

Flying Trollkin

By Greg Stafford and Sandy Petersen, converted to Hero Wars by Malcolm Serabian.

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The conversion of this scenario to *Hero Wars* is a fan work. The hard-working volunteer has made all interpretations of game stats.

Narrator's Information

Benchmark: This episode is designed for heroes whose best ability is 5w. It emphasizes combat, strategy, and problem solving.

Premise: A group of Trollkin bandits skilled at riding Giant Flies have kidnapped a dependant, or ally of the heroes. They have eaten into the carcass of a dead dinosaur, and made the interior of the beast their lair. Player heroes will find out about the kidnapping and decide what to do about it in Scene 1. Scenes 2 through 5 concern various ways in which the heroes may attempt to free their friend and they each lead to an eventual confrontation with the bandits in Scenes 6 and 7.

Secret: The trollkin flyers are led by a superior trollkin - Nesretep. The number of trollkin should vary with the attacking party's strength, but at least a dozen or so is recommended. Inside the carcass is a dark troll Xiola Umbar priestess as well. She stays with the trollkin renegades as their medic and gets a third of all their loot in return. Nesretep takes another third, and the rest is divided up among the followers. These trollkin flyers have no masters but Nesretep and the priestess Xoroho. They found the dinosaur carcass and have eaten passages and tunnels into it. They systematically eat any maggots they find within the carcass, keeping down the rate at which it rots.

The trollkin collect animal carcasses in a large mound to one side of the dinosaur, where they breed giant maggots for new flies. The flies themselves feed on manure, and the trollkin have gathered a large heap of such fertilizer for their steeds.

The poor kidnap victim is being held inside the dinosaur, in the rank, black interior.

Key Points: From a local farmer: "He had gone out to check on the cattle after we'd heard some strange sounds. Then I heard a loud whirring noise, and scream. I rushed out to see what was going on, but I was too late. All I saw was a glimpse of black bodies flying off into the starlight."

"The prints the raiders left in the dirt look like trollkin spoor to me. Come here and I'll show you."

"I heard the creatures screeching to one another as they flew off. It might have been Darktongue, the language of Trolls."

From a villager, who comes running up to the victim's stead: "This note was found pinned to the door of the sheriff's office by a throwing dart."

From the note, scrawled in rough Tradetalk: "We have your friend. We must have 10,000 Lunars in cash by next Darkday or we eat him. Place the cash next to the big rock by Elm Grove. Do not enter the grove. Leave the cash before nightfall. The next dawn we will place your friend where you can get him easily. We will not eat him if we get the 10,000 Lunars. Nesretep the leader"

The day is now Wildday, so the characters have two days to rescue their friend before he is eaten. Elm Grove is a well-known landmark about 10 miles east of town, in a wild area.

The Setting - The Victim's Stead

Midway up a low grass covered hill the victim's long house and barn squat against the steep slope. Dark oaks gather in bunches about the foot of the hill. The cattle and oxen mill about quietly lowing. The victim's family forms an anxious knot before the door. The sun is shining and a warm west wind carries the sweet scent of honeysuckle.

The Action

If the heroes decide to examine the tracks found by the victim's significant other, they will be lead to an area of the stead near the barn. Clear signs of a struggle can be seen in the dirt.

Examine Tracks (12): Tracking

Any victory will result in the heroes clearly identifying the tracks as belonging to trollkin. A complete victory will allow the heroes to identify the markings made by the giant flies.

If the heroes think of using Divination to try to determine the whereabouts of their friend, they can call on the local god talker to perform the divination for them. See *Narrator's Book*, pp. 132-136 for more information about Divination.

Divination will work if their friend was an initiate of the god answering the questions. Here are some answers to typical questions.

Q. Where was our friend taken?
A. Eastward toward troll country.

Q. How far?
A. About twenty miles or so.

Q. Who has kidnapped him?

A. Bandit trollkin, with help.

Q. Is he still alive?

A. Yes.

Q. Will the trollkin kill him?

A. Probably, unless the ransom is paid.

The heroes should be encouraged at this point to discuss what their plan of action should be.

Do they simply set out, perhaps using information gained through Divination, to try to find the whereabouts of the trollkin lair? This choice leads to Scene 2.

If anyone in the group has flying skills, allies, or followers, they might wish to search the area by air, looking for signs of trollkin. This choice leads to Scene 3.

They can go to Elm Grove and try to bushwhack any trollkin there, either following them back to the lair or capturing one to force him to tell them the lair's whereabouts. This choice leads to Scene 4.

Will they simply pay the ransom? If the heroes come to this decision the trollkin take the ransom, and do not return the victim. This choice leads to Scene 5.

Aftermath

Direct the heroes to the scene dictated by their course of action.

Scene 2: Striking Out East

Key Points: Use this scene if the heroes simply head east, looking for signs of the trollkin.

