



An Adventure
for Characters of
Levels 1-3

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CROSS CITY RACE

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The Best Adventure I Never Wrote

As D&D 3rd Edition rode off into the sunset, Wizards ran a competition for our freelancers, asking them to present the ideas for the adventures that they had always wanted to write but had never done so for one reason or another. Those short synopses were voted on, and the eventual winner from the freelancer submissions was this, "Cross City Race!"

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INTRODUCTION

This adventure is designed to be a 'side quest', a break from more typical adventures and dungeon delving.

It begins with the characters arriving within a city where a great fair and revel are in progress. The city is alive with talk about a race that forms part of these celebrations and which engages the town's interest like little else. The race is held every year on the same day.

The goal is to take a letter from the southern gate to the northern watchtower as quickly as possible.

While the race started out as a competition between two message carriers and a celebration of history, it is now open to anyone. There are loose rules about the use of magic and physical violence between competitors but it is, for the most part, a free-for-all with almost anything being considered 'fair'. The race is also open to interference from the citizens. Many bands of children, ruffians, and the bored delight in setting 'traps' for the racers and watching them take a tumble.

The prize for this punishing race is coin and the added inducement of a magical item from the treasury. This year, not only are there material prizes, but the powers that be in the city are looking for a capable runner to take sensitive correspondence between their city and another. The competition proves a method by which they can find the best person for the job, meaning this could be used as an introduction to another plot or adventure for a Dungeon Master needing a good 'hook'.

The adventure can be run with a single player, with multiple players competing against each other and the nonplayer characters, or with one player as the runner and the others providing aid to him and interference to their rivals.

HOW TO RUN THE RACE

The race is made up of a series of skill challenges across a variety of routes, all leading to a final obstacle and the finish line. The number of successes gained demonstrates each racer's position relative to each other on each of the routes. The more successes you get, the faster you're moving; the more failures you get, the slower you're moving and the more trouble you may run into.

Each turn, each racer makes an appropriate skill check. If the check succeeds, then the racer advances along his chosen route. If the check fails, then the racer either remains in place or takes consequences, depending on the challenge. The racer who reaches the end of the route first is the winner and claims the reward, bringing the race to a close.

It's best to run the adventure fairly swiftly to keep a sense of impetus and urgency to it. Things will inevitably slow down in combat encounters, but the added jeopardy should keep the tension up in those instances.

RUNNING THE RACE

Roll Initiative for all the racers as you would for combat. Rounds proceed in this order.

1. The player whose turn it is may try to switch routes, making the roll and taking the consequences. If the switch succeeds, that player proceeds with step 2. Otherwise, that player's turn ends and play jumps to step 3.
2. The player makes a roll for the challenge of the character's current route. With success, the character moves forward to the next appropriate space. With failure, the character

remains in place. If the character has accrued enough failures to trigger a consequence, it must be resolved.

3. Play proceeds with the next player in initiative order, starting at step 1. Continue until the race is won!

COMPLICATIONS

Various things can cause complications during the race, mostly when characters interact with each other or with nonplayer characters. The most common of these potential complications are described here. Use these as guidelines if issues arise with similar powers, magic items, and so on.

CHANGING ROUTES

If a character is having a hard time with a particular challenge or doesn't like the look of what they're going to be up against, they can elect to change routes with a skill roll. The character retains the successes gained on the previous route when entering the new route or if the skill check failed. A switch can be made only between adjacent routes; a character can't go directly from one roof route to another roof route without dropping down to street level first. Changing routes doesn't end the character's turn if the skill roll succeeds; the character can immediately attempt a roll on the new challenge for the area just entered. If the skill roll to change routes fails, then the character takes the consequences listed below and his turn ends.

MOVING FROM ROOF TO STREET

Getting down from the rooftops to the street below is relatively simple but has the potential to do the character a little harm. A character can reach the street in one of two ways:

- ◆ **Jumping down** requires an Acrobatics check against DC 15. If it fails, the character takes 2d10 damage but is not otherwise delayed. The player can make an Acrobatics check to reduce this damage (PHB pg. 181). Succeed or fail, the character is now on the new route.
- ◆ **Climbing down** requires an Athletics check against DC 10. If it fails, the character falls and takes 1d10 damage. The player can make an Acrobatics check to reduce this damage. Succeed or fail, the character is now on the new route.

MOVING FROM STREET TO ROOF

Getting from a street route up onto a roof route takes an Athletics check against DC 10. If it fails, the character falls and takes 1d10 damage. The player can make an Acrobatics check to reduce this damage. The character is not switched to the new route, and his turn ends.

MOVING FROM STREET TO STREET

Moving into the Rich Street Route requires a Diplomacy check against DC 15. With a successful roll, the character makes the switch and continues immediately. If the check fails, the character gets caught up in street traffic or is being lectured on rudeness by a merchant; this turn ends and the character

skips his next turn entirely, but he can continue on the Rich Street Route on the turn after that.

Moving into the Main Street Route requires a Diplomacy or Streetwise check against DC 15. Failure means that the character gets jostled by the crowd and loses 1d4 hit points from being elbowed and smacked around. Succeed or fail, the character is on the Main Street Route.

Moving into the Poor Street Route requires a Streetwise check against DC 15. Failure means that the character gets shoved to the ground by angry people and misses the next turn. Succeed or fail, the character is on the Poor Street Route.

SABOTAGE

A character or an NPC can sabotage the race route behind them in several ways. They could drop caltrops, spill oil on the ground, even set traps and snares on the route. These types of tricks affect only characters who are behind the cheater and on the same route. There are too many possibilities to cover all of them specifically, but in general they should have one of two effects:

- ◆ **Increase the DC of the skill challenge:** This comes about by somehow modifying existing obstacles; pouring oil down a climbing surface, for example, makes an existing challenge considerably more difficult for those following behind. Sabotaging a skill challenge this way should increase its DC by 2 to 5 points, depending on the nature of the interference.
- ◆ **Add an extra skill check:** This sort of effect arises from creating new obstacles or traps in other racers' paths. The new obstacle requires a second skill check before the racer can move on to the next area. Both skill checks can be

rolled on the same turn. Once one of the checks succeeds, that skill doesn't need to be checked again, but both skill checks must succeed before the character can advance. This should be a simple check of the appropriate DC with appropriate consequences. A typical, hasty obstacle (vegetable cart overturned on the road, laundry line pulled down to neck height) adds a second skill check which must be made successfully before advancing. An actual trap of some sort (a snare or net, for example) could force a caught character to lose a turn while getting free. Rigging a trap is considerably more time-consuming than upsetting an apple cart, so it's reasonable to make the lead character spend a turn or more (or make some skill checks) in order to lay the trap.

PUSHING EFFECTS

Many powers can be used to shift opponents around the battlemat during combat. These can be used creatively while addressing skill challenges during the race. If two characters are in the same skill challenge and at the same number of successes, they are considered to be 'neck and neck' in the race and within each other's 'threat range'. In these circumstances a character may forego their skill roll that turn and instead 'attack' the person who is parallel with them, if appropriate. This knocks away one of the target's successes, forcing them backward in the challenge and on the track.

RACIAL ABILITIES

Several races have abilities which could impact skill checks and challenges, as well as some of the complications that have already been covered.

DWARF

The dwarven *Stand Your Ground* racial ability should increase their defense against push attacks described above by +2. Dwarves can still use their saving throw against being knocked prone against any circumstance that would cause this to happen.

ELADRIN

The Eladrin *fey step* racial power can let a character avoid an obstacle or trap completely by moving past it, or get a free success on the right type of skill check. This represents them leaping forward using their ability. It still takes them their turn to do so, however.

