TP3 A Secure Location

By Dan Hass

The victims of the annual tribute have managed to escape Chogneaux and Baron Reolus. But they don't have the protection of a village against a dark and dangerous world. Can heroes protect the refugees long enough for them to become a resistance? A Dungeons and Dragons® 5th Edition Adventure for 1-8 3rd level characters. Episode 3 in *Tyranny in Purple*.

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Contents

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Adventure Summary

TP3 A Secure Location is a Dungeons and Dragons® 5th Edition adventure designed for 1-8 3rd level characters. It is designed to run using only the *Basic Rules* (*BR*) and *DM Basic Rules* (*DBR*) (these are a free download [here](#)). It also utilizes the free *Unearthed Arcana* Feats ([here](#)) and *Wardrow's Feat Compendium* ([here](#)). The DM and players should get a strong exposure to D&D 5th Edition and if it is going to be an primary hobby the *Player's Handbook®* (*PHB*), the *Monster Manual®* (*MM*), and the *Dungeon Master's Guide®* (*DMG*) are necessary investments.

While the encounters include scaling for 1-8 characters, parties of 1 or 2 PCs and 7 or 8 PCs are fringe circumstances that may play oddly. Specifically, parties of 1-2 are highly susceptible to a single bad die roll, and 7-8 can slow play dramatically. Ideally a party will be 3-6 PCs.

It is set in the *Dimgaard Campaign Setting* (the *Dimgaard Campaign Guide* is a free pdf available at [drivethrurpg.com](#)), but could be set in other campaigns. The Digital copies of the encounter maps are available [here.](#)

Dimgaard Philosophy

Dimgaard's primary principle is that D&D should be an entertaining experience. In particular, it should be fun and interesting. The "best" D&D is a collaborative storytelling event where the DM provides the framework and supporting details, while the players contribute by roleplaying the heroes (their characters) that results in epic tales.

"Epic" implies that the heroes be challenged and that success is a question to be decided by the heroes' deeds and choices. *The Lord of the Rings* is only an epic because the reader doesn't know until the final pages if Frodo, Aragorn and the rest will achieve their objectives or die, fruitless, in their efforts.

A great Dimgaard session (and really any D&D session) is where there is the finest line between success and failure and the heroes *just* manage to win (occasionally, just surviving is "winning"). But for those narrowest of victories to have true meaning, they cannot be foregone conclusions, and likely there will be times when the PCs fail – Boromir comes to mind or Gandalf's expedition to Isengard where he was captured.

Preparing the Adventure

It is always a good idea for the DM to read through an adventure before running it. *TP3 A Secure Location* is no different. There are some rather complex encounters that will benefit if the DM spends a few minutes deciding how she will play them. *TP3 A Secure Location* can be run with a lot of interaction between the PCs and NPCs depending on the inclinations of the players and DM. The module deliberately gives *just enough* information about NPCs to move the plot along, leaving a lot of room for a DM to individualize these to her campaign. It makes things smoother if the DM spends a few minutes deciding how she will deliver the NPCs' interactions. Some DMs revel in the opportunity to assume the personas of multiple NPCs over the course of a session while others prefer a summary approach. The decision is a matter of style and showmanship. Similarly, many players look forward to opportunities to interact "in character" while others prefer to summarize. Neither approach is "correct"; both are valid ways to collaboratively build a story, but the DM should try to anticipate her players' preferences (and decide her own) and prepare accordingly.

A battlemat or dungeon tiles may be helpful, but not necessary.

Items for Review

➢ *BR/PHB*: Help, incapacitated
➢ *DBR/MM*: ape, ghost, goblin, hobgoblin, swarm of bats, troglodyte, wolf

Running the Adventure

TP3 A Secure Location is made up of six encounters. An encounter is "something significant that happens" (on average an encounter should take 20 to 40 minutes of game time). Generally, these will fall into two categories: roleplaying or combat. Often the decision as to what type of encounter it will be is based on the PCs' actions. Sometimes a combat encounter may evolve into a roleplaying encounter when mistaken identities, misunderstandings, or action based on false assumptions are corrected, thus ending the violence. Other times conversations, interrogations, or negotiations can become heated and erupt in violence changing a roleplaying encounter into a combat encounter.

Dimgaard gives the DM opportunities to reward good roleplaying. Good roleplaying can generally garner players an easier path

to achieving the desired outcomes. completely avoid combat. Dimgaard is a dark and violent place where opponents with short tempers often find violence the most direct route to achieving their goals.

The encounters in *TP3 A Secure Location* challenge PCs in different ways. The combat encounters are expected to meet the definition of **hard** (*DBR* 56; *DMG* 81), but additionally there are encounters to test the PCs ability to deal with diplomatic situations and pose difficult questions about their character's morals.

