

Session/Game: Up to Gnome Good Date: August 1, 2021

Episode 1: New Pork-chops

Campaign Date: Month of Gormak, Day 13

Characters:

Gedianic "Ged", human fighting man-2, Neutral (Caleb)

Lorenz, elf, Fighting man-1/Magic-user-1, Chaotic (Craig) Captain of Falcon Company

Gorin, human, Magic-User-1, Lawful (Mike)

Selina, human, Cleric-2, Lawful (Joanna)

Oswald, dwarf, Fighting-man-2 (Jonathon)

NPCs (all are Normals, unless noted all are human)

Billmen: Yanger, Gary, Randolph, Big Mike

Archers: Yancy, Bobwick, George, Stephen Hood

Servants: Jughead, Larry the Lantern Guy, Dorgo the Blacksmith (dwarf), Pork-Chop (halfling)

Judge: Dave N.

LOG

The Impetus—Outrage in the Castle:

Our heroes are the Falcon Company of the Baron's army, currently off-duty in the retainers' hall. About 10pm on this evening, they hear the bell chime out from the chapel, with the swift three ring beat that indicates an emergency. They also hear the bolts on all the gates slam shut and the portcullis slam down before the already raised drawbridge.

After quickly arming, they rush to the great hall to see the Baron emerge from his privy chamber. He is normally friendly and cheerful. He is very tall, and rather young (22 years old, but looks younger); but now he looks angry and frustrated.

"Ah, my good Falcons, the Owl Company has the castle locked down and I know that the dastards hadn't left through the gates yet, as the Drawbridge has been up since sundown." They see from his face that he just now realizes that they don't know what is going on. He proceeds to give them the situation, covering the following information:

- A gang of somewhere around a dozen lightly-armed Gnomes infiltrated the castle.
- They killed 2 guards from Owl Company who were on guard at the treasury (in the South West Tower).
- They apparently used acid to burn through the locks and bars on the treasury door and looted the treasure.
- Most importantly, he adds, is that they stole the Ruby Necklace of Yorgind which has to be retrieved at all costs.
- They made no attempt to head to the walls or gatehouse, instead they took the stairs directly downward, moments ago they were heard entering the basement.
- After the alarm bell rang, hobgoblins appeared at the periphery of the castle grounds and have been shooting at anything that moves.

He turned to the company and say

"Falcon Company, while I deal with the hobgoblins, I charge you with hunting down and capturing these thieves. Think of the rewards I've given you, the feasts we've had together and your slain brothers from Owl Company; honor your oaths of fealty and avenge this outrage against your lord and his house. Bring back the Ruby Necklace of Yorgind at all costs and at least 1 live prisoner from among these thieving rats."

The Action—Gnome Hunt:

Captain Lorenz of the Falcon Company divided his forces in two parts. He and half of them searched the pantry and treasury and pantry of the castle. They discovered one of the cooks, Ralph Pudding, who told them that the Gnomes had headed through the great hall before the Baron arrived there. The other half of the company passed through the great hall to the ante-room where they discovered that the door to the South East tower was hanging wide open. They rushed down the stairs to the Funeral Chapel in front of the family crypt in the basement. Here they discovered Mrs. Non-Tibbles, one of the castle cleaning women, dead on the floor. They sent a man back to summon the captain (they tried to send Pork-Chop their halfling cook, but he wouldn't go, no running up stairs for Pork-chop).

When the company assembled, they searched around the chapel. Oswald said that he heard someone or something breathing in the chamber somewhere, and George, one of the archers, figured out that someone was hiding behind some barrels in the corner. Gedianic went over and discovered that the head cleaning woman, Mrs. Tibbles, was cowering in fear there.

Mrs. Tibbles revealed that the gnomes had entered the chapel from the mortuary, some of them had gone into the crypt but then came back out after a few minutes. They held Mrs. Tibbles and Mrs. Non-Tibbles prisoner while most of them climbed into the castle. When Mrs. Non-Tibbles would not stop screaming, one of the Gnomes killed her. Eventually, the remaining Gnomes returned and left through the mortuary whence they came.

Deciding to ignore the side trip into the Crypt that the gnomes had made, the company charged into the mortuary beyond the chapel. It proved to be mostly empty. They did see 3 exits, one an old, dusty door that seemed to have been recently opened; the second a waist-high iron hatchway; the third a curtain covering a tunnel exit. Strangely, there was a large hunk of fresh "Six Legs on a Goat" style cheese¹ sitting on the ground in front of the dusty door. This attracted the interest of the company and they had Big Mike and Yancy open the door.

