

-----===== **The NET.PLOTS.BOOK** =====  
**Volume III**  
**Compiled by Phil Scadden and Aaron Sher**

Editors Note:

Compilation of this volume was originally started by Aaron Sher and has been completed by me. It contains plot and scenarios mostly for fantasy RPGs but some from other genres have also been submitted. (Come on other-genre players - get your contributions in for Vol IV). Plots have been presented in no particular order but there is a large Appendix which is a compilation of the responses to the "On the road you meet..." thread in rec.games.frp.misc. I have made only minimal changes (spelling usually) to the material as received. I hope everyone finds this enjoyable and useful.

Authorship of individual plots have been accredited individually with email address where I had them (missing from some collected by Aaron - if you can supply please email me). Author attribution is at the top of each plot. Authors appreciate feedback - if you use any of these try telling the author how you did. IT MAY WELL ENCOURAGE THEM TO CONTRIBUTE MORE PLOTS TO THE NEXT VOLUME.

Finally, my thanks to all who submitted these plots and especially to Aaron Sher who dreamt up the Net.plot.books in the first place.

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Author: Ben Davis  
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Local temple (agricultural type goddess) been generally lax and living it up, not actually doing much work in the way of religion. One of the PCs knows someone in this temple - is asked to do a favour. The major temple of the same religion is sending round a small group to "inspect" all the little provincial places. The report will be both a financial one (audit) and a load of interviews with the congregation. If the report gets done properly (ie truthfully) all the priests are in big trouble.

What the PCs are asked to do is to help alter the way the report gets done. The problem is that a report has to get done, that killing the visitors is a massive no go, and that the PCs are going to have to alter the perception of the temple and the surroundings without the visitors realising.

In the version we ran, the PCs got a hand from the priests in that the priests took care of the congregation (by buying them all drinks etc) and the party only had to deal with the visitors. They did this by finding out some background (5 visitors), and then seducing 2, getting 1 blind

drunk, bribing one, and blackmailing the last. Thus the report was written by the right people, and no- one's suspicions were raised.

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Staying in pub - landlady's daughter comes back from playing on the beach in the early morning to collapse - initial thoughts are that she's ill, further investigation will reveal she's been poisoned.

Turns out the kids (small group on beach) found a rowing boat aground, with a case in it. They nicked the case, found it was full of food, and eat it several die, all very ill (they didn't eat much of the food 'cause they didn't like it - unusual taste).

Food was being dropped off to be picked up by a caravan passing nearby, where it would be swapped for an identical case (unpoisoned) and sent on to its buyer, a powerful alderman (or equivalent) in a nearby town.

So - to help out the landlady the PCs have to sort out a number of things owner of the boat, realise a caravan was going to be nearby at the time, find out from the merchant where the food was going, make all the right connections. They should then meet up with the alderman, who'll realise the attempted assassination attempt (especially if the PCs have still got a sample of the food - its a delicacy that's his favourite and that no-one else likes), and may ask the Pcs to sort out who was behind the poisoning. This will now entail crawling around the city getting the poison analysed, tracing the boat, the buyer of the poison and so on. Who's behind it is up to you (as is everything else really) - I had his son responsible (via a long and convoluted chain.

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PCs are dealing with some nomadic tribe (in my version, they were trying to set up a trade deal with them). Problem - chiefs brother has disappeared in mysterious circumstances (surprise me) and, guess what, the tribe is mourning and is not prone to doing business - so, if the intrepid PCs can rescue the brother, everyone'll be happy.

The brother has in fact tried to visit the ancestral plane to find out loads of Good Things, meet ancestors etc. He got the instructions from a ghost in an old ruined hill fort, which he got the location of from a diary he bought from some other nomads (the PCs can sort all this out with the right clues). He went to the hill fort, summoned the ghost, and got the spell to open a gate to the other plane. Unfortunately, the ghost being a miserable bugger, and the brother being of the trusting and slightly awed sort, the ghost withheld how to get back "for a laugh". So, the brother successfully built the gate, went to the ancestral plane, only to discover he couldn't get back. The PCs had better be more ruthless when talking to the ghost or exactly the same'll happen to them,

The way this scenario goes depends very much on what the PCs do - when I ran it, the main feat was getting to the hill fort and talking to the ghost - rounding up the components for the gate and rescuing the brother were fairly simple compared to that.

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PCs are asked/hired to go and pick up (if they have a starship) or escort on a liner (if they haven't) four people from a nearby system. Ideally, get them to agree before they have much chance to do any background research.

The world they'll be going to is a Balkanised water world. The four people they're meeting are political dissidents from one of the governments, a theocracy. The starport is in a different country, a bureaucratic obsessed blood pressure inducing place.

Unsurprisingly, the four dissidents don't turn up for the rendezvous. Depending on things, they've either:

- been put under house arrest
- been arrested by the bureaucracy for a minor traffic violation (driving a powerboat without due care and attention)
- or something similar.

The governments concerned (make the planet have at least 4 or 5 for fun) should be sufficiently twitchy that, when the PCs do eventually find out where these people have got to, they can't just steam in with guns blazing. 'cause the military are on standby most of the time, and all hell'll break loose. The way my PCs got them out from house arrest on a floating hydroponics plant (remember, its a water world, makes life much more difficult) was to hack into the theocracy's job allocation computer, have all four of them transferred on a Police boat (so as not to attract attention) to a nearby oil rig, and took the boat in transit during an electrical storm (weather conditions on a slowly rotating (40hr day) water world)

Just for comment, we were using a 2300AD/old Traveller(TM) hybrid (2300AD characters, Traveller universe, hybrid gear with a touch of Cyberpunk(TM) for good measure.)

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#### REVENGE.

The PCs get kidnapped in their youth, before starting their career as adventurers. (This of course makes it difficult for the players to choose a scholarly profession, but it is not impossible.)

The kidnapper (in our campaign his name was Barbarossa) is really a slaver who enjoys tormenting his captives before selling them off in a slave market in a country faaar from the respective PCs home.

After x years of slavery in {a coal mine, a salt mine, the fields picking cotton} our heroes get a chance to escape. The escape can be an adventure by itself.

The PCs may be from any part of the world. (They may even have problems in understanding each others language in the beginning.) After successful escape they by incident see Barbarossa. The word "revenge" suddenly appears in their minds.

What can they do to hurt the seemingly too powerful slaver?

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Author: Graham Wills  
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The PCs find a freshly dug grave, haunted by the ghost of the victim, who will follow them around and wake them at nights wailing "John Smith killed me; avenge my death". They are also hired to hunt down someone who robbed a rich merchant. His name was John Smith. Whatever. Eventually the PCs will go looking for John Smith. He is a local farmer, totally innocuous, who lives on a rather isolated farm near a dangerous area.

When they find him, he tries to zap them with a nasty wand, but after one charge, he drops it and attacks with a sword. He is berserk, but has very few hits and dies rapidly. When they get back to town they are told that while they were gone John Smith left on a boat/caravan/pogo stick. They are confused. They are even more confused when they are attacked by John Smith.

A shape changer/illusionist has got hold of a neat magic item that is supposed to make people believe they are someone else. Unfortunately the item is broken and makes people believe they are one particular person ... namely John Smith, the first person the item was used on. Undeterred, our villain controls numerous people, making them John Smiths and occasionally taking on the John Smith persona to do dirty deeds. Even when there are obviously far too many John Smiths, he'll keep doing this, as people will be reluctant to kill someone who could be their wife, brother or mother!

The PCs will have to tackle numerous John Smiths of varying dangerousness and capture them, determine whether he's a stupid peasant or a high-level evil genius and deal with the situation.

This is great for low-level types without spells that could solve the problem rapidly. High-level PCs would just do a Detect X spell and wrap up.

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Author: Charles W. Manry Jr.  
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Setting: Town with 1 or more tavern's, meeting places, etc.  
Target is male Pc.

A Pc is on the make, ie. looking for love. A woman comes in and looks over the place and picks one of the Pc's. She grabs 'em and asks him to come back to his place. They get into a very \*nice\* coach. If the Pc asks any questions about the woman's background she'll say that she is a wealthy widow (she is lying!). One into the carriage she becomes all hands. Once home, a nice large mansion, she ignores the servants strange looks and drags Pc up to the bedroom where a night of passion will commence.

The punch line: The lady is really the wife of mayor/prominent community leader/military leader/etc who has been cheating on her. She's out to get revenge! The night with the Pc is the method of her choosing!

In the morning the servants, who do their best to ignore the Pc's presence, will come in and straighten up. They will fold the clothes and bring breakfast. In the middle of breakfast the husband will come home. The wife will get out of bed and start throwing their freshly folded clothes all over the bedroom. Mean while, one of the servants will tell the husband that his wife has company! The husband will charge into the bedroom and try to kill the Pc. This will be occurring while the wife is saying to her husband, "Serves you right for cheating on me!", "He was much better than you", "Oh! I never new what I was missing until last night", etc. This causes the husband to go into blind rage causing him to not fight up to this full potential.

Options:

The Pc can try to fight if he gets his weapon. Once this occurs the husband will calm down and fight to the best of his ability. If the Pc does kill or wound the husband the wife will attack the Pc. She really still loves the husband (all well as a few other women!) and will try to protect him. At this point the Pc becomes just a tool for her revenge. She does not care what happens to him....

Flee!!!! The husband will chase the Pc into the streets and then stop saying that he'll get revenge!

Either situations can cause a man hunt for the Pc. The city guards will be brought into the situation. If caught, you can toss 'em jail, strip them of \$\$'s and items, etc. If they flee the town, bring this sub-plot back into play every time they return to the town. Or send mercs. after the Pc's party to bring back the one Pc to "justice".

Have fun with this one. Make 'em pay for fooling around with out thinking too much! 8^).

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This was designed for a rather high level party in a very politically unstable world. The local government is being treated unfairly by the big federal-style empire ruling over them and the neighboring cities. The cities are currently in a state of alliance in trying to overthrow the central government, not through civil war (unless it comes to that) but through diplomatic means. The scenario is that the Emperor has a mysterious covert army, made up of people with assassin-type skills (in RM I use NightBlades). This army kidnaps the Emperor's heir's fiancee and tells her

that they are revolutionaries supporting the revolutionary alliance. The Emperor then sends a small army force to each city to take the local government people into custody for questioning concerning the kidnapping, since he has found "clues that implicate them..." His plan is to take them into custody, then release the girl who will swear to her grave they were revolutionaries who kidnapped her, and thus he will have no recourse but to execute the troublesome barons. The Barons obviously are not going to go peacefully but then again they don't want an all out war. Have the Barons get some advanced notice somehow (spies with magic communication or whatever) so they can prepare. In my world I also had Paladins roaming the streets who supported the Empire. Now the Baron sends the city into an uproar to fight off the Emperor's troops. Catch is, the shadow army is here to catch the Baron alive (poison arrow comes to mind). As for what the PCs are doing, in my campaign they were rabid revolutionaries and they ran around killing Paladins and Emperor's troops until they saw the Baron and managed (plot catch) to see a guy aiming an arrow at him. They save the Baron's life and the Baron thanks them...and asks them to do him a favor. He's seen them working in the streets and knows they are good, plus they just saved him. He asks them to go to the capital city, speak to some of his spies there, and find out where the heir's fiancée is hidden. If they free her and convince her that the people behind her capture weren't rebels but someone else in disguise, then the Emperor will have to call off his troops and a war can be prevented. In my campaign they were also asked to delay the Emperor's reinforcement troops so they couldn't get to the city before the Barons were proven innocent. Note, this will probably not be possible without the PCs having access to some sort of teleportation/ instantaneous travel...

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Background: setting 1998 earth, with incompetent bureaucracy ruling the USA, has already scuttled NASA and decided to go with a space program under direct congressional control (!). The ship travels by exploding fusion devices behind it and travelling forward on the strength of the blast. Obviously it has a very strong shield on the back. Obviously it is not aerodynamic.

The ship's mission is to go to Alpha Centauri and gather data on whether or not the system is suitable for human habitation (earth is becoming uninhabitable because of pollution and mismanagement).

The characters all have hidden motives, as they are all agents of one or another secret society in the fragmented USA government. They have to depend on a navputer+, a navigational computer that is programmed to take care of all their needs. ;-)

The problem is that Djinn wants to look at the world after 500 years, and to play off the humor of all these relics of ancient days wandering around in the brave new world of 2500 AD. Since the trip to AC will only take about 9 years of objective time, what to do?

I'm getting an evil idea...

The Navputer+ gets close enough to Alpha Centauri to check it out. Orders sent in the mean time by genius senator Orrin Hatch's subcommittee on efficient space exploration have downgraded the importance of human observation on this task. Quickly confirming that there is no suitable planet for life, the Navputer decides to continue on to Barnard's star before waking up the crew!

The crew awakens and starts working, then discovers that the starfield is all wrong and they're not in the solar system they expected, then they notice that huge gas giant in orbit. They discover a planet in the habitable zone, though calculations are difficult because of that huge companion planet. They also discover that they're short on fuel to get back. If they just head back they'll take about 100 years to make it the 9 ly (or so) back from Barnard's star. After much racking of brain they find a black hole passing by the solar system, just a little bit off the plane of the galaxy, and decide to use the black hole's gravity to give them a boost back towards Sol (it's going that general direction anyway).

Anyway, after much panicking and gnashing of teeth they go for it. Only complication is that the acceleration is going to be so strong that no human will be able to pilot through the black hole. They'll have to go into cryo and let the navputer (the one that didn't wake them up last time) do the steering, and don't have a big window for operations on the other end either, since food is running short.

And finally, the experiment backfires again, though the trip is made at near light-speed (about 9 years) unpredictable time "currents" around the black hole make them \*go away\* for 500 years.

Finally, the heroes awake in the solar system, speeding past Neptune at .9C. Can they slow down in time to stop at earth, or do they have to depend on earth to save them? They'll probably try to pull another deceleration manoeuvre, but this time the only available large body is the sun. Can it stop them without killing them (is the nuclear shield on the back large enough to shield them)?

At long last the heroes arrive on earth, only to find it is 500 years later, nobody knows them, and their ship is an interesting relic. Their knowledge of Barnard's star is dated. The only unique information they have is on the black hole and the time dilation they experienced. It might be worth big bucks, but how to use the information?

1. Maybe they can create some kind of time-stasis device? The rest of the campaign could be a struggle to protect the invention and become industrial magnates, then eventually rulers of their own demesne, perhaps to sit on the first galactic throne, all the time struggling against industrial espionage, cults of personality, eco-terrorists, interstellar teamsters, and the adoring public.
2. Or maybe another black hole is approaching some important planet (earth?) and the original crew's data can help them divert it. But the Navputer was sold for scrap long ago, and the tapes are covered with dust (or were caught in a flood) since they were stored by an incompetent bureaucrat. The characters search for the Navputer, which is now running some children's ride in Spielbergland, etc. You get the idea.

The possibilities, especially for satire, are endless.

