

Carnel zine presents

# **TENNESSEE SMITH**

*IN ANOTHER THRILLING ADVENTURE*

# **THE KASBAH KAPER!**



**EPISODE 34**

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# Tennessee Smith and the Kasbah Kaper

A right rollicking action adventure to be played in the space of just one hour!

## Introduction

This is write-up of a one hour scenario I ran at Dragonmeet 2005. It was the result of some conversation about the nature of conventions and the type of games that get put on at them. There are essentially two kinds of convention, one is tied to a specific game, theme or system and the more general kind of affair that Dragonmeet exemplifies, a very broad church with a mix of activities from many areas of gaming. At this latter kind of convention you often want to try some games that you do not normally play or perhaps have heard good things about but are unsure personally.

The trouble is that most games that get run at conventions are written for normal gaming sessions of about four hours. Sometimes the author will even assume that since it is a convention the game should be longer, maybe seven hours or the length of the whole convention.

There are a place for such time-consuming games and for some I am sure they are part of the attraction of conventions but there has to be a balance. Personally I would rather try three games at a convention and get some spare time to look at stalls and do some socialising.

This means looking at a scenario of less than three hours. During our conversation we talked a lot about what situations could be converted to an hour format. The first conclusion was that for the most part combat was out because it consumes too much real time compared to the amount of game time that passed. That kind of leads to the situation where you kind of want game time to be as close to real time as possible. That being so then the logical thing is to link the idea of a one hour game with some kind of one hour in-game situation. John Foody almost immediately came up with a winning idea in the form of "One Hour to Morr", an assassination scenario where the players have one hour to case the scene and set up the assassination of a visiting dignitary. I had a few false starts but I think the real inspiration for my choice was the radio and film serials where the action is general from cliffhanger to cliffhanger and is over in half-an-hour, add in half an hour of mechanic time and bingo Flash Gordon is your man.

Or rather Tennessee Smith, Gavin Taylor's pun on my favourite pulp hero homage and the system that I rate so highly and which I thought would be used to run the game. Out of all the Indiana Jones sequences my favourite is the truck hijacking in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* where Indy takes on a convoy of Nazis and wins (well sort of). This scene is recreated in the *TSR Indiana Jones* roleplaying game and includes cardboard fold and stick models. It is a sad confession but one of the joys of my early teens was using the models and the game to recreate that moment from the film (I liked the cardboard plane too, just to get all the confessions done at once). So what better situation to pose the players than to recover a valuable artefact from a Nazi truck?

Of course one of the most enjoyable things about roleplaying is all the in-character banter and interaction. In fact roleplaying is the character interaction when you get down to brass tacks. If each character has equal screen time then in a one hour game the normal

four to six player RPG groups would get 10 to 15 minutes of interaction per player. Add in the time that GM has to say stuff as well and then we are talking about just seven or eight minutes of contribution from each player. That, strangely enough, drove the ideas back to combat, or more specifically, to strongly leaning on the mechanics of a game. Using a dice roll to resolve a complex interaction is actually a big saving on time because the resolution is no longer than a dice roll and all the group can understand the outcome of the action simultaneously. Of course to do that you have to have a game system that everyone understands.

This is the way that all ideas work themselves out, you start with the idea that you want to be able to have a game people can quickly sample and that does not have to much in the way of dice rolling and two hours of conversation later you are at a point where you think you have to use *D20 Modern* and there needs to be some serious fist meets Nazi face action.

Since we have only begun to explore the possibilities of one hour games we do not know how true these assumptions are but that is what *Kasbah Kaper* is about.

## **Herr Smith, we meet again**

I originally tried to write a radio script style introduction to the game where the players would read out their character parts. I thought this would be a good introduction to the characters and get people into their characters quickly. However in practice it did not seem as quick as giving people a written introduction and their character sheets.

Having seen the scripts idea being used successfully since I think the problem may have been with me and a slightly too verbose style. Still since the written introduction is the one that I actually used I have included it in the separate handouts.

## **Objectives**

The objective of the game for the PCs is to recover the stolen idol from the truck before an hour of real time is up. If the time limit expires the truck roars out of the Kasbah gates and away to a heavily guarded German Army base in the desert. To recover the idol the PC's have to transfer it to their car. As soon as all the PC's are in the car along with the idol and no Nazis are also on the car they have won and they can quickly disappear into the city and leave the Germans behind.

As a slight refinement to these basic rules of engagement there are a few special cases. If the PCs' car is destroyed or can no longer keep up the chase then the PCs lose and the truck escapes. However if the PCs manage to take control of the truck then they will also succeed as soon as there are no Nazis left on the truck. As a rarer case if the PC's force the truck to stop and kill or drive off all the guards then they can also be considered to have won as it is just a formality to grab the crate and leave.

If the crate or the idol is destroyed then neither side has won and a valuable bit of Egyptian heritage has been lost.

## **Feel**

The feel of the game is pulp action so it should be fast, furious and with an emphasis on

# Survivors

Survivors is another one hour scenario that I tried out but which seemed to lack either the right narrative flow or perhaps it was a bit obscure which meant a lot of time is spent adjusting to the situation rather than actually playing the game. Whatever the reason it felt that for four players the playing time was probably closer to two hours than one.

## Conceit

The central conceit of Survivors is that it is a post-apocalypse game masquerading as a fantasy game. For the first ten to thirty minutes the players are encouraged to think of themselves as traditional fantasy peasants but after that they should start to recognise modern artefacts that mark the game as a post-technology society. For this to work the GM unfortunately has a bit of burden in that they have to describe several modern items without using any modern words or concepts. I will try and give some suggestions but probably the best thing to do is practice running through the descriptions and making a note of any handy terms you can use instead of any giveaway words.

## Synopsis

The village is in uproar when a demon appears from the haunted woods. The creature dies soon after appearing but no sooner has it expired then three more appear and terrorise the village. Can the player characters defend their village and steal the magic of the demons?

## Background

I had a very provisional “big explanation” background for this scenario involving alien invasion and partial occupation but I have not quite ironed out the logic behind it so I think I will leave a general setting overview to a later time.

In terms of what a GM needs to know to run the scenario the key facts are that a planet very much like our own has been occupied by alien forces and human society has collapsed leaving much of the world in a medieval state. This suits the alien occupiers fine and they occupy very limited sites scattered around the world before eventually completing their goals and leaving again.

Only the resistance movement originating with state governments have retained any semblance of the society, culture and knowledge the world once possessed. These remnants were forced into hiding during the occupation but are now free to explore the abandoned alien sites and try to understand what the aliens were doing. In addition they can start to rebuild society. However the resistance members have a strong dislike of the backward majority of the other survivors for having “acquiesced” to the demands of the invaders and having given up the struggle.

The isolated village where this game is set is near one of the alien sites. The villagers have stories of the demon (alien) haunted wood and refuse to step beyond the ancient village boundary and enter it.

Before the start of the game two rival groups of “Remnant” forces clash in the old alien