

SHATTERED SONS

AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTERS OF 2ND TO 4TH LEVEL



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SHATTERED SONS IS A FIFTH EDITION adventure for three to six characters of 4nd to 4th level, optimized for a party of four 3rd-level characters. For reasons particular to the party, the adventurers must assault or infiltrate the hideout of the Shattered Sons, former mercenaries-turned-bandits who harass the local roads and countryside. Will they approach the hideout with reckless abandon, or will they take a different path by securing a floorplan and planning a strike of masterful precision? This adventure is set in the hills of Cartosia, but names of people and places can be changed to place the adventure in practically any other campaign world.

BACKGROUND

Years ago, the Shattered Sons were soldiers of a mercenary company known as the Broadside, bound not just by duty but also by camaraderie and shared trauma. Led by a cunning and resourceful sorcerer named Emeric, the men made a profitable living for themselves fighting for the causes of others. The Broadside was broken, however, when a strategic error made by Emeric resulted in much of his company being ruthlessly slaughtered by their foe, with some of Emeric's closest friends among the fallen. Damage to the company proved irreparable both in numbers and reputation, and it soon formally disbanded. Informally, however, a portion of the men remained affiliated as vagrants. Naming their restructured group the Shattered Sons, Emeric and his remaining followers soon turned to banditry when opportunities for mercenary work dried up.

The horrors of war and the consequences of his error broke Emeric as they did his company. He refuses to let his closest companions go—he keeps their skeletal remains in a chest which rests locked away in the Shattered Sons hideout. Tormented by the faces of those he doomed, he dreams of a day when he might harness enough power to resurrect his lost brothers-in-arms. While banditry provides the funds necessary for survival and Emeric's pursuit of necromantic knowledge, grave-robbing has become a morbid, essential pursuit of the Shattered Sons as Emeric desperately seeks practice material with which to hone his magical skills, hoping that each new skeleton bring him a step closer to restoring his departed comrades.

INFORMATION SOURCES

Instead of going into the hideout blind, the party may hope to gather information that can inform their approach. Though this list of methods is not exhaustive, it provides some ideas for how the party might gather information.

A Man on the Inside. A member of the Shattered Sons is providing the party with information. They may be doing so under threat of death or blackmail, or they may have grown

tired of their allegiance to the bandits and are willing to betray their companions.

A Crossed Third Party. A third party who has worked with the Shattered Sons in the past is feeling scorned and is willing to work with the party to get revenge. This could be a shipping company, a rival bandit gang, a group of smugglers, or a local guild.

Surveillance. Be it through the old fashioned way or by powerful magic, the party takes a look at or into the hideout's operations. They may set up a stake-out, or use spells such as scrying or arcane eye to get a sense of what they're up against.

SECRETS AND CLUES

The Secrets and Clues table provides pieces of information the party can gather through their investigative methods. Feel free to use as little or as much of this table as necessary to suit your game. With extensive planning and some good luck, the party might learn everything from the Secrets and Clues table.

- There is a breach in the northern section of the hideout's wall that allows for easy access.
- Emeric keeps a chest full of the skeletal remains of his former company members close to his side. He would do everything to prevent the remains from coming to harm.
- Emeric has dedicated himself to necromancy in the hopes of one day resurrecting his former companions.
- Emeric is wracked with guilt, both for the fall of his former mercenary company but also for his continued leadership into banditry. Maybe he can be talked out of his wrongdoings.
- One of the Shattered Sons is a bugbear cook named Norgok. Norgok's allegiance to the group is tenuous.
- There is a secret door in Emeric's personal quarters that leads to a hidden alcove.
- The Shattered Sons keep their amassed wealth in an alcove within the subsurface caverns.
- The watchtowers are kept manned at all hours.
- There are twenty-two members of the Shattered Sons present within the hideout, plus their leader, Emeric.

GENERAL FEATURES

The Shattered Sons hideout is a log fort built into a small hillside and connected to a small, furnished cave network. The fort is surrounded by a wooden palisade and fitted with several lookout posts to keep watch for any intruders. Unless otherwise stated, the features of the hideout are described as follows:

Ceilings, Walls, and Floors. The exterior fort is constructed of sturdy pine, with eight-foot-tall ceilings. The cave network is naturally occurring, with ceilings ranging from 15 to 20 feet in height. The ground within the cave network is rough and uneven, but is not considered difficult terrain.

Doors. Doors within the fort are made from the same pine as its exterior walls. They have AC 12 and 22 hit points. Locked doors can be picked with a successful DC 12 Dexterity check using thieves' tools or a DC 16 Strength check.

