

RTK0-01

Reflections

**A One-Round D&D LIVING GREYHAWK[®]
Ratik Regional Introductory Adventure**

Version 1.0

Round 1

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A blind boy has acquired the gift of vision. While he still cannot see, he has glimpses of events from both the past and future. A group of brigands want him for profit, an elderly sage wants him for knowledge, and a secret order of knights wants him to fulfill a destiny. An introductory adventure only for 1st level characters.

Estimated game time: 3 hours and 30 minutes

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This is a LIVING GREYHAWK Adventure. As a LIVING adventure it is expected that players bring their own characters with them. If players do not have a LIVING GREYHAWK character generated, get a copy of the current LIVING GREYHAWK character generation guidelines, and a character sheet from your convention coordinator or the RPGA Web site, and then have any players without a character create one. Once all players have a LIVING GREYHAWK character, play can begin.

Along with the other materials that you are assumed to have in order to run a D&D game, it is also recommended that you have a copy of the LIVING GREYHAWK Gazetteer.

Time Units and Upkeep

This is a Regional "Introductory" adventure. Characters native to Ratik pay one Time Unit per round, all others pay two Time Units per round.

Adventurer's Standard Upkeep costs 12gp per round. Rich Upkeep costs 50gp per round. Luxury Upkeep costs 100gp per round.

Adventure Certificates

Players should record their play of this adventure on a generic adventure certificate.

Adventure Summary and Background

A young boy named Jeshin has been blind since he was attacked by a wolf at around age five. Five years later he began having visions, seeing vivid scenes of people and places that he had never encountered. He is now 12 years old, and in the past two years he learned that his visions were actual events, some from the past and others from the future. This news interested a local scribe and scholar from Marner named Obrom, who repeatedly badgered Jeshin's father to allow him to study his visions to glean historical and future knowledge from him. Jeshin's father had other ideas, however, and began using Jeshin as a means of accumulating a small fortune through gambling.

Obrom, seeing Jeshin's gift being wasted by his greedy father, informed the local Thieves Guild controlled by the Vermin, that his father was cheating, using magic that the boy possessed to rig games and steal money from them.

Jeshin's father was quickly killed by the Vermin, and Obrom fled with the boy. Unfortunately, the

Vermin have decided that Jeshin would be a valuable asset to their gambling halls, and have been on the hunt for him for the past week.

This is where the PCs come in.

Introduction

It is the time of Needfest. This frigid seven-day period marks the transition from one calendar year to another, and is usually accounted as the start of the new year. All seven days of Needfest are public holidays in Greyhawk; this is a time to celebrate life when the weather is most miserable. Food stored away after harvest is brought out for grand dinners. Overindulgence and merrymaking are the rule. Some middle-class and noble citizens have a tradition of decorating their homes with yellow candles, boughs of evergreen branches (symbolizing the triumph of life through hard times), and even magical lights and ornaments.

Needfest is not a religious celebration per se, but the local religions take note of it nonetheless. Special services are held at many churches and temples, complete with singing, music, sermons, and feasts to which the priests and their helpers invite all parishioners.

Here in the small, rural town of Grassflats, the snow has been swept aside from town center and the folk who live here are having a grand celebration while wrapped in their winter coats.

Some of the more prominent and colorful PCs who are present include:

Bagirr Trollarm (male dwarf Com1; Profession: Woodcutter +3) a jovial dwarf who enjoys a good arm wrestling match. He is the reigning champion of the log-tossing competition.

Merretin Greyface (male human Com3; Profession: Farmer +8) the oldest man in town and also the owner of the largest farm. He is respected as the town's leader.

Chippelwin Rose of Sharon (female halfling Com1; Profession: Brewer +4) a witty and charming young woman, Chippelwin owns the local brewery and can drink anyone in town under the table.

Aaredo the Dabbler (male human Com1; Craft: Leatherworking +4) the local tanner and something of a clown, Aaredo has taken the honorary role of "the Fool," for the duration of the celebration.

Ezedrin of Norebo (male human Clr1) the obstinate and opinionated village priest. He will openly insult PCs who wear holy symbols of other gods—particularly those of different alignments. While abrasive, the one thing that Ezedrin respects is devotion (even to another god).

