

Slakking Off *A level 3 adventure for DnD 5th Edition*

Background

Players all live on Vulcite, a massive super-continent whose people have just begun an industrial revolution. The various factions all trying to be the dominate source of mechanization and fuel have started many wars, but for now it is a time of peace. The party presently resides in The Hand, an empire created by the union of Elves and Humans. Despite its founders being exclusive, The Hand is welcoming of all peaceful races.

One of The Hand's proudest achievements is acquisition of a "limitless mine" called Slakk. They've had a tight grip around the resource for years now, but over a short period of time the reservoir's output has been dropping significantly. Not only is this strange, but it has potential to destroy The Hand's economy. To keep the public unaware, solving the problem has been outsourced to Johannes Metzger, a trusted alchemist who runs a mercenary company on the side.

Adventure overview

Encounter 1

Players begin their adventure in the Hand city of Ottrich. It is a time of great merriment on account of the Grand Market Festival and its once-a-year super sale. In a few moments they will hear the alchemist Johannes Metzger shouting at a team of bad mercenaries. After the ex-mercs leave the shop, the party should either ask for the job or be asked by Johannes to finish what the other mercs couldn't. The job in question is learning why production has been low at the Slakk mine, and fixing it if possible. Johannes takes the party there with his brand new automatic carriage, then takes his leave. The party speaks with Cynthia, the Elf in charge of mining operations. She urges them to start with the few remaining workers to search for answers.

Encounter 2

After questioning three of the four miners without issue the players find the fourth, (the one staring at a wall) is a gibbering madman who runs into an abandoned mineshaft. Inside, the party must fight a group of infected miners and bring one back for Cynthia. As the miners fall in combat their bodies rapidly deteriorate, but Cynthia wants one brought back alive.

Encounter 3

After working with the corpse, Cynthia is able to begin synthesizing a cure, but she needs more infected. The party is sent back into the abandoned mine to search for more. The players find the source of the infection, as well as the missing workers: patient zero taking her own infected blood and injecting it into unconscious miners. After defeating the boss, players return her to Cynthia. She's able to complete a cure for the party to administer.

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GAT212

Part 1: The Potion Shop, Johannes Metzger, and Cynthia

Introduction [read italicized paragraphs to players]

You are residences of or wandering through the Human-Elf Empire, known as The Hand. Things are relatively peaceful despite a recent war but it can be difficult to make money without hard labor. Today your presence is marked by the yearly Grand Market. Every shop worth their salt is here. You may peruse the sales here, most stores are offering great deals.

Players can find any shop here within reason. If they wish to buy something, sell it to them for a modest discount. After a few moments of players viewing wares, read the following:

You can hear someone being berated very loudly from a nearby potion shop.

The yelling belongs to *Johannes Metzger*

A man with permanent dark circles under his eyes, frazzled black hair, and a German accent. He's a government alchemist who runs his own potion shop and mercenary ring on the side to stave off boredom. He is an eccentric, sarcastic, slightly unhinged man who has run out of penitence crafting health elixirs for dying rulers.

The Potion shop Exterior [read as players approach the shop]

The potion shop is fairly unassuming other than a large sign that reads 'Metzger's Alchemy'.

The Potion shop interior [Read as players enter the shop]

The well-crafted interior doesn't seem to match the modest outside. Treated oak planks are the primary construction material. Shelves are lined with many kinds of alchemical ingredients and potions. The shouting is an ill compliment to the otherwise silent shop, but it does seem to be coming to a conclusion

"You are the absolute worst mercenaries I have ever had the misfortune of hiring! How do you screw up talking to one person?! Get out of my office, and you can forget about pay."

A very disgruntled party of adventurers leaves grumbling to themselves and slamming the door. Once silence returns to the store, the owner wanders onto the shop floor. Aghast customers heard tirade, Johannes Metzger introduces himself. The man looks at least three decades old, with dark circles under his eyes, and frazzled black hair

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9/15/15

GAT212

Players should advocate for themselves to do the job. If they don't, Johannes asks what they're here in town for, and if they'd like replace his newly fired crew once he realizes they're adventurers. The job in question is going to Slakk, the mine, trying to aid the workers with whatever problem has been slowing production. He's paying [4D6 GOLD] for people willing to work.

