UNCAGED

VOLUME III



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UNCAGED ANTHOLOGY

PRODUCER'S NOTE

Uncaged continues to be a whirlwind that I am emotionally unprepared for. At time of writing this, I've just returned home from Gen Con, where *Uncaged Volume I* was nominated for an ENnie award (!!!) and where we hosted a panel to a packed room. Those of us at Gen Con even had a meet-up where we signed each other's books. Totally surreal. I definitely didn't cry. (I definitely did.)

Not that I needed reminding, but this affirmed how special *Uncaged* is; not just as a book series, but as a community. Thanks for being a part of our movement. We hope you enjoy this volume and can feel the love we've all poured into it.

Ashley Warren | *Founder/Editor*
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Uncaged friend and fan Cheyanne Lovellette (@Clove_Latte on Twitter) came to the Uncaged panel dressed as our Vol. I cover girl. From left: Luciella Elisabeth Scarlett, Ashley Warren, Cheyanne, Lynne M. Meyer, and Samantha Darcy.

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ABOUT THE COVER

Our *Volume III* cover features the Yuki-onna, a ghostly snow woman from Japanese folklore. Some legends say that the Yuki-onna that a lost traveler may meet during a snowstorm. Other legends claim that she is considered a "yokai," or demon, with malicious intent. Regardless, we hope you enjoy our take on her story.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Uncaged*, an epic collection of adventures spanning the multiverse. Each adventure features a creature from the world's vault of mythology, folklore, fairytale, and legend—including the beloved mythos of *Dungeons & Dragons*. Many of the creatures may be recognizable, although some are lesser-known monsters. We are excited to illuminate these stories.

VOLUME OVERVIEW

Dungeon Masters will find adventures designed for Tiers 1 through 3. The adventures are not connected, although clever DMs are encouraged to find ways to weave the stories together to form a longer campaign. Regardless, every adventure is designed to be a one-session module that can be completed between 1 to 5 hours.

GENERAL NOTES

DMs will need the *Dungeon Master's Guide (*denoted as *DMG)* and the *Monster Manual* (denoted as *MM*) to run these adventures. Some adventures feature items or creatures found in *Volo's Guide to Monsters* and *Xanathar's Guide to Everything*; these are denoted with *VGtM* or *XGtE*. Creatures/monsters that are **bolded** are found in the *MM*. Items that are *italicized* are found in the *DMG*. Stat blocks are included for new or reskinned creatures. See *Appendix A*, pg. 219, for a list of creatures in this volume.

Due to the nature of the anthology, some adventures are preceded with a relevant **content warning**. We encourage you to set clear boundaries and expectations at your gaming table, ensuring that our hobby remains inclusive and inviting to all.

Most of the adventures in this anthology rely on "theater of the mind" and do not include maps. Blank player maps are found in *Appendix B*, pg. 220.

> Text that appears in a box like this is meant to be read aloud or paraphrased for the players.


TIER 1



Illustration by Ma'at Crook

THE NIGHT WATCH

by Chloe Mashiter

Creatures: *Harpy & Dryad* | **Levels:** *1-3*

SYNOPSIS

A predominantly social adventure, for characters of 1st-3rd level designed to last four hours.

The Night Watch of the village of Vaxla has a simple task: patrol the nearby woods and prevent ambushes. However, when a member is discovered beaten and unconscious at the woods' edge, talk turns to monsters and help is needed…

ADVENTURE HOOK

Vaxla is a popular overnight stopping point for merchants and adventurers; characters could be passing through, actively looking for work, or seeking out merchants and wares in the village. Regardless of what brought them there, they will have spent the night at the Maul and Mead, Vaxla's only tavern.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Vaxla is a small village, surrounded by the River Tema to the west and the Myrkur Woods on the remaining three sides. The Tema is cursed and deeply dangerous to cross, but an enchanted bridge guarantees safe passage.

The Mykur Woods is a forested swamp, with an East-West path. Jega (dryad) and Sila (harpy) are a couple living together in the woods. They take care to evade travelers by day and patrols at night, for fear of attacks.

A fortnight ago, Night Watch member Roche Shin spotted Jega and made an offer to capture "the monster" and sell "it" to merchant Roscoe Montajay. Without the Night Watch leader's knowledge, Roche convinced the rest of the Night Watch to help capture Jega, in exchange for a cut of the takings.

Last night, Mattias Windriver saw Jega and gave chase, but Sila came to her defense. Mattias fled, fell, broke his leg and passed out at the woods' edge. The watch found him the next morning.

In the morning since the attack, Hisdri—through talking to local expert Katelyn Morningfall—has realized Jega is a dryad, information that has now reached Roche and Roscoe.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

- **Jega:** a female **dryad** who is violence-averse and patient, with skin that looks like that of a rainbow tree. Normally a careful planner, she leaps to action whenever Sila is in danger.
- **Katelyn Morningfall:** a half-elf woman (**commoner**), with calloused hands and muscular frame, who is Vaxla's blacksmith. A self-taught polymath, she speaks at the speed of thought.
- **Roscoe Montajay:** an unscrupulous male halfling man and merchant (**commoner**), forever selling dodgy magical items. He is flamboyant and cocky with painstakingly styled facial hair.
- **Sila:** a female **harpy** who is fiercely protective of Jega and distrustful of humanoids. She has red-brown feathers and golden eyes, coupled with a cutting sense of humor and formidable strength of will.

NIGHT WATCH MEMBERS

The Night Watch members' stats are on pg. 13.

- **Lesslen Torunn (leader):** a non-binary dwarf with a broad, rounded russet beard, Lesslen is well-intentioned, albeit sometimes tactless. Lesslen acts as a lookout during patrols, since stealth is complicated by the glow of their mage hand, used as a prosthetic right forearm.

- **Mattias Windriver:** a male human prone to overthinking and nerves, with a lean build and delicate glasses.
- **Roche Shin:** a young, highly competitive and confident male human with an interest in black-market magical items. Roche has poorly shorn dark hair and a handful of tattoos.
- **Valder Thorngage:** a shy male halfling with bitten nails and a concave chest, Valder has strong morals but little self-confidence. Pressured into compliance with Roche's plan, he's the most likely to help the characters.
- **Hisdri Folkor:** a female gnome, who considers knowledge power and hordes it. She is always seeking to add to her extensive savings, buried throughout the woods. She has neat, short blond hair and wears copious amounts of jewelery.
- **Laplan Liadon:** a non-binary half-elf who chases danger and adventure, with numerous scars and minor injuries to show for it. They joined the Watch for excitement and are delighted it's here.



CHAPTER 1 – BROKEN BONES AND FRACTURED STORIES

Lesslen Torunn—who does not know about Jega or Sila, nor Roscoe's plan—enters the tavern to hire the characters for the Night Watch.