Light. Wall-mounted torches in both the fort and the caverns ensure that the hideout remains illuminated at all times.

Secret Doors. Secret doors have been carved into some of the caverns by the bandits. The visual presence of these doors is subtle, requiring a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check to notice.

Palisade. A twelve-foot-tall wooden palisade surrounds the hideout. The palisade can be climbed with a successful DC 18 Strength (Athletics) check. Alternatively, a section of the palisade has collapsed around the north end of the hideout, providing an easy means of access if the party discovers it. Emeric has ordered the breach fixed, but repairs are not yet underway.

Bandit Attitudes. The bandits do not hesitate to attack anyone recognized as an intruder. They fight until reduced to one-quarter of their hit points, at which they attempt to flee or surrender. If the party is able to talk their way into the hideout or otherwise act like they belong there, they are unlikely to be challenged further by its occupants, however, the GM may call for further Charisma (Persuasion, Intimidation, or Deception) checks as applicable for the party to keep up their appearances.

Regular Routines. Area descriptions and the positioning of Shattered Sons members are written assuming the party engages the hideout during active hours. If the party tries to infiltrate the hideout in the dead of night, GMs should consider the following:

- The watchtowers remain manned at all hours.
- The bandits sleep in shifts to keep their guard up; even in the darkest hours, at least one-quarter of the hideout's occupants will be active within the hideout.
- Specifics of which hideout members are asleep vs. awake is left to GM discretion.

APPROACHING THE HIDEOUT

If the party approaches the hideout conspicuously, they will be greeted by the bandits in the watchtowers pointing knocked arrows at them and demanding to know their business. Providing an answer that prevents the bandits from immediately attacking requires a successful DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check, as they are deeply suspicious of any outsiders. Convincing the bandits that the party has meaningful business inside the hideout, such as a meeting with their leader or an item to deliver, requires a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check.

The following areas are keyed to the provided map of the Shattered Sons hideout:

I. COURTYARD

The flattened dirt of this lower courtyard is thoroughly marked by footsteps and wagon tracks. Scaffolding along the surrounding palisade rises to nearby watchtowers, and empty wagons are parked along its perimeter. Toward its eastern edge is a canvas tent and two iron cages.

The Shattered Sons use this courtyard to load and unload supplies and plunder. It is currently empty of any activity. The tent contains nothing other than a bedroll and a few empty bottles.

Encounter: Kenneled Mastiffs. Inside each of the cages within this courtyard is a **mastiff**. The dogs bark violently at any unfamiliar faces within the hideout that come within their line of sight, and can be calmed with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check. The cages are locked, and can be opened with a DC 10 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check using thieves' tools or with the key that hangs on a nail in the nearby palisade wall.

2. WATCHTOWERS

There are three watchtowers along the perimeter of the hideout; positioned roughly to the west, south, and northeast. Each watchtower consists of a single elevated platform accessible via scaffolding or ladder from within the hideout, and holds a chest or other container of common supplies such as ammunition and torches.

Encounter: Scouts. There are two **bandits** posted at each watchtower, keeping watch in all directions for any signs of approach. Reaching the hideout without being noticed by the scouts requires a successful Dexterity (Stealth) check contested by the scouts' Wisdom (Perception).

3. DORMITORY

A half-wall divides this structure loosely into two rooms, one littered with wood shavings and occupied by four bedrolls and the other providing space for a table and weapon rack.

The weapons resting on the rack in this dormitory are of mundane quality. The table hosts a pair of stools and a few dirtied dishes.

Encounter: Idle Bandits. There are two **bandits** in this dormitory, sitting atop their bedrolls and busying themselves with whittling projects.

