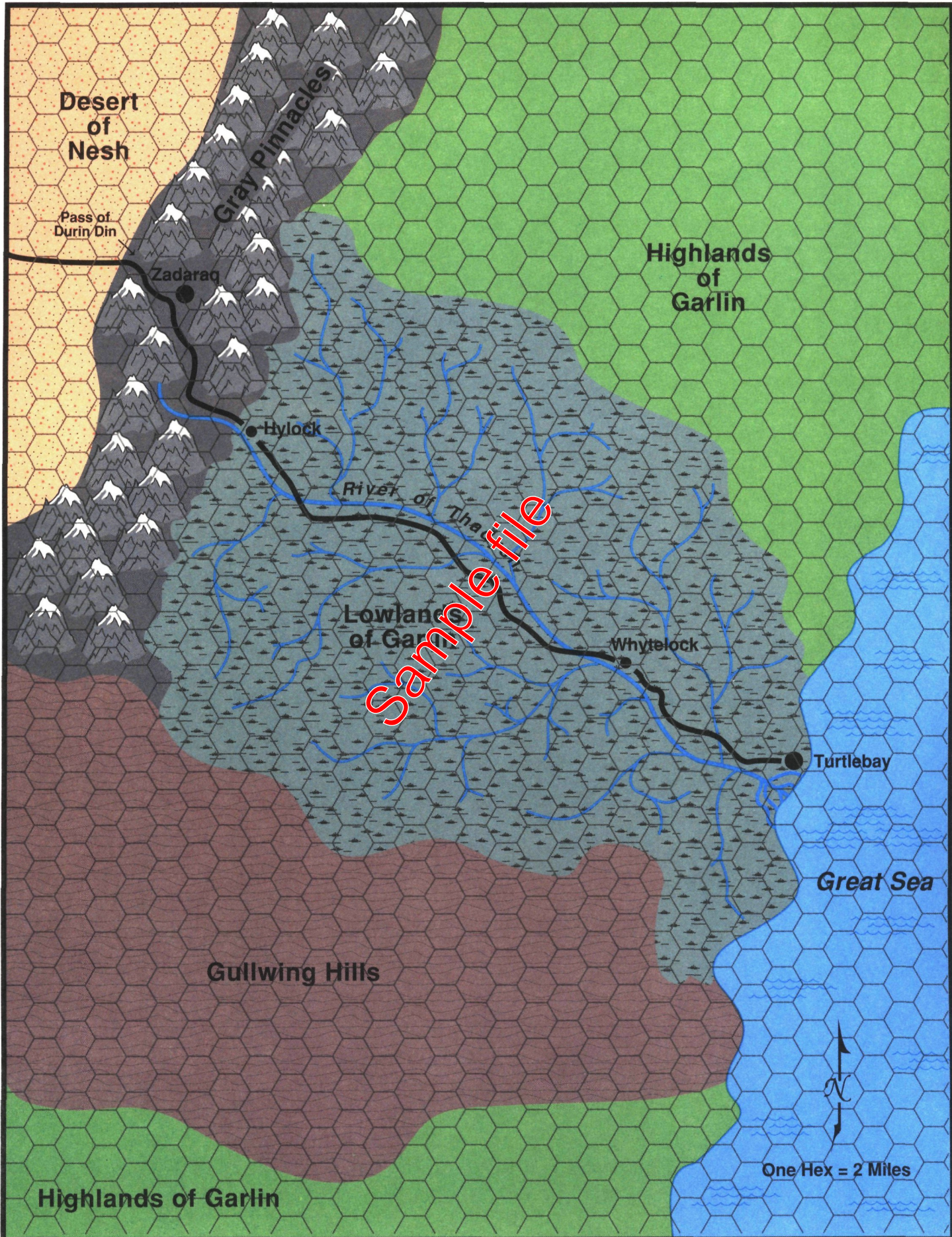


The Lands of Garlin





Thief's Challenge

by Troy Christensen

Introduction	1
I. Adventure Background	2
Starting the Player Character	3
DM's Information	3
II. Personalities	4
III. Places of Interest	10
Hylock	11
Whytelock	16
IV. Plot Points	19
Meeting with the "Moll"	19
Hideout of the Gullwing Bandit	28

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ISBN 1-56076-562-3

Thief's Challenge is an adventure designed for a DUNGEON MASTER™ (DM™) and a single player character: a thief. It's perfect for the thief who'd like additional experience points or a chance to use his special talents without having those troublesome fighters and spellcasters about to steal the show.

