

the
DIRE GOOSE
HUNT
a Tier 2 Daggerheart Adventure

By T. L. Bainter



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I would like to thank the artists I worked with on this guide. Their work was instrumental in bringing this to life, and by purchasing this guide you are supporting real art. You can find the artists in this book on social media.

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INTRODUCTION

The *Dire Goose Hunt* is a Daggerheart adventure designed to either be played as a one-shot or as a multi-session adventure that will take players through the early levels of Tier 2. In this guide, you will find an overview, advice, and an easy-to-follow walkthrough for running the adventure.

What's in This Book?

Within this book, you will find adversaries, items, environments, adventure, advice, and more. It contains details for running the adventure as a one-shot for your next session *or* running it as a longer adventure that will take your players from level 3 to level 5 across 3-5 sessions (assuming sessions are approximately 2 hours each).

Adversaries

While the main adversary of this book is the Dire Goose, the feathered dragon of the swamp, but many other creatures reside within the marsh surrounding the bestial quarry's lair.

Dire Cassowary

A raptor-like flightless bird that is quick, deadly, and beautiful. Don't let their magnificent blue-and-pink plumage catch you off-guard; drop your weapon for even a moment and you may be eviscerated by their razor-sharp beaks.

Dire Crocodile

At home both in the dark waters of the swamp and muddy banks, these creatures blend in with their environments just well enough to slink up on and strike unaware prey.

Yatevea

A plant that senses its surroundings through a root network, the yatevea indiscriminately devours meat with the same fervor with which it consumes water. Long vines ending in mouth-like leaf blades feel out their environment and drag victims to the central pod for prolonged, painful digestion.

Ribcage Members

Here to collect on the bounty no matter the cost, the Ribcage Gang is a crew of rough-ridin' mercs with no morals, no shame, and no uncrossed lines. The one thing they do have is a unique fashion sense, as they have cobbled together whatever scrap and oddities they can find to fashion their armor and weapons.

Multiple adversary blocks for members of the Ribcage Gang exist and, if the party finds themselves opposing these violent naerdowells, they're in for a difficult fight.

Dire Goose

A feathery behemoth, the Dire Goose is one of the most ferocious beasts in the known world. Worse still, they are extremely territorial and known for wanton, meaningless destruction. Their violent tendencies can lead to numerous deaths and even abandoned settlements should one make its nest nearby.

You will notice that the Dire Goose is a Tier 3 Solo adversary rather than a Tier 2 Solo. This makes it great as a boss for Tier 3 without any adjustments, but if you are running this Tier 2 adventure, the Dire Goose is made easier by acquiring *Dire Goose Hunt Advice Cards*, which provide information and tools needed to make the fight more manageable for lower-level mercenaries.



What's In This Book?

Items

Several items are included in this book, each derived from one of the creatures within this guide. Should players harvest the materials to create these or acquire them from a shop, they'll be carrying some unique loot with them on their next adventure. All items are Tier 3, intended to be given out as rewards for the adventure's completion.

Beast-Feather Arrow (Tier 3 Consumable)

An incredible arrow that greatly extends the range of the weapon from which it is fired. Large feathers of a dire beast are required to fashion them.

Billtower (Tier 3 Secondary Weapon)

Crafted from the massive bill of a legendary bird, this shield is incredibly heavy, but makes up for that with obscene levels of protection... provided you are strong enough to lift it.

Crocscale Armor (Tier 3 Armor)

A armor created with the carefully-procured hide of a dangerous, swamp-dwelling reptile, crocscale armor may be a bit grotesque to look at, but the benefits offered by it are unparalleled.

Debonair Derby (Tier 3 Loot)

A hat with the magnificent feathers of a dire cassowary ornately displayed from its band. Simply wearing this hat is sure to bring all sorts of attention! That's what you wanted, right? Attention?

Ribcage Flintlock (Tier 3 Primary Weapon)

A small pistol fashioned by members of the Ribcage Gang. This weapon is exceptionally unreliable and comprised of scrap materials and haphazard tooling. But when it works... it *works*.