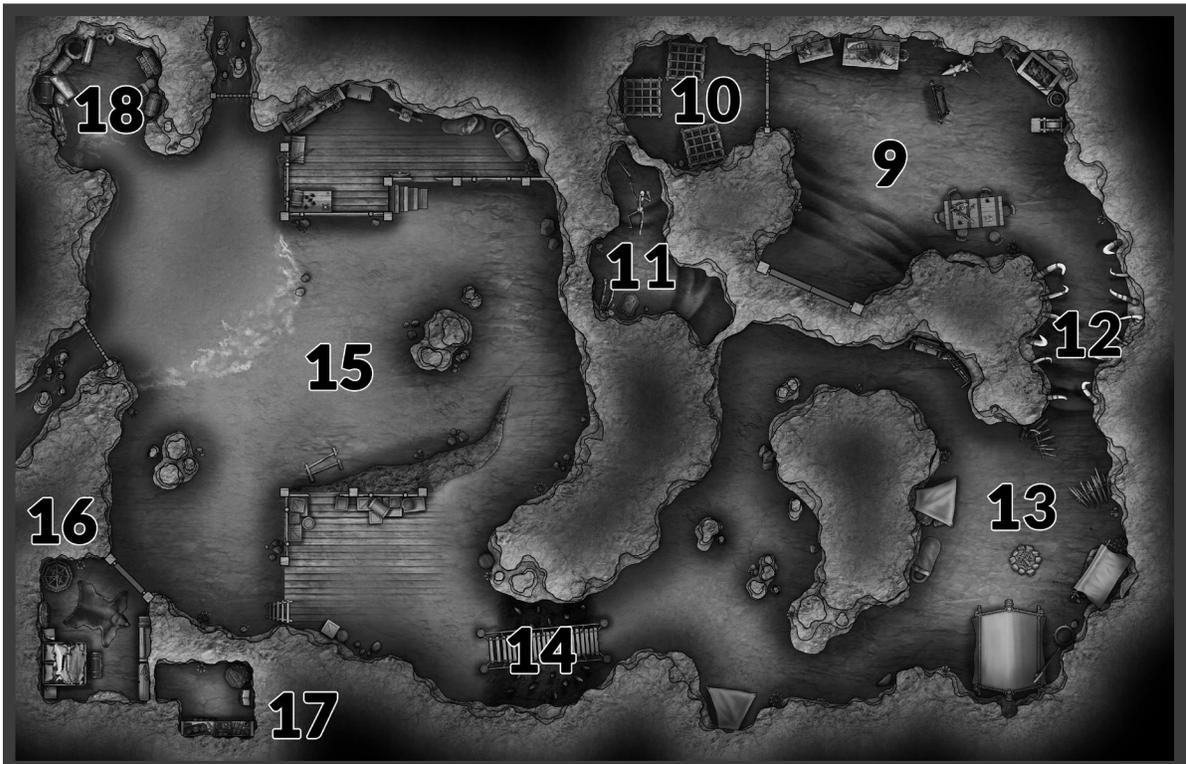
4. PRIVY

These stalls reek. Holed benches are positioned above rusted, laden buckets.

HIDEOUT EXTERIOR



HIDEOUT CAVERNS



An unfinished tic-tac-toe game has been carved into the wall of one of these stalls. There is nothing of value here.

5. UPPER COURTYARD

A prominent pair of double doors are built into the overhang of the rising hillside at the far end of this upper courtyard. A few canvas tents and a campfire equipped with a stewing pot hanging from a spit fill the space.

Weather permitting, the bandits share meals here around the campfire. This wall that separates this upper courtyard from the courtyard below makes it suitable as a second line of defense in case the outer wall is breached by attack. The tents in this courtyard are empty of valuables.

Encounter: Idle Bandit. A single **bandit** is present in this courtyard feeding logs to the fire, which is kept burning perpetually.

6. STORAGE ROOM

Shelves along the walls of this small room are packed with containers and loose supplies. The nature of the equipment in view would suggest there is little of significant value to be found here.

The Shattered Sons use this room for general storage—rope, oil, spare torches, common tools, nails, and the like. A character who searches the room and makes a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check however finds a bundle of ostensibly unsent and mostly unfinished letters, many of them letters to family and friends written by members of the Shattered Sons many years ago when they were still a mercenary company, members who perished in combat before the letters could be sent.

7. ARMORY AND MESS

If the bandits are not on alert, the party is likely to hear loud sounds of revelry coming from this room. When they enter, read aloud:

To the south end of this room stands a large, weathered table, its surface battlefield of playing cards and scattered coins, frozen mid-wager in an ongoing game. Candlelight glints off of silver and copper pieces, as well as pieces of armor and weaponry in the north corner of the room, which seems to serve as a small armory. A pair of weapon racks and a haphazard pile of armor pieces clutter the area. The air is sour with musk and ale.

One of the most frequented areas of the hideout, many of the group spend much of their time here gambling against each other and occasionally getting into drunken fights.

Encounter: Gambling Bandits. There are three **bandits** and three **thugs** in this room engaged in a heated game of poker. If the party has managed to enter the hideout amicably,

they can convince the table to let them join the game with a successful DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check. If a fight breaks out in this room, one of the bandits tries to use the opportunity to scrounge up as much of the coin scattered across the table as they can before making a run from the hideout. This bandit, named Plemmon, has grown sick of his perceived bullying at the hands of the other members and has been thinking of abandoning them for some time.