SHIFTER

The racial ability *razorclaw shifting* allows shifters to run more swiftly when bloodied (along with its usual benefits) for the duration of the race. On appropriate skill checks or challenge rolls, they should get a +1 bonus to represent their increased speed.

CLASS POWERS

Various classes have powers that could interfere with the race in one way or another. The main ones to be concerned with are addressed here. Using these powers takes up that character's turn.

CLERIC

Cause Fear: If used successfully, this knocks off a success from a competitor anywhere in the same skill challenge as the fear-causing cleric. The attacked character doesn't need to be adjacent to the attacker. Otherwise, this works the same as pushing, described above.

Command: This can be used against anyone in the same skill challenge as the cleric; the target and the cleric don't need to be adjacent. The target of the *command* can be forced to skip a turn, fail a roll, knocked prone (requiring a turn to get back up again) or pushed back (knocking off one of their successes).

FIGHTER

Get Over Here: If an ally of yours is one success behind you in the same skill challenge as you, you can haul them up/forward, bringing them to the same success level as you and effectively giving them a free success on the challenge.

ROGUE

Topple Over: Attacking with a weapon is against the rules but an unarmed attack could still use this to knock someone prone, delaying them for a turn, though it would also delay you.

WARLOCK

Ethereal Stride: For the purposes of the skill challenges, this works the same as the Eladrin *fey step* power.

WARLORD

Knight's Move: You can inspire someone in the same skill challenge as you to make an extra roll this turn at the cost of your own roll.

WIZARD

Icy Terrain: The DC of a skill where slippery ice would be a problem is raised by 2 until the end of your next turn.

Expeditious Retreat: Moving with blinding speed gives you a free success on an appropriate skill check.

BARBARIAN

Combat Sprint: *Combat sprint* can be used to get a free success on an appropriate skill check, representing the barbarian's ability to move quickly over the terrain.

DRUID

Twisting Vines: The DC of a skill check where writhing, tangled terrain would be a problem is raised by +2 until the end of your next turn.

Fleet Pursuit: You can move quickly over the terrain and get a free success on an appropriate skill check.

WARDEN

Mountain Lion Step: If someone has sabotaged the terrain, thereby increasing the DC, you can ignore that extra difficulty for one skill roll.

OPPONENTS

The characters aren't the only ones running the race. Several other opponents face them, drawn from the town and its surroundings, all with their eye on the treasure at the end.

DORION LIGHT-STEP

Dorion is an elven ranger from the nearby woodlands, venturing out in the world and seeking to make a name for himself. This competition is his chance to see whether he's truly capable in character and ability of taking up the life of an adventurer.

Dorion isn't a cheater. He has a strong moral sense that may even lead him to help people who get into serious trouble near him. He'll use his rope and grapple for one climbing obstacle and then leave it behind. He may use his daggers to help him climb when his rope has been left behind, granting him a +1 bonus to Athletics checks for climbing.

Elven Fleet-Foot Medium fey humanoid, Elven Ranger	Level 1 Skirmisher XP 100
Initiative +4 Senses Perception +3, low-light vision	
HP 29; Bloodied 14	
AC 15; Fortitude 12, Reflex 15, Will 14	
Speed 7	
⊕ Dagger (standard; at will) ♦ Weapon +6 vs. AC; 2d4 + 3 damage.	
↓ / ↘ Evasive Strike (standard; encounter) ♦ Weapon Melee or Ranged 10; +6 vs. AC; 2d4 + 3 damage; the elven fleet-foot can shift up to four squares before or after attacking.	
Elven Accuracy (free; encounter) The elven fleet-foot can reroll an attack roll. It must use the second roll, even if it's lower.	
Wild Step The elf ignores difficult terrain when it shifts.	
Alignment Good Languages Common, Elven	
Skills Nature +8, Acrobatics +9	
Str 11 (+0) Dex 18 (+4) Wis 16 (+3)	
Con 13 (+1) Int 12 (+1) Cha 10 (+0)	
Equipment: two daggers, leather armor, rope and grapple	

GARTH COOPER

Garth is a member of the local watch, young and arrogant and looking to win in order to bump himself up the ranks and to impress a girl he likes very much. He's determined to win and to show off, meaning he may take risks. Being a local, Garth knows how to push the rules to their absolute limit and will not hesitate to do so.

He isn't above a little sabotage, either, including spilling a bag of marbles behind him to make life difficult for those following him, not to mention the public.

Garth's bag of marbles, when scattered, requires an Acrobatic skill check against DC 12 to get through. Failure indicates the character falls prone and loses their turn.

Human Watchman Medium humanoid, Human Fighter	Level 2 Soldier XP 125
Initiative +4 Senses Perception +2	
HP 40; Bloodied 20	
AC 18; Fortitude 18, Reflex 14, Will 14	
Speed 6	
⊕ Short sword (standard; at will) ♦ Weapon +7 vs. AC; 1d6 + 5 damage. <i>Effect:</i> The watchman marks the target until the end of the watchman's next turn.	
↓ Tide of Iron (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon +7 vs. AC; 1d6 + 5 damage and the human watchman pushes the target 1 square and can shift 1 square into the square the target vacated.	
↓ Brutal Cut (standard; encounter) ♦ Weapon +7 vs. AC; 3d6 + 5 damage.	
Get Over Here (move; encounter) The guardsman can slide a willing target 2 squares to a square that's adjacent to you.	
Alignment Unaligned Languages Common, Dwarven	
Skills Athletics +10, Endurance +10, Intimidate +6	
Str 16 (+4) Dex 13 (+2) Wis 12 (+2)	
Con 16 (+4) Int 10 (+1) Cha 11 (+1)	
Equipment: short sword, wrist-buckler, leather armor, bag of marbles	

TWO-TEETH

Two-Teeth, named after the teeth he lost after being kicked by a wild horse, is a half-orc barbarian who is traveling through here on his way to somewhere else. Spying an opportunity for profit and being accustomed to long-distance running since childhood, he sees this as a chance for some easy money to pay his way across the land.

Two-Teeth is a stereotypical brute. If he thinks he can get away with it, he'll have no compunction about tackling, beating, knocking out, or otherwise interfering with another runner in order to get ahead. The chalk he has patted onto his hands gives him a +1 bonus to Athletics checks that he makes to climb.

Half-Orc Runner Medium humanoid, Half-Orc Barbarian	Level 3 Soldier XP 150
Initiative +5 Senses Perception +1 low-light	
HP 46; Bloodied 23	
AC 19; Fortitude 17, Reflex 16, Will 13	
Speed 6	
⊕ Brawl (standard; at will) ♦ Weapon +8 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage.	
↓ Bruising Smash (standard; encounter) ♦ Weapon +8 vs. AC; 2d8 + 7 damage, and the target falls prone.	
Combat Sprint (move; encounter) The runner moves its speed + 4, with a +4 bonus to defenses against opportunity attacks this movement provokes.	
Furious Assault (free; encounter) <i>Trigger:</i> The runner hits with an attack. The runner's attack deals an extra 1d8 damage.	
Half-Orc Resilience The first time that the runner is bloodied in combat, they gain 5 temporary hit points.	
Alignment Unaligned Languages Common, goblinoid	
Skills Athletics +10, Endurance +10, Intimidate +6	
Str 18 (+5) Dex 14 (+3) Wis 11 (+1)	
Con 14 (+3) Int 10 (+1) Cha 13 (+2)	

GAZUNDA

Gazunda is a gnomish rogue, native to the town and determined to win the prize which should be enough to get him “out of this parochial, backwater dump where my inestimable talents are wasted,” in his words. Gazunda has many unscrupulous, cunning, clever, devious plans to unleash on anyone foolish enough to follow the same route he does.

