

THE DM TOOL CHEST

A SIMPLE BARGAIN

RETRIEVE THE MAGICAL BLADE FROM
THE HOUSE OF THE GIANT-KIN





A SIMPLE BARGAIN



Simple Bargain is a Fifth Edition adventure intended for **three to five characters of 7th to 10th level** and optimized for **four characters with an average party level (APL) of 8**. The characters come across the local

recruiting agent for a steal-to-order organisation known only as The Procurers. The leader of which is a quietly dangerous fiend who uses infernal contracts to blackmail unsuspecting characters into obtaining exceptional items for their clients. The characters enter the service of The Procurers and must return with the Sun Blade that is currently in the possession of a clan of cyclopes that live in a formerly secret estate in the nearby mountains. This adventure takes place in the [FREELANDS CAMPAIGN SETTING](#) but fits into any existing campaign with only a few modifications and name changes.

BACKSTORY

The Glozug clan of cyclopes has moved around between various mountains for centuries. They have come and gone between their hidden estates to reduce the appetite of monster hunters. On their last move, the family was tracked, and the adults led off their pursuers while the young children continued on and made it to the house. Sadly their parents did not return, and that was a decade ago. One of the children was born differently, being conjoined twins - an ettin called Bakroz and Batroz. Growing up without their parents, shut off from the world made them anxious. Their brothers Tentruck, Ventruk, Altruk did the majority of the hunting in the surrounding woodlands, as Bakroz and Batroz were always tripping one another up. One day the ettin ran into a large cloaked creature in the forest – this was an oni, who sensed the childish discontent and

saw an opportunity to manipulate them for their own ends. The oni convinced the ettin that they could give Bakroz and Batroz their dream of making them into separate cyclopes – they said they just needed to develop the right magic, and for that they would need a few things. For the past year, two oni have had the Glozug clan raid nearby settlements for gold, materials, and magical items to help further the magical development. The most recent “acquisition” was a Sun Blade that was previously enshrined in a monastery a week’s journey away. These raids have made local organisations aware of the previously secret clan house – most notably a steal-to-order “merchants guild” called only The Procurers. They had been hired to deliver that same Sun Blade to a private collector but didn’t want to risk a full-on assault against such dangerous adversaries. So they did what any shady organisation would – they went looking to hire grunts to do the heavy lifting for them.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The characters find themselves recruited by a well-paying “merchant guild,” secretly The Procurers. They are trapped by an infernal contract to retrieve the Sun Blade from the cyclopes within a week or forfeit their souls.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Here are a few ways to get your characters hooked into this adventure:

Something’s Fishy. In the local tavern, you overheard somebody called The Sergeant chatting with a couple of folks who looked to have thick arms and thin wallets. You see him leave with his arms conspiratorially around their shoulders.

The Rot at the Core of our Fair Town. The mayor of the town has been tracking the emergence of an insidious organisation. The characters have been tasked with infiltrating them to find out something that can bring them down. Their recruiter is known as The Sergeant and is often found working the local taverns. It didn't take long to get a job offer.

Easy Money. In the local tavern, you overheard somebody called The Sergeant chatting with a couple of folks who looked to have thick arms and thin wallets. Later on, after sizing you up, he came over with a fresh round of ales and told you about an exciting opportunity - easy money for such capable characters.

GETTING THE QUEST

However the characters get hooked into the quest, The Sergeant (a human **spy**) makes it clear that Bub will want to tell the specifics of the job in person - it's just around the corner at The Sugared Apple, a seedier tavern with some private rooms that nobody asks questions about. When the characters first step outside, read aloud the following:

The evening air is cool on your face and the cobbles sound loud underfoot as the night seems to shrink away from you. It's only a short walk to The Sugared Apple - and it is as seedy as its reputation implies. Going inside, you see a smokey interior lit by candles on tables and in braces on pillars. There are a few customers dotted around, but The Sergeant makes straight for a side door to a private room. As the drape over the doorway is pulled back, a lit fireplace can be seen in the centre of the opposite wall. At a table in the corner, there is a figure with a cowl up over their head, writing in a large ledger.