Treasure: Gambling Pot. There is a cumulative 32 gp in copper, silver, and gold pieces arranged in loose piles across the table.

8. OVERHANG

A pair of hunting trophies, stag skulls mounted on stakes, overlook the courtyard of the hideout from this hilltop. Behind a small campfire is a faded and torn battle-standard depicting a battered helmet in profile.

The battle-standard depicts the icon of the Broadside, the company's former identity as a mercenary group. It is one of the few reminders throughout the hideout of their past. A character who makes a successful DC 15 Intelligence (History) check recognizes the symbol.

9. FOOD AND FORGE

The presence of smithing tools and culinary instruments suggests this chamber serves a dual purpose. A forge built out of the wall radiates heat and hosts a bubbling cauldron hanging from a spit. A nearby stone table is stained with blood and laden with a partially butchered carcass — presumably a deer.

The Shattered Sons maintain a small, practical forge and smithy for basic repairs to damaged equipment. The forge often doubles as a cook area for the group's chef, Nargok.

Encounter: Chef Nargok. A foul-mouthed **bugbear** named Nargok serves as the hideout's chef and spends most of his time in this cavern preparing meals for the group. If the party isn't immediately hostile, Nargok doesn't recognize them as intruders. He's rather looking for any help he can get to help him find an onion that he was sure he stashed somewhere in the chamber, which he needs for his stew. If the party agrees to help him search for the onion, a character who makes a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check finds it buried under one of the many piles of burlap sacks throughout the room. Nargok is mostly indifferent toward his membership in the Shattered Sons. Disillusioned with Emeric's leadership and the grave robbing he has ordered, he has been thinking of looking for another bandit group to join for some time now. If the party helps Nargok find his onion and further engages him in conversation, they have advantage on the DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check to convince Nargok to betray the Shattered Sons and share with the party information about the hideout that might help their objective (see 'Secrets and Clues' section).

Pens Key. Hanging from a nail on the cavern wall in this room are the keys which unlock the cages in the pens (area 10).

10. PENS

Three empty iron cages fill this dank chamber.

The Shattered Sons occasionally use the pens to hold prisoners for ransom. If the party is bested by the bandits, their weapons are confiscated and placed in area 18 and the party is locked into these cages until the bandits decide what to do with them. To escape, the cages can be opened with a successful DC 12 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check using thieves' tools or with the key found in area 9. Alternatively, the party may be able to convince Nargok, who often works nearby, to release them (see area 9).

Narrow Tunnel. Characters who make a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check notice a small tunnel partially hidden by a small boulder at the base of the south wall of this chamber. The tunnel is large enough to allow Small-sized creatures or smaller to crawl through into the collapsed passage (area 11) beyond. Expanding the tunnel to accommodate Medium sized creatures takes a few hours of work as well as the appropriate tools.

11. COLLAPSED PASSAGE

Two pairs of skeletal remains are sprawled across this small passage. They are draped in the worn fabrics they died in, and their packs lie nearby.

These are the remains of two explorers who became trapped in this passage after a minor earthquake which caused a ceiling collapse, many years before the Shattered Sons occupied the caverns. The bandits have no awareness of the bodies here.

Treasure: Explorer Packs. Along with common adventuring and exploring gear in the packs, a character who searches through them will find two potions of greater healing, a *cloak of protection*, as well as a faded journal which documents the pairs' travels and last few days of life as they slowly suffocated to death.

12. TUSK CORRIDOR

Great, pointed tusks of ivory are suspended along the ceiling of this narrow stone corridor with a complex net of ropes. A character who makes a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check notices conspicuous knots tied off at each end of the corridor. The knots at either end of the corridor can be slashed to cause the tusks to swing into the corridor, threatening to impale any within. If fighting breaks out with the bandits in area 13, some may attempt to flee through this corridor, cutting the knots behind them if the party follows them through. Any creatures within the corridor when the knots are slashed must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving

throw, taking 12 (3d8) piercing damage on a failed save, or half that amount on a successful one.

13. MAIN CAMP

Three tents and some bedrolls are arranged around the perimeter of this oval chamber. In its centre is a campfire, its embers low-burning and its smoke wisping toward the ceiling.

This area serves as the primary sleeping and living space for the bandits.

Encounter: Idle Bandits. Three bandits and three thugs occupy this chamber. They spend much of their time trading war stories and polishing their leathers.

