

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS



Module AJ1

Fugitive

By Alex Johnson
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This Module contains an adventure compatible with the Mentzer edited Basic Set of Dungeons and Dragons. It is also eminently suitable for use with the Moldvay edited Basic Set of Dungeons and Dragons without modification.

Adventure by Alex Johnson (alex@dragonsfoot.org)
Artwork by Erik Wilson (<http://www.erikwilson.com>)

Recommended Party: 6-8 characters, Basic (1st-3rd)
Level

Total Creature XP: Weak 1,325, Strong 2,580
Total Treasure XP: 190

Notation: Distances in the adventure are based on a 90' base move. If the party is slowed to 60' due to encumbrance, then for every three or four miles to be traveled reduce the distance by a mile. That keeps the timing of events the same (the timing is more important than the exact distance traveled).

Encounters are provided with alternatives for a weak group and a strong group. Since the adventure is intended for Basic level characters (L1-3), parties can range in power a great deal. Parties consisting of 1st level or smaller groups of 2nd level PCs should be considered "weak." Parties made up of 3rd level characters or large groups of 2nd level PCs should be considered "strong." It is up to the DM to judge the party's strength and use the appropriate encounters (labeled "Weak" or "Strong"). If no label precedes an entry, it applies to both types of groups.

Adventure Background: Zarrin is a priest who has sought power over life and death. To this end he has learned and practiced the foul art of Necromancy. Zarrin had been a fugitive for some years, but was recently identified and detained in the village of Coppice. The constable contacted the local magistrate, who sent marshals to collect the criminal for trial. The prisoner, however, escaped with the assistance of an outside accomplice the night before the PCs' arrival. The constable was slain during the escape.

The PCs may become involved in the story while passing through Coppice or may be sent by the

magistrate to retrieve Zarrin. If the PCs are not working for the magistrate, he will have sent word back that he will be unable to send aid for a week. This ensures the fate of the village is in the hands of the party.

Adventure Summary: The party is to investigate the break-out, and then follow the fugitive's trail. The trail leads past the kill of a great cat, winds through the forest, and comes out at a cabin containing a family murdered by Zarrin earlier. Wolves come to feast on the slaughter left behind. The trail continues to an unpaved road, where bandits accost the PCs. Further down the road is a farmstead Zarrin controls in the most horrific way. He will make his stand there against the party.

1. Coppice

This quiet village of just 100 souls or so makes its trade through skills such as carpentry, tanning, trapping, and fletching. Until recently law was maintained easily by the local constable. The general store carries some adventuring equipment: normal equipment of 10 gp or less, short bow, arrows, battle axe, hand axe, spear, and leather armor. The population can scrounge up no more than 50 gp in coin as a reward, should one be sought. No one in town is either capable or willing to pursue the infamous Zarrin.

The escape took place just before dawn. Zarrin's charmed ally, the ogre Brutus, broke through the outer wall of the holding cell and tore open a hole large enough to squeeze through. Gormin, constable of Coppice, came to investigate the loud noises from the cell and saw Zarrin escaping. Brutus killed him, smashing his skull flat with a great club and leaving the body where it fell. The two criminals then fled into the forest. Nobody else saw the escape or the ally.

The party arrives in the late afternoon. They will be shown the demolished cell wall and the violently murdered law man (currently covered with a tarp). Investigation might reveal (1-in-6, Intelligence modifier extends range of success) that the cell was first broken INTO before being broken OUT OF. A similar investigation roll would suggest that anyone doing that kind of damage to a human

skull would probably leave a trail of blood droplets as it withdrew. Such a trail can be found given a turn of searching. Should neither clue be found, the perimeter of the village could be scouted, revealing small amounts of blood smeared on the leaves of bushes following an animal path out of town. This is the route taken by the escapee.