Gazunda has a little box of tricks that he intends to use to pepper the route behind him with nasty surprises—provided his little legs can get him ahead of anyone, of course. These include smoke bombs

Gnomish Trickster		Level 2 Skirmisher
Small fey humanoid, Gnome Rogue		XP 125
Initiative +5	Senses Perception +2 low-light	
HP 34; Bloodied 17		
AC 16; Fortitude 13, Reflex 16, Will 13		
Speed 5		
⚔ Dagger (standard; at will) ♦ Weapon		
+7 vs. AC; 2d4 + 4 damage, or 2d4 + 8 with combat advantage, and the trickster slides the target 1 square.		
⚔ Blinding Cut (standard; encounter) ♦ Weapon		
+7 vs. AC; 2d4 + 4 damage, or 2d4 + 8 with combat advantage, and the target is blinded until the end of the trickster's next turn.		
⚔ Fade Away (immediate reaction; encounter) ♦ Illusion		
<i>Trigger:</i> The trickster takes damage.		
The trickster becomes invisible until it attacks or until the end of its next turn.		
⚔ Great Leap (move; at-will)		
The trickster jumps 7 squares.		
⚔ Reactive Stealth		
If the trickster has any cover or concealment when making an initiative check, the trickster may make a Stealth check.		
Alignment Chaos	Languages Common, Elven	
Skills Arcana +6, Stealth +6, Thievery +9, Acrobatics +9		
Str 14 (+3)	Dex 16 (+4)	Wis 11 (+1)
Con 10 (+1)	Int 14 (+3)	Cha 15 (+3)
Equipment: Leather armor, dagger, box of dirty tricks		

(increase the difficulty of some skill checks by +2) and oil (increases the difficulty of Athletics checks for climbing by +2 or creates a DC 12 slipping hazard for characters entering or leaving a skill challenge area).

TOM BURGHER

Tom is a local bard, beggar, and acrobat from the town who wants to go on to bigger and better things and thinks that he knows the place well enough to stand a chance of winning if he enters the race. He plans to use his natural agility—and his staff—to make his way across town.

The staff gives him a +1 bonus on skill checks where balance is important.

Human Street Entertainer		Level 1 Skirmisher
Medium humanoid, Human Bard		XP 100
Initiative +3	Senses Perception +0	
HP 29; Bloodied 14		
AC 15; Fortitude 12, Reflex 14, Will 13		
Speed 6		
⚔ Quarterstaff (standard; at will) ♦ Weapon		
+6 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage.		
⚔ Blunder (standard; at-will) ♦ Arcane, Charm, Implement		
Ranged 5; +4 vs. Will; 1d6 + 5 damage and the entertainer slides the target 2 squares.		
⚔ Vicious Mockery (standard; at-will) ♦ Arcane, Charm, Implement, Psychic		
Ranged 10; +4 vs. Will; 1d6 + 5 psychic damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls until the end of the entertainer's next turn.		
⚔ Surprising Shout (standard; encounter) ♦ Arcane, Healing, Implement, Psychic		
Ranged 10; +4 vs. Will; 2d8 + 5 psychic damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the entertainer's next turn.		
Alignment Unaligned	Languages Common, Elven	
Skills Arcana +7, Acrobatics +6, Athletics +6		
Str 10 (+1)	Dex 12 (+1)	Wis 11 (+0)
Con 13 (+1)	Int 14 (+2)	Cha 18 (+4)
Equipment: Quarterstaff, leather armor		

THE RACE

The race begins at the southern gate and ends at the top of the northern watchtower. The main road connects those two points directly, but it's also crowded. Winding through alleys is longer but less crowded, while scrambling across roofs is perilous but possibly the speediest of all.

The race commences when the drawbridge at the southern gate falls. It ends when the winner passes their letter to the city elder waiting at the top of the tower. The winning runner is then led out of the tower and presented with his prizes before being wined, dined, and feted as the hero of the hour.

THE PRIZE

This year's prize fund consists of a lacquered coffer filled to the brim with 400 gold pieces and a pair of *surefoot boots* (*Adventurer's Vault* pg. 130) for the winner, as well as free drinks and food for the night of the festival after their win and the admiration of any number of winsome young locals, not to mention the prospect of steady work as couriers on behalf of the city council.

PRELIMINARIES

Before the race starts, the characters can gather information about the history of the race, possible routes, and their opponents.

Registering for the race gives them access to the rules. For everything else, they need to wander around town, scouting out the routes and asking questions about who else is going to be racing.

RACE RULES

- ◆ Participants in the race must be present two hours after first light at the southern gate.
- ◆ Participants must not begin running until the gate portcullis hits the ground.
- ◆ Participants may not directly attack another runner with magic or arms. Roughhousing, wrestling, and bare-hands brawling are permitted.
- ◆ Participants must travel on foot (or their species equivalent). Mounts, magical travel, flying more than a few feet at a time, and any other forms of movement that the judges deem to be cheating will get the racer disqualified.
- ◆ The first one to hand their letter to the town elder at the top of the northern watchtower is the winner and will be awarded the prize. The elder's decision is final in the event of an apparent tie.

ROUTE INFORMATION

Basic information about the different race routes can be gathered by making any of the following rolls at DC 10:

Bluff: The character garners useful information about the race by lying, wheedling, and charming their way around town.

Diplomacy: Amiably talking to residents, who are always willing to talk about the race, and to the race organizers gets access to the same, basic information.

Streetwise: Taking to the streets and asking around, as well as having an eye for the urban landscape itself, can reveal the basic information you need to know about the race routes.

Basic Information: The race typically takes place across one of five routes. One of these is across the roofs of the richer half of the city, passing over the magical quarter, the river, and the wealthy quarter before reaching the tower. The street route for the same area winds through the magic shops, the river docks, and the wealthy gardens. The main road is the most direct route; it passes over the bridge and through the market before the finish line. The poorer half of town has a route winding through its dingy back alleys, crossing the river and passing through Halfling Town before reaching the tower. A racer can also take to the roofs in the poor section, scrambling over the ramshackle buildings, the old city wall, and the roofs of Halfling Town before reaching the end.

Deeper information about each route can be garnered using the same skills at DC 15, rolling no more than once for each. Gathering the information will take the rest of the evening. The duty of looking over the routes should be divvied up between the characters.

Rich Street Route: The magic shops have a lot of frontage and strange things going on; running through there can be a bit hazardous. The working barges tie up at the river next to the bridge. Once you're across, you have to cut through the rich people's gardens without getting chased by guards or dogs.

Rich Rooftop Route: You go over the magic shops and teaching buildings; sometimes their experiments go awry and that can make things more difficult. There's no real river crossing, but the bigger boats tie up at that part of the river. Then you're on the rich people's roofs, and they can get nasty if you damage their expensive roof tiles.

Main Street Route: The main road is straight and wide but tends to be crowded with traffic, especially around the bridge. Once you're past that area, you have to run through the market, which is also crowded with milling people, especially on race day.

Poor Street Route: Certain elements of this neighborhood are dangerous. Since racers are sometimes fairly well off, predatory types may be keen to trip them up and take anything of value they might be carrying or using. The river is filthy here and there are no barges or bridges, so you're stuck swimming across. That gets you into Halfling Town, where if you're human-sized, squeezing through the tight streets can be an issue. If you're halfling-sized, of course, those streets can give you an edge over larger competitors.

Poor Roof Route: The roofs are a bit rickety but they haven't fallen down yet. Birds like to roost in the brickwork and roof spaces, and running across their territory can bring them out. You can cross the river on the old city wall, though it's crumbling in places. Then you're onto the roofs of Halfling Town and they have a lot of chimneys, which means a lot of smoke.