Bandit Belongings. The tents here, like others throughout the hideout, are occupied by bedrolls and mundane supplies such as clothing and simple tools. In the southernmost tent, however, the party can find a pouch containing 25 gp as well as a leatherbound journal. A character who takes the time to read the journal finds it describes one member's account of the history of the Shattered Sons through various diary entries. Its most recent pages detail the writer's concern for Emeric, who they believe to be wallowing in his grief and pushing the group too hard in his sad, impossible quest for the resurrection of their brethren.

14. ROPE BRIDGE

A rope bridge provides passage across the bottom of a spiked pit twenty feet below. While the bridge is stable enough to allow up to two creatures of Medium size or smaller to cross at a time, the bridge has release mechanisms on both ends to allow the bandits to collapse it against unsuspecting intruders. If fighting breaks out with the bandits in area 13, the bandits may attempt to flee to one side of the bridge and pepper the party with arrows, hoping to lure them across so the trap can be sprung. Any creatures on the bridge when it is collapsed must make a successful DC 18 Dexterity check to leap to an edge of the pit. A creature who fails this check

falls into the pit, taking 6 (2d6) falling damage and 12 (3d8) piercing damage.

15. INNER CHAMBER

A subsurface river runs lazily through this spacious chamber. Against the chamber's far wall, some scaffolding has been constructed which hosts containers of supplies and a few bedrolls.

This area is used for training and storage of general goods. The river running through it provides a steady supply of fish and freshwater, a lifeblood for the hideout. The containers here hold mundane supplies; there is nothing of significant value to be discovered.

16. EMERIC'S QUARTERS

This chamber has been furnished as a private quarters. A bed is flanked by two nightstands as well as a storage chest. Shelves on the opposite wall hold personal belongings. A banner depicting a helmet in profile, identical to the one hanging in the courtyard, hangs on a wall.

These are Emeric's private quarters. He keeps little of value here — the storage chest and shelves hold clothing and mundane personal effects.

Encounter: Emeric. Emeric, leader of the Shattered Sons, is a now-taciturn man with a nose broken several times over and a single-minded devotion to his resurrection quest. He might be found in a few places throughout the hideout. If he is not here, in his quarters, he might be spending time in the armory blowing off steam with some of his men, or perhaps conducting one of his usual walkthroughs of the hideout to ensure that everything remains in shape. Depending on how the party approaches this adventure and at GM discretion, Emeric may not immediately resort to combat with the party. Emeric uses **mage** statistics, though he cannot cast any spells higher than 3rd level. Emeric carries a keyring, a pouch containing 54 gp, and his spellbook on his person.

Secret Door. Concealed behind a wardrobe against the east wall of this room is a wooden door that leads to Emeric's hidden alcove.

17. HIDDEN ALCOVE

The concealed door to this chamber is locked, and can be opened with a successful DC 13 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check using thieves' tools or the key found on Emeric's person. When the characters enter, read aloud:

This room belongs to a spellcaster. A shelf on the south wall is well-stocked with various spellcasting components and common alchemical ingredients. A table in the corner of the room bears arcane runes marked in chalk and a

loose pile of notes. Two wooden chests reinforced with iron bands rest nearby.

Here is where Emeric conducts his arcane studies, sealing himself away from the distractions of the rest of the hideout. A character who studies the runes and notes on the table in this room and makes a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) check can confirm much of it is necromantic in nature. The chests in the room hold the skeletal remains of his brethren. They are sealed with an *arcane lock* spell, and can be unlocked with a successful DC 18 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check using thieves' tools or with the keys found on Emeric's person.

18. LOOT PILE

Small, neatly stacked piles of containers fill this small alcove. A pair of sacks have lilted over, their open mouths partially spilling their glittering contents.

This alcove hosts the vast majority of the Shattered Sons' wealth, much of it taken from caravans, farmsteads, and novice adventurers. There is a cumulative 720 gp worth of coins, small art objects, and gems present here, in addition to an *immovable rod*.

AFTERMATH

The aftermath of this adventure depends heavily on the reasons the party entered the hideout and how they left it. If the party engaged in hostilities and left survivors but Emeric was slain, the Shattered Sons are likely to disband entirely and not pursue any revenge against the party. If the party acts violently and Emeric remains alive, however, the bandits are likely to seek vengeance. If the party learns of Emeric's motivations and manages to persuade him to abandon his cause and pursue a more virtuous way of life, the Shattered Sons disband.

REFERENCES

This work includes material taken from the System Reference Document 5.1 (“SRD 5.1”) by Wizards of the Coast LLC and available at <https://dnd.wizards.com/resources/systems-reference-document>. The SRD 5.1 is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>.

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