

THUNDERSCAPE™

THE WORLD OF ADEN



THUNDERSCAPE NIGHTS

01

Trouble at the Dunswood Inn

PATHEFINDER

ROLEPLAYING GAME COMPATIBLE



THE WORLD OF ADEN ORIGINALLY CREATED BY SHANE LACY HENSLEY

Thunderscape Nights 1:

TROUBLE AT THE DUNSWOOD INN

Written by Shawn Carman



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THUNDERSCAPE

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Thunderscape Nights 1: Trouble at the Dunswood Inn

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Adventure Background.	3
Scene One - Shadows on the Road	3
Small Nocturnal Fire Elemental	4
Scene Two - A Light in the Darkness	5
Scene Three - All Is Not What It Seems	5
Scene Four - Into the Woods	6
Rykard	6
Prathem	6
Margot	7
Epilogue	7

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TROUBLE AT THE DUNSWOOD INN

A 1ST LEVEL ADVENTURE FOR THUNDERSCAPE CHARACTERS

This adventure is designed to serve as an introduction to the world of Aden for first-level players. It is designed with a group of four characters in mind, but can accommodate up to six with minimal changes to slightly increase the difficulty level. The events of the adventure are set within the nation of Arasteen, although they take place largely in the wilderness and could be moved to any other nation if it suits the GM simply by changing the names of the people and the descriptions of the environment.

The purpose of this adventure is not only to provide an introduction to certain aspects of the Thunderscape campaign setting, but also to establish the mood of isolation and desperation that pervades the Known Lands in the years since the Darkfall took place. Nocturnals and the corrupted are an ever present threat to everyone, and true safety and security can only be found within the world's cities. However, the cities are unable to sustain themselves, and so the lands in between must be tended no matter the terrible risks that are incurred, and sometimes horrible choices have to be made in order to survive.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The rural reaches of Arasteen were once places of great beauty, and they still are if one can but overlook the endless threat of nightmares emerging from the shadows that lay waste to anyone who lets their guard down.

Knut Bjornson never lets his guard down. After the Darkfall, when he was trying to get his family to safety as their village was overrun, they came upon a fort that had been abandoned. All signs pointed to the fact that the militia stationed there had gone to help some settlement under attack, so Knut moved his family in and shored up the defenses to wait for them to come back. They never did.

Ten years later, Knut, his wife, his eight children plus their five spouses and six grandchildren have made the place their home. They repair the wall constantly to ensure that it can withstand attack. They keep a ready supply of weapons at hand and everyone old enough to hold one is trained in its use. The small portion of land inside the wall has been converted for farming, and a few livestock are carefully maintained to ensure food is available. Travelers are welcome, but expected to pay what they can for the Bjornson's hospitality; usually this takes the form of barter but coins are acceptable as well for those rare trips to the city for supplies that they can't make on their own. It is not a perfect existence, but it is enough for Knut and his family to know that they are safe and that they are together.

Unfortunately, all is not as it seems in the Bjornson estate. One of Knut's younger sons, Magnus, is an aspiring mechamage who is, as of yet, largely self-taught. Little more than a year ago, a pair of bandits came to the fort and demanded payment. One of them was an arcanist, and the other a golemoid. Knut refused their "protection" and forced them to leave, but Magnus knew very well that they would return.

Desperate to protect his family and secretly eager to learn, Magnus snuck out at night and found the two men, offering his services to repair and enhance the golemoid's systems in exchange for his family being spared. Not particularly excited to test the fort's defenses, the bandits agreed.

Since then, Magnus has been increasingly involved with the affairs of the bandits. They have left the fort alone and the rest of the family has largely forgotten about them, but Magnus feels justified in his actions because his family has been safe. The excitement of sneaking out to do what he can to learn more about mechamagic while aiding the golemoid bandit who he secretly admires for his strength and his determination, is a thrill for him.

- SCENE ONE - SHADOWS ON THE ROAD

The adventure begins with the player characters in transit from one place to another. Where exactly they are going and where they have been is entirely up to the players and the GM as part of the development for the campaign. If for some reason there is difficulty in determining such things, the player characters are a group that recently met in the city of Portsmouth and are now moving north toward Top of the World, a much larger city where they might be able to find more lucrative work in whatever fields they pursue. The players may also wish to describe what horrors they have faced on the journey so far, for there are no simple trips across the wilderness in Aden; the nocturnals are everywhere.

