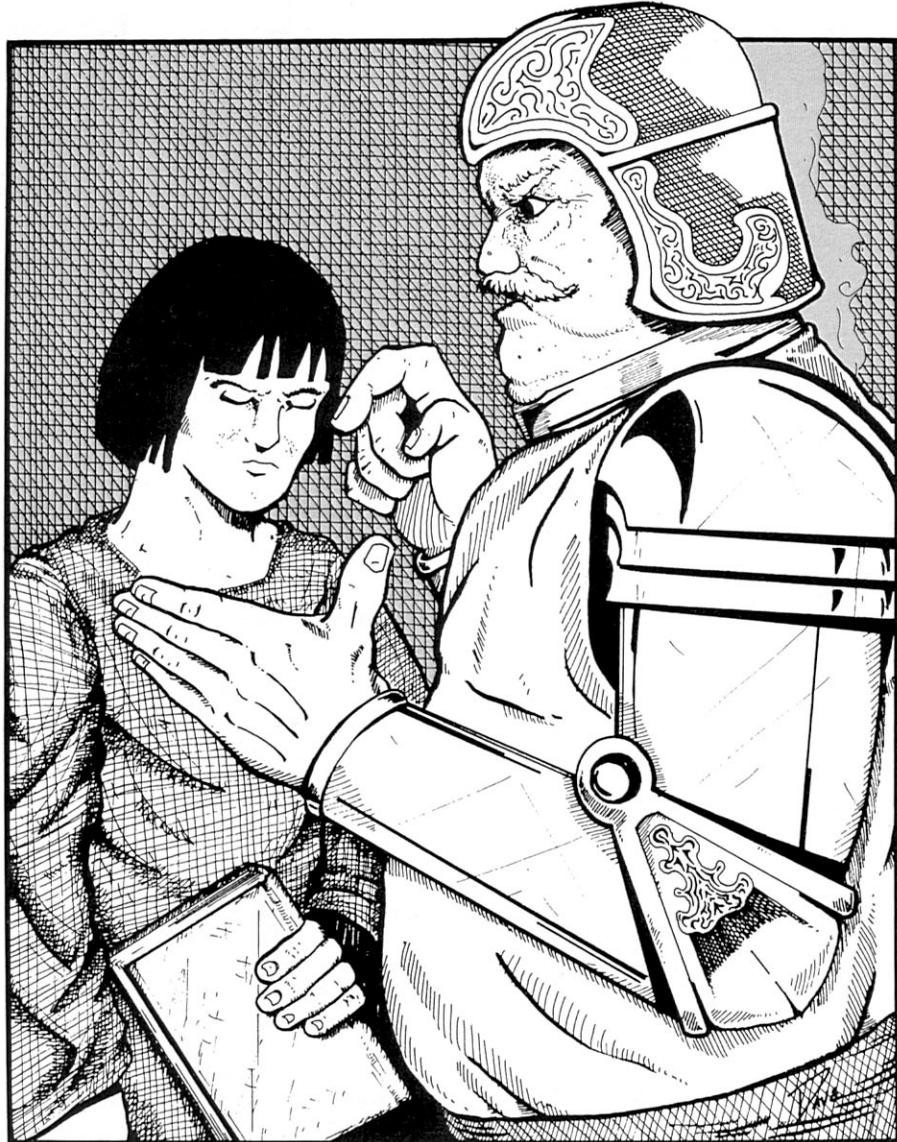


The Charleston Academy



AN AD&D® GAME ADVENTURE

by Rembert Parker

developed by Skip Williams

Background for the DM

Something is very wrong at the Charleston Academy for Future Leaders. The school, a private institution which claims to teach young men the rudiments of civility and leadership, has (as do all schools) a group of incorrigible bullies among its students. Unfortunately for the well-behaved students, the bullies have located the grave of a semi-lich in an abandoned cemetery adjoining the school grounds. The undead creature hopes to use the bullies as its agents when they graduate, and has inspired them to act in a manner even more disreputable than is normally their wont. Under the semi-lich's guidance, the bullies have been able to conceal their transgressions from the Academy staff. However, one student, Randall Bingham, has taken enough abuse from the bullies. Unable to convince his teachers that the bullies are going too far, Randall has fled the Academy and returned to his father's home in Martinburgh, pausing only to visit his girlfriend, Selina, in the town of Coalfist. Unfortunately for Randall, his father, the mayor of Martinburgh, is also unsympathetic and insists that his son return to school posthaste. To insure the truant's return to school he hires the PCs to escort Randall back to the Academy. He also asks the PCs to question the headmaster about his son's academic progress.

At the beginning of the adventure the party is gathered at the Unseen Inn in Martinburgh to decide which members should receive the magic potions they acquired on their last adventure.

Note: Smooth's magic dagger is a *dagger of venom*, now empty. The +4 bonus Smooth thought he noticed was merely the effect of the poison injected into opponents.

The Adventure Begins

You are gathered at your usual watering hole, the Unseen Inn in Martinburgh. Like most places in Martinburgh, it's not a very exciting place, just a small-town inn that serves decent drinks and food because its customers, mostly adven-

turers and traveling merchants, demand it. Its only unusual feature is the enchanted mirror that hangs over the bar. Its reflection does not show the person looking into it, only the room and its contents. The mirror, unusual as it is, has become so familiar that it no longer holds any fascination for you.

The business at hand, however, promises to be more interesting — there are magic items to distribute, two potions. After a small payment to the local adventurers' guild, you have determined that the potions are *oil of fiery burning* and three applications of *oil of sharpness +3*. You must decide who will get the potions.

After the party has bickered for awhile; in walks Clyde. Clyde is a local with an appalling country bumpkin accent. But he is the mayor's nephew and he carries a magic sword. Clyde is the sheriff, and thus, Gareth's boss.

Your negotiations have been interrupted by the unwelcome appearance of the town sheriff, a bumpkin named Clyde. You remember three things about Clyde: he has a potent magic sword that likes him even though it's obviously smarter than he is, he's the mayor's nephew, and he's Gareth's boss. "Gawly, Gareth," drawls the bumpkin. "The mayor shore is upset — he said fer you and some of your friends to.... Hey, what's with the new potions?" You wince inwardly, magic fascinates Clyde. Now you'll never be rid of the bumpkin until you tell him exactly what each potion does.

Clyde will insist on knowing what the potions do, and will want proof that they do what the PCs say. If the party lies about what the potions do, he will detect the lie (via his sheriff badge) and become even more insistent. Until he finds out what the potions do, he will not say why the mayor is so upset. "It's mah job to make sure nothing dangerous is allowed to wander around in the city limits — ah gotta make sure y'all can handle what y'all got and y'all fer shure can't do that unless ya knows what it is."

Clyde will be satisfied with a simple demonstration of the potions' effects, or an assurance that the adventurers' guild has identified the potions. Clyde warns

the party not to use the *oil of fiery burning* within the city limits. Once satisfied, Clyde gets back to the mayor.

"The mayor wants fer you and your friends to do some travelin' for him; said fer you to high-tail it over to his office right away."

Gareth, being a town guardsman, must obey the summons. If the rest of the party wants to remain behind and stay bored, they may. Needless to say, by the time the party gets to the mayor he will be quite annoyed at the delay.

Clyde AL LG; MV 9"; F9; hp 81; AC 2; THAC0 12; #AT 2; Dmg long sword, +7 "to hit" +9 damage; Size M; In low; Sts 11; Stw 10; Sheriff badge (*detect lie* for 1 turn 4x/day), *long sword, vorpal blade, ring of protection +2*; SA Long sword double specialist.

