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# THE QUICK AND THE DEAD

## AN ADVENTURE FOR 12TH-LEVEL CHARACTERS

By Aeryn “Blackdirge” Rudel

*The Quick and the Dead* is a short adventure designed for five 12th-level characters. The adventure can accommodate any mix of characters; however, a controller that can negate some of Tarthalus’ magic and slow the quicklings down would greatly benefit the heroes. See the “Scaling Information” section for ways to tailor this adventure to your group’s unique style of play.

## ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The PCs are en route to their next adventure, moving down a well-traveled road in daylight. They pass through a thick copse of trees and are ambushed by a group of quickling muggers. The quicklings, however, do not attack to kill; instead, the little fey attempt to snatch a valuable item from each PC and a traveling merchant and then race off into the forest.

Unable to keep pace with the speedy quicklings, the PCs must track the thieves if they wish to regain the stolen items. Following the trail of the quicklings leads the PCs to a shack in a small clearing deep in the forest.

In the clearing the PCs are ambushed again by more quicklings; however, this time the quicklings attack to kill. After the PCs defeat the quicklings, they can explore the shack. Although the shack appears empty, a search reveals a trap door leading to underground chambers.

The subterranean redoubt is the lair and workshop of a twisted satyr warlock named Tarthalus, who has been using the quicklings to lure victims back to the shack. Tarthalus uses the bodies of the theft victims in necromantic experiments. The PCs need to confront Tarthalus and his undead minions in the satyr’s workshop, ending his predations on travelers once and for all.

## GAME MASTER’S INFORMATION

### ENCOUNTER TABLE

To help the GM prepare, we have included a quick reference table showing all encounters at a glance.

*Loc* – the location number keyed to the map for the encounter.

*Pg* – the module page number that the encounter can be found on.

*Type* – this indicates if the encounter is a trap (T), skill challenge (S), combat (C), or non-challenge (N).

*Encounter* – the key monsters, traps, or NPCs that can be found in the encounter.

*EL* – the encounter level.

| Loc | Pg | Type | Encounter                                  | EL |
|-----|----|------|--|----|
| 1-1 | 3  | C    | 5 quickling muggers                        | 12 |
| 2-1 | 5  | C/T  | 5 quickling muggers<br>1 net trap          | 13 |
| 3-1 | 7  | C    | 2 juju zombies                             | 11 |
| 3-2 | 8  | C    | Tarthalus, satyr warlock<br>2 juju zombies | 14 |

## SCALING INFORMATION

*The Quick and the Dead* is designed for five characters of 12th level. The following changes are suggested when adjusting the adventure:

### Weaker Parties (10th level or lower, or 3 or fewer characters)

- ♦ Remove a quickling mugger from Encounter 1-1. This reduces the encounter to EL 11.
- ♦ Remove a quickling mugger and the net trap from Encounter 2-1. This reduces the encounter to EL 11.
- ♦ Remove two levels from Tarthalus in Encounter 3-2. This reduces the encounter to EL 13.

### Stronger Parties (14th level or higher, or 6 or more characters)

- ♦ Add a quickling mugger to Encounter 1-1. This increases the encounter to EL 13 encounter.
- ♦ Add a quickling mugger to Encounter 1-1. This increases the encounter to EL 14.
- ♦ Add a juju zombie to Encounter 3-1. This increases the encounter to EL 12.
- ♦ Add a juju zombie to Encounter 3-2. This increases the encounter to EL 15.

## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Tarthalus is a very odd satyr. He is not interested in normal satyr pursuits: wine, music, and the all-consuming search for merriment. Tarthalus has other, less savory interests that have made him an exile from the Feywild, earning him the wrath of Titania and the Summer Court.