One day during the player characters' travels, as it is growing nearer to dusk and they have not seen any settlements for several days, the sounds of combat ring through the countryside. Assuming they investigate, as player characters are so often wont to do, read the following text:

Along the trail you see an all-too-familiar sight: that of a traveler beset by nocturnals. The man is a jurak with two golemoid arm replacements, one of which is hanging uselessly by his side. He is being attacked by two beings that seem to be made of fire and smoke. The scattered, smoldering stones at his feet seem to indicate that he has dispatched one of them already, but the two that remain appear more than up to the task of dealing with him. Even as you watch, one of them immolates the man's leg below the knee, eliciting a scream of sheer agony.

The man being attacked by the nocturnals is the last survivor of a larger group that was recently wiped out by a corrupted sorcerer and his minions. Tybald Gentor, a jurak golemoid of Urbanan descent, was already wounded and exhausted when the two nocturnal fire elementals caught him. If the player characters do not intervene, he will be dead within a matter of moments; he may well die even if they do intervene.

Small Nocturnal Fire Elemental CR 2

XP 600 each

NE Small outsider (elemental, extraplanar, fire)

Init +5; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +4

Defense

AC 18, touch 15, flat-footed 16 (+1 Dex, +1 dodge, +5 natural, +1 size)

HP 11 (2d10)

Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +0

DR 5/magic, Immune elemental traits, fire

Weaknesses vulnerability to cold

Offense

Speed 50 ft.

Melee slam +4 (1d4 plus burn)

Special Attacks burn (1d4, DC 11)

Statistics

Str 10, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 4, Wis 11, Cha 11

Base Atk +2; CMB +1; CMD 13

Feats Dodge, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +5, Climb +4, Escape Artist +5, Intimidate +4, Knowledge (planes) +1, Perception +4

Hide in Plain Sight (Ex): A nocturnal creature can use Stealth to hide even if the terrain does not grant cover or concealment. It gains a +4 racial bonus on Stealth checks. This bonus does not stack with any racial Stealth bonus possessed by the base creature.

These particular nocturnals are born of man's fear of fire. Any player characters from Aramyst should have particular distaste for them for obvious reasons, given the state of affairs at the Burning Coast and the loss of that nation's capital city in the immolation. They are not intelligent creatures, but neither are they mindless; once it is obvious that they are going to be destroyed, they will attempt to flee.

In the aftermath of the battle and having lost part of his leg, Tybald is in shock and lapses into unconsciousness. Any attempt to stabilize him or heal him will succeed, but he will remain unconscious (he is suffering from a magically induced malady that cannot be alleviated without remove curse or something similar). Due to his implants, he is quite heavy and difficult to move. The player characters may find themselves in a difficult position, forced to either set up camp in a vulnerable location (particularly if the elementals were not destroyed outright) or to abandon a wounded and possibly dying man.

Allow the players a few moments to debate their options before letting them know that, in the dying light of dusk, they see the flickering of torchlight through the dense forest trees.



- SCENE TWO -

A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

Assuming that the characters follow the light, they will very soon stumble across an unexpected but welcome sight: a heavily fortified building amid the forest, a short distance away from one of the more well-travelled paths. Read the following:

The dim evening light barely illuminates the structure before you, but that does little to dispel your relief. The palisade surrounding it is sturdy and well maintained, and even in the twilight you can see several people standing watch in the light of the lanterns. One of them spots you, and there are shouts of alarm from within the walled structure.

The guards will demand to know who the characters are and what they want. If they explain that they have a wounded man with them, the guards' mood will become more helpful. If they mention that he is a golemoid it will immediately make the guards suspicious until and unless it is revealed that he is a jurak, at which point they will relax once more. After the guards ask a few cursory questions to ensure that this is not some sort of nocturnal trap, the door to the palisade will open, allowing more light from torches and lanterns to spill out, and four men will emerge. Two are armed and armored, obviously guards. The third is older and apparently in charge, while the fourth is much younger, wearing the robes of an arcanist. The older man, Knut Bjornson, owns and operates the business he calls the Dunswood Inn, although it is more of a safehouse for travelers than a true inn. He will carefully inspect anyone in the group who possesses golemoid implants as if making sure that they are who they claim to be. Satisfied, Knut and his sons, Sven and Magnus, and his son-in-law Jori, will allow the characters to enter the inn's wall. The condition of their charge will draw concerned looks from the Bjornsons.

"Aye, we've seen this before," Knut says grimly. "There's a sorcerer in these parts who has a particular hatred of golemoids. He has some manner of spell that attacks them, much like the Wasting. It's very difficult for them to fight it off." He nods to his young son. "Magnus here fancies himself a mechamagic. He's worked to combat the effects before. Let him have a look and he'll see if anything can be done."