THE SUGARED APPLE

The Sugared Apple is one of the seedier taverns of the town, with some private rooms that nobody asks questions about. Open at all hours, there are constant comings and goings that the local watch doesn't look at too closely for the most part.

GENERAL FEATURES

These general features are prominent throughout The Sugared Apple unless otherwise noted in the area descriptions.

Ceilings, Floors, and Walls. The ceiling is 25 feet high in the main bar, 15 feet high in the side rooms, and 10 feet high in the corridors. The floors are rough stonework, but the walls and ceilings are soot-stained wood.

Doors. There are heavy fabric drapes over the doorway to the main bar and a wooden door leading to a back alley behind the tavern.



BUB

Lights. There is dim light throughout provided by the candles and the glow of the hearth.

Unusual Features. Above the table, hanging from the tusks of a wild boar bust above the table with the cowled figures are medallions on red ribbons.

BUB'S DEAL

If the characters were with The Sergeant, then they are simply ushered into the side room. If they were following The Sergeant with others, then after a minute, the characters see a dozen gruff-looking humans stand up and look at them, just as The Sergeant pulls back the drape and invites them in. Read aloud the following:

As you enter, you catch sight of two richly cloaked individuals in opposite corners of the room, but their presence is overshadowed by a third hooded individual by the fire. She pulls back the hood back from over her head, and you see a human noblewoman dressed in a decadent lace dress. She smiles warmly as she greets you all: "Well met, friends. I am Bub, Princess of The Autumn Vale and leader of The Procurers. If you've come here recommended by none other than The Sergeant, then you must be very capable indeed! Please sit and let me tell you of the bargain we propose. Can I get you anything to drink?"

Bub is, in fact, a **rakshasa** with a *disguise-self* spell cast on her. The two other cloaked figures are sat at separate tables to either side. One is a female tiefling **mage**, and one is a female human **archmage**. Their cloaks are ornately embellished and look immaculate despite the soot and dirt in the air. A successful DC19 Wisdom (Perception) check allows a character to notice that there are occasional but powerful arcane sigils woven in

amongst the design of the embroidery of the mages' clothes. There are no weapons in sight other than the sword sheathed at The Sergeant's side as he slouches against the doorpost where the characters entered. None of the cloaked figures will shake hands, shrinking back apologetically if attempted, but will nod in acknowledgment of any introductions. Bub will tell The Sergeant to organise any food or drink requested by the characters.

The mages, while not threatening, are ominous. There is an air of arrogant calmness about them which lets the characters know that they probably do not have the upper hand in this environment. The mages do not say or do anything beyond responding to any threat from the characters while talking to Bub. They will each raise a hand with gathering magical energy at any perceived threat or intimidation, with Bub making a gesture for them to relax. The mages will counterspell any magical aggression and cast a wall of force in response to any physical act of aggression, enclosing the party and holding threatening magical energy in their hands while Bub calms the situation down. Bub had the **archmage** cast a *mind blank* spell on her earlier in the evening.

Bub will inquire after the characters' background and skills until any refreshments arrive before steering the conversation back towards business. She outlines a bargain for the characters to consider and will answer any reasonable questions from them.

What Bub will tell the characters:

- A band of monsters raided a nearby monastery and stole a sacred relic - a Sun Blade.
- The monsters have been responsible for similar attacks in the region over the past month.
- The monsters are thought to be cyclopes.
- The blade needs to be found, and a reward is offered if returned in 7 days.
- The reward is 2400 gp.
- The reward will only be paid to official medallion carrying members of a suitable merchant guild - that means your true names must be used.
- The Procurers are recognised as an exclusive merchant guild.
- An advance of 100 gp per character is available.

These statements are all essentially true, though there is more meaning to many of them than their plain reading. They should all be given to the characters, but the order is optional. Bub is an expert negotiator, and any haggling over the reward requires a character to make a legitimately persuasive argument. Still, she may agree to increase the reward by up to 500 gp per character if a character succeeds on a DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check.

THE SIGNING

Once the characters agree, read the following aloud:

Bub smiles warmly and opens the large ledger you saw when you entered. She turns to a blank page and, with a quill and ink on the table beside her, begins to write out the joining contract for membership of The Procurers. The script is elegant but dense and difficult to read. This isn't helped by the complex words she uses, despite it being in Common. She finishes a minute or so later and pushes it gently across the table to you. You can see that there is a space for each of you to write your true names and indicate your agreement. It takes some deciphering, but you determine that all of the terms written are as agreed.