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Author: Robert T. Fanning

The king or some important noble's daughter was drawn into an evil religion, which involves drugs, orgies and other corrupting influences. He wants her back, but she doesn't want to come, enjoying it as she is. In reality, she is being kept around to encourage his good behaviour, but they won't hesitate to kill her ( even though she doesn't know it ). If the party attempts to get her back, she will use the first opportunity to betray them or escape, but won't do this until the worst possible moment. She could leave a few tokens on the trail which the PC's would miss. The PC's have no reason to suspect her. The best way to portray this is to have the princess, etc being given the best possible quarters for her "prison", which she doesn't leave. She could also have gained formidable spell powers in a few months of casting spells within the ethos. This will annoy the players if they need to take her back to get their reward, especially since they have made another enemy in the form of the corrupting religion. The princess can deliberately deceive the players into believing her innocence. A few red herrings, such as the evil church actually sending out assassins to kill her, instead of recovering her ( which of course, she doesn't believe until it is too late after she manages to escape and go back. )

The reason for this is that the king wasn't behaving himself by sending adventurers after her, especially if the King has just blown it before by standing up to the evil church because he has come to the decision that he might have to take the risk and they are about to carry out their threat because of it, which makes time very crucial.

The best way to give them a time limit is to set a special event upon which the princess is to be unknowingly sacrificed. If the PC's fail to pull it off in time, they get no money for their trouble, make an enemy of both the king and evil church, as well as probably being suckered with a powerful curse.

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### HONOR AMONG THIEVES

This is a short adventure for a group of PCs of 3 - 5th level. There should be at least one mage, one rogue, and one cleric in the party. Total levels shouldn't exceed 30. The adventure takes place in the small town/village of Hartthorn.

#### Scenario Description:

A halfling thief named Freebag, was once a trusted member of a thieves guild. Then one day he stole a very large sum of money from the guild. He is currently in the process of leaving the area where the guild operates. In a village to the east (Dar-Town is its name) Freebag spent a night in a safe house. While there he heard of about a wizard who was selling a magic item in Hartthorn. Since Hartthorn is a growing town and has no guild (the local leader is very strict on thieves) Freebag decided to go there. Besides, it gets him farther away from the guild. Freebag meets a small group of halfling fighters and merchants on the way which let him travel with them. Mostly due to racial trust reasons. He arrives at Fred's in Hartthorn at start of this adventure.

While Freebag was making good his escape, the guild didn't stand idle. Using some of their special methods they have placed the rumour about a magic item for sale in Hartthorn knowing if Freebag heard the rumour he would go after it. They have done several things like this in all areas out around the guilds area of operation. They not sure of his whereabouts, but, need time to get agents into position. A group of these agents arrived in Hartthorn several days ago. With the agents are two guild members who know Freebag. They will identify Freebag and stay out of his sight while the other agents do their plan.

The plan is to get the money back by counter-ripoff. Due to the local political situation, the agents do not want to incur the wrath of the local leader. They want to get the money back peacefully. The rumour is that a MU is selling a Girdle of Storm Giant Strength for 4000GP. Interested buyers are to contact a man named Logard at Fred's. The agents will recover most of the money and let Freebag go. If forced to, they will use violent means to recover the money. Players could disrupt this plan....

Players don't hear the rumor, **\*THIS IS IMPORTANT\***, but, overhear the conversation between Logard and Freebag. If they players decide not to get involved the events still happen, but, the PCs go on their way. It is nice to have some adventures which the players decide whether or not to get involved with. In my game, they didn't pursue them the first time this was run. I expected the thieves to act as thieves, instead they just hung around waiting for the GM to lay an adventure in their lap.

#### PLACES IN TOWN used in this adventure:

Hartthorn Inn: Nice inn, average costs, there is a room for gambling, individual rooms and a dinning room with the best local food (very good and some unusual local items.)

Hastings Inn: Poor inn, average costs - substandard rooms, some low life types in here. Especially the owner! He is an evil low level mage. Hartthorn was built over the remains of an enemy fort (wooden fortress) which was destroy in a war 150 years ago. The leaders of the winning army were forewarned not to explore the underground area beneath the fortress. A few years ago, while digging a large wine cellar, the owner discovered at passage into the area beneath the fortress. He now charges 1SP or more to let adventures adventure within. The local leader knows about this but is not concerned.

Ki Rin House: Part of a chain of fine inns and hotels which all go by this name. This place is two story building, continual lights surround the entire building and very experienced guards patrol inside and out. Customers are searched going in and weapons are checked in and locked up. The all doors to all rooms are in view of each other. Frequented by merchants, mages, and anyone who can afford the stay (1GP per night at least, meals 1-5 gp). The are mostly good sorts here. The owner and his wife are powerful in their class. Thieves would best stay away from here! The owner pulls in a good 120 GP to 200 GP per day here.

Fred's: In my world, Fred is a god of drinking/pleasure. Many go here to drink and have a good time. Fred was used in several games throughout the U.S military in the 70's.

Stable: Good stable, excellent horses for sale!

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS in this adventure:

Freebag male 1/2ling th 5th NN 12,13,9,17,15,13,13 hp27 AC 4 leather, foil, dagger, +1 cloak of protection. Member of the Guild gone bad. Stole from the Guild and is on the run. He is greedy and loves to flash his wealth around. He will buy women drinks and try to seduce them. He gambles heavily. He is staying at the Hartthorn Inn.

\*\*\*\*The Guild's Agents\*\*\*\*

Leader

Logard male Human Fighter, powerful, nasty, chainmail, long sword- (2xspecialization with Long sword), dagger, longbow, lance, 1 magic potion perhaps

Melitiak Male Human Magic User, say 5 spells available and a magic item

Xilia female 1/2elf Thief moderately good, magic weapon

Trank male elf Thief moderately good, magical leather armor and a weapon

Eifpak male human Cleric. Good. Plate & sh, Potion of powerful healing

GoMoku Male Human Thief, newbie, Potion of powerful healing.

\*\*\*\*End of Guild's Agents\*\*\*\*

The Adventure:

A group of 1/2lings arrive in town. Most are fighters, but one is a thief (Freebag is his name) who has stolen mob money. One of the party members thieves sees this halfling spending platinum and gold at Fred's. He is buying a man (Logard is his name) drinks and is talking to him. Freebag gets information about a magic item for sale (if the players overhear, don't tell them what type of item unless they are reluctant to do anything). Freebag tips Logard with 10PP and leaves. A woman (Xilia is her name) talks with Logard for a few seconds then leaves Fred's while Logard stays and enjoys Fred's.

Freebag goes to the Ki Rin house to buy a girdle of Storm giant strength which he heard was for sale. The halfling will be negotiating with a mu (Melitiak by name) to buy a magic item from him (Melitiak is actually a member of The Guild trying to get the money back peacefully by counter-ripoff). The halfling states he must go to his hiding spot to get the large sum of money being asked for the magic item(4000GP). The two agree to meet back at the Ki Rin house in 24 hours. This should give the party plenty of time to ripoff Freebag. The hiding spot is in his room at the Hartthorn inn. The guild didn't know what room he is in and they don't want to do anything that might look like active thieving if they did. This could put legal/political pressure on the guild.

WHAT COULD HAPPEN Possible actions:

**1**

If the party rips-off the halfling Thief, The halfling's body will be found in two days in his room murdered (Large lumps on his head are found and his wrists are rope burned. His throat was slit).

With the mob money is evidence letting the group know that this money belongs to a major thieves guild (Insert Guild name here!). The mob money totals 4500GP (11JS 48JC 210PP 1150GP). JS is a Jade Square and is equal to 100GP. JC is a Jade Circle and is worth 25 Gold pieces.

If the guild has to kill Freebag, they will hang around town and try to figure out who has their money. If anyone in the party starts to buy expensive stuff or shows off hidden wealth they will become suspected by the guild. If the group approaches Melitiak to buy the girdle of Storm giant strength at this time they will become suspect. The guild will sell the girdle in this case and get their money back. This way they succeed in their mission. If the guild suspects party members they will follow them around and watch them. They may try to kidnap a party member to get the money back. At worst they will attack them or enspell them somehow.

When the guild agents get their money back they will leave the town through the south gate into the fields and then to the wilderness. The guild's agents escaped to the south and entered an environment controlled by woodland creatures or a high level magic-user and /or Druid. If the PCs kill a deer hunting for food (or other woodland types) the group will be geased/quested to kill a creature which has been killing woodland creatures or hurting the forest. The creature is a basilisk. The group will find signs of it in an area one day, if they camp/sleep near this area the basilisk will find them at night. If they find the lair they could be in trouble! (in its lair there is some treasure 2000 silver pieces, 400 electrum, 200 gold, 50 platinum, 1 scroll of protection from undead, and a +1 short sword. there is also a treasure map to a nearby tomb which contains 20 ghouls, 2 shadows, 14 wights, 1 ghast, and 1 wraith. The map doesn't mention the undead or that it is a tomb.)

If the group tries to find out who killed the halfling they will get the following information: Freebag came into town with a group of halflings. The halflings are staying at the Hasting's inn. Freebag stayed at the Hartthorn Inn.

Other information found out below if they investigate.

The other halflings will say that Freebag was hauling a heavy wooden chest on his horse. Freebag joined them in Dar-town and came along for strength in numbers and racial trust reasons. They know nothing else.

Hartthorn inn: Owner says that he was quiet and paid in advance for his room. He felt that Freebag had molten gold in his pocket. His daughter (wench) served him dinner normally. The wooden chest is not in his room. Wench @ the Hartthorn Inn: Mentions the dinner and wine and that he gambled after he ate. She will point out a gambler she last saw Freebag with. Gambler @ the Hartthorn Inn: States that he played cards with him and broke even. Halfway into the game some other men wanted to join so he gave up for the night. The men who join the game had been staying in this inn. The two men are GoMoku and Eifpak. He will give descriptions of the two men. GoMoku and Eifpak are camping outside of town since Freebag was killed.

Stable man found knocked out: He was guarding the place was knocked out. Nothing is missing. Freebag's horse is in here. If the hay in the horse stall is searched they will find the Scroll mentioned above.

A speak with dead performed on Freebag will work if they ask questions about his murder and who killed him. This is the easiest way for the group to discover the murderers. Note: the murderers are staying at different inns and they will leave town if other members of the guild group are caught.

## 2

If the group doesn't rip off Freebag for the money, the transaction for the girdle will go on as planned. The Guild will get it's money back and Freebag will go on his way with a fake girdle of Storm Giant Strength. Freebag will quickly figure out that the girdle is a fake and will leave the area under the Guilds control ASAP. The guild will not take any further action against Freebag unless he stays in the area. In this case they will have him murdered.

It is possible that the group will try to rob the mage of his money instead. They must try this outside of the Ki Rin House, Else they will most likely die. The mage will be surrounded by his friends when he exits the Ki Rin House so if he is attacked the group should expect some back attacks. If the group wants to follow him out of town use the plan in the paragraph below.

The Guild group will regroup and leave town two hours after the sale of the girdle. They will exit through the south gate. If they notice anyone following, they will move forward quickly and try to setup an ambush. If the group catches up before the ambush, they will try to run. After having run away from the group once the PCs gets attacked at night at their camp (unless they appear to strong to handle) or the group is ambushed the next day. Each member of the Guild group has 20PP on them. The last guild member will have the chest of mob money.

## 3

If the group tries to get the Girdle from Freebag (non-stealthily) he will first try to sell it to them for 6000GP. If attacked he will offer to give them some very interesting information if they let him go (A scroll written in Thieves Cant relating the safe house in Dar-town). Second, he will boast of his new found strength and warn the group not to attack him. He will also inform them of his expertise in fighting with the foil (a lie). If this doesn't work he will run away, fighting only if there is no other choice. The group will figure out the girdles quality quickly.

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### TEMPLE RAID

Suggested requirements: This adventure is for a group of thieves of 6-9 level. The total levels should be at least 24 and no more than 45.

Scenario Description: An evil god of thieves demands a sacrifice of a thief to satisfy his needs. He would desire a non-guild thief, but, any thief will do. The clerics of this god are trying to find

a thief/thieves to sacrifice. One of the higher level clerics is attempting to get the PCs into the temple by pretending to be a thief and stating he has knowledge of rich treasure within it.

Places in the scenario: Temple of Stoth: A large building with several towers. There are guards below and apparently none on the outside or at the upper floors of the tower.

#### NPCs in the scenario:

Matar: Male Human cl 9th CN 13,14,17,16,16,11,9 hp 63 AC 6 leather, Gauntlets of climbing, Ring of feather falling, Platinum ring set with an opal, necklace of gold and jewels worth 5000gp+, silver bracelet with turquoise setting, Magical silver lock picks which add +5% of all thieving skills. All his pouches have material components for clerical spells. He will have at least two hold person spells and one dispel magic spell memorized.

Stoth: god of thieves- Alignment CE/CN- Purpose: to control all Thief related activity. This is not lawful, this is a selfish power hungry god who doesn't care who he steps on! He sees crime as anti-law. Notes: Thieves guilds which pay dues are left alone. In those guilds which pay, many members are also worshipers. Guilds which don't pay are considered enemies. Non-guild thieves which are not worshippers are enemies. Enemies are to be "converted" or removed from the business. Almost all member guilds have clerics in them, who control or manipulate the guild. The clerics have some thief skills as well as normal clerical spells, but, they are limited to thieves weapons and armour. Occasionally, Stoth (his clerics) demand a sacrifice of enemy thieves.

#### New Items:

Magic lock picks: Giving to loyal clerics of Stoth who have performed a remarkable act of thieving. They add 5% to all thieving skills.

#### The Adventure:

PC Thieves find an NPC Thief (Matar) who wants to raid/burglarise a temple of Stoth (a CN/CE god of thieves). They will meet him in any of a variety of places: a bar, the guild headquarters, adventuring, etc. They have been targeted for sacrifice. He tries to enlist the aid of the group by speaking of great riches and magic items!

#### WHAT COULD HAPPEN Possible actions:

1

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* . * KEY:
* . * * = Stone Wall
* . * .. = Heat Trail
* . * M = Magic User
* . * C = Cleric
*****
***** F = Fighter
* M > . < T * T = Thief
* C C * -- = Balcony Ledge
* C > < C * >
* T < > F * < = Curtain/Tapestry
*****
***** >
*
*
*
*****
*****
*
*
* Balcony *
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If the group goes with him, Matar will insist the group not go through the front doors as they are guarded. He will recommend climbing the walls up to any of the balconies which are on the upper levels. He will claim the riches are kept up there. The guards/clerics will notice Matar's movement and will be waiting the group's arrival at a balcony. Matar will not be the first person to the top of the balcony, unless the group insists. The first person to reach the balcony will see the heat trail(s) (if he has infravision) upon entering the first hallway, which is dimly lit by candles, he will see heat trails which led to two tapestries. One is on the left side of the hallway, while the other is on the right side. Behind these there is Stoth worshipper's "sacrificial welcoming committee". They will attack to capture the characters using magic, lasso, and subdual damage. They should get surprise on the PCs unless they see the heat trails. Other guards/clerics will arrive if the combat lasts a long time. The PCs should concern themselves with escape.

