



THE DM TOOL CHEST

WRECK OF THE MINNOW

CAPTAIN GRISLY'S TREASURE HUNT PART I

FIFTH EDITION ADVENTURE

DISCOVER THE FATE OF *THE MINNOW* AND HUNT DOWN CAPTAIN GRISLY'S TREASURE



WRECK OF THE MINNOW

By Alex Lefort

Captain Grisly's *Treasure Hunt* is a Fifth Edition adventure for **three to six 5th to 6th level characters**, optimized for a party of **four 5th level characters**. This adventure is set on the mysterious Asboro, Isle of Oddities, but can be placed into any campaign with dangerous jungle environments. The infamous Captain Grisly, a fearsome pirate, is said to have buried his treasure on the Asboro, the Isle of Oddities. Rumor has it that the map to his treasure can be found on the island within the wreck of his ship, etched directly onto the shell of his beloved pet: a menacing caustic snail, which still roams the wreck in search of its master. What are the characters willing to risk for the chance at fabulous fortune? Can they brave the horrors of the shipwreck to recover the map? And once they have the map, where next will their search take them?

BACKGROUND

Captain Grisly had long promised to conquer Asboro, Isle of Oddities, and become the ruler of the strange island. After a lifetime of raiding and pillaging, Grisly was one of the first to seek to map the shores of the mysterious island, and whether or not he completed this task depends on which version of the story being told. Home to strange magical phenomena, bloodthirsty orcs, and threatening megafauna, Asboro had thus far resisted the attempts of outsiders to become too familiar with its geography. Most commonly, the story goes that Grisly chose Asboro as the place where he would bury his treasure, knowing that

such a mystifying and dangerous place would deter petty looters. Once the treasure was in the ground, Grisly etched a map to its location directly into the shell of his beloved pet; his caustic snail named Speedy. Having settled his wealth, the captain set off with his crew in their ship, *The Festering Minnow*, up the Twisted Channel, which bisects the island, in order to explore its innards. Exactly what happened next is subject to debate, but what is known is that *The Festering Minnow* lies wrecked in the morass surrounding Lake Dread. Some say it was torn apart by a terrible hydra lurking in the lake, while others speculate that the orcs within the jungle overpowered the crew before eating them alive. The latter version of the story approaches the truth, as *The Festering Minnow* ran aground, and it took months for the crew to perish as they were surrounded by feral orcs who picked off and slaughtered any crewmember who dared venture off the ship. The only surviving member of the expedition was Speedy the caustic snail, etched with Grisly's treasure map, who remains on the wreck to this day.

Years later, an intrepid group of explorers from the mainland established a basecamp on the south shore of the Asboro named Camp Bravery. Treasure hunters, adventurers, thrill junkies, and those with a death wish have come to the island to find what they seek. One such treasure hunter, a man named Silas, has ventured into the Asboro's jungles and has seen the wreck of *The Festering Minnow*. He has also seen that it is infested with the undead. Unable to recover Grisly's map from the wreck alone, he has returned to Camp Bravery to find adventurers willing to explore the wreck with him to recover the map to Grisly's

treasure. Though he will tell any adventurers that he'll likely need them to recover the treasure itself and is more than willing to split anything found, he plans to betray the party once the map is recovered and flee into the jungle on his own.

GETTING THE QUEST

While at Camp Bravery, the characters are approached by Silas (LE male human assassin), a bald, clean-shaven man who looks to be in his mid-thirties. Silas wears a sleeveless canvas shirt that displays his muscled arms and a wide-brimmed leather hat that protects him from the sun. He speaks captivatingly, with a smooth, deep voice and a charming smile. He speaks:

"Hey partners. Well, potential partners. My name's Silas. I've stumbled onto something quite lucrative that I can't pull off by myself, so I need to cut someone in. You folks look quite capable. You're obviously experienced. You give me a good feeling in my gut. Interested in potentially making a whole mess of money? It's not gonna be easy."

If the characters express interest, Silas explains that he's found the fabled *Festering Minnow*, the ship of Captain Grisly. He relays the information provided in the first paragraph of the "Background" section if the characters are not already familiar. He says that the wreck is inhabited, probably by the undead remains of the crew, and that he needs help clearing it out. Depending on the preferences of the characters, he is willing to either purchase the treasure map from them for a price of 500 gp, or have them travel with him to find the treasure itself, which they can split equally amongst themselves.