Tarthalus is a necromancer, and a warlock as well; both pursuits place him squarely on the opposite side of the Summer Court and their goals. However, the twisted satyr does have a powerful patroness who approves of his ghoulish experiments and shields him from the wrath of Titania. The Queen of Air and Darkness, ruler of the Winter Court in the Feywild, also has an interest in the undead, and she has taken notice of Tarthalus and his work. The Winter Queen has made sure that her newest pet has everything he needs in his little hideaway on the Prime Material Plane, and she has even provided a small band of evil quicklings to serve him as guards and servants.

Tarthalus sends his quicklings to prowl the trade routes and well-traveled roads in and near the small forest that hides his workshop. The quicklings ambush travelers, either slaying them outright or luring them back to the workshop for a more coordinated and deadly ambush. The quicklings keep any valuables their victims might be carrying, while Tarthalus uses the bodies for his experiments.

The satyr warlock, although twisted and evil, is a necromantic genius, and he has succeeded in combining the essence of the Feywild with the necromantic energies of the Shadowfell. The result is a horrific undead monstrosity known as a juju zombie; and it is in this beast that the Queen of Air and Darkness has shown keen interest. With the might of evil fey and undeath at her command, she could overwhelm the Summer Court and spread the deathly chill of winter throughout the Feywild. A bold group of heroes is needed to stop Tarthalus and the Winter Queen.

## GETTING THE PLAYERS INVOLVED

GMs can design story hooks specific to their PCs, or modify one of the story hooks listed below:

- ♦ Travelers and merchants have been disappearing on trade routes previously considered safe. The disappearances are concentrated near a small forest to the north. The PCs are hired by a consortium of concerned and frightened merchants to investigate the disappearances.
- ♦ An elven or eladrin (or other fey) PC receives a vision sent by Titania, the queen of the Summer Court, during his or her sleep or trance. The vision depicts a dreadful army of undead fey marching through a raging blizzard, descending on a sunlit valley. The vision shifts to an aerial view of the small forest where Tarthalus hides his workshop. The PC wakes and realizes that he or she has been sent a missive by the Summer Queen herself, and that a dire threat is developing nearby.

## PLAYER BEGINNING

Start the adventure by reading the following:

The road before you is well-traveled, although you have seen few other travelers. It is a pleasant day, and the road enters a small forest of elms and oaks. The smell of life is thick in the air, and the small sounds of living things fill the woods with a chorus of chirps and rustlings. The forest is a natural spectacle until you reach a place where the road suddenly widens. The trees grow closer together along the roadside. The forest grows eerily quiet. Ahead of you in the middle of the road, a portly human sitting atop a horse looks around nervously. He kicks his heels into the horse's sides, but the beast refuses to move.

## AREA 1: THE AMBUSH

### ENCOUNTER 1-1: ROADSIDE AMBUSH

**Encounter Level 12 (XP 3,500)**

#### SETUP

##### **5 quickling muggers (Q)**

The mounted human is a merchant named Estemun Frath, returning from taking a shipment of goods to a neighboring city. He was returning home when his horse became startled by the presence of the evil fey. The merchant and his horse begin the encounter in the area between the two dotted lines on the map.

Five quickling muggers hide in and among the trees along this part of the road. They have chosen this spot because the trees are thicker here, providing excellent cover for an ambush. More quicklings muggers wait deeper in the woods.

When the PCs, moving northward, are within 50 feet of the first hidden quickling (marked Q on the map), give them a Perception check opposed by the quicklings' Stealth check (+19 Stealth modifier) to notice the malevolent fey. If the PCs fail to notice the hidden quicklings, the evil fey attack when the PCs reach the ambush point (marked in dotted lines on the map).

## 5 Quickling Muggers

Level 12 Skirmisher

Small fey humanoid

XP 700

**Initiative** +16

**Senses** Perception +9; low-light vision

**HP** 122; **Bloodied** 61

**AC** 27; **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 26, **Will** 20

**Speed** 12, climb 6; see also *fey shift*, *ripping run*, and *snatch*

⬇ **Sickle** (standard; at-will) ⬆ **Weapon**  
+17 vs. AC; 1d6+8 damage.

