



River Raiders

We begin with the adventurers aboard a trade vessel travelling downriver toward Rivertown. The journey takes them past the shadow of the ominous Wraith Woods and the ruined spires of Fortua, with the crew uneasy as fog gathers over the swift-moving waters. As night falls, raiders emerge from the mist in spiked canoes, using jars of fireflies to mark and confuse their approach before ramming the ship and boarding. A tense battle erupts, resolved through a dynamic countdown: if the adventurers succeed, they fight off the raiders and manage to beach the damaged ship with the help of the crew, while failure sees the raiders plunder supplies before the vessel sinks, forcing the party to swim ashore exhausted and stressed.

How to read this Zine

The below boxes is how I break up and display content for this adventure. It's not a in depth adventure guide with hundreds of pages of lore, tables and numbers but should be enough to get you going weith Daggerheart.

These boxes are generally narrative - Coloured on the right to help identify what we read out to progress the narrative.

This is generally a DM prompt. A mechanic, or something we need to be aware of. The darker colour on the right hand side signifies this.

GM Guidance:

I put notes for how to enhance the scene, to set the narrative or to enhance the game play.
The important part is here in bold: Generally an explanation or prompts as to why, how, what or when.

Encounter - Reference (name)

If there are rules for the encounter I put them in a DM box.

- Success

What does success look like, what does it do. Generally paired with a narrative box too.

- Failure

What does failure look like, what is a consequence (not the only one!). Generally paired with a narrative box too.

Adversary and Environment blocks will be represented similarly most of the time. There will be subtle differences but I will have most of the information s tored in a easy to read format. Additional notes may be found in a DM Box.

Adversary / Environment Name	Type / Tier
Difficulty: # Thresholds: x/y HP: # Stress: # ATK: + # Weapon: Range xdy + n Phy/mag	
Feature	
Feature description	

GM Principles:

These are the **Principles that I put heavy emphasis on, in order of significance to me.** This is how I would suggest running this adventure.

- 1. Ask Questions and Incorporate Answers:**
 - The players have just as much creative say in the worlds that we create with them, not for them. Let them have the reigns frequently and with glee.
- 2. Collaborate at All Times:**
 - This is a shared narrative of GM and Player, not adversarial. We set challenges that they will overcome and create a truly amazing narrative!
- 3. Begin and End with the Fiction:**
 - Goes hand in hand with my #1 and #2. This is a narrative style TTRPG system and this multi-act adventure sets us up for a great story.
- 4. Give Every Roll Impact.**
 - This one is interesting. Don't make them roll for things they don't need to. Make sure that you make the rolls count as it could be seen as fishing for Fear or Hope.
- 5. Fill the World with Life, Wonder and Danger**
 - This adventure has life at every turn. It also is filled to the brim with danger and chances of discovery and wonderment. Highlight this narrative to the players to help them get fully emersed.
- 6. Hold on Gently.**
 - Be flexible. If they want to try a peaceful alternative to a solution, let them and Pivot!
- 7. Play to Find out What Happens.**
 - This is something I'd encourage you to ask your players. One-shot Zines can feel very scripted but set the goal, lay the scene before them let them traverse through it. This is a mutual agreement for us to not force them into an outcome, but they also need to want be involved.

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River Raiders

Read out to the Players

The currents carries your vessel steadily downstream, its waters dark from the shadow of the Wraith Woods on the far bank. The trade ship creaks and groans as it pushes forward, its cargo lashed down beneath canvas tarps. Its more well paying cargo are on the deck and watching the fireflies play above the waters surface amongst the reeds and the evening fob that are creeping in.

You are bound for Rivertown, a bustling hub of trade, but before you lies danger: the river narrows, churning as it winds downstream, in the distance the last rays of the setting sun catch the edge of the ruins of Fortua, jagged stone towers broken against the sky.

The crew mutters uneasily. The woods and ruins are places of ill omen. But tonight, the river seems calm as the fog creeps in.

Preparing for the Raiders attack

When the players examine or investigate describe the following, but also ask the below question line.