Allow the characters to make any checks they wish to verify that there is no trickery going on. In response to this, or when they have finished, read the following aloud:

Bub points to the last clause with an outstretched finger and looks at each of you in the eyes as she says, "There is one last thing you should take note of so that we're all on the same page... Note that this last point here says, 'The members do so agree to render the item unto The Procurers within the allotted time, under pain of removal from The Procurers and their displeasure forever more.' I hope you can understand that you only get one shot at an opportunity like this. Fair enough? Sign, and we'll make it official," she says and stands up to pull down some of the medallions from the tusks of the boar adorning the wall. She is smiling and looks to be waiting to hand one to each of you ceremonially. "These are the mark of The Procurers and will make sure you aren't interfered with. Don't worry, you can wear them under your clothes!"

The medallions are empty vessels to deposit souls into as a form of currency used in the hells, and as soon as they are accepted, the characters' soul is marked to be bound to it pending the outcome of the contract. Again, Bub will smile and nod to acknowledge each character, but no hands are shaken. She bids the characters all good fortune and tells them that The Sergeant can make sure they find their way.

The Sergeant holds open the drapes for the characters all to leave and congratulates them warmly. He will take them drinking for several more hours if they agree or arranges to meet them whenever they choose to depart. He plans to serve as their guide, and it is just about a day's travel on horseback from here to the place in the mountains they think is, and horses and a wagon can be arranged if required (The Procurers will take care of it).

GLOZUG CLAN HOUSE

1 Square = 5 Feet



THE GLOZUG CLAN HOUSE

The journey is relatively uneventful, with good roads and tracks taking the characters most of the way there. It is only the last hour in the foothills that they need to travel on foot. The Sergeant leads the character's onwards and points out a crag in a fold of the mountains that seems slightly darker than the rest. "We've seen them go in there." The Sergeant climbs with you to reach it and leaves you at the dark entrance to the tunnel leading inside the mountain, saying that he'll keep watch here.

GENERAL FEATURES

These general features are prominent throughout The Glozug Clan House unless otherwise noted in the area descriptions:

Ceilings, Floors, and Walls. The ceilings are 25 feet high in the tunnel and 40 feet high throughout the

house, where large skylights (each with at least one pane shattered) are present in every room except underground. The floors and walls are dressed stone in giant-sized pieces.

Doors. The doors are 25 feet high and 20 feet wide, made from heavy wood with iron reinforcement and hinges.

Windows. Except for the stained-glass windows, all other windows are open, with 2-inch diameter partially rusty iron bars set in them. The bars are spaced enough for creatures to get an arm between them, but only Tiny creatures can pass through. Despite the rust, the bars are too strong to be broken by non-magical means.

Lights. There is bright light throughout except in the tunnel and the underground shrine, where there is no light.

Climate. There is the drone of constant wind this high up in the mountains, and the air outside has

moisture from the lake below to the North, though it hasn't rained here in the past week.

Special Circumstances. It is not possible to take a long rest in the Clan House during this adventure.

Depending on the circumstances, this could be due to the wind whistling through broken skylight panes, the friendly but inane chattering of any non-hostile inhabitants, or the loud squeaking of happy rats munching on the corpses of any fallen.

BEHAVIOUR OF THE RESIDENTS

The actions of the characters drive the general behaviour of the creatures within The Glozug Clan House. This means the action could happen anywhere throughout the location. The following guidance on their motivations and actions applies throughout:

The Oni (2): Unbeknownst to all.

The **oni** want to use the **ettin** and **cyclopes** to gather magical items to gather the magical energy needed to create an Orb of Control that would allow them to cast *dominate person* spells at will. Only the **ettin** knows that they are **oni**, the other **cyclopes** believe that they are human **magics** who have agreed to help their brother try and separate. The **oni** wants to get the characters to leave peacefully as soon as possible and keep them out of The Ritual Chamber (Area 6). The butler **oni** will stay hidden and in human form until after any combat has initiated, and even then, will pretend to flee in human form to get into a more advantageous position. In battle, **oni** will cast a *cone of cold* spell or turn invisible to retrieve their giant glaive from the weapon racks in Area 2 and attack wherever they think the characters are weakest. They can fly and have a reach weapon. They will flee immediately if they see the **ettin** or the other **oni** is killed, regardless of what form they are in - casting gaseous form to escape through barred windows or flying away if getting outside is easier.