Silas makes every effort to be open and friendly, as he seeks to build a relationship with the party that he can eventually exploit. He is extremely hesitant, however, to reveal any information about the wreck's location so as to deter the party from attempting to find it without him. Silas would instead prefer to lead the party directly to the wreck himself, and this is a conundrum that he freely explains. "I can't give everything away to you, can I?" he says. A character who makes a successful DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion) check will convince Silas to divulge only that the wreck lies "somewhere near the south shore of Lake Dread".

ROLEPLAYING SILAS

If the party has agreed to work with Silas, he will accompany them through the jungle and their investigation of the wreck of *The Festering Minnow*. Silas oozes charisma and will do everything he can to make sure he is liked and trusted by the party. He tells them about his own backstory, of which many parts are entirely fabricated — as the eldest son to an esteemed noble, he ran away from home to avoid responsibility and live a life of adventure,

preferring to make his own name and fortune for himself, rather than inherit from his father. He will relay interesting and funny anecdotes, such as the time he fought off a shark with his own bare hands, or the time he soiled himself in front of a packed tavern after eating some bad stew. He will take every opportunity to ask the characters about their own backstories and their interests, such as where they're from, what has brought them to Asboro, and what they'd like to do with their money once they become fabulously rich. He shares his vulnerabilities with the characters if given the opportunity to do so in order to further build trust.

Silas is an assassin, though when fighting alongside the characters, he makes sure to pull his punches so as not to appear too capable and potentially threatening. To this end, he will not apply poison damage to his shortsword or use his Sneak Attack, and will routinely allow the party to take the spotlight in any combat encounters. Silas wears a *ring of misty step* (see the Appendix), though he does not use it until the right opportunity to betray the characters.

SEARCH FOR THE MINNOW

Whether the characters have decided to find the wreck of *The Festering Minnow* with or without Silas, the next stage of their quest will take them into the sweltering jungles that cover most of the island and surround Lake Dread. The southern shore of the lake is about a day's trek north from Camp Bravery, though the exact location of the wreck is unknown. Once the party is within a half-mile of the lake, they must make three successful DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) checks to locate the wreck; searching through the jungle for debris, clearing sightlines, and ensuring that they don't pass over sections of the shoreline tangled with vegetation that may hide *The Festering Minnow*. The party can make these checks once for every hour spent searching the shore of the lake. If Silas is traveling with the party, all Survival checks made to find the ship are done so with advantage. Upon each failed Survival check, the party will stumble into an Asboro jungle encounter from the following list:

Encounter: Decorative Bones. The party stumbles upon sun-bleached humanoid bones that have been strung up in the surrounding trees in a decorative, threatening fashion. The display's centerpiece is a human skull wreathed in palm fronds that hangs from an overreaching branch at about eye level. When a creature comes within 5 feet of the skull, it utters the words "no escape" in Orcish through the use of the *magic mouth* spell. Using the remains of *The Festering Minnow's* crew, the display was arranged by the orc tribe within the jungle, whose enchanters routinely prepare such warnings to deter interlopers.

Encounter: Cart Snakes. A rotting wooden cart lies abandoned and overturned in the dirt. Old scraps of torn clothing and a single leather boot

can be seen nearby. Any creature that comes within 5 feet of the cart angers the two **swarms of poisonous snakes** that lurk within it, which attack the party and flee when reduced to half of their hit points or fewer.

Encounter: Hungry Manticores. A posse of three **manticores** flying above the canopy overhead spot the party below and decide they may make for a tasty meal. One of the manticores is heavily scarred and has the remnants of a stone-tipped arrow lodged in an old wound. The manticores flee if reduced to half their hit points or fewer.



Encounter: Pestering Familiar. A brightly-colored parrot (treat as a **raven**) approaches the party and, if permitted, follows the party for the next hour. Every few minutes, the parrot will squawk "death", "fear", "trespasser" and "bones" at the party. The parrot is the familiar of an orcish enchanter living within the jungle.

Encounter: Orc Scouting Party. An orc scouting party of four **orcs**, one **orc veteran**, and an **orc enchanter (priest)** is prowling the jungle around Lake Dread for suspected interlopers. If the party fails their survival check by 5 or more, the orcs are able to catch the party by surprise. They engage the party by firing a volley of arrows from a safe distance before immediately retreating back into the jungle. The orcs have no desire for a direct engagement: their plan is to eventually ambush the party with larger numbers at a later time. If the characters attempt to capture and

interrogate an orc, they receive only Orcish insults in return.

After the list of encounters has been exhausted or the party has made three successful DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) checks, they will finally locate the wreck of *The Festering Minnow*.