The crowd in The Maul and Mead, Vaxla's sole tavern, is beginning to thin as the watchtower bells chime one o'clock. Most patrons are merchants and travelers passing through, keen to start their onward journey. A highly-strung barmaid serves your complimentary breakfast while you recover from last night's late arrival.

The door swings open, and fresh, cold air mixes with the smell of spices, the spilled mead coating the floor, and the dog asleep by the bar. A dwarf arrives, with broad, rounded russet beard and an amputated right forearm and prosthetic mage hand. Scanning the tavern, their eyes light upon you.

"I'm in need of some Watch members. There's been trouble with a creature in the woods—scaring folks, breaking bones, but you look like a capable lot. I can pay you two gold per day, with a bonus fifteen gold between you if you can kill or capture whatever it is. What do you say?"

Lesslen briefs the party with the following information:

- The creature broke Mattias' leg last night
- Before the characters start their shift they should gather what information they can, starting with Mattias
- Directions to Mattias' home, where he is recuperating
- Meet at Vaxla's watchtower at five o'clock for the night's patrol

Seeing Vaxla in daylight for the first time, you note the imposing watchtower, smoke from the blacksmith's, and lush surroundings. Winding through a scattering of homes, you soon find one with a distinctive green door.

The door is unlocked; if anyone knocks, Mattias calls for them to come in. The bedroom occupies the entire first floor and Mattias is in bed, his leg in a splint. Barrels and boxes are available as seats. Use the "Roleplaying Mattias Windriver" sidebar to help roleplay him.

A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals Mattias is lying about last night; a success on a DC 12 Charisma (Intimidation) or a DC 17 Charisma (Persuasion) check can get him to reveal at least some of the truth. On a failure, Mattias challenges the party to investigate the woods themselves if they don't believe him.

A success on a DC 14 Intelligence (History) or (Arcana) check reveals that Mattias' seems to be describing a harpy; any character who succeeds on this roll is familiar with stereotypical harpy lore.

If Mattias feels exposed or threatened, he will feign weakness and say he must rest.

Roleplaying Mattias Windriver

Mattias' story:

- A winged monster with talons or claws attacked him
- He tried to escape but it broke his leg and knocked him unconscious
- He doesn't know how he reached the edge of the woods
- It stole money from him

What Mattias knows:

- The monster didn't attack; he ran at the sight of it
- He broke his leg while running, losing consciousness at the woods' edge
- He doesn't know how he lost the money in his pocket

What Mattias doesn't know:

- The monster's a harpy
- That Jega's a dryad
- That the two are linked at all

What Mattias knows but will never admit:

- The monster appeared while he was attempting to capture Jega
- Jega's existence

Development

As the party leaves Mattias' house, the bells chime at two o'clock. They only have three hours to find information before tonight's watch.

Chapter 2 – The Cold Light of Day

The rest of the afternoon is a chance for exploration and inquiry. Below are likely locations and encounters.

Throughout the afternoon, Valder watches the party; ask for occasional perception checks. On a successful DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check, the characters see him following them. If caught, Valder admits to trailing the party to see if they're trustworthy. On a successful DC 15 (Charisma) check, Valder shares Roche's plan. On a fail, Valder is too scared of Roche to say anything.

Vaxla's Blacksmith

If the party seeks equipment, or information on monsters, any local will point them to Katelyn Morningfall and the blacksmith's dual plumes of smoke.

> A wall of heat meets you at the blacksmith's doorway; twin fires burning at the back with spitting intensity as a white-haired woman hauls crates into some unknowable order. Her pointed ears prick up at your approach, and she smiles warmly.

Katelyn openly shares information, but has a habit of going off on tangents.

Roleplaying Katelyn Morningfall

What Katelyn knows:

- The contents of the *Monster Manual* (Katelyn lets traveling merchants pay for services in unwanted books, through which she's learned much).
- Hisdri visited her earlier in the afternoon, quizzing her on monsters—harpies, dryads, banshees, lamias and hags. Hisdri claimed she was merely curious, and thinks talk of monsters in the woods is hysteria.

What Katelyn doesn't know:

- Jega or Sila's existence

The characters may buy any medium armor or simple weapon for half the price listed in the *DMG*, since Katelyn is yet to master these. On any attack successfully made with a weapon, or sustained wearing armor, roll a d20. On a 1, it breaks irreparably.

THE MAUL AND MEAD

If the party want to buy magical items from merchants, or try to listen in on rumors about events, they should go to The Maul and Mead.

> The tavern's now peppered with small groups of locals, unwinding with games of chance. Most merchants have already moved on—except one, a flamboyantly dressed halfling propping up the bar.

Only a success on a DC 25 Charisma (Persuasion) or (Deception) check will convince Roscoe the party are allies and make him willing to talk about Roche's plan. If, following this, a party member says a demonstrable lie, they should make a further Charisma (Persuasion) or (Deception) roll against Roscoe's Wisdom (Insight). On a failure, he becomes suspicious of the group and feeds them misinformation about the plan.

Unless Roscoe views the party as allies, he'll attempt to sell them a *wand of viscid globs* (see *Rewards*).

ROLEPLAYING ROSCOE MONTAJAY

Roscoe's story:

- He's waiting in Vaxla for a friend, to travel on together

What Roscoe knows:

- Roche's entire plan, and who's involved
- Roche visited him earlier today, to explain the delay in delivering Jega
- The existence of a harpy (but he is only interested in purchasing the more "beautiful" dryad)

THE MYRKUR WOODS

> Entering the northernmost section of the woods, your feet disappear with each step beneath a foot of brush, grass, and wild plants, which camouflage the woods' swamp pits. Delicate branches stretch out like a web over the woods.

A successful DC 16 Wisdom (Survival) check reveals the footprints left by Mattias last night. Sixty feet from the tracks' endpoint is a tree with layers of red, orange, and brown bark; Jega is bound to this tree. Any character who succeeds on a DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check spots a carving on a nearby, typical tree that reads "J + S.", 'J' shaped like a leaf and 'S' like a feather.

If the party fails the check or investigates the woods, roll 1d4 to see what they find:

D4	Result
1	A swamp pit: a successful DC 20 Dexterity saving throw avoids falling in, and any creature falling in must succeed on a DC 16 Strength saving throw to get out
2	Attacked by one **violet fungus**
3	Mattias' lost coins: three silver and six copper
4	A love note, signed 'Sila,' hidden in a hollow of a tree

THE NIGHT WATCH

Locals can direct them to the likely whereabouts of Night Watch members—Roche's house and the stables.

Roche and Hisdri are at Roche's, a modest home with a dark red door. Characters wishing to eavesdrop must succeed on a DC14 Wisdom (Perception) check. On a success, use the 'The Night Watch' sidebar for the information the party can overhear.