From out of the door rushed a horde of 24 vicious rats, who had eaten another hunk of cheese on the far side of the door and were mad with cheese-lust for the second hunk in the room. The cheeses had been left by the Gnomes to attract and madden the rats. The rats swarmed the company and an earnest battle ensued. Despite all their losses, the rats would stubbornly refuse to flee (such is the power of cheese, I imagine). Most of the company took at least 1 wound from rat bites and Yanger the Billman was killed from multiple bites. Big Mike, Randolph, George and Gary were all very badly injured and the leaders decided that they should be sent back upstairs to get patched up. They found the rats' nest in an abandoned supply room down the tunnel, but found nothing of interest there.

1 *Six Legs on a Goat* is named because, much like 6 legs on a goat, the cheese is interesting but not strictly necessary.

The company decided to split up. Oswald, Gorin and Selina went down the curtain corridor with Dorgo and a pair of archers and discovered there was a large cave with a deep chasm at the end of it. Meanwhile, realizing that only Pork-Chop was small enough to walk through the tunnel behind the iron hatch, the remaining men waiting in the mortuary.

Pork-Chop walked down the tunnel and turned the corner, only to be stabbed in the face and killed by Stan the Face-Stabbing Gnome who was waiting in ambush. Hearing Pork-Chop's death screams, Selina and Oswald arranged their men at the exit of the tunnel into the chasm cave.

When Stan emerged, the team rushes him and Gorin casts a Sleep spell, dropping the gnome in his tracks. They quickly tie the Gnome up as the live prisoner desired by Baron Timrad. At this point, Selina decides to crawl down the tunnel whence Stan had emerged. Unfortunately, Stan had booby-trapped² it, leaving a pool of oil behind him with a slow match. Whether the match was well timed or whether a bit of flame from Selina's lantern jetted out at the wrong time we shan't know, but Selina suffered some burning and scorching and crawled back out. The team assembles, deposited Pork-Chop's body in the chapel and questioned Stan the Gnome. Lorenz realizes that Stan had been charmed by some unknown master to whom the gnomes were reporting. They decide to send Yancy the Archer to escort their prisoner to the baron and to continue forthwith lest the rest of the Gnomes escape. Yancy never did catch back up with the company.

Proceeding to the Chasm Cave, they decide that it is too far across to jump and the gnomes had withdrawn their rope (to Stan's annoyance by the way). Lorenz worked up a trailing loop of rope attached to one of his arrows and in a truly magnificent shot shot the loop around a stalagmite on the far side. The company then managed to traverse the chasm by the rope. On the far side they found a tunnel that turned sharply downward to a level of caves below.

Forewarned by the smell, they encountered a herd of 10 wild dungeon hogs in the first cave. Lorenz used his sleep spell to enchant all 10 of them. The company killed and butchered the hogs in honor of Pork-Chop, their lately stabbed cook.

Ignoring 2 side passages they pressed straight ahead, finding a hewn chamber with a bronze cauldron in the middle of it and a badly burned Gnome corpse lying at the door. As the company approached, small fiery balls shot out from the cauldron, injuring several members, including burning Selina (again) rather badly. Larry the Lantern bearer gets hit right in the face with one fiery ball, dying on the floor. After Ged managed to push over the cauldron and pour out the strange liquid inside, they were safe from the magic. Gorin expressed interest in claiming the cauldron for study later on their return. Selina uses her Cure Light Wounds spell on herself at this point to heal all those painful burns.

They open a door from the cauldron room to see a glowing sword lying on the floor of another room, with another Gnome corpse lying nearby. Lorenz is all for leaving the sword be, but then the company decides to wrap the cauldron in a blanket and place it over top the sword, to presumably prevent magical mischief. However, Oswald is overcome with curiosity and lays his hand on the hilt of the sword. The sword communicates with him empathically, revealing it can locate objects and sliding passages/secret rooms, as well as providing a combat bonus to righteous wielders such as Oswald. He takes the sword. Runes on the blade say its name is "Truth."

2 I said "booby" huh-huh

Beyond the magic chambers is a very large cavern with a wide, swift moving stream running through it. On the far side is a ledge, reachable by a wooden ladder (perhaps the same ladder the Gnomes used to cross the Chasm above)³ There is also a small cave opening in the face of the ledge. But wait, there's more! To the right was a man-made corridor leading to a large lever, protected by a stout iron portcullis gate.