#### Methods of Escape:

- Climb back down the wall they came up on. This will be the easiest method to escape. They will have a free round of climbing if they run immediately (they do no other actions) upon seeing the heat trails. If they don't see the heat trails, tough luck. At the bottom of the wall below the balcony a glyph will have been placed after they reached the balcony by a cleric. The glyph is a paralyzing glyph. Saving Throw negates the effect. They will be pursued for at least 12 turns. The clerics may use find the path to get them.
- Attack and defeat the welcoming committee, and escape by racing through the maze of the temple. This should not be easy because of their unfamiliarity and the hosts' familiarity. This is stupidity on the players' part, but, who knows, they might get lucky.
- Magic might work. Teleportation or other device such as flying. The PC should not go to any place public to hide because they will be found. The clerics have watched them for some time and know their usual public hangouts. Same goes for their homes. If the PCs have several safe houses which are not guild related, they might get away with it. Hanging out at a good aligned temple will protect them from the clerics for sure. Other will depend on the relationship between all those involved.

If the PCs escape there is a chance that one of their other plans will succeed in getting them a thief. The chance is 1-5 on a D6 that the players will be left alone. If a 6 is rolled, the clerics will summon a demon to grab a PC and return with it alive to the temple. The demon can't enter any good temple, or within 200 feet of the altar of a non-evil god.

All those thieves who do not escape will be killed that night! Other classed characters which might somehow be with will be quested to act as a guard for the temple. This quest will last as long as if the player was charmed, but, at -2 on his intelligence. At the end of this time they may leave.

## 2

If the PCs won't come with him, he will break down and cry. He will claim that he was quested by a good aligned cleric to get back a magical holy item from the evil temple. He has tried, but, can't get past a trick lock mechanism on a sliding metal door. The door has a lock on both sides which must be picked at the same time. The locks reset if the door isn't open or the other lock

isn't unlocked immediately. He needs at least one other thief to help him. He is willing to let the thief have any and all treasure found inside except the item he needs.

If the PCs buy this, goto to #1 above.

If they don't buy this, goto #3 below.

### 3

Earlier in the evening/day, a thief picked pockets on a non-thief PC in the group. The thief (Matar) will now show the thieves this item. They will recognise the item as belonging to the character. Matar will tell them to come with him and raid the temple or this person will suffer dearly. The character, has not been really kidnapped for fear of provoking what ever guild might represent that PC's class.

If they buy this goto #1 above.

If the PC's threaten Matar back, he can be convinced to take the characters to where the PC is.

This is Another trap.

If they PC's fail to get involved, the clerics will react as follows. Roll 1d8

1. Nothing.
2. The next time any of the players commit a theft within the city. The city guard will get tipped off and the PC will get arrested.
3. The temple will send clerics and thieves to rip off the players homes while they are adventuring in or out of town. This will happen as long as the PCs are in town or they join the Temple or one high priest of the church is killed by any means.
4. Rumours will be spread around the city which will caused people not to trust them or take their eyes off their activities. The guards will search their Homes whenever a crime is reported, Merchants will be extra careful around them, etc. Good deeds performed by the PCs will reduce this.
5. The clerics will ask the PCs to join the church of Stoth. If they accept, great. If not, roll again.
6. The church of Stoth will hire assassins to kill the PCs. One attempt only.
7. The PCs will find a map detailing a wizards keep and its defences. The map will be correct, but, the magical defences will be wrong in a very bad way.
8. Problems with the Thieves guild. If the PCs are members roll 1d4)
  1. Money is stolen from the guild, PCs help search for it. The money is found in their home(s).
  2. Another Thieves guild has started up. PCs must decide which guild they will support. The church will really support the guild which the PCs are not a part of.
  3. A guild member joins the group for a city adventure. During the adventure, someone they encounter is killed. They guild is under pressure to give the city the killers. The PCs are given over. They have a chance to prove themselves. The guild member belongs to the church.
  4. PCs are ordered on a mission which, unknown to the guild leaders is a trap.

If the PCs are not members of the guild they will be offered to join, stop thief activities in town, or leave.

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The PC's find a map to an abandoned underground lair - including some description of the resident of the lair. They recognize the resident and know that he is long dead (perhaps a high level MU). The map details the caverns to a great extent (perhaps leaving out some key rooms). The map also neglects to mention the many traps set throughout the lair - or perhaps mentions one or two giving the PC's a false sense of security. As for monsters, are undead boring? They still be around from the MU's days. Perhaps rodents, snakes, spiders as well. For the main villain a wight or perhaps a very minor demon (trapped on this plane with the appropriate wards - "You have entered a room with a large circle engraved on the floor. You notice this circle because it lights up as the fighter walks into it. The room suddenly becomes very dark and you hear a low growling laughter."). Or perhaps the MU is not dead, only very old and quite insane - thus maybe he has neglected to memorise his higher level spells and sits quietly on his throne waiting to die (thus not such a formidable opponent). Or perhaps his last opponent turned him into an ogre or a doppelganger or whatever you want (maybe using divine intervention to end his spell casting ability).

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A company has lost contact with a mining planet about 12 h away from the main base. The mining base is mining a valuable metal. There has been some problems with the production in the last 2-3 month, and the last time the transport ship returned, it returned with only a fraction of the normal production.

The PC's are going with the normal transport ship out to the base after a briefing at the main base.

At the base when they arrive with a complete record/file from HQ. The base personnel are waiting to fill the transporter as usual. (Yes, as usual...) The players are invited by the base commander to get the usual tourist guide in the mining complex. All of the 20 persons on the mining base are equipped with the usual transmitter, that gives possibility to know where they are at all times. (Only the base commander can get into this program) When the players are shown the production facility, an accident happens on a random mining level, where the leading geologist accidentally falls into the main elevator, where he is crushed under the stones under the transport up to the production hall. The players in the production hall will be able to see the bloody stones, and they will think that this was \*NOT\* an accident. The base commander breaks down when he sees his good friend crushed under the stones, and the base doctor will have to put him to sleep for 12 h. This should cut most of the party's resources. (This is meant as a delay and an obstruction for the players) Most of the valuable information is bound to the commanders personal password.

All the records on the station are \*NOT\* falsified and they show that there has been no problems with the station. They have delivered the normal production at the normal times.

Sidetrack no. 1: The dead geologist, has a photo of a beautiful girl standing on his bed table, but his personal record shows no such thing. His record has not been updated by the commander since the connection with the girl happened under his 2 month leave, from which he has returned from for only 3 weeks ago (He came out with the last transporter)

Sidetrack no 2: The dead geologist had been offered an other job by another company. (At the same place where his girlfriend works..). It is a research job, and he would have taken it when his contract was finished, because he likes to do research better then to do mining.

Sidetrack no 3: He is doing some research in his spare time together with 2 other scientists at the base. They are working on an analysis of crystals electronic possibilities. They have found a interesting crystal in a meteorite on the surface, and is now making some tests...

Solution: The dead geologist \*WAS\* an accident. The mining station \*HAS\* delivered its regularly normal production. At the HQ there was a smart programmer, that has falsified the messages from the mining station and redirected the valuable metal to his own bank account.. This should be easily found out if the players check the messages logs in the HQ and the base. The players messages is getting edited before they get through to HQ and HQ's replay is also getting edited by the programmer before it is sent back to the players. This will allow the players to get most of the info they need to find out what is wrong..

I spun a few threads more myself, when I ran the scenario. It took my players 12 h of very exiting and good roleplaying to find the solution. They did \*NOT\* like the solution, but if you build it logical up, and make the communication lines heavy (Long replay times: The computer for the personal files at HQ has gone down, and is first up in an hour... etc...)

My mining base was a large asteroid with no atmosphere, so the players could only move in the base and the mining shafts. The mining was run by robots and the persons at the base were there to plan the mining, maintain the robots and operate the refinery.

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This adventure was originally made for the BOOT HILL western game, but it can be adapted to any western game campaign.

Promise City, Summer of 1890.

The party has just arrived at Promise City, in El Dorado County, Texas, looking for Ben Cartwheel, an old friend of one of the PC's father, and rancher of Promise City. When they get into the town, they see a man dressed in black, with milky white skin, harassing a young lady in her mid-twenties. The party should confront the man, who leaves, but not before saying the PCs will pay for this (There should be no fight, though; we'll need this character for later).

The woman is none other than Elizabeth Cartwheel, Ben's daughter. She takes the party to the Cartwheel ranch, a few miles out of town, where they meet Ben. He explains that the man in black name is Montgomery, and he is Mr. G's right hand. Mr. G is a mysterious and prominent rancher in Promise City, and he "owns the town". He seldom leaves his ranch, The G ranch, and is rarely seen. Ben also tells the party about the news of the last two days, mainly, the disappearance of the town judge, Judge Parson, and also about the kidnapping of the Indian Chief Sitting Bear, from the Indian reservation to the north of El Dorado County.

The party will probably accept Ben's invitations and stay for the night. Next day, they will go to town, and, quite by chance, they will stumble upon Judge Parson's wagon, a few hundred yards from the road. Next to it is Parson's body, shot. Examination of the wagon shows that two people were riding on it, one of them the judge. Marks of horses are seen around the wagon. A few feet from it, the party finds an Indian feather, the type of feather worn by Indian chiefs. And they find a small cigar stub.

If the party informs the sheriff, he will say he'll conduct an investigation, but will be suspiciously uninterested. If the party searches the Judge's office (inside the Promise City Court Room), they will find a clipping from an old newspaper quoting some words from chief Sitting Bear, which are underlined: "... white men have arrived here, sick and bleeding, and we have done for them what we could, but they died here, sharing their last secrets with me...". They also find a map, with a red line connecting Promise City with the reservation, and a name: Richard Flynn.

#### What's going on:

In the summer of 1880 Richard Flynn, a known thief and outlaw, robbed the Promise City branch of the First National Bank. At the moment the bank vault was holding an important shipping of money coming from California, as well as a number of valuables, the most important of which was a golden necklace speckled with precious stones, the Isabel Piece. The Isabel Piece, an invaluable work of art, originally part of queen Isabel of Spain's personal jewellery, made expressly on the fifteenth century, and supposedly stolen from the Royal Vault in 1624, had been found by chance among the ruins of an old Mexican town in the middle of California. Now, while the Spanish Crown, the Government of Mexico, and the United States waged diplomatic wars to keep control of the newly found necklace, the necklace itself was being transported to the East coast to be displayed in a museum. During the Piece's two-day stay at Promise City, the outlaw Flynn and the two members of his band somehow slipped into the bank and parted, taking almost all of the money and, of course, the Isabel Piece.

During their escape, Flynn and one of his henchmen were wounded. While under subsequent pursuit by the regular Army division that was supposed to have kept the money safe, Flynn divided his band, sending the henchman that hadn't been wounded in a different direction, to throw off the pursuit. This ploy worked to a great extent; when the Army finally captured the diverting outlaw, Flynn and his remaining man had a good four hours advantage. The Army threw itself again on pursuit. Many hours later, when it was obvious for Flynn that he was going to be captured, he and his underling hid the booty somewhere along the road. Having ridden themselves of this bulky weight, they were able to escape and were never seen again.

The captured outlaw, the one who had been sent as a diversion, was put on trial, presided by Judge Parson. Parson was not an honest person, and he saw this as the chance to get his hands on the booty and disappear. The problem was, he had to find out where the money was hidden. To this end he interrogated the outlaw, who didn't know where the booty was, but said Flynn's plan was to lay low in the Indian reservation for a while. Parson conveniently kept this information a secret. The outlaw was finally found guilty of robbery and hanged, although the money was never found.

Ten years go by. In 1890, Judge Parson finds a newspaper article written by a bold young reporter who managed to get inside the Indian reservation and interview Chief Sitting Bear. One particular sentence in the article struck Parson: "... white men have arrived here, sick and bleeding, and we have done for them what we could, but they died here, sharing their last secrets with me...".

Convinced that those words meant that Chief Sitting Bear had a clue to Flynn's final destiny and to the location of the treasure, Parson went to the Indian reservation pretending to be a friendly reporter, and interviewed the Chief about the secrets whispered by those white men. Confronted by the Chief's refusal to disclose the dead's secrets, and already without doubt that those "white men" had been Flynn and his henchman, because of the similitude in the dates, Parson dropped the pretence and kidnapped Chief Sitting Bear, taking him, bound and gagged, back to Promise City.

What Parson didn't know is that for the last ten years he had been closely watched by Mr. G. Mr. G, being wealthy, and also being a jewellery admirer, had secretly hired Flynn to sneak into the bank and steal the Isabel Piece for him. The plan went wrong when Flynn, consumed by greed, decided to take not only the Piece, but also the money, and to doublecross Mr. G. After Flynn's escape and disappearance, the location of the treasure was as much a mystery to Mr. G as it was to Parson. However, Mr. G was convinced that Parson knew something important, and kept a watch on him. That precaution finally paid off.

While returning from the Indian reservation with Chief Sitting Bear, Parson was ambushed by Montgomery and murdered. Chief Sitting Bear was then taken to the G Ranch, where he was going to be interrogated.

#### The Investigation:

Sooner or later the party will start investigating on its own (you should try to push them a bit). They can ask Ben Cartwheel about who Richard Flynn is, or they can go to the Promise City Times newspaper (the "newspaper" is published weekly and is about two pages long). Anyway, they should easily find out about the Isabel Piece robbery and the mystery of the Flynn treasure. The cigar stub should point to Montgomery, who usually smokes expensive cigars (you can change this clue for something more subtle). Of course, if Montgomery is involved, then Mr. G also is. That would explain why the sheriff is so uninterested in the case.

After one or two encounters with Mr. G's men (who by now have figured that the party is meddling around), the party should be ready to sneak into the G ranch (a big complex

surrounded by a wooden fence and guarded by G's men) and save chief Sitting Bear. (the rescue should be where lots of the action will go).

After being saved, the chief tells the party that Flynn was really with him ten years ago, and he mentioned that "some important Promise City rancher" had hired him to steal the Piece, and that he had doublecrossed this rancher. Flynn also told the chief the location of the treasure, and he tells the players about it. (you should make the location of the treasure a cryptic message which the Indians would not be unable to understand because they don't know the proper names; for example "three gun-lengths north of the division of the river of the Griffin", where Griffin is the name of a small town; otherwise, you will have to explain WHY the Indians haven't dug the treasure by themselves!)

The party travels to the cave, possibly having one or two encounters on the way. There are several possibilities here:

- The party finds the money and the Piece. Meanwhile, Montgomery has been to the Cartwheel Ranch, and he has taken Ben and Elizabeth as hostages, in exchange for the Piece. This is when the final showdown with Montgomery should take place. Note that Mr. G will probably be a long term campaign enemy.
- The party finds the money, but not the Piece. As it turns out, the Chief had had the Piece all along, planning to use it to fund an Indian rebellion. The only reason he gave the party the location of the treasure was because it would have been too suspicious to keep quiet after all that has happened. The party does not know any of this and will be baffled when Montgomery tries to exchange his hostages for an item the party does not have.
- While camping on their way to the treasure, the chief makes a fire, to "keep warm". When the party finds the treasure, an Indian band appears, and surrounds them. The chief then proceeds to explain that the money and the Piece will fund the rebellion, and takes the money with him, leaving the party gagged or whatever. This makes for an interesting situation; now the party must find the escaping Indians, while evading Mr. G's men, and trying to save Ben and Elizabeth at the same time. Alternatively, the party may want to help the Indians in their attempt at escaping their small reservation, and restoring their rightful lands.

