

DRUNKARD'S REBELLION

A one page scenario for WFRP by 'Dagobah' Dave Graffam

An exceptional barley harvest has filled the bellies of even the poorest in the region, and thankful prayers to the nature gods Taal and Rhya have never been louder. An unexpected consequence of the bounty is the great abundance of lagers and ales flooding the taverns of the Empire. This scenario can take place in nearly any town or city, and will give your PCs ample opportunities to test their tolerances for alcohol.

Act I: Party's Just Begun

It seems that every local brewery, from the largest to the smallest, has pronounced its latest ale drinkable within the same week, and they have all just arrived in the PC's town by boat or wagon on about the same day. Everywhere they look, casks are being opened and tankards are being filled with heady brews. The market is so saturated with these tasty beverages that taverns are competing for the lowest prices per mug. Street barkers are hired to advertise ludicrously cheap 'penny fills' and 'two-for-ones' and even 'shilling tables' where any number of patrons can pitch in a silver piece's worth to squeeze around a single table and drink their fill.

A carnival atmosphere soon sets in, and almost everyone partakes. Groups of young men serenade young ladies they pass while skipping from one tavern to the next. Musicians and street freaks perform late into the night, and even watchmen on duty are caught sipping. There are impromptu weddings, and quite a number of birthdays are shamelessly celebrated a week late or a month early.

The PCs might get directly involved in making a profit from the ale rush, such as setting up their own beer cart, or purchasing ales in quantity to sell elsewhere. If they do intend to leave town, their destination should be just as deep in the flood of ale. They might find work providing security for a noble's impromptu garden party, open only to the wealthy and well-known about town. If they are already engaged in some other plot, this could be merely a distraction from their plans. And if they have nothing better to do, they can get right pissed along with everyone else.

Act II: Trouble Brewing

After a long weekend, almost everyone in town is hung over and must face the cold reality of a new day. Many sleep in late, and many who can be dragged to their feet just go right back to the taverns and continue drinking. Labourers don't show up at the docks or construction yards. Merchants don't set up their stalls in the market. Shops remain shuttered well into the afternoon. Ferries and gates go unattended.

But there are still untapped casks of ale, and more are arriving all day long. Someone in authority gets the bright idea to impose an excessive tax on every pour of ale. Criers and heralds, sounding a bit groggy themselves, wander up and down the streets proclaiming the new duty and posting

signs. Some reasonable citizens applaud the policy, hoping to restore sanity. Most jeer and mock the new law, and resolve to express their solidarity at the nearest watering hole.

Over the next couple of days, the jovial mood darkens, as a drunk might sink into a bout of self-loathing and aggression. Angry and achy-livered citizens rub each other raw, and no one wants to pay the new tax which has pushed the price per mug to five pence. Loud arguments lead to brawls, broken windows and noses. The gutters begin to run with vomit, and pickled corpses rot in public spaces.

In this act, the PCs might find themselves in the middle of someone else's feud, and it should be easy to find almost any kind of work filling in for those too intoxicated to do their jobs. Or they could continue drinking their lives away. Whatever they do, they should get the impression that things are spiraling out of control.

Act III: Sick to their Stomachs

As the unproductive days drag on, the town's leaders realise that drastic measures are needed. The new ale tax is quadrupled, sending ripples of rage throughout the populace. Bleary-eyed and unwashed, hundreds gather in the town square to protest. Someone decides this is a perfect opportunity to set up a beer wagon, adding fuel to the crowd's fire. While watchmen and even some standing army units attempt to keep control, their ranks are so thinned by the ongoing party that they only manage to agitate the mob. Looting and arson come next.

While the town falls into chaos, the drunks turn their anger over the beer tax into a genuine rejection of the ruling class. Barricaded in their palaces and mansions, the nobility sends out frantic requests for military intervention to the Emperor or other provincial heads. It may take a couple more days for the army to arrive, and by then half the town could be reduced to ash. While waiting for intervention, two opposing factions should form: those railing against the beer tax, and those supporting it.

As this is going on, the PCs could be swept along with the madness or take active roles working with one of the factions. They could align with the nobility and take steps to bring the town back to order. If they've established a good standing with the wealthy, they could be the messengers dispatched to request help from abroad.

What happens from here is left to the GM's discretion and the PCs' level of involvement. The arriving army might make a show of force that instantly puts an end to the drunkards' rebellion, giving the town a chance to return to normal. Or, a military presence might spark bloody battles that continue for days or weeks. Groups of rebels might spread into the country or other towns, expanding the conflict into a civil war. In that case, one can easily imagine the rebel banner prominently displaying a beer stein and stalks of barley.