The scenario is suited to a thief of levels 2 to 4, and is ideal for a character of 3rd level. With minor adjustments by the DM, *Thief's Challenge* may also test the skills of a thief as inexperienced as 1st level or as skilled as 6th level. A multi-class thief may also be used in this adventure, though the scenario will emphasize his thieving background rather than spellcasting or fighting.

Thief's Challenge is primarily a mystery, a story thick with finger-pointing and double-crosses. The plot depends greatly on the player character's actions. But the choices that the PC makes will depend largely on how you, as the DM, portray each nonplayer character and how you present each clue. Do not be too tough on the character, for a single mistake can prove disastrous in a solo scenario.

Combat and the acquisition of magical oddities are rare in this adventure. To compensate for the lack of experience points, the DM is encouraged to award experience for other activities. Suggestions are made throughout the adventure. Also consult the optional rule titled "Individual Experience Awards" in Chapter 8 of the *DUNGEON MASTER™ Guide*.

Here's a summary of the pages to come. Chapter 1, "Adventure Background," describes the setting and its history, and offers the DM tips for getting started. Chapter 2, "Personalities," describes important NPCs. Chapter 3, "Places of Interest," describes the adventure's setting: the towns of Hylock and Whytelock, and the surrounding lands. Chapter 4, "Plot Points," outlines the scenario, detailing the various plots and subplots of the mystery. The DM must read the adventure in its entirety before play.

Chapter I: Adventure Background

Years ago, trade along the river Thadysh was a dangerous and difficult affair. Neither man nor monster was the enemy; it was geography. The Thadysh snaked from the Grey Pinnacles in the west, across the swampy lowlands, to finally flow into the warm sea at Turtlebay. Along the way it was knotted with rock-strewn rapids, and the lands bordering the raging river lay in a stagnant quagmire.

High among the Grey Pinnacles, the town of Zadaraq mined lustrous ores of silver, gold, and iron. The minerals were smelted and forged into bars bearing the stamp of the duke of the land, Lord Zadaraq, a cruel and ruthless ruler.

The men and dwarves of Zadaraq led a grueling life. Little profit was garnered from the gloomy mines, since much was lost in transport to Turtlebay and what was left was taken by the duke. The people of Zadaraq had but one pleasure: partaking in the sweet harvests of the lowlands.

Far down the Thadysh River dwelt the men and elves of Turtlebay, who harvested grapes, barley, and hops along the windswept coast. They produced the fragrant wines, heady beers, and spicy ales sought by the miners of Zadaraq. The lowlands, however, lacked the mineral deposits of the Grey Pinnacles, making trade with Zadaraq ideal.

For many generations trade fluttered up and down the river, but countless flotillas of heavily laden barges broke upon the rocks. Caravans left by foot as well, but the dangerous quagmire made more widows than rich merchants.

The reign of the evil Lord Zadaraq came to an end when the people revolted, throwing off Zadaraq's loathsome yoke. Duke Garlin—a Paladin of some repute—then claimed the lands. A wise and noble warrior, he listened to the people's needs and quickly appreciated the wealth to be gained from a *stable* trade route between the two settlements. He commissioned a study to help remedy the trade route situation.

It was decided that two locks would be constructed along the Thadysh. The first, called Hylock, would be the trading port for minerals coming out of the Grey Pinnacles. It would gently lower the barges 20 feet to the level of the middle Thadysh, now made smoother by the second lock, called Whytelock, which lay within a three-day march of the port city of Turtlebay. This lock acted primarily as a dam for the rough and rapid stretch of river between Hylock and Whytelock, ensuring a placid stretch of open water. At Whytelock, river traffic was lowered another 10 feet to the becalmed reaches of the lower Thadysh.

Construction of the locks proved to be a boon for the two cities, which over the years grew rich and powerful. Wealth from all over the world flowed through Turtlebay up the Thadysh to the castles and towers of Zadaraq. New mines cracked open huge deposits of gold, silver, and platinum, and veins of iron and mithril were discovered that stretched for miles underground.

