

Blade & Crown

The Bandit Map

Synopsis

The Bandit Map is a scrap of paper that the PCs find in a book. It leads them to a far-reaching adventure where they eventually confront the leader of a group of bandits who've been menacing the area.

This adventure is designed to take 4-12 hours of play time and is suited for beginning or advanced characters.

Credits

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A note about Morensia

This adventure is set on the eastern coast of Morensia, a large island kingdom with a dangerous past. According to popular belief, the island was ruled hundreds of years ago by the Dwarves, who were master artisans but who became lazy. They were slaughtered by the bloodthirsty Mountain People, who were in turn destroyed by the Morensians. The Morensians are therefore the rightful rulers of this island.

Specifically, this adventure takes place within the Kreshar region, which is split in control between various noble lords.

The two most powerful are Earl Loroud, who owns one of the villages nearby and is perhaps the most powerful noble in the land, and Count Dobros, who owns most of the lands nearby but is a relatively minor player in court politics. The wilderness surrounding the Kreshar is vast, and contains Mountain People, ghosts, wild animals and more.

Adapt this adventure to any area that works in your current campaign. Some names may need to be changed, of course. The main requirements for the adventure are:

- A fairly well-settled area with...



- A wildland nearby that...
- Could be home to bandits and...
- Was once populated by a powerful, ancient civilization who...
- Were slaughtered sometime in the distant past.

It also helps if the area is split between two feudal lords, both of whom have good reason not to deal with the bandit threat in a thoroughgoing way.

Background

For decades, the Kreshar region has been plagued by bandits. They sweep down out of the surrounding wilderness and attack, taking whatever they can carry, then disappear back into

the wilderness. Though the local lords (Count Dobros, especially) have sent patrols to investigate, none have ever been able to locate the bandits' hold. Either the patrols have gotten lost, or have gotten ambushed. Soldiers are now reluctant to even go into the hills, fearing that they are haunted by the vengeful spirits of their dead comrades.

One local knight, Chaejad, worked out over the course of several years where the bandits were probably headquartered. He crafted a map that showed a few places most likely to be the bandit hold. He left the map in a book he owned, called *On Kings and Soldiers*. He then created another, better copy of the map that he took into the field with him.

As Chaejad and his troops neared the bandit hold, they were ambushed by a large patrol of bandits. The bandits killed all of

General rumors

Variation Die	Stalemate	Success	Critical Success
1	Lotta bandits 'round here, ey?	There was a bandit attack at Krebrae not more than a month ago.	A friend of my cousin said the bandits who attacked at Krebrae last month were really organized.
2	The Dwarves liked to eat babies, you know.	I heard that a couple of kids went playing in some Dwarven ruins and got turned into piles of stones.	Many years ago, one of my uncles went into some Dwarven ruins; he said it gave him strange and furious dreams.
3	Krebrae is a nice village, but it's so far away from everything.	Krebrae is the edge of civilization; don't go past the river, or you'll be looking for trouble.	I heard people say there's been a lot of evil goings-on in Krebrae. Their bailiff went missing, I heard.
4	I think I heard of someone named Chaejad once. I think he worked on my aunt's farm.	Chaejad? Do you mean the Count's man, who went off west somewhere? I heard he died on duty.	A man named Chaejad went off to fight some bandits during the Interregnum, probably when you were little. Neither he nor his troops were ever heard from again.
5	Avoid going west of the Vaebish river. I've heard bad things about the land over there.	Ghosts and spirits haunt the lands to the west of the Vaebish river.	There were some battles to the west of the Vaebish river, decades or maybe hundreds of years ago. People say the spirits there are warriors from those ancient battles.
6	There's a reward if you can stop those bandits.	I heard you can get a big sack of coins if you bring back the head of those bandits.	The reward for stopping the bandits is three bags of coins, but you only get the full reward if you bring the leader back alive.
7	How do the bandits know when to strike? They're smart, they are.	Someone in town must be telling the bandits when to strike, because they always seem to hit when there's a caravan going from town to town.	I heard old Bathtir the carpenter one night in the inn. He was talking in a hushed voice with a stranger. I think I heard them talking about market days and shipments.
8	Earl Loroud owns Ethbrig. Always seemed strange to me.	Ethbrig is one of Earl Loroud's towns because a few dozen years ago, there was some kinda territory dispute. He got the town to settle the dispute.	Earl Loroud has been very displeased with Count Dobros for not getting rid of the bandits up in the hills. But then, Dobros has bigger fish to fry.
9	You can make good money fighting bandits, as long as you don't mind getting killed.	All the feudal lords around here would like someone to stop the bandits. There are rewards, too, I've heard.	Dobros has put out a big reward to stop the bandits. Loroud has put out a reward, too, but it's not as big.
10	Ghosts? Sure, there are ghosts everywhere.	There are more ghosts to the west, because that's where the Dwarves lived.	Don't go into the hills, or if you do, make sure you're not afraid of ghosts.
11	I expect the crops will be good this year.	Looks like there'll be a bumper crop this year. Hope those bandits don't steal all our food again.	I almost hope our crop this year isn't so good, so the bandits don't get enough to eat and they starve. Last year they took at least three months of grain.
12	Bandits take prisoners, I'm sure of that. Bound to be some missing people turn up if you find the bandits' lair.	Some bailiff or reeve went to investigate the bandits a few years ago and hasn't been heard from since.	Bailiff Roshanima, from Krebrae or Ethbrig or somewhere, went missing a couple years ago. I heard she was looking for bandits, but there's been no ransom for her.