Treasure. The **oni** each have in the folds of their true form cloaks one from the following: a *potion of healing*, a 300 gp diamond.

The Ettin (1): Bakroz and Batroz.

The **ettin** wants the **oni** to succeed in their supposed ritual magic to split them. They have convinced their **cyclopes** brothers to do this for them but haven't told them the truth about who the **oni** are. They are nervous and try to convince the characters to leave - but they disagree about how to do this! One head is trying to be aggressive while the other says their "guests" can see they are a peaceful clan and that they should look around if they don't believe them and then leave. Arguments like this can go on until interrupted by another creature. The **ettin** will try to accompany the characters if they wander around - and will not willingly unlock The Ritual Chamber (Area 6) initially, though they are clearly wearing the key on a chain. Persuasion works best on the **ettin**, and complex logical arguments can confuse them into submission. The **ettin** will

immediately defend the **oni** to the death in response to any significant hostile act towards the **oni**, themselves, or the **cyclopes** that they observe. The **ettin** will always prioritise the perpetrator of the last hostile act against the **oni** which is in range, even if it's one of his **cyclops** brothers.

The Cyclopes (1-3): Tentruk, Ventruk, Altruk.

The **cyclopes** want their brother the **ettin** to be happy, but they are dismissive of the disguised **oni** as "strange little humans". Some may follow the **ettin** around the estate. They do not respond to any act of hostility solely directed towards an **oni** in human form. They will immediately defend themselves and the **ettin** against any act of hostility and fight to the death, attempting to block the escape of any hostile creature. They will charge towards any sound of battle if they are not immediately involved. **Treasure.** Each **cyclops** have assorted discarded food items and bones amongst their clothing as well as giant sized hunting gear and knives that would be worth 200 gp to the right buyer.

KEYED LOCATIONS

The following descriptions correspond to the keyed locations on the provided map of The Glozug Clan House:

1. THE ENTRANCE TUNNEL

The tunnel leads inside the mountain for 15 minutes, and is largely consistent in shape despite being rough-hewn. After the last bend, you find a very large wooden door - with iron bracing and handles. It certainly appears that this is a place built for creatures much larger than yourselves.

There is no knocker or key-hole on the door, but a successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check will reveal that the door is secured by a latch, which can be lifted quietly by a character proficient in thieves' tools that succeeds on a DC 13 Dexterity check. A failure will also lift the latch but noisily. If the party is unable or unwilling to open the door, or after they attack it in some way, then their efforts will be heard or any light they have seen through the crack in the door, prompting a somewhat timid male voice to politely enquire if there are visitors.

2. THE RECEPTION HALL

If the characters opened the door, the butler is at the top of the stairs closing the door to Area 4 and will turn to the characters. Otherwise, the butler opens the door. Either way, read aloud the following:

A middle-aged human man in plain but clean clothing regards you as you emerge through the doorway. They

hurry in front of you and open their arms in greeting. "Please come in, and I'll let the masters know that you're here at once. I didn't know we were expecting company! Whom should I announce?" Taking in the room behind, you can see unlocked but closed heavy double doors like the ones you just came through to the East and West and another set to the North up a few steps. On the far wall, there are two weapon racks full of all manner of giant-sized weapons in various states of repair, and an ornate design has been engraved in the middle of the dressed stone floor.

Encounter: The Butler. He will tell the characters that his name is A'Fred - he is, in fact, an **oni** that has polymorphed into this appearance. The design in the centre of the floor is giantish and tells of the history of the Glozug Clan for the past 1200 years. The giant glaives of the **oni** are held in the weapon racks.

Treasure. There is a normal-sized *+1 greatsword* in one of the racks. The other weapons are all giant-sized, and all weigh in excess of 500 lbs.