Players may make a knowledge history check on Slakk

- 10 or lower, it's a mine.
- 15-19, it's the mine that The Hand works and is very protective of.
- 20 or higher, it's *the* mine. It's rumored to have limitless resources, and is the primary source of The Hand's income.

Hooks Johannes can use if players are uninterested

- He knows about your gambling debt.
- He knows how hard it is to make money here.
- They want to do good right?
- They might have friends in Slakk

The Job

The team is to take a carriage to Slakk. Johannes insists that they take his automatic carriage so he may get some more testing in.

On the way there Johannes tells the players that Slakk has been outputting very little precious metal lately. This is a secret being kept from the public to prevent panic over potential economic collapse, but Johannes isn't exactly a shining example of government official.

Players may choose to chat with Johannes on the way to the mine. Here are some answers to questions they may have.

- Why are you running a mercenary ring out of your shop?
 - *"Extra cash. It's usually legal and I haven't been making a lot of money since the war stopped."*
- What do you do?
 - *"I make potions and do general alchemy work for the government. It is maddeningly dull, so I'm also running two businesses."*
- How do you make money from this?
 - *"I get payed a large sum of money, then hand out smaller sums to the mercenaries I hire."*
- Why come to you?
 - *"My teams are generally reliable and I provide a nice front for people that want to stay behind the scenes"*
- Why were you not at the Grand Market?

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9/15/15

GAT212

- *“It isn’t worth the money. I crunched the numbers and I’ll make more money devoting my attention to the Slakk job than trying to sell potions to adventurers.”*

The amazing auto carriage

Only Johannes knows how to drive the wagon. The strange machine belches green fire and moves the carriage’s wheels without horses. It is like nothing the players have ever seen. It is a DC 25 knowledge arcana check to begin understanding how the machine works. Beating the knowledge check or asking Johannes will yield that it functions on a similar principle to that of the up and coming steam engine but he’s not interested in sharing the details.

On cue, the party arrives at Slakk:

The mine is set into a mountainside. Lush vegetation that is never tended to covers much of the outside. It’s an unassuming location for a mine such importance.



After stepping off the carriage, you are greeted by some Hand guards standing just outside the entrance. Johannes chooses now to depart.

*“I have more work to do back at the shop, good luck with Slakk!”
They take you inside to an office strewn with papers.*

Cynthia

A well-groomed elf with a protective nature. Typically she is warm and bright, but when first seeing the party she is reserved. She’s been through a lot lately, and Johannes’s previous mercenaries left her in a foul mood. She cares deeply for her workers, and is devastated so many are missing. Cynthia speaks with a southern accent.

Josh Gutenberg

9/15/15

GAT212

You are greeted by a blonde elf woman with a beehive hairdo and odd birth mark. It begins below her eye, a line straight down. The guards nod to her and leave the room.

“So ya’ll are the replacements? You best be doing a better job than that last crew we hired. They spent so much time goofin’ off I gave their asses the can. Ya’ll be pickin’ up where they left off, go talk to the dismal amount of workers we have left while I stay here and try to make sense of what’s going on. Take this sending stone and let me know if ya’ll find anything.”

She tosses one of the players a rock with elaborate glowing carvings. If they speak into one rock, the sound comes out the other. With the introduction over, Cynthia returns to her mess of records and the party should step out into the mine. If they don't Cynthia hollers at them to get going.

Part 2: Talking with Miners, Chasing a Miner, Fighting more Miners

Slakk interior [Read after players exit Cynthia’s office]

Outside Cynthia’s office is the main mining shaft. The tunnel branches off in several directions but the main work seems to be happening in the center. One of the many offshoots seems to have been closed due to cave in.



Worker Displeasure.

There a whopping 4 workers in the main mine shaft. Each is Human, Elf, or Half-Elf. Distribution is up to you.

A basic knowledge check will tell the players that there should be more workers here. Talking to them individually will provide a wide range of emotions.

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9/15/15

GAT212

While talking to any of the miners players can make an intimidation or diplomacy check to learn more.

The first person they talk to has only just started working here and is a huge fan of the pay.