Ribcage Microgatling (Tier 3 Primary Weapon)

A piece of heavy artillery that is exceptionally unwieldy, this massive firearm is a challenge to aim and use, but can be incredibly devastating when held by capable and skilled hand. The expensive upkeep of the firearm makes it largely unusable.

Ribcage Rifle (Tier 3 Primary Weapon)

A long-barreled rifle with a fitted scope, all bound together by tape, odd screws, and mismatched components. It's a miracle every time it fires successfully and an even bigger miracle when it hits its target.

Vine Whip (Tier 3 Primary Weapon)

A whip fashioned from the limb of a man-eating plant, this thorn-covered weapon ends in an organic maw that latches onto targets of its own accord, hungry for flesh even still.



Introduction

Environments

In addition to the small trading town where the PCs will begin their journey, there are two environments where the bulk of the adventure will take place: the lair of the Dire Goose and the swamp surrounding it. Each environment offers unique ways to challenge and intrigue the players; including them is a surefire way to up the difficulty if you're afraid things will be too easy!

Goose Nest (Dire Goose Lair)

Dire Geese craft their nests from sticks, brambles, bones, vines, and down, resulting in a complex, macabre ring of bedding in which they may lay their eggs. Often, they will try to keep these nests at least somewhat hidden in the muck of the marshes they call home, but larger dire geese are less concerned about predators and thus tend to have larger, more noticeable nests. A somewhat symbiotic relationship between the dire goose and yatevea has also formed, with dire geese choosing locations near the man-eating plants for additional protection from those who would do them harm, in exchange providing scraps of meat—intentionally or not—for the carnivorous denizens of the swamp.

Swamp

Water-logged, humid, sticky, and ultimately inhospitable, the swamp is a place few willingly call home. It feels like everything here is trying to kill you, whether it crawls, swims, or flies. Nothing is safe to touch or eat; you're better off just staying out of this place altogether. If there's a plentiful bounty waiting for you somewhere in this place, though, you might consider braving the dreadful environs just for a chance at that money.

Trading Town

Cypress Junction is a tiny town built in a spot where east, west, and northbound trade routes converge on the edge of a swamp. Cypress Junction is hot, slipshod, and unwelcoming to those seeking to stay for any length the locals happen to deem "too long". Due to the Dire Goose wreaking havoc in the area, though, they're a bit more willing to accept travelers who look like they're here to pursue the bounty of the beast's head. Of course, many have tried and none have succeeded thus far, so the people of the town are beginning to lose hope in the idea that a hero may come along to eliminate the threat.

Special Conditions

There are a few special conditions in this book, written to make keeping track of long-term/temporary effects easier. These conditions are:

- **Deafened:** You cannot hear.
- **Deposed:** You cannot be spotlighted. Any creature can spend a Fear/Hope to end this state for themselves or another creature, or another creature may take an action to help a *Deposed* creature while next to them, ending the condition for them.
- **Diseased:** You must roll a d6 before making an action roll. If the value rolled is less than the number of Stress you have marked, you must mark a Stress.
- **Exhausted:** Your Maximum HP and Stress are reduced by 1. Can be removed by completing a long rest.
- **Stuck:** You cannot move from your current position.

Adventure

Of course, the key element of this book is the adventure herein. *The Dire Goose Hunt* has five acts, or two if you are running it as a level 3 one-shot. If this



What's In This Book?

adventure will span multiple sessions for your group, the story is designed to enable the party to level up at the end of both the second session and the final session, assuming they start the adventure at the intended level of 2.

Act One: Approach

In this act, the party is traveling to Cypress Junction with the intention of taking the contract on a beast called the *Grey Dragon* or *She Who Honks*, having learned from neighboring settlements of the devastation the beast has wreaked on trade routes, with many traders now refusing to travel along the routes through Cypress Junction. During their journey there, they'll learn firsthand why the Dire Goose is such a threat: they'll be attacked by her, albeit briefly. Thankfully, members of the Ribcage Gang show up to back up the PCs, sending the dire goose fleeing back toward her nest before sunset, realizing this chosen prey isn't as easy as she had hoped.

