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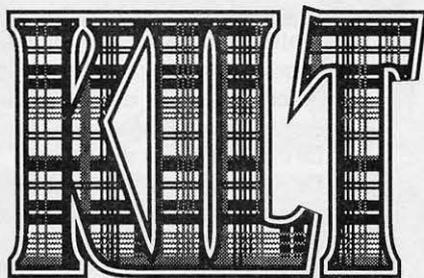




FRESHLY

Article by
Christopher E. Wolf

The further we went from civilization, the weirder it got.



The player characters are told by one of their street contacts (a mage would be best) that a certain alchemist is looking to hire bodyguards for a wilderness expedition. If the characters are interested, he'll slot them a contact number for £30 sterling. When the characters call the number, a cultured female voice will tell them to slot their names so their reps can be accessed. After a few moments, the voice will tell them to be at 7A Frith St. at 8 p.m. The location is Serena's Hermetical Supply Shop (see page 72 of the *London Sourcebook*).

The PCs will be directed to Shaw's Edinburgers (see page 130 of the *London Sourcebook*) to meet their patron. When they arrive, the PCs will be greeted by Professor Elias Wetheral, a small man dressed in shorts and wearing a pith helmet. He explains that he is an alchemist, and he needs bodyguards to protect him from the denizens of the wilderness while he collects some samples he needs. He is willing to pay £5000 a day.

If the PCs accept his offer, he tells them to be ready to leave early tomorrow morning.

Their trip, however, is not set for an uneventful beginning. While they are still at Shaw's Edinburgers, they are caught in a brawl between two feuding clans (the Campbells and the MacDonalds). All the combat is nonlethal, unless the runners stupidly make it lethal. If that should happen, both clans will turn on the runners and attack them jointly.

Depending on how the player characters acted during the brawl, they could have made some contacts or enemies. The Scottish clansmen use regular

dwarven stats because they are naturally rugged folk.

The professor will mysteriously make it through the brawl unscathed, without even a hair out of place. If the PCs question him or comment on this, he will state that he has always been naturally lucky.

REFEREE

The goal of the referee is to exploit the spooky aspects of the adventure, setting the players' nerves on edge as much as possible before the confrontations in the cave.

The professor should come off looking extraordinarily lucky—unnaturally so. In fact, there is nothing supernatural about the professor—he just happens to be naturally lucky.

JOURNEY INTO THE WILDERNESS

The trip consists of driving north to Fort William, then travelling a half-day's ride on horseback to the foot of the Cairngorm Mountains. The PCs will deal with a variety of threats and obstacles along the way.

Check for encounters using the Daytime Encounters or Nighttime Encounters Table, as appropriate.

As they ride further and further from civilization, the PCs may begin to feel somewhat spooked, with a creepy-crawly feeling down the back of their necks. Play this up, with strange animal noises off in the distance, followed by complete silence, foliage seeming to reach out toward them as they brush by, and an ever-increasing feeling of being alone—or not so alone.

The player characters may begin to ask themselves what they're really doing here and what the lucky professor is all about.

When they finally arrive at their campsite at the foot of the mountains, it is near dusk. They are then in for a long night of strange howls, grunts and an eerie whistling wind.

After the PCs get a fitful night's rest, the professor (who proclaims he slept like a baby) is wide awake and eager to

begin his work. The runners will need to unpack the mountaineering equipment, for what the professor seeks is at the peak of the mountain.

Runners who climb the mountain must make an unresisted success test, target number 5, using Climbing or Athletics, or, if all else fails, Body. They must make this skill test twice—once ascending and once descending.

If the runners rope themselves together, the target number is decreased by 1. Then, if anybody fails the test, instead of falling and taking a serious wound, he is caught and takes a light wound.

The gamemaster should also make a daytime encounter check when the characters reach the top of the mountain.

The trip up the mountain is an adventure in itself. Previously sure footing suddenly crumbles, threatening to topple the PCs into a ravine. Strange birds or bats dart out of crevasses into a climber's face. And the wind constantly threatens to snatch them from their precarious perch.

Still, no matter how much it looks like the professor is in danger, he'll never take more than a light wound, and he'll ask, "What the devil is everyone so worked up about?" The PCs may begin to wonder why he thought he needed bodyguards.

CAVE DWELLERS

After the samples are collected and the characters begin their descent, the professor announces that he needs a certain ore from a nearby cave. What he forgets to mention is that the cave is a radiation site. Fun in the sun, chummers—better put on some sunblock 99!

Deep in the cave is the vein of ore that the professor needs. To get there (and back), the PCs will face a variety of threats, determined by rolling on the Toxic Encounters Table. Once they reach the vein, they will find it guarded by the group of giant spiders which live nearby. Looks like the PCs get to earn their pay.