Character mechamages may be interested in the malady as well, but Magnus will be somewhat evasive and, if confronted about it, will admit that he has very little understanding of the malady and can only treat its symptoms until the golemoid either recovers or succumbs. He is quite eager to "talk shop," as it were, with other mechamages, but wants to respect his father's wishes and minister to the jurak through the night. He eagerly asks any player characters who display knowledge of mechamagic to agree to speak with him the following day before they move on, assuming they do so.

In the meantime, Knut and his family will offer every hospitality to the characters. Although they refer to their home as an inn, it is hardly that. They allow any travelers in need of aid to stay without charging them, telling them only to pay what they can if they are able, and leave it at that. Each night the family prepares a modest fare, usually whatever game could be caught during the day and whatever could be gathered from the forest. It is not a great deal of food, but they are happy to share it with whoever is staying with them at the time, including the characters.

If the characters check in on their charge at any point during the evening, they will see Magnus and one of his sisters quietly tending to him, she moistening his brow with a damp cloth while he reads from a book and prepares some sort of herbal mixture. Both will smile at the characters, but the daughter will get up and quietly close the door so that their patient can rest undisturbed.

- SCENE THREE -

ALL IS NOT WHAT IT SEEMS

Morning at Dunswood Inn is accompanied by the cool morning air, the bright sunshine, and the smell of breakfast cooking in the kitchen downstairs. It is a reminder of Aden before the Darkfall, and the cheerful demeanor of the many Bjornson family members working away to keep the inn-fort combination running seems only to reinforce that. It is not until the characters inquire about the fallen golemoid that the dark mood of the current age seeps back into the place.

"Ah, yes," Knut says, his face falling at once. "I am very sorry to say that the curse laid upon your friend was such that it could not be overcome. Wounds can be healed and illnesses recovered from, but both at once was simply too much." He looks genuinely sorrowful at the news. "I am sorry. Magnus came to me just before dawn and told me he had passed. The young lad was distraught... he is too sensitive, I think, sometimes. He is resting now." He looks at you carefully. "We were preparing his body for the pyre. Would you like to see it? Pay your respects?"

This turn of events will, in all likelihood, raise suspicions among the player characters. The golemoid's body has been tightly wrapped in cloth and placed on a slightly elevated platform in the courtyard, where wood can be piled beneath it. This is recognizable to any native of Arasteen as an old funeral tradition from that country, one that is not regularly practiced but which has seen something of a revival since the Darkfall in an attempt to prevent the undead from becoming an issue. Unfortunately, inspecting the body will do little to assuage the characters' concerns.

Inspection of the golemoid's corpse will not reveal anything unexpected in terms of his demise; it genuinely appears that he perished from a combination of his physical wounds and whatever arcane malady was inflicted upon him. However, a Perception check (DC 15) or a Knowledge: Mechamagic check (DC 10) will immediately reveal that several key components from his golemoid implants have been carefully removed. Knut is shocked if the player characters bring this to his attention. Any attempt to Sense Motive will reveal he is completely sincere in his surprise, just as he is completely genuine in his anger if someone suggests that Magnus was responsible.

"My boy hasn't done anything!" Knut insists angrily. "He tried to save this man! You should have seen him when he came to me! He was overcome with grief!"

Knut will storm off to get Magnus and prove he is correct, presumably accompanied by the player characters. He knocks on Magnus's door, but there is no answer. Finally, he will open the door... to find the chambers empty.

"This makes no sense!" Knut sputters. "My son has no use for golemoid components! He couldn't use them here or we'd know something odd had happened. The only other..." he trails off. "Oh, no," he says quietly. "There was a pack of bandits that came through here about a year ago. Their leader was a golemoid. They wanted protection money but we refused. I always thought they would come back but they never did. What if... what if they didn't because Magnus was paying them some other way?"

Aden, Dark and Terrible

The evidence the characters are presented with does not suggest that Magnus did anything overtly evil or corrupt, merely morally ambiguous. However, should the GM wish to present a darker tone, there may be some hint that Magnus did indeed kill the golemoid so that he would not have to wait and see if he died of his maladies. This certainly escalates the matter of Magnus's actions, and may give more pressing urgency to any character interested in tracking him down for answers.

- SCENE FOUR - INTO THE WOODS

The truth behind the death of the golemoid has been revealed, and it is likely that at least some among the player characters will wish to seek him out. If by some chance they are not, Knut will plead with them to bring his son back to him before something happens that will prevent him from ever coming home. He will tell them of the bandits that came by a year earlier, and how Magnus had been keenly interested in the man's implants, but had not mentioned it again, which Knut found peculiar given the young man's obsessive interest in everything mechatmagical.