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This scenario is designed for lower level characters (2-4), however it could be modified to suit higher level groups. The campaign setting is low magic, and powerful magic in the hands of the group will make this more difficult to run. This takes place in and around a small city in the center of a large rural agricultural area. There are several small hamlets and villages within a few days ride of the city.

The party is sitting in their favorite bar/temple feeling bored when the pounding of hooves and the shouts of guards draws their attention outside. Just as they make it out the door, they see a large group (15 or so) of armed riders charge out the nearby city gate, pursued by a small number

of city guardsmen. The guardsmen return shortly, and if the players inquire, they can discover that the local tax collector was just robbed and this year's revenue from the annual sheep tax was stolen.

Within an hour or so, a guard captain should start visiting various taverns, announcing a generous reward for the return of the strongbox. The characters should notice that there is little interest among the locals to pursue the fleeing tax monies. Questioning locals will reveal that the thief is a well known bandit that has plagued the town from time to time, He has a fairly nasty reputation and has killed at least 8/10/14/22 men (depending on who you talk to. 6 is the real number).

Once the group decides to actually go for the raiders, they should have little trouble following the trail. It leads straight across country for several days riding. If the characters are familiar with the area, they will realize the trail is leading to a tiny village nearby. Sometime before reaching the village, the party should lose the trail when crossing a river. further efforts to pick it up should prove to be very difficult. Hopefully the party will head into the village.

The party should arrive in the village near dusk and find it to be very deserted looking. The only building that shows any light is the small fortified tavern at the far end of the village. The tavern is a two story affair, with rooms above a common area on the first floor. If they go in, they will find only the tavern keeper standing behind the bar. He will appear to be nervous and occasionally dart glances in the back room behind the bar. He will claim to have seen no strangers in town and try to get rid of the party with the "we close in 5 minutes" bit. Should the characters check the back room, over the barman's protests, they'll discover 3 bandits holding the barman's wife at knifepoint.

The bandits will threaten the barman's wife and one of them will whistle loudly. In short order several more bandits will appear from upstairs and a few more will enter through the back door. Finally a group of 8 or more will enter through the front door, dragging the unconscious body of anyone that was watching outside. The leader of the bandits is in this last group. He is a rather twitchy looking fellow, armed with a rather large bastard sword and chainmail. The rest of the bandits are in either leather, scale or chain. Most are armed with broadswords and short bows. The bandit leader is approximately an 8th level fighter (or high enough that the party will not succeed in taking him out without help). Most of the bandits should be the equivalent of 2nd level fighters or thieves. There is at least one with some knowledge of magic. All told there are 15 bandits plus a leader. Quite a group, but they don't look like much.

Should the players decide to fight, they should be quickly and mercilessly pummelled into unconsciousness. This is the ideal course ;) Should they not fight, the bandits will chose one or two characters to rough up with the goal of starting a fight. The characters will be prevented from leaving, and eventually, a fight will start.

The characters will wake several hours later with aching heads and bruised bodies. The bandits will be long gone. As each wakes, they will discover that any valuables they had have been stolen. They will also notice 2 strangers in the inn. The first stranger is a lean, hardbitten, cold eyed human wearing dusty riding clothes and a suit of elvan chain. Slung over his shoulder is a

bastard sword with a rather unusual blade (dwarven steel, +2 damage due to hardness/sharpness, non-magical). The second is a tall, broad shouldered elf, carrying a huge long bow (probably not anyone in the group that could string it, much less fire it). He is dressed as a noble and looks somewhat out of place. A glance outside will reveal that the characters horses are still there, and there are two large well kept riding horses there as well.

The strangers will be very reluctant to discuss themselves. The human in fact will not give his name. They will ask about the bandits and try to obtain all information they can from the party about their movements. They will head out after the bandits once they have gotten all the info they can from the group. Should the group suggest an alliance, the pair will resist, but will eventually be convinced to let the party tag along. They will make it clear that they are in charge and the bandit leader is theirs to kill/capture. The bandits trail should be clear from the village, and the party will quickly realize that the bandits are headed for an abandoned orchard and farmhouse that lies a days ride away.

The party will arrive at the farmhouse and quickly discern that the bandits are there. There are about 20 horses tied up in the barn and sounds of a large group coming from the remains of the farm house. The elf will vanish into the trees near the farm and the sword slinging human will start into the farmhouse. The party should be forced to act quickly. In any case, mayhem will soon start, as the sword swinger heads straight for the bandit leader, who immediately attacks. The other bandits will spread out and a general melee should ensue. The sword swinger will concentrate on the leader, and the bowman hidden in the woods will do the same should the chance arise, otherwise he will pick off bandits. The party should have their hands full with the rest of the bandits. Should the party prove successful, they will find the tax chest intact (magically sealed), and the two strangers will show no interest in it. They will instead pack the now dead bandit leader and several of his followers onto horses and leave without a word. Should the party inquire, they will be informed that there is a bounty offered for bandit in some nearby city. They will refuse a share of the reward money. The adventure will hopefully end with the party returning the tax chest, the strangers collecting the rewards on the bandits, and everyone happy. Note that the players will find most of their stolen belongings as well.

#### Behind the scenes:

The sword swinging stranger should be about a 6th level fighter. He has the advantage of being very dexterous and very practiced with his sword. In my campaign, he fought as a fighter 2 levels above his current level with his bastard sword. Also in the first round of combat he always gets the first swing. He has the disadvantage of being non-proficient with any other weapon.

The elvan bowman is also a 6th level fighter with the additional advantage of having a good dexterity and maximum elvan strength. His bow is a custom design which adds strength bonuses to damage. He gets an additional attack per round with the bow, and is non-proficient with any other weapon.

The bandit leader is specialized in bastard sword. He has the benefit of a good strength and constitution. He is also somewhat insane and enjoys killing.

#### Motivation:

The strangers are both bounty hunters with personal grudges to settle as well. The sword slinger's wife was raped and killed by the bandit leader, and the elf's father was killed by him. Also the reward for the bandit and several of his band adds up to 3 times the amount offered for the return of the chest.

#### Side Plots:

The players get involved in bounty hunting via the two strangers. Someone tries to stop the players from reaching the city with the chest. One or both of the strangers are sorely wounded and the party decides to help them out.

#### References:

For more info on the strangers and the bandits, watch "For a Few Dollars More" with Clint Eastwood ;)

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### AN AIR OF DISTRUST

**Scenario Requirements:** The adventure is set for a group of thieves, who might be part of a larger group of adventurers. The group should consist of 2-5 thieves of 4th to 8th level. There should be at least 8 levels of thieves and no more than 21 levels. Multiclassed characters which having thief as a class should be allowed. Non-thieves and Bards should not be allowed on this adventure. The adventure is meant to be a short one which could be played easily in one night.

#### Scenario Description:

Thieves hear of a magical or monetary prize to be gained from a well to do's house. While scouting around the house or when they start to burglarise the place they meet a fellow thief. The thief will offer the group to join him on the adventure, and will claim to have scouted the area out and have information which will make the job easy. Unknown to the characters, the thief is really a Djinni in disguise.

#### Places in the Scenario:

**Well-to-do' house:** Called house in the text. A small manse with a wall around it and a few guards outside. Inside there a creatures protecting the owners wealth. The owner is a magic user who happens to be away at the time of this adventure.

#### NPCs in the scenario:

**Ah-Trah:** A Djinni of the most powerful type. He is an ultra-genius, and has the abilities of a high priest and wizard on his home plane. He is noble and has a large number of servants. He likes to travel to the prime material plane for fun every few years or so. If he gets killed there he reappears on his home plane but can't leave it for 1001 days. Many of the items mentioned in this scenario were made by him. Including any rings of wishing. The wishes can't be used against him in any way (this includes his servants and his possessions). He is on the current adventure to get his ring of air elemental command back (he didn't make it, it is a very powerful item on his

plane). He lost it when he died on his last trip to this plane. If he is a friend for life of the group he will aid them when he can and invite them to his castle or go on adventures with them every few years or so. Some adventures could be on his own plane. Has the sword of the air with him on this trip and a jar of Keoghtoms Ointment.

Birnleyas Corinthas: A thief which the PCs will meet during the ripoff part of the scenario. He is around 9th level and is evil. He will think nothing of stabbing the PCs in the back after the adventure, and won't bear his part of the combat burden. He has +2 leather armour, +3 dagger, Potion of speed, and a potion of extra healing. He has an 17 strength, and a 19 dext. He fights with a dagger in each hand or with short bow.

New Items in the scenario:

Bag of the Winds: A magical pouch which when opened and a command word is spoken will blow a very strong breeze in a specific direction. The direction is fixed and can't be changed. The breeze can be used to breakup magical gases, such as a stinking cloud, or to power the sails of a ship. The wind will last as long as the bag is open. There are a few rare versions of this item which when used aboard a ship will lead a ship to a specific preset location (a port or an island for example). This has been used by navies to allow ships to return to port easily and magic user pirates as a method of finding treasure they have buried on islands.

Dust of Dispelling Air Elementals: When this dust is thrown into the air a blue field of shimmering energy will emanate from the dust. The dust will cover a 20' x 20' x 15' area. Each air elemental within the dust must face a savings throw vs spells at -3. If failed the air elemental is forced to return to the elemental plane of air. If saved, the creature is unaffected. There is usually a pouch containing 1d4+5 uses of the dust. This item doesn't work on the elemental plane of air.

Potion of Protection from Dragons Breath: adds +4 to savings throw vs any dragon breath for half or no damage! This is a very rare item made only on the elemental plane of air. A flask will always contain just one dose. The potion lasts for only 3-12 rounds.

Sword of Air: +2 weapon, +3 vs elementals, Powers: acts as a necklace of adaptation if you have it on your person (even if in a scabbard), and user can see through all fogs, mists, gases, even if they are magical, as if they are not there. Although the sword must be drawn for the second power concentration is not required.

Talisman of Proof Against Magic: an ornate necklace worn around the neck which provides the wearer protection from one type of spell. Each talisman is created to protect against only one type of magic. Examples of type of magic are clerical spheres or any of the mages schools, but, only one type. When a spell of the correct type is cast and the wearer is in the area of effect, no effect of the spell will effect the wearer (even beneficial spells). The talisman holds a gem of some high value in it which is consumed when the user is protected. The talisman will not function again until the gem is replace with the correct type of gem with a certain minimum value. It takes at least a turn for a skilled jewellery maker to replace the gem. The talisman in this adventure protects against Alteration magic.

## The Adventure

The PC thieves are at their local fencer of stolen goods selling their swag. The fence can't offer them as much as they want for their swag. To make up for it he is willing to tell them some information which could make them richer if they are willing to accept the offer. If they do, he will tell the PCs about a shipment which came into town yesterday. One of his most reliable agents spoke of a treasure which was taken to the house of a wealthy man. Tell the PCs whatever amount of treasure it might take to get them into the adventure, the treasure should not be reachable by the PCs! The fence will also remark that the man left town via ship before sunrise this morning. He suggests that the PCs could have an easy time ripping off this mark.

### Planning stage:

If the PCs investigate who owns the house they will find out the following. The house is owned by Larthius, a young man who came into town three years ago. He bought the manse with cash and has not had many problems. Rumours state that one time a barbarian broke into the manse on a drunken rampage but was killed by lion guard. They can confirm that the man left town this morning. If the PCs are guild members and investigating the owner they will get the following as well. The owner does not pay the guild protection money so it is okay to steal from him. About the barbarian, a thief overheard the barbarian before he went into the manse claiming he once saw the man summon a flaming demon. Also, a body was found later in the river which appeared to be the barbarian. It had burns covering the body. The man has been seen around a few magic component supply stores. A rumour at the guild is that the guards at his gate in the wall are charmed. The guild will be able to tell the PCs where the ship was going when it left with the man. It should take at least 2 days for the man to reach the destination.

### The ripoff:

While scouting around the house or when they start to burglarise the place the PCs meet a fellow thief. The thief will offer the group to join him on the adventure, and will claim to have scouted the area out and have information which will make the job easy. The thief states that he has been hired by an elemental (a mage who has elemental based spells) to gain an item from inside. If asked, he will tell them the item is a ring of elemental command. His boss will pay with magic items if they will hire on with him (he won't say what the items are, but, promises the reward will be worth the effort). He claims to have scouted out the area and needs the aid of brave thieves. If they refuse the offer he will tell them to leave. If they get hostile, he will fly away invisible and return to scare them away with his abilities of illusion. If they accept, he knows all of the outside layout and of some of the creatures inside. He will seek to avoid combat. The thief will then tell the players his name "Ah-trah". Ah-Trah is really a Djinn. He will try and keep his identity away from the group. He is his own master!

Ah-Trah will avoid combat and will take the PCs on a specific route. If the PCs want to explore any other part of the manse they will find it extremely difficult and VERY LETHAL. Use the following order of rooms, hallways, etc to get the PCs to the final goal.

\*\*\*\*\*

Over the Wall: The thieves climb over the wall of the manse into a garden of strange plants. Ah-trah will warn them that Lions roam the garden. There is nothing of value here. For encounters in this area roll once on table A below and twice on Table B. For every 3 turns the PCs hang around the garden roll again on Table A and B (once each). At the end of the garden is a large crystal doorway.

Encounters:

Table A: Roll 1d6

- 1: Shambling Mound, # appearing 1,  
HP = Number of levels in the party \* 3hp.
- 2: Stirges, # appearing 2-5;
- 3-6: Lions, # appearing 1-2; HP = 6hp/die

Table B: roll 1d6: Special effects, sounds, and sights

- 1: A large red flower is seen quickly snapping at a bat flying by.

Upon

missing the bat, the flower appears to open up fully and turn in the PCs direction.

- 2: The PCs discover the body of the largest lion they have ever seen.

It

appears to have been crushed to death in a bloody fight.

- 3: Far off in the distance a very evil laughter can be heard. Perhaps the sound of some summoned demon cheerfully torturing a summoner before taking him back to the abyss.

- 4: You hear the sound of a nearby foots steps. If the PCs check they will find one set of fresh footprints in the soft moist dirt of the garden heading on the same path they are going. They will not find the person who made these tracks.

- 5: The ground opens up below the group. Roll 1d20 + 3. If this is greater than the PCs dexterity he falls into a hole 15' deep with 5' of foul water in it.

If searched, the PCs will find a piece of leather with marks on it. A successful read languages will determine: 1) That the marks are those made by barbarian tribes north of the city. 2) the marks say ""

- 6: Suddenly, the entire garden goes totally silent. No insects, birds, or other animals are making any sounds. This lasts for 5 minutes.

\*\*\*\*\*

The First Room or the Crystal room: Entering from the garden through a large crystal doorway. This a 20' x 20' by 10' room apparently made from crystal. There are 2 other doors in the room, one on the west wall one on the east wall. There are fresh muddy footprints leading to the west exit. Ah-Trah goes to the west exit.