Act Two: Arrival

The party arrives in Cypress Junction just after dark, so it's too late to venture into the dangerous swamp to find the dire goose; they'll need to rest up, gather supplies, and prepare before heading out. This is an opportunity for them to gain information about their quarry, the lands surrounding it, and otherwise set themselves up for success... or, they can just charge right in without doing much reconnaissance.

Act Three: Hunt

Now that they are rested and prepared, the party heads out at sunrise before the worst of the heat arrives. Even this early, it is still sweltering and sticky outside, immediately signaling that the battle here won't just be against a feathered dragon, but against the environment itself.

This act will take the party through the impossibly-dense and oppressive swamp with its mud pits, hostile denizens, and abrasive plants. A countdown will act as a signal as to whether they are getting the drop on their quarry or the other way around. Hopefully, they're all still in one piece by the time they reach the dreaded goose.

Act Four: Quarry

The party encounters the Dire Goose. This battle is expected to take up an entire session if you are not playing a one-shot, so be prepared for a tense fight! The setup for the fight depends on how the previous act played out, but once done, it's time to move on to Act Five.

Just when it seems the party has succeeded in their venture to acquire untold riches, the Ribcage Gang swoops in to take the glory. They want the head of the Dire Goose for themselves. In exchange, the PCs get to walk away with their lives. Especially after the battle with the goose, fighting these mercenaries could be extremely unwise, though the battlefield isn't necessarily favorable to the members of the gang, with the various creatures and pitfalls still about.

Act Five: Ribcage

This is where the fallout with the Ribcage Gang takes place. Will the party hand over the head and forgo their riches and glory, or will they stand their ground and risk death against these mercenaries who clearly more conniving and rested? Should they toss over the head, they've found rivals for life. Should they stand their ground, they may just get out alive... with a bit of luck.

Introduction

Running the Adventure

The Dire Goose Hunt is a straightforward adventure, but there are still plenty of opportunities to open the floor to the PCs throughout its play time, especially if you are playing multiple sessions! Here, you'll find helpful information to help you familiarize yourself with the nature of the adventure, the characters, and the setting.

Hooking the Players

PCs often want to know *why* they are on this adventure. What has called them to Cypress Junction and the contract on *She Who Honks*? There are two primary reasons a PC may be interested in this contract:

- *There's a high price on the Dire Goose's head!*
- *The Dire Goose is harming and killing people.*

Of course, PCs are encouraged to come up with their own reasons for their interest in the contract, but if you need an easy reason to get your PCs hooked, you can offer the selfish or noble option.

This may even be a great opportunity to prompt each PC and ask them why they are here; they may have a unique explanation!

Setting the Tone

This adventure is intended to feel rather isolating for the PCs. The people of Cypress Junction don't like visitors, the Dire Goose is hostile and deadly, the swamp is unwelcoming and oppressive, and their only perceived allies, the Ribcage Gang, turn on them in the end to take the bounty for themselves. You should go into this adventure with these goals as far as tone-setting is concerned:

- *Establish isolation and unwelcome.*

- *Instill a sense of concern and distrust.*
- *Give the PCs no one to lean on but each other.*

So long as the tone is set and consistent, the PCs will get the idea; they'll recognize they're on their own. The locals want the Dire Goose gone, but they don't have much hope anyone will succeed in doing it, so they really just want the riffraff out of their town. The Ribcage Gang wants money, no matter how they get it. The Dire Goose just wants to survive. *No one here cares about the PCs but themselves.*

Another thing to note about the tone is that notion of a violent, unkillable goose is inherently *silly*. Your role as the GM is to both maintain the overall silliness of that notion by greatly exaggerating the absolute nightmare that is the Dire Goose. Play up its brutality, make NPCs shudder at its mention, and make the PCs rue the day they thought a fight against a giant goose would be a cakewalk.