Some contests that are happening (each PC should only be allowed to enter one contest):

Log-tossing competition:

Each PC who wishes to participate rolls a Strength check to see how far they can heave their log. The six highest rolls (longest throws) advance to the second round, followed by the three highest for the third round, then a single winner for the championship round. Use the following strength modifiers for the NPCs in the competition: Str +1, +1, +1, +2, +2, +3 (Bagirr).

Archery competition:

Using bows (no crossbows, "any simpleton can use a crossbow") at a range of 50 feet, contestants fire at a bulls-eye painted on a discarded barn door. In the first round, striking the target (AC 11) is sufficient to advance to the second round. In the second round, they must hit the inner circle (AC 15). In the third round, the highest roll indicates the shot closest to center and the winner. Use the following ranged attack bonuses for the NPCs: +0, +0, +0, +1, +1, +1, +2. PCs must provide their own arrows, and any arrows that strike their target are destroyed (and those that miss are most likely lost in the dark and have a 50% chance of being destroyed).

Performances:

This is not a formal competition per se, but several people are demonstrating their skills at storytelling, singing, dancing and playing a lute. Whoever manages the highest Perform check manages to draw the largest crowd of people around themselves. Use the following Perform skills for NPCs: +1, +1, +1, +2.

Also, PCs can collect a few coins for their efforts (yes, it's not much but this is a small town).

DC	Reward
15	1d10 cp
20	3d10 cp

25 1d6 sp
30+ 3d6 sp

Eventually when the characters have had their fill of celebrating and the festivities begin to die down they should seek shelter at the nearest inn. There are vacancies available at the Haystack Inn, and that is where Encounter One begins.

Encounter One (EL 2)

The Haystack Inn is a warm two-story building that is decorated with numerous bales of hay covered with blankets. While many people have retired to their rooms for the evening there is still a large and boisterous crowd in the tavern area. Men and women are singing drinking songs while downing cups of hot mead and cider. A particularly comely tall, blonde bar wench of Suel blood appears to be the center of attention for many of the male patrons.

PCs will probably want to rent a room for the night or have a few drinks first. While they are speaking with the Haystack proprietor, they are interrupted by Obrom and Jeshin arriving.

In mid-sentence, the barkeep breaks off your conversation and yells out "Your boy looks a little young to be in the tavern, old-timer!" Following the direction of his gaze you see an old man wrapped in a winter cloak, leading a young boy of perhaps ten or eleven years. The boy's face is covered with gruesome scars, and hollow sockets mark his face where his eyes should be. Several patrons laugh and many of them offer to buy the boy a drink of ale or a wench for the night. The man looks embarrassed at the attention and tries to pull the boy into the crowd and towards a table, but once again the barkeep yells "Hey, this isn't a nursery!"

The old man holds up his hands pleadingly, "We just need to warm ourselves for a few minutes then we will be on our way. It is not safe for us outside right now. Please do not throw us out."

The barkeep shrugs and turns away. In the moment of silence following, the boy's voice carries clearly through the tavern, "Obrom, I see a pretty woman with blonde hair. She's on fire. She's trying and trying to scream but no sound is coming out." At these strange and

disturbing words, many of the murmurs in the tavern stop, and once again all eyes are on the pair.

If the PCs take no actions at this, then the tavern carousing will eventually pick back up. If they try to start a conversation with Obrom, he will shun them claiming that they are too weary to speak and just need to rest for a while.

After about ten minutes, continue on to the following.

Glass suddenly shatters and the dim light in the tavern is brightened by streaks of fire. Flaming arrows are shooting through the windows of the tavern. Two of them strike bales of hay and instantly flare up, while several others hit walls, tables, and the floor. The crowd panics and scatters in all directions.

Have the PCs make a Spot check (DC 14). If successful, they see that the Suel woman has been shot through the neck by one of the arrows; She flails around for a while making some sick choking sounds, with her hair and clothing on fire, then she collapses to the ground. She is at -1 hit points, and losing 1d6 per round from the flames in addition to 1 point per round from the blood loss. To help her, it is a full-round action to extinguish the flames, then a Heal check (DC 15) to stabilize her (or any amount of magical healing).

Immediately following the flaming assault, several figures charge into the tavern. They all wear black wolf furs and their faces are covered in leather masks. They appear to be looking for someone or something in the crowd.