The Setting - Wild Lands out East

The wild lands out to the east of the village are an unpopulated expanse of dark wood groves, rocky barren hills, rough gorges with shallow caves in their walls, and open scrub land on which the occasional herd of deer may be seen.

The Action

Once per day the hero with the best ability may attempt to find the trollkin lair.

Stumble on Trollkin Lair (5w): lucky, troll knowledge (-5), area knowledge (-5), scan

Any victory for this action will lead the heroes to Notch Hill, and Scene 6.

Aftermath

After two days of searching the time limit stated in the ransom note will have run out. The heroes may continue the search, or they may return to the village.

Scene 3: The Fly-By

Key Points: If the heroes wish to try to get a lay of the land from the air, and they have the resources to achieve this they may attempt a fly-by of the area around the victim's stead.

From the Sheriff: "I've sent out my hawk familiar and he saw nothing that could be a trollkin dwelling-place. If you want to waste your precious time go ahead."

The aerial search will take an entire day.

The Setting - Wild Lands out East

The wild lands to the east of the settlement contain a dinosaur carcass, gorges with caves in the walls, dark groves of woods, and a herd of deer.

The Action

The flying hero, follower, ally, creature, or familiar can attempt to notice something out of the ordinary once during their recognizance mission.

Notice Giant Flies (17): spot hidden, keen eyesight (-5), notice strange things

Any victory will result in the flyer noticing a group of large flies gathered around the dinosaur carcass. This is the only hint that should be given to the heroes, and the chance to attempt the action should only be given if they ask specifically about the carcass.

Aftermath

If the heroes wish to check out the dinosaur carcass proceed to Scene 6. Otherwise the heroes should be encouraged to try another avenue of investigation.

Scene 4: Encounter at Elm Grove

Key Points: If the players go to Elm Grove, hoping to ambush the trollkin, they may be surprised. If the players enter the grove, they immediately will be ambushed by the trollkin, who are hiding in the high underbrush.

The Setting - Elm Grove

Elm Grove is large and airy within, though shaded. Frequently there is room to ride a horse through. Just outside the grove a large stone juts from the soil. Within the shadowy grove, tufts of underbrush sway softly in the gloom.

The Action

Just before the players reach the grove, the trollkin will sling stones at them. If the players persist, the trollkin will flee the grove from the opposite side, flying away on their mounts. They will be beyond effective arrow shot.

Follow Fleeing Trollkin (10w): Keen Eyesight, Fly, Run Fast

Any victory will result in the heroes being able to follow the Trollkin at a distance beyond effective missile combat range.

Aftermath

If the heroes manage to track the Trollkin back to their lair proceed to Scene 6.

Scene 5: Cattle Thieving Trollkin

Key Points: If the player-characters fail to find the trollkin lair within two days, then on Waterday (the day after Freezeday) another raid will occur.

From a peasant will run into the sheriff's office: "I've been running all day. Monsters on giant flying bugs stole three of my cattle! I followed them and saw where they went! They came from Notch Hill. Some neighbors have missing pigs and goats, and I'll bet the bugs took them too! What can we do?"

"I can show you the place!"

From the sheriff: "Mayhap these buggers are the same ones who stole your friend. Maybe your friend is dead, and maybe he ain't, but at least you can avenge him!"

The Setting - The Sheriff's Office

The Sheriff's office is located in the center of the village. It is a large stone building that serves as both a dwelling place and meeting hall. The gnarled oak door leads

into a large hall with a great fire pit in the center of the dirt floor.

The Action

The farmer will lead the heroes off to the east of town. After travelling for a short distance they will come upon the dinosaur carcass and Notch Hill.

Aftermath

The heroes should follow the farmer to Notch Hill and Scene 6.

Scene 6: The Clash

Key Points: Eventually, therefore, the player-characters will come to Notch Hill and a confrontation with the bandit Trollkin.

The Setting - Notch Hill

Notch Hill is a good-sized hill with double peaks. There is little vegetation on it, and it is eroded. On the far side of the hill sprawls a brontosaur carcass at least six months dead. The flesh reeks terribly. The head is caught in a tree.

The Action

The heroes may wish to scout the location from a distance.

Scout from a Distance (12): Good Eyesight, Scan

If the heroes succeed in this action, they will make out a large pile of dead animals beside the dinosaur and beside it a huge pile of manure with feeding giant flies on it.

Each five rounds that the heroes are within 40 meters of the carcass, they must attempt the following action.

Withstand Vile Odor (17): Strong Stomach, Brave (-5), Poor Sense of Smell

If they fail in this action, they are overcome by the stench of the carcass, and suffer a -5 hindrance for the next five rounds, when they must roll again. This modifier reflects physical nausea and cannot be dispelled.

If the players draw closer, the trollkin lookout will screech, and the flies will take off and land on the dinosaur's head and in the tree. Five trollkin will board the insects and fly to the attack.