Modification "Exploits"

Technically each encounter uses a **medium** XP budget per the encounter building guidelines. And for many parties a **medium** encounter may turn out to meet the definition of hard as PCs may be built for roleplaying and the party may not have optimized their tactics.

Modifications have been made to the creatures which do not increase the calculated CR of the creature but do increase the challenge of the creature. These are denoted with a [1]. These are not intended to be used with all parties, nor does a DM need to use every suggested modification. The DM should gauge the effectiveness of the party and decide which of these to use (keeping in mind the definition of **hard** encounters).

Adventure Background

Each year the village of Chogneaux must produce a tribute to the Tofarian Empire, which dominates Chogneaux. While the tribute is distasteful in every facet (soldiers, livestock, crafted goods, food stores, etc.) the part that generates the most resentment is the slave quota. Citizens of Chogneaux are torn from their community to serve distant masters and never return.

In *TP1 Tribute Time*, the heroes disrupted the annual tribute, and the citizens designated as slaves (including the heroes) escaped to the wilds near Chogneaux. However, as demonstrated in the action of *TP2 Building Resistance*, the location is not secure, and the group of escapees is barely surviving.

Most of the group is considering returning to Chogneaux even in the face of slavery.

The alternative appears to be death in the untamed wilderness. Many entertain the fantasy that if they present themselves to Baron Reolus, he will negotiate with them and there is a possibility they won't be sent away as Tofarian slaves.

A young woman named Atula (human Commoner) has emerged as an important figure holding the group together. She is reasonable and persuasive. She also has demonstrated kindness toward almost all the other fugitives in their time of need. The reason the group has not crumbled is because of her leadership and support.

Adventure Outline

The PCs are notified by Atula of the urgent need for a secure location for the camp and suggests the abandoned mine about a half-day's travel from the current site.

As the PCs search for the mine, they encroach on the territory of some apes, and encounter dangerous plants.

The PCs must deal with some goblinoids who have taken control of the mine's entrance.

The PCs discover a breach to the expansive cavern system beneath the Dragon Teeth (the *Cavern Realm*), and face creatures that have ventured to the surface.

To secure the mine, the PCs must eliminate the undead remnants of a group of dwarves from the Cavern Realm.

Rests

The PCs are expected to complete 6+ medium or hard combat encounters without taking a long rest. Even short rests should be cautiously allowed since many PCs' resources recharge on a short rest.

Once the action starts, the PCs can't take a long rest. If they insist, the resistance is disheartened, but rather than return to face the severe punishment, a group of heroic rebels emerges to secure space for the resistors in an abandoned mine.

Starting the Adventure

Important Spell Access

The DM should assess the various capabilities of the PCs. The first consideration is healing. While hit dice go a long way, the party needs some healing in combat. If the PCs do not have this ability, the DM should consider including a friendly druid in downtime who can provide each character a couple of *goodberries*. (The details of *goodberry* can be found at donjon: here.)

Also, a *revivify* can help. The DM should consider an Artificer NPC (here) who can infuse an amulet with *revivify* (lasting for eight hours).

The action of *TP3 A Secure Location* takes place a few days after the events of *TP1 Tribute Time*. The fact that the PCs are in a remote location without infrastructure limits the downtime options for those few days. For many downtime activities, the PCs would need access to the resources of Chogneaux (which is currently hostile to the PCs). Hence, the PCs would need to infiltrate Chogneaux via stealth or disguise; or find a collaborator still within Chogneaux. The DM should consider these factors when awarding and adjudicating downtime. The *PHB* 187, *DMG* 127, and the *Dimgaard Campaign Guide* all have suggestions for downtime activities and the DM may develop some of her own.

PCs' Resources

Managing the PCs' access to extraordinary equipment is another tool to modulate the difficulty of the encounters. If PCs are underpowered, downtime can contribute resources (potions, scrolls, etc.) to increase their effectiveness. Stronger parties may not need this type of support.

The PCs should have progressed to 3rd level or there may be new players joining. The players may need an opportunity to introduce and/or discuss their characters prior to launching the action. The DM can read or paraphrase the following:

> You have integrated into the small population of escaped tributes. The camp in the grove of trees is not elegant but appears sufficient, and you have made the acquaintance of other talented individuals.

When the introductions are complete, the DM can introduce the action with the following.