Oswald and Gorin walk down the corridor, deducing that the level might activate some kind of device to cross the stream. They were correct in the assumption, but did not expect a second portcullis to fall, cutting them off from the rest of the company. When this second gate fell, the noise alerted a band of 10 primitive cave goblins who poured out of the small cave on the far side of the stream. The goblins' volley of flint javelins fell short of hitting the company. But, the archery of Lorenz, Bobwick and Stephen Hood killed 4 of the goblins in the first exchange, causing the remaining 6 to flee down the cave.

After some yanking and levering, Oswald and Gorin pull the far lever, activating a extending bridge across the stream. And after another period of yanking, they get the trap portcullis lifted sufficiently to escape back to the company. They then cross the stream-bridge and climb the ladder. At this point, Ralph the Rock Dropping Gnome leaps up from the ledge, intending to drop a large rock down the ladder to the discomfort of the ascending fighting-men. However, Lorenz and Stephen Hood shoot him down before he can get in position to drop the rock.

There is a tunnel at the top of the ladder that leads outside to a ravine near the castle. The company advances and spots the last 10 gnomes waiting in a ruined chapel. They make a direct charge against the gnomes, killing 9 of them almost immediately. Then they gang tackle the last one, Baldy Joe, who was attempting to escape with the Ruby Necklace. Lorenz recovers the necklace, well pleased, and ties up Baldy Joe. They waste a few precious minutes searching the bodies and camp allowing enough time for the mysterious master to arrive. It was a huge demonic wolf that breathed terror and vileness all about it.

All of the rank-and-file members of the company flee in terror at this point, leaving Lorenz, Gorin, Ged, Selina and Oswald alone facing the beast. Gorin throws a light spell into the eyes of the beast, which blinds it for a few moments allowing the team to deploy and make a few attacks. The beast, however, places some sort of devilment onto Lorenz, who now considers the beast to be his friend and he walks forward and drops the necklace into the creature's mouth. The beast then turns and escapes into the night, Oswald, Selina and Ged landing blows on its back as it escapes.

Epilogue

The rest of the company subdues Lorenz, and take him and Baldy Joe back to the castle. Baron Timrad seems quite disturbed by the loss of the necklace, but gently says "I know you did your best." He will reward each of the PC's with 100gp for bringing in the prisoners and allowing no Gnomes to escape. In a few weeks, a visiting bishop lifts the enchantment on Lorenz and the 2 captured Gnomes.

The Gnomes reveal that they had been bewitched by a mysterious figure and ordered to accomplish several tasks in the castle:

- Steal the Ruby Necklace of Yorbind
- Desecrate the Tomb of the Baron's Great-Great Grandfather Timrad I in the crypt

3 Yes, yes it was the same ladder.

- Carry off the Skull of Simrack the Tall from the crypt (this skull was recovered from the gnome bodies at the end.

An investigation of the crypt reveals the scattering of Timrad I's bones and the theft of Simrack's skull. Also, the tomb of Rhaban III (Simrack's father and Timrad I's elder brother) was broken an empty, but the breaking of the tomb may have happened years or even decades ago.

Family lore reveals that Rhaban III and his son Simrack were notorious as tyrannical rulers and rumored to be evil sorcerers. After Simrack died, Rhaban went on a tyrannical rampage leading to his brother Timrad overthrowing and killing him.

Gorin's Research into the Cauldron

The bronze cauldron recovered from the caves must be filled with mixture of alchemical materials (100gp) to activate. It can launch 1d4 small fiery balls with a range of 20" each round, each ball does 1d6+1 damage and hits its target on a 1-2 on a d6. The owner (a magic user) can either set it on "Guardian Mode" in which case it attacks anyone who comes in range, or "Command Mode" where the cauldron only attacks those whom the owner commands.

NEXT GAME:

We will move several months ahead in time as the Barony of Redfield comes under attack by mysterious forces. The Falcon company will be given command of a watchtower over a mountain pass with orders to prevent the foe from passing into Redfield Valley to attack the gate of the town itself. We will advance to 4th level (Lorenz will be 3rd level in both classes). Leveling up will be handled at the beginning of the session. I will try to be there at 12:30, if you want to get things moving.

PORK-CHOP LIES IN THE FUNERAL CHAPEL; R.I.P.