Roll initiative at this point and have each PC make a Spot check (DC 16) to notice Obrom has dragged Jeshin to the end of the bar where they are trying to hide.

Creatures:

Vermin Thugs, male human War1 (3): CR ½; Medium Humanoid; HD 1d8+2; hp 10; Init +1; Spd 30 ft; AC 14 (touch 11, flat-footed 13) [+1 Dex, +3 armor]; Atk +2 melee (1d6+1, short sword); AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 13, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Climb +4, Intimidate +3, Jump +4; Quick Draw, Toughness.

Possessions: short sword, studded leather.

Spell effects: *endure elements* (fire).

Tactics:

The fire will spread quickly, so if the fight takes too long, it will begin to take it's toll on those inside.

- Beginning on round 3, all beings inside must make a Fort save (DC 12, +1 per round). A failed check means that the victim spends the round choking. Anyone choking for 2 consecutive rounds takes 1d6 points of subdual damage.
- Beginning on round 5, everyone in the building will take 1d6 points of heat damage per round. Note that the thugs are protected by an *endure elements* spell that will negate up to 5 points of fire damage per round.

The thugs will try to find Jeshin and capture him; Killing anyone in their way, especially Obrom.

Once the thugs have been dispatched, Obrom will approach the PCs.

“Please, help us! They are after this innocent boy. We must take him somewhere safe. Please.” The fire is spreading quickly and it appears that the inn is a total loss. People from upstairs are rushing out the front door, where screams of pain drown out the crackling fire.

If the PCs attempt to exit the front door, have them make a Spot check (DC 18) to notice that there are nearly a dozen men in black furs with crossbows aimed at the front of the building. Failing the check means that PC walks into two light crossbow attacks (+2, 1d8/x3 damage).

The PCs can exit out the back by breaking through a window and crawling out to Encounter 2. If they try to fight their way out the front, then let them try, but they will most likely be cut to pieces. Use the same stats as the thugs, but there are now ten of them armed with crossbows in addition to short swords.

Encounter Two (EL 2)

Just outside of the burning inn, there is an open wagon. The two horses hitched to it are mightily struggling to flee from the fire, but the wagon itself is secured to a post at the rear of

the inn. The old man lifts the boy onto the back of the wagon and beckons you onto it. "Hurry, let's go! We must take the north road."

Once the PCs are onboard and release the wagon, the horses will take off wildly. Regaining control of the horses requires a Ride (DC 20) or Handle Animal (DC 15) check from the driver, otherwise they run randomly through the center of town, knocking over carts and tables and barrels. Once the PCs regain control of the horses and head out of town, they are pursued by four riders.

The wagon moves at a speed of 40 ft, and fully-loaded the horses are limited to 3x movement with a run action. The riders light horses move at 60 ft so they will easily catch the wagon in two rounds.

Creatures:

Vermin Riders, male human War1 (4): CR ½; Medium Humanoid; HD 1d8+1; hp 6; Init +2; Spd 30 ft; AC 15 (touch 12, flat-footed 13) [+2 Dex, +3 armor]; Atk +2 melee (1d8+1/x3, battleaxe); AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Handle Animal +5, Ride +6; Mounted Combat, Trample.

Possessions: battleaxe, studded leather.

Light Horses: CR 1; Large Animal; HD 3d8+6; hp 19; Init +1; Spd 60 ft; AC 13 (touch 10, flat-footed 12) [-1 size, +1 Dex, +3 natural]; Atk +2 melee (1d4+1, 2 Hooves); SQ Scent; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +2; Str 13, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Tactics:

Since they have no missile weapons, they will attempt to ride alongside and axe the driver. Consider the driver to have 25% cover from the sides of the wagon, giving him a +2 AC bonus. If this proves too difficult they will attempt to axe the horses.

Note that since the riders are not on warhorses, a rider attempting to control a horse in battle must make a Ride check (DC 20) to guide the horse as a move-equivalent action. A failed check means that the rider can do nothing else that round.

Treasure:

Inside the wagon is a trunk containing a dozen heavy winter coats, ten winter blankets, 4 oil flasks, and three tents which can each hold two people. There is also a locked metal box (Open Locks DC 22) inside a hidden compartment under the driver's seat that can be found with a

successful Search check (DC 12). It contains 70 gp.