Magnus' trail through the forest is relatively simple to follow (Survival DC 10), as he is not a woodsman by any means. He has stolen into the night with the implants he harvested from the dead golemoid. He headed to the only rendezvous point he knows, which fortunately enough is where the bandits he seeks are currently located.

The bandit encampment is perhaps five miles from the inn, just far enough to ensure that members of the Bjornson family won't wander far enough to stumble across it, but close enough so that Magnus can make contact and offer his services to the group. Presently they are quite weak, having run afoul of the same corrupted sorcerer who laid low the golemoid warrior the characters discovered at the beginning of the adventure. The survivors, of which there are three, have all recovered, but they desperately lack the numbers that they once had, and for this reason are at last amenable to bringing Magnus into their fold completely, something that the young mechatmage can finally admit he does in fact desire.

The three remaining bandits are essentially the ring-leaders of the former group, and hope to be again very soon. The golemoid, Rykard, is the most fearsome warrior of the group and the one whom Magnus so thoroughly admires. The fact that he was suffering from significant damage to his arm, which Magnus has managed to repair using the parts stolen from the dead jurak, has prompted him to offer the young man a position in his group. Magnus has, to only his own surprise, enthusiastically accepted.

Rykard's second-in-command is an arcanist named Prathem, a native of Kyan whose arcane talents, while considerable, do not include any tendency toward mechatmagic. Rykard's increasing dependence on Magnus has driven a wedge between the two of them, so much so that Prathem is considering setting out on his own. Rykard's invitation to Magnus has largely sealed the deal, and if it were not for the impending intervention of the characters, he would steal away in the night.

The only other remaining bandit is a perpetually silent woman named Margot. The others know very little of her past, but she is an arbiter who fell from grace in Carraway. She remembers very well her martial training, but abandoned her pursuit of law and justice long ago. She rarely speaks and can typically be found smoking a very thin herb roll that gives off a crisp, slightly sweet smell.



NE Male Human Golemoid 1
Init +4; **Senses** -; **Perception** +6

Defense

AC 14, **touch** 10, **flat-footed** 14 (+0 Dex)
HP 12 (1d10+2)
Fort +4, **Ref** +0, **Will** +1

Offense

Speed 30 ft.
Melee +4 longsword (1d8+3)
Ranged +1 wheellock pistol (1d8)
Special defenses +4 vs. disease, +2 vs. poison

Manite Implants (Steam Points: 1)

Minor Implants Integrated Scabbard (can draw longsword as free action), Momentum Manipulator (spend 1 steam to change direction during charge)

Basic Implants Integrated Armor (no speed reduction, -3 ACP penalty, +4 Intimidate)

Tactics

Rykard is currently worse for wear in the aftermath of his group's unsuccessful attempt to waylay a local sorcerer. He has only one steam point remaining in his Steam Reserve. Normally in combat he attempts to take out the most threatening physical opponent first, but he is currently suffering a fear of spellcasters and may go for any obvious arcane threats first depending upon who is attacking him.

Statistics

Str 16, **Dex** 10, **Con** 14, **Int** 11, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 14

Feats Improved Initiative, Power Attack

Skills Disable Device +4, Intimidate +8, Perception +5, Survival +5

Languages Western Common

Combat Gear Dagger, longsword, chain shirt (integrated), wheellock pistol

Other Gear survival kit, travel rations, 11 gold crests



NE Male Human Sorcerer 1
Init +2; **Senses** -; **Perception** +0

Defense

AC 12, **touch** 12, **flat-footed** 10 (+2 Dex)
HP 8 (1d6+2)
Fort +3, **Ref** +2, **Will** +3

Offense

Speed 30 ft.
Melee quarterstaff +0 (1d6)
Ranged dart +2 (1d4)

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 1st; concentration +4)

0-Level (at will) - doze (DC 13), detect magic, ray of frost, read magic
Bloodline arcane

1st Level (4/day) - color spray (DC 14), magic missile

Tactics

Prathem's morale is already shockingly low and he is ready to desert at a moment's notice. He will respond to an attack with a counterattack, but if he sees that Rykard is struggling, or if he sustains more than three points of damage, he will immediately attempt to flee into the night.