OPPONENTS INFORMATION

Basic information about the different racers can be gathered by making any of the following rolls at DC 10. 'Basic information' amounts to name, race, gender, and some idea of how the character earns a living.

Bluff: Pretending to be an interested fan rather than another racer might get people to open up who otherwise wouldn't.

Diplomacy: Asking the right questions to the right people in the right way, all while being calm and approachable, can be an effective method for getting information.

Insight: Simply observing people while they talk about the race and the racers gives a perceptive person plenty of information to work on.

Intimidate: You can bully information about the other racers out of people, though it might not always be reliable.

Streetwise: Talking to the right people and hanging out in the right places should reveal some interesting gossip that might give you a tactical advantage.

Deeper information about the other racers can be garnered using the same skills at DC 15, rolling once for each. Gathering the information will take the rest of the evening and could be divvied up between the characters. This can be done at the same time as they are looking for more info on the routes.

Dorion Light-Step: Dorion is an elf, a woodsman from the nearby forests, young by their reckoning, and a good person. He knows how to climb and run but he's probably not ruthless and nasty enough to win the race.

Garth Cooper: Garth's a local watchman. He knows the city like the back of his hand. While he's sworn to uphold the law, he tends to get a bit carried away showing off for the ladies and he really, really wants to win. He won't be above a little trickery.

Two Teeth: Two-Teeth is some half-breed barbarian. Nobody quite knows where he comes from, but he literally ran into town on those tree-trunk legs and has shown himself to be a powerful brute. Despite his heritage, he doesn't seem to be a bad sort of fellow. He certainly doesn't talk much. Two-Teeth is expected to largely ignore other racers unless they cross him, and then they should watch out.

Gazunda: That dastardly gnome is a thief, a liar and a cheat. Don't take your eyes off him or turn your back on him. If he shakes your hand, check to make sure you still have your glove. He won't hesitate to stick a knife in your back or set fire to the roof you're running on if it will let him get ahead.

Tom Burgher: Tom's a street entertainer who rolled into town quite a few months ago. He's a mediocre singer but a decent acrobat, and a dab hand with that staff of his. Tom probably won't cause any trouble, but he's unpredictable, so don't be sure.

THE START

The crowds cheer as the contestants line up just inside the southern gate, sizing each other up. With a great deal of gravitas, the captain of the watch passes before each contestant, bows, and presents them with a small scroll bound up with red ribbon—the message to be delivered at the end of the race. With this accomplished, he paces to the side of the starting line and raises a bright red handkerchief and waves it furiously like a flag to signal the guards. In a moment there is a loud 'CLANG!' right behind the runners as the portcullis drops. The race has begun!

And the racers are off and running. Initiative should be rolled now and used to determine turn order throughout the entire race. Each of the NPC runners takes off along their chosen routes, leaving the players to choose their own paths.

SO YOU'RE OUT OF THE RACE?

You're lagging behind all the other racers and there seems to be no way you can catch up. Don't give up! There are still a few things you can do, especially if you have a friend who's still in the race.

For someone who's hopelessly behind, there are quicker ways of getting around. This isn't easy or automatic; a player needs to come up with a good idea for how they'll not only catch up but get ahead, such as flying or grabbing a horse. For obvious reasons, it needs to be something that would normally get the racer disqualified (otherwise, he could just do this to catch up and get back in the race!). By the time a character gets into position for any of the following options, there's no chance to simply jump back into the race; he's been seen 'cheating' by too many observers. All of these strategies are also available to characters who didn't join the race but planned to act as 'racer support' all along.

- ◆ **Cut ahead and yell encouragement:** Once out ahead, a character can keep pace and yell encouragement to his fellows or jeers at their opponents, which grants either a +1 bonus for encouragement or a -1 penalty for discouragement.
- ◆ **Sabotage the other racers:** Once you get ahead, you can lay a few little surprises for the racers: traps, tripwires, oil slicks, and so on. This is unsporting, but it's not against the rules of the race. The actual effects of such hazards must be judged by the DM based on the type of hazard, where it's created, and how much time the character has to construct and camouflage it.

- ◆ **Foul Play:** While a little nondeadly sabotage and a few beatings are all par for the course in this race, more direct or forceful attempts to interfere with the racers are frowned upon. That doesn't mean that an enterprising and unscrupulous adventurer couldn't shoot one of the runners with a crossbow if they really wanted to. At the very least it should make the racer duck and slow down a bit. You don't want to get caught doing this, however.
- ◆ **Spread Rumors:** Spectators can easily spread rumors about the conduct and tactics of one of the other racers. An angry crowd on the verge of rioting is about the only thing that could overturn a winner and prevent them from claiming the prize. This would be a skill challenge set by the Dungeon Master in response to events that have happened during the race, which will determine how riled up the crowd already is.
- ◆ **Play the Crowd:** Hundreds of people are packed into all the best viewing spaces along the route, very intent on the race and dressed up to celebrate. That makes a tempting target for a pickpocket and gives plenty of opportunities for thieves to break into houses. Criminal activity of this type gains a +2 bonus while the race is in progress and everyone is distracted (and more likely to be wearing their wealth).

RICH ROOF ROUTE

This path requires climbing up onto the buildings above the magic and noble quarters of the city. These large, grand buildings are better made than most but they're also built further apart, requiring a little more athleticism to get across the open spaces.

Getting up onto the rooftops requires an Athletics skill check against DC 10 or an Acrobatics check against DC 15. Provided this succeeds, it does not count as the roll for this turn and the runner may proceed directly to the first skill challenge. If this check fails, the runner is stalled and his turn ends.

MAGICAL QUARTER: HOT ROOF

As the race starts, you scramble onto the roofs of the magical quarter, clambering up through ornate weather vanes and baroque experiments as you start to sprint. The street below is billowing with strangely colored smoke and, as you dash along, you realize that the roof tiles beneath your feet are scaldingly hot.

Each failed roll at this skill challenge also causes the runner to take 1 hit point of damage as their feet are scalded.

Level: 2 (XP 125)

Complexity: 1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures)

Primary Skills: Acrobatics, Athletics, Endurance, Perception

Acrobatics (DC 10): By springing from brick to brick and keeping off the tiles, jumping over the hotter parts and keeping your feet off the ground as much as possible, you can get across the hot roof without too much trouble. This skill can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

Athletics (DC 15): The best thing to do is just to put your head down and charge across the roof fast enough that you don't get burned. The sooner you're across, the less harm you're going to take. This skill can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

Endurance (DC 15): The heat is going to hurt long before it does you any real damage. You can grin and bear it and worry about getting your burns healed later on. This skill can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

Perception (DC 20): The hot tiles have a heat haze over them and are a little blackened. With your expert eye, you can spot the hottest parts of the roof and weave around them. This skill can earn a maximum of 1 success.

Success: You reach the edge of the shop roof and leap over the space onto the next roof where the tiles are blessedly cool.

Failure: The roof is too hot and you can't bear it. Your feet are in agony. You must get away from the pain as soon as you can by dropping down to the Rich Street Route. You retain your successes so far as progress in that challenge area.



THE RIVER: RIGGING

The roofs of the magical quarter drop away abruptly as you reach the river. The river is wider and deeper here than on the other side of town. A few small sail boats are moored here as well as the river barges. You might be able to spring from one to the next in order to get across the river.