Mayor Bingham's office is the second nicest building in the village (his home is the nicest). Stepping inside, you are greeted by his blonde receptionist, Ginnie.

Ginnie has an Intelligence of 6 and a comeliness of 19. She will make a fuss over one of the men in the party (probably Gareth) and will eventually escort the party into the mayor's office.

You enter a room that most of you have never seen before; it is furnished in some of the darkest mahogany and cherrywood that any normal tree could supply. There is a large liquor cabinet to the right, several sofas and chairs directly ahead, and a squirming 14-year-old boy to your left. Sitting behind his 10-foot desk is a very angry looking mayor.

"It's about time you got here," he growls. "What took you so long?"

The mayor will listen to the answers and dismiss them as lame excuses.

The mayor dismisses your conversation with an imperious gesture. "The business at hand concerns that young man over there. He is, I'm sorry to admit, my son Randall. It seems that after only two weeks at school he decided he was tired of it, and ran away to come back here. Harumph."

The young man looks decidedly

gloomy.

"I want you to take him back to school, and see to it that he stays there this time. He insists he isn't learning much. Balderdash! The Charleston Academy is famous for producing leaders; I only regret that I was unable to attend there as a lad. I want you people to get to the root of his problems and see to it that there are no recurrences of this behavior. Interview the headmaster, attend classes with him. Do what you have to."

The mayor tosses a small brown sack to Gareth. "I trust that 1,000 pieces of gold will be sufficient to cover your expenses; if any remains after your return, feel free to keep it."

He tosses a piece of parchment on the desk. "Here's a map showing the route to the Academy; it's about one and a half day's march beyond Coalfist; shouldn't take you more than a week to get there and back. See to it that nothing happens to the little adventurer on the way (this last is added very sarcastically). Any questions? Good."

The Mayor turns to Randall and grimaces. "No more allowance until I get a good report on your progress, young man. Is that understood? Well, speak up, I can't hear you!"

"Yes, sir," the boy replies sullenly.

The sack contains ten 100 gp gems.

Randall: AL NG; MV 12"; HD 1; hp 3; AC 1 (cloak and dexterity); THAC0 20*; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon; Size M; In high; Sts 19; Stw 18; SA as a budding thief, Randall has 30% chance to pick pockets.

Unbeknownst to the mayor, Randall has been into his father's collection of magical goodies and equipped himself with the following: an invisible *ring of invisibility*, a *cloak of protection +5*, *boots of striding and springing*, and an *amulet of proof against detection and location*.

Note: Since the last item is a barrier to detect magic, it is unlikely that the party will learn that any of Randall's equipment is magical.

If the party questions Randall, the boy will insist that he was merely homesick. If they try to get information about the Academy, Randall will be evasive. "It's just a school." The most that can be gotten out of Randall is his roommate's

name (Winston), and his daily class schedule (see *The Academy*). If asked what he thinks of the school, his roommates, or his classes, Randall answers with an unenthusiastic, "They're okay."

On the Road

Day One

The journey the first day is uneventful until about 3:30 in the afternoon. The road runs through a wooded area, and when the party comes around a sharp bend they come face to face with a band of eight ophidians, who attack.

Ophidians: 8; AL CE; MV 9'//18"; HD 4; hp 28 each; AC 5; THAC0 15; #AT 2; Dmg short sword, 1-3; Size M; In average; Sts 16; Stw 15; SA bite causes save vs. poison or be afflicted with a lycanthropic condition which will turn the victim into an ophidian, onset time is 2-5 days, duration is 8-16 days, cure disease negates.

When the melee begins, Randall will wait until he is not being observed, turn invisible, and jump up into a nearby tree. When the party starts winning the melee, he will become visible and start rooting for the PCs.

The ophidians carry no treasure; if the party follows their tracks they will be led back to a hole in the ground. This leads to the lair of a spirit naga who originally sent the ophidians to bring back human prey. The hole has an unpleasant smell, and Randall will refuse to enter it.

Spirit Naga: 1; AL CE; MV 12"; HD 10; hp 53; AC 4; THAC0 10; #AT 1; Dmg 1-3; Size L; In high: Sts 10; Stw 9; SA Spells; bite causes save vs. poison or die; can permanently charm a creature which meets its gaze unless a save vs. paralyzation is made.

Spells: *magic missile* (three missiles) (x3), *sleep*, *melf's acid arrow*, *invisibility*, *lightning bolt* (5d6), *command*, *cure light wounds*, *hold person*

The naga waits in her lair invisibly, looking for a chance to catch the entire party with the lightning bolt. She will continue throwing spells when appropriate, biting and using her gaze weapon when she can't think of anything better to do. The lair contains a stunning (to the PCs) treasure consisting of 320 cp, 1,116 sp, 480 gp, three gems (1 gp each), and a horn. The latter is a magical *horn*

of fog.

The party may camp in peace that night if they have destroyed the naga; if not, the naga will attack while most of the party is asleep. She tries to charm one of the guards first. If the party is caught unawares, Randall will wake up, go invisible, and try to alert the PCs to their danger.

Note: If questioned, Randall will deny having any magical items. If pressed, he will insist that he had a *potion of invisibility* that he swallowed at an appropriate time.

The Village of Coalfist

At about dusk on the second day, the party will come over a rise and see the village of Coalfist in the distance. As they get closer, Randall will insist that they follow him off the trail to see a beautiful view. He leads them east up some hills, following a well-beaten path, and they come to a pastoral view of a bubbling river.

Anybody watching Randall closely will notice that he is eyeing a tree. Inspecting the tree will reveal a large number of initials carved in the trunk. If anybody asks what the initials are, make up any number of pairs. Any character specifically looking for initials RB (Randall Bingham), finds a heart with the initials RB and SD in it.

If Randall is questioned about the tree, he will claim not to have seen it before. If anybody asks about the initials SD, he will deny knowing anything about them (but will turn very red).

When the party enters the village, they find it to be much like any other they ever have seen. Randall explains that he and his father always stay at the biggest inn in the village, the Duncanson Inn.

The Duncanson is quite large; the first floor has a dining room, a bar, and a spacious area for gaming, contests, and meetings. Rooms cost 2 gp per night plus 1 gp per additional person; this cost includes food but not drink.

That night, while dinner is winding up, the party will encounter any number of distractions:

A dealer in fine jewelry approaches Anastasia. He has some pieces that he thinks match Anastasia's fine looking set. His wares include a ring worth 120 gp, two bracelets worth 50 gp each, a pendant worth 300 gp, a headband worth 200 gp, and two sets of earrings,

one worth 100 gp, and one worth 500 gp.

Two locals approach the party looking for a dart-throwing contest. Each is willing to wager 5 gp that he can best any party member two throws out of three. Each has 20 gp to squander on betting. If a PC accepts the wager, treat each throw as an attack. The thrower who hits the best armor class wins. The locals have a THAC0 of 18 for purposes of dart-throwing.

A dwarf offers to appraise or buy gems. He smirks if the characters produce the gems from the naga's lair. He's too polite to come right out and say they're junk, instead he makes a grand show of examining the stones and pointing out their many flaws: "Not much color for quartz, big chunk though, too cloudy to be much good for anything. Let's look at this tiger eye. Hmm, a bit jaundiced, ha! A little joke there. Ah ha! this agate looks interesting, oops bit of a crack there. Okay, three pieces of gold for the lot." If the party demurs, the dwarf will throw in a round of drinks, but will go no higher.