\*\*\*\*\*

The First Hallway: A shiny brass hallway, 50' long, can be seen here. The mud tracks continue here. If the PCs walk in the hall way, the hallway rings/chimes like dozens of bells or chimes are being hit. Ah-Trah will fly down the hallway, the PCs must move silently to avoid this noise. If

the PCs check for traps before they enter the hallway, they will discover the sound property of the hallway. They can't remove the chiming effect. If the PCs make noise, the person in the next room will be alerted. If not, the PCs will be 90% likely to get surprised on him.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Second Room: This is 15' x 15' x 15' room made of fine quality woods. Various types of wood have been inlaid in the floor in beautiful patterns. On the floor is a pair of mud soaked soft shoes. There are two other exits in the room. One north, the other West. PCs will go west.

If the PCs surprise the occupant: You see an average looking male elf dressed in fine leather armour sitting on the floor pulling on a pair of shoes. He is surprised.

If the occupant is alerted: Above the door frame of the door the PCs entered through is a male elf thief. He climbed up here when he heard the noise they made. He will observe them to make sure they aren't guards. When he is sure they aren't guards, he will reveal himself.

The thief is named Birnleyas Corinthas. He will ask to merge the two groups (the PCs group and His group, which is himself) and to split any treasure gained equally. If the PCs agree, he will join them.

If not, he will pretend to leave down the brass hallway. In a turn he will come back down. He will follow the group, and when they ENTER the room of Glass spiders he will drink his potion of speed and attack. He will get to the PCs 3 rounds after they enter the combat with the glass spiders.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Second Hallway: Just a normal stone hallway which leads to the room of Glass Spiders below.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Room of Glass Spiders: This is a 30' x 30' 15' room made of granite bricks. Inside the room the PCs see 3 dry corpses on the floor. Try to give the impression that these are some form of undead, perhaps a strange type of mummy. There is an exit on the north wall.

The room contains glass spiders: They are invisible spiders with invisible webs. The webs are very thin and incredibly strong. Once stuck on a web, it can only be removed using wine or other alcohol. Fire will just cause the webs to melt into a pool of very sticky mess. Magical blades will not stick to these webs. There is one glass spider for each 2 creatures in the party. Move: 6" HD 3+2, AC 8(4), # of attacks 1, Damage 1+ special, Special defence invisibility makes them AC4 if in combat, and undetectable otherwise. Special damage is a S.T. VS poison on the bite, failure causes poison damage of 1d3 per round for 4 rounds. Each bite causes this damage to be cumulative.

Effect of the webs: each round that a creature is fighting within the webs, he will get more tangled in the webs. This has the effect of causing a cumulative -1 to hit in combat and -1 to the creature's dexterity per round. When the dexterity reaches zero, the creature cannot move.

There is nothing of value on the corpses or in the room. Ah-Trah will use his djinni powers in this room of: Gaseous form to get out of the webs, and create wine to get the party out of the webs.

\*\*\*\*\*

The screwy hallway: This hallway corkscrews around. There is nothing of interest other than that. NOTE: Ah'trahs knowledge of the inside ends here.

\*\*\*\*\*

Puzzle Room One: The room appears to have only one doorway, which is the doorway the PC entered through. The room is 30' x 30' by 15' and is made of large bricks of granite. A large iron balance scale(10' tall, 10' wide) can be seen tilted to the right (unbalanced, there are more bricks in the right pan than the left pan). In the center of the room is a pile of bricks. Each brick seems to be exactly the same. Currently there are 11 bricks in the left pan and 24 bricks in the right pan.

Searching the room may find:

If the PC search the pile of bricks carefully (they must voice some strong interest in it) they might note that most of the 100 bricks here are new and only a few of them are scratched in anyway.

If the wall behind the scale is looked at it will seem a 12' x 12' section of it is less perfect than the rest of the walls in the room.

TRICK: The scale is a puzzle lock. No PC skill roll (such as pick locks) will open this lock. To open the lock the scale must be balanced AND have the correct amount of weight on it. 10 bricks in each pan will open the lock and open a passageway. The wall section behind the scale will appear to turn into mud revealing a passage to the next room. Let the PCs have fun trying to get through this one.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Hall of Earth: This Hallway appears to be made from a very black claylike soil. Walking on the ground here feels like your walking on the back of some large living creature. Nothing else is in the hallway.

\*\*\*\*\*

Puzzle Room Two: The hallway ends in a room 20' square on each side. In the room are two other exits, both exit are on the walls adjacent to the wall where the PCs entered the room. So Three of the four walls have exits. If searched for, there are normal chances to find the secret door on the forth wall. To open the secret door, both locks on the other two doors must be unlocked in the same round. A knock spell cast over both doors will open it, but, not if cast on the secret door alone(the mechanisms are the two locks on the doors). By the way, the locks reset each round, so one thief with picks can't do it. Behind the two doors are walls of solid granite. The secret door lead to the small hallway.

\*\*\*\*\*

The small hallway: This hallway is only 4 feet tall and 4 feet wide. After the party enters the secret door closes. At the other end of the hallway, embedded in the wall, is a wall safe with a

combination lock. This is a false safe! When the party gets near the safe or opens the safe, the floor of the hallway rotates downward creating a chute to the next room.

\*\*\*\*\*

The final Room: The party lands in a smoke filled room. Small fires can be dimly seen about. A loud evil laughter can be heard from above, and a voice rings out "Another Group of fools to feed my hunger, I shall enjoy sucking the marrow from your bones and making toothpicks from your souls" The room goes quiet, and now the party sees before them a large demonic figure dripping of oozes. This is an illusion, caused by the Efreeti. If the PCs attack it, it will be dispelled revealing an enlarged(by 200%) Efreeti standing in a mass of swirling fire and bright energy. Within the energy field is a large golden ring. This is the ring Ah'Trah seeks. The ring is also protected by the energy field which disappears when the efreeti is killed. The field prevents the ring from moving by any means (wishes included). It is impossible to get to the ring without killing the efritti! The field covers the ring and flows to the efreeti. This prevents the efreeti from going gaseous or invisible. Touching the energy field causes 3d6 damage save vs spells for 1/2 damage. The flames around the Efreeti cause 2d6 damage per round 1/2 if save vs. spells is made.

If Birnleyas Corinthas is still with the group, he will avoid combat an try to steal the ring by touching the energy field.

When the efreeti dies the energy field dies with him, leaving the ring free to grab. The party will also discover a large diamond in the wall at this point. Touching the diamond causes the toucher to Teleport to the Crystal Room mentioned above. If Birnleyas Corinthas is still alive at this point(in the crystal room), he will take his potion of extra healing(if not used already) and attack the group. If he wins, the party is over. If not, goto What Could Happen below.

What could happen after the adventure is over.

## **1**

If Ah'Trah and the group find the ring of elemental command he will offer to take the ring back to his master and will give them each a magic ring of many wishes (2 wishes per ring) as payment. After they accept this offer, Ah-Trah reveals his true form, laughs a lot and asks them to drop by if they are ever on the plane of air (they are life friends). **2**

If the group argues with him or asks to go to his masters place he will place a bag of beans on the floor and fly away. If the group attacks him manages to kill him after this they will find only his weapons, the elemental ring of Elemental Command (AIR) will be gone! Killing him will give the group enemy on the elemental plane of air, who will send an air elemental after them once every 1d12 months. Re-roll a new 1d12 months after each occurrence. The bag of beans will have 8 beans.

FIRST BEAN PLANTED will cause the ground to rumble and a large mound of clay to rise out of the ground. It hardens in a round then starts to crack and fall to pieces. Suddenly, a clay golem attacks the nearest party member if in sight. If none are visible it will rampage the area. NOTE: don't forget the special rules for healing wounds from a clay golem!

**SECOND BEAN PLANTED** in a 30' by 30' area many bamboo plants shoots up out of the ground each will 6 to 20 feet tall. Damage 6d8 S.T. vs dexterity -4 for half damage. If the group cuts down the 6' long bamboo tree in the center they will have a staff of wonder(25 charges). The tree radiates magic and must be cut down before 1 turn elapses after it grows or all its charges are depleted.

**THIRD BEAN PLANTED:** When planted and watered this bean will cause a large cloud of black gas to appear within a 20' radius of the bean. If the cloud is entered you will be blinded (until cure blindness is cast on the character) and then attacked by an invisible stalker. If the stalker wins, it will leave. If it is killed, a triple Hit die double damage Stalker will haunt the nearest town until killed. Whoever kills the second Stalker (the actual killing blow, use individual initiative.) permanently gains the ability to attack any creature whose origin is from the elemental plane of air without needing a magic weapon to hit. Only one character gains this ability! **DO NOT TELL THE PLAYER ABOUT THIS POWER!**

**FOURTH BEAN PLANTED:** a pedestal appears out of nowhere and has several buttons, switches, and levers. It will last for 2 hours then vanishes as suddenly as it came. The buttons, switches, and levers have various effects. Some good, most bad!

**FIFTH BEAN PLANTED:** Nothing appears to happen. But if the bean is dug up a chest will be found. They won't find the bean! In the chest is a magical censor with a magic rune on it. If read magic is used, the rune appears to say "Summon and Be Commanded". It is a censor of summoning hostile air elementals of the strongest type.

**SIXTH BEAN PLANTED:** a tree grows out of the ground. The fruit it bears resembles diamonds. Every round several of the diamonds fall to the ground a shatter, any picked by hand are normal diamonds valued at 1000 GP. 1d4 diamonds can be picked per round by a character and there 25 diamonds in all. The GM will tell players getting the diamond that they feel that they own all the diamonds and should not share them with others. 3 turns after the tree appears, anyone who picked a diamond will be quested (no Savings Throw! They lost the chance to save by voluntarily grasping the diamonds.) to go to the nearest temple of air (or other good church) and donate several magic items for forgiveness (sin of greed) or they must volunteer for a quest or they can avoid this if they are not ever greedy again (I mean be non materialistic! They must be generous and give to charities any extra money. etc... Let them know what their punishment will be if they fail!). If they choose the last and they fail to be non-greedy, they will be punished by losing all their possessions (where ever they maybe).

**SEVENTH BEAN PLANTED:** in a 50' radius of the bean 50 bookworms appear out of the ground (good luck! **HOPE YOUR MAPS or spell books DON'T GET EATEN!**).

**EIGHTH BEAN PLANTED:** a large hole (25 radius 50' deep) appears. A very old large white dragon is in the hole. It will attack directly and without much thinking (it has been trapped for 100+ years and is very pissed!). It's treasure hoard is at the bottom of the hole and has normal non-magical treasure plus the following: a wand of secret door and trap locating, a potion of animal control, a potion of human control, a potion of frost giant control, a potion of frost giant

strength, a map to a girdle of frost giant strength which can only be read by the first fighter or thief who tries to read it.

### 3

If the group finds out Ah-Trah's true form (and Ah-Trah knows they know his true form) before the ring is discovered, he will deny it and when the group finds the ring will reward them with the following items: a ring of feather falling, a flying carpet, 2 potions of gaseous form, a bag of the winds, and a ring of 2 limited wishes (to be used for healing he says firmly). He will not invite them to visit him on his plane in this case!

### 4

If Ah-Trah dies during the adventure, he will go back to the elemental plane of air. The players are on their own. If they manage to get the ring they will be approached by an agent of Ah-Trah's very soon. In exchange for the selling the ring they will each get a choice of one of the following items (a maximum of 4 items for the group and no more than 1 per character, no duplicate items):

1. a ring of three wishes(limited).
2. a carpet of flying.
3. a scroll of one spell, player's choice from any spell in the books.
4. Sword of Air: see description in the text.
5. Pouch filled with Dust of Dispelling Air Elementals(6 uses): See description.
6. Potion of protection from dragons breath: see description
7. ring of flying.
8. ring of feather falling.
9. Talisman of Proof from Magic (Alteration): See description.

### 5

If the PCs die in the fight with the Efreeti, but, Ah'Trah wins and gets the ring. He will use his wishing powers to bring the PCs back to life. The wishing will be done back on Ah'Trahs home plane. The PCs will not have any possessions from before. The wishing will be their reward. Some GMs might give the PCs some other rewards as well, but, giving them their lives seems good. Also, there will be a party in the players honor with many air elemental types in attendance.

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A plot which I am now working out for my little group:

From one place to another (fill in any appropriate places of your world) goes a huge gold-transport (make up the reason yourself). The PC can act in many ways:

1. As guards. (Prepare Transport, Guard Transport, Discover Plots against Transport, etc)
  2. As Robbers (!?!), The transport is of a bad guys?)
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Well, there's the standard "save the world" goal... I've run a few of these kind of campaigns, and I've found, as I acquire experience at it, that the focus of this kind of campaign has switched from "'Da Bad Guy' is threatening to destroy the world - kill him" (I'm sure it's everybody's first mega-plot) to a more complex and involved kind of plot, in which the players don't get handed things on a plate... Ask my PBeM party!

Another classic is the 'recurring enemy'. The low level players offend/thwart a petty villainess in her first tentative steps towards a master plan (say, trying to take over a small merchant house in the city). Villainess is mightily p\*\*sed at this, and proceeds to be a thorn in the party's side for the next ten levels, gaining experience and power as they do. Throw in a fatal fascination or two (she is mightily smitten with the party's paladin, say) or even a family link (one of the party's a relative of hers) just to add spice, stir well....

Similar to that is the "all-pervasive' enemy, a mysterious shadowy organisation (say a slave dealing ring) with minor political aspirations that seems to be everywhere. In the early stages, about one in every two adventures the party has is generated one way or another by this group, and slowly the party begins to put two and two together, until at higher level they are seeking to wipe out this organisation...

Or how about the vengeance quest - an NPC close to the PC's is killed, and the PC's seek vengeance, following the trail of the NPC's killer through various places, organisations etc..

Hey, I just thought (I'm typing this on the fly): Combine all four.... NPC close to PCs is killed because she found out too much about the all pervasive organisation (APO). PCs start on the vengeance trail, and inadvertently thwart the recurring villainess (RV) on the way. APO recruits RV (they share a common cause of wanting the PC's out of the way) - better, APO assist RV without revealing that they are the APO. Also da bad guy (DBG) is using APO to further his plans for world domination, plans which RV doesn't necessarily agree with when she finds out (although it may take the PCs time to discover this (they may think she works for the APO), and also to find out what it will take to make her change sides - maybe the NPC is a relative and the RV mistakenly blames the PCs for her death). Maybe factions of the APO don't agree with DBG's plan either...

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Player has to go on a quest to visit the high holy spot of their lawful good deity. In the course of the trip during a sea voyage they are beset upon by a ship of the undead. Given that the ship's complement is unbeatable, they disable it at the helm or rudder and leave it to crash on the reefs. Continue on with visiting the nice deity and when they finally arrive after whatever other challenges you choose to put in their path (I used lots of spirit things, including ghosts of monsters they had recently defeated and of dead friends) they are told by the deity/priests that

tho their actions were commendable they must finish their business with the undead ship. It seems that since it has grounded on the reefs whatever eldritch energies went into powering it are now slowly puncturing a hole to the plane of the undead. In my version, the ship is half filled with water and as the waves pass over/through it the battles got very messy. In the end it was a second wheel below decks that was the focus of the power, manned by a gent cursed for killing women and children on a particular ship he plundered.