These flying trollkin will engage the players in combat when near the lair. The fly-riders will remain behind the tree and dinosaur, where they cannot be attacked by missile fire or spells, until the heroes get within 20 meters of the carcass.

Two trollkin will fire missiles from the dinosaur's skull, and giant maggots from the pile of animal corpses will swarm out and attack.

The trollkin are reasonably brave and will not hesitate to fight to the death if necessary, though they will certainly flee if outmatched, if possible. They may run away if overcome, but they will not surrender.

The trollkin cannot use their heavy crossbows while flying the flies, so they will leave all the crossbows behind with the carcass defenders. Before they fly out (long before the heroes are close enough to do anything) the trollkin put a dose of spider venom on one crossbow bolt per crossbow, and on two of their darts each, using up all their spider venom (they feel they can always steal more later). If the players give up and come back later, the trollkin then will more spider venom stocked up.

The flying trollkin will first use their Arrow of Night fetish on a poisoned dart and throw it. In the same round they will throw a second, unpoisoned dart. The next round they will first use their Arrow of Night fetish on another poisoned dart. Then, they will either close to melee or (more likely) they will fly back to the dinosaur head and get more darts.

Aftermath

Once the exterior defenders have been driven off or defeated the heroes should proceed onto Scene 7.

Scene 7: In the Belly of the Beast

Key Points: To rescue their kidnapped friend the heroes must enter into the confines of the dinosaur carcass, and face the leaders of the Trollkin band.

The Setting - Inside the Dinosaur Carcass

A large opening allows access to the interior of the dinosaur carcass. Within the smell is overpowering, and a deep blackness surrounds you. Congealed blood and fat drip from the tissue overhead, and pools of putrescent matter puddle in the rancid flesh beneath your feet. Narrow passages lead deeper into the creature forcing you to walk hunched over and in single file. Map at end of document

The Action

Except for carrion-eaters like hyenas, vultures, and flies, animals refuse to go near the carcass. If the heroes force their mounts, for instance, they must succeed in the following action each round or they can do nothing but control their animal that round.

Control Animal (1w): Ride, Command Animal

Once the heroes fight their way into the dinosaur carcass, they will need light of some sort. Since a torch may well go out in the dripping interior of a bloated brontosaur, any hero holding a torch must succeed in the following action each round he holds the torch and engages in combat.

Keep Torch Lit (1w): Lucky, Agile

If the hero fails the roll, the torch goes out. Lanterns and Light spells will work, but if a lantern is dropped and breaks, it always goes out and leaves no burning pool (the brontosaur is non-flammable).

No unintelligent, non-carrion eater will go inside the carcass, preferring injury instead (remember, most mammals have much better senses of smell than humans do). Familiars will go near the carcass if ordered, but they will suffer the same modifiers as the heroes.

When the heroes go inside the carcass, they will have an automatic -5 hindrance in combat because of the overpowering rank odor within.

In addition, each round in which the characters engage in melee, they must attempt the following action.

Withstand Vile Odor (5w): Strong Stomach, Brave (-5), Poor Sense of Smell

Any failure will result in the hero being so incapacitated that they may not attack at all. Any defense is at -5 their normal target number.

Missile weapons cannot be effectively used within the carcass except at point-blank range.

The passages within the dinosaur are very narrow. Only one person at a time can pass through one, and then only if hunched over.

The maggots will not attack heroes inside the dinosaur. Maggots are not smart, but giant maggots have (comparatively) giant brains, and are as trainable as a rather stupid dog or horse. Inside the dinosaur lurk Xoroho and seven or more trollkin, who will try to ambush the player-characters or otherwise obstruct them. The trollkin are reasonably brave and will not hesitate to fight to the death if necessary, though they will certainly flee if outmatched, if possible. They may run away if overcome, but they will not surrender.

The trollkin within the dinosaur will fire poisoned crossbow bolts on their first shot, and then reload, shooting unpoisoned bolts. All trollkin within the carcass have at least one crossbow with a poisoned bolt, and when the adventurers manage to get inside, they will melee by first firing their poisoned crossbows, then drop them and get out their spears. The trollkin figure that if they can hit their foe well with their first shot, they won't have to worry about return blows.

Aftermath

The captive will be unconscious when found and will not revive until able to breath for at least five minutes outside the dinosaur. The heroes will have earned the respect, and loyalty of the victim and his entire family.

Nesretep, Trollkin Warrior of Kyger Litor and Gorakiki-Fly

Keywords: Trollkin, Warrior, Initiate of Kyger Litor, Initiate of Gorakiki-Fly

Significant Abilities: Eat Anything 14, Hungry 16, Nimble 12, Resist Poison 10, Bully Worker or Food Trollkin 18, Close Combat 5w, Dodge 14, Hide 14, Ranged Combat 12, Search for Food 14, Move Quietly 17, Scan 17, Ride Fly 1w.