Chaejad's soldiers, but Chaejad himself was taken captive. The bandits originally planned to kill Chaejad once they'd gotten enough information about of him, but he gave them only hints, while at the same time informing them of some valuable strategies. Eventually, Chaejad had made himself invaluable to the bandits, and Chaejad finally challenged the bandit chief for leadership – and won.

Chaejad didn't *want* to help the bandits. At first, it seemed that giving them aid was the only way he could keep himself alive. Later, he became so overcome with guilt over his actions that he didn't dare return to civilization. And he still fears for his life; if he hints that he's going to slip away, the bandits may take him captive again, or worse.

The bandits have continued to stay in the caves, because they are the most comfortable and, now, familiar place available. Chaejad realizes that it is tactically dangerous to keep the bandit headquarters where they are, especially since his map is out there, somewhere; but he balances this against the convenience and relative comfort of the caves. And, probably, he has a subconscious desire to be caught and perhaps rescued.

Instead, he has surreptitiously been having the bandits obtain copies of *On Kings and Soldiers*, hoping that he will be able to locate the map and eliminate the danger of discovery. The bandits believe he's been trying to find an earlier, more complete edition. They don't know the truth: that a map to their secret lair is out there, waiting to be discovered.

It's now been several years since Chaejad became chief of the bandits. All this time, he's been dreading – but perhaps, on another level, hoping for – the day when someone finds his map and attacks the bandit lair.

Timeline

Many decades ago: Bandit attacks become more prominent in the Kreshar.

About twelve years ago: War sweeps the land.

About ten years ago: Chaejad begins studying the bandits' raids and making his maps.

About eight years ago: Landslide uncovers the cave entrance. The bandits move into the caves a short time later.

About five years ago: Chaejad leads his ill-fated expedition to quell the bandits and is taken captive.

Three years ago: Chaejad becomes chief of the bandits.

Two years ago: Bailiff Roshanima is captured while investigating the bandits.

About two months ago: The bandits' most recent raid.

Motivation

The Bandit Map assumes that the PCs will want to root out the bandit problem. Whether by combat, negotiation or some other means is up to the PCs. (See Resolution, page 19, for more on this.) The PCs may be motivated by justice, social advancement, wealth, a desire to establish their own bandit horde, or a combination of factors. The adventure should work regardless.

What the PCs know

Facts that can be taken as known by everybody (and therefore should be explained):

- The PCs are on the eastern coast of the island of Morensia, which is somewhat like Norman England in its general technology and state of integration.
- The PCs are in the town of ChaeGrae, in the Kreshar region.
- There have been bandit attacks in the area for years now, but because no one knows where the bandits are headquartered, it's been impossible to stop them.
- Someone has put out a reward for stopping the bandit attacks. Probably one of the local lords, though the PCs don't remember exactly who. (They could easily check around, though.)