If approached by the party, Roche and Hisdri feign goodwill—a successful DC 16 Wisdom (Insight) check sees through this.

Laplan is at the stables, having just returned from a ride. A character who succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) check sees that Laplan's civility is artificial.

Roleplaying the Night Watch

Their story:

- There are no monsters
- Mattias was drunk and injured himself
- Mattias will lose his job if Lesslen finds out—the watch are covering for him and will pretend they've driven the monster away tonight

What they know:

- Roche's plan
- Last night's true events
- That Lesslen hired new watch members
- The above story was devised by Hisdri, in case anyone started asking questions

What only Roche and Hisdri know:

- There's a dryad and harpy in the woods
- Roscoe is getting impatient
- Cutting trees might lure the dryad out

Development

The bells chime five o'clock, calling the party to the watchtower for the night's patrol.

Chapter 3 – Watchful Eyes and Hidden Monsters

> Approaching the watchtower as dusk falls, you can see five figures gathered at its base, at least one whom you recognize.

Lesslen introduces everyone before splitting them into two patrols. The party will patrol the North Woods, and the NPCs the South Woods. Lesslen then ascends the watchtower.

Roche suggests switching patrols, claiming the North Woods have more swamp pits and are safer for a group that knows them well. A successful DC 16 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals he's lying; characters remember the last sighting of the dryad was in the North Woods. If the party won't switch, the NPC patrol heads for the South Woods swiftly.

Valder whispers in Halfling to follow the patrol, in the hope that a party member understands.

If this is the party's first time visiting the woods, use the read-aloud text from *Chapter 2* before continuing.

Unless the party is following the NPC patrol, they must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom (Survival) check, at advantage if they have been here before, to avoid swamp pits (use the stats in *Chapter 2*).

Choose from among the next three sections depending on the party's choices: "Patrolling the South Woods" if the party agreed to switch patrols; "Patrolling the North Woods" if the party refused; or "Following the NPCs" if the party abandoned their patrol to follow the NPCs.

Patrolling the South Woods

Jega observes the party, hiding amongst the trees. If the party succeeds on a contested Wisdom (Perception) check against Jega's Dexterity (Stealth), they spot her. Any character that spots Jega can attempt a DC 11 Charisma (Persuasion check). On a success, Jega treats the party as allies and offers to lead them through the woods if they protect herself and Sila from the Night Watch.

Roleplaying Jega

What Jega knows:

- The Night Watch is after her, but she doesn't know why
- They are damaging trees whilst patrolling right now
- Sila, her partner, was defending Jega last night
- Mattias' encounter with Sila was near Jega's tree
- Sila will do anything to stop the Night Watch from harming Jega's tree

Once the party reaches the North Woods, the NPC patrol is 60 feet away, and Jega disappears. The watchtower bell rings as Sila flies down, landing between the NPC patrol and Jega's tree. Proceed to "The Final Showdown."

PATROLLING THE NORTH WOODS

Succeeding on a DC 14 Dexterity (Stealth) check to enter the woods unheard, and a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, the party overhears Jega and Sila near Jega's multicolored tree, arguing over whether the new watch members can be trusted, and Sila's preference for pre-emptive attacks over Jega's caution. (When role-playing Sila, she knows everything that Jega knows.)

On a failure, or if the party do not stealth, Jega and Sila are startled.

Tactics: Jega hides using *tree stride* and Sila sings a Luring Song (two Night Watch members are within 300 feet). If Sila lures any characters, she flies to a nearby swamp pit to trap them, then returns to Jega's tree. Sila warns everyone to leave; if attacked, she fights. If Sila reaches half HP, Jega aids her. The NPC patrol appear after two rounds and fights the party out of fear of interference or having to share the payment. Proceed to "The Final Showdown."

FOLLOWING THE NPCS

Characters easily track the Night Watch patrol; they are leaving an trail of chopped trees. The party must succeed on DC 9 Dexterity (Stealth) checks to follow them without being caught. If they are spotted, the Night Watch patrol runs, attempting to trick the party into falling into a swamp pit (see *Chapter 2* for how swamp pits work).

Any character with a Passive Perception of 10 or more overhears a conversation, learning the same information from eavesdropping on Roche and Hisdri in *Chapter 2*.

Jega observes the party during their tracking; she attempts to speak with them, sharing the same information as listed in "Patrolling the North Woods."

The NPC patrol heads to where Mattias attempted to capture Sila last night; once there, the bell of Vaxla's watchtower rings. Sila flies, landing between the Night Watch and Jega's tree. Proceed to "The Final Showdown."

THE FINAL SHOWDOWN

Jega and Sila fight the four Night Watch members, attempting to convince the party to help.

Tactics: Valder refuses to fight the party, Jega, or Sila. With a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check, he fights alongside the party. On a fail, Valder runs to alert Lesslen. Roche and Laplan focus attacks on Sila. Hisdri attempts to reach Jega's tree and threatens damage to it if Jega doesn't comply.

After combat, Lesslen arrives. They are horrified by any deaths of their co-workers but honor the agreement with the party. Valder cares for the dead or injured whilst Lesslen arrests Roscoe and impounds his wares. Jega and Sila, thankful, promise the party that they can call on them anytime for help. If the simply ask for them during a future adventure, it will not be long before their allies appear.

REWARDS

As a primarily social adventure, 300 XP per character is recommended, but down to DM's discretion.

- Besides their fee (bonus included), Lesslen offers some of Roscoe's seized wares as thanks:
- *Wand of viscid globs* (successful DC 13 Intelligence check reveals it shoots backwards, at the holder)
- *Potion of water breathing* (successful DC 13 Intelligence check reveals it's poorly made, with unknown side-effects. The drinker can breathe underwater, but when above water, water constantly spills from their mouth)
- *Wand of paralysis* (successful DC 13 Intelligence check reveals it's a disguised *immovable rod*)

Night Watch Member

Medium humanoid, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (studded leather armor)
Hit points 22 (4d4 + 4)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	9 (-1)	9 (-1)	11 (+0)

Skills Intimidation +2
Senses passive Perception 9
Languages Common plus any according to their individual race
Challenge 1 (200 xp)

Actions

Multiattack. The Night Watch member makes two melee attacks.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d6+2) piercing damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 80ft./320ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d6+1) piercing damage.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

This is the first one-shot I've written for publication and reflects my fondness for social, flexible and improvisation-heavy games. As a queer woman, I wanted the one-shot not just to reframe *D&D* monsters in a feminist way, but feature a positive, loving all-female relationship at its core. It's also important to me to represent non-binary and disabled people in the worlds that I write. Thanks go to Shamini, Grace, Tom P and Tom J (aka Tosscobbles Insurance Inc.) who helped me playtest this one-shot and were instrumental in working out the pacing and structure for it.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chloe Mashiter is a London-based freelancer who works in theatre and gaming as a writer, director, and performer. She is one of the co-creators of Adventurers Wanted, a company running live and streamed shows based around *D&D* and other TTRPG systems. Reach her at @chloemashiter on Twitter.