Using Fear

It is a key principle that as a GM, you should not hoard Fear. This adventure highlights this. There are many opportunities for you to gain additional fear as the adventure continues, and the Dire Goose will hardly pose a threat if the PCs fight it with full resources. You must spend Fear to wear down the PCs over the course of the adventure, otherwise the Dire Goose will hardly pose a challenge. Use the environments, adversaries, and presented situations to chip away at the resources of your PCs so that the fight against the goose actually requires something of them rather than being a cakewalk.

Running a One-Shot

A one-shot is designed to be played in a single session, usually ranging from 2 to 4 hours in length, though they can



Running The Adventure

run longer than that at times. This adventure is written in a manner that allows you to easily run its contents in a single session! Here's how to do it.

Start in Act Three

Begin the adventure in Act Three, with the players having already set out from Cypress Junction. The start of Act Three has a bit of opening narration specifically for starting the adventure at this spot. Look for the ➡ symbol, which represents material specific to the one-shot version of the adventure.

Start with Pre-Made Characters

If your party does not already have characters, do not make character creation part of the one-shot if you can avoid it. This guide comes with 4 pre-made characters for your players to use if you just want to hit the ground running. The only blank fields are names and connections; you can fill those out before the session if needed!

Modify the Contents of the Acts

Adjust the contents of the acts to suit the amount of time you have available (and how you wish to dedicate that time). Expect each of these to add about 90 minutes of playtime, with the Ribcage Gang specifically adding 2-4 hours on their own.

- ▶ **Remove:** The Ribcage Gang.
- ▶ **Remove:** Adversaries from the lair.
- ▶ **Change:** The Swamp Die to a d6.
- ▶ **Reduce:** The Dire Goose Thresholds.
- ▶ **Ignore:** Non-Dire Goose Encounters.

Return to Cypress Junction

Once the Dire Goose Hunt is over, if you are not running the Ribcage Gang as part of your one-shot (and it is strongly advised you do not do so), simply return the PCs to Cypress

Junction where they may collect their reward. There is a box of text toward the end of Act Four that details how to do this, notated with a ➡ symbol. This will skip Act Five entirely, removing the Ribcage Gang encounter.

Running a Longer Adventure

If you choose to run this adventure as something longer, dedicating 3-5 sessions to it, that's great! There is plenty of content in here to make it last at least that long, assuming your sessions are typically 2-4 hours in length. And with the notorious, backstabbing Ribcage Gang, there's no telling what tales remain after this one!

This adventure can take characters from level 2 to level 4, or it can simply be a great adventure for level 3 characters with no leveling at all (PCs should be at least level 3 before Act Three begins). The pre-made characters included are already at level 3, but you can also have players create their own characters or (better yet) slot this adventure into an existing campaign with existing characters!

GM Resources

There are multiple resources available for the GM, which you should print out for yourself in advance. The resources recommended for each act are listed at the start of that act's page and they can be found at the back of this guide.

Dire Goose Advice Cards

One particularly useful resource is the *Dire Goose Hunt Advice Card*. These are cards you can hand out to the PCs throughout the early acts of the adventure. PCs can earn them by helping or speaking with locals and can use the cards to level the playing field. They each contain a beneficial and unique single-use effect.



SETTING AND STORY

This adventure takes place in the *Free Cities of Suorr*, a region of the world where industry thrives and corporations rule, with their own private security forces dictating law and order and their funds determining which settlements thrive and which die. One of those settlements is long-abandoned by this larger corporations: *Cypress Junction*, built around a train depot where west-and-eastbound tracks converge with northbound tracks in an inhospitable swamp.

If you are slotting this adventure into your own setting, feel free to adjust this setting's details to suit your campaign. Maybe you don't have trains and the trade route is simply a path through the swamp. Maybe the adventure can't take place in a swamp, but you can make a jungle or other wetland work. Do whatever is needed to make this adventure work for you!