Level: 2 (XP 125)

Complexity: 1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures)

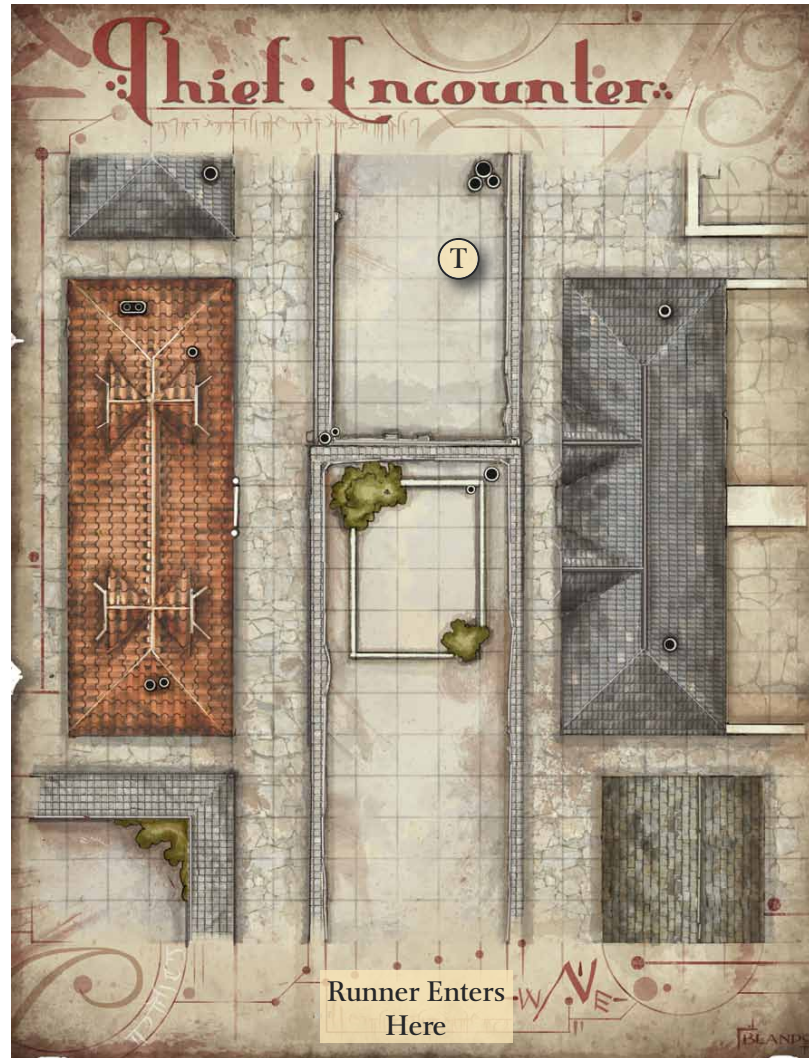
Primary Skills: Acrobatics, Athletics

Acrobatics (DC 15): With your acrobatic skill, you can spring from mast to mast and beam to beam quickly and accurately to land on the roofs at the other side of the river. This skill can earn a maximum of 3 successes.

Athletics (DC 20): A headlong dash and a desperate jump or two might get you to the other side, with a bit of luck and a strong tailwind. This skill can earn a maximum of 3 successes.

Success: You leap from precarious perch to precarious perch and make it to the other side of the river in good time, taking a deep breath and scrambling up onto the roofs of the richer houses.

Failure: You lose your footing and plummet down into the stinking water of the river. You are swept down to the 'barges' skill challenge in the Wealthy Street Route. You can retain your successes from this challenge and finish crossing using the swimming challenge rules given there.



WEALTHY QUARTER: A MORAL DILEMMA

Clambering over the crenulated and garden-studded roofs of the rich and powerful, you suddenly espy a thief, using the commotion of the race to pilfer, clambering out of an upstairs window almost directly in your path. If you run on you'll have allowed a thief to get away, but if you interfere you might forfeit the race . . .

The thief is an opportunist who is most interested in getting away with his swag. He will fight viciously but only if cornered. If left alone, the thief will not interfere with the runner, being far more interested in absconding with his loot.

The thief's swag should be worth no more than around 50 gold pieces, if the player decides to keep it. If a character stops the thief, they might get half that much as a reward, plus the experience points for dealing with the thief.

Rather than fighting the thief, characters can elect to leave him alone and escape through the other side of the roof (refer to the Thief Encounter map). Each turn of combat or pursuit gives the other racers a chance to move forward with their own skill challenge.

Escaping from the roof allows the character to progress to the next area. Killing or otherwise besting the thief will lead to a reward at the end of the race as noted above and some additional experience points. Either way, the thief will not be on this roof for anyone following after the lead hero.

If the thief knocks out, kills, or immobilizes a character, he has no reason to stick around (unless you decide to have him sift through the unfortunate character's pockets). He escapes as quickly as possible.

Halfling Second-Storey Man		Level 2 Skirmisher
Small natural humanoid		XP 125
Initiative +6	Senses Perception +1	
HP 34; Bloodied 17		
AC 16; Fortitude 13, Reflex 15, Will 14		
Speed 6		
⚔ Dagger (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
+7 vs. AC; 1d4 + 2 damage, or 1d4 + 6 with combat advantage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).		
↘ Thrown dagger (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
Ranged 5/10; +7 vs. AC; 1d4 + 2 damage, or 1d4 + 6 with combat advantage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).		
Mobile Melee Attack (standard; at will)		
The second-storey man can shift up to 3 squares and make one melee basic attack at any point during that movement.		
Alignment Unaligned	Languages Common and Elven	
Skills Acrobatics +11, Athletics +9, Thievery +11		
Str 13 (+1)	Dex 14 (+2)	Wis 13 (+1)
Con 14 (+2)	Int 2 (-4)	Cha 10 (+0)
Equipment leather armor, six daggers, thieves' tools		

THE TOWER

Coming down from the wealthy area's roofs brings the runner to the tower, which is described on page 23 as the final obstacle.

RICH STREET ROUTE

SMOKING BARRELS

As the race starts, you dart into the side streets, heading into the clean and tree-lined paths of the richer side of town. You pass beneath the spires and gargoyle-festooned crenulations of the college of wizardry, shifting back and forth through the crowd before you're interrupted by a loud 'crump!' noise and a cloud of sparkling, multicolored smoke billows out of the nearby cellars of an alchemy shop. It floods the street with thick, noxious gas which obscures the shop fronts, crates, and the tangled mass of street detritus in a thick, billowing cloud.

The magic smoke that's bubbling and roiling out of the cellars is more than a little noxious. It makes a +5 vs. Fortitude attack against the racer. If the attack is successful, the racer takes 1d6 + 3 damage and a penalty of -2 to Endurance checks for the rest of the race. The effect fades after a 5-minute rest. Characters can avoid the smoke by changing route if they wish, but this will delay them.

Level: 2 (XP 125)

Complexity: 1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures)

Primary Skills: Acrobatics, Arcana, Athletics, Endurance

Acrobatics (DC 15): The smoke is dense and thick, staying close to the ground. Without climbing up onto the roofs, you can still avoid the smoke by taking to the higher ground, climbing on awnings or market stalls, and leaping from wagon to wagon. This skill can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

Arcana (DC 20): With your special knowledge of magic, you can identify the particular qualities of this smoke and grab some ingredients from the alchemy stall in which to soak a cloth which you can then hold over your mouth to lessen the effects of the smoke. This skill can earn a maximum of 1 success.

Athletics (DC 10): Ducking your head down, you forge through the smoke, barging people out of the way and trying just to get through it as quickly as possible with speed and brute force. This skill can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

Endurance (DC 15): If you can endure the stinging pain and the racking cough that the glowing smoke causes, you can take your time and pick your way carefully through the panicking, coughing crowd. This skill can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

Success: You force your way free of the smoke and emerge, eyes streaming with tears, gasping for clean air, back onto the street as another loud 'crump!' sounds from the cellars behind you, showering the street with sparks as something else catches fire.