⬇ **Ripping Run** (standard; recharge ⓂⓂⓂ) ⬆ **Weapon**  
The quickling mugger moves its speed. At any point during its move, the quickling mugger makes a sickle attack: +17 vs. AC; 3d6+8 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends). The quickling mugger does not draw opportunity attacks when moving away from the target of *ripping run*.

⬇ **Snatch** (standard; recharge ⓂⓂⓂ)  
The quickling mugger moves its speed. At any point during its move the quickling mugger makes an attack: +15 vs. Reflex; on a hit, the quickling mugger steals a small object from the target, such as a vial, scroll, or coin (not a weapon or implement). It does not suffer opportunity attacks when moving away from the target of *snatch*.

### Combat Advantage

A quickling mugger deals an extra 2d6 damage against any target it has combat advantage against.

### Swift Retreat (move; encounter)

The quickling mugger shifts 12 squares. It may ignore difficult terrain while shifting. At the end of its move, the quickling mugger gains concealment until the end of its next turn.

**Alignment** Evil

**Languages** Elven

**Skills** Acrobatics +23, Stealth +19, Thievery +19

**Str** 11 (+6)

**Dex** 26 (+14)

**Wis** 17 (+9)

**Con** 18 (+10)

**Int** 16 (+9)

**Cha** 10 (+6)

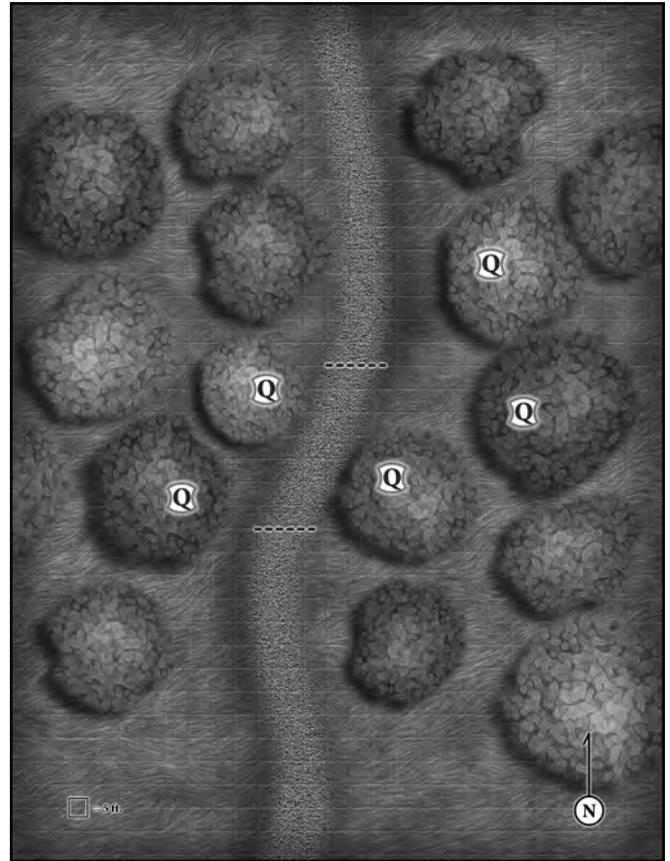
**Equipment** sickle

**Description** *This tiny, gray-skinned humanoid has massive eyes set above a wicked, fanged mouth. Its hands and feet are overly large for its body, although this doesn't seem to handicap it in any way, as it moves at a speed that easily outstrips a horse at full gallop.*

If the PCs manage to spot the quicklings before they reach the ambush point, the fey attack immediately and follow the same tactics described below.

When the quicklings attack, read or paraphrase the following:

The forest is suddenly alive with frenzied movement. Darting shapes move between the trees in near-invisible blurs of motion. One of the tiny shapes zips out onto the road toward the mounted human. Another moves in front of you and stops, giving you a clear look at a diminutive, gray-skinned humanoid with huge eyes and ears, and a grinning, fanged mouth. It brandishes a wicked, curved sickle at you, and then bursts into motion again...straight toward you!