DC 5 Diplomacy/Intimidation: They really don't know more, they've been working here for little over a week.

The second is concerned that they've been here for a while. They mention that normally carts are brought back and forth between the city trading workers and taking precious metal, but the mine hasn't been outputting enough resources to warrant a transfer yet. They could certainly use more workers though, they don't know where everyone has gone.

DC 10 Diplomacy/Intimidation: The current workers haven't left the mine in weeks. It's not technically illegal to keep them here, but it is fairly foul play. The miner works harder after saying this, motivated to escape.

The third has been working in Slakk for years now. They have resigned themselves to the fact that they may never leave the mine, they've worked here for so long that they expect to die here.

DC 15 Diplomacy/Intimidation: People keep disappearing. They've been told to keep quiet about it, lest people start to panic.

The last worker they talk to isn't really working so much as he is starring a hole in the wall.

If players take a closer look at him:

This one seems to be in fairly poor condition. Rips and tears in his clothing match the wounds covering his exposed skin. Off color blood oozes from his cuts and scrapes.

After approximately 20 seconds of interaction the worker will gnash his teeth, and sprint into the darkness.

It is a moderate athletics check to keep up with the miner (DC 15) at first. After a few moments of sustained running it becomes difficult to continue (DC 20). Those who caught up with the miner see him scramble into a hole in the wall like a spider. If the party loses them it is a DC 5 perception check to find the hole he went in.

If players fail to see where the crazed miner went, there is a sane miner working nearby who can point them toward the hole in the wall, leading to the closed tunnel.

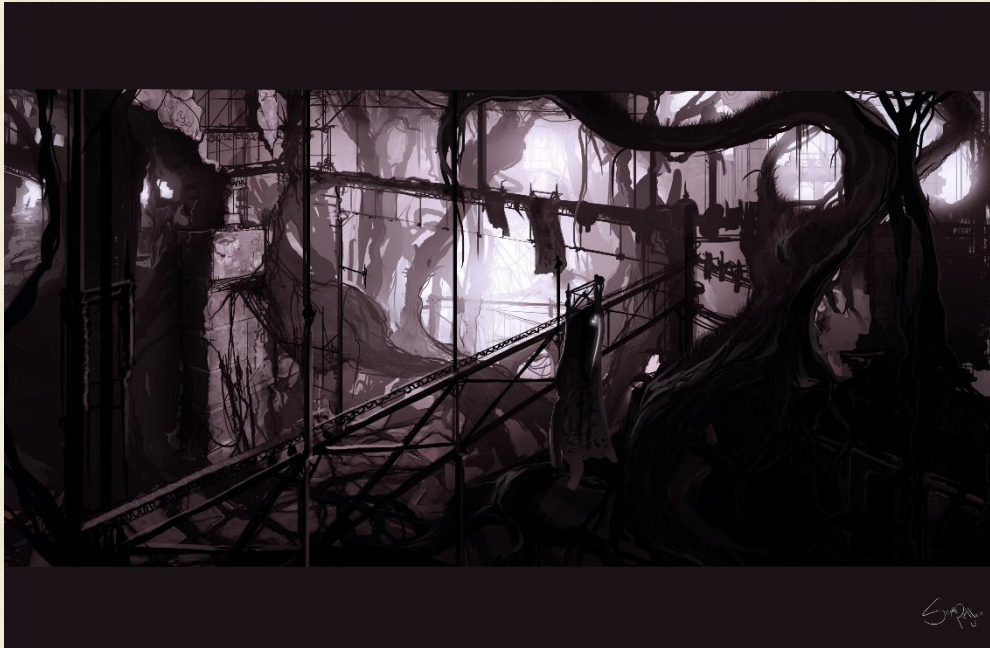
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9/15/15

GAT212

Inside the Abandoned Mine [read as the players squeeze through the hole in the wall]

The abandoned mine shaft is a cornucopia of missing safety rails, exposed machinery, and crumbling walls. Your path in particular is a stunning example of this: To your left is a wall of stone, to your right is a sheer cliff leading to discarded equipment and twisted rails. A dim light emanates from torches below. This mine may be empty but it's not uninhabited.