Failure: You get confused in the smoke and end up turned around on yourself, bumping people and emerging from the cloud back where you started. Either try again—including being attacked by the noxious smoke but retaining existing successes toward completion—or move to a different route.



THE RIVER: BARGES

This side route doesn't have a bridge; you need to make your way across the water by some other means. The water is filthy and busy, with barges moving up and down between the rickety wooden docks carrying goods up- and downriver. A ragged cheer goes up from some of the bargers and from onlookers on the shore as they take bets over how you're going to get across the river.

The water is both disgustingly fetid and incredibly busy. Anyone failing a skill check while crossing is

either bumped or run into by a boat or takes a mouthful of disgusting water. In either instance, they lose 1d4 hit points each time.

Level: 2 (XP 125)

Complexity: 1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures)

Primary Skills: Acrobatics, Athletics, Bluff/Intimidate, Thievery

Acrobatics (DC 20): Waiting for the perfect moment, you charge forward to spring from deck to deck of the various barges and rowboats and get across the river without touching the water once.

This skill can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

Athletics (DC 10): Sometimes the simplest approaches are the best; you dive headlong into the stinking water and swim as fast as you can to reach the other side before swallowing too much scummy, lifeless water. This skill can earn a maximum of 3 successes.

Bluff/Intimidate (DC 20): The best way across the water is the same as the best way to get up and down the river. You can either persuade or intimidate someone into giving up their rowboat so you can row across in safety and comfort. This skill can earn a maximum of 1 success.

Thievery (DC 15): If you can't persuade someone to give up their rowboat and you can't terrify them into handing it over, you'll just have to steal one. There are plenty tied up on the bank and along the rickety wooden piers. All you need to do is grab one without being stopped. This skill can earn a maximum of 1 success.

Success: Characters who succeed in crossing the river emerge on the other side to continue along their route.

Failure: Characters who fail in the crossing are swept downriver to the next route across, where they keep trying to get the rest of the successes they need to cross. Once they get four successes in total they're across the river, at whatever point where they finally succeed.



WEALTHY QUARTER: GUARD DOGS

While sprinting through the rich quarter, you're forced to take a diversion to avoid a blockage in the street. When you vault over a low wall into a great, green garden surrounding a magnificent home, a pack of spike-collared guard dogs comes snarling and barking out of the shadows beneath the trees, making a line straight for you. Streamers of saliva trail behind them as they pound the dirt toward you.

This square-off against the dogs is a tough encounter for a single character. It's important to note that the character doesn't need to defeat the dogs in battle; he only needs to get past them.

The animals are something between wild wolves and domesticated dogs. They're fiercely loyal to their trainers but can be viciously dangerous to intruders, especially since they haven't eaten a thing all day.

Besides fighting their way through the dogs, characters can try to dodge past the dogs and escape over the far wall (Athletics DC 15) or through the locked gate (Thievery DC 15). Each turn of fighting or fleeing gives the other racers a chance to move forward with their own skill challenges.

Escaping from the garden allows the character to progress to the next area. Killing the guard dogs could lead to a confrontation with the owner after the race, but it also clears the garden of the dogs for anyone trailing behind.

If the dogs bring a character down to 0 hit points, they stand over the body waiting for

their owner to come and deal with the trespasser. Other racers or friends can intervene to help someone in this situation, after dealing with the dogs.

5 Fierce Dogs (D)	Level 1 Minion
Medium natural beast	XP 25 each
Initiative +4	Senses Perception +6, low-light vision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion	AC 16; Fortitude 13, Reflex 13, Will 11
Speed 8	
⊕ Bite (Standard; at-will)	
+6 vs. AC; 4 damage, or 6 against a prone target.	
If the fierce dog has combat advantage against the target, the target also falls prone.	
Alignment Unaligned	Languages -
Str 13 (+1)	Dex 14 (+2) Wis 13 (+1)
Con 14 (+2)	Int 2 (-4) Cha 10 (+0)

THE TOWER

Coming in from the wealthy area's streets brings the runner to the tower, which is the final obstacle (pg. 23).

MAIN STREET ROUTE

THE MAIN ROAD: CROWDS

As the race begins you charge past - and through - the cheering crowds and up the cobbles of the main road, bruising your feet on the hard, rounded stones, as you sprint toward your first landmark, the bridge. The crowds of cheering spectators are packed thicker and thicker, cheek by jowl with disgruntled tradesmen and townsfolk simply trying to go about their daily business. It's going to be hard to get through this crowd.

Each failed roll in trying to shove through the crowd results in the loss of a single hit point from being buffeted and knocked around by annoyed townsfolk.

Level: 2 (XP 125)

Complexity: 1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures)

Primary Skills: Acrobatics, Athletics, Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate

Acrobatics (DC 10): With your agility you can worm through the crowd and get above it, moving from wagon to wagon and beam to beam, even using people's shoulders as a springboard to run over and above the crowd to get to the bridge. This skill can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

Athletics (DC 15): You hunker down and put your shoulder into it, barging through the crowd and shoving people out of the way in order to get past the tangle. This skill can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

Bluff (DC 15): Shouting something like 'fire!', 'bandits!' or 'runaway bull!' is a good way of motivating the crowd to scramble out of your way. This skill can earn a maximum of 1 success.

Diplomacy (DC 20): 'Excuse me. Pardon me. I'm terribly sorry.' These aren't phrases typically associated with adventurers in a hurry but from sheer shock value they might get enough people to budge just far enough for you to get through. This skill can earn a maximum of 1 success.

Intimidate (DC 15): If you holler 'MOVE!' loudly enough and spray people with enough saliva while flexing your muscles, there's a good chance they'll scramble away in fright. This skill can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

Success: You emerge from the other side of the crowd somehow, to find yourself at the bridge.

Failure: Failure to negotiate the crowd results in getting crushed by the heaving mob. The character takes 1d6 + 3 points of damage and is ejected from the crowd. The runner can elect to cross to a different route or try to push through again, retaining their existing successes for the next try.

THE MAIN ROAD: THE BRIDGE

Leaving the crowd behind, you arrive at the one, main bridge that serves the whole town for getting from one side to the other. There's a steady flow of people back and forth across this broad, stone path . . . or there would be if two big carts hadn't tried to cross at the same time and gotten stuck, their respective owners arguing and shaking their fists at each other. This is, apparently, almost a daily occurrence.

Level: 2 (XP 125)

Complexity: 1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures)

Primary Skills: Acrobatics, Diplomacy, Intimidate, Nature

Acrobatics (DC 15): By jumping up onto the side of the bridge, you can walk along the top of the wall and avoid the blockage and the crowds building up on the bridge deck. This skill can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

Diplomacy (DC 10): If you can smooth things over between the owners of two carts that are tangled together, they'll be able to move them apart enough so you can squeeze between them instead of going around. This skill can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

Intimidate (DC 15): A harsh word with the country bumpkins who are arguing over who should get out of whose way scares both of them into getting out of the way. This skill can earn a maximum of 1 success.

Nature (DC 20): While the cart owners are arguing, you could take charge of the situation and lead one of the horses out of the way yourself. Then everyone could get across the bridge without needing to thread through the tangle of cartwheels and horse flesh. This skill can earn a maximum of 1 success.

Success: If you succeed, you manage to negotiate the snarl on the bridge and can carry on into the marketplace that stands near the foot of the north tower.

Failure: You get stuck in the crowd that is milling around the carts and can't move in any direction. You miss a turn, but then you can continue rolling for this skill challenge, accumulating new successes on top of your existing successes.