Setting

Cypress Junction

About 50 years ago, the train route connecting the Free Cities of Suorr to the neighboring *Federation of Miliim* was completed. A few years later, a new route was established branching north from that east-west path, snaking through the swamps to reach the northern settlements of Suorr. At the point where those routes converged, just south of the swamp of *Nortmol*, a train depot was established. Soon after, settlers began construction on homes, utilities, and other necessities surrounding the depot, turning it into a small village named after the depot itself: *Cypress Junction*.

Population Decline

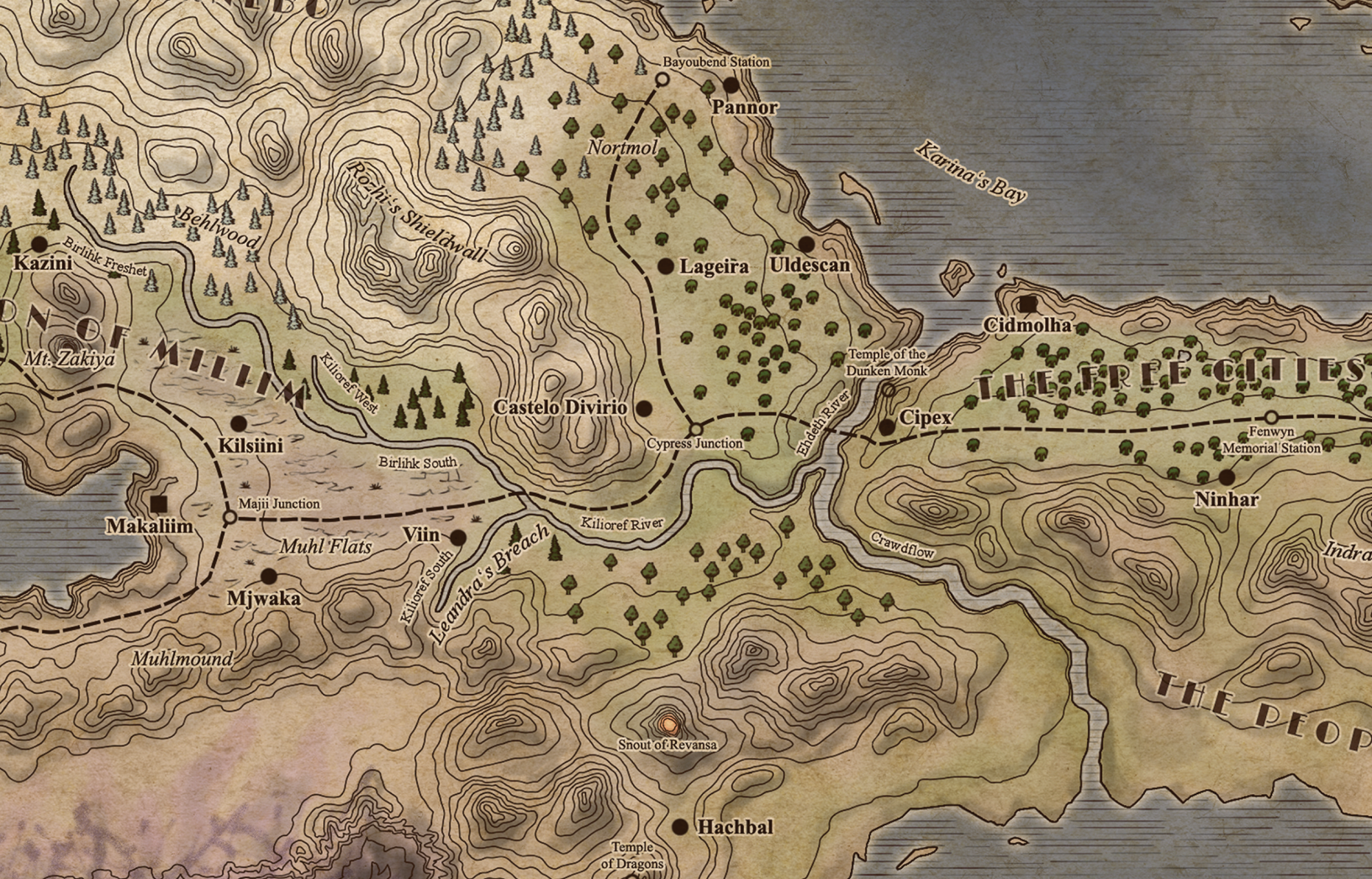
Cypress Junction's population peaked about 30 years ago, with about 200 residents. There was no real logic or reason to the layout of the settlement—folk just showed up to build wherever they saw fit. As time passed, it became clear no major corporation would take interest in the settlement, leaving them without sustainable funding. Travelers and traders typically didn't want to stop in the sweaty old town either. This resulted in a gradual exodus from the village until the population dwindled to an amount as low as 30 just this year. Those who remained, though, are proud of where they live and do what they can to make Cypress Junction a home... for *them*. Being shunned by travelers, strangers, and corporations for so long has soured the residents of Cypress Junction against newcomers, which isn't doing much to improve their population or bring inhabitants to the numerous abandoned buildings dotting the landscape.