DAYTIME ENCOUNTERS

Roll 2D6 for encounters in the morning, at noon and at dusk, and consult the following table:

Roll	Result
2	Free Spirits: 1D6 are present. Roll 1D6: 1: Field Spirit: Force 9, Energy: 6, Powers: Animal Form, Wealth, Personal Domain, Aura Masking. 2: Water Elemental: Force: 6, Energy: 2, Powers: Animal Form, Personal Domain, Hidden Life, Possession. 3: Mountain Spirit: Force: 7, Energy: 5, Powers: Dispelling, Human Form. 4: Water Elemental: Force: 9, Energy: 7, Powers: Astral Gateway, Wealth, Human Form, Aura Masking. 5: Earth Elemental: Force: 10, Energy: 7, Powers: Human Form, Hidden Life, Possession. 6: River Spirit: Force: 9, Energy: 8, Powers: Aura Masking, Personal Domain.
3	Scottish Druid/Hermit: Not feeling too sociable today, he will summon up a Mist spirit to conceal himself from the group.
4	Bombardiers: A group of bombardiers drop ordnance on the party from trees and chitter squirrel talk at them.
5-6	Bogies: Three Bogies attack the group (see page 34 of the <i>Paranormal Animal Guide to North America</i>).
7	Guardians: Characters stumble across a standing stone guarded by three Watcher Spirits and a Salamander. If anyone approaches within five feet of the stone, the Salamander will attack.
8	Spirits: One to three are present: 1: Air Elemental: Force: 9, Energy: 6, Powers: Astral Gateway, Wealth, Hidden Life. 2: Nature Forest Spirit: Force: 8, Energy: 5, Powers: Animal Form, Aura Masking, Astral Gateway. 3: Mist Spirit: Force: 4, Energy: 2, Powers: Animal Form, Aura Masking.
9	Clan of Bear Shapeshifters: They will not be overly hostile unless they are provoked.
10	Broobies: A flock of broobies is nearby. If left alone, they will leave the group alone. If somehow the party disturbs them, they will attack.

11 **Dzoo-noo-qua:** Adzoo-noo-qua is out foraging for food. It is quite possible that one or two of the party members might look quite appetizing.

12 **Trail:** The characters come across a strange trail that leads into the wilderness.

NIGHTTIME ENCOUNTERS

Check once at late evening, midnight and just before dawn. Roll 2D6 and consult the following table:

Roll	Result
2	Spirits: Same as on the Daytime Encounters Table.
3	Gloaming Owl: It attacks.
4	Snake: A runner at random is awakened by a snake in his sleeping bag.
5-6	Stonebinders: Flock of stonebinders attacks the group.
7	Rabbit: A homicidal rabbit (possessed by a nomad) attacks whoever is on watch at that time. If the character kills the rabbit, the nomad will attempt to possess him.
8	Green Man: The runner on guard duty sees a giant, green man riding on a great antlered horse with a large number of hell hounds around him. If the runners don't attack him, he will curb his hounds and approach the group. He has a wager for anyone who would care to take him up on it. Being the gambling man that he is and times being what they are, he has this offer: Play a few hands of poker with him, and he will grant the winner one wish within his power if they win, but the runners must put up not money, but karma points. At this point the gamemaster can get out a deck of cards and play out a game of poker. Or the runners involved in the game can make a skill test 4 using Gambling skill or Intelligence. The Green Man's Gambling skill is 6. Whoever rolls the most successes wins the hand.
9	Spirits: Same as on the Daytime Encounters Table.
10	Spirits: Same as on the Daytime Encounters Table.
11	Saber-Tooth Cat: A saber-tooth cat attacks the group.
12	Mysterious Animals: The player characters see glowing eyes and hear noises off in the darkness, but they can't find anything out there.

TOXIC ENCOUNTERS

Make two encounter checks on the way into the cave and two checks on the way back out, rolling 1D6 on the following chart:

Roll	Result
1	Earth Spirit: The runners come across a black standing stone. A toxic Earth Spirit is nearby and will attack anyone who gets close to the stone.
2	Water Elemental: The runners encounter what looks like to be an oil slick, but it is actually the domain of a toxic Water Elemental that will attack the group.
3	Devil Rats: The runners come across the ruins of some sort of dwelling. If they investigate them, they will be attacked by 2D6 devil rats.
4	Corpselight: A random PC is attacked by a corpselight.
5	Bogies: The runners are attacked by a sickly looking pack of bogies.
6	Giant Spiders: The runners are attacked by a group of giant spiders. See the sidebar for more details.

Giant Spiders

The spiders try to inject their victims with a paralyzing poison. They then wrap them in sticky webbing and hang them upside down from the scraggly trees. The spiders will wait at least 24 hours before they suck the fluids from their victims, which may give the PCs enough time to devise a plan of escape.

Body: 9

Strength: 6

Quickness: 4x4

Charisma: -

Intelligence: 3

Willpower: 3

Essence: 6

Reaction: 4

Attacks: 3L2+special

Powers: Venom, Regeneration, Silence (the venom has the damage code of 6S2, but has the same effect as paralyzing touch)

Vulnerability: Orichalcum, Severe

CONCLUSION

Assuming the PCs can escape from the, ahem, sticky situation, they will walk away with their promised pay, a bonus from the professor, and perhaps a phobia of the wilderness in general or spiders in particular. They will also have developed a future contact with Serena's Hermetical Supply Shop and the mysterious professor. Ω