Wealth of this caliber also brought thieves and rogues from the farthest corners of the land. Soon a cadre was formed amongst the powerful thieves. Then a guild formed to regulate and manage the illegal activities in the area. This thieves' guild controlled the gambling, thieving, and rackets along the river. They established their guild in the quiet village of Whytelock.

Every barge leaving the locks paid the guild protection money, which guaranteed a safe, uneventful trip up and down the river. After generations of hazardous travel along the churning waterway, river merchants were easily convinced that a such protection was well worth a few pouches of gold. The guild grew rich as it "served" the merchants, protecting their barges from pirates and other hazards.

Over the years, factions within the thieves' guild broke from the main body to form a second, closely aligned guild. The second guild formed its headquarters in the northern town of Hylock. From the two locations, the guilds

oversaw all river trade operations.

Everyone seemed content. Duke Garlin grew rich on his taxes, the people were pleased with their luxuries, the merchants enjoyed their profits, and the guild got a cut from almost everyone involved.

For years, this has been the way of the lands of Garlin—until the recent arrival of the Gullwing Bandit. The masked rogue, from his secret hideout, has stopped and pillaged every barge coming and going on the river for the last three months. No one knows who the bandit is or from whence he came. Fingers of blame are pointing in all directions. Some think the “bandit” is really a new faction of the thieves’ guilds. Others whisper that the Gullwing Bandit is protected by the duke and is out to destroy the thieves. Still others mumble that the guilds themselves are in a power struggle. Needless to say, the thieves’ guilds of Hylock and Whytelock are offering a handsome reward for the unmasking of the pirate, any man or woman in their ranks who can perform this task is promised great favor in future advancement.

Starting the Player Character

The ideal situation for launching this adventure is to have a PC who is a native of Whytelock—or, barring that, to have a PC who is located somewhere near the lands of Garlin.

If the character does not hail from Whytelock, the DM can invent a few short, improvised acts of thievery to get the PC acquainted with the town and lands around Garlin. The PC will not have access to the local thieves’ guild, however, nor will he know the identity of the guild master.

If it is impossible for the PC to start in Whytelock, the DM can launch the adventure with this setup: The PC approaches the local thieves’ guild bearing papers of transfer from his own guild—a guild which may be larger and more affluent. The papers are addressed

to the guild master of Whytelock (see “Mistress Mary Reisyk” in the “Personalities” chapter). The transfer is being made at the request of a master thief (20th level or higher). The larger guild may have some stake in what is occurring in the lands of Garlin or may even be positioning the player character for possible future subterfuge. In any event, the PC won’t know the identity of the master of the Whytelock thieves’ guild until after the scenario has begun.

Tips for the DM™

It is imperative that the DM convey the sense of corruption and mystery cloaking the events of *Thief’s Challenge*. Ideally, the PC should be kept guessing at all times, suspecting that at any moment he may be double-crossed or stabbed in the back.

Study the next chapter carefully to learn who’s who and to understand the NPCs’ motivations. There is no ultimate “bad guy,” though the Gullwing Bandit may be labeled as such. Every notable NPC is scheming to get something—often risking everything in the process. As DM, you must play each NPC’s role using the motivations described. Try to maintain the mystery of the scenario; don’t give away too much. Allow the player to make any assumptions he desires about the situation, no matter how far off base those assumptions may be.

Many of the events in this adventure are brought about by the PC’s decisions. Set up each plot, and then allow the PC to move through it at his own speed. Don’t lead the player by the nose, but allow the PC to discover clues and to react according to his own motivations. Pacing is important, but generally it’s best to let the PC (and the player) take as much time as needed to figure things out.

Chapter II: Personalities

This chapter describes Garlin's most interesting characters and their motivations for the adventure. Equipment lists include commonly possessed items. The DM may elaborate or develop further background as he sees fit.

Mistress Mary Reisyk, the "Moll" (T8): Human; AC 5; MV 12; hp 32; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 15; AL CG; THAC0 16.

Special Abilities: Pick Pockets 15%, Open Locks 25%, Find/Remove Traps 95%, Move Silently 30%, Hide in Shadows 30%, Detect Noise 15%, Climb Walls 60%, Read Languages 55%.