Nortmol

A dense swamp north of Cypress Junction, *Nortmol*, is home to many hostile animals, dangerous plants, and environmental hazards. Mud pits, ensnaring vines, thorny thickets, and more await those who dare traverse the overgrown foliage without a guide. Stray too far from the path and you're sure find yourself eviscerated by cassowaries and fed to crocodiles.

A couple of settlements have been established in northern *Nortmol*, but they are typically reached by water or train. *Nortmol*'s dangerous reputation has led to some retirees preferring the settlements north of the swamp just to ensure they are left alone in their later years, giving those settlements their own reputation for having nothing but old curmudgeons and mud.





Free Cities of Suorr

The Free Cities of Suorr is a nation theoretically ungoverned, though in reality it is ruled by a conglomerate of corporations, each at war with one another in their own unique ways, be that espionage or outright gunfire in the streets. The corporations decide which streets are built and maintained and where, they determine which settlements thrive and which are abandoned, they determine who gets what resources, and they are ultimately more hostile than most governing bodies. Yet, people do come to Suorr to escape oppression elsewhere. One's opinion of Suorr depends entirely on perspective.

Suorr keeps its sovereign status and avoids conflict with other nations through its industriousness and neutrality. It is more advanced than any kingdom or nation, allowing it to hold weapons their would-be enemies have no defense against. Moreover, they remain entirely neutral on political affairs, or at least claim to be, with no laws prohibiting travel through the Free Cities regardless of your place of origin, and no sanctions or tariffs imposed on any other nation. Some would call them fence-sitters, but proud Suorrans would say it is simply good business.

Story

For Whom the Goose Honks

About a year ago, a massive dire goose took up residence in the swamp north of Cypress Junction. The villagers have given the goose many names, as have traders and travelers passing through who have been unfortunate enough to encounter the beast: *She Who Honks*, *Grey Dragon*, *Nightmare in Feathers*, and many more. The appearance of the Dire Goose has proven devastating not only for the village, but for the trade route. The goose notoriously attacks traders and travelers, even derailing trains with her tremendous size. Sometimes it's for food, sometimes it seems to just be for pleasure and a total disregard for industrious society. The nerve!

Initially, the village itself sent out parties to take the goose down, but none of these parties made it back alive, either encountering the many dangers of the swamp or being lucky enough to reach the Dire Goose only to be killed by her. Realizing this would be a job for more experienced and skilled monster hunters, they put out a contract for the meager 50 gold they could muster together. This, of course, was not enough to persuade people to head out to Cypress Junction and take on the monster. It would hardly cover travel costs!