2. Blood on the Trail

The animal trail winds through the forest for miles, sometimes crossing other animal paths. Travel along the path is slow (1/3 normal) to reflect the party having to retrace its steps to find signs of blood or passage by large creatures. An hour on the trail will bring the party to a mad buzzing of flies. The smell of blood is strong here. Have the party roll for surprise. If they are surprised, they push through heavy overgrowth and plow right into a grizzly mess. It appears to be a large boar but its intestines have been pulled out and spread. If they are not surprised, they carefully push aside the overgrowth to see the scene and may make plans.

The boar is a fresh kill, slain some twenty minutes ago by a great cat. The feline is perched out of sight, alerted by the party's noisy approach. She is very hungry and will ferociously protect her kill. Should anyone enter the vicinity of the meal, she pounces. Have the party roll for surprise. If they are surprised, the cat gets the round of surprise and then initiative is rolled normally. If the party is not surprised, the cat still gets initiative this round.

Weak Creatures (50): Mountain Lion from Basic Set.

Strong Creatures (275): Tiger from Basic Set.

3. Cabin

As the sun sets and the trail gets harder to follow, the path leads into a partly cleared area no more than 3 miles from the start of the trail. A log cabin dominates the area. The cabin door is closed and there are no lights or signs of activity. The trail is impossible to follow out of the clearing until sunrise, regardless of the party's desire to continue the pursuit with all due haste.

Zarrin and Brutus came across this cabin six hours ago. It belonged to a lumberjack and his

family. Brutus killed the man and his wife at Zarrin's order and was allowed to take the children, a boy and a girl, for his own feast later. They closed the door and departed, leaving the cabin as it was. When the party opens the door they will be assaulted with the smell of death, which had been held in. Behind the door is the lumberjack, his head pulled from his shoulders. At the back of the room is his wife, with a broken neck and some bruising on her cheeks. The cabin is simple, consisting of three rooms, with the kitchen and bedroom separate from the main room. The children's bunk is in the corner of the main room. The cabin's contents include clothing for four, pots, genuine silver cutlery (a wedding present from the bride's family, worth 20 gp), a fine dagger, the lumberjack's axe (comparable to a battle axe), and a small locked strongbox containing 5 gp, 40 sp, and 50 cp. A thief has normal odds to open the lock, or it can be forced (scattering coins across the room).

Observant characters may also search for the key, which can be found with a successful search roll (1-in-6, as for secret doors). The front door, of course, does not have a lock. If the party stays inside the cabin they will have to air it out and remove the bodies.

Once the front door is opened, the smell of blood will draw wolves. It will take a turn for them to arrive, but they will remain until they taste flesh. They will come even if the door is again closed. If the bodies are outside, they will be devoured, but the wolves will stay and



wait for the remaining humanoids to leave the cabin in order to add a second course to their meal. If the door is left open for more than half an hour, they will get brave enough to come inside to find their meal.

Weak Creatures (75): Wolves, Normal (3) from Basic Set.

Strong Creatures (150): Wolves, Normal (6) from Basic Set.

Treasure (29): See description.

4. Banditry on the Road

The trail can be picked up at dawn. It is easy to follow by the broken branches and torn roots leading away from the cabin. Darkness was approaching and clearly Zarrin insisted on hustling to get somewhere by midnight. The trail winds westward for four miles and comes out on a dirt road in the mid-afternoon. Wagon ruts imply this is a more heavily traveled path than any taken so far. The scuffles in the dirt suggest the last group to pass through headed south. There were three sizes of feet, tiny, medium, and large. The road goes four miles and passes through a farmstead.

After half a mile on the road, however, the party is accosted by bandits. These thugs were hired by Zarrin to keep pursuers off his trail. The bandits are thieves at heart, not murderers, and they will offer to let the party live if they put down their purses and valuables on the road and withdraw the way they came. They will hold to their word. If the party chooses to fight, the bandits will have already gotten half their number into concealed positions behind the party. These men will attempt to backstab PCs if negotiations fail. A PC thief can make a hear noise roll to spoil their chances of backstabbing him while the rest of the party is only given a 1-in-6 chance. The rear guards will not close until combat has begun, ensuring enough covering noise to get in close unnoticed. In the main group there are two armed with crossbows.