Several men launch a discussion about whether the use of force is justified in cases where a man is suspected of a crime but no definite proof is available.

Two men argue over which of their wines tastes better.

The owner asks Gareth to help "escort" some rowdy barbarians back to their rooms.

The distractions should happen simultaneously or in rapid succession. The idea is to get everybody preoccupied with some piece of minor business. While the PCs are occupied, Randall disappears — he can simply crawl under the table and go invisible, or go to the bathroom and go invisible, or slip away in a similar fashion. Before he goes, Randall lifts Smooth's magic dagger; even if Smooth notices that it is gone, he will have a difficult time finding it.

The characters will eventually notice that Randall is missing; there will be no sign of him anywhere. If anybody thinks to ask the innkeeper if he has a daughter whose first name begins with S (or about age 14 or etc.), he will explain that he has a 14-year-old daughter named Selina. Further investigation reveals that Selina is also missing.

Anyone asking a local (not a visitor) about the strange tree, will be told that legend has it that two people who willingly carve their initials in the tree together will be true loves for life.

If the party can't figure out what happened to Randall, the innkeeper's wife will come in looking for her daughter Selina after about an hour. If the party still needs to be hit over the head, about ten minutes later a drunk will come in offering to tell a secret in return for a glass of wine — he tells the party that he saw the innkeeper's daughter walking down main street with some stranger from out of town.

When the party gets close to the scenic area they saw earlier in the day, they will hear a woman screaming. When they get to the tree, they see a battle in progress.

Randall and a pretty girl about his age stand with their backs to the tree. The boy is armed with a gleaming dagger, the girl with a staff. They have killed one bugbear; but eight more circle the tree.

Bugbears: 8; AL CE; MV 9"; HD 3 + 1; hp 18 each; AC 5; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg spear; Size L; In low: Sts 16; Stw 15;

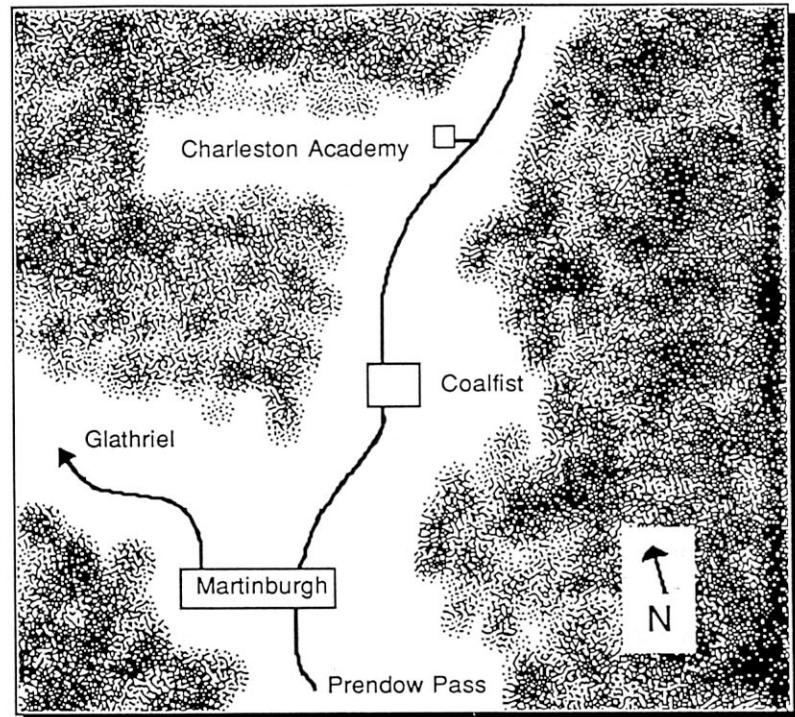
Collectively, the bugbears have 5d6 cp, 4d6 sp and 3d6 gp. Both youngsters are badly shaken by the encounter, but Randall will try to appear unaffected and will comfort Selina. He thanks the PCs for their assistance. Once he gets back to the inn and into his own room, he will collapse into tears, sob for awhile, then quickly fall asleep.

Day Three

The next day Randall is more communicative; he will start dropping hints about having some trouble at school. Little by little (let the party drag it out of him) he will relate how some of the boys at school are picking on his friends. And him. He will explain that he talked to the head of the Academy, but was told to toughen up and act like a man. He will add that he is convinced that something is wrong with the other boys at school.

When the party makes camp at the end of the day, Randall notices a visitor, "Hey Thrassupt, can't you talk to animals? There's a cat over here." The cat looks like a black panther; but it's really a nonafel. Once Randall calls the party's attention to it, it separates and attacks.

Nonafel: 1; AL CE; MV 9"; HD 9 (parent), 2 (children); hp 72 (parent) 9 each



(children); AC 5 (parent), 6 (children); THAC0 12 (parent), 16 (children); #AT 1; Dmg 2-20 (parent), 1-8 (children); Size L; In low: Sts 11; Stw 10; SA Can divide into nine "children" within one segment, if one or more children are damaged, 25% chance to re-associate and regenerate 1 hit point/round per surviving "child," division and re-association does not prevent combat.

After this encounter, Randall is even more impressed with the PCs, and will freely offer details about the Academy — maps, names, etc.

The Academy

The next morning, you reach the Academy after traveling about three hours. A long stone wall stands to your left, between the road and the grounds. After a few hundred yards it opens to a path leading west. Over the entrance the stones form an arch which has a built-in sign reading: The Charleston Academy for Future Leaders. Randall heaves a sigh when he sees the entrance, but gamely leads the party onto the path.

Immediately to your right you see

sports fields, to your left, a large ring of stones surrounds a scorched area — clearly a campfire ring. The path leads to the center of a U-sided building. A sign on the door instructs visitors to knock; there is a large wooden ring on the door.

Knocking with the ring produces a dull booming noise; several minutes later Headmaster Charleston appears.

Inhabitants

Charleston: This retired paladin has decided that he can best serve the forces of law and goodness by getting hold of the sons of leaders and trying to direct their growth to an alignment that he feels is more acceptable. He tells each parent that he normally charges several thousand gold pieces tuition, but that in their son's case he is granting a complete scholarship because of the boy's potential. He makes up for this in subsequent donations. He has become very gruff in his old age, and more lawful than good. He is totally unaware of the evil in the back yard, and truly believes that the problems are the normal problems with school bullies. He will be cordial to the party, but doubt anything

they say about something being wrong. ("Boys come here with these problems every year; they need to grow to learn how to fight their own battles.") He will not let on that he is a paladin.

Charleston: AL L(G); MV 12"; Pa 6; hp 60; AC 9; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg staff; Size M; In average; Sts 14; Stw 13; SA paladin/cavalier abilities.

Borgultandish: This fighter teaches physical education, horsemanship, and fencing. He is aging, gruff, and brooks no misbehavior in his classes. Like Charleston, he believes there is nothing wrong at the school. He thinks all the boys need is some discipline.

Borgultandish: AL LN; MV 12"; F6; hp 52; AC 2 (bracers, Dexterity bonus); THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg pummel, or long sword; Size M; In average; Sts 14; Stw 13; SA pummeling double specialist.