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For weird, have them get a message from StarFleet to patrol into Klingon Space, (maximum priority command etc...) Once inside Klingon space, they are no longer able to communicate with Fed Space, (but may not realize this for a while under comm silence), and discover no Klingon signals either.

Have them meet another curious ship from another culture which doesn't know what's going on either. For extra weird, have that ship vaguely resemble the ship they are in, but with identifiable differences...

Other ways it could turn out:

Actually, it was all the result of a botched experiment in a SuperCloaking device that temporarily shifted the Klingon Empire out of time for two weeks, four days, and seventeen minutes from mark...

And now they're back! With several curious Romulan, Fed, and other ships hovering over their capital planet...

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#### TREASURE INN

This plot is a low-combat (no combat hopefully) test of the players ingenuity and other skills. It described for a medieval period but could easily be transported into most settings.

Outline: The players have a treasure map for stolen gold but on finding the place, discover an inn has been built over the spot where the gold is buried. The map describes the location of the treasure as 20 paces towards the river from a gnarled willow, 2 feet beneath a large flat stone. This is now manifestly beneath a room in the corner of an inn built on the river flat. The room is dirt-floored and windowless, being used by the innkeeper as a holding cell for guests that have exceeded their capacity somewhat and are in need of protection, or have become belligerent and a nuisance to other customers. The innkeeper is scrupulously honest and does not "roll" such guests but will extract payment for any damages. The underground cellar of the inn narrowly missed uncovering the gold, being under the adjoining room and an excavation from the near wall would find the treasure after only a few feet of digging. On the other hand, the innkeeper is not in the habit of letting guests into his cellar!

Background detail. This outline is particularly set up for characters who have set themselves up as "the good guys" as it potentially involves an ethical dilemma if your players enjoy such things.

Location. The Inn is situated on a route junction where a side stream enters the main river. 2 days up river is the city where the gold originated. The main route enters a hard gorged section of road below the inn and 6 further days of travel brings the route to a major port city. The other route continues up the side stream and over a low pass after a long day's travel in lonely country. Another day's travel is required to arrive at the small sea port where the characters will start from. This port town has grown enormously in the last 12 years since a pirate kingdom was destroyed allowing trade to flourish in the southern ocean. Consequently this side route has grown much more important allowing the inn to flourish. The innkeeper was a smithy by trade and his services are valued by travellers. The inn stands by itself with no neighbours or other business in very underpopulated country which makes it something of an oddity in the world setting.

History. The gold is a booty from a raid on a goldsmith's shop in the up- river city 13 years ago. It was a bulk purchase to be shared with other goldsmiths in the guild and was guarded by an apprentice whom the thief killed, leaving a widow and 3 children. The thief ran into trouble though with a lame horse near the inn site, and with the hue and cry close on his tail, he buried the gold under a large flat stone before fleeing up the then little-used trail to the small port. He covered his digging further by piling all the excavated earth (a distinctive red) onto his cloak, then emptying it bushes nearby. His luck really ran out though when he arrived at the small port and was arrested by the guard for an earlier murder and was summarily executed. He did however have time to make the treasure map and gave it to his lover, mother of his 2 year old son. She would not have a bar of what she correctly guessed was stolen gold though but is now very sick (beyond the means of the characters to cure). Her son, now 15, is desperate to help her and has approached the party with the map. They could be relatives or friends of a party member and the gold would be used to buy a cure.

In the provost's party, pursuing the thief was the murdered apprentice goldsmith's brother, a journeyman blacksmith. The party stopped at the route junction on finding the lame horse while woodsmen in the party tried to find which route the thief had taken. Answering a call of nature in the bushes, he found the pile of red earth but told the provost nothing. After it was discovered that the thief had already been executed but without any gold being found, he made a shrewd guess about what the thief had done, but failed realise that the earth had been moved into the bushes which he now turned over in what rapidly became an obsession. To cover his activities, he built a small smithy to service travellers coming up the gorge road, which soon became augmented by an inn as the trade in the southern ocean made the route to the port town more important while his digging was unfruitful. He even now hasn't given up on finding the treasure though he seldom is actively digging. His strange obsession (which he wont reveal) means there are light-hearted stories about him searching for a rainbow's end, told at his expense by frequent travellers stopping at his inn. The innkeeper is well-liked and married when his obsession cooled, now having 5 children helping around the inn. He has also taken in his brothers destitute widow and children who help out about the inn. The widow helps cook and brew but this is a bitter come-down from her expectations in marriage to a goldsmith and she frets for her 16 year-old

daughter now serving behind the bar. Her older sons are competent smiths under the innkeeper's teaching. The family all share the secret about the possibility of gold buried nearby but none take this seriously.

The challenge for the players is compounded by fact that it would be very unusual for anyone to stay more than 1 night so 2 nights without an obvious excuse. This will result in some pretty blunt queries and suspicion of "casing the joint" from people used to fending for themselves in an isolated spot.

Stories about the innkeeper's strange diggings will be easily heard but no one suspects what he is after. A reasonable number of people, many on very good terms with the keeper will be present on any night, though all will be passing through.

If players come up with an ingenious scheme for getting the gold out and clear, then good for them but I would be likely exploit any weakness in their plans to set up a confrontation with the keeper and the widow. They are very unlikely to try force unprovoked but will certainly put forward an impassioned case for their rights to the gold - better life for daughter and sons, years of graft, etc. Obsessions can be dangerous things though ...

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#### WE GO TO WAR

Involving players in a war is a pretty sure way to ensure a high combat session or three. The problem is dealing with effect of a few players in a very large battlefield. This can be done, but limiting players to attempting "key objectives" is a good way to control the play. This approach is certainly helped by a scenario that puts the player characters under the eye of a senior NPC. Outlined below is an example of players involvement in a short war. In some parts the players will be caught up in events; in others they have options not to participate. The events assume both player participation and success right through and is offered as a possible model that can obviously be modified and improvised indefinitely. Note that in fact much the player involvement was from their own ideas. I would always present the situation and see what they do with it before offering "missions" in guise of a commander. While the events will unroll whatever the player's action really, it should help their enjoyment to give tons of feedback on the effect of their actions (good and bad) so they feel in the centre of activities.

1- First action: assumes the players are mounted. As they approach a road in a border area, they will notice the odd refugee and ragged army groups on foot moving away. A grim-looking senior army officer or noble is driving two carts loaded with incendiaries (oil, naphtha, resin-soaked straw) against the flow. Questioning anyone will tell of a massive invasion that has pushed in the border garrisons. The cart commander will request the party assistance, since they are mounted, in destroying a bridge over a nearby major river. The idea here is to give the party exposure to a key NPC. The bridge is easily set ready to burn, but the commander will delay the firing till last minute, allowing as many as possible of the fleeing garrison troops across first. The border itself is a mountain ridge and in one to two hours, companies of the invading army will be seen in the distance on tops of the foothills. A largish company of defenders, well armed and moving in

good order is sighted but suddenly a company of the cavalry from the enemy vanguard appears. A race to the bridge ensues with the commander uneasily preparing to fire it. When only hundred metres away, it is clear the race will be lost and the defenders turn at bay to face the cavalry. Alone, they are outnumbered and lost, but they look capable ... ? If the party goes to assist, they may well swing the balance but the commander will definitely fire the bridge rather than risk it being taken should the fight go badly ... After 4 rounds of combat, the enemy will suddenly be aware of the risk of the bridge and try to disengage so as to rush it instead.

2- Under siege: The border defences have fallen back on a powerful fortress, built in the rough terrain of a mountain range (other side of the valley), protecting the road to the capital. The enemy army cannot forage through here so must neutralise the fortress to protect the supply line. The commander of the fortress however has discerned that the enemy has split with a force going down valley and the long way round to take the capital by surprise or at least prevent relief of the fortress. He decides to take a large force of mountain-hardy locals through less-known routes to harry and hopefully stop this thrust but this will leave the fortress very lightly manned. Players will not be locals so will remain in the fortress. The man they helped at the bridge now commands the fortress and will request them so they can help him with any ideas to make it seem the fortress has more men than it really has. The enemy army has been delayed crossing the river but all too soon they arrive. The fortress' outer wall has no moat but is too high for scaling ladders or grapples. The gate is both powerful and a cunningly made death-trap. It opens into a gated courtyard that would quickly be a killing ground if the main gate is forced.

Early stage ideas:

Players discover enemy magicians using some levitation or flying power in an attempt to fix ropes on the wall. A magically- or psionically- powerful party might like to battle enemy sorcerers from spying, attempting to kill the commander etc. Enemy might attempt parley with some bribe the GM knows might tempt the party.

Serious stuff: With no easy way in, the enemy gets constructing. Siege towers go up which are well protected with fire-proofing to the front (ie water-soaked wool, constantly dowsed). There are not enough forces inside to properly defend the wall from these so this is serious. After anxiously watching a few days, the commander decides a night-sally to fire them from behind is needed as they near completion. A very powerful party might attack several, otherwise they will be one of several parties sent out at midnight to attack. If one of several, they will have to address coordination of the attacks.

3- Relief: The old commander's gamble pays off and he successfully grinds the flanking force to a halt and by message has warned the prince of it. He now hurries back, while the prince sends most of his cavalry to engage this much-delayed enemy and is able to gather a large relieving infantry force to aid the fortress. The fortress gains hope from sudden movement in the enemy camps as a defensive line is marshalled at right angle to the fortress to meet the threat. Battle is joined but the fortress takes no part to begin with to avoid risk of losing the gate. A sally force is prepared though and party is expected to be in it. The arrival of the old commander with the remnants of his force at midday forces the enemy flank so their line is slowly turned with its back to the fortress. The enemy standard is right in front of the gate when the Prince launches a

furious attack on the centre. It is time for the sally. The players are detailed to bring down the standard, others will chase the enemy general. For a powerful party, the standard will be defended by enemies champions. The standard will also be protected by anti-magic spells and possibly a duty sorcerer.

If the players succeed, then the enemy army will collapse into a rout, though the Prince doesn't have cavalry to exploit this much. If they fail, the enemy will withdraw in good order though this probably won't interest the player characters much. :-)

This scenario throws the players into a full-scale battle with a specific goal and few gaming systems have rules for this so here are my ideas. The trick for the GM is to create the battle about the players in an interesting way without setting up a wargame table. I think the "fog of war" makes this possible - the GM only has to describe the action in the immediate area about the players. You can use the following table of results for a 6 sided dice to help lubricate the imagination, thrown every few combat rounds.

1. Appearance of cavalry at charge range.
2. Troops on a flank of players collapse.
3. Troops appear to the rear.
4. Missile troops come to support
5. Infantry reinforcements come
6. A Champion arrives

Throw a D10 to determine whether the result is good or bad (ie whether it is friendly or enemy cavalry, friends or enemy that collapse at the flank etc.) Since battle is going the way of the Prince then 1-4 means bad and 5-10 means good. Adjust as required for any battle balance.

The second question about battles like this concerns battlefield morale of NPC units both fighting the player characters and on the flanks. The GM might just rule their morale in any way that makes the game interesting, but here are some simple morale rules that can be used where gaming system doesn't provide. Rate NPC quality from 1 (fanatics) to 18 (14 year old conscripts).

NPC forces check morale when:

- When about to engage enemy or on arrival of new enemy
- At every round when they are losing a fight
- When neighbouring friends are routed, (this can cascade) Throw 3 dice:

add 1 for

- secure flanks and rear (friends on three sides)
- champion or general in charge
- winning the fight
- charging
- every enemy unit seen routing in last and current round

- an enemy champion seen killed in last or current round

subtract 1 for

- insecure rear
- every friendly unit seen routing in last and current round
- general or standard lost in last or current round
- a champion killed in last or current round
- being charged
- facing magical attack (including melee contact with lycanthropes)
- facing undead, golems or similar mindless opponents
- every 25% of unit or hit points (as appropriate) lost (ie 50% lost is -2)

The last modifier only really can apply to NPC units in actually fighting players - not to imaginary neighbouring units though the GM can adjudicate some losses if dicing for them. Personally, I never check morale for flank units and guess something fun but think it adds to game to check morale for the NPC that the players face.

If the resultant score is less than the morale value then the unit routs. Use any other reality appropriate (ie ensorcelled NPCs are like undead they never check for morale).

Back to plots ...

4- Impasse: The enemy has recrossed the river further down and linked with remnants of the abortive flanking attack. They are growing in strength as reinforcements arrive and rafts are constructed. Neither side can easily attack the other across the river. The enemy has set up in a patch of high ground on a river bend and the ground both up and down river is mostly swamps and marshes, providing secure flanks. However, the swamps also preclude any foraging so the enemy is dependent on the supply lines through the mountain border. The Prince needs to dislodge the enemy from this ground though he suspects the swamps will bring disease into the enemy camp before long but he faces the same risk. It is decided to send spare strength across the river in small units to attack the supply line and reinforcements. The party is asked to be one such group and attack the supply line for as long as they can do reasonable damage safely. The first part of the trip once over the river higher up is to avoid enemy screening cavalry though these will be thinly spread. Increase the chance of a sighting by day compared to night. The rough hill country leading back to the border will provide many suitable bases in form of caves (which may house the odd monster) or secluded bushy glens. (Describe the country to the party and then dice for finding a suitable occurrence every watch). A good map of rough hill country will help enormously if you prefer to play this more detail (better still, use a real map of an area you know well as this makes the description much more vivid and helpful)

The supply line will at first be very lightly guarded. The party might encounter

in a day: say on a D6 (adjust for strength of party).

- 1-2 - 2-6 supply wains with armed escort of 2-8 of low grade soldiers
- 3 - reinforcement group consisting of 3-6 men-at-arms with very low morale levy of 16-24. (The best troops were with the original

force)  
4 - cavalry patrol of 8-10 riders  
5 - 1-2 wains going other way with wounded, guarded by walking wounded.  
6 - messenger on good horse. (Boring messages though ... )

There is only light traffic, so 1/6 chance of one of the above per watch. A 1/10 chance could be rolled for two groups instead of one within on the road within hailing distance. The reinforcement groups are modelled on feudal levy - a few proper fighting men from a lord's following with a troop of untrained and uninterested peasants. These could be expected to break if the men-at-arms are defeated.

After a week of raiding, the supply line will get better guarded. In second week, the reinforcements will travel with the wains, so matrix could be:

1-3 supply and reinforcements as above  
4-5 cavalry  
6 messenger  
In third week, the supply will move in convoy  
1-3 4-12 supply wains with 30-50 of levy  
4-6 cavalry patrols of 10-15 riders

At this point, the party can probably do little more and should return.

On return, they should find the enemy has succumbed to poor food and disease and has pulled back with the Prince preparing to pursue. Another battle could be fought in the hills, weighed heavily in the Prince's favour, if the party hasn't done too well.