Creatures (120): Bandits (10) from Basic Set, Bandit Leader (2nd level thief, 20xp)

Treasure (61): 100 cp, 100 sp, 50 gp, potion of healing (Leader's), 2 crossbows, 20 quarrels, 8 short swords, 1 sword, 11 leather armors.

5. Farmstead

It will take the remainder of the daylight hours to reach the farmstead. The farmstead consists of two large farmhouses and a pair of grand barns. A bonfire has been lit in the middle of the road as it passes between the two houses, and a group of people are gathered before the fire with their backs to the road. They appear to be listening as a man in long, black robes speaks and occasionally waves his arms at them. He sounds like he's making a dark sermon of some kind.

The crowd is actually composed of zombies, animated by Zarrin. The mad cleric is indeed conducting a magical sermon to his dark cabal of corpses, though they cannot understand him. Unless the party uses utmost stealth and planning, Zarrin will notice the party and order the parishioners to bring him their lifeless bodies. The zombies turn and attack the party using their bare hands or pitchforks that deal 1d8 damage. The DM should try to emphasize who these people once were by describing their attire and appearance: farmer's garb with fresh wounds too deep to be anything but lethal as they shamble towards the party.

While the party is occupied with the zombies, Zarrin will watch and send Brutus against the biggest threat, be it an armored fighter or a magic-user with ranged spells or a cleric who turns the zombies. Zarrin will not engage in melee if possible and will make every effort to escape if the battle is going against his forces. He does not have the bulk of his equipment, but Brutus did bring him one article, a scroll of *word of recall*, which he uses if injured in melee.

Weak Tactics: The zombies and ogre do not pose too much of a threat alone, but they benefit from Zarrin's direction. Zarrin will start by casting *Blight* and then use his power to control undead each round to prevent the party cleric from turning them. Brutus will disengage from any enemy to rescue Zarrin, accepting attacks while he retreats. If Zarrin is attacked, he will use *darkness* on his attacker before reading from the scroll to escape.

Strong Tactics: Zarrin, without his equipment, must use all the weapons in his arsenal. He is intelligent and evil, so play him accordingly. Remember he is aware how vulnerable he is without his

magic items and will still flee if there is no reasonable hope of victory. He starts combat by casting *silence 15' radius* on the party's cleric. This spell will prevent both spell casting and turning of undead. He then uses *striking* on Brutus' great club, followed by *blight* on the party while they are occupied. Zarrin will then cast *darkness*, *cause fear*, and *curse* on anyone closing to melee with him. If Brutus is badly injured, he will make a fighting withdrawal in order for Zarrin to heal him.

Weak Creatures (1080): 4 Zombies from Basic Set, Ogre (Brutus) from Basic Set, Cleric 8 (Zarrin) from NPC Capsule

Strong Creatures (2035): 8 Zombies from Basic Set, Ogre (Brutus) from Basic set), Cleric 8 (Zarrin) from NPC Capsule

Treasure (100): 100 gp on Brutus

6. Resolution

Zarrin will most likely escape the party by using his scroll, leaving Brutus to die at the swords of the party. He will not soon forget this day and should, after some time recovering and planning, exact his revenge. The DM may choose to use Zarrin as a long term adversary, periodically harassing the party through *charmed* allies and undead.

Tied up in the larger farmhouse are the two young girls and three women Zarrin held captive. They are blindfolded, gagged, and scared witless. The girls' parents are dead and the husbands and sons of this farmstead are also dead. The survivors have nothing to offer the party as a reward and will require all the assistance they can get to renew their lives. Let the PCs figure out what to do with them and how much to give to help.

NPC Capsules

Brutus: Male ogre (Str +2, Int -1, hp 21, AC 5, xp 125). Brutus is a typical ogre, 8' tall and very strong. Normally he'd be an uncontrolled homicidal maniac with a low intelligence. Currently, though, he is *charmed* by a magic item Zarrin used. Brutus wields a large club and wears large leather armor. His valuables include 100 gp in cash. If freed from the *charm*, Brutus is likely to continue serving Zarrin, as there is money in it and tender young children to eat.