Equipment: *bracers of defense AC 4, long sword +1, potion of healing*

Trandellia: This 52-year-old woman does the cooking and cleaning; she was Charleston's nanny. The old paladin adores her, and she can therefore get away with almost anything. She has seen the boys fighting and feels it is a natural result of being in a military atmosphere — too much discipline and harsh treatment. She thinks it's too bad they can't all act as well as that nice young man Cody.

Trandellia: AL CG; 12"; HD 1; hp 6; AC 10; THAC0 20*; #AT 1; Dmg pummel; Size M; In average; Sts 19; Stw 18

Kangalt: Here is a real rarity — a half-orc scholar. His treatise on the dwarven occupation of Glathriel is considered the standard by which all other history books are measured. He is convinced that some form of evil is subverting the students; he will talk at great length about how the situation here is similar to what happened in the court of Jassiplean when that accursed gem was returned as part of the loot after the sacking of Prendow. Unfortunately, only his theory is correct, and that is flawed, there is no *item* subverting the students.

Kangalt: AL NG; MV 12"; HD 1; hp 6; AC 8 (Dexterity); THAC0 20*; #AT 1; Dmg pummel; Size M; In genius; Sts 19; Stw 18

Dramastine: This druid teaches nature and farming, but is uncomfortable about the way Charleston uses the boys' farming plots to teach the principles of Law, however subtly he does it. He sees the problems at the school as a natural result of Charleston's attempts to force alignment changes (it all balances out eventually).

Dramastine: AL N; MV 12"; D3; hp 19; AC 6; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg scimitar; Size M; In high; Sts 15; Stw 14

Spells: *animal friendship, detect magic, speak with animals, create water, locate plants, cloudburst*

Students: The boys are paired off in rooms (see map). Except for Cody and Randall, they have identical statistics.

Boys: AL varies; MV 12"; 1; hp 4 each; AC 10; THAC0 20*; #AT 1; Dmg pummel; Size M; In average to high; Sts 19; Stw 18

The Baddies:

Cody and Clint. Cody is the real leader of the baddies; he is the oldest student at the school and is nominally in charge of the dormitory. This effectively gives the baddies the ability to come and go as they please. The semi-lich often imbues Cody with a *cure light wounds* spell, which Cody uses when the baddies get carried away and really hurt somebody. This allows Cody to claim that the victim was never hurt badly. Because he is the oldest, and has a peculiar ability to make things "right," all the boys respect him. He is obsequious to a fault when adults are around, but he has no true respect for anyone except his mentor, the semi-lich. Cody has formed the baddies into a secret society that venerates the semi-lich. Cody periodically leads small groups of baddies to meet the creature in the dead of the night. Clint is the school bully; he instigates most of the baddies' pranks, practical jokes, and especially the "hazings" of younger students. He never misses an opportunity to torment other students, particularly those he considers to be "goodie-two-shoes." Clint is a chaotic neutral human.

Cody: AL CN; MV 12"; F1; hp 10; AC 9 (Dexterity); THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg pummel or knife; Size M; In high; Sts 17; Stw 16

Spells: *cure light wounds*

Dowen and Brusstel: Dowen is chaotic neutral and a stereotypical half-orc. He dislikes "soft" humans, and particularly likes pushing around Scoltin. He used to antagonize Traors but stopped when the dwarf rearranged his face. Brusstel is a chaotic neutral human; he is Cody's second in command and the semi-lich's devoted servant. It was he who stole the materials from the stable (see below).

Georgewain and Stanzel. Georgewain is a lawful neutral half-elf; he feels that all non-elves are dirt under his feet. He considers Ernwalt to be a traitor to his race for fraternizing with the enemy (ignoring the fact that most of his colleagues are non-elves). Stanzel is a chaotic neutral human; he is Clint's shadow, and always eager to execute some new cruelty or prank.

The Goodies:

Randall and Winston. Randall is the neutral good human who got the party involved in this affair. Winston is a neutral good human; he is small for his age, and very scared of the baddies. He was frightened and restless while Randall was gone, so much so that he was awakened by Cody's nocturnal shenanigans two days ago. He saw Cody, Stanzel, and Georgewain leave the dormitory, but does not know where they went. He hasn't told anyone, fearing reprisals from the baddies.

Scoltin and Ernalt: Scoltin is a neutral good halfling; he is rightly running scared, and would like to find a nice, comfortable hole to hide in. Ernalt is a lawful neutral half-elf; he considers Georgewain a traitor to his race because of the way he allows a human (Cody) to run his life. He is quick to back up any of the good students who are threatened.

Traors and Bristow. Traors is a chaotic good dwarf; he has had enough of this, and would gladly pound the baddies into the ground if he could just get a few stalwart allies to stand their ground. Bristow is a neutral good human who is convinced that if the boys could just get to know each other better they could all be friends. Fat chance.

At the Academy

When he sees Randall, the headmaster will immediately put on a stern visage; he will order Randall to go upstairs and

get dressed for lunch. He will then invite the party inside to talk with him in his private office.

The office is decorated in early military academy; along one side of the room are bookcases full of unread books. Along the other side of the room are plaques bearing the names of students from previous years.

Charleston patiently listens while the PCs tell their story or speculate about problems at the school, but doesn't really pay attention. He explains that each class has a period where the boys must get accustomed to each other, and it is common for one or more of them to feel picked on. Nothing the party tells him will change his mind. After the discussion is over (or at the appropriate time), he invites the party to spend the rest of the day and that night visiting the Academy and observing its activities.

The first event will be lunch; the boys are all present and dressed in navy blue uniforms. Before lunch begins, the headmaster will introduce the various party members to the staff, and to Cody. Then, one party member will notice a boy (Klint) pouring pepper on Randall's food when he goes back to the kitchen. When Randall returns, another boy (Brusstel) tries to trip Randall. Charleston misses both incidents. If the party calls the headmaster's attention to either incident, he dismisses it. If the party presses the point, the headmaster will ask Cody what he saw. Cody replies that Randall has been a bit of a trial. "When young Mr. Bingham sat down he managed to produce quite a cloud of pepper, much to the consternation of those seated next to him. But since most of it eventually settled onto his own plate, I think he's learned his lesson. When returning to the table after conveying an empty dish to the kitchen, he walked right into another student."

After lunch, the boys return to class; Charleston asks the party to wait behind. After the boys are out of earshot, he explains that one of the Academy's earliest graduates has made possible a room that allows observation of the classes. He leads the party up to a set of rooms that they will be allowed to use that evening (just in case they want to leave any of their equipment; he will explain that nobody except himself, Trandellia, and the guests can enter the top wing of the northern wing — he will not elaborate except to insist that it is not possible. He then will lead them to a room which contains a tub of water

surrounded by a number of chairs. He picks up a long stick of wood, runs it through the water, and then points out the new view — the party can see the class from a vantage point above and behind the students. As Charleston is putting away the stick, the party will see Klint punch Randall in the arm as he goes by (Charleston will be dubious of what they saw.) "It will take your eyes a while to adjust to the depth of the water."

The teacher, Kangalt, proceeds to give a lecture which explains how the large success of the mining efforts of dwarven immigrants led to rapid inflation in their dealings with the elves of Glathriel, "Increased gold supplies chasing static food supplies." And how later diminishing returns impoverished the dwarves and was one of the underlying causes of the occupation. Charleston will fall asleep during the class and misses Stanzel stealing Scoltin's notes at the end of the lecture.

There is a break before the next class. As the break ends, the boys troop back in; Georgewain and Ernalt have bloody noses, and Stanzel is limping — Traors is beaming. Randall's shirt is ripped.

