

Episode 27: “The Great Skull Collectors’ Caper, or *It came from Dave’s Gall Bladder*”

Campaign Date: March 4th - March 31st, 1431 AY

Characters:

Rinaldo of Saturn, human, cleric-7, lawful (Robert Swan)
Decius, human, explorer-5, neutral (henchman)
Mighty Beavis, gnome titan-5, neutral (henchman)
Manfred, human, mage-5, neutral (henchman)
Bobby the Bard, bard-4, neutral (henchman)
Wingus, human, lackey-5, lawful (henchman)
Rotwang, human, barbarian-7, neutral (Bob LaForge)
Tiberio, human, mage-6, neutral (Tim Moyer)
Masked Archer of the Apocalypse, assassin-7, neutral (Dave Nelson)
Trusty Nixon, human, lackey-5, neutral (henchman)
Hackamore, human, thief-6, neutral (henchman)
Faber the Fantastic, human, mage-4, lawful (henchman)
Pontifex Amicus, human, Cleric-8, neutral (Andrew Smith)
Heilyn the Herald of Jove, Bard-4, neutral (henchman)
Brutis the Lackey, Lackey-1, neutral (henchman)

Judge: Jason Leibert

April 1st-29th

The Skull Collectors spend two weeks in various shopping ventures, and another further two weeks oppressing the population of Yoeville in the name of Jove. Rinaldo of Saturn opens a new eatery in Yoeville, the “Chateau L’over de Fleur”, serving only the finest food and booze available.

April 30th

Badaxe Jack summons the Skull Collectors, with an offer of a ‘very profitable venture’. Once the Skull Collectors arrive at Badaxe Hold, the craft-priest lays out his elaborately detailed, decades-delayed plan for breaking into the treasure vaults of the Church of Bor in Portchester (after the henchmen are sent away for free booze and short, bearded whores).

An underground survey that was poorly received by the Bor clergy, an angry mob assaulting dwarves in the city, and a naturally vengeful Badaxe Jack resulted in this plan. Jack detailed his plan for approach through convenient underground tunnels, using a dwarf machinist’s invention to quietly scrape through the last dozen feet to reach the inner walls of the vault area, to use a summoned elemental to break open the vault doors (and absorbing the damage of any traps involved), to use a golem to haul wagons full of loot back to a staging area, and to have a mysterious ‘doomsday device’ (provided by the mysterious machinist Scholar Primal to Badaxe as payment for supplying parts, a Chaos Monkey Barrel) to cover the group’s escape.

Badaxe's intention of stealing 'every god-damned thing in those vaults, down to the last copper coin and saint's golden tooth', touches a special place in the Skull Collectors hearts. Namely, the place that gets giddy at the thought of a hundred years of collected church tithes and the life savings of every Bor-worshipping citizen in the territory. There is much discussion amongst the Skull Collectors, as they know quite well that this will mean that Portchester will no longer be a place where they can easily visit to shop or sell items. A suggestion is made to disguise themselves somewhat, but the Masked Archer very clearly vetoes that idea with the claim of 'Fudge that! I want these assholes to know who it is that's stealing their shit. Going in all, "This is a robbery! Any of your mother-fuckers move, and I'll execute every mother-fucking last one of you!'. This appeals to the Skull Collectors collective vanity and desires for violence, so the caper is on!

The Skull Collectors agree to the plans, deciding to leave their more lawfully-inclined henchmen behind.

May 1st-3rd

The Skull Collectors lead the column of dwarves and supplies up an ancient Dwarven under-road, from Badaxe's territory to Portchest. Many side passages lead away to possible Old Ones paths, but the column soon comes to a major intersection which is apparently guarded by a mysterious fortress. It's mysterious because the dwarves claim that it wasn't there within the last few weeks that they traveled this way. The Skull Collectors investigate the sounds and lights inside the keep, only to discover that it's no stone and mortar fortress, but a colossal house hunter mimic! After a relatively bloody fight, they defeat the beast, and find the ancient beast to have plentiful treasure inside.

