtyard. Read or paraphrase the following:

*You can see a flagstone-paved courtyard within the lines of the walls. Brush and weeds poke up through the stones, and piles of cleared brush are in the corners. The collapsed remains of outbuildings are opposite the mostly-intact tower in the southeast corner.*

*In the center of the courtyard is a well, a round stone wall about 4 feet high on which several wooden buckets lie.*

*Leaning on the well are two figures. One is a hulking half-orc man. His left hand is missing, replaced with a metal fake. A wicked scimitar is thrust into his belt, and he wears little more than coarse trousers and a leather vest.*

*The other is a tall human man wearing gleaming plate armor. His helmet hangs on his greatsword, which leans against the well wall, and he runs a gloved hand through long, blond hair.*

*The half-orc spies you. He grunts and indicates you with a thrust of his chin.*

*The human man turns to regard you haughtily. "Finally," he spits. "Where is my money?"*

The human is Sir Hamond. The half-orc is Wisgar, Hamond's lieutenant. Their stat blocks are in **Monsters & NPCs**, below.

Sir Hamond is imperious, arrogant, and haughty. He expects his orders to be obeyed instantly. Wisgar is silent and menacing.

If the heroes hesitate, Hamond will become more demanding, claiming he doesn't have an infinite supply of patience, do I, Wisgar? Wisgar will grunt in agreement. Hamond snaps his fingers and waves at the hero driving the cart to bring it into the courtyard. Read or paraphrase the following.

*"You, there. Bring the treasure to me. Drive the cart to the well, dismount, and return to your friends. Failure to comply will result in the girl's immediate death. At once!"*

If the heroes are fool enough to meekly comply, Hamond and Wisgar will mount the cart and drive it out through the opening in the east wall. Heroes with a **passive Perception of 16 or greater** hear the crack of the reins, cantering hoofbeats, and Hamond's chuckle as they race away with the loot. The other bandits melt into the woods, leaving Evi trussed up and gagged in Area B. None of them are ever seen again.

If the heroes refuse his instructions and/or demand to see the girl, Hamond grins and compliments them on their wisdom. Hamond snaps his fingers and the heroes see Gavyn (or Aldus, if the heroes slew Gavyn) dragging a young woman from Area B,

giving the heroes their first look at Evi. The villain drags the furious and struggling Evi to the well. The girl is the spitting image of Zalra Deg.

Hamond demands that the hero driving the cart bring the chest to the well, then dismount and rejoin the party. Read or paraphrase the following:

---

*"Should you be thinking of any thrilling heroics, peasants, think again," he sneers. He gestures at the tower and ruined outbuildings. "My men are strategically placed, and will shoot you down like dogs if you try anything."*

---

Hamond has no intention of double-crossing the heroes. In serious need of coin to keep his band together, he concocted this plan, hoping to strike it rich in one job. This will cement his authority over the gang of criminals as well we set him up in some style in a place like Uthmere.

When the hero leaves the chest and rejoins the party, read or paraphrase the following:

---

*At Hamond's gestured command, Wisgar hefts the heavy chest down from the cart and carries it over to the well. Hamond tries to open the chest, but cannot.*

---

Depending on whether or not the heroes slew Gavyn, Hamond, annoyed, orders Wisgar to contain the struggling girl so Gavyn can pick the lock. Otherwise, Wisgar kneels and pulls out some lockpicks, only to be stymied by the chest's magic. Hamond's color begins to rise as his fury mounts. Read or paraphrase the following:

---

*"What is the meaning of this?" the knight demands. "Is this some effort to cheat me? If it is, you shall regret it!" The bandit holding Evi roughly pulls her hair and she cries out in pain. Hamond whirls, pulls a dagger, and holds it dangerously close to the girl's throat. "Now," he hisses. "Someone kindly tell me how to open this chest."*

---

Assuming either the heroes or the girl tell him about the chest's magic, Hamond replaces his dagger and cruelly grabs the girl's wrist, drags her to the chest, and throws her to her knees in front of it. When she grasps the lock, it snaps open and remains so. Read or paraphrase the following:

---

*Impatiently Hamond knocks Evi aside to sprawl on the flagstones. He flings open the lid with a triumphant grin which you see change to puzzlement then furious rage. He grabs one corner of the chest and heaves it across the courtyard, spilling thousands of worthless lead coins onto the ground.*

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*The treasure is fake. Ogdan Deg has betrayed you and his daughter.*

*Hamond shrieks at you: "Where is my money? What is the meaning of this? Thieves! Now you shall die!"*

---

This was Ogdan Deg's plan from the beginning. He loaded the chest with worthless metal in order to provoke a fight in which he would rid himself of the bandits and his irritating daughter in one fell swoop.