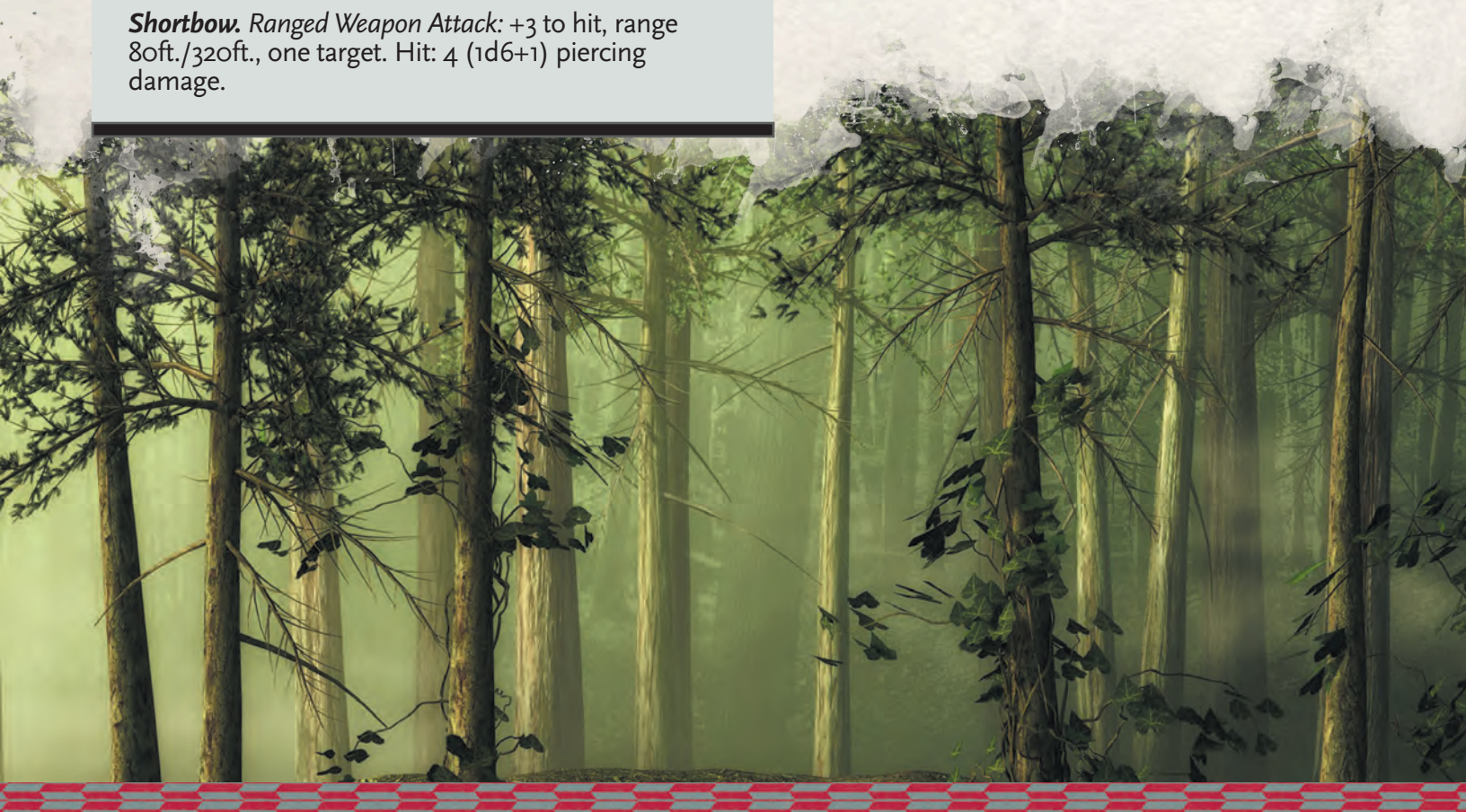




Illustration by Sammy Ward

CHERRY BLOSSOMS AND BLACK FEATHERS

by Andrew Engelbrite

Creature: *Dryad & Harpy* | **Level:** *2*

SYNOPSIS

A dryad named Nilal attempts to escape her wooden shackles using dark fey magic, luring passersby to their deaths. She has enslaved two harpies, Bharya and Kamu, to do the worst of her dark deeds. The adventurers discover Nilal's deception and the harpy couple's innocence after a clifftop battle. The adventurers must form a tentative alliance with the typically shunned harpies to undo Nilal's wicked magic.

ADVENTURE HOOK

While traveling through the woods, the party spots a body lying at the foot of a tall cliff next to a flowering cherry tree. Upon investigation, the party meets the dryad, Nilal, who tells them of a pair of fearsome harpies that live atop the cliff occasionally dropping unfortunate travelers at her feet. Nilal implores the party and promises magical favors should they travel up the harrowing cliffs and remove these monsters from her forest.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Cherry Blossoms and Black Feathers is a low-level adventure intended for 4-6 2nd level characters. It can be easily placed in most campaigns when the party travels through a wooded area. The adventure is primarily comprised of two encounters, each containing options to decrease or increase the difficulty of combat for groups with fewer or greater levels or numbers.

For this adventure, the common perception of dryads' stereotypes them as beautiful and wise spirits of the forest and sighting one on a journey through the woods is a sign of good luck. The common perception of harpies' stereotypes them as wicked and vicious monsters —cackling demons wearing human faces that endanger the unwary traveler.

CHAPTER 1 – SOLEMN PETALS

To begin this adventure while the party travels through a wooded area, tell the character with the highest passive Wisdom (Perception) that they notice something and read or paraphrase the following:

> Out of the corner of your eye, you spot a flash of bright color through the dull earthy tones of the surrounding foliage. Peeking through, you find a clearing. You see a single towering cherry tree in full bloom standing unchallenged at the top of a low hill, with bright pink petals gently showering down in the breeze. Beyond the tree, a jagged and steep cliff face juts hundreds of feet up, the rocky edifice visible as you investigate the clearing. You spot something atop the hill near the cherry tree, partially obscured by the fallen petals: a humanoid body lies motionless on the hill.

INVESTIGATING THE SCENE

Unless the characters remain particularly stealthy, Nilal becomes aware of them once they begin their investigation of the area. Once aware, Nilal quickly assesses the party, emerges from her tree, and addresses the characters. Read or paraphrase the following:

> *"Hello? Please, did you know him? The beasts had their way with him. I don't suppose you know how he'd want to be buried?"*

Nilal attempts to convince the characters of her own innocence and implores the party to scale the cliff to destroy the harpies that have killed the man at her feet and so many others before him.