THE FESTERING MINNOW

The Festering Minnow is a moderately-sized sailing ship that remains mostly intact save for a breach in its hull on the starboard side. It lies listing upon the shore of Lake Dread.

GENERAL FEATURES

Unless otherwise stated, its features are described as follows:

Ceilings. The ceilings in the lower deck, holds, and cabins are 8 feet high with 6-foot-high doorways.

Doors. The ship's doors are made of wood and have AC 15, 18 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. A lock can be picked with a successful DC 12 Dexterity check made using thieves' tools, or the door can be forced open with a successful DC 18 Strength (Athletics) check.

Footlockers. Footlockers on the ship are iron and have AC 19, 18 hit points, and immunity to poison and psychic damage.

Rigging. Rigging on the deck and above can be climbed without an ability check. Rigging draped over the sides of the ship can be climbed with a successful DC 10 (Strength) Athletics check due to it being wet, slimy, and slippery.

Sails. The ship has a single 80-foot-tall mast that holds a wet and torn sail. The lower deck is fitted with oars for rowing.

List. The ship is pushed up against the rubble of the beach and lists at a slight angle. For this reason, the decks of the ship are considered difficult terrain.

When the characters find the wreck of *The Festering Minnow*, read aloud:

Partly hidden among the vegetation that has begun to overtake it is the wreck of a sailing ship listing towards its starboard side upon the shore of the lake. A single damaged sail lies tangled around its mast. The hull is crusted with barnacles. A splintered figurehead depicting a fish, likely a minnow, points to the west.

The characters will likely approach the ship from its port side. The ship can be boarded by climbing the rigging onto the main deck or by finding and entering the hole in the starboard side of the hull, which lies half-submerged in the water of the lake.

The following locations are keyed to the map of *The Festering Minnow*.

1. MAIN DECK & QUARTERDECK

A cracked and broken 3-foot-high railing runs around the perimeter of the deck. To the east, stairs rise to the steering while atop the quarterdeck. A closed, 15-foot-square iron grated hatch, as well as two sets of stairs near the mast, provide access to the lower deck. A mostly skeletal humanoid corpse dressed in tattered clothing has been bound to the mast and looks over the deck, 15 feet high in the air. A seagull is perched upon its skull and pecks at one of the eye sockets.

Three doors provide access to the areas beneath the quarterdeck. The deck itself is littered with wet vegetation and old bones picked clean. The seagull perched on the skeleton flies away if disturbed. The corpse was strung up by the orcs, who left it there as a signal to other trespassers.

Encounter: Iron Hatch. The iron hatch that leads to the deck below is worn and rusted, making it difficult to pry open and requiring a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check. If opened, it creaks loudly, startling a group of eight



stirges perched on the ceiling of the deck below, which fly out through the hatch and attack anyone on deck. They fight until they are destroyed.

2. FIRST MATE'S QUARTERS

The door to this room is locked. Characters with a passive Perception of 12 or higher notice splinters in the door, as if it was struck by a blunt object multiple times. If the characters make their way inside, read aloud:

A bed, dresser, and desk line the walls of this room. A skeletal corpse is slumped against the side of the bed and is surrounded by dozens of empty liquor bottles. Numerous tally marks are etched into west wall.



The corpse belongs to the first mate, who locked himself in his cabin with a hoard of the liquor remaining on the ship and gradually drank himself to death. A character who counts the tallies etched into the wall finds a total of 39. Other crew members made an initial attempt to break down the door, but were unsuccessful and succumbed to infighting.



3. NAVIGATOR'S QUARTERS

A bed, desk, and dresser are in this otherwise empty room. Characters who search the desk find a set of navigator's tools and a mostly incomplete map of Asboro rolled up and tucked into one of the drawers.

4. CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS

Characters with a passive Perception of 12 or higher can hear shuffling sounds coming from beyond the door to this room. If the door is opened, read aloud:

A moldy, half-drawn curtain divides this room vertically into two sections: one with a bed, an end table, and a lockbox, and another with a larger table surrounded by six stools. Shelves half-filled with books line the walls. Poking its head out from under the table is a goblin wearing an oversized brimmed hat and cloth shirt. Startled, it draws a small dagger and shouts "Get back!"