> The escaped peasants are not trained or equipped for life in the wild. They can barely maintain a camp. Anxiety is high as this is the first time most have strayed outside the safety of Chogneaux's patrolled walls.
>
> There is talk of negotiating a return to Chogneaux, and those murmurs include unrealistic hopes of avoiding being part of the tribute and reaching an agreement that results in the escapees returning to Chogneaux's population in the same circumstances they had before the flight.
>
> The group is hanging on by a thread. Not enough to eat; near exhaustion because the anxiety has prevented a sound sleep; no hope of being taken in somewhere else or rescue. There is no leadership to allay these fears. Unless you can take the mantle, this group will likely disintegrate and return to Chogneaux. In the process, they will likely name you as the instigators, which will result in you being labeled a criminal.
>
> The nominal "leader" of the group is the maiden Atula. She is plain looking and soft spoken, but because of her compassion and careful thought, her voice carries weight. She has persuaded the others to continue their struggle.
>
> Atula pulls you aside and says, "I don't think we can continue for much longer. A day or two at most. If we had a location where there was some confidence we could defend ourselves, the others may be emboldened. There is an old mine – rumors are it was dwarven – maybe a half-day from here. You would have to search to find it, but you seem very capable. If we could secure that as a base, maybe things would turn.
>
> "Every now and then it has served as a base for brigands and such, but it is supposed to be haunted and avoided by most people. But the only alternatives seem to be death as we succumb to the dangers of the wild, or slavery (at best) by returning to Chogneaux."

The general vicinity of the mine is known (about six miles through mixed terrain), but not the specific entrance. The PCs can construct a travel strategy, and the trip is uneventful until the PCs are in the vicinity of the mine when the DM presents Encounter 1.

Encounter 1: Getting There

Random Encounters

The *DMG* p.85 has a section on random encounters. In Dimgaard adventures, the first encounter is often isolated from the storyline, and heavily skewed towards combat. This serves multiple purposes.

The DM can use it to gauge the PCs' combat effectiveness to modulate the subsequent encounters. However, if the encounter goes badly, the PCs can still successfully complete the adventure.

The random encounter also presents the DM with an opportunity to tailor the adventure. She can substitute an encounter she has designed for the particular PCs in her campaign and still complete the storyline of the adventure.

Finally, there may simply be a different encounter that the DM believes would be more interesting to present to the players. There are Encounter Galleries in the Kickstarter offerings that may offer alternative encounters that make substitution an easier task.

Map. Path Through Forest

Background. The territory around the mine is territory to a troop of apes.

You have penetrated the forest where the mine is supposed to be located. However, after a cursory examination, it is not easy to find and there is no obvious entrance. There is movement in the trees.

What is being Challenged

Usually there is a specific quality (sometimes called a "gimmick") or set of qualities that an encounter is built around. Here the issue is the difficult terrain of the forest (as noted with the encounter map), and apes' climb speed. This gives the apes much better mobility.

Running the encounter. The apes are omnivores and territorial. They will have an extremely negative reaction to interlopers.

Scaling the encounter.

Ape. *DBR* 10; *MM* 317.
[1]**Armor Class** 14 (natural armor)
[1]**Hit Points** 32 (5d8+10)
[1]**Saving Throws** Dex +4, Cha -1
[1]***Territorial Affinity.*** The ape has Advantage on Initiative checks in the forest.

Concluding the encounter. The PCs are able to continue their search, but there are additional dangers in the area.

Hazards (Traps)

The demands of the adventure day are impossible to implement in a standard, four-hour session. A combat encounter will consume thirty+ minutes even though it lasts only three rounds. If the DM is presenting 6+ combats, it leaves little time for anything else in a session.

To allow for story building, character development, and roleplaying, Dimgaard adventures simulate the results of a combat encounter with hazards – a type of trap, environmental effect, disease, or similar mechanic. These can be applied to the party and resolved with minimal session time spent. By implementing 2-4 of these events, the session has time for non-combat encounters and activities.

If the DM feels the extra resource taxes are unnecessary, she can exclude them.

Fire Bloom
Plant event
Plants release a chemical cloud similar to alchemist fire. Each party member suffers 9 (2d8) fire damage. A successful DC14 Dexterity saving throw halves the damage. If the save fails by 5+ it does an additional 9 (2d8) fire damage. Any creature with a passive Perception or passive Nature of 14+ has advantage on the saving throw.

It requires the combined efforts of the PCs to locate the mine.

Skills Challenges

Skills challenges are not a part of the 5th edition rules. They model situations in where the PCs engage in various specialties to achieve a common goal outside combat. A skills challenge allows players to explore their character abilities and builds a narrative around an event that takes more time than combat. The party must achieve a certain number of "successes" to achieve the goal.

Finding the Mine
Skills challenge
Play progresses in rounds representing about an hour of activity. It requires cumulative successes equal to 2 + the number of party members. Each player explains how his character will contribute to the effort. The obvious choices would be Investigation or Survival (or Helping another PC in those efforts), but players may have other ways of contributing. It is hard (DC20) to achieve one success; a 25+ result contributes two successes. A 10 or less exposes the PC pursuing the activity to a **whipvine** attack. Also, at the end of each round, the party is subjected to a number of **whipvine** attacks equal to the number of party members. The DM and players should construct a narrative around the PCs' activities and the results.
➤ ***Whipvine.*** *Melee Weapon Attack.* **+**3 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (2d4) slashing damage.