**Tactics:** Hamond snatches up his sword and attacks the nearest hero in rage. The bandits fire from their prepared positions, targeting unarmored spellcasters first. Wisgar maneuvers to use his *pack tactics* ability in melee. He uses his metal hand as a shield (hence his AC). Gavyn maneuvers to *sneak attack* with ranged attacks wherever possible.

Evi is in no immediate danger, and scurries to cover as soon as the fighting kicks off. If the fighting goes badly for the heroes, Evi knocks out one of the bandits with a tree branch – Ysac at A would do nicely – and takes up his crossbow. Otherwise, she darts into Area B, grabs a spare crossbow the bandits left, and starts shooting.

If Hamond is slain, the other bandits flee if they can, except for Wisgar, who fights to the death over his master's body. Bandits who escape disappear into the forest, never to be seen again.

**Treasure:** Evi can show the heroes the gang's stash of valuables in the ground floor of Area B. There is a chest containing 1500 cp, 1100 sp, 40 gp, a *potion of fire breathing*, and 2 *potions of healing*.

In a hidden compartment of the chest (**DC20 Wisdom [Perception]** to find) is a velvet bag, in which is an unadorned silver ring. The ring radiates a dim aura of magic. A character who dons the ring will see a vision: A woman recognizable as Zalra Deg is smiling, holding and gazing with love at an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes. Looking on over Zalra's shoulder is a man the ring's wearer does not recognize. It is certainly not Ogdan Deg.

The chest is trapped. When the chest is opened without disabling the trap, the ceiling begins to collapse. The trap is spotted with a successful **DC16 Wisdom (Perception) check**, and can be disabled with a successful **DC14 Dexterity check** by a character proficient with *thieves tools*. It can also simply be triggered by using a pole or rope to knock over a thin wooden prop.

Any creature in the area beneath the unstable section must succeed on a **DC 15 Dexterity saving throw**, taking 11 (2d10) bludgeoning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Once the trap is triggered, the floor of the area is filled with rubble and becomes difficult terrain. The treasure chest is buried, but can be unearthed again in a few minutes.

There are also crates of provisions and bedrolls for each bandit. Each bandit's body has 2d10cp, 1d12sp, and 1d8gp. Wisgar's metal hand will fetch 50gp from a curiosity collector.

## AFTERMATH

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Evi thanks the heroes. As she showed in the battle with the bandits, she is no shrinking violet. She is a strong, strong-willed young woman under no illusions about what her "father" thinks of her.

If the players haven't twigged to Ogdan Deg's plan yet, she explains it. Read or paraphrase the following:

---

*Evi scowls. "Of course he set me up," she says. "He would. I'm sorry you got involved. Clearly his plan was to get us all killed. That would solve all his problems."*

*She has already armed and equipped herself from what the bandits have left. As she speaks to you, she begins to make a bundle of supplies from the possessions of the dead bandits, hands moving deftly and swiftly.*

---

---

*"He's hated me as long as I can remember. He's convinced I'm not his daughter."*

*She stands, dusts her hands, and looks you in the eye unflinchingly. "You know what?" she asks. "He's right. I can prove it."*

---

If the characters have the ring, she will ask for it. If they missed the hidden compartment, she will fetch it, because she watched Hamond place the ring therein.

Evi explains that the ring is an heirloom her mother gave her ages ago. The vision is of her, her mother, and her real father.

She is fuming, trembling with rage that Ogdan would stoop to setting her up to be killed. She wishes to return to Timbertown to put the story before the Baron, with the heroes as witnesses.

If a character is unsure whether the ring's vision is acceptable as evidence, a successful **DC10 Intelligence (Arcana) check** reveals that the ring is a fairly common magical memento, recording an image for posterity. It is impossible to falsify an image once it is imprinted.