The current speeds up. Fog rolls heavy over the water, obscuring the banks and veiling the surface. Fireflies cluster in swarms along the reeds, their lights strange and shifting.

Ask the table: What is the weird sound that you heard? Why is it so strange to hear it in this part of the woods? Incorporate their answer into the narrative (GM principle 1).

The current speeds up. Fog rolls heavy over the water, obscuring the banks and veiling the surface. Fireflies cluster in swarms along the reeds, their lights strange and shifting. Those strange sounds continue, sporadic and unnaturally so. Soon a pattern emerges and a heavy feeling sinks into your chest.

How does the party react? If someone checks the surroundings read the following narrative.

The current pulls at the vessel, the waves beating against the hull as if it tries to drag it down further into the water. As you search for the source of the sounds you heard you notice the clusters of fireflies have moved and are swiftly rushing towards the side of the vessel at an angle. A gap in the fog reveals the truth. Several low, thin and swift canoe with large sharpened spikes attached to the head of the boat is rushing out of the fog. The boat is manned by several men and women dressed in dark clothes holding jars of fireflies in the hands that aren't holding a weapon.

GM Guidance:

Pacing the Scene: Start eerie and quiet, then burst into sudden chaos once the canoes strike.

Ask Questions to Draw Them In:

- “What about the sound you heard chills you most?”
- “Who among the crew looks to you for protection?”
- “What do you notice about the raiders that hints at their origin?”



Read the following out loud

The crunch of steel into wood and the shudder your ship is sudden and that sickening feeling in your chest grows deeper. However, swiftly before you the warriors, the raiders, that you saw on the canoes just moments before.

They brandish their weapons and impale the fire-fly lanterns into the hull of your ship as they prepare to fight as more thuds and calls from the darkening river indicate that this is just the initial force

Encounter - River Raiders

Dynamic Countdown (5)

- Progress Countdown: Adventurers defend the vessel and steer it toward safety.
- Consequence Countdown: Raiders plunder and the ship succumbs to the current

River Raider	Standard - Tier 1
Difficulty: 13 Thresholds: 5/10 HP: 3 Stress: 2 ATK:+1 Scimitar: Melee 1d8+1 Phy	

Savage raider - Reaction

When the River Raider enters close range of an enemy for the first time, they can immediately move into melee with a target and make an attack against them. On a success they deal 1d8+5 physical damage instead of their standard damage and the target loses a hope.

- Success

The party are successful and have managed to fend off the attack from the raiders. Though their ship has sustained heavy damage they believe they can at least get it to the river banks before it sinks and its cargo, including them, are lost to the rapid currents of the river.

One of the raiders lets out a sharp whistle; a signal to retreat. The survivors dive overboard, swallowed by the churning river. The ship groans, timbers cracking, as the captain, bloodied but unbowed calls out “We’re sinking!”

Crew, captain, and adventurers alike seize oars and paddles, straining against the current. With desperate effort, the vessel scrapes its way onto a muddy bank. The raiders are gone, and you live, though the ship will never sail again.

- Failure

The party are not successful Each party member rolls 1d4 and they suffer half the result rounded up in stress damage.

With joyous cries, several raiders topple barrels, crates, and valuables into their waiting canoes. Your attention is torn away as the ship lurches.

A jagged crack; splintering wood beneath your feet, and then chaos. The vessel slams against something hidden below the surface. The hull tears open. Water rushes in. The deck splits. In a heartbeat, you are pitched into the river.

GM Guidance:

- Let the raiders feel dangerous and strange:** their eerie lanterns, their cries echoing across the fog.
- Use the fog and fireflies as cinematic description to make each failure feel urgent:** rope lines pulled taut, the ship listing, strange light seeping into the mist.
- Use Failures as Escalation:** Describe the hull cracking, raiders swarming, the tiller spinning loose. Each setback should heighten urgency.
- Allow creative player actions:** pushing cargo overboard to rebalance the ship, rallying the crew, or seizing a lantern to drive fear back at the raiders.
- Remember: the raiders will always retreat** — the outcome is whether the adventurers reach shore on their terms, or the river decides for them.