

Noble Intent

An adventure for 4-6 Heroes in the world of Théah . . .

Introduction

This is a new adventure which I've recently put together and run. It should take about two quite sizeable sessions to run, depending on the amount of legwork the characters become involved in. Having said that it's got quite a few scrapes in it, which may draw things out. The adventure is based in Montaigne, and has no party-requirements other than some able fighters, but will probably gain if you've got wily, or paranoid players on hand.

It's designed to be run on a "no-holds-barred" basis, or as Revenant & Co. might say ... "We're playing Prison rules now boys". So take no crap from the players and let them feel the heat for a change.

The Tale

The scenario starts with the players traveling out from Hoeught, a fairly affluent town in northern Montaigne. At present they have no specific tasks at hand and are probably seeking further exploits. As they head towards the town of La Jute, they encounter an ambush laid for them. The protagonist has watched their activities in Hoeught and believe they may be the tools most appropriate for his task. And so the ambush is sprung

Overview

Theme ~ Intrigue & Adventure

Story ~ To thwart the plans of a dastard noble and rescue innocents from harm

Act I - Machinations

Scene 1 ~ Ambush

Scene 2 ~ Journey to darkness

Scene 3 ~ Dark designs

Specifics - The Real Story . . .

Act II - What are we to do?!

Scene 1 ~ Frustration

Scene 2 ~ La Jute

Scene 3 ~ Possible leads

Scene 4 ~ The mirror

Act III - The miners

Scene 1 ~ The miners

Scene 2 ~ Ruin monster!

Scene 3 ~ Rescue?

Act IV - Stolen Heirlooms

Scene 1 ~ It's a riot!

Scene 2 ~ Sneaky, sneaky . . .

Scene 3 ~ Counter attack

Act One Scene 1

The characters should be just beginning to wind down after a previous adventure, this'll work best towards the end of a session when they may be getting complacent. As they wind along a cobbled road out of town and pass through some undulating and wooded countryside they are jumped by around 3 Brute Squads and a Henchman. For this I used Jacques Fleur with some pretty tough Highwaymen. He's been sent to capture the players and won't take any trouble whatsoever. Use him to convey to the players the feeling that they are now getting involved in some serious and nasty business. If the fight goes the player's way then have the second Supporting Villain show up; I used Marie Seville for this purpose with more of her select Brutes. Lots of Firearms generally does the trick (and I had a party of 6 with 1 Dracheneisen, 2 Swordsmen & an Ussuran Shape shifter!!).

Act One Scene 2

Once you've got their attention it's time to start getting downright dirty. Jacques will shoot any horses amongst the party, then rob them to pay off his Brutes for their work. They'll be allowed to keep swords, but that's about it. He then proceeds to have them trek across the evening countryside for around about 6 miles. He'll listen to their complaints and be reasonable but is in no way stupid. He understands better than the characters what he has to lose should he fail Jules d' la Jute. Generally give an overview of the area and the sense of foreboding as they approach a poorly illuminated coach-house just back from the road. It should now be late evening, yet only a few lanterns give any indication of occupancy at the Inn. This is where Jules d' la Jute currently resides, along with his sizeable retinue. Wagons and Horses are all round in the stable yard, and there are several Brutes keeping an eye out on the road. Jacques will only answer questions regarding events that have taken place, such as the murder of the innkeeper and his staff and their subsequent burial in the nearby woods.

Act One Scene 3

Once the characters are led to the second floor of the dim Inn they are faced with two Supporting Villains, some Henchmen and a number of Brutes, plus a powerful Villainous Noble, one Jules d' la Jute. This is the main protagonist of the story, and should be portrayed as an aloof, scheming sociopath. Jacques will have them sat in a large smoking room in the tavern and given meager refreshments before Jules enters and begins to expound upon his designs for the players. This must be done carefully, the sense of power which Jules holds must be seen as absolute. At no time should the characters be seen to be anything more than his pawns. If this fails and the characters attack him then it's all over.

Jules explains that two children ~ one of the innkeepers and his Brother's nephew ~ are trussed up and will be mercilessly killed unless the characters carry out his demands with skill and speed. He then tells them that they are to travel to the town of La Jute and find the home of his brother, the Comte Marc d' la Jute, and kill him without the knowledge of anyone else. The body is to be returned to the Inn for proof. Of course they are twins. Additionally, he requires that a large standing mirror is stolen and brought back. If the players push for more information or seek to bargain with him, then he treats them ruthlessly. He has no care if it seems impossible, or they need rest or medical help first, or more time. That's the reason he's chosen to use someone other than his normal allies ~ remember that as a sociopath, he has trouble relating to the emotions and needs of others.

The Real Story

Okay, so far this probably doesn't make much sense, and you're thinking "I've got to run this? but what's going on?!" So here's how it all comes about

The initial plan to have Comte Marc assassinated and his brother replace him is an obvious ploy for power, one which the players will see through and hopefully betray. Doing exactly what Jules d'la Jute wants them to. What no-one knows is that the families history is full of dark little secrets and betrayal.