Weapon Proficiencies: dagger, short sword, sling.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: swimming 10, disguise 14, appraising 12, jumping 10, reading lips 10.

Equipment: *studded leather* +1, daggers (x3), short sword (only outside the guild), pouch with 25 silver and 2 gold.

Mistress Reisyk, or the "Moll," as she is known to the thieves of Whytelock, is easily 6 feet tall with a lithe, hard frame. When working as a thief, she wears a studded leather jerkin, which is dyed red, and knee-high black boots. Otherwise, she dresses like the townsfolk.

Mistress Reisyk is the master thief of the Whytelock guild, but she is also proprietress and operator of Whytelock's general store, market, and warehouse.

Motivations: The "Moll" is a tough, strong-willed woman who has worked long and hard to reach her current station, and she commands the loyalty of the Whytelock thieves. Recent events have vexed her greatly, though, and she has decided to use the PC as bait to uncover the Gullwing Bandit. She cares nothing

for the PC's well-being, but will seemingly take him into her confidence. In truth, she is setting the PC up to be "snuffed out" by the Bandit, thereby hoping to catch the rogue and end the mystery of his bothersome existence.

Kyma the Axe (T3): Human; AC 8; MV 12; hp 18, #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 8, Wis 11, Cha 9; AL CN; THAC0 19.

Special Abilities: Pick Pockets 45%, Open Locks 15%, Find/Remove Traps 10%, Move Silently 15%, Hide in Shadows 15%, Detect Noise 20%, Climb Walls 60%, Read Languages 0%.

Weapon Proficiencies: hand axe, sling.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: juggling 12, tight-rope walking 13, cooking 8.

Equipment: leather armor, hand axe (x2), short sword, pouch with 5 silver and 2 electrum pieces.

Kyma the Axe is a swarthy young woman with flowing black hair and heavy eyebrows. She has a light build and stands roughly 5 feet 6 inches tall. Her movement is fluid and her touch is dextrous. She applies both traits to a pastime that fascinates her: juggling hand axes.

Kyma is Mistress Reisyk's chief lieutenant. Publicly, she serves as the cook at the Gullwing Tavern.

Motivations: Kyma, like most thieves, is self-centered and power hungry, but she is intensely loyal to the "Moll." She will make it known that she dislikes any other thief who tries to "get in" with Mistress Reisyk, particularly the PC. In several of the plots, Kyma will work closely with the player character. It should be evident that she dislikes and distrusts the PC, however. The DM may find it interesting and easy to implicate Kyma as the Bandit. (She isn't.)

Miri Softouch (T2): Halfling; AC 7; MV 6; hp 10, #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; Str 8, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 16; AL NE; THACO 20.

Special Abilities: Pick Pockets 45%, Open Locks 10%, Find/Remove Traps 5%, Move Silently 10%, Hide in Shadows 35%, Detect Noise 15%, Climb Walls 60%, Read Languages 0%.

Weapon Proficiencies: dagger, staff.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: disguise 15, animal handling 9, local history 16, gaming 16.

Equipment: brocaded dress with small encrusted gems (worth 6 gp), silver belt, gold earrings, pouch with 14 ep and 2 sp.

Miri is a slender and attractive halfling with rosy cheeks and curly brown hair. Her eyes sparkle with mischief but can be alluring to

the point of enchantment.

Miri is the lieutenant to Hap Farfoot, master of the Hylock thieves' guild. She is also an expert gambler, capable of nearly imperceptible cheating when it suits her.

Motivations: As a child, Miri was a content shepherdess. After her family was killed by merciless human ranchers, she was forced into a life of thievery. Her lovely, sweet appearance is a mask hiding an evil countenance. She wants nothing more in life than to hurt other people, especially humans.

Hap Farfoot (T6): Halfling; AC 8; MV 6; hp 25, #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; Str 13, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 15, Wis 9, Cha 15 AL NE; THACO 18.

Special Abilities: Pick Pockets 45%, Open Locks 15%, Find/Remove Traps 10%, Move Silently 80%, Hide in Shadows 25%, Detect Noise 45%, Climb Walls 85%, Read Languages 25%.