During their investigation, characters find the following:

- The body is a human male in his mid-thirties and horribly mutilated to the point that he is difficult to identify.
- The man's possessions are still present, including a bedroll, hunting trap, five small animal furs, and a coin purse containing 4 gp and 8 cp. If the party decides to take these items, Nilal has no objections if she can give the body a proper burial.
- A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) or DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check on the body reveals that it sustained numerous impact injuries, likely battered while falling from a great height.
- A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine) check or DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) check on the body also reveals numerous cuts caused by some sort of claws or talons.
- The cherry tree stands 20 feet tall atop a grassy hill roughly 30 feet in diameter.
- A successful DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) or DC 16 Wisdom (Survival) check of the area reveals dozens of areas of displaced dirt. If the graves are discovered and Nilal is questioned about them, she maintains her façade and informs the party that she's had to solemnly bury countless unfortunates who have been cast down by the harpies.

In speaking to Nilal, characters who succeed on a DC 20 Wisdom (Insight) check sense deception in her story. If pressed, Nilal attempts to play this off as latent nervousness, as she rarely talks to humans.

ROLEPLAYING NILAL

Nilal acts in the way she thinks would best convince the party to trust her. If the characters seem noble or chivalrous, she takes the role of damsel in distress. If the party seems debonair or easily manipulated by a pretty face, she is a seductress. For an overly cautious or skeptical party, she seems to be a wizened forest sage. Have Nilal target whomever she perceives as the leader of the group and allow her to change tact if an angle fails.

If the characters seem unreceptive, have her offer to guide them magically through the rest of the woods. If that fails, Nilal offers them a magic ring she discovered on one of the harpy's victims (which doesn't exist), should they agree to fight the harpies for her.

NILAL

Nilal is a dryad—a lesser fey bound into a tree as punishment for falling in love with a mortal man. She has taken badly to her punishment and for decades has been consulting with dark fey spirits to escape from her wooden prison. She wants vengeance on the high fey who imprisoned her—and on humanity, which she blames for tempting her with forbidden love.

Nilal has been manipulating and enslaving passersby for years, siphoning their life energy into her tree's roots. She believes with enough life energy she can undo the fey magic that bound her as a dryad. She closely resembles her bonded tree, with dark brown bark skin and small branches along her head and back that constantly sprout and shed cherry blossoms.

In conversation, Nilal is manipulative, flirtatious, and highly persuasive.

Nilal uses the statistics for a dryad with the following changes:

- Repetition of her deceitful routine has trained her well and she gains a +5 bonus to her Charisma (Deception) and Charisma (Persuasion) checks for a total +9 bonus to both.
- Nilal replaces the fey charm ability with *Dark Fey's Gift*.

Dark Fey's Gift. As a bonus action, the dryad can attempt to charm any creature who currently possesses a part of her tree, such as a branch, blossom, or petal. If the dryad attempts to charm a creature who possesses part of her tree, it must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or be magically charmed. The charmed creature is under the dryad's control and takes the dryad's requests or actions in the most favorable way it can, even endangering themselves or their allies to carry out the dryad's wishes. This effect remains as long as the creature retains a part of her tree and instantly ends if the part is removed. If a target's saving throw is successful, the target is immune to the dryad's *Dark Fey's Gift* for the next 24 hours. On successful saves, the creature is unaware of the attempted charm effect, regarding the enchantment as a passing infatuation with the dryad.

DEVELOPMENT

If Nilal's manipulations work, the party ascends the cliffs. If the characters abjectly refuse Nilal, progress straight to *Chapter 3* for a confrontation with Nilal, choosing the options without the harpies involved.

CHAPTER 2 – MONSTERS WITH HUMAN FACES

To reach the harpies, the party must first contend with the cliff face.

SCALING THE CLIFF

The harpies' nest is set upon a lowland mountain - one of many that dot this forest. It is jagged, rocky, and lush with lichens and mosses. Any spot of soil on the mount is overgrown with scrubby thorn bushes and gnarled, hardy pine trees. The mount's peak is 800 feet above the forest, though the party only has to scale 400 feet before reaching the encounter with Bharya and Kamu.

As the party ascends, choose one or both of the following encounters:

- A gap in the ledge necessitates at least one character jumping the gap. Any character who attempts this makes a DC 14 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check, taking 2d6 bludgeoning damage on a failed check as they roll back along the cliff.
- The character in front reaches a shelf of loose scree —have them make a DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. If they fail, have the rest of the party make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw as loose stone sprays down the cliff face. Any character who fails suffers 2d4 bludgeoning damage.

ECHOING DUET

The party reaches a mesa below the main peak after 400 feet of climbing, a relatively flat area of short pines and scrub roughly 60 feet across with the continuing cliff ascent on one side and a sheer drop on the other. Once they reach this area, read or paraphrase the following:

> You arrive in a respite of stubborn, stunted pines and scattered rocks, with a stretch of easy going ahead before resuming the arduous climb. Looking over the edge, Nilal's tree is a speck of bright pink sitting alone down below among a sea of green. From above, a single sung note starts low and ranges higher and purer than any of humankind is capable of, then another joins it, starting high and delving lower than the deepest baritones. Two harpies are descending upon you. Their duet, sung towards each other, is more beautiful than words and you can feel your reason slipping away.

The harpies, Bharya and Kamu, attack the party as they have done with every other traveler that Nilal has sent up their mountain.

Start the encounter by having the characters each make two DC 11 Wisdom saving throws, one for each of the harpy's luring songs, which Bharya and Kamu start singing once within 100 feet of the party. If any character has preemptively tried to plug up their ears, give them an advantage on these saves.

If either Bharya or Kamu successfully charm a character, they fly over the cliff's edge and attempt to lure the charmed character over the edge. Otherwise, they make flying attack runs with their claws on whichever character seems to have the most ranged capacity. After the 2nd round of combat, have any character with a passive perception of 12 or higher notice the rotten cherry blossom wreaths stuck on their heads—read them the following:

> Amid the black feathers and shining claws, you notice a glint of bright pink color along the harpy's head. They're molded and rotten, stuck fast with decay atop both of their heads, but beneath the grime you detect the unmistakable bright pinks of cherry blossom wreaths.

If a character targets the wreath, have them make their attacks at disadvantage, destroying the wreath on a successful hit.

The wreaths are automatically destroyed on any successful attack that would bring either harpy to 10 hit points or fewer, breaking Nilal's hold on them.