Jules & Marc are twins, and Marc was born first and recognised as the family heir by their father. Of course some say that it is because of the ochre stain on Jules's right arm which led the father to chose Marc. Jules ran from is home at a fairly early age and entered into fierce study, soon coming to the attention of Legion cultists as a source of valuable knowledge and a tool to perform research for them. The family never spoke of him again. Some years later the father was cast out of favour in the court and his popularity waned. Now Marc has had a similar fate befall him; the fickle Montaigne nobles have perceived some slight and he finds his social calendar rapidly deteriorating. Conversely the Grandfather of the twins, one Louis-Duchamp d' la Jute and a bold Musketeer Captain, found wealth and fame in his exploits in the service of the Montaigne royal household. He disappeared soon after a celebration in his honour by the King ~ rumors were that uprising merchants had tried to sway him and use him as a mouthpiece against the nobility. His body was never found. In fact he was murdered and his ghost trapped in a mirror by poor Noble Porte Sorcerer's who sort the wealth of the developing merchants. This mirror now resides in the basement of the Comte's manor.

Jules d' la Jute has discovered the various faction's involved in his past and seeks to bargain with the spirit of his dead grandfather and reclaim his rightful place as the heir to the d' la Jute estates and title. Ancient texts lead him to believe that he can free his grandfather and return him to the body of a blood relative ~ i.e. Marc. Which is where the character's come in to things. Jules has killed the innkeeper and his wife, and is now using the daughter's life as a bargaining chip with the characters. The young boy is in fact his own illegitimate son, but the player's will only work this out if they cotton on to the fact that he is referred to as Marc d' la Jute's Nephew, which would make him Marc's brother's son . . . Jules's son. Additionally, there is an old mine shaft which the miners have recently fled due to a "ruin monster" driving them out. Jules's is now using this to hold the children and to retreat to if the players try to trap him at the inn prematurely. Jules's creates an Homunculus to watch the characters. For this adventure I would use the two Villains, Jacques Fleure and Marie Seville as the Henchman.

As far as Jules d' la Jute goes I've provided no stats for Jules, mainly because he's pretty nasty and should be judged against your own GM style and character's strengths. He could be a member of the Celebrant's of Night's Dawn ~ but it's probably best to just give him one quirky cultist power rather than make him a fully fledged nutter. Making him a Valroux Journeyman is probably a must, as are any skills which strengthen the link to his Musketeer grandfather. Enjoy!

Now it's time to get back to the adventure

Act Two Scene 1

Without much more to go on the characters should be shoved out into the night and told in no uncertain terms to get on with it. If they still balk then Jules will kill the innkeepers daughter (Note; I threw in the son of a character's Patron & had Jules's shoot him in the head ~ that went down really well!) just to illustrate his point. Remember he can't go any further as the other child is his son, and he's not that much of a bastard; this is his last gambit and you're on your own if it fails.

Hopefully it won't happen and the characters should take the first opportunity to leave the Coach-house which gives them the chance to get away and begin their own counter-plotting. In this Scene they'll probably check out the Inn and then reluctantly head out towards La Jute to at least how the land lies in that direction. The players should realise that things aren't going to be easy for them now, and they've got to think carefully about how to get around the situation.

Act Two Scene 2

The town of La Jute is about 15-20 miles North-east of their current location and the surrounding terrain is hilly and verdant. Further East are the nearby mountains and the Eisen border, plus the foothills below are used by miners to gather resources and wealth from the rich seams below ground. La Jute has grown wealthy over the years on the profits from such mining and the current Comte ~ Marc d' la Jute ~ has been enjoying a rich and popular life until recent months. I.e. since his fallen from grace within the Montaigne courts.

As the players approach the town they pass through lush farmland and into the peasant-occupied dwellings that skirt the town proper, which is walled. The characters enter what it pretty much a typical Montaigne town. It's got a large proportion of peasants, one Vaticine Church, which sees little use, several taverns and houses of ill-repute, plus a high proportion of skilled physicians and herbalists. One such surgeon's home is actually a Knights of the Rose & Cross safe-house. Other items of note include the large amount of itinerant miners who roam the streets and taverns, plus there are several members of a Vendel Guild in the town - the specifics of these are left up to you, but they may provide a means of access to Comte Marc, should the characters not be able to provide one themselves.

Act Two Scene 3

As the characters go about La Jute they will no doubt uncover the following;

The miners in town are now itinerant due to a mine, 3-4 miles away in the foothills, being abandoned.

The mine was abandoned because a dormant "Ruin Monster" was uncovered.

Someone else (Jacques Fleure) was asking about the "Ruin Monster" some weeks ago.

No-one under the age of about 50 has heard of the Comte every having a brother.

Comte Marc is delirious and probably mad, and although he has a fine bedroom actually sleeps in a servants room on the third floor.

Only an old retainer, servant or guard will know of the mirror. It's in a cellar under wraps, but it has a replica in a third floor bedroom.

The mansion is haunted.

A group of Wayfarers did camp in the region about a week ago, they moved on to Hoeught.

The party is being followed at nearly every turn by Marie Seville's picked men.

There is some dark and insidious creature following one particular character ~ this could be an Homunculus, Shade, Paranoia or other nasty.