# RETURN TO DEGSTHORPE

When Degsthorpe emerges to the party's eyes, read or paraphrase the following:

---

*Before you rises the motte and bailey of Degsthorpe. Unlike your previous visit, however, you see only one thread of woodsmoke coming from the buildings therein. The place looks deserted.*

---

Degsthorpe is effectively deserted. Deg's manor house is guarded by a half-dozen guards who are disinterested in leaving the safety of the house.

The thread of smoke comes from the chimney of Nanny Alys's.

## A WARM WELCOME

---

Depending on previous events, one of two situations meets the heroes when they walk into the bailey.

### SCENARIO ONE

If the heroes failed to slay Edmonde, he and six of his bandits will be found lounging in Alys's.

As the heroes approach, they will see one of the bandits get up from sprawling on the porch and hurry inside. A few seconds later, Edmonde will emerge. Read or paraphrase the following:

---

*On the porch of Nanny Alys's ale house is a figure you've seen before: The leader of the gang of bandits who tried to extort a toll from you on your way to Degsthorpe.*

*He smiles broadly and waves. "Well met once more, friends," he says. "Please forgive our presence here. We have no quarrel with you."*

*He sighs, making a face as though he suffers from terminal melancholy. "Nevertheless," he says, "I must insist you leave this place in haste. We do not wish to be disturbed."*

---

Observant characters - those who succeed on a **DC14 Wisdom (Perception) check** - will notice curtains twitching in other houses. Those who succeed by 4 or more also see the glint of sunlight on the sharp heads of crossbow bolts.

Edmonde and his men can be convinced to leave or frightened off if the heroes succeed on a **DC16 Charisma (Persuasion) or (Intimidation) check**.

**Tactics:** Edmonde and two bandits engage in melee, while the other four bandits fire their crossbows at the heroes from their hiding places, where they enjoy half cover, targeting unarmored spellcasters first. If Edmonde falls, the other melee bandits surrender, and the four archers run away.

If the heroes capture the bandits, they can turn them over to the guards who are cowardly holed up in the house on the motte. The guards place the subdued bandits into cells.

### SCENARIO TWO

If the heroes slew Edmonde, the loungers will be Ogdan Deg's **guards**. There will be one for each hero (including Evi), plus one extra for every two heroes. Thus, if there are six in the party, there will be nine guards.

As the heroes approach, read or paraphrase the following:

On the porch of Nanny Alys's, you see a pair of men in the shabby uniform of Ogdan Deg's personal guard lounging on the porch. As you approach, one of the sneers and spits at you as the other starts in surprise.

"What might you be wanting, my pretties?" the insolent guard demands. "Better clear off, is my advice. You're not welcome here, see?"

The guards have been told to run off anyone who doesn't live in Degsthorpe. If the characters threaten them, they attack.

**Tactics:** One guard for each character will engage in melee. The others will come running from the motte and engage with ranged attacks - they will hurl their spears - before joining in melee with clubs. Add the following attack to their stat block:

**Club. Melee Weapon Attack:** +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d6+1) bludgeoning damage.

When half their number are subdued or slain, the others turn tail and run up to the motte and lock themselves in. Heroes who search slain guards and find a contract which bears Kordred's signature as well as the symbol of the Fraternity of Tharos. If the characters fail to do this, Nanny Alys will point out a piece of paper stuck under one of the bodies.

## AFTER THE WELCOME PARTY

---

Assuming the heroes prevail, when the fight is over Nanny Alys emerges from her house. Read or paraphrase the following:

---

*You're wiping the flotsam of battle from your blades when you see the hunched, wrinkled form of Nanny Alys emerge from her house. She nods, steely-eyed, her jaw firmly set.*

*"Good on yer," she says. "Showed them thugs what for. Now come inside, have a bite, have a sup, and I'll tell you a story for a change."*

---

Over tankards of ale and a pottage of oats, barley, dried fruit and spices, Nanny tells them that, as it's been so long since Evi was taken, Ogdan Deg has taken the family and gone back to Timbertown to have her declared dead. The other dozen or so people who live in the Thorpe went with them, for Ogdan promised them a wake. Nanny remained, to serve the guards left behind to protect the Thorpe.

