

# Backswords & Bucklers

*Adventuring in Gloriana's Britain*

**PARTICIPATION GAME**

**UK GAMES EXPO  
&  
PRAIRIECON**

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## General Information

This booklet contains enough material to keep a Backwords & Bucklers session running for a good few hours. Given the job-based nature of the game, players will not miss anything vital if they only attempt one or two of these jobs.

The Tavern that serves as the focus for this game is the Duck & Drake, detailed in the Basic Rules book.

### Money

It is recommended that two types of small denomination coins, or some other sort of counter, are used to represent pennies (d) and shillings (s). This speeds up the game enormously, especially for Scoundrels who are likely to spend money at every excuse.

### Beginning the Game

As creating Backwords & Bucklers characters is so quick, no pregens are provided and your players will have to create characters themselves before the game can begin.

Once the players have all created their characters and introduced themselves to each other, they will probably need to decide how they all know each other. It's down to the Referee's discretion whether you bother with this, but it helps players get into the mood if they do.

Afterward, describe the Duck & Drake (and/or pass around the handouts). All of the Regulars will be present. Erect Eric will be slumped at the bar. Old Jacob, Burnt Marcus and Flemish Pete will be dicing. The staff will be behind the bar, serving drinks and food, cleaning things or lurking depending on their role. Everyone else will be sat drinking in their own corners. The players will be at their usual spot by the fire. It will be early afternoon.

Have the characters buy their drinks, maybe some food, and mingle with the regulars. Let them pick up a few rumours (see **Rumours**). Eventually, they should end up with a job (see **Jobs**).

### Running Jobs

You will find no maps, floor plans or detailed breakdowns of events in this booklet. It will be necessary for you to make some stuff up as you go along. This may be difficult for some people. Best advice I can give you is to just relax. It's a fantasy game. There is no 'right' and no 'wrong'. If you need time to think, take a short break. Get some drinks in, have a smoke, get the players to discuss something. Anything like that. This may seem obvious, but then again it might not and people do find this difficult, so I mention it just in case.

Once the players have got themselves a job, they will most likely need to spend some time planning out what they intend to do. This is probably the most important part of the game, so don't rush the players into anything. If they just march off to deal with it then and there, it may be a good idea to guide them toward planning something out instead. Depending on what games your players have played in the past they might naturally gravitate toward the plan, or they might just assume they can kick the door in and kill everything.

# Rumours

## The Regulars

- 1 - They say the French Ambassador is looking for some capable fellows. Perhaps you should go see him? (See **Job 1: Bruno** if players follow this up).
- 2 - Have you heard? That Mary in the Tower has got too big for the doors. That ought to make any potential rescuer think twice.
- 3 - The Emperor of Poland's trying to marry old Bess (Queen Elizabeth I) again...
- 4 - Did you see the fight at the Happy Nag the other day? Strange Audrey won again. Good place to go if you fancy yourself as a Gladiator.
- 5 - They'm a surly lot at the Golden Tower. Good place for dicing though.
- 6 - The Spanish are making threatening noises again.

## Erect Eric

- 1 - I shat out an emerald earlier. Bugged if I know how it got there.
- 2 - Small Bill knicked my spoon!
- 3 - Dogs can't look up.
- 4 - The Emperor of Poland owes me favour, Saved his life once.
- 5 - Those damned alchemists are still following me around.
- 6 - I'm sure that jug just spoke...

# Jobs

## Job 1: Bruno

If the players hear Rumour 1, they might well decide to head down to the French Embassy to get themselves a job.

Anybody can tell them that the French Embassy is located in Eastcheap, near London Bridge. The Ambassador's servant will open the door upon knocking. They will likely look disdainful at the player character's common clothing but if they mention the Ambassador's need for capable fellows, he will let them in to the parlour. He will send a passing kitchen boy to fetch the Ambassador, not daring to leave you unattended in the Embassy.

When the Ambassador arrives he will size them up before telling them that he suspects his personal friend, an excommunicated Italian scholar, is being held prisoner in the Spanish Embassy. If the player characters will go to the Spanish Embassy, locate his friend, rescue him without the Spanish Ambassador finding out who is responsible and keep the affair out of public knowledge to avoid a major diplomatic incident then he will pay them an entire Sovereign (30 shillings). The Spanish Embassy is located on Fleet Street.

Whether the characters accept the job or not, on leaving the French Embassy they will be being followed. Half a dozen Spanish thugs are trailing them. When the characters are next at a secluded, isolated or quiet spot they will be set upon by these thugs.

## 6 Spanish Thugs

1 HD each: 1, 2, 3, 3, 4 & 4 hit points.

Hit Bonus: +1

Defence: 11

Damage Reduction: 1 (for leather jack)

Saving Throw: 18

Base XP (each): 15

They will all be wearing leather jacks, and be wielding cudgels (Bludgeoning damage). They are attempting to capture the characters rather than kill them, and will attempt to bludgeon the characters unconscious if they resist.

Assuming that the characters are captured, they will find themselves in a first floor room in the Spanish Embassy. They will be tied up and their weapons and other gear will be thrown to the other side of the room. The room is large and well appointed. There is a bed at one end. Lying on the bed, tied up, is the Ambassador's friend, Bruno. There is a window which opens out onto the street behind, if characters don't mind the drop (it will deal 1d6 Bludgeoning damage if they jump out). There is a fireplace and a chimney. There are bookshelves (though the books are all in Spanish), a few candles and a chest containing some mouldering clothes.