If Bharya's wreath is broken first, read or paraphrase the following:

> *"Kamu! Get away from her, wait, we can... The wreath! Get the witch's flowers off her head!"*

If Kamu's wreath is broken first, read or paraphrase the following:

> *"Bharya! Please no, it's all my fault... The flowers are evil, please leave her be!"*

Bharya and Kamu attempt to get the wreaths off one another and defend each other to the best of their abilities. Assuming the wreaths are removed, both Bharya and Kamu cease their hostilities and try to reason with the party. If either Bharya or Kamu are dropped to 0 hit points, have them make death saving throws like player characters.

BHARYA AND KAMU

This harpy couple assumed they would find a refuge here, far away from the treacherous shorelines of their birth and the bloodlust that grips the harpy race. They intended to live here alone, surviving off deer and other game, singing only to each other as they grew old together.

One day Kamu found Nilal's cherry tree and made lovely wreaths for her and her love, unwittingly entrapping them with the dark fey's gift for years to come. The wreaths have long since decayed, stuck fast with the grease of rot to the harpies' heads.

In appearance, both harpies seem every bit as evil and savage as rumors would tell, but with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check, characters can see the kind innocence in Kamu's eyes and the desperate love and desire to protect within Bharya.

In conversation, Bharya is defensive but forthright, motivated to protect Kamu to the point of self-sacrifice. Kamu is shy and easily startled, often hiding behind Bharya. She speaks kindly and softly. Both Bharya and Kamu use the normal statistics for a harpy, except both have the alignment Chaotic Good.

ADJUSTING THE ENCOUNTER

For an easier encounter, have the party notice the flower wreaths at the beginning, rather than as the 2nd round ends. Also, the wreaths are automatically destroyed when a harpy reaches half health (19 hit points), rather than 10 hit points.

For a more difficult encounter, remove any damage thresholds from the wreaths, and only have them destroyed when specifically targeted and hit by a character.

DEVELOPMENT

If either Bharya or Kamu are killed, the remaining harpy curses and spits obscenities at the party and Nilal before attempting to retrieve their love's body and retreating to their nest.

Assuming Bharya and Kamu survive the encounter, they explain Nilal's deceit together. They tell the party about a secret safe way down the mountain and show them the way if they agree to destroy Nilal. Both Bharya and Kamu want to bring an end to Nilal, but won't fight if the other is wounded. If the characters heal both harpies to at least half health (19 hit points) they agree to fight Nilal alongside the party. If the characters are unable or unwilling to heal them, they thank the party after leading them down the mountain and then return to their nest.

CHAPTER 3 – THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM

Once Nilal knows her façade has fallen, she resolves to feed these newcomers to her tree, one way or another.

CONFRONTING NILAL

Unless the party tries to descend the mountain through some other means, both the main climb and the secret pathway lead directly back to Nilal's grove. Nilal has been awaiting the fall of the characters' bodies and has been suspecting that something has gone wrong. Nilal casts *barkskin* on herself and *shillelagh* on her club before the party arrives.

Assuming Bharya and Kamu are with the party, start the conflict with the harpies flying towards Nilal and by reading or paraphrasing the following:

> Bharya and Kamu scream and howl in melodious tones as they rush towards Nilal and the dryad's kind visage is replaced by a disgusted scowl. *"Fine then! You've let the beasts go free. I'll make sure you go back to your proper place — on the leash or back into the dirt."* Nilal's tree rears up out of the hill. Nilal rides high upon its branches, and the blanched and drained corpses of dozens of unfortunate travelers are enwrapped amongst its roots.

Nilal's tree uses the statistics of an **awakened tree** and acts on its own initiative, prioritizing attacks against creatures that target Nilal or any creature wielding fire attacks. Any creature that gets within 15 feet of Nilal's tree becomes covered in flower petals.

Nilal makes use of her *dark fey's gift* feature on any characters who have petals on them. Characters can attempt to prevent this by spending an action and checking their own gear to remove any errant petals.

She otherwise hides atop her tree's branches and uses the *entangle* spell on the party or attacks creatures that reach her in melee using her *shillelagh*.

Bharya and Kamu target Nilal with their claw attacks. If either of them reaches 0 hit points, the other comes to their aid and attempt to stabilize them away from the fight. Nilal is irrevocably linked to her tree—if either die, the other instantly drops dead.

Adjusting the Encounter

For an easier encounter, have Nilal more caught off-guard, using up her first two actions casting *barkskin* and *shillelagh* rather than casting them beforehand.

For a more difficult encounter, give Nilal the benefit of half-cover while she sits within her tree's branches; with *barkskin* active, this makes her AC 18.

Conclusion

With Nilal dead, Bharya and Kamu are free to live their lives together, assuming they both survived the encounter. If they did not participate in the final fight, they greet the party after it ends. However the harpies rejoin the group, read or paraphrase the following:

> Bharya sinks a talon into the rapidly moldering form of Nilal, *"Hah, finally."* She looks to you, conflicted and says, *"Look, I... We... I'm not sure how..."* Kamu jumps in with, *"Thank you! She means to say thank you. We'd still be living for this monster if it weren't for all of you. Now we can finally live for each other again."*

Rewards

Before the characters continue along their way, Bharya stops them and asks them to wait for her to bring them something. She hands the party a clear spindle, claiming that it kept them going, but now they can keep each other going again.

The clear spindle is an *ioun stone of sustenance*, which removes the need to eat or drink from the bearer. If using XP advancement, award the characters 200 XP for defeating Nilal, 450 XP for her tree, and 200 XP each for Bharya and Kamu as if they were defeated in combat.

Author's Notes

Writing for this anthology, I struggled quite a bit deciding what feminist issue to address and why. I decided to go with something simple: female characters who have been typecast and whose stereotypes don't truly reflect who they are. A lot of fantasy females are directly pigeonholed by their race or body type and even just from a writer's perspective, I feel that it's important to broaden these perceptions. I hope you enjoy this little adventure and more than that—I hope you enjoyed its characters, who didn't match what a simple physical description and stereotype would make you believe.

About the Author

Andrew Engelbrite is a disabled Texan and all-around turbo nerd. I've been creating TTRPG content for a couple years and I've been GM'ing for almost a decade. Find more of my content at LootTheBoss.com and you can find more of our books at DriveThruRPG and DMs Guild, just search for loottheboss or find me on Twitter with @AEngelbrite.



Illustration by Charles Van Slambrouck

THE BREWSTER'S DAUGHTER

by John Tetzlaff

Creature: *Witch* | **Level:** *3*

SYNOPSIS

Konigsthron has nestled against the dark woodlands for centuries. It is largely a peaceful town, except during the renowned beer festival, Lord Gaffer's Cup. The finest breweries compete and for five years none have bested Black Hat Brewery, founded by Gwenna Cathain, a supposed hedge witch who saved the town from demonic incursion decades ago.