Comte Marc always seems to be distant these days, as if melancholy.

Two of the Knights of the Rose & Cross are in town.

This is all accurate, but there should no doubt be other rumors and juicy pieces of information which the characters uncover, just to liven things up.

If the party chooses to seek out Comte Marc then they will be told by his Seneschal that unless they have a letter of introduction or a Noble present they will not gain an audience. Most of their attempts to gain his ear should initially go ignored. If the players are particularly persistent or cunning then they should be able to make reasonable representations to him. Of course, Jules will find out through Marie and her spies, then execute some innocent.

The players may try various methods to get into the mansion, such as making an official visit from some Guild or another; perhaps they seek a reward to quest after the monster and restore the mine, or maybe they just sneak in.

Act Two Scene 4

The Mirror is indeed located within the cellar of the Comte's fine mansion. It's simply tossed to one side, amongst lots of old furniture, and has a simple sheet hung over it. Although the mirror does contain the trapped spirit of the twin's grandfather and is rather ornate, it has no real magical properties. But it does have a rather scary ghost image in it of a senior musketeer of about 70 years ago.

Marc had a second replica made when he inherited the family titles, but just leaves the second where it is. He always pretends that he's forgotten about his brother, the mirror and the sad past of his family.

By creating distractions or being especially sneaky it shouldn't be too hard to obtain the mirror, and they can smuggle it to the outskirts of the town if they like. A long while will pass before anyone notices it's missing and informs the Comte.

Act Three Scene 1

The miners, whilst not actually being in on the plot, are in fact part of it. They'll drink, gamble and scrounge with the characters and inform them of the dark creature that lurks in the abandoned mine shaft, which they were working. They also let slip that the Wayfarer's are troublemakers and thieves, and whilst it's a not entirely truthful, they hope to get the local Guards to lock up the few that linger around La Jute to secure the dwindling supply of money the miners have.

They all describe the monster that dwells in the mine as large, fierce and cunning. It ate some of their friends and drove the rest out. A small detachment of militia that were sent to kill it never returned. No further action has yet been taken, which angers the miners.

Act Three Scene 2

The mine itself is about an hours walk out into the foothills and consists of some small storage huts, a barrack-style dormitory, a staging area for carts and equipment, plus the mine shaft itself. The tunnel is quite narrow and follows a seam of silver into the rock, then a shaft drops about 30 feet and the seam continues down a second tunnel until it finally terminates. At the end the tunnel, walls crumble away to reveal an underwater lake. It's into here that the miners broke and awoke the beast.

Act Three Scene 3

At the moment, though, it's used by Jules as a secret base of operations when he's not at the Coaching House. At any one time you will find either Jacques or Marie here with their respective Henchmen, Brutes and the innkeepers daughter. Whether the monster still dwells in the levels below is left to your designs. It's spate of attacks are obvious and the villains only venture into the first tunnel if they must. It is therefore possible for the characters to get to the mine shaft and inflict some casualties upon the villains and rescue one hostage. But it must be done without alerting Jules at any time. Otherwise innocents will die.

Act Four Scene 1

Back at the town, the miners are getting restless. Marie has been up to no good and has had a few incidents take place to stir the miners up. Several of her Brutes have stolen from, cheated or mugged some of the miners. This causes them to form a mob with the intention of forcing the Comte to a) do something about the thieves & brigands, and b) to provide for them & their families. This basically causes a minor riot in and around the mansion house.

This should be timed when the players are either getting restless and have not stolen the mirror, or when they've returned from the mine and about to confront the Comte before going to 'get' Jules.

Act Four Scene 2

Of course, Marie's plan is but a diversion. She seeks to upset things around the house so that she, and her little team of cunning Brutes can get into the house and steal the mirror during the confusion. In effect she's doing the job of the characters, but is concerned about getting Jules what he wants before he blows a fuse and takes it out on her. Additionally, if the players have made it clear they're just going to ignore the mirror and storm off to take on Jules it gives an extra angle to things.

This works well if the characters are involved with the mob when they return from the mines, or information gathering. They then see Marie sneak into the mansion and have to do something about it. If they're successful then it all comes to head. Another of the Supporting Villains is taken down, and the problem is highlighted to the Comte who can no longer ignore matters.

All that's left is to somehow get to Jules d' la Jute and finish things.

Act Four Scene 3

The last scene of the adventure is basically a big scrap and a chase. There's nothing too complex about it, but timing is pretty critical. Ideally here's what should have happened to this point;

The party has disposed of Jacques Fleure and his Brutes.

Likewise, Marie Seville and her Brutes are out of the picture.

No one is left to gainsay their deception.

One of the hostages should have been rescued.

The characters have the mirror and 'a body' with them as agreed.

They have located the Knight's and gained their support.

All that's now left is to travel to the Inn disguised with Marc and / or the Knight's present and to confront Jules. This should see a pretty cool climax to the adventure with the party battling Jules and his villains, plus whatever magic or infernal allies he has. Add in a brief horse/coach getaway and it ends with a glorious chase. It may be worthwhile having either of the Supporting Villains escape to support their dark master in this finale.