Dramastine teaches the next class. He lectures on the importance of understanding the food chain, and explains how destroying the wolf population may destroy an agricultural society when the rabbit and rat populations formerly kept in line by the wolves are allowed to grow unchecked. During the lecture, Charleston leaves to check on the menu for dinner; while he is gone Dowen hits Winston on the back of the head with a book and nearly knocks him out (he covers by knocking his own books on the floor and yelling at Randall to leave his stuff alone). Charleston reenters just in time to hear the teacher telling Randall to stop making trouble during his class.

After this class, the students go out back for exercises and martial arts training. The party is led to a room at the back of the building that has a one-way window (from outside it appears to be stone). They watch the students going through their paces; whenever somebody starts to make trouble, the teacher, Borgultandish, immediately steps in and allows the offender to "volunteer" to act as the victim as he demonstrates a new move.

After this, Charleston explains that the students will go swimming and invites the party members to join them. The PCs are free to decline. The stu-

dents are each assigned a buddy, and there are frequent buddy checks. The swimming session starts with some work on specific strokes, and then the students are allowed a free swim time. During this time, there are any number of incidents that look like aborted attempts to drown one another. At least once, it will appear that Randall "disappears" underwater just as several badgers have him surrounded.

After this, the students are escorted back up the hill to the academy, and the party is told that the students have about two hours of free time to "kill."

The teachers retire to their rooms, except for Borgultandish — he tends the horses. If any PCs talk to him, he will suggest that some of the students are keeping a wild horse out in the woods. In the last week he has been missing some of the straw he uses in the stalls, some of the leather tack, and some of the lead ropes.

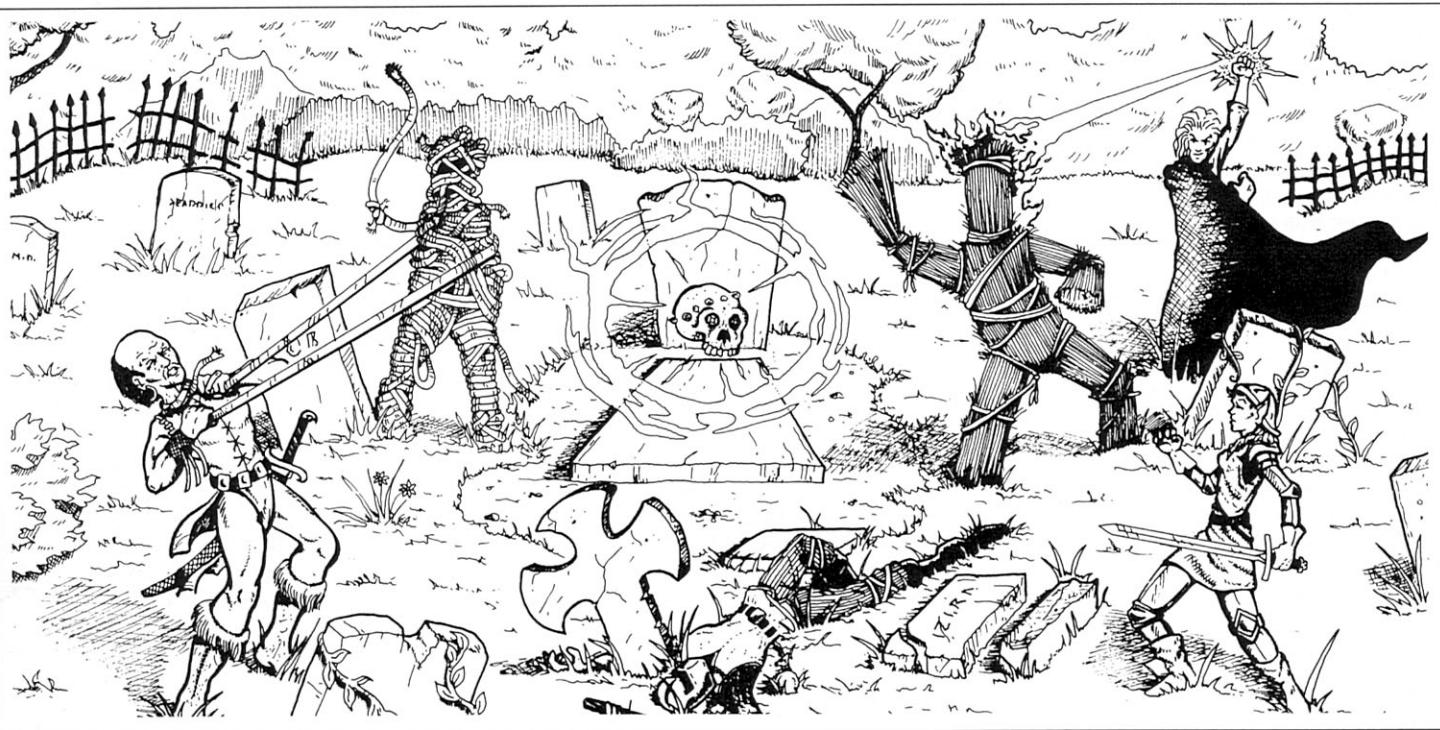
This is the party's opportunity to investigate; they will be allowed to split up, stay together, or whatever — the students will tend to move around, but eventually the party will notice that some of them seem to be drifting back down the hill toward the boat area. In fact, the baddies will be headed for the semi-lich's lair; Cody is wary of the party, and wants some advice. The PCs can interview each student if they wish, Charleston will not allow for any formal interrogations, but he expects each student to be polite to the guests.

The Lair of the Semi-Lich

The semi-lich lies in an abandoned cemetery, no trees grow here, but the place is overgrown with nasty-looking briars and thickets of burrs. The baddies have cleared the vegetation from the semi-lich's grave, and reset the toppled headstone.

If the party tracks the baddies, they will be able to hear the boys talking to the semi-lich before they reach the cemetery.

Nobody would walk through these woods for enjoyment, there's too much undergrowth. Still, boys will be boys, perhaps they are playing at some school game. You can hear their voices floating down from a nearby hilltop, they seem to be chanting something. There is a pause, followed by a single, rasping voice, one of the older boys, perhaps.



When you reach the hilltop you see a clearing filled with brambles and toppled headstones. Eight boys stand in a semicircle around the one decently preserved grave. The oldest boy, Cody, is not pleased to see you. There is a rustling in the undergrowth behind you, and you find yourselves under attack.

If Gareth does a detect evil, he will get an immediate response from only one source, the grave. The attackers are the missing straw and rope and leather.

Straw Golems: 2; AL N; MV 12"; HD 2+4; hp 20 each; AC 10; THAC0 16; #AT 2; Dmg 1-2,1-2; Size M; In non; Sts 10; Stw 9; SD immune to bladed weapons; half damage from blunt weapons; double damage from fire; immune to mind-affecting magic

Rope Golems: 2; AL N; MV 9"; HD 3+6; hp 30 each; AC 8; THAC0 13; #AT 2; Dmg 1-6,1-6; Size M; In non; Sts 10; Stw 9; SA successful hit causes strangulation, 6 points/round; SD immune to blunt weapons; half damage from piercing weapons; immune to mind-affecting magic

Leather Golems: 4; AL N; MV 6"; HD 4+8; hp 40 each; AC 6, THAC0 12; #AT 2; Dmg 1-6/1-6; Size M; In non; Sts 10;

Stw 9; SD hit only by +1 or better weapons, half damage from blunt weapons; immune to mind-affecting magic

The students will run away as soon as the melee starts. The semi-lich will immediately cast his two *wyvern watch* spells, then *spike stones* on the area surrounding the grave. He continues using his spells as intelligently as possible thereafter.