Weapons: Crossbow ^5, Spear ^1, Sling ^3.

Affinities:

Council of Eight (Absorb Magic, Blind Foe, Command Fear Spirit, Counter Chaos Talent, See in Daylight, True Maul) All feats are improvised.

Armor: Leather Armor and Small Shield ^1

Magic: 4 Fetishes, Arrow of Night: Might 17, Cry of Pain: Might 12, Healing: Might 12, and Protection: Might 17

Xoroho, Dark Troll Healer of Xiola Umbar

Keywords: Troll, Nurse, Devotee of Xiola Umbar

Significant Abilities: Acute Darksense 12, Eat Anything 14, Hungry 15, Large 15, Move Silently 12, Resist Poison 12, Strong 14, First Aid 17, Gentle Touch 17, Brew Healing Potion from Fungus 17, Create Medicine From Insects 17, Midwife 17, Recognize Illness 17, Intimidate Patient 1W, Mythology of Xiola Umbar 17, Treat Disease 17 Close Combat 14, Missile Combat 14.

Affinities:

Heal Wound 1w (Heal Burn, Heal Chaos Wound, Heal Injury, Regenerate Quickly, Stop Dying)

Relieve Pain 17 (Calm Distress, Comfort Song, Diminish Fear, Sooth Anger, Transfer Birth Pains to Mate)

Dark Protector 5W (Capture Attention of Foe, Defend Group, Shield of Darkness, Turn Blow Against Wielder)

Armor: Medium Shield ^1

Weapons: Mace ^3, Spear ^3

Giant Maggots

The larvae of giant flies are leathery white maggots that are actually larger than the adults. They usually hatch inside giant corpses or piles of refuse, and remain there until they pupate. They strike out blindly against anything which disturbs them, but are not active hunters. The conditions in which they live are usually so foul smelling, opponents with a sense of smell are likely to suffer a large handicap to most of their abilities to reflect their nausea.

Combat tactics: The maggots will attack any non-trollkin (except for Xoroho) that passes near their dung heap. Inside the dinosaur, the maggots will not attack the heroes. The maggots are not smart, but giant maggots have (comparatively) giant brains, and are trainable as a rather stupid dog or horse.

24 Giant Maggot

Significant Abilities: Large 12

Weapons: Bite 18²

Armor: Leathery Chitin ¹

10 Trollkin

Significant Abilities: Eat Anything 14, Hungry 16, Nimble 12, Resist Poison 10, Bully Worker or Food Trollkin 18, Close Combat 14, Dodge 14, Hide 14, Ranged Combat 12, Search for Food 14, Move Quietly 17, Scan 17.

Weapons: Spear ¹, Sling ³.

Armor: Leather Armor and Small Shield ¹

Magic: 2 Fetishes, Web of Confusion: Might 12 and Darkspear: Might 12

10 Trollkin Fliers

Significant Abilities: Eat Anything 14, Hungry 16, Nimble 12, Resist Poison 10, Bully Worker or Food Trollkin 18, Close Combat 14, Dodge 14, Hide 14, Ranged Combat 12, Search for Food 14, Move Quietly 17, Scan 17, Ride Fly 17.

Weapons: Crossbow: ⁵, Spear ¹, Sling ³.

Armor: Leather Armor and Small Shield ¹

Magic: 2 Fetishes, Arrow of Night: Might 12 and Cry of Pain: Might 12

Giant Flies

Of the several species of giant fly, this is the only one to be domesticated and is used as an aerial riding animal by a couple of trollkin cults. Giant bluebottles eat rotting organic matter or the nectar from giant flowers, and lack any biting mouth-parts. Dung flies, flesh flies, warble flies and hover flies are all common in troll lands as well, and are also harmless to humans. Females normally lay their eggs in the

carcasses of large animals such as dinosaurs, but any suitable pile of dead organic matter will suffice.

Trolls who breed the animals use middens full of troll and giant beetle dung to hold the eggs and larvae. Some small cults let trollkin ride these large insects, and they can teach their mount to vomit their stomach acids onto a target.

Combat tactics: Unless trained to do otherwise, a giant bluebottle will instinctively flee from any attack. If unable to flee, it might try to vomit on an opponent, but can do this only once per hour, and with no great accuracy.

10 Giant Flies

Significant Abilities: Aerobatics 5W, Dodge Attack 2W, Fly Fast 2W, Spot Food 2W, Strong 12

Weapons: Vomit Acid 10³

Armor: Chitin ¹

Poisoned weapons

The trollkin have applied newly-milked spider venom to some of their weapons. This poison is Debilitating and Lethal, with a potency of 17. A weapon remains poisoned for a single exchange, the poison has then worn off. A new dose cannot be applied to the weapon during a contest.

