

THREE DAYS TO KILL

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKDROP

With some jobs, you can hire just any dumb group of joes. Guarding a caravan? Kidnapped princess? Rogue minotaur? No problem — just send your resident creepy old guy in a cloak down to the local tavern and hire the first group of dullards in shiny new armor you can find. Jobs like that are a dime a dozen, and pay about as much.

Other jobs ... well, other jobs can be different. Sometimes you need some people to do some work that might not strike the village idiot as exactly on the up-and-up. There's danger involved, sure, and maybe at the end of the day your band of for-hire thugs can convince themselves that they did something worthwhile. But the job isn't about doing something worthwhile. It's about putting the hurt on someone for the sake of your interests. It's about doing a number on the competition. It's about greed — your greed, your victim's greed, and of course the greed of your hired thugs.

Jobs like that aren't easy to come by. They sure aren't easy to pull off.

But man, they really pay well ...

Three Days To Kill is a scenario for a group of low-level characters. The storyline is very straightforward, offering opportunities for exploration, surveillance, infiltration, and combat. The only way players can really screw things up is if they die trying. The toughest part of running this scenario is adjusting the enemy forces to best match the group, and even this isn't too tough; options exist to introduce additional foes in the midst of combat if the initial group of bad guys isn't enough.

Our story is set in a small area known as the Deeps, a valley surrounded by mountains that lies along a major east-west trade route. The heart of the Deeps is Deeptown, a major waypoint for caravans, which practices a policy of openness to anyone willing to spend a little money — or, preferably, a lot.

The player characters are hired by a local bandit lord to make a hit on a rival. This rival is holding a secret meeting with some potential allies at a villa in the mountains, and the PCs' new employer wants them to disrupt the meeting. They don't have to kill everybody, so long as they ruin the event and demonstrate to the potential allies what a loser the rival is. The bandit lord wants to break up this new partnership before it gets off the ground.

The potential allies in question are members of a religious group called the Sect of Sixty, diabolical priests who traffick with devils. Throw in some snooping clerics from a holy order, a few young orcs out to prove their manhood, and a surprise straight from Hell. Stir briskly and bring to a boil.

Things are about to get hot.

CUSTOMIZATION

This scenario is designed to be adapted into most any fantasy campaign. Although the geography of the locale and the politics of the area are very specific and very important to the scenario, they are still pretty well self-contained and transportable. In particular, the deities worshipped by the various temples of Deeptown are never named; you should choose appropriate gods from your campaign world to fill those slots. If instead you simply want to run this scenario as a one-off without any particular fantasy world attached, you should find everything you need in these pages.

In several places, more information is given than you need for this scenario. The author's intention here is to provide you with source material for further adventures in the Deeps, and several suggestions along these lines appear at the end of the book.

SETTING

The Deeps is the name of a valley within a mountain range, called the Deeps because the mountains frequently put the valley in shadow. In the heart of the valley is Deeptown, a way-point on the east-west trade route that passes through the mountains. Deeptown is located on the shores of Shadow Lake, a largish body of water fed by two rivers, Forks and Dream, coming down from the mountains to the north.

The mountainous terrain of the trade route makes caravans easy pickings for bandits, leading to a steady job market in low-brain, high-brawn caravan guardsmanship. The towns on either side of the mountains are about three days' journey either way, making Deeptown a destination point for young toughs looking for work — pay rates for caravans leaving Deeptown are often double those of the outside towns, since if you're hiring in Deeptown it means you've already been hit on one side of the mountains and now need reinforcements to get through the other. Despite a steady stream of fresh guards, the job market remains tight; casualties are high, and the more-capable guards sometimes join the local bandit lords for even better pay.

There are six bandit lords in the area. Calling them "lords" gives them too much credit, really — they're just competent thugs. The largest two groups — those controlled by the bandits Modus and Lucien — each have about two dozen men, while the smallest are no more than a half-dozen leaden scum out for quick profits. The smaller groups stage frequent hit-and-run attacks, often just stealing horses and whatever coin wealthy-looking travelers happen to have on their persons. The two large groups attack fewer caravans, and they tend to make well-executed assaults that strip their targets clean. None of the groups are especially bloodthirsty; they usually tangle with the guards, killing some, but leave the merchants and travelers alive when all is said and done. If they just slaughtered everyone who came through this wouldn't be a trade route for long, so the leadership of Deeptown wouldn't tolerate that sort of extreme behavior. When the occasional group of psychos turns up and murders