Semi-Lich (new creature)

This is a demi-lich that hasn't made it yet. Its appearance is similar to a demilich, a gem encrusted skull and a few scattered bones. Although its body has rotted away, its original lifeforce is still strong, and the creature does not need to accumulate energy as does a demilich. When approached to within 10 feet, the skull rises into the air, supported by a column of dust. The creature can use any spell it could use as a lich, but has no physical attacks (except touch-delivered spells). The creature cannot be turned. Even if reduced to 0 hit points or less, a semi-lich is not destroyed until holy water is poured on the site and a *ceremony* spell is cast to *consecrate* the ground. If these steps are not taken, the creature will reform in 1d6 months.

This particular specimen is a 13th level cleric with a wisdom of 12.

Semi-lich: AL CE; MV 0; Cl 13; hp 60; AC -3; THAC0 12; #AT 1; Dmg N/A; Size 3; In genius; Sts 9; Stw 8; SD hit only by +3 or better weapons

Spells: *cure light wounds* (bestowed on Cody), *darkness*, *cause light wounds* (x2), *protection from good*, *cause fear* (x2), *command*, *wyvern watch* (x2), *dust devil*, *silence 15' radius* (x2), *know alignment*, *hold person* (x2), *cause paralysis* (x2), *curse*, *dispel magic* (x2), *prayer*, *spike stones*, *spell immunity*, *cause serious wounds*, *imbue with spell ability* (cast), *golem* (x2) (cast)

When Charleston learns of the semi-lich he will hurry to the grave and detect evil to determine the monster's status. If the creature has not been slain, a strong evil aura will remain, and Charleston will announce that the creature is powerless, but not destroyed. It is up to the party to figure out how to slay it.

If the creature is slain, the boys will return to normal, and Charleston's teachings will begin to take hold; except for Cody, who is expelled. (Discipline must be maintained after all.) The headmaster is so pleased he writes a glowing account of the PCs' heroic actions and sends it to each PC's superiors. This clears the blots various PCs have on their records and brings the party a measure of renown throughout the realm.

Thrassupt Tree-Friend

6th Level Elven Male Druid

STR: 12 +100#wt, Drs 1-2, BB-LG 4%
INT: 14 +4 languages
WIS: 18 +3 ST bonus
DEX: 14
CON: 13 SS 85, RES 90
CHA: 18 +35% reactions, 15 henchmen/+40% loyalty

COM: 12
Age: 468
Height: 5' 3"
Weight: 110#
Hair/Eyes: Brown/Green
Alignment: N
AC normal: 5
AC rear: 6
Armor type: leather & shield, *ring of protection* +2
Hit points: 34
THAC0: 18
Spells/day: 6,5,3,2
Attacks: 1/1
Weapon proficiencies: staff, scimitar, whip

Special abilities: identify plants, animals, pure water; pass through undergrowth without trace; speak hill giant, pixie, lizardman, sprite

Non-weapon proficiencies: alertness, tracking, weather sense, animal noise

Magic items: *staff of the woodlands* +2; 12 goodberries; *ring of protection* +2; *Keoghtom's Ointment* (5 applications); *ioun stone*, pearly white spindle

Money: 31 gp, 14 sp, 8 cp, one 150 gp gem

You have been operating out of Martinburgh with the rest your party ever since you first became a druid. Your first superior unceremoniously dumped you there after an embarrassing episode in which you mistook a giant skunk for a large cat (he refused to believe that tomato juice would help).

Your party is enough to try anyone's patience — they insist on investigating everything in as chaotic a fashion as possible. In order to balance things out it has fallen on you to try and force the party members to work together to solve problems instead of barging straight in. There are other adventurers in town, but most of them are out chasing rumors of an entrance to a lost dungeon — nothing you wanted to get involved in.

As the adventure opens, you and the others are in the Unseen Inn trying to decide who will get the two potions that were found on your last adventure. One

Gareth Gon-Groyne

5th Level Human Male Paladin

STR: 18/62 +2 to Hit, +3 damage, +1250#wt, Drs 1-4, BB-LG 25%
INT: 9 +1 language
WIS: 15 +1 ST bonus
DEX: 8
CON: 16 +2 hp per hit die, SS 95, RES 96
CHA: 17 +30% reactions, 10 henchmen, +30% loyalty homely
COM: 8
Age: 24
Height: 5'9"
Weight: 130#
Hair/Eyes: Brown/Green
Alignment: LG
AC normal: 2
AC rear: 2
Armor type: plate mail +1
Hit points: 42
THAC0: 16
Attacks: 1/1 or 3/2
Weapon proficiencies: lance (choice), long sword (choice), horseman's mace (choice), dagger, footman's mace

Special abilities: detect evil 60', immune to all disease, lay-on hands once per day to heal 10 hp, cure disease once per week, protection from evil 10' radius, +1 "to hit" and attacks 3/2 with weapons of choice, stays conscious to -8 hp, immune to fear, protection from fear 10' radius, 90% resistant to mind-affecting spells

Non-weapon proficiencies: endurance, cold survival, blind fighting

Turn Undead

Skeleton	4
Zombie	7
Ghoul	10
Shadow	13
Wight	16
Ghast	19
Wraith	20

Magic items: long sword +2; *deputy badge* (detect lie for 5 rounds/3x per day); *potion of extra healing*

Normal Equipment: footman's mace, backpack, 1 week's iron rations, 6 torches, flint and steel and tinder box

Money: 11 gp, 24 sp, 15 cp

You have been stranded in the small town of Martinburgh for the last few years, ever since you tried to explain to one of your church's clerics that it was his job to keep the paladins comfortable. (How were you to know the head cleric was listening from behind the door?)

Borne Reiden

7th Level Human Male Cleric

STR: 16 +1 damage, +350#wt, Drs 1-3, BB-LG 10%
INT: 15 +4 languages,
WIS: 18 +3 ST bonus
DEX: 10
CON: 16 +2 hp per hit die, SS 95, RES 96%
CHA: 16 +25% reactions, 8 henchmen/+20% loyalty
COM: 5 ugly
Age: 27
Height: 5' 5"
Weight: 165#
Hair/Eyes: Brown/Green
Alignment: NG
AC normal: 2
AC rear: 3
Armor type: plate mail & shield
Hit points: 41
THAC0: 16
Spells/day: 5,5,3,2
Weapon proficiencies: staff, horseman's mace, footman's flail

Non-weapon proficiencies: healing, blind fighting

Turn Undead

Skeleton	D
Zombie	D
Ghoul	D
Shadow	T
Wight	T
Ghast	4
Wraith	7
Mummy	10
Spectre	13
Vampire	16
Ghost	20

Magic items: necklace of prayer beads: karma, curing, heal (as 6th level cleric spell), resurrection (as 7th cleric spell), armband of curing (maximum result from cure spells 3x/day); scroll of protection vs. paralyzation; elixir of health

Normal Equipment: horseman's mace, footman's flail, staff

Money: 64 gp, 37 sp, 29 cp, one 100 gp gem, one 200 gp gem

Sheesh — one little penmanship error, and here you are in a little backwater town in the middle of nowhere. Just because your letter to Mrs. McFig seemed to start out "Dear Mrs. McPig", she decided not to make the endowment to the church construction fund, and you suddenly found yourself on the road to nowhere. For years (it seems decades) you have been adventuring near Martinburgh, afraid to take on the perils of a trip back to civilization.