However, this has been a troubling year and the festival was nearly cancelled. Strange lights have been seen on the high hills, and terrible sounds echo through the haunted forest. Woodcutters have gone missing and now many wonder whether the old tales about Gwenna and witchcraft are true. When she is arrested at the festival the party must clear her name, and they discover that all hell is about to break loose.

ADVENTURE HOOK

This is a four hour adventure for a party of 3rd level characters. It begins when they encounter an abandoned grain wagon on the road to Konigsthron. Shadowed fiends have dragged the hapless wagon driver into the woods.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Long ago Gwenna was a mighty druid who banished the demon Gnathus when he emerged from the Abyss in the woods nearby. All who fought Gnathus died, save Gwenna (who earned horrific scars) and Rodrick Ryemark, now Abbot of the Grey Cloister at Krakhelm Monastery. After the battle, Gwenna erected standing stones enchanted with eldritch power at the site to prevent Gnathus from returning. She then retired from adventuring and founded the brewery. Time, and the wounds she suffered, have nearly taken Gwenna's mind and now she lives a quiet life, sitting around the tap room of the brewery she founded, sharing stories of yore.

Decades have passed and the Black Hat Brewery has prospered. It is now run by Ravenna Cathain, Gwenna's daughter. Black Hat has become a commune of alewives (women brewers) and a refuge for orphans and outcasts. Gwenna taught those with the gift the ways of magic.

Rodrick is a grave threat to Konigsthron. He was bitten by Gnathus and his injury festered physically and spiritually. Unlike Gwenna, he succumbed to Gnathus's will and hears corrupting voices. He longs to open the gate for his master. He needs Gwenna out of the way if he is to unbind the sealing spell. As an upstanding abbot, none suspect his corruption. For years he has turned the town against Gwenna and now many suspect the Black Hats practice black magic.

Rodrick needs one last component to bring back Gnathus. He plans to poison the mayor to obtain it, and frame Gwenna so that she cannot prevent the summoning.



CHAPTER 1 – TROUBLE BREWING

Gnarled bows of ancient oak loom above as you travel down the muddy road. Storm clouds race over the encroaching hills. A gust of wind showers you with leaves as shadows dance across the forest floor. The branches seem to reach for you like knobby claws. A crooked signpost ahead reads "Konigsthron 5 leagues." Suddenly, you hear the pounding of hoof beats! Two draft horses gallop around the bend, whinnying in a panic. They are hitched together like a wagon team, but there is no wagon in sight.

The horses may collide with the party (DC 13 Dexterity saving throw to dodge or take 1d8 bludgeoning damage). A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check calms the horses. Around the bend the party finds an overturned wagon with bags of barley spilled on the road. Strange tracks surround the wagon and lead into the woods, and the imprinted soil looks corrupted. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Survival) check identifies four sets of tracks. A successful Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals what creatures made the tracks:

- DC 10: unidentified fiends;
- DC 15: **dretches**.

After investigating, they faintly hear the wagon driver calling for help from the woods, in the same direction the tracks lead.

If the party continues to Konigsthron, proceed to chapter 2. If they investigate, read the following aloud:

You follow the tracks for an hour occasionally hearing cries until you reach a clearing ringed by standing stones. The stones are carved with strange glyphs but have been covered by other symbols painted in blood. One of the large stones is cracked and fallen over. In the center a man is chained to a stone slab surrounded by capering demonic creatures. One of the fiends prepares to sacrifice him while the others chant.

The demons are four **dretches** led by one **maw demon**. The demons fight to the death.

After the demons are defeated, succeeding on the following ability checks reveals:

- DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana): The glyphs invoke extraplanar protection.
- DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine): The blood covering the glyphs is a few days old.
- DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation): Near the slab is a broken dagger with a pommel of adamantine carved into a horrific toothed grin.
- DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana): The pommel is the symbol of Gnathus, the Dark Maw.
- DC 15 Wisdom (Perception): There are several graves outside the circle, containing the remains of sacrificed humans. These are the woodcutters who have gone missing from Konigsthron.
- DC 13 Wisdom (Survival): There are very recent demon tracks and week old human sized shoe prints.

The man on the slab is Willem Fuller, an acolyte of the Grey Cloister and the driver of the wagon the party encountered. He was transporting grain to Krakhelm monastery. He thanks them and says Abbot Ryemark (who is in town attending Lord Gaffer's Cup) will reward the party for his safe return. Willem says:

"He'll know what to do about this evil. The monastery is favored to win the cup this year. If the witches don't beat us again. I'm sure they're to blame for this."

If pressed, Willem has no proof of this, but sanctimoniously dismisses any dissent.

DEVELOPMENT

The party arrives at the festival of Lord Gaffer's Cup.

CHAPTER 2 – THE CUP RUNNETH OVER

You arrive in Konigsthron at midday. The guards nod in acknowledgment as you walk through the open gate. Drunken revelers stumble down the street singing songs and clanking tankards as you pass. The town square is teeming with vendor stalls selling all manner of food and goods. Behind them are three large tents surrounding a stage. A grand red and gold tent sports the banner of the Golden Cask, a dwarf brewery. A large tent of plain white with a banner of looping red cord belongs to the Grey Cloister. The third is made of several dark gray sections of canvas secured around a collapsed tower causing the structure to resemble a witch's hat. That is the tent of the Black Hats.

Lord Gaffer's Cup is an Oktoberfest-like festival that takes up the square for a tenday. The festival concludes today with the award ceremony. Willem encourages the party to enjoy the festival and takes his leave, telling them to come to the Grey Cloister's tent to claim their reward.

The festival is open ended, with opportunities for social interaction, gathering information, shopping, drinking contests, and most importantly, meeting the main NPCs—Ravenna, Gwenna, and Rodrick.

THE BREWSTER'S DAUGHTER

The first encounter at the festival should be with Ravenna Cathain outside in the square. She is a woman in her thirties wearing a black pointed hat. She is entertaining a small crowd by singing a humorous song about the superiority of the Black Hat's brew. When she sees the party she welcomes them and hands them each a token for a free ale at the Black Hat's tent.

She is tough, friendly, and clearly knows how to handle a rambunctious crowd. It is important that Ravenna and the party develop a good rapport. Have her hand a few coppers to some child beggars (or some similar altruistic act) in the party's presence. After conversing with them she says that Gwenna, the savior of Konigsthron (her mum) would love to pour them a round herself and then leaves.

A successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a strange symbol tattooed on her neck. It is like the glyphs on the standing stones. A successful Wisdom (Religion) check reveals it is:

- DC 12: associated with demons.
- DC 15: a ward against demons.