Zarrin: Male cleric 8 (Int +1, Wis +2, Dex +1, hp 26, AC 6, xp 1750). Zarrin is a frail, dark man twisted by the worship of a foul god. He seeks power through corruption, favoring spells that penalize others or involve the dead. He wears leather armor taken from a victim and wields a dagger. The only magic item in his possession is a scroll of *word of recall* he left with Brutus for emergencies. He has prepared *cure light wounds* (x2), *darkness**, *blight**, *silence 15' radius*, *3, curse*, and *striking*, but has already cast his *animate dead* spell.

Notes for the Dungeon Master

Curses:

- "Double Vision": The subject is afflicted with severe double-vision. Movement, if higher than 60', is reduced to 60'. Any time something is done which requires the character to specify a target, such as attacking or casting a spell that is not area-affecting, the subject has a 50% chance of affecting the real target, but also a 50% chance of targeting the false image. In such a case, the attack, spell, or other action is completely wasted and has no effect on the actual target.
- "Nearsighted": The subject's eyes cease to focus at distances over 10' away. He can not see anything more than 10' away and thus cannot move more than 10' per round unless guided. Missile weapons and spells cannot be targeted on distant areas. Attempts to do so have random results.
- "Light sensitive": The subject is uncomfortable in bright light. Like orcs and goblins, the subject suffers -1 on attack rolls in daylight. He also insists on getting indoors. He will not carry the light source in the party and will start to become nocturnal, preferring to be active at dusk and sleeping during the day. If forced to act in daylight, he will become belligerent or will insist upon wearing ridiculous looking hats and shrouds to protect him from the sun.
- "Flies": The subject attracts flies. A cloud of the insects will surround and follow the subject everywhere. Bathing will not help, and total

submersion in water will only drive the flies away for a round following. The flies will make the character unwelcome in most civilized locales, particularly restaurants, bars, inns, and stores.

- "Aversion to metal": The subject will not voluntarily touch anything made of metal. This includes thieves' tools, silver holy symbols, swords, daggers, axes, maces, hammers, construction and craft tools, and chain and plate armor. Alternatives for some items can be found using non-metals, but will have to be special ordered and cost twice normal. Coins are the only exception. Money may still be carried, but not more than 200 cn worth.

- "Sound of coin": Only used on thieves, the sound of jingling coins, as from a full and heavy purse, accompanies every movement of the subject. This makes it impossible to move silently and backstab. It also draws unwanted attention from criminal elements: thugs, thieves, bandits, brigands, cut-purses. The subject will be much more likely to be mugged and when dealing with merchants will always have a 20% mark-up because the merchants all believe he is rich.

- "Fearless": The subject is made fearless. He is affected by a permanent +6 bonus to saves against fear. Of course, his lack of fear drives him to take insane risks. The subject volunteers for any dangerous task, never retreats in battle, and foils any plan for stealth by loudly confronting any enemy he sees.

- "Fear of the wee folk": Only used on fighters, the subject is afflicted with an illogical fear of things that pose little threat. Any creature larger than a rat but smaller than the subject will illicit panic. The subject is affected by a *Cause Fear* spell when threatened by any such opponent.

- "Curse of the Wolf": The subject unconsciously thinks he has been cursed with lycanthropy. Over the next two weeks the character's jaw will seem to elongate, his fingernails will become claws, and his hair will thicken and grow, giving the appearance of a werewolf. The subject is NOT actually a werewolf

and does not have lycanthropy, but he will be unable to behave otherwise. On nights of the full moon he will howl all night and he will recoil from wolvesbane and flee if hit by it. This curse does not give immunity to weapons or the ability to transform into an animal shape; it just gives some minor canine traits and a suggestion to the subject.

- "Curse of the Gods": A small black thundercloud forms over the subject. Any time the subject takes any action against (including speaking out against or disagreeing with) a cleric of any god, a bolt of lightning will strike at the character from the thundercloud. This lightning does 1d6 damage (save vs spell for half). The cloud cannot be lost and will follow the subject indoors. Nothing damages the cloud.