Encounter Three (EL 1)

Once the PCs establish a safe distance between themselves and the Vermin, they can set up for camp somewhere along the road. Jeshin will quickly fall asleep. Obrom will answer questions for the PCs and explain where they are going.

Obrom, male human Exp1 (scribe)

- I am Obrom and the boy's name is Jeshin.
- I am a scholar working on building a library in Marner. I have spent years piecing together the history of the Flaeness, trying to fill missing gaps in the timeline. Answering questions. Discerning fact from rumor.
- I heard of this lad, Jeshin, several months ago. People were saying that he could see visions of the past and the future. Of course this interested me greatly so I left Marner to find him.
- Jeshin's father, Trimkin was his name, was using Jeshin's gift to win games of chance in a gambling hall.
- Trimkin's winnings drew the attention of a cell of the Vermin, the thieves guild that control the gambling trade from here to Ratikhill.
- The Vermin killed Trimkin, and wanted to capture Jeshin, no doubt to use him in the same way that his father had. Can you imagine using such an invaluable gift just to cheat people out of a few gold crowns?
- Fortunately I arrived in Cormik and found Jeshin in his home before the Vermin did. We've been running now for several weeks.

Any PC questioning Obrom can make a Sense Motive check, those succeeding (DC 18) will get the idea that he is holding something back.

Where to now?

- Jeshin is guiding us now. He's the one who told me that we need to head into the great pine woods which I assumed to mean the Timberway forest to the north.
- We can ask him more questions in the morning, let him sleep for now. As should we.

Surviving the winter night:

Each character must make a Fortitude saving throw each hour for eight hours (DC 10, +1 per

previous check) or take 1d6 points of subdual damage from the cold. The PC suffers from hypothermia (treat her as fatigued) until she recovers the subdual damage she took. A winter blanket grants a +2 on the save, as does cold weather clothing, as does a tent or similar cover. A Wilderness Lore check (DC 15) allows a +4 bonus to the save. One additional person can receive the bonus for every point the check result exceeds 15.

If it seems as if they may not survive the night, they can set the wagon on fire, which will provide sufficient warmth for the evening.

As dawn approaches, the morning is thick with fog. You have a full day of travel ahead of you before reaching the lands of House Abonhoth. The blind boy, Jeshin huddled in his fur coats, stares sightlessly into the fog. He begins to speak in an emotionless monologue.

"There's a battle. A war it looks like. Thousands of human and dwarf soldiers fighting thousands of monsters. In the sky is a castle, sitting on a tall column of rock that sticks out of the mountain at a funny angle."

Obrom says excitedly, "That's Spinecastle, in the Bone March! That was in 586, just seven years ago during the campaign led by Alain IV. What else do you see, Jeshin?"

"Hairy monsters with heads like dogs. They've surrounded a man covered in armor. They're dragging him from his horse although he keeps fighting and fighting. Other men try to rescue him but there are too many monsters. The hairy things have his sword arm pinned, and his horse is dead, and there's blood everywhere."

"That's Prince Alain, Jeshin. What do you see? Is he dead?"

"I'm not sure. They're holding his helmet in the air like a trophy. It's all bloody and dark. All the humans are running away, back through the mountains. I'm going with them. I'm trying to see him but I can't. There's too many monsters and I'm too far away."

Jeshin stops talking and stoically begins rolling his blanket, feeling around on the ground to tie it to his pack.

"That's unfortunate," says Obrom. "There are many who believe that Prince Alain survived the battle at Spinecastle. It would be of great importance to the archbarony if we were to know for sure if he were still alive. When the Prince died, his father the Archbaron immediately fell ill at hearing the news. Rulership of the realm fell into the hands of Alain's wife, Lady Evaleigh. But she's proven unable to lead, and the nobles and merchants are nearly ready to go to war against each other over rulership of Ratik." Obrom ruffles the boy's hair. "Perhaps another day you will see for sure for me."

Jeshin shrugs, then says "In the great pine forest there's a circle of stones. Each one taller than a man and carved all over with pictures. We have to go there. There's a tall, strong man in armor, with brown hair and blue eyes, and a purple cape with a gold star. He's going to meet us there."