## TACTICS

The quicklings, recognizing the threat posed by the PCs, do not attack to kill. Instead, they wait until the PCs reach the ambush point—zipping out, grabbing one of the PCs' items (scroll, potion, coinage, etc.) with *snatch*, and darting away. Each of the quicklings targets a single PC (if there are less than five PCs, the quicklings steal two items from one PC) but does not engage in melee. Once the quicklings have made their *snatch* attacks, they retreat to the north to stage another ambush in Tarthalus' clearing.

Five quicklings focus on the PCs, while other quicklings dart in, steal a valuable gem from the merchant, and then escape to the north. Since there are five quicklings focusing on the PCs, the chance of the fey stealing at least one valuable item is very high. Quicklings that miss with the *snatch* attack do not attack again, retreating with their successful brethren.

While the quicklings attack, they squeal in high-pitched voices about how their master is going to be so pleased with the loot they will be bringing him today. This should motivate the PCs to follow the trail back to Tarthalus' lair even if none of their possessions are taken.

## DEVELOPMENT

Even if the quicklings fail to get an item from the PCs, Estemun's pouch is taken—it contains a highly valuable gem. He explains the situation to the PCs, begging them to pursue the thieves and offering a reward if they retrieve his gem. Estemun is too frightened to accompany the PCs, however, and he insists on waiting for them at a watering hole two miles south of the forest.

There is little chance that the PCs can keep up with the speedy quicklings. However, since the escaping quicklings want the PCs to follow them, they leave fairly obvious signs of passage through the forest. Following the quicklings to the concealed path that leads to Tarthalus' clearing requires only a DC 10 Perception check.

## AREA FEATURES

**Illumination:** Bright light.

**Road and Grass:** The road is hard-packed dirt, and light grass and undergrowth grows between the trees. These areas do not restrict movement.

**Trees:** Moving into a square with a tree trunk requires 1 extra square of movement. Creatures in a square with a tree trunk have cover (-2 to attack rolls). The trees in this area are 40 feet tall and can be climbed to a point 20 feet off the ground with a DC 15 Athletics check, and the limbs of each tree are strong enough to hold a Medium-sized creature. Creatures in the trees have concealment (-2 to attack rolls).



# AREA 2: HIDDEN PATH AND CLEARING

## ENCOUNTER 2-1: CLEARLY AN AMBUSH

Encounter Level 13 (XP 4,200)

### SETUP

**5 quickling muggers (Q)**  
**Net trap**

When the PCs reach the clearing, read or paraphrase the following:

The path opens into a small clearing, roughly 70 feet in diameter. A small, rundown shack sits near the west end of the clearing, its roof sagging from age and water damage. The trees around the clearing are thick and dark, and there is an ominous pall here, despite the rather idyllic, sylvan setting.

The shack sits atop Tarthalus' hidden laboratory and workshop, accessible by a hidden trapdoor. The quicklings live in the shack, storing their ill-gotten treasure there. However, the quicklings are not currently in the shack. They are hiding in the trees around the clearing, waiting for the PCs to set off the net trap in front of the shack. Give the PCs Perception checks opposed by the quicklings' Stealth checks to notice the hiding fey; however, since the quicklings are actually in the trees, give them a +5 bonus to their Stealth checks.

### TACTICS

If the PCs fail to notice the quicklings, the fey wait for the PCs to enter the clearing and set off the net trap. Once the trap goes off, the quicklings attack, focusing on PCs trapped in the net.

The quicklings' tactics against mobile PCs are cunning and bloodthirsty; they begin combat with *ripping run*, and then attempt to flank individual PCs to gain combat advantage.

The quicklings do not fight to the death: once three are slain, the remaining two speed off into the forest, using *swift retreat* to avoid opportunity attacks. Fleeing quicklings do not return.

If the PCs notice the quicklings in the trees and do not set off the trap, the quicklings attack anyway, using the same tactics mentioned above. However, they also attempt to maneuver the PCs into one of the trapped squares.