If players don't start moving along the path by themselves, have them roll a perception check. Anyone who rolls greater than 5 noticed footprints moving in the only direction the path goes. Radioing Cynthia will have her send workers to clear the cave in.

Crazed Combat

As the players continue down the path 3-4 Crazed Miners (See Crazed Miner supplement). The area is the same path with a wall to its left and a sheer cliff to its right. The Miners are climbing up the cliff face to meet the players.

[Read when a miner is killed on the path by reaching 0 HP]

The miner collapses to the ground covered in their strange off-color blood. Before your very eyes the body begins to sizzle and melt.

Any player knocked off the cliff side must make a dex save (DC 15) or fall. Crazed Miners do not make a save, they are outright killed when they hit the ground. Players can make another save to grab something as they fall. If they fail *that* they take 2d6 damage from the fall and can find an old ladder to climb back up with.

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9/15/15

GAT212

If the players breeze through the fight too easily, more miners can easily climb up from the cliff side.

If the players are losing the fight they can run back to the open mine. When they do the party is aided by sane miners. The sane miners successfully knock out at least one of the crazed miners.

After defeating the miners Cynthia contacts the party by means of sending stone.

“How ya’ll doing? I’ve been hearing quite a ruckus out of this here sending stone.”

- Assuming players tell her about the crazed miners, she will ask that they bring one back to her office med-bay as soon as possible:

“Ya’ll better bring one of them crazies back to my medical bay on the double.”

- If the party is hesitant to tell her about the crazed miners she will pry:

*“Are ya’ll **sure** you haven’t found anything yet?”*

- If they try to lie to Cynthia she will know the party isn’t telling her everything.

“Ya’ll don’t wanna end up fired for withholding information do ya?”

Melting

Bringing a dead worker to Cynthia is less useful as they decompose over the course of 10 minutes. If the players manage to bring one that is knocked out, Cynthia can begin work on it much easier. The Med bay is accessed through Cynthia’s office.

Read as the players walk into Cynthia’s Medical Bay:

You are greeted by Cynthia standing in a stark white room. The medial supplies and tools rival that of any typical hospital. She smiles at you as if there isn’t a body on your shoulder

“Let’s have a look at this fella, huh?”

If the players outright kill the crazed miners they begin to decompose and must be RUN over to Cynthia. Players carrying a body must pass a medium athletics check (DC 15) to make it in time, otherwise the body is starting to rot to the point of uselessness.

Cynthia asks if anyone knows medicine in the party. Players may feel inclined to assist with a medicine check.

DC 15 is the body is melting

DC 10 if it is not melting.

Josh Gutenberg

9/15/15

GAT212

If the players are successful in helping Cynthia she begins to understand what is affecting the miner. It's a virus. Where this virus came from is not known, though she deduces it's melting away very important parts of the body, such as joints and the brain.

If players are unsuccessful in helping Cynthia she is only able to tell the miner is sick with something outside her expertise.

Whether or not players succeed in helping Cynthia, she requires more infected blood to synthesize a cure.

[Read after Cynthia explains what she discovered]

"Now ya'll should do me a favor and head back to where ever you found this here fella and look for more of 'em. Go on, git! We have a lot of work to do."

She returns to the body.

Part 3: Return to the Abandoned Mine, Fight the Boss, Administer the Cure

Back to the old mine

[Read as players return to the main shaft]

The main mine shaft seems to be completely empty. The miners here earlier are gone.

[Read once players enter the old mine and begin walking down the path]

You encounter no resistance as you make your way down the perilous path, it's eerily quiet. Following the path to its conclusion leads you to another office, locked and partially covered in rubble.

[Read if players take a closer look at the door]

It is a simple wooden door with a bolt lock. It seems to have somewhat rotted with age.

Players may choose to break down the door or pick the lock open.

- It is a DC 10 strength check to break down the door.
- The door breaks if it has been dealt 10 damage.
- It is a DC 15 sleight of hand check to lock pick the door.

Upon making it inside the party finds DOZENS of unconscious miners. And at the center of it a disheveled human woman.

[Read if players burst in loudly]

You burst into a room not unlike Cynthia's office. It's in a sorry state. Everything is either rotting or broken. Close to the walls are piles of bodies, they look like the missing miners!