3. EXPERIMENTATION CHAMBER

The door opens, and you can immediately feel warmth against your skin. Inside, you can see two plinths with pulsing pillars of light 12 feet high bobbing gently above them, one red and one blue. There is a swirling and crackling energy to the air here, and it seems that motes of energy are forming and dissipating at random. Some of these motes appear to coalesce into a vapour being drawn into circular panels mounted in the near corners of the room. As you look down, you see markings in the same language as the reception hall, but these look much more haphazard, perhaps scratched without tools.

The writing is in giantish and gives a running account of energy captured over the past six months, with notes on ideas of how to improve efficiency - but the details seem to be very specific and not meaningful to anybody not involved in whatever this is. Detect magic will register strongly as Transmutation. If asked, the butler will report that they only know that this is where the outsiders are doing their work and that it's best to stay clear of it. A captured Oni could explain that they were building a reserve of energy for powerful magics to perform a big ritual - they would seek to trade this knowledge for their freedom.

Hazard: Energy Lights. Touching either the circular panels or the cylinders of light on the plinths causes motes of light to materialise and leap towards the character. They must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw to avoid being struck, taking 9 (2d8) lightning damage and 9 (2d8) necrotic damage on a failed save

and half as much damage on a successful one. They do not see the threat coming for the purposes of feats or class features. Regardless, they have a faint glow of the corresponding colour for the next minute.

Hazard: Completing the Circuit. Anybody standing or moving directly between the two cylinders of light must make a DC 19 Dexterity saving throw to avoid being struck, taking 18 (4d8) lightning damage and 18 (4d8) necrotic damage on a failure, and half as much on a success. They do not see the threat coming for the purposes of feats or class features. Additionally, a great flash of light occurs as opposite motes of energy annihilate against each other, and they will lose their highest available spell slot (or half of their available hit dice if they have none) and collapse unconscious for one minute. This effect can only be triggered once, and the victim can be safely retrieved without threat.

The butler will attempt to help in any reasonable way requested by the characters if any of the hazards are encountered - they are biding their time.

4. THE PARENTS' STUDY

Food, a map of the region, a giant sword, and a brightly glowing orb all sit on the large desk on the Northern wall. The whole of that wall is bathed in a myriad of colours from the stained glass windows. Otherwise, the whole of the room is a bit of a mess, with spilled drinks and things no longer of interest just swept onto the floor. A large lit brazier stands in the corner with smoke trailing outside through a barred window. Standing on the large rug in the centre of the room you hear what reminds you of a family squabble, only bigger.

The map has a mark on it with a big "X." A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check will confirm that this is the location of the monastery where the blade was stolen from. Several other locations a similar distance away have also been marked, though not as prominently.

Encounter: Meet the Family. An **ettin** and a number of **cyclopes** are involved in an inane argument as you enter, but then all stop to turn and stare at you. Use 1 **cyclopes** for a normal adventure, 2 for a harder encounter, and 3 if you are supremely confident in managing the chaos of the **ettin** interfering with their brothers. Any brothers not there are out hunting for either food or more magic items.

Treasure. A *stone of good luck* is lying on the floor next to the wine rack, and anybody approaching will clearly see the unusual shine of the stone. The orb is clearly potent with magical energy and worth 1000 gp to those skilled in the arcane arts - the party do not know how to use it. Persistent attempts to destroy the orb will cause first cracking and dangerous-looking flashes of light, and if the characters continue the

attempt it will shatter, detonating as a 6th-level *fireball* spell.

5. OUTSIDE

The outside of the house has mossy grass growing wild over the whole area. There are several sturdy-looking trees here as well as large rocks, some of which appear to have been tossed around in some sort of juvenile contest. A four-foot-high wall separates you from a sheer drop down the cliff face to the lake below, which is enclosed by the mountains. There is no denying how beautiful the view is from here. Elsewhere there is an arched door that seems to lead to an underground chamber of some sort.

The **cyclopes** can throw the boulders as part of their attack but only once each, as the rocks break apart on any impact whether they hit their target or not.

5A. ACCOMMODATIONS

About fifty feet further to the east, you can see that there is a small (by giant standards) single-storey dwelling-house. Outside there are open barrels to collect rainwater. You can see through barred windows that there are several bedrooms, a kitchen, a pantry, and a common area. Things look sparse but clean throughout, with a few personal items scattered across beds and tables.