Obrom interjects, "The stones he's talking about are a well-known landmark in the southern edge of the Timberway. They are called simply "the Stones" or "the Standing Stones" or "the Flan stones." They are covered with Flannish glyphs and runes that no one has been able to decipher. Scholars have been studying them for some time.

If questioned about how he knows about the man, Jeshin shrugs his shoulders and says simply "he told me he'd be there." He does not know the man's name, or anything else about him. Obrom says that if Jeshin is looking into the future, then the man will certainly be there, so we'd best get going.

Should any PC decide to converse with Jeshin, he is solemn, quiet, and answers questions with short answers or with shrugs of his shoulders. He will offer the following information about himself:

Jeshin, male human Com1

- When I was five years old a wolf attacked me and bit my face. That's how I lost my eyes.
- My mother died giving birth to me. I've actually seen her once though in one of my visions.
- I started having visions two years ago. I thought it was just dreams—or daydreams because I wasn't really asleep.

- My father started making lots of money gambling, because sometimes I could see how dice would roll or what card would come off the top of the deck. I guess that's why those men were mad enough to kill him, because he took their money.

Encounter Four (EL 1)

Resuming your trek north, you eventually reach the great river Hart which you must cross to reach the Timberway. There are several bridges which cross the river, but most of them are closer to Marner and the larger towns. You are lucky to find a small rope bridge that looks secure enough to support a number of people across the 200-foot span.

PCs must abandon the wagon and any horses to cross the river. Obrom will assure PCs who have their own mounts that they can return for them later. Whether or not that's true depends on how well trained the animal is, if the PC has a +5 bonus in the Handle Animal skill, they can return and recover their mount.

Crossing the bridge requires a Balance check (DC 5) to move one-half your movement as a move-equivalent action. Attempting to cross quickly, requires two checks (at DC 10), each success allowing a one-half move as a move-equivalent action. A failed check results in no progress, while a check failed by 5 or more results in falling into the river.

The river is near-freezing, and any character falling in takes 1d6 points of cold damage per round.

When the PCs are midway across the rope bridge, a band of kobolds emerges from hiding on the far side.

Noise and movement on the far side of the river arrests your attention. Small humanoid creatures prance about the rope moorings, yipping like small dogs. One of them calls out, "this bridge our bridge! You pay toll! Or we cut ropes and you fall in river and freeze!"

The PCs are in a precarious situation. The kobolds demand that the PCs place all their gold and gems into one bag then send one person with the bag to their side of the river. They will first

demand that the boy come, but when told that he is blind they will allow someone else to deliver the toll.

There are several ways this could play out. The PCs could fill a sack with some copper and be done with it. The PCs could cooperate and pay. After which they could try tracking the kobolds back to their lair. A lone PC could try attacking the kobolds on his own when he reaches their side. Allow PCs to devise a plan. The kobolds will only cut the ropes as a last resort if a number of PCs start charging at them.

Kobolds (4): CR 1/6; Small Humanoid (Reptilian); HD 1/2d8; hp 2; Init +1; Spd 30 ft; AC 15 (touch 12, flat-footed 14) [+1 size, +1 Dex, +1 natural, +1 armor, +1 shield]; Atk -2 melee (1d4-2/19-20, dagger) or +1 ranged (1d4-2, sling); SQ Darkvision; AL LE; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 6, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Craft (Trapmaking) +2, Hide +8, Listen +2, Move Silently +4, Search +2, Spot +2; Alertness.

Possessions: sling, 6 bullets, dagger, padded armor, small wooden shield.

The kobolds have a fair amount of treasure stashed in their lair. A PC with the Track feat can make a Wilderness Lore check (DC 15) to find the path to their lair in about ten minutes, otherwise it will take a 1 hour Search (DC 18) to locate their hideout. The hideout is a tight cluster of trees tangled with ropes and planks of wood that form a crude shelter. Anyone entering has a 1 in 3 chance of triggering their burglar system.

Crossbow Bolt Trap: CR 1/2; +8 ranged (1d8/19-20); Search (DC 15); Disable Device (DC 15).

Treasure: 750 sp, a necklace worth 100 gp, 5 masterwork arrows, 5 silver-tipped arrows, the light crossbow that is part of the trap, and a +1 *nunchaku* that none of them can use.