The heroes should have figured out that Nanny knew Evi wasn't Ogdan's daughter by blood. If they haven't, read or paraphrase the following:

---

*Evi gives Nanny a grave look. "You know, don't you?" she asks.*

*Nanny cackles. "Of course I do, dearie," she replies. "I was there when you was a-born. Your ma and da was head in the stars over each other, they was."*

---

---

*The ancient woman becomes serious. "And from now on I'll tell whoever wants to know," she says. "I been too long sayin' nothin' or tellin' lies."*

*She rises, takes a bucket of water to the coals in the hearth. Over the hiss of quenched fire, she asks, "Well, then, let me lock up, then we'll leave."*

---

Evi and Nanny immediately get up, ready to set out for Timbertown. Presumably the heroes accompany them.

They can commandeer riding horses from the stables in the bailey if they think to do so; if the heroes still have the cart, Nanny will wish to ride in that rather than on a horse.

If questioned about their motives for returning to Timbertown, Evi wickedly smiles and talks about how nice it will be to crash her own funeral. She says nothing more.

Nanny Alys grunts about wanting to set right what's been festering for far too long and seeing that Kordred man gets what's coming to him. If questioned about Kordred, she has long suspected him to be a member of the Fraternity, but has remained silent.

# RETURN TO TIMBERTOWN

The trip to Timbertown from Degsthorpe is uneventful.

When the party crosses Deep Creek Bridge coming back into town, they can hear cheers from the area of the Guildhall.

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*Making your way slowly across the market square to the Guildhall, you stop at the edge of a crowd of dozens of people. Below the balcony which juts from the Guildhall's second story over the square are tables groaning with food and good ale. The folk of the town, as well as Degsthorpers, are feasting themselves.*

*On the balcony, Ogdan Deg, somberly dressed, raps his tankard on the railing. "My friends," he intones gravely. "Fill your tankards and join me in a toast." He raises his mug. "To my darling...what...you!" he splutters, dropping the mug to the cobbles in the street, where it shatters noisily.*

*His mouth works, lips wobbling, but no words come out as he points across the crowd to Evi, standing with you.*

*"Hello, father," she sneers. "Surprised to see me?"*

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Also present on the balcony are Zala Deg, Tren Kordred, Gerung the lame guard, Reeve Hugin Guarin, Baron Ferrand Galadhor, and the Baron's chamberlain, Yvonus Grandore.

After a moment of shock and surprise, everyone begins to speak at once. Zala cries out in joy and surprise.

The Baron is confused, asking "What is all this?" Yvonus Grandore, long used to taking charge and getting to the bottom of questionable issues, briskly shouting for quiet.

Grandore sends Gerung to bring the characters, Nanny, and Evi through the crowd and up to the large dining room in the Guildhall's upper story. As they pass through the crowd, Evi, much loved by Degsthorpers, is thronged by smiling, cheering people, who hug her and shake her hand.

When they arrive, Ferrand is already seated in a great chair before the fireplace with Yvonus Grandore at his side. Ogdan Deg sits on the floor, rocking back and forth, Zala kneeling next to him and wiping his chin, Tren Kordred standing behind them.

Although Ogdan Deg is mentally unstable, he is not stupid. He recognized the consequences if his plan failed; if his betrayal was discovered, he would surely be stripped of his lands if not imprisoned. So he instituted a fallback scheme, planting documents on the guards and in Kordred's belongings which implicate Kordred as an agent of the Fraternity of Tharos and the

architect of Evi's kidnapping with the intent of sacrificing her to a demonic overlord. Any evidence the heroes have found of Kordred's involvement with the Fraternity reinforces this accusation. As Kordred really **is** part of the Fraternity of Tharos, this was overkill, but Ogdan didn't know that. In any case, that evidence does not trump the evidence of Evi's ring or the testimony of the characters.

Grandore asks the adventurers to tell the tale as they remember it. After they finish, Baron Ferrand asks if there was any evidence of demon-cult activity where Evi was held. (There was none; it was clearly a money grab.)

Evi tells of being taken by Sir Hamond and his bandits while hunting. She swears there was never any hint of demon worship or cult foolery. She asks the heroes to verify this, based on their fight and investigations at Falcon's Crest.

Ogdan Deg shouts manically about Kordred's Fraternity ties. The heroes can present this evidence, if they have it. Nanny Alys tells of her suspicions and urges the heroes to tell of the Fraternity signs found in the battle with the mercenaries.