There is a finely crafted wooden table with the leftovers of a meal atop it and a few chairs. The characters are left tied up near to the bed and Bruno.

They will need to find some way to free themselves and escape the Embassy with Bruno. No-one will come and talk to them, the Spanish Ambassador is at the palace, explaining the suspicious build up of ships off the coast of Spain.

If the characters decide to fight their way out of the building, or manage to fight off the thugs and decide to investigate the building, you will need to sketch up some corridors and rooms as you go. There are a dozen guards, with the same sort of statistics as the Thugs that ambushed them earlier wandering about the place, they will be encountered in groups of two at a time unless the household is alerted (when they will all converge on the characters). There are also a number of servants and other staff, which will mostly just try and keep out of the way.

## **Job 2: Bones**

If the characters talk to Flemish Pete, he will tell them that he knows a man who might have some work for them. The man, known only as Ralph, has lost an important family heirloom. The heirloom is an elaborately carved set of 4 dice in a plain black box. They were stolen from him after a game of Hazard and he wants them back. He was playing Hazard in the Golden Tower in the Strand. If they recover the dice for him he can usually be found loitering on London Bridge around dusk (he likes the view). Flemish Pete doesn't know if there is any reward offered, but he's sure that Ralph will sort them out.

The Golden Tower is an average drinking establishment, if unfriendly. The prices will be the same as the Duck & Drake. Most of the regulars there will ignore the player characters should they decide to pay a visit. However, there will be a group of four playing dice by the fire; known as Cheating Margaret, Silent Humphrey, Short Rowland and Fair James. If approached they will let the player characters join their game. They will be playing One and Thirty (see Tavern Trawling for the rules, or just roll high dice). The dice used will be instantly recognisable as Ralph's ornate family heirloom. They also happen to be Demon Bones (see the magic items section in Basic Rules). All have the following statistics if a fight breaks out:

### **4 Gamblers**

1 HD each: Cheating Margaret, 3 hit points; Silent Humphrey, 1 hit point; Short Rowland, 6 hit points, Fair James 4 hit points.

Hit Bonus: +1

Defence: 11

Saving Throw: 18

Base XP (each): 15

All are armed with daggers (dealing Thrusting damage).

If the players recover the dice and head to London Bridge around dusk time, Ralph will be waiting for them. He is a short, thin and unhealthy looking man in tatty but clean black clothing. If the character's approach him, he turns to face them, and glare at them in an unsettling fashion. On closer inspection he appears to be leaking small, pink wriggling things from his sleeve. He smells quite horrible, like rotting meat. If the characters present him with his family heirloom, he will grin and thank them. He will then leap off the bridge, shouting that the next time they're in need, he will be there to help them out.

As it happens, Ralph is a demon. So this help manifests in a somewhat unpleasant fashion. The next time each of the players receives a Downright Blow, a seething mass of maggots will crawl out of the ground, completely coating them. After 1d3 combat rounds the maggots will disappear back into the ground. The character will have recovered from the effects of the Downright Blow and will regain 1d6 hit points.

### **Job 3: Mayhem**

The first time the players leave the Duck & Drake for any reason, someone will bump into one of the characters and hurry off. That character will find a letter tucked into their belt. Assuming the characters can read, the letter can be found as a handout at the rear of this document.

The letter is from a small rebel organisation that wishes to place Mary Queen of Scots on the throne of England. To achieve this end, they first need to get her out of the Tower. This is a somewhat futile plan, no one has ever escaped from the Tower. As stated in the letter, they want the player characters to cause some form of general mayhem somewhere in London to serve as a distraction whilst the escape attempt is made. Whether or not the players choose to accept the job, the escape attempt will fail. Their payment will still be found in the location described in the letter however, if they succeed at mayhem.

An Angel is a gold coin worth 10 shillings. A wherry is a small boat used as a river-borne taxi service.

The next time the player characters enter the Duck & Drake after receiving the letter, Black Jack will call them over to his table. He will ask them if they have received any sort of communication from a rebel group. If they say they have, he will ask when the escape attempt is to be made. If they tell him, he will pay them a shilling each. If they don't tell him anything, he will tell them they will be being watched, and they will receive no further work from him. If they lie to him, Black Jack will confront them after the fact and demand his money back. In case the characters make the mistake of getting into a fight with Black Jack, his statistics are as follows:

## **Black Jack**

6 Hit Dice Agent of the Crown, 28 hit points.

Hit Bonus: +6

Defence: 16

Damage Reduction: 1 (for leather jack)

Saving Throw: 13

Base XP: 400

Wears a leather jack (black of course) and wields an old cruciform broadsword (Cutting damage) and a dagger (Thrusting damage).

## **Erect Eric's Emerald**

Incidentally, Eric is telling the truth about the emerald. If the characters think to check the Duck & Drake's 'little room of office' they will find a small one floating in the bucket. Not a pleasant place to go searching for riches, but it is worth 7 shillings.

Basterds for Hiyer,

We represente the concerned peoples of Englande, that wishe the true Quene of Englande to ascend to her proper playce.

We requier a distractionne of grete magnitude to take playce on the morrow at noone or thereabout.

Cause enough havok to cloke our activities on the morrow, and you will fynd an pair of Angels hidden benethe the benche of an abandoned wherry moored belowe Blackefryars, marked withe the sign of the Phoenix.

Regards,

Societie of Truthe