Encounter Five (EL 3)

You reach the top of a small hill where you can now see the massive pine forest, the Timberway. These woods are the beginning of the territory controlled by House Abonhoth. Treetops extend as far as you can see to the horizon. These woods provide Ratik with a rich source of lumber and animals for fur and

game. The sheer size of the forest is breathtaking.

The journey to the stones should only take another day and you prepare to set up camp.

Have the PCs make Listen checks (DC 15) to hear the distant barking of dogs from behind them. Nothing is visible yet because of the rolling hills, but any character may make a Handle Animal (DC 12) or Wilderness Lore (DC 15) check to recognize the barking as coming from a breed of hunting hound.

The Vermin have been using dogs to track Jeshin by scent. The dogs are a little bit too bloodthirsty and will break off from the human pursuers and attack the PCs. Have PCs make Spot checks to determine at what distance they pinpoint the dogs coming after them (all roll at -5 if none of them made the previous Listen check), then roll initiative.

DC	Distance
<10	20 feet
10-15	40 feet
16-20	60 feet
>20	100 feet

Creatures:

War Dogs (2): CR 1; Medium Animal; HD 2d8+4; hp 13; Init +2; Spd 40 ft; AC 16 (touch 12, flat-footed 14) [+2 Dex, +4 natural]; Atk +3 melee (1d6+3, bite); SQ Scent, Trip; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: Listen +6, Spot +3, Wilderness Lore +6.

Trip (Ex): A war dog that hits with a bite attack can attempt to trip the opponent as a free action without making a touch attack or provoking an attack of opportunity. If the attempt fails the opponent cannot react to trip the dog.

As soon the dogs attack, Jeshin immediately curls up into a fetal position and cries. Obrom stands defensively over him. The dogs will attack the first thing they come across. Following the battle, read the next section.

Obrom is kneeling over Jeshin who has collapsed to the ground. The boy is covering his head with his arms and rapidly spitting out words. Obrom says to you, "Don't disturb him, he's having another vision." He then coaxes Jeshin to keep reciting what he is seeing.

"Monster soldiers with dog heads and some with pig faces. They're attacking a

fortress, but it's not finished yet. The human soldiers have no walls to protect them. And there are too many monsters. And they have wolves with them! The pig faces have wolves on leashes, and they tell them to kill the humans! I don't want to see anymore!"

Obrom pleads with the boy, saying "Just a little bit longer, Jeshin. The wolves cannot hurt you. Look and see who's commanding the orcs and the gnolls. The monsters. Who is leading them?"

Choking back tears, Jeshin spits out "A man in armor, that's black and red. He has metal fangs and horns on his helmet. And on his shield and chest is a painting of a metal fist holding arrows. The wolves are coming! They're attacking the wounded soldiers, they can see me! They can smell me!"

Obrom nods, "He's witnessing the battle near the uncompleted Fort Bredivan. The last major orc and gnoll invasion out of the Loftwood. That was just over two years ago now. There were unconfirmed accounts from some of the soldiers that a priest of Hextor was watching the battle from behind the orc and gnoll lines. The armored fist holding arrows is the symbol of Hextor. That confirms that he was there. This is an important discovery!"

Meanwhile Jeshin continues to cower on the ground, curled into the fetal position.

Have all the PCs make a Spot check (DC 15). Success means that they see a large number of silhouettes of men standing on a distant hilltop. They immediately charge down the hill in the direction of the PCs so they had better move on into the forest.

Jeshin meanwhile is in a hysterical state. He will kick and scream if anyone touches him. Getting him to snap out of his vision requires a Diplomacy check (DC 18) or Intimidate (DC 15). If they attempt to carry him without first calming him down, they must attempt to grapple him each round to maintain a hold on him (Jeshin's grapple checks are at -5). They could also choose to knock him unconscious if necessary, although that is the least desirable alternative.

Encounter Six

Once inside the Timberway you see that this close to the southern border there is a network

of roads and paths that the lumberjacks and hunters use, so that you may find your way. Several sign posts point down roads labeled with the names of villages. It is a simple matter to find the one labeled "The Stones," that points along a dirt path heading into the northeast.