Encounter: Reegs the Goblin. The creature under the table is named Reegs, a solitary goblin who scrounges the Isle of Asboro to make a living. Reegs speaks broken Common after many years of encounters with explorers. Despite the weapon he brandishes, Reegs wants no part of a fight and seeks only to protect his own wellbeing. He is currently scavenging the wreck for any leftover rations or liquor. If given something to eat or drink, Reegs can share the following information with the party:

- Reegs heard of the wreck from other explorers looking for Grisly's treasure. He searched for it in hope of finding food or "drink".
- Undead lurk in the lower deck of the wreck.
- The orcs of the jungle should be feared for their use of enchantment and illusion magic.

Reegs finds the extended presence of others annoying and disorienting. While he may accompany the party for a short time depending on the circumstances, he will set off on his own once again before long.

Treasure: Lockbox. The lock box next to the captain's bed is locked. Inside is a leather pouch containing 75 gp worth of gems as well as a few paintbrushes, ink bottles, and a painted sketch on parchment of a young girl. Also inside the lockbox is the key to the ship's armory (area 11).

5. LOWER DECK

Numerous skeletal corpses are scattered about the lower deck. Discarded liquor bottles and empty barrels lie amidst the bodies. Multiple doors exit the north, east, west, and south.

Encounter: Ghosts and Stirges. Three ghosts lurk behind some empty barrels near the port side of the ship and attack any characters that venture into the lower deck. They fight until they are destroyed. If the stirges that lurk under the iron hatch (area 1) have not already been disturbed by an opening of the hatch, they join the fray and attack the characters.

Bodies. There are 7 corpses in total lying in this area of the lower deck, victims of gradual starvation after the ship's rations were depleted. A DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check of the bodies finds no obvious signs of physical trauma.

6. PRIVY

When the characters enter this room, read aloud:

A humanoid figure dressed in sailor's clothing leans over a bench in the north corner of this room, which looks to be a privy. "I'm so hungry.." the figure moans. "I need to eat something..."



Ghostly Apparition. The figure is the ghostly apparition of one of *The Festering Minnow's* crew who succumbed to starvation. It appears as a flesh-and-blood man, with frazzled curls of brown hair and a rugged face. If given the chance, it turns towards the characters and begs for food. After a few moments, or if attacked or given food, it lets out a panicked scream and abruptly disappears.

7A, B, C. CREW BUNKS

Multiple hammocks are strung up on the walls of each of these rooms, which serve as crew bunks. Some of the hammocks are filled with skeletal corpses. One of the corpses clutches a leather-bound journal to its chest.

Journal. The journal contains the writings of one sailor who documented the fate of *The Festering Minnow's* crew. Characters who take some time to read the journal can learn the following information:

- After the ship ran ashore, they were soon surrounded by ferocious-looking orcs who greatly outnumbered their crew.
- The orcs never approached the ship and instead remained to lurk within the trees.
- The crew sent scouting parties to find help and food. Each time, the heads of the men sent off the ship would be mounted on pikes in front of the ship within 48 hours.
- The men survived as long as they could on their existing rations and alcohol. Some succumbed to infighting, but most to starvation.
- Captain Grisly spent most of his time in the hold lamenting his worries to Speedy, his pet snail. The crew largely blames him for the Minnow's fate.

8 MEDICAL CABIN

Two cabinets in this room have been knocked over, spilling their contents onto the floor alongside an overturned table and two stools. A chunk of the deck along the starboard side of the ship has been ripped away, leaving a gaping hole to the hold below.



The hole in the deck within this room provides access to the hold of the ship. Characters looking through the hole can see that an outcropping of rock has torn through the hull of the ship through the hold, flooding it with water from the lake.

The cabinets in this room once held medical supplies such as herbs, gauze, and potent alcohol, though they have been entirely pillaged of any of their useful materials. Any remaining supplies are wet and damaged.

9. SUPPLIES

Numerous barrels sit in a loose pile in the middle of this room. Tools hang on the walls.

The barrels contain supplies such as tar, rope, extra lumber, fabrics, and other materials necessary to maintain the ship.

10. HOLD

The hole ripped into the starboard side of the hull has flooded the hold with roughly a foot of murky water. An acrid, acidic stench fills the air. The form of a hulking snail, its shell at least five feet in height and just as wide, moves slowly through the water.

Encounter: Speedy the Caustic Snail. The creature in the hold is Speedy, the caustic snail (see the Appendix) pet of Captain Grisly. Engraved on its shell is the map to where Grisly buried his treasure. The snail is fiercely defensive of its territory and is accompanied by the spirit of Captain Grisly, a wraith. If any creature comes within 15 feet of the snail, it attacks, aided by the spirit of Captain Grisly, who manifests out of thin air and menacingly whispers "you will not take us...you will not harm him...this island is mine...". Grisly and the snail fight until they are destroyed.