Fortunately, there are a large number

of fellow adventurers in town, so you have been able to keep busy keeping them alive (and finding yourself some important magical items along the way). If you can just convert enough of them to your way of thinking you can build up enough of a following to start a reasonable church branch here and maybe redeem yourself. Unfortunately, most of the adventurers in town are currently on an expedition looking for a lost dungeon entrance. (If you're lucky, it will turn out to be fable rather than fact.)

The rest of the party is currently arguing over who should get a potion of fire and something which sharpens blades, you don't really care who gets them as long as they get used properly.

Here's what you know about the others:

Thrassupt: This pagan elven druid is not to be believed — for some reason he thinks that he's in charge when there's a paladin around. Also, nothing you have said has been able to sway him from his strange beliefs about sacrifices to trees.

Gareth: There's something wrong with this paladin. He doesn't understand that paladins exist solely to do the bidding of clerics; no wonder his church sent him to this exile.

Silane: Just in case the enemy isn't doing enough damage to the party, this firebug is always around. Lately he has started burning party members (always by accident, or so he claims). Best to stay out of fireball range of him, of course, you can't always be sure just where he is.

Smooth: Now here is a success story; the man not only gave up his thieving ways, he joined your church. A lesson to be learned here: no soul is beyond redemption.

Anastasia: My, my, what a pretty lass, but a test of your faith. You simply must ignore the temptation she presents and hold to your vows of (groan!) virtue until marriage to (groan! again) a woman of the faith.

You have been sent here for some remedial humility training — you are forced to work as the deputy sheriff for a cretin (Clyde, the 19-year-old sheriff). If he didn't have that strange artifact of a sword you'd show him what's what. The only compensation is your deputy badge, which, when activated, announces "That's a Lie" when it hears one.

Most of the adventurers in town are currently out looking for an entrance to the great underground; you, because of your wonderful job, are stuck in town. At the moment, you and the rest of the party are trying to divide up a pair of potions — a fire potion which is obviously going to wind up in Silane's hands, and some *oil of sharpness* which is just the thing for your sword.

Here's what you know about the others:

Thrassupt: This old elven druid is a real pain, always trying to excuse neutralist behavior. His only redeeming quality is his realization that the party needs to operate together to succeed at anything.

Borne: Another bossy cleric. Don't they know that their job is to wait in the rear with their healing spells? He thinks his job is to be your boss.

Silane: A chaotic, magic-using elven thief — does anything else about this fellow matter? The fool has even burned several party members (yourself included) when throwing some of his spells during melee.

Smooth: This thief is on the road to recovery. Thanks to your patient help, he has come to understand that there is no future in thievery. He is now working on improving his acrobatic skills to make himself more useful.

Anastasia: This lass has a beauty that has grown on you. When you first met, you thought her rather plain, but she has come to have a certain air about her. It's about time she took some notice of you. If only she weren't so unpredictable.

of them is capable of making a weapon sharper — since you don't have a bladed magical weapon, it is only fitting that you get it. The other has something to do with fire (anybody but Silane can have that one).

Here's what you know about the others:

Borne: This ugly little priest is a typical human know-it-all, always trying to convert everyone to his funny beliefs. He packs a respectable number of healing spells, but he should be neither seen nor heard until your healing is used up.

Gareth: This overbearing paladin is another typical human, and a moral extremist to boot. Of course, he is useful in opposing evil (if only he didn't see it in places where it doesn't exist).

Silane: This elf is a firebug; he has caught you in his fireballs (always "by accident") no less than four times. He is not to be trusted, especially when out of sight (and he always seems to be out of sight).

Smooth: It's hard to believe, but this strange human appears to be a thief who has dedicated his life to helping others. In sharp contrast to Silane, he is always thinking of others, and never seems to steal anything. Equally curiously, he is usually able to figure out how to use the magical devices the party finds.

Anastasia: This poor half-breed has a few screws loose. Instead of staying home where she belongs, she is out swinging that sword of hers in the face of danger. True, she is getting very good at swinging it, but she needs to understand her place in the scheme of things.

Silane Quindel

Elven Male Magic User/Thief (5/5)

STR:	12	+100wt, Drs 1-2, BB-LG 4%
INT:	15	+4 languages, Ctk 65%
WIS:	13	
DEX:	18	+3 reactions; -4 AC
CON:	12	SS 80, RES 85
CHA:	10	4 henchmen
COM:	11	
Age:	375	
Height:	5'1"	
Weight:	128#	
Hair/Eyes:	Black/Blue	
Alignment:	CN	
AC normal:	3	
AC rear:	7	
Armor type:	cloak of protection +3	
Hit points:	30 (26)	
THAC0:	20*	
Spells/day:	3,2,1	
Weapon proficiencies:	dagger, staff, darts, short bow	

Thief Abilities

PP	OL	FT	MS	HS	HN	CW	RL
65	52	45	55	51	25	90	25

Non-weapon proficiencies: fire building, foraging, animal noises

Magic items: dagger +1, 8 goodberries, fire wand (see below)

Normal Equipment: backpack, staff, 8 darts, short bow, 8 arrows

Money: 274 gp, 184 sp, 38 cp

Spell Book

Cantrips

Firefinger	Dry
Warm	Whistle

Level 1 Spells

Burning Hands	Feather Fall
Sleep	Unseen Servant

Level 2 Spells

Flaming Sphere	Invisibility
Knock	Pyrotechnics

Level 3 Spells

Fireball	Item
Monster Summoning I	

Fire Wand

This device can produce the following: faerie fire (1 charge), produce flame (2 charges), a five-die fireball (3 charges), or wall of fire (4 charges). The user can safely expend six charges per day (non-cumulative); if this limit is exceeded, a five hit die fireball, immediately strikes the user. Fortunately, the wand also confers a +4 saving throw bonus against all fire attacks; if the user saves, he takes no damage, and failed saves reduce damage by half.

Smooth

6th level Human Male Thief/Acrobat

STR:	17	+1 to hit, +1 Damage, +500#wt, Drs 1-3, BB-LG 13%
INT:	13	+3 languages
WIS:	7	-1 ST penalty
DEX:	18	+3 to reaction rolls, -4 AC
CON:	16	+2 hp per level, SS 95, RES 96%
CHA:	9	4 henchmen
COM:	13	
Age:	25	
Height:	5' 3"	
Weight:	110#	
Hair/eyes:	Blonde/Blue	
Alignment:	NG	
AC normal:	1	
AC rear:	5	
Armor type:	bracers of defense AC 5	
Hit points:	36	
Weapon proficiencies:	dagger, long sword, dart	
Non-weapon proficiencies:	direction sense, healing, swimming	

Thief Abilities

PP	OL	FT	MS	HS	HN	CW	RL
60	57	45	57	47	20	92	30

Acrobat Abilities

TW	PV	HJ	SBJ	RBJ
90%	10'	4'	5'	9'
T:A	T:E	F	W/E (Body)	W/E (add)
9%	15%; 25%, 15'		450 gp	100gp

Magic items: magic dagger, bag of tricks (rat), magic lockpicks (+10%), 2 darts of the hornet's nest, potion of invisibility, scroll of protection from any trap, longsword +1 (named Lamont), Bucknard's everful purse (gold)

Normal Equipment: nine-foot pole, backpack, one week's gourmet rations, bottle of good wine, skin of passable wine

Money: 246 gp, 18 sp, 33 cp, 1 50 gp gem, 50 pp

Life just isn't fair. One of the world's greatest wine experts, you found a small-town inn with an amazing selection to sample and went just one drink too far. The next morning you woke up nearly penniless and abandoned by the merchant you were supposed to be guarding. Though most of your money gone, you still had your magical purse, which provides you with enough cash to get by, but not enough to buy your way out of this miserable little town (too risky to travel back to civilization alone).