When this is done, read or paraphrase the following:

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*All eyes turn to Tren Kordred.*

*The man sighs, then chuckles. "I tire of this, anyway" he says in a vastly different voice than before. "It begins to bore me."*

*There is a shimmer of magic, and where Tren Kordred stood now stands a demon, its wings and tail unfurling. Horns grow from his brow, eyebrows arching over eyes of pure red fire. His facial features otherwise remain the same.*

*"You didn't really think you did it all yourself, did you, human?" the incubus sneers at Ogdan Deg, who gapes at the fiend. "As for you," it says, turning to Baron Ferrand, "I shall consider it a coup to slay you."*

*It snaps its fingers, and six human cultists in dark robes and brandishing scimitars rush into the room.*

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Adventurers who have never seen a demon before must succeed on a **DC10 Wisdom saving throw** or be **surprised**.

**Tactics:** The **incubus** attempts to *charm* the nearest female hero and use its *draining kiss* on her. If this fails, he uses his *claw* attacks to fight clear and take to the air, with the intent to get out the double doors and into the darkening night sky. The **cultists** try to keep the heroes away from the incubus.

Evi rushes to her mother, joining Gerung to protect Zalra. Deg collapses into a gibbering heap. Treat Gerung as a **guard** and Evi as a **commoner**.

Ferrand leaps onto the table, brandishing a candelabra as an improvised weapon. Having battled demons before, Ferrand knows the incubus can only be struck by magical weapons, and will inform his allies of this at once. Hugin Guarin pulls a dagger from his belt and moves to protect his baron. See **Monsters & NPCs** for stat blocks for these two.

Ogdan Deg is useless. Yvonus Grandore will hide under the large, sturdy table and only act to stabilize allies reduced to 0 hit points.

If the party is larger than 5 PCs, or higher level, add more cultists: 2 more if the PCs are 4<sup>th</sup> level, and 4 more if they're 5<sup>th</sup> - a total of 6 cultists at 4<sup>th</sup> level and 10 cultists at 5<sup>th</sup>.

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## CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

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Award XP whether or not they slew the incubus; a defeat is as good as a kill, and the goal is to protect the "civilians" - Evi, her family, Baron Ferrand, et al.

After the battle, Ferrand calls the heroes together and thanks them for their bravery. Read or paraphrase the following:

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*"Friends," he says. "I am grateful for your valiant defense of myself and these people. Master Hugin will arrange for a reward for you to repay this debt. Use it with honor."*

*"Your excellency," says Yvonus Grandore. "As much as it pains me to interrupt, there remains the matter of Ogdan Deg."*

*Ferrand's face falls from the elation of battle to the pained look he gets when confronted by actually running his Barony. He turns to look at the pitiful figure of Ogdan Deg, who lies in the fetal position near the doors to the balcony. Zalra goes to him, but he flinches as she touches his shoulder and otherwise does not respond to her gentle questions.*

*"I fear he is beyond our justice, my lord," says Grandore.*

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*The Baron turns to you. "What would you have me do, friends?" he asks. "Placing such a wretch in prison seems useless and cruel."*

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Unless the heroes advise him to simply kill Deg out of hand, Ferrand will listen to their counsel. If they suggest no sensible course of action, he will command Grandore to commit Deg to the care of the priests at the Temple to see what can be done. When this is concluded, read or paraphrase the following:

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*"Now there is the matter of Degsthorpe. Counsel me once more, friends. Degsthorpe now has no master. I am minded to grant Degsthorpe to Mistress Zalra and her daughter here. It is only proper they retain their lands despite this poor man's treasons. What say you?"*

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Zalra and Evi are shocked, and effusive with their thanks, both to the adventurers and the Baron, who directs Grandore to draw up the papers forthwith.

**Treasure:** For the character who acted with the most daring and bravery, or who slew the incubus, award one *+1 item*. For a combat character, a *+1 weapon* or armor upgrade is appropriate; for an arcane caster, a *wand of the war mage +1* or some equivalent you think useful. Also, each character receives a chit for 200gp, to be paid at the castle at the characters' convenience.

**XP:** Total the enemies defeated or slain for XP. In addition, award 50XP per PC if no NPCs were slain in the final battle, and an additional 200XP if they advised Ferrand to be merciful to Ogdan Deg and his family.

The adventurers will have made a lifelong ally and friend of Evi and her loyal Gerung. They will always be welcome at Degsthorpe.

**FINIS**