Sponsored Contract

Once traders began outright refusing to take the train route through the region due to stories of the monster assailing travelers on the tracks, corporations finally took an interest in Cypress Junction. They put together a significant contract, sponsored by multiple vested interests, and offered an irresistible amount of gold for the Dire Goose's head.

Unfortunately, while this did draw the eye of many mercenaries, it has now been 7 months without success. Many succumb to the cruelty of the environment. Those few who reach the Dire Goose perish just as the first hunting party did.

Dwindling Efforts

In time, word spread that the Dire Goose was proving to be quite the challenge. Fewer and fewer mercenaries and hunters showed up to take the job. Those who did tended to bring large groups, and even they could not bring the beast down. With each coming party, the goose seemed to grow in its rage and boldness, seeking prey further and further from its nest. The offer for its head has increased, but this has not drawn a significant influx of people compared to the initial increase in mercenary arrivals when the contract was first offered by Suorran corporations.

The Party Arrives

Now, the party of PCs has chosen to take the call to take down this Dire Goose for whatever reason they so choose. Maybe they need the money, maybe they just want a dangerous beast slain. Whatever their logic, they're heading for Cypress Junction and they won't leave until the goose is dead... or they are.

They aren't the only ones who have heeded the call, however; another group of mercenaries, the Ribcage Gang, has taken the contract at the same time. Surely there's strength in numbers, though, right?

ACT ONE: APPROACH

In which our party travels to Cypress Junction and is assailed by the brutal Dire Goose, saved only by the sudden appearance of the Ribcage Gang, who are able to scare the beast off, though they did not do so out of any sense of kindness.

► You may skip this entire act if you are running the game as a one-shot. Cutting the Ribcage Gang entirely is advised to ensure the session does not drag on for too long after the Dire Goose fight concludes, resulting in cutting Act Five, as well.

You will need:

- All *Dire Goose Hunt Advice Card* printouts (Glossary, Pages o-r).
- *Passenger NPC* and *Zoologist NPC* cheat sheets (Glossary, Page a).
- *Dire Goose Contract* printout (Glossary, Page t).
- All *Ribcage NPC* cheat sheets and *Ribcage Adversary* printouts (Glossary, Pages a-b, e-f).
- *Dire Goose* adversary block printout (Glossary, Page f).
- *Dire Crocodile* adversary block printout (Glossary, Page d).
- *Swamp: Clearing* environment block printout (Glossary, Page g).
- (Optional): Player Character Sheets if using pre-made characters (Glossary, Pages u-bb).
- Standard *Daggerheart* materials (dice, pen/pencil, paper, etc).

Act Overview

GM Goals

As the GM, your goals this act are as follows:

- **Establish the Threat:** Establish the Dire Goose as a significant, dangerous threat to the PCs and the innocent.
- **Introduce the Rivals:** Introduce the Ribcage Gang as a potential rival monster-hunting crew. Avoid making it obvious the gang would go so far as to backstab the PCs later, but leave enough breadcrumbs that the PCs can see this coming in hindsight.

NPC and Creature Goals

The Ribcage Gang

The Ribcage Gang wants money, and they'll do whatever it takes to get it. Their eyes are on the prize of the Dire Goose right now, though. Upon meeting the PCs, they'll come to the conclusion that they could be used as bait to weaken the goose so the gang can swoop in and reap the reward of glory and gold.

The Dire Goose

The Dire Goose's needs are unpredictable. Survival is her priority, but she will also attack just about anything for at least a moment. She often swoops in to derail trains, dive bomb caravans, or lift up unsuspecting travelers in her massive bill. The only thing anyone needs to know about the Dire Goose's dire is that she wants to kill, and she wants to do it a *lot*, just not at the cost of her own safety.

Setting and Scene

This adventure will begin with the PCs en-route to Cypress Junction, already aware of the Dire Goose contract and knowing their destination. While on-board the train to the village, the Dire Goose swoops in and attacks, forcing them to take the last leg of the journey on foot. The act will end once they reach Cypress Junction.