Things some PCs may know (with appropriate Folklore, Area Knowledge or History rolls):

- A knight named Chaejad was killed a dozen or so years ago fighting bandits; he took about 60 troops with him, but none of them returned alive.
- The hills west of here used to have a lot of Dwarves; people have reported ruins and strange sightings.
- Due to the vagaries of history, the small village of Ethbrig is owned by Earl Loroud.
- The largest reward for the bandits (Value 9) has been offered by Count Dobros. Earl Loroud has offered a reward as well, but only for Value 7.

Additional rumors can be found in the table above.

Beginning the adventure

The PCs begin the adventure in the market of the medium-size town of ChaeGrae, in the Kreshar region. One of the merchants' stalls displays a number of books; ask the players which of their PCs would be most likely to be perusing these volumes. The PC who's looking at the books notices a slip of parchment – the map – hidden in the book. The merchant is unaware of the existence of the map, so the PCs can easily buy the book – it is only Cost 7.

The book is called *On Kings and Soldiers*. It is a history of military strategy. There are notes in the margins that seem to highlight especially important passages. The handwriting is not particularly distinctive, but it is the same handwriting as on the map.

For a full-size example of the map, see Illustration A on page 26.

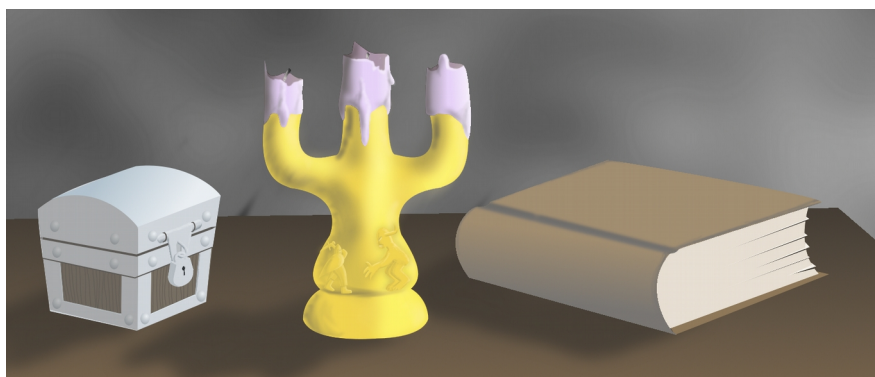
If the PCs ask anyone about the map, those who know the area well enough will agree that it very possibly shows the hideout of the bandits – but they will also want to show the map to their lord. It may be hard to get information without alerting the feudal rulers that the bandit headquarters has been identified, and if that happens, the PCs won't get the reward.

The PCs should quickly figure out that the map indicates the headquarters of the bandits who've been plaguing the region for years. If they follow the map, they will eventually come to a confrontation with the bandit leader.



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Blade & Crown: The Bandit Map

The adventure begins when you find a scrap of paper in a book. Could it lead to the lair of the bandits who've been plaguing the area for years?

The Bandit Map is designed to take 4-12 hours of play time and is suited for beginning or advanced characters. The adventure will work with any well-settled area near a wilderness that could be home to bandits, and where ancient ruins may be found.

Contained within:

- An introduction to the region where the adventure occurs
- Notes on adopting the adventure to your setting of preference
- Rumors for the region
- Extensive encounters, clues and side-adventures
- Detailed maps for the bandits' lair
- Maps, magic and mystery for a Dwarven ruin along the way
- Full NPC descriptions and characteristics, with cards ready for photocopying
- Detailed notes on resolution and repercussions
- Illustrations of major sights, including a full-size version of the Bandit Map
- An extensive index

The Bandit Map can be played in a single session, or form the start of an extensive campaign, or anything in between. The first supplement for Blade & Crown, The Bandit Map is designed with open-ended play and gritty, nail-biting adventure in mind.

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