PCs may attempt a Spot check (DC 15) to notice that their pursuers are not following them into the woods, but are instead preparing camp. It quickly becomes dark and cold in the Ratik winter so traveling could prove nearly as dangerous as stopping.

If the PCs ask, they will notice that there were no more dogs with their pursuers, so they may think that they are safe once they get into the woods and out of sight. The leader of this pack though is a wererat sorcerer who is also able to track by scent.

If the PCs attempt to march straight through the night, then they must make a Constitution check every hour (DC 10, +1 per extra hour). If the check fails they take 1d6 points of subdual damage. This subdual damage cannot be recovered until they halt and rest for at least 4 hours.

This is in addition to the Fortitude save, they must make each hour to resist the cold. Except that while traveling, they cannot gain the bonus from winter blankets, tents, and a successful Wilderness Lore check grants only a +2, instead of the stationary +4.

After one hour Jeshin and Obrom will both collapse from exhaustion. In the event that the PCs are not likely to survive the night and are looking for something to set on fire, they could always cut down all of the sign posts and make a medium fire (which will give them an additional +4 to their saves).

Encounter Seven (EL 3/3)

At this point the Vermin leader determines which road the PCs are on and guesses their destination. Several of his men are frostbitten from the night (as he did not have enough *endure elements* spells to protect them all), so he will take his remaining healthy men, remove all their heavy equipment, and hustle to reach the stones before

the PCs, by taking an alternate route (Knowledge: Geography). The PCs reach the Stones after marching for an additional six hours, so they can remove that much subdual damage.

Morning is slow to make its presence known as the air is thick with fog. It reduces the rising sun to a dim blur on the horizon and impedes your vision badly. You break camp and resume your journey along the road, but the going is slow and miserable. You check frequently for any signs of pursuit but see none.

You march steadily for many hours, until the sun is nearly directly overhead. Finally the fog begins to break and you can get a better idea of your location. Almost as if waking from a dream you realize that the road has led you into a large clearing nearly a hundred paces across. Large standing stones, each ten to twelve feet tall and covered with runes, form a nearly perfect circle around you. You have reached the fabled stone circle of the Timberway.

Have PCs make a Listen check (DC 16) to hear swords being drawn from scabbards and movement from behind some of the stones. If the check succeeds, then that PC is allowed to act during the surprise round. The four Vermin thugs and their leader are each hiding behind a stone (roughly forty feet from where the PCs are standing).

Vermin Thugs (4): CR ½; Medium Humanoid; HD 1d8+2; hp 10; Init +1; Spd 30 ft; AC 15 (touch 11, flat-footed 14) [+1 Dex, +3 armor, +1 shield]; Atk +3 melee (1d6+2/19-20 short sword); AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Listen +2, Ride +5, Spot +4, Wilderness Lore +2; Alertness, Toughness.

Possessions: short sword, studded leather, small wooden shield.

Spell Effects: *endure elements* (cold).

Vermin Leader, male human wererat Sor2: CR 4; Medium Humanoid; HD 2d4+6; hp 13; Init +5; Spd 30 ft; AC 18 (touch 15, flat-footed 13) [+5 Dex, +1 armor, +2 natural]; Atk +6 melee (1d4+1/19-20, dagger) or +6 melee (1d4, bite) or +6 grenade (1d6/1d6, alchemist's fire); SQ DR 15/silver, Scent; AL LE; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will

+5; Str 12, Dex 20, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Alchemy +6, Concentration +7, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Knowledge (geography) +3, Listen +8, Search +9, Spellcraft +4, Spot +8; Combat Casting, Dodge, Weapon Finesse (bite), Weapon Finesse (dagger).

Spells Known (5/4, base DC=13 + spell level):
0—*dancing lights*, *daze*, *detect magic*, *mage hand*, *ray of frost*; 1st—*cause fear*, *endure elements*.

Possessions: masterwork dagger, alchemist's fire (x2), bracers of armor (+1), potion of cure light wounds; scroll of comprehend languages, loun stone (dull gray), amber stone (100 gp value).

Spell Effects: *endure elements* (cold), *endure elements* (fire).