THE MAIN ROAD: THE MARKET

The marketplace is a tangle of tents, stalls and crowds made up of many different peoples from the surrounding area. It's full of the smells and sounds of any busy town and the ways between the stalls are close-packed with shuffling people carrying their purchases. The only real gaps are behind the stalls, but you can't just go cutting through there, can you?

Level: 2 (XP 125)

Complexity: 1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures)

Primary Skills: Acrobatics, Athletics, Bluff, Intimidate, Streetwise

Acrobatics (DC 20): The tents and rickety stalls won't support your weight, but you should be able to dash and tumble through them, thereby avoiding the worst of the crowds. This skill can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

Athletics (DC 15): You can set your shoulders and barge through the crowd, though it won't make you any friends and may shove some people into the stalls and knock over a few merchants' wagons. This skill can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

Bluff (DC 15): "Everything is half price at the butcher's shop!" is a fine thing to shout if you want to make an enemy of a man with a cleaver. It's also a good thing to shout if you want to get a big crowd of townsfolk out of your way in a hurry. This skill can earn a maximum of 1 success.

Intimidate (DC15): Many townsfolk mistrust adventurers at the best of times and fear them at the worst. All sorts of stories are told about wandering bands of vicious grave robbers. You can play off that and act up to your fearsome reputation in order to send people leaping over the stalls and out of your way. This skill can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

Streetwise (DC 10): If there's one thing you know, it's how to move through a crowd. You slip and slide through the press of bodies with no regard for propriety, property, or personal space. This skill can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

Success: You manage to get through the market and the crowd of onlookers waiting for the end of the race in order to reach the foot of the north tower, the last obstacle between you and the prize.

Failure: Failure in the market results in being shoved prone by a band of annoyed shoppers and shopkeepers, which delays you for a turn. After that, you may try again to get through the market, retaining your existing successes.

THE TOWER

The market runs almost all the way up to the base of the north tower, where a crowd has gathered to await the runners who will then need to climb to the top to claim the prize.

POOR STREET ROUTE

POOR QUARTER: THUGGERY

As you leap off the starting line and dart, immediately, into the dark and winding alleys of the poor quarter you're already aware of eyes on you from the windows and cul-de-sacs. Sure enough, you round a corner to be confronted by a gang of four surly thugs who seem intent on either robbing you, or breaking your legs for the hell of it. You're not sure which.

Level: 2 (XP 124)

Thugs: These guys get a kick out of interfering with the racers. Any money they make from beating up a contestant is secondary to the pleasure of simply ruining someone's day. If a character chooses to fight, use the Thugs Encounter map as the tactical map for this encounter.

Other Approaches: There may be other ways to get past the thugs. They could be bribed; this requires at least 20 gold pieces and a Streetwise check (DC 15), taking one turn per attempt. They could be bamboozled into letting someone past; this is a complexity 1 skill challenge based on Bluff, Intimidate, Streetwise, and Thievery at DC 15, making one skill check per turn. Failing in either case means that they'd rather fight than talk. Success means they let the character past.

If the encounter goes to combat, the character may be able to evade the thugs and race off the far end of the map. That qualifies as a safe escape, too.

Success: You get past the thugs one way or another and reach the bank of the filthy river that cuts the town in half.

Failure: Failure here comes only when the thugs have beaten a character to the ground. They won't kill someone outright, but they will beat a character into unconsciousness and then take absolutely everything from him, including the clothes off his back.

4 Footpads (F)		Level 2 Minion
Medium natural humanoid		XP 31 each
Initiative +2	Senses Perception +0	
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion		
AC 15; Fortitude 15, Reflex 14, Will 12		
Speed 6		
⚔ Club (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
+7 vs. AC; 5 damage, and the footpad shifts 1 square.		
Peer Pressure		
The footpad gains a +2 bonus to damage while at least two other footpads are within 5 squares of it.		
Alignment Unaligned	Languages Common and Dwarven	
Str 14 (+3)	Dex 10 (+1)	Wis 10 (+1)
Con 12 (+2)	Int 9 (+0)	Cha 11 (+1)
Equipment club		



THE RIVER: DIRTY WATER

There are no bridges, boats, or barges here to cross the river. If you're going to get across, then you really only have one option; to take a plunge into the filthy water and swim across to the other side as fast as you can.

The water is disgustingly fetid. Anyone failing a single check while crossing it takes a mouthful of disgusting water, losing 1d4 hit points each time .

Level: 2 (XP 125)

Complexity: 1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures)

Primary Skills: Athletics, Endurance, Nature

Athletics (DC 10): After diving into the water, you hold your breath and concentrate on making powerful strokes with your arms and legs to carry you to the other side. This skill can earn a maximum of 3 successes.

Endurance (DC 15): Even if you're not that good a swimmer, the river doesn't move that fast. It's more about enduring the discomfort until you get to the other side. You can bear it . . . This skill can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

Nature (DC 20): If you judge the current right, it will carry you partway to the other side of the river, saving you a lot of effort. This skill can earn a maximum of 1 success.

Success: You reach the other side of the river and haul your dripping body out onto the bank, wringing out the worst of the water and trying to work up the energy to run through the Halfling Quarter.

Failure: You get turned around in the murky water, choking and gurgling on the filth as you try to get your bearings. You miss a turn and then may continue the crossing, retaining your existing successes.

HALFLING QUARTER: RAT RUN

The houses and shops suddenly shrink down, the alleys cramping in as you enter the Halfling Quarter, an area of the town that the halflings and other 'little folk' have claimed for themselves. It's terribly cramped and hard to move if you're of a human size and you feel like a blundering elephant. Other 'little people' are going to have an easier time of it here, even if the alleyways are a confusing rat run and maze, the whole quarter having been thrown together hap-hazard.

Any runner who is Medium or larger is going to have trouble making their way through this area; the DCs of their rolls on the skill challenge are increased by 2.

Level: level 2 (XP 125)

Complexity: 1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures)

Primary Skills: Athletics, Dungeoneering, Perception, Streetwise

Athletics (DC 20): Provided you run fast enough and don't care too much about who you trample or what you knock over, you should be able to plough through this district like a rampaging giant and get out the other side quickly enough. This skill can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

Dungeoneering (DC 15): Being hemmed in like this isn't so different from being in a dungeon. Your dungeon instincts might help see you through to the other side. This skill can earn a maximum of 1 success.

Perception (DC 15): With a keen eye for the foot traffic and the north tower clearly visible from where you are, you work out which of the many rat-runs actually leads out of the quarter and up to the tower. This skill can earn a maximum of 1 success.

Streetwise (DC 10): Knowing the way of the streets is your best ticket through this warren of alleys and narrow avenues. This skill can earn a maximum of 3 successes.

Success: You emerge from the narrow streets, trailing overturned barrows and bruised halflings in your wake, and emerge near the foot of the north tower for the final hurdle.

Failure: You get turned around and lost in the streets. You're caught in the tiny, narrow, twisting alleyways until you barely know which way is which. You lose a turn but can then continue, retaining your existing successes.

THE TOWER

Leaving the Halfling Quarter brings the runner out, close to the northern tower and ready to climb it in order to claim their win.

POOR ROOF ROUTE

POOR QUARTER: PIGEONS

The portcullis slams down and the ringing of iron against stone sets you going. You leap onto barrels and scramble up onto the roofs of the buildings on the poorer side of town. (Ascending to the roof requires an Athletics check against DC 10). As you hit the roof and start running, great clouds of panicked pigeons fly up in droves. Startled by your intrusion, they fill the air with beating wings and fluttering feathers until you can barely see where you're going.