5 - Victory: This scenario is for a swashbuckling style with fast combat and more concern for fun than realism at its deadliest. The enemy invasion is broken and has fallen back inside its own border but the Prince has decided to press the attack to annihilate the threat once and for all. The remaining enemy army is now besieged in a fortress town, just inside the border while the Prince demands handing over of the leaders and laying down of all arms. He judges he probably has enough strength to carry the walls by assault though the cost will be high. They learn (a prisoner, traitor, magical?) however of a drain leading from inside the fortress into a moat that protects part of the wall. It is large enough for a person to crawl through but involves swimming underwater to its entrance and making the first part of the crawl underwater. (This is possible on one breath but should require a difficult skill throw to avoid panic). An initial scouting will reveal that the other end is blocked by an iron grille and patrols move past the entrance very regularly. However, the Prince is planning a pre-dawn assault on the walls anyway, and it seems that a party could slip out of the drain unnoticed in the confusion of the attack and hopefully open the gate. A certain element of trust is probably going to be necessary here for the player to take this on :- ) - perhaps they would prefer siege ladders and burning oil? Best of all is let coax the players into thinking up the scheme themselves. (ie. they can be the bearers of the information about the drain to the prince, discuss it with "him," etc).

Assuming they take it on, they will need a means of opening the grille which should be provided by the Prince if the party has not the means. A means of breaking iron will come handy later too.

The wall has a structure of buildings on the inner side providing rooms for archers to use arrow slits, stores of defensive equipment, stairs, access passages and barracks. A good map of these

(making up three levels, mostly one room wide, two at the base) is needed. The drain grille will open into a 'room', three sided and open to the inner court where the sewer ditch comes in. No access to any other rooms in the level. It will be a reasonable distance from the gate. The gatehouse itself will be on the middle level and accessible only from an internal passage past barracks on this level.

So how do the players find fun instead of sudden death for their characters? My approach was to play this as a series of running fights, with the players thinking up every means of deception they could and thoroughly inventive spell use. It is dark and confusion reigns with people running everywhere. The players will encounter various groups soldiers, newly waken, rushing to man the wall on the most part, parties carrying supplies of torches to help light the wall, slaves carrying barrels of oil for throwing on attackers, messengers, comrades assisting wounded off the wall etc. On encountering enemy, they will automatically assume that part of the wall has been taken. They probably will fight but only briefly if the party is getting upper hand, whereupon they will turn and flee, calling for reinforcements. The party should be forced into every trick in the book to delay or ward off pursuers - give the party plenty of feedback that these are working. If they adopt disguise, then they should encounter a captain who tells them to follow him - away from the gatehouse :-). Of course, unless you have decided the enemy is non human, then they probably will be mistaken for friends anyway unless they announce themselves as enemy.

The gatehouse will only have at most two occupants - they weren't anticipating needing the machinery at the moment! The gate itself is a counterweighted drawbridge, operated by a chain windlass. It will take some time (say six rounds) to lower the gate by windlass and it is not much use till it is completely down. The defenders will notice the moment it begins to lower and the party will find things very hot at the gatehouse door very quickly. Of course, if the chain holding the counterweights is broken, the drawbridge will open very suddenly. A picture of apparatus might help your players. There is but one entrance to the gatehouse which probably will be crowded by enemy with the gate down, but players could squeeze through the gatekeeper's watch window - a 20' jump into the moat. If any of your players fancies a glorious character death then now is probably a great moment.

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#### BECOMING A TRIBAL WARRIOR

A tribal group that the party wants something from (eg. horses, specialised bows, arcana) will only deal "Fingers of the Fist". Ie, at least one member of the party must successfully prove themselves as a tribal warrior for which there is a traditional initiation. The traditional fighting band is the five strong "Fist", consisting of "fingers" (initiated warriors) and led by a "thumb" - the eldest finger.

Normally tribesmen would go through initiation at 14-16 years old, so the procedure shouldn't be too dangerous but they may embellish the procedure somewhat for outsiders. This can be used as to make use of some less frequently used stats, eg. a rough ride to test horsemanship. A test of pain endurance should be part of it. Tattooing or branding are obvious and could use things like max-hit-points, constitution, mental stamina, stats for the test. A test concealed to the players

could be made by an estimate of the no. of times the character has been wounded. While having limited playing interest, the resulting brand might lead to interesting plot developments "back home". A more interesting component of the test could be a stealing mission: a central totem of some kind in the tribal villages is generally surrounded by curious pottery votive bowls. The design of these bowls being distinctive to each village. The task is sneak into a neighbouring village and pinch a bowl. Since the tribes live pretty much at peace, spilling of blood much more than a bloody nose would be severely frowned on and likely to cause blood feud. (The party may or may not be told this depending on how you might like to develop this). This is naturally a game played by the younger tribes people and the night guard on the totems would only be 13-14, on possibly a new "finger". Their preferred "weapon" against would-be raiders is a foul yellow dye that takes a week or so to wear off. A person marked with such a dye, would be a general laughing stock. A daylight raid would be considered very daring though no especial guard is placed on the totem at day and entry to the village could be gained on some other pretext.

The test should conclude with combat. Suggested is tackling a suitable large predator - but with no armour etc., and only a dagger for a weapon.

An enemy (may be a monster as well as human) killed in honourable combat (ie the enemy had a chance), may qualify the "finger" for a silver ring awarded by a war council of "thumbs". An extension of the plot here might be an incident that lets the players become Ringed Fingers.

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#### "WOLVES" ON THE PASS.

As a plot this is pretty sketchy, but is hopefully an antidote to the "wandering monster" syndrome. Ie. "You meet monster x." "We beat the stuffing out of it, then proceed." The idea is use weather and fatigue rules plus the wolves to provide a night of high tension and brainstorming but perhaps surprisingly little combat.

The idea is to get a trading mule-train over a broad mountain pass to the plain's people beyond as early in the season as possible. High profit is assured by being the first trader of the season through, ahead of any big caravans. The mountain pass is fast way through which a mule train of light, high-value goods (ie spices, salt, liquors, specialised textiles) can exploit, returning later in safety with first choice of furs and winter craft-goods in exchange. The players may be doing it this on their own account if sufficient organised, or may be paid as escorts. Either way, their return should be proportional to the number of mules brought safely through the mountains. The hazards are cold and wolves, though some rarer nasties might come into play. Instead of a single encounter, the wolves will dog the party all the way, avoiding a fight but occasionally making rushes in hope of panicking a horse or mule loose. They also will worry the party at night, calling fatigue rules into play. Wind, rain and cold will also take their toll, hampering defence efforts. I find turns of 3 hours from 6am to 6pm, and 4 hours from 6pm to 6am to be good for this type adventure. Also, I wouldn't bother with the tedium of mule/horse v. wolves fights. Assume that the wolves are opportunist and 4-8 will rush an opening. If it goes well, then more will join in. Give the wolves a 1/6 say (better if mobility reduced etc) per combat round of bringing down a

mule if not interfered with. Will retire immediately if resisted. If defenders say all go to protect say the tail of train, then good chance that another group of wolves will seize chance to attack elsewhere. The very first attack can be full-scale (all the wolves) but wont last more than 4 rounds (probably less - as long as it takes to realise that mules are defended). It will with luck :-) though panic your magic users into wasting a lot of power that they will have trouble regaining.

The wolves should perhaps be in inverted commas - because I don't know or care whether the behaviour I'm describing is "realistic" (not being part of the New Zealand ecology!). Call them something else appropriate to your world if need be. The party will pick up a wolf pack early in the piece. The pack is very hungry though certainly not suicidally so, having unsuccessfully chased their normal prey (deer or something else suitable) over the pass. They are NOT interested in the humans, being too prickly for the amount of meat to warrant the trouble unless conditions are very favourable. They are however very attracted by the mules which they can easily outrun especially when laden with about 200lb of goods. Any horses are also very good game in heavy snow, though they will outrun wolves on hard ground. Attacking animals they will attempt to hamstring or take out the jugular. Faced with humans, they will generally withdraw, out of missile range if necessary. A human isolated even temporarily from others will be game however provided odds of at least 4 to 1 can be brought to bear. Wolves to the front will "face off" keeping out of weapon reach but feinting lunges to help the attackers from behind. These will attempt hamstringing, or a knock-down followed by worrying to the neck. At any concerted attack on them, they will fade, especially if one their no. is hurt or killed. They will eat their own dead quite happily when safe to do so. The pack animals will be frightened and likely to bolt with each attack. Some kind of beast- mastery/horsemanship should be tested on each occurrence unless the party have devised foolproof tethering. If the wolves successfully get an animal, then the party will have a respite of several hours. The attack will end when either the wolves have eaten about one animal between two/three; they have lost a quarter of their number; or easier game presents itself. (GM could be dicing for this or just pretending - bring on the other animals when the party has had enough).

Weather can be manipulated gloriously in this scenario:

- Wind should make all missile-fire difficult. Rain should affect bowstrings and visibility.
- Cold should affect all manual skills at very least.
- Snow should affect mobility.

Here is an example crossing: A successful weather-forecasting will tell bad weather on way, but they should clear the pass if hurried. Snow is encountered in patches as the party climb through sparse timber - and suddenly they have a wolf pack about them making good use of the cover to avoid missiles etc. while making occasional lunges. (1 per turn at most). The sparse timber gives way to thorn scrub as evening comes and party will take severe cold effects if they do not camp here. Fire is possible but the timber disappears as thorn-scrub gives way to snow-covered grasses and rock higher up. It gets very cold during the night and the wolves make lunging attacks 1-2 per turns. The idea here is the party becomes fatigued, spell-users cant replenish power etc. As each attack is met, the wolves will melt back into the night, gathering in again an hour or so later.

The next day bodes bad weather as the wind rises and the sky darkens. As the party trudge through heavy snow they should take further cold and fatigue minuses while the rising wind will play havoc with missile fire. If they turn back, then a heavy snowstorm will block the pass for nearly two weeks, while a forecasting will still indicate they can cross before the storm hits. The wolves are unencumbered and will tread quickly over the icy surface on the snow. They will only attack 2-3 times today, but will aim at the horses. The broad pass, fortunately relatively safe from avalanches, will be crossed in the late afternoon and the storm gathers fury. The snow is not so deep on the southern side and large rock formations and boulders make numerous sheltering points not far down the southern side. GM might like some other nasties living in these cave-like shelters though. It will be 4 freezing hours in pelting snow though down to firewood. At least the shelters and weather will mean little attention from wolves this night.

Next morning is somewhat warmer and the snow-showers give way to rain. By the time the party gets down to the tree line it is pouring, making fire (which they are probably reliant on) impossible without magical means. Hopefully their magic-users will have had a night's sleep by now :-). The wolf attacks will get very intense in the timber (they are now really hungry), before perhaps other easier game takes them away.

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#### DEFENDING THE COAST

This plot is meant as a strategy exercise to give a change of pace for high- status characters (ie the characters are recognised and respected).

The idea may be of use at a lower level. Characters with scrying and/or night vision capacities will be especially useful.

Plot. A coastal region about a port town has become the target for foraging pirates, based somewhere in a nearby archipelago. The lord in the town has asked the characters to assist in setting up a defence against this menace. Mostly the raids have been strictly foraging but a recent one overpowered a sleeping manor, killing its owner and with all the young women carried off. For groups so inclined this plot can easily include a simple board game based on the map, with the turn being a week, and then dicing for if and where an attack will come. The GM then looks at what the characters have put in place and adjudicates a result. The GM can control events on a more abstract level if this doesn't appeal - the fun is in devising the strategy and counter-strategies. They should be thinking up plans for watches, message passing, deployment of forces etc. A good place for the characters to get directly involved is in attacking the boats themselves while the bulk of the crew are raiding inland.

Here is a more detailed scenario as an example.

The Pirates. These are actually the losing navy from fratricidal wars on the far continent preying mostly on their own countrymen's merchant trade in vengeance. They have 12 viking-style boats with crews of 20-40 each. The leader is a cunning captain and will order appropriate measures against defences (ie, they will understand a lit beacon and its implications as well as the intended

receivers). The coastal strip concerned is very convenient and it would be difficult to go further afield. It is only due to a botched campaign against them that they are forced to forage off the coast to this extent and the word is forage as opposed to rape and pillage. The leader did not order the attack on the manor and was not amused when he found out about it, guessing correctly that it would result in stronger defences. The usual attack mode is to travel well off-shore (though they have been slack so far) at day, then run ashore pre- dawn. The raiding party goes inland while 5-9 remain to guard the ship, usually lying slightly off-shore rather than beached. The raiding party will be competent fighters though they will back off from significant resistance, particularly if it endangers the ship. Animals are driven back to the ship on the hoof, while anything else has to be carried on the raiders' backs. If a ship does not return or has encountered major opposition, then further raids will remain well out of sight of land by day. If a second ship is lost, then the raids will be carried out by two ships at a time to make a large combined force with extra guards on the ship. The loss of four ships will force the captain to move foraging elsewhere and raids will cease.

Resources. The town lord has a sizeable following of men-at-arms based in the castle as well as three fighting ships, properly part of the navy. These ships will outpace the pirates on short hauls, (less than 1 hour apart), due to superior no.s of oarsmen but are no match for the longboat under sail as the oarsmen tire. There are 20 villages/hamlets scattered about the coast that can raise ill-trained militia at a push (ie with a backbone of real men-at-arms in command) but mostly the villagers will be too concerned with protecting family as they hightail out of it, probably driving herds if they have time. There will be one or two manors of nobles near each village though and these usually retain 2-6 men-at-arms who can be commanded. The population will be generally enthusiastic for measures to counter the pirates, particularly if they don't have to actually do the fighting. They will man look-outs and beacons reliably.

Any time a pirate is captured, there is a 50% probability of finding a chart (providing the ship isn't fired). This covers the coast and archipelago quite well and while it wont locate the pirate base, it will be noticeable that part of the archipelago is drawn in far more detail than the rest.

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### TRAVELLING COMPANIONS

People met on the road, (random or otherwise), I have found to be great sources of plot and fleshing-out material for the world. An encounter might begin with hearing sounds of a fight round the next corner. On rushing up, the players find a merchant's caravan under attack. If they help, they will have a useful contact who is probably well-disposed to try and reward them. If travel is dangerous in your world, then locals on the move will be hoping to team up with a well-armed party. This can get players away from the inevitable inns as plot starters. Eg. " Well we are finally back in Jardor - these villages don't change much."

" Same rotten-looking inn - lets see go chat up our good merchant Waller instead and see if we can con a free meal and board"

GM - you go to Waller's house.

" My friends! Newly arrived back in these parts? Come in, come in -I'll get the servants to send us some refreshments suitable for the travel weary. - Oh, I would like you to meet the Lady Damier - we have just been discussing a certain difficulty of her's, haven't we my dear. These good folk might be just the people you need ... " etc etc.