Tactics:

The Vermin thugs rush in to attack. The Vermin leader assumes his hybrid rat form and casts *detect magic* while remaining behind cover (Spot DC 14). He will spend three rounds concentrating to determine whether or not any of the PCs are armed with enchanted weapons (which will bypass his damage reduction). Chances are the fight will be over by the time he enters combat. He casts *cause fear* to try to scatter the PCs before attacking in melee with his dagger. If the PCs demonstrate any method at all with which they can hurt him (silver weapons, magic spells) then he will flee.

Conclusion

With the last of the Vermin defeated, silence falls once more upon the Timberway. It lasts for only a moment as the sound of a horse galloping approaches. Through the trees appears a rider upon a magnificent white horse. The man is bundled in leather and furs. His hair is long and gray, tangled across an ancient face. He reins his horse to a stop and peers at the figures in the clearing. He says aloud, in a clear, penetrating voice "I have come for you, Jeshin."

Obrom interrupts, "this must be a mistake. Jeshin said that the man we were supposed to meet here was a strong man in armor. With brown hair."

"And so I once was," says the rider. "That was over forty years ago, when I stood in this circle and left that message for Jeshin to see. If you do not recognize the face he described, perhaps you will recognize this." The rider pulls a tattered purple cape from a shoulder

satchel and unfurls it to reveal a gold star embroidered on it.

"I am Verik, once a Knight in service of the Stargazers, we who seek answers in the stars. Our order is guided by prophecy. And I was instructed to invite Jeshin here forty years ago, then to meet him here today. Jeshin has a rare gift, and if he comes with me he will learn to use it. To be a prophet and guide for our order. So, I am extending an invitation to you Jeshin, here in the Middle of this Circle." Verik smiles as if to some inside joke.

Once again Obrom interrupts, "The boy is too young to make this decision for himself. I have been caring for him and protecting him from the Vermin. And his gift can be put to use piecing together the fragments of the past. I cannot allow you to take him."

As an argument between Obrom and Verik is about to start, Jeshin will speak to whichever PC is closest to him at this point. He will ask an innocuous question, "Could you describe to me what Obrom looks like?" Once the PC answers him.

"It was you!" yells Jeshin. "Obrom's the one who told the Vermin about me. I saw in my vision, him talking to the men in the black furs and the masks. You took money from them and it's your fault that they killed my father!" The emotional outburst from the normally stoic boy stuns everyone in the circle.

Obrom stammers out, "Y-you don't understand, Jeshin. Your gift was being wasted. You could accomplish so much by helping us to unlock the past."

The knight moves to intercept Obrom before he can lay a hand on the boy. Verik states flatly, "Your vision for this boy is too limited if you seek to use him to unlock the past. The stargazers will see to it that he learns to unlock the future. His future. And trust me when I say that you will have no part in it."

Jeshin snarls at the old man. "You're a bad man. An evil man. And I should ask these men to kill you like you had my father killed. But they don't need to. What happens to you, you'll wish you were dead when the time comes."

Obrom yells loudly for an answer to what he means. But Jeshin and Verik ignore him. Verik gives you one last salute as he leads Jeshin away towards his destiny.

The End

Magic: *potion, scroll, stone* (10 gp), *bracers of armor +1* (100 gp)

Experience Point Summary

Total Possible Treasure: 477 gp (max 400)

To award experience for this adventure, add up the values for the objectives accomplished. Then assign the experience award. Award the total value (objectives plus roleplaying) to each character.

Encounter One

Escape the Inn 60 XP

Encounter Two

Evade the riders 60 XP

Encounter Four

Bypass the Kobolds 30 XP

Survive the Trap 30 XP

Encounter Five

Defeat the Hounds 90 XP

Encounter Seven

Defeat the Vermin thugs 90 XP

Defeat the Vermin Leader 90 XP

Total possible experience: 450 XP

Treasure Summary

Encounter One:

Loot: short swords (3 gp)

Encounter Two:

Loot: cold weather clothing (9 gp), blankets (1 gp), tents (3 gp).

Coin: 14 gp.

Encounter Four:

Loot: special arrows (4 gp), crossbow (3 gp)

Coin: 15 gp, necklace (20 gp)

Magic: *+1 nunchaku* (230 gp)

Encounter Seven:

Loot: weapons and armor (15 gp), masterwork dagger (30 gp)

Coin: amber stone (20 gp)