During the past few years, you've kept company with a number of adventurers. Not wanting to work for a living, you specialized in certain, um, useful skills — sneaking, unlocking, listening,

Anastasia

6th Level Half-Elven Female Fighter

STR:	17	+1 to hit, +1 damage, +500#wt, Drs 1-3, BB-LG 13%
INT:	10	+2 languages
WIS:	13	
DEX:	12	
CON:	13	SS 85, RES 90
CHA:	14	+10% reactions, 6 henchmen, +5% loyalty
COM:	16	good looking, +16% reactions fascinate males WIS 8 or less

Age:	234	
Height:	5' 3"	
Weight:	110#	
Hair/Eyes:	Brown/Brown	
Alignment:	CN	
AC normal:	2	
AC rear:	3	
Armor type:	plate mail & spiked buckler	
Hit points:	48	
Weapon proficiencies:	bastard sword (double specialist), dagger, spiked buckler	

Non-weapon proficiencies: blind fighting, alertness, running

Magic items: sunblade, incomplete set of jewelry of commanding presence (missing the earrings)

Normal Equipment: one week's normal rations, backpack, spiked buckler, dagger

Money: 631 gp, 214 sp, 53 cp, 1 256 gp gem

The powers that be deliver you from this male-dominated town. There isn't one of them worth having, and here you sit. During the years since your fiancee deserted you here in Martinburgh (poor man's ego couldn't handle your ability with a sword), you have gotten to be a much better fighter. You have acquired a really top-notch sunblade bastard sword, a comfortable set of plate mail, and a nearly complete a set of magical jewelry — you have the bracelets, ring and amulet of a set of jewelry of commanding presence, and if you can just find the earrings and wear the entire set for six months, your comeliness and charisma will both increase to 18 forever (even without the jewelry). Your stats have improved so much already that most of the men in the town have started hitting on you. You've also been practicing with your bastard sword, and are almost to the point where you get two swings per round.

Most of the adventurers in town are out looking for an entrance to a lost dungeon; the others here are arguing over who gets a pair of potions you got hurt earning. No doubt they'll all have reasons why they want them (probably never occur to them that a woman could

use them properly).

Here's what you know about the others:

Thrassupt: This elven druid is nothing but a dirty old man; you can't help but notice the way he looks at you, and you've heard rumors of his strange pagan practices.

Gareth: Ick. Is that kind of human rules-making contagious? Or does it only strike male chauvinists? This paladin always insists that people do what he thinks is right; yuk.

Borne: You never have seen a man this ugly. Although he is clearly attracted to you, he always seems to pull away. It might be fun to tease him a little.

Smooth: This guy is always trying to get you drunk with cheap wine; at least lately he's been buying you a better brand of drink; and he is Silane's friend.

Silane: This guy is the only other properly aligned member of the party at present. He's also fun to be around (always doing the unexpected). If only he could get some help for his addiction to fire (could that be the result of some kind of repression?)

and other, um, thieving skills. The deputy sheriff thinks he talked you into changing your ways, in fact, you discovered that it took a lot of practice to get any better, so lately you've spent your time becoming more nimble.

In order to avoid bringing trouble on yourselves, you believe, it is necessary that the party not do anything to harm any innocent bystanders. As a result, you have become the party's conscience. In addition, your purse keeps you wealthy, so you generously tip all those who help you in any way; this doesn't hurt your image.

Recently, you obtained a magical dagger, but you have never been able to figure out how it works; sometimes it seems to be +1, sometimes as much as +4, but there seems to be no discernable pattern. Sometimes it merely seems better to use that trusty long sword, Lamont.

You are intrigued by magical gadgets and try to figure out how to use any that the party comes across. At present, the adventurers in town are trying to split up a pair of potions; one that should go to Silane (it generates fire), and one that you could use to spiffy up Lamont's blade (after all, the fighters already are at all kinds of pluses due to their specialization).

Here's what you know about the others:

Thrassupt: That over-bearing druid is positively lawful — always trying to give orders to poor Silane (and everybody else as well). You have him convinced that you are a champion of the downtrodden, and are careful to avoid hurting trees when he's around.

Gareth: Poor, deluded paladin; he seemed so concerned that your skills are inherently evil that you finally told him you were going to reform and become an acrobat (how is he to know that you were just tired thief training?)

Borne: This is the party's major source of healing. He has resurrected you a few times, so you joined his church and started giving him a few coins in offerings every week.

Silane: This guy is great fun. You can never tell what he is going to do next. The two of you occasionally cook up some great jokes to pull on Thrassupt (but only when you won't get caught).

Anastasia: There is simply no hope for this lass. Perhaps the elven half of her is to blame, but she cannot tell the difference between wine and vinegar. You once bought a 100 gp bottle of wine to share with her, and she guzzled it and declared it to be a bit flat! Thereafter you started buying her the poorest wines you could find. She may be pretty, but she's no prize.

It's not really your fault you're stuck in this Martinburgh place; just because your teacher noticed when you tried to pick his pocket to get that neat looking rod.... You woke up in the stable with the horses the next morning, with no idea of where you were (except that there were way too many humans around).

So, okay, you go with the flow; yeah, that's right. You must be here for a reason; maybe the pickings are slim, but there's not much competition.

So what if you never mastered *magic missile*, now that you have the *fire wand* people are gonna respect you. You would never intentionally harm a friend or colleague, don't they understand that?

It's not your fault that you sometimes panic in melee and cast a *fireball* on the enemy and somehow get the party as well; it's not your fault that sometimes you forget how many charges you've used from your *wand* and you accidentally *fireball* yourself (and the party) instead of the enemy — that's not your intent. What you really want to do is go *invisible*, sneak up for a triple damage backstab, and end the fight right away. Independent action utilizing each individual's strengths is the only way to go.

The party is currently trying to decide who gets some kind of potion which makes blades sharper, and after that they will give you your fire potion — all you have to do is wait them out.

Here's what you know about the others:

Thrassupt: Who died and made this druid king? This guy is a real pain. It sure is fun playing practical jokes on him, though. You've have been secreting the goodberries he gives you in a jar to preserve them for emergencies (like when Borne is knocked unconscious).

Gareth: This guy is a real stuffed shirt; he doesn't ever seem to enjoy himself, but what can you expect from a paladin? He has, however, saved your life over and over and over again.

Borne: You have to humor this cleric — he has the healing. If only he would stop preaching.

Smooth: A fellow thief. Who says an elf and a human can't be friends? The way he handles everybody is nothing short of amazing. And some of the ideas he gets for practical jokes on Thrassupt are truly inspired.

Anastasia: Now this girl is more like it. This fetching lass is just the ticket. Granted, she doesn't seem to give you the time of day, and she is a bit young for your tastes, but that's okay, you can age her in a hurry. She is astonishing in melee. They don't call her the tank (behind her back) for no good reason.