Each failed attempt costs the runner a single hit point of damage from getting pecked and battered and from bumping into chimney stacks in the confusion.

Level: level 2 (XP 125)

Complexity: 1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures)

Primary Skills: Endurance, Nature, Perception

Endurance (DC 20): You can ward off the blasted birds with your arms and wade through the storm of wings, excrement, and feathers, if you can ignore the mess and the pain. This skill can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

Nature (DC 15): You know a thing or two about birds. If you just slow down a little and drop into a crouch, you won't spook them half so much. Then you should be able to get through just fine. This skill can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

Perception (DC 10): Between your memory of what the roofs look like and what you can still make out by squinting, you can pick your way through the confusion. This skill can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

Success: You emerge from the cloud of pigeons and leap to the next roof, which carries you to the remnants of the old city wall that crosses the river.

Failure: You get turned around, blinded by a particularly persistent pigeon doing its very best to climb

into your mouth. As you pull it away, you misstep and take a 10-foot fall off the edge of the roof. Start again next turn, keeping the successes from this turn.

THE RIVER: THE OLD CITY WALL

The river at this side of town is spanned by the old city wall from when the town was much smaller. Its crumbling arches cross over the filthy water and afford a skillful runner a quick way across the river to the safety of the low roofs of the Halfling Quarter.

Each failure in this challenge causes part of the ancient wall to crumble away, making the path more unpredictable and dangerous. This increases the DCs of all subsequent skill checks by +1, for this runner only.

Level: 2 (XP 125)

Complexity: 1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures)

Primary Skills: Acrobatics, Athletics, Dungeoneering

Acrobatics (DC 15): If you can keep your balance, you can sprint across the top of the wall and keep ahead of the crumbling masonry. This will get you across very quickly. This skill can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

Athletics (DC 10): You can't just walk or run across the entire length of the wall; portions are just too precarious and unstable. If you treat it more like climbing, you can pick your way over the stones—slowly—and safely reach the other side. This skill can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

Dungeoneering (DC 20): Knowledge of walls, brickwork, and ruins is valuable for survival in a dungeon, and the same things apply here. With this knowledge, you can pick out which parts of the wall

will support your weight and which will not. This skill can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

Success: You leap down from the far side of the wall onto the jumbled roofs of the Halfling Quarter, then dash on toward your final goal with all haste.

Failure: The wall partially collapses under you, spilling you down into the water in a shower of bricks and stones. You lose a turn and then shift to The River: Dirty Water on the Poor Street Route (pg. 21). Retain the successes that you've already accrued, but continue with that swimming skill challenge.

HALFLING QUARTER: CHIMBLIES

The Halfling Quarter is a jumble of low, thrown-together buildings. Because they're so much smaller than 'normal' human houses, the chimneys are much closer together and all of them seem to be spewing smoke and cinders all at once, along with the many and varied smells of cooking food. It's both distracting and confusing, not to mention hot. You need to wind your way through the chimneys and the smoke to find the other side.

Level: 2 (XP 125)

Complexity: 1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures)

Primary Skills: Acrobatics, Endurance, Perception

Acrobatics (DC 15): Weaving between the chimney stacks without disaster should be no problem at all for someone with your nimbleness. This skill can earn a maximum of 1 success.

Endurance (DC 10): It's just smoke; a little thicker than a campfire or a tavern but still only smoke. You can ignore your streaming eyes and burning lungs long enough to get to the other side. This skill can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

Perception (DC 20): From the way the smoke rises and churns, you can figure out where the chimney stacks are and avoid them. That should help to get you through the smoke to the other side. This skill can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

Success: You burst out of the smoke, coughing and spluttering, eyes streaming, but within dashing distance of the finish line at the north tower.

Failure: With your eyes streaming tears, lungs burning, cinders searing your skin, and blundering against chimney pots, you find yourself utterly disoriented in the smoke. Take a single hit point of damage and a penalty of -2 to Perception for the remainder of the race. By redoubling your efforts, you can continue through the smoke next turn, retaining your existing successes.

THE TOWER

It's not that far down to the street from the roofs of the Halfling Quarter, and then it's a short sprint across the cobbles to the base of the northern tower, where the last challenge of the race awaits.

THE TOWER

To win the race, you need to clamber to the top of the northern watchtower and hand your letter to the town elder. The tower is old and craggy and many of the bricks look loose. Pigeons roost amongst the nooks and crannies and the stone is stained white with their droppings in many places, incongruous clumps of wild grasses and flowers sprouting from unlikely places amongst the brickwork.

Level: 2 (XP 250)

Complexity: 2 (requires 6 successes before 3 failures)

Primary Skills: Acrobatics, Athletics, Dungeoneering, Endurance, History, Nature, Thievery

Acrobatics (DC 15): Swinging from wooden support beams to outward-jutting bricks will get you up the wall quicker than simply climbing. This skill can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

Athletics (DC 10): It's a straightforward climb and an easy wall at that. There's no need to do anything fancy, just scramble up it. This skill can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

Dungeoneering (DC 15): Long experience with tunnels and chambers gives you an intimate knowledge of brickwork, with its weak points and the best ways to ascend different surfaces. This skill can earn a maximum of 1 success.

Endurance (DC 15): More haste, less speed. Dogged determination counts for at least as much as skill. If you can endure the pain of supporting your own weight, you can take your time climbing the wall. This skill can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

History (DC 20): You know the wall was damaged by an orcish attack about a decade ago and the north-facing wall had to be rebuilt. It might be a little harder to climb but it's not going to fall apart on you, either. This skill can earn a maximum of 1 success.

Nature (DC 20): The tower is overgrown with several kinds of creepers and ivy. With your knowledge of plants, you know which ones should hold your weight and, crucially, which ones don't have thorns or contact poisons. This skill can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

Thievery (DC 15): If this were a bank vault, it would be the easiest heist ever. The mortar is old and crumbly, making it child's play to climb by jamming daggers in the chinks or just scraping away hunks of loose mortar to create your own handholds. This skill can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

Success: The character scrambles over the edge of the parapet and scrambles to the bell, ringing it out

and winning the race—if they're the first person to get here. Then they can clamber wearily down the stairs and claim their magnificent prize!

Failure: One or two failures indicate slippage, losing one's grip but then managing to grasp hold of the tower again without falling. If a character gets three failures before six successes, they fall from the tower. The distance is 10 feet for each success they've accrued, with the normal 1d10 damage for every 10 feet fallen. Characters who survive can start climbing again, but they do so from the bottom; successes are not kept!

VICTORY!

You press the crumpled and illegible note into the town elder's hand and he raises your arm triumphantly, proclaiming you to be the winner and ringing the alarum bell that hangs in the tower. As it peels, a great cheer goes up from the crowd and the town crier solemnly steps forward to present your prize, a fine pair of boots that twinkle with the glow of magic and a small but weighty coffer of gold. Right now, you're probably too tired to lift it, but it's a fine prize for a morning's work.

The winning racer receives a lacquered coffer filled to the brim with 400 gold pieces, plus a pair of *surefoot boots* (*Adventurer's Vault*, page 130). They can eat and drink for free during the rest of the day and night's festivities, thanks to all the delighted locals who are happy to buy them drinks and meals. They will be treated as a minor local celebrity, at least until next year's race.

About the Author

Hailing from The Shires of "Merrie Olde England," James "Grim" Desborough escapes from his idyllic, countrified surroundings by indulging his imagination in violence, adventure, and cut-price succubi. Grim freelances across the roleplaying industry and has contributed material to *City of Stormreach* and *Monster Manual V* (both for 3rd Edition).