Treasure. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check will uncover a small bag of 12 diamonds worth 50 gp each left open on a table, and an empty *ring of spell storing* on a bedside table. The butler (if accompanying) will make no move to stop any theft, instead turning away and pretending not to see. Any of the **cyclopes** or **ettin** (if accompanying) will stop any theft they see, but will willingly relinquish them if the characters can pass a DC 21 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check. Grant advantage for any compelling argument offered. They cannot be intimidated, and will simply laugh at the culprit while snatching the items away.

This area should be drawn to the attention of the characters in the event that they have cleared the rest of the adventure.

5B. THE WESTERN BLUFF

To the west, the cliff face wraps around the Clan House, hiding it from view to the outside world. You don't appear to see anything of interest.

6. THE RITUAL CHAMBER

The door to what seems like an underground chamber is locked. It can be unlocked using the key that the ettin is wearing. When the adventures proceed, read the following aloud:

A few steps lead down to what is clearly a ritual chamber of some sort. A large stone altar, with a simple black runner on it dominates the room, in front of a mosaic that covers most of the Eastern wall. Atop the altar, you can clearly see the unmistakable shine of the Sun Blade, with a large horrific figure hunched over polishing it, and turns to regard you aghast before vanishing.

Encounter: Their True Form.

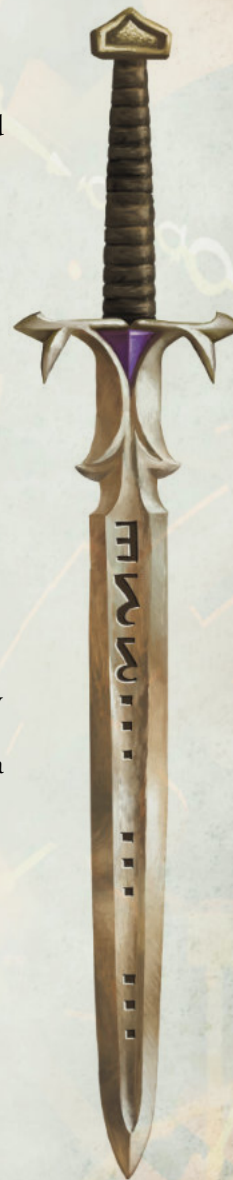
An **oni** in their true form was spotted by the party as they entered, which immediately turned invisible in the same spot.

The mosaic looks like it has been constructed by the **oni** and shows a scene of the pair of them dominating what bears an eerie resemblance to this whole kingdom.

CONCLUSION

The characters emerge from the cave entrance, and The Sergeant is nowhere in sight - he is, however, tracking them, and reporting their position back to Bub.

If the characters do not seek out Bub and have the Sun Blade - they will be found on the 7th day since they signed the contract, and Bub will reveal herself as a rakshasa and that the last line of the infernal contract they signed refers to their souls being forfeit. The characters will feel a sense of imminent emptiness and dread starting to settle upon them, as the medallions are telekinetically snatched from them by Bub's accompanying mages. She will offer them one final chance to honour the contract and will hand over the agreed amount and leave if they comply, as the feeling of dread recedes. If they don't comply, the full arsenal of the mages is unleashed along with her own magics to incapacitate the characters. The



blade is taken from them with the agreed amount left on top of one of the characters' prone bodies, rising and falling with their breath.

If the characters do not have the *Sun Blade* - Bub will find them and reveal herself as above but seeing they don't have the blade will produce the contract, which bursts into flame in her hand. The medallions are telekinetically snatched from them by Bub's accompanying mages as she leaves and calls over her shoulder, "No prize, no coin. You disappoint me."

If the s seek out Bub - she will honour the contract if the characters do, accepting no bargains or alternative offers. She will then allow the characters the choice to hand back their membership medallions or hang on to them in case they might be interested in further work. If they don't comply, she reveals herself as a rakshasa and the full arsenal of the mages is unleashed along with her own magics to incapacitate the characters. The blade along with their medallions are taken from them with the agreed amount left on top of one of the characters' prone body, rising and falling with their breath.

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