Silas's Betrayal. The treasure map has been etched into a roughly 2-foot-by-2-foot portion of Speedy's shell. Once this portion of the shell has been broken off, Silas plans to take it for himself and flee from the characters. Below is an outline of the actions Silas will take depending on the circumstances:

- Silas will immediately move towards the snail to break off the piece with the treasure map.
- If the party insists they do this themselves, he waits for an opportunity in the moments after the map has been removed to attack the character holding the map by surprise using his assassinate ability.
- Silas attempts to wrestle the map from the character he attacked.



- Once Silas has the map in his possession, he uses his equipped *ring of misty step* (see the Appendix) to flee the wreck as quickly as possible and lose the characters as he makes his way to his distant campsite in the jungle.

Silas's Betrayal: Making a Copy. If the party decides to restrain or incapacitate Speedy instead of killing him, they may decide to make their own copy of the map without removing his shell. This is disastrous for Silas; he did not expect that the party would care for the wellbeing of such a foul beast. If the party begins to do this, Silas panics and attempts to attack the most vulnerable character in the party by surprise. He intends to defeat the party or intimidate them into surrendering the map to him. Silas is prepared to murder the entire party if he is able to, though he uses his *ring of misty step* (see the Appendix) to flee the ship if reduced to one-quarter of his hit points or fewer.

II. ARMORY

The door to this room is locked. Inside are a few crates of weapons and armor. If the characters search the crates, they can find:

- 3 shortswords
- 1 set of studded leather armor
- 3 shortbows
- 1 set of leather armor
- 15 throwing axes

PURSUING SILAS

If Silas manages to escape the wreck ahead of the characters using his *ring of misty step* (see the Appendix), the party may wish to pursue him whether he has the map in his possession or not. If they do, assume that Silas has gained at least 30 feet of distance from the characters through the use of his ring. The party will have to pursue Silas off of the wreck and potentially into the jungle. Refer to the rules on Chases in Chapter 8 of the DMG to adjudicate this encounter.

Encounter: Escape! It is possible that Silas will successfully evade the party and disappear into the jungle with the map, leaving the party at a temporary standstill. In this case, the party may track Silas into the jungle to discover his location. A character can follow Silas' tracks back to his jungle campsite with two successful DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) checks. Failed checks may result in jungle encounters at GM discretion. If the party reaches Silas' tent, read aloud:

A canvas tent, an unlit campfire, and a package suspended from an overhanging branch can be seen through the foliage of the jungle. The tracks appear to end here.

As the party approaches the campsite, Silas will be in his tent, studying the map if it is in his possession. If confronted by the party, Silas would prefer to bargain with the characters rather than flee deeper into the jungle beyond his camp. He offers them 500 gp in exchange for his life, which he promises that he has stored at another location near Camp Bravery. Whether or not he is telling the truth is left to the GM's discretion.

AFTERMATH

If the characters successfully acquired the map, either by taking apart the shell itself or by making a copy, they are free to follow its instructions towards Captain Grisly's treasure. Depending on how the party dealt with Silas, he may or may not still be alive. If the party agreed to let Silas live despite his betrayal, he bothers the party no further, knowing that he was lucky to escape them with his life and that they are too much of a match for him. If Silas has promised the party gold to compensate for his wrongdoing, he tells the party they can escort him back to Camp Bravery where he will recover the funds. Whether or not Silas has the funds to recover or simply tries to make a break for it and escape is left to DM discretion.

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APPENDIX

CAUSTIC SNAIL

Medium beast, neutral

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 52 (5d10 + 25)

Speed 15 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	5 (-3)	20 (+5)	3 (-4)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Caustic Shell. The snail's shell constantly secretes an acidic fluid, which spatters outwards when the snail is attacked. Creatures who hit the snail with a melee attack must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 5 (1d10) damage on a failed save, or half that amount on a successful one.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The caustic snail makes two bite attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 3) poison damage. The target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the end of their next turn.

Acid Belch (Recharge 5-6): The snail belches acid in a 20-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 15 (3d10) acid damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

REACTIONS

Withdraw. The snail adds 3 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the snail must see the attacker.

RING OF MISTY STEP

Ring, rare (requires attunement)

This ring holds two charges. The wearer can expend one of the charges to cast *misty step*, requiring no components. The ring regains lost charges at dawn.