Statistics

Str 10, **Dex** 14, **Con** 13, **Int** 12, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 17

Base Atk +0; **CMB** +0; **CMD** 12

Feats Alertness, Combat Casting, Eschew Materials, Iron Will

Skills Bluff +7, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (local) +5, Perception +1, Sense Motive +1, Spellcraft +5

Languages Kyall, Western Common

SQ arcane bond (bonded object [silver ring with engraved spider]),
bloodline arcana (+1 DC for metamagic spells that increase spell level)

Combat Gear potion of cure light wounds, scrolls of shield (2), wand
of magic missile (8 charges), tanglefoot bag

Other Gear darts (5), quarterstaff, 28 gold crests



NE Female Human Arbiter 1

Init +0; **Senses** -; **Perception** +8

Defense

AC 13, **touch** 10, **flat-footed** 13 (+0 Dex)

HP 13 (1d12+1)

Fort +2, **Ref** +0, **Will** +2

Offense

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +4 heavy mace (1d8+2)

Ranged +1 light crossbow (1d8)

Tactics

Margot is deathly silent in battle, and will not engage in banter or any sort of celebration until she's certain every enemy is dead. She will seek cover and try to close the distance to melee range with opponents while firing at them to keep them as contained as possible. If she sees that Rykard is down she will choose the better part of valor and flee. If pushed into a situation where she obviously cannot win, Margot will drop her weapons and surrender.

Statistics

Str 14, **Dex** 11 **Con** 12, **Int** 14, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +1; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 13

Feats Combat Expertise, Expert Prowess, Weapon Focus (heavy mace)

Skills Bluff +4, Diplomacy +4, Intimidate +6, Perception +7, Sense Motive +7, Survival +5

Languages Eastern Common, Vanoran, Western Common

Combat Gear Light crossbow, heavy mace, studded leather armor

Other Gear potion of cure light wounds, quarrel with ten bolts, pack with five days' rations, 11 gold crests

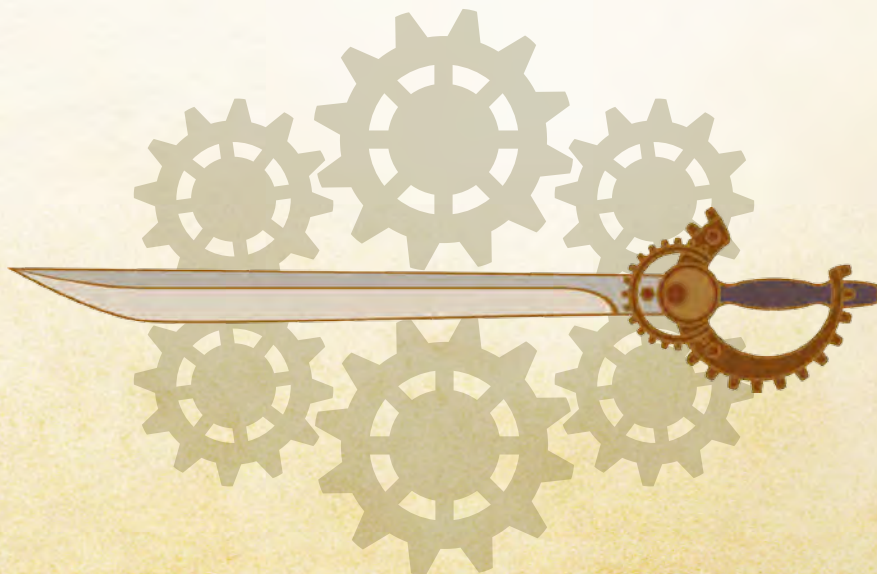
Magnus' Guilt

If you take the darker route as described above, having Magnus outright kill the fallen golemoid in order to harvest components for Rykard, then the player characters are almost certainly going to oppose leaving him with his family, and his family will be somewhat less eager to keep him. Still, the bonds of blood are strong, and it is not outside the realm of possibility that the Bjornson clan will be willing to fight to keep Magnus. Once again, it is all a matter of how dark and bleak the GM wishes to present the final outcome of this scenario.

EPILOGUE

Regardless of whether the bandits are defeated or escape, the Bjornson family will not be receptive to accusations made against one of their own. Magnus himself, however, will crumble almost immediately when confronted with the reality of his actions. He will confess shortly afterwards, stunning his entire family, several of whom are likely in the process of shouting hostile defenses of him at the player characters. His revelation shocks them all, and in the absence of any other clear course of action, Knut quietly asks the player characters to be on their way.

It is possible that some among the player characters may not be inclined to allow Magnus to get away with his crimes. In particular, given that the entire affair is taking place within Arasteen, if there are members of the Radiant Order among the player characters, they will likely be eager to see judgment passed on Magnus for the things that he has done. Unfortunately, his family is not particularly eager to see something like that happen, and anyone who is intent upon taking custody of Magnus could very well face another struggle from the various members of the Bjornson family.



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