At the center of the room is a disheveled human woman. She's covered in the same telltale wounds that the other infected miners are. She shouts nonsense as she stabs a syringe into her arm and pulls off-color blood to inject into the body on her desk. After jabbing the worker, she leaps toward you over the desk.

[Read if players entered quietly]

You burst into a room not unlike Cynthia's office. It's in a sorry state. Everything is either rotting or broken. Close to the walls are piles of bodies, they look like the missing miners!

At the center of the room is a disheveled human woman. She's covered in the same telltale wounds that the other infected miners are. She stabs a syringe into her arm and pulls off-color blood to inject into the body on her desk. Her task complete, she picks up the body and gently places it among the others. She returns to the desk in the center of the room, muttering to herself.

Players may now make stealth checks (DC 15) to move about the room. If any member of the party fails, she attacks that player and combat begins.

Players engage in combat with the Boss Crazy Miner (See the Crazy Miner Boss stat block in the crazy miner supplement.)

If players are decimating the boss

Crazy miners can get up from the piles of unconscious bodies and aid in the fight. Bodies are strewn about the room and pose no real hazard.



If players are losing

If players are losing badly, Cynthia sends one of the two guards from the entrance to help.

You hear from your sending stone, "I heard a commotion over there, ya'll need some help"

The guard has no statblock and should be more than enough to help turn the tide against the Miner boss

[Read when the players defeat the miner boss]

The madwoman crumbles to her knees. Her disgusting blood coats her ruined clothes and skin. Her cold dead eyes stare blankly at you as she slumps over.

Josh Gutenberg

9/15/15

GAT212

Surprisingly, the miner's body doesn't being rotting away. This is exactly what Cynthia needs.

[if the players defeat her with nonlethal damage]

The madwoman crumbles to her knees. Her disgusting blood makes for odd colored bruises all over her skin. She stares blankly at you as she collapses. This is exactly what Cynthia needs.

Aftermath

Players should bring the miner boss's body back to Cynthia, who is clearly moved seeing the identity of the boss. After working on it for a few moments Cynthia determines she is the source of the virus. She was trapped and wounded by the cave in, resulting in an infection that eroded her mind and body. Using the alpha-infected blood, Cynthia is able to create a cure that can be administered via syringe.

If the boss miner is not killed, she is cured as well and rewards the players each [2d6] gold for saving her life. She clearly knows Cynthia, the two embrace when she regains her facilities.

"Alright Ya'll, this should be more than enough medicine to cure the whole team. You take care of this and I'll contact Mr. Metzger."

She hands each of you a large syringe of blue fluid.

"And thank ya'll ever so much for your help. I think I'll find you if I ever need a hand."

The party should go back to the abandoned office and cure the miners. After they have been injected they wake up shortly. The awakened miners thank the party before asking to be taken back to the proper mine.

When you return to the main mine Johannes is waiting with a bag of gold.

"Excellent work mein freunds." He gives each of you [4d6] gold on the spot from the bag. "The auto carriage is waiting outside. Let's head back to the city, ja?"

As you are leaving Slakk you see a large number of Hand carts filled with people and supplies. It seems the mine is officially back up and running. Johannes looks up from the wheel, "Cynthia told me everything you did in the mine. If you want there are more jobs waiting for you in the future, just visit me in the shop."

Johannes drops the party off at his potion shop and waves them off.

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9/15/15
GAT212
What Next

If players wish to continue adventures in this setting, here are some prompts.

More jobs from Johannes

Johannes will never run out of jobs for able-bodied adventurers. His tasks will range in legality, unless the job is particularly extreme and pays well it will never be fully illegal. Jobs may include stealing an artifact from a gang, guarding a shipment of medicine, roughing up a thief, etc.

Johannes is also running questionable experiments unsanctioned by the government in his basement. These experiments involve corpse reanimation and the development of necrotic weapons. Johannes may ask the players to get materials for him (dead bodies, strange crystals, blood, etc.) so long as they swear to secrecy.

If the party gains enough notoriety they could be asked by the current ruler of The Hand on a personal task. This would no doubt be an epic quest or an act of military espionage. Players would need to be very experienced and pay would be great.