May 4th

The Skull Collectors are taken to the proper area in the Portchester sewers by the machinist New Jack, and a party of Dwarven laborers. Jack finds the door, but proclaims that the room beyond is apparently occupied by someone. The door is kicked in, and the party discovers that the room has been taken over by a small band of thieves and bootleggers. A brief conflict ensues, and the surprised bootleggers are quickly slaughtered, their booze removed by the two survivors for the use at the "Chateau L'over de Fleur". New Jack quickly assembles what turns out to be a mole machine to drill towards the inner walls of the vault. The process is time consuming, as the machine is run incredibly slowly in order to be as stealthy as possible, scraping stone into dust inch by inch.

May 5th

The mole machine has finally reached the inner, finished stone walls and is stopped. New Jack quickly removes the machine, and prepares the next step. The Skull Collectors watch as New Jack uses a Stone of Earth Elemental Summoning. The elemental bashes through the wall, and moves towards the door, leaving the Skull Collectors to deal with the people currently inside the entry way to the vaults. They quickly discover that the vault has a large party of the Bor Youth Group on a field trip visiting the vaults. The priest in charge of the children (one Buster of Bor) orders the vault guards to surrender,

hoping to preserve the children's lives. But he has no control over the gigantic golem, which hurls a fire elemental-laden oil dish at the party, before rushing in to attack.

During the ensuing battle with the golem and the elemental, Tiberio summons a massive hydra to do battle. The children and the vault guards were taken down by sleep spells in the opening of the fight, but most of them are slain between the thrashings of the hydra or the eventual death of the golem. Crossbowmen guards attack continually as the dwarves earth elemental takes down the temple's outer vault door. As the elemental rips down the door to the inner vault (and subsequently dies to the resulting trap damage), divine light and angelic music fills the entire area.

Suddenly, the party finds itself beset on all sides by angelic beings of great power! A ghostly hand reaches through the wall of the temple vault, grabbing a dusty old Stetson hat from the relic frame it was in, while a noble, manly voice proclaims "That's where I left that dang thing." The noble Saint McClintock, patron saint of Manly Virtues, is opposing the party from the left. From the right, entering from the temple bank vaults, is Saint Josey Wales, patron saint of Revenge Beyond All Rational Reasoning. And materializing through the ceiling into the middle of the party, Bor's angel of holy wrath the mighty Extinctus. After a brief application of Saint McClintock's holy, knuckly fists upon the heads of the unbelievers, he is sent back to whence he came by application of a dispel evil spell, before reappearing minutes later claiming 'Boys, this here's where I'm from'. A drawn-out fight ensues with the divine beings inspiring courage in the mortal defenders who continually march down the entrance steps, and are just as continually cut down. In the end, though, the Skull Collectors destroy these mortal vessels of Bor's divine wrath, demoralizing and greatly weakening the defenders.

Whilst the Dwarven work crews begin bagging up and hauling out all of the treasure in both the church's inner and outer vault, as well as the more public amphora vault (right down to the 'Children's Piggy amphora' section), the Skull Collectors quickly cut down two lawful warriors who attempt to lead a charge into the vaults. The master mystic Wun Hung Lo and the paladin Sir Stomp-Evil are added to the list of fatalities inflicted against the forces of law, as well as the list of people stripped of anything valuable.

In the end, the Skull Collectors come away with 4 heavily laden wagons full of purloined loot. As they pass the prescribed point, Badaxe quickly opens the doomsday device monkey barrel, and triggers the covering cave-in nearby, leaving Portchester to its fate.

The town of Portchester is left severely shaken. Before the kingdom can even assess the financial hardships caused by the theft of money from nearly everyone in the kingdom, the chaos monkeys infesting their sewer system must be dealt with. Eventually a determined party of adventurers makes its way into the sewers, and destroys the barrel. Afterwards, hundreds of armed soldiers scour both the sewers and the streets of Portchester, slaying all the chaos monkeys they can find. No one knows how many of the cursed things were brought into existence before the barrel was destroyed, but occasional victims of their antics are still occasionally found, and it's suspected that the beasts are not even close to being completely wiped from the city.

The financial blow to the church of Bor, and the population of Portchester in general, is immense. Nearly everyone has lost money, from lowly peasant children to high-born noble houses. The church has lost more than the general population combined, not only in coin, but in holy relics stolen, not the least of which was Saint McClintock's hat! The steps the church will take to render restitution to the people whose money they lost have yet to be revealed.

The population of Portchester, from the kings and bishops down to the common folk, are enraged at this act of violent larceny and mayhem. What kind of vengeance will result from this act, only time will tell.