When players get used to meeting fellow travellers on the road, then some not so random ones can be throw in. Eg., a thief on the run; a mage burdened with some powerful artefact that he/she cant properly control; a dying messenger etc. A couple of good ones though are:

1 - THE SPY - so how do your good role players feel about king and country? They meet with what appears to be a foreign merchant riding a single wagon, along with his cook, apprentice and a mule skinner. In reality he is a spy, sounding out local opinion on the rulers, gathering information on defences and paying off his collection of local spooks. A false bottom in his wagon will be full of money for the payoffs and bribes. The meeting will be on a wilder stretch of road, and he will suggest the party travel with him - even offering to pay. If the players are in their own country, he will be interested in their opinions of the ruler (your players have some? :-)) and will be telling various scandalous and completely untrue stories about them. If they are also foreigners, he will be asking after any military information they may have gathered in their travels, in a roundabout way. A lovely role for the GM. You need plenty of events to create the GM-player dialogue. Here are some suspicious ones that will help the players.

Attack - the wagon IS attacked. All of the spies party, even the cook, reveal themselves to be very competent fighters needing little protection. They may use some fairly rare and difficult weapons too.

Visitors - by day another well-armed man of same nationality will ride up (actually he is part of the same party). He will be taken aback a little by the party's presence as he has important news of a hidden defensive fort near a ford to impart. The spy will pretend he doesn't know him but hail him as a fellow-countryman, bidding him drink a toast in the wagon and share news of home. Players will need some special listening skill and the language to hear what they say. On leaving, he will nearly ride into the cook and they will curse each other by NAME, despite never having been introduced. At night, a watching party member might notice one of the spy's paid spooks, ( a scruffy local peasant ) creep into the camp to collect his pay and warn the spy of an army patrol. If the players confront the spy over this, he will say the man is a blackmailer, knowing of an unfortunate deal with a local lord and demanding money not to tell the lord he is back.

If the players start getting obviously suspicious, the "merchant" will suggest the road is safe now and they ride on unencumbered by him. If they still stick around, he will sabotage his own wheel and beg the players ride to the nearest village and send back a wheelwright. "Continue on then, don't worry about me." If the characters leave but then watch from hiding, they will see the armed horseman return and the "merchant" will trade clothes and places with him, allowing the spy to continue overland while the others see to the wheel.

The spy scenario could be a prelude to the invasion plot, described above.

2- THE UNWILLING BRIDE - a flash outfit of two coach/wagons led by an austere old noblewomen will beg the party help protect them. She will tell them they are taking a bride to her wedding in a nearby (about 2 days away) town and their escort has unexpectedly had to pursue a known rogue with his cronies, who tried to waylay them. The woman is the bride's guardian aunt (she is an orphan) and the wedding is an arranged one to another powerful family for mutual control of the bride's estate, enriching both families at the bride's expense. The "known rogue" was her real love (perhaps a Romeo from a despised rival family?) trying to deliver her. The party also consists of several grooms, maidservants, an aged valet (on the brides side in any encounter - he is loyal to her parents memory) and two dour men-at-arms. The bride is desperate and while she will be unable to appeal directly to the party, the valet will be her messenger and tell them of her plight. While finding a way to spring the bride and reunite her with her Romeo shouldn't prove too difficult for the party, this plot should deal a mass of consequences to the party. They will have gained some very loyal friends but contracted two influential families of enemies. The region should become very hot for the party with wonderful potential for a vendetta.



#### APPENDIX- "On the road you meet..."

Some time back on the net, Chuck asked the question:

" The party in a fantasy campaign is travelling on a major road between two large cities. The distance between cities is 10 days on horseback. My question is, what could they possibly meet on the road? The few ideas I've come up with.

1. Caravans. Small, medium, and large. I don't know if they would stop for any traveller or not.
2. A man galloping fast on horseback (he is a messenger).
3. A guard patrol, who would look at the adventurers, and perhaps ask them questions.

Any other ideas? - Chuck"

Well the net did indeed have some ideas. Some longer responses have been included in the main section of the book - but here is a collection of shorter responses.

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From: H.M. Dykstra  
Email: hdykstra@titan.ucs.umass.edu

(1)

A travelling party crests a hill and comes upon a ford across a shallow quiet river. There is a group of some 25-30 people standing in the water, all naked save for masks/hoods. The group includes a variety of people from young children up through stooped grandmothers. They are performing some kind of ritualistic cleansing. As the party approaches, a stout, grizzled man steps out and invites them to take the blessings of . This would, of course, require the characters to undress and don the ritual masks as well. The nature of the god and the ceremony itself would have to be tailored to the campaign.

(2)

It is after dark, and the party has been delayed. They are riding along the road in hopes to come to an inn that they expect to find. They come to a building which gives forth warm light and the sound of players can be heard from inside. The sign over the inn has been effaced by time.

If the characters enter, they will find good beer and wine, and simple but hearty meals at a decent price. The crowd is friendly and jovial, and warm beds and good fellowship are readily available. In the morning, the inn is gone and the characters will awaken, cold stiff and hungry, on the bare ground. If you want to make it really nasty, one or more of the characters may be stricken with an irresistible urge to return nightly to enjoy the hospitality of the phantom inn. Eventually, he will starve or freeze, and become one of the permanent guests there.

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From: John S. Novak, III

Email: darknite@cegt201.bradley.edu

Restricting myself to 'civilized' encounters (meaning, not animals, monsters, or empty land formations) here's what I can come up with:

- Toll gate, or toll bridge. May be a legitimate government fine, may be a bunch of brawny idiots with an attitude.
- Travelling entertainer (bard, gleeman, minstrel, etc.)
- Travelling group of 'players' (like a small acting and entertainment company) or a small travelling circus.
- Small band of brigands, waiting to prey on the caravans you had mentioned.
- An escaped criminal, fleeing from a city justice system.
- The bounty hunter hired to collect the aforementioned criminal.
- A pair of young newlyweds, fleeing their powerful, but opposing families (see 'Romeo and Juliet syndrome')

Also remember that a major route between two large cities will probably be well travelled by caravans, as you mentioned, and there would probably be small villages and farming communities scattered through out. If the ground is not farmable, there will be inns in place of the farming villages. Probably one every eight hours of travel for a caravan, which might translate to two or three a day for a small, mobile, party on horseback.

(That last is just a swag. It does sound like a lot of inns. But then, not too many are going to be great huge ones.)

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From: C. Hartley

Email: CHARTLEY@ESOC.BITNET

Quite a few good ideas gone in already so I'll just list one of my favourites..

The Mountain Mirage - a creature that appears to each PC as whoever, including animals, they would like to see at that time. If carefully used you can have it lead away a PC thinking that he is following another PC they were looking for, or whatever else springs to mind. This creature should make its entry at the right moment, when tension is already building.

As the name implies I had it living high in a snow-filled mountain pass, but I see no reason why it can't have cousins that live in swamps, graveyards, old ruins, etc...

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From: James Wallis

Email: james@wonder.demon.co.uk

1. Bandits. Obviously.
2. A group of travellers who have been attacked by bandits
3. A rag-tag rebel army led by a displeased noble or a dispossessed bastard offspring of the local monarch, on their way to usurp the throne
4. A monk on a pilgrimage
5. Lots of monks on a pilgrimage
6. Ordinary folk on a pilgrimage
7. Lots of monks on a crusade
8. Gypsies, travellers, tinkers etc.
9. Other adventurers
10. Rich people fleeing an outbreak of plague in one of the cities
11. A runaway child
11. An eloping couple
12. Irate family members pursuing the runaway child/eloping couple
14. The other family pursuing the other half of the eloping couple
13. A hobbit inside a locked wardrobe. Well, we left him out there on the road sometime in 1987, and someone's going to have to let him out eventually
14. Snake-oil sellers
15. Religious revivalists
16. Tollgates, official or otherwise
17. Low-flying dog fighting magic carpets. Or a magic carpet dog fighting a dragon
18. Packs of wild animals
19. Spirits of the departed, doomed to walk the road for eternity until someone breaks the curse that holds them there.

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From: Theo Mora

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Somebody in distress; bandits are going to do nasty things to him/her. Once saved (if ever): he is going to introduce the party to the next adventure or to an interesting subplot of whatever the current plot is, or just possesses the clues to maybe successfully complete the present plot.

Alternative: he/she is very evil. Once saved, he/she invites the party to his castle and makes disappear the party members one by one... a la Agatha Christie... because he wants make a

human sacrifice with them... Be sure to have a NPC disappear early and reappear in due time to save the group, if they are unable to get out of this by themselves. I used this plot, the group liked it but I needed a Deus ex Machina In this plot the guy in distress must look nice and not dangerous at all.

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From: Stephan Zielinski

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Actually, you can have a lot of fun with harmless loonies. The PCs are already expecting to walk around a corner and find three witches hissing at them about doom and goats and whatnot; an occasional red herring is amusing.

For example:

A pale little girl in a raggedly dress, sitting gravely by the side of the road, who watches the PCs approach in silence, and says, "Tey'res marnsther's down 'at way." The PCs may question her, but eventually they'll turn their backs on her-- which is when she vanishes. Guaranteed to slow down their march...

A large hunting dog, obviously the property of a noble, that runs up to a PC, whining, and refuses to leave his side, casting fearful glances all about. When the party stops to rest, the dog vanishes.

At a crossroads: a foot-high cross with a crucified rat.

A man in a chef's uniform running down the road gibbering "The knuckles... the horrible knuckles..."

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From: Samuel Penn

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A lone pilgrim building a shrine to his god at the side of the road.

A burnt and gutted village/inn which has been recently attacked by bandits/dragons/an army/undead whatever. Maybe it's a regular occurrence in the area?

Inn run by thieves who rob likely looking travellers in the night (after suitable doses of drugs in their sleep of course). Need some reason why they don't just kill the players of course.

Inn run by faeries just out to have a good time. When the characters wake up in the morning, they find the inns moved/vanished, the residents have changed, or any other worrying but non-fateful events. Faeries could make good use of glamour et al to make anything appear as anything they want it to.

An army marching somewhere off to fight some war (or coming back from one). Maybe first come across routing soldiers, then finally an enemy army in pursuit/camped down whatever.

Massacred caravan.

An obviously marked trail just off the road leading somewhere. Someone in need of help? A trap? A red herring?

No road. ie its vanished, gone, disappeared into oblivion. It just ends in the middle of open plains. Maybe continues a few kilometres further on.

A herd of cattle crossing the road. They seem to appear some kilometres to one side of the road, cross the road, and disappear several kilometres in the other direction. Some form of rift in space/time leading to other worlds. (okay, so I've stolen that from Mostly Harmless).

A lone horse, riderless. Still has saddle/saddle bags. Contents might give clue to who the rider was, but not why he's disappeared.

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From: E. Bruce Macdougall  
Email: abhu000@titan.ucs.umass.edu

God. He wants them to find this cup...[Ed. See "Monty Python and the Holy Grail if you cant figure this out]

A new lake/chasm blocks the road...

Demons/Dragons have set up shop on the road. Steady supply of food.

Of course, more sensibly:

Many small towns, villages and homesteads, with associated townsfolk. Village rumors and scandals can be a great add to a campaign. Gives and sense of the real world existing. Not just BIG magic, monsters, cities. Normal people are around too. They shouldn't just be Background (or god forbid, cannon fodder).

And if you really want to confuse your players

Another city. Unmapped. Perhaps illusory, perhaps it only overlaps the world once every hundred years or so. Or the players just get misled by bandits who altered the road to lead to a previously abandoned city, lost to time (great for BG). Imagine their surprise as they come to what they assume is the proper city and find it completely abandoned (save for traps from the bandits).

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From: Hans M Dykstra  
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- A group of pilgrims, travelling to a shrine or religious site, possibly for a holy festival...or a human sacrifice.
- A small footpath into the hills/woods/whatever, leading to a hermit's house. The hermit may be a sage, a crazed ex-magic-user, an alchemist, a witch...
- A roadside gravesite. Lots of possibilities.
- The ruins of a castle, city, or something, destroyed in war some hundreds of years ago.
- A small, untended shrine dedicated to a local demigod. Failing to make donations could lead to bad luck. The wrong kind of donation could be worse than none at all. (A few of these and your players will start to take more care to learn something about the lands they are travelling through.)
- A small, mysterious monastery, that welcomes travellers.
- A witch-burning.
- A small hamlet, burning and deserted but for a few dead peasants.

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From: Terrence W Wright  
 Email: tww133@cs.usask.ca

The remains of a small skirmish. Be sure to have several dead still steaming in the morning mist (ie still warm). It works best if the PC's are at war with both sides (so they are not sympathetic to either side), then have a survivor found from each side. Be sure to have both warriors promise whatever if the PC's will save them and eliminate the other. Also be sure to imply that someone will be coming back here. Give experience if the Clerics administer last rites, and if the PC's are sufficiently solemn. There should be NO battle here. Just role playing.

I pulled this one in one of my fantasy campaigns, and the PC's saved both survivors, only to find that the allies of one of the survivors had gone on to the next town and looted it for supplies. (The nearest town happened to be a PC's hometown.)

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From: Ben Davis  
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Inns with irritating/eccentric landlords (lights out at 10, temperance village, demanding the PCs take baths, only food available is what you pick yourself, that sort of thing)

Goats that go bleat in the night (in a threatening manner...) (watch that blood pressure \_rocket\_ :)  
 )

Shoe catastrophes (how many PCs have the gear to mend their boots ?) or even worse, horse maintenance

Local Govt. representative charging them road tax (my lot thought it was a bandit scam, and killed them...bad move). If they pay up, you can even give them a road tax disc...

Helpful NPCs who just want to make their life easier (offering cups of tea, somewhere to stay, in a quiet cottage in the woods, "if only you'll chop some wood sir, for I am frail" kind of thing - eccentric old ladies with too many cats who really are just being nice)

Bridges down, flooded rivers, natural catastrophes in all shapes and forms (especially irritating ones that are time consuming, or involve a change of plan, without being life threatening)

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From: Colin G. Peters

Email: colinp@nano.engr.mun.ca

Travelling minstrels, as in bards, actors, etc... It's used in oh so many plays and movies (anybody see *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead?* (bad spelling I know) ).

Bandits. Used a lot I know, but you could make them original (or at least interesting). How about a Robin Hood type band... Steal from the rich, give to the poor, PCs are often rich :) :). This is especially good if the PCs are all (supposedly) good and claim to support this kind of rampant do-goodery. Just wait till they realize \*they\* are now the targets :)

Monks or Pilgrims. These people can be nicely annoying to PCs. They may be overfriendly, or attempt to convert characters, or ask for donations (travelling Hare Krishnas anyone? :) ). Monks can also be really useful... they know all kinds of stuff, or, if you're into that kind of thing, they could be carrying a holy relic around with them.

Tax collectors. At certain times of the year the Lord/Sheriff of a barony would send people around to all the villages to collect the king's taxes. These people would be heavily armed and would carry a whole pile of money. The PC's might be tempted to turn bandit- even if they had good intentions. However, stealing taxes is one of the best ways to incur the wrath of the local lord, because then he must pay the king out of his own pocket!

The single, unassuming stranger. Who is he? He could be a wizard in disguise... he could be a dishonoured knight... he could be a young man looking for adventure and escaping a nasty past. Why not just have someone ask to accompany the characters. Make the person act mysterious and listen to the players speculate. Players have really good ideas sometimes :) (If they decide to kill him for being mysterious then (a) your players are bloodthirsty and (b) this guy could be a totally innocent traveller, perhaps with powerful friends).

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