FESTIVAL ENCOUNTERS

D6	Result
1	An owl bear escapes its cage A pack of mime pickpockets target one of the party members
2	A merchant's stall starts on fire
3	A drunken nobleman throwing coins
4	A half-naked halfling jumps out of a window
5	A woman blows him a kiss as an enraged man grabs him on the street below
6	Gondol (see below) invites the party to the Golden Cask's tent

If the party asks festival-goers about the Grey Cloister or the Black Hats, they encounter a mix of reverence and suspicion. Many are wary of the Black Hats, but "rebellious" folk dislike the Cloister.

THE GREY CLOISTER

Volunteers in grey tabards serve ale to a subdued crowd as monks chant. The mood is that of a stuffy country club dining room. Willem finds the party and introduces them to Rodrick. If the party did not rescue Willem, a messenger approaches Rodrick with news that he is missing.

Rodrick is superficially cordial, but a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals an undercurrent of anger and fear. He gives each of the party 10 gp if they saved Willem. He suspects Gwenna is behind the witchcraft in the woods and wants proof. He says the party is ideally suited to help because they are not known in town. He offers the party 50 gp each if they bring him evidence incriminating the Black Hats.

Rodrick wears a *ring of mind shielding* to conceal his thoughts and alignment. He is behind breaking the standing stone, the sacrifices, and summoning the demons. His plan to bring back Gnathus is nearly complete. He needs one last component, life essence from the bloodline of the last creature Gnathus killed. The mayor is the son of a slain warrior from the battle.

BLACK HAT BREWERY

Ravenna is tending bar while Gwenna smokes a pipe in a rocking chair. Ravenna welcomes the party warmly. The Black Hats serve their brew to a lively crowd while a bard performs bawdy songs on a central stage. The mood is boisterous, fun loving, and a little raunchy.

If the party decides to find evidence for Rodrick, a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals an empty vial underneath the bar next to an amulet with the symbol of Gnathus. A successful DC 13 Intelligence (Nature) check reveals it contains wyvern poison residue, which is exceedingly deadly even in small amounts. If the party confronts Gwenna or Ravenna with these items, they both claim to have never seen them before, which is confirmed by a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) check.

THE GOLDEN CASK

Dwarven pipers drone out incredibly loud drinking songs. In order to drink from Moradin's cup, characters must prove themselves worthy in the eyes of the dwarves. Use this tent for drinking games, feats of strength, etc. If the party investigates the Black Hats here, they meet a dwarf named Gondol who helped Gwenna erect the standing stones. He knows about the corrupting nature of demonic wounds but he vouches for her character. "She has a will of iron, that one. She would not succumb."

THE CUP CEREMONY

When the party has had their fill of the festival, great horns sound the beginning of the award ceremony. After the requisite speeches, Mayor Jeralt Bandraddon invites Rodrick, Gwenna, and Ulbrecht Three-Casks to the stage. Jeralt quaffs a tankard from each brewery, first the Golden Cask, then the Grey Cloister and, as he moves to drink from the Black Hat's tankard, he staggers and collapses. Gwenna cackles as Rodrick looks alarmed. The mayor spits blood into the crowd showering a nobleman, who screams.

Chaos ensues. Gwenna looks shocked; Rodrick dives forward, seemingly to offer aid, and begins muttering an incantation. A successful Intelligence (Religion) check reveals:

- DC 13: Rodrick is not performing healing magic.
- DC 20: Rodrick is performing a demonic incantation.

Gwenna understands what he is doing and claws at him, screaming "Gnathus! Betrayer!" As Gwenna tears Rodrick's robe, a successful DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals an unnatural wound on his torso. Ravenna and the mayor's guards rush the stage. After a brief struggle, Rodrick loudly accuses Gwenna of poisoning the mayor and witchcraft. The guards arrest Gwenna while Ravenna protests. Rodrick is whisked away by his monks.

The party can save the mayor's life with a *protection from poison* spell, paladin's Lay on Hands or similar poison countering abilities, but he inexplicably remains in a coma. If the party interferes with Gwenna's arrest or threatens anyone on stage a large number of guards appear and Ravenna makes it clear they are making things worse, imploring them to stop.

DEVELOPMENT

Ravenna asks the party for help. She believes Rodrick framed Gwenna and offers the party 20 gp each if they find evidence clearing her.

CHAPTER 3 – TOIL AND TROUBLE

What really happened: Rodrick used a hat of disguise to appear as Gwenna and planted the poison on the mayor's tankard prior to judging. He then placed the empty vial and the symbol of Gnathus in the Black Hat's tent. Rodrick, disguised as Gwenna, bought the poison from a shady apothecary some weeks ago.

Investigation can reveal the following clues.

Clues:

- Stitcher the apothecary sold the poison to Gwenna but thought something was strange about her appearance.
- Rudiger the Naive witnessed Rodrick change form before entering the apothecary's shop.
- Feldspur, still drunk from the festival, witnessed Gwenna in two places at once, in the Black Hat's tent and in the alley outside the tent this morning.
- A child, Inna, and an animal saw Gwenna change back into Rodrick as he was leaving the mayor's tent.
- Hirjolf, acolyte of the Grey Cloister has seen Rodrick leaving the monastery at strange hours.
- The *hat of disguise* used by Rodrick can be placed

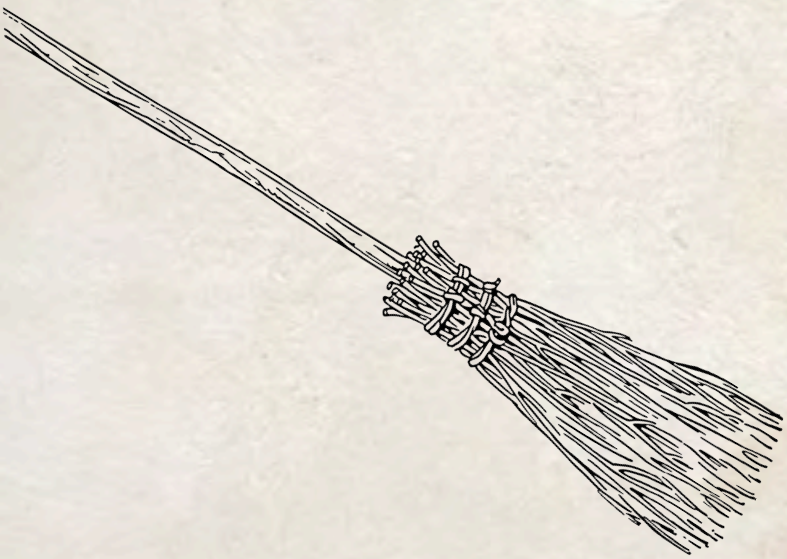
in the Grey Cloister's tent or in his quarters in Krakhelm Monastery, depending on where the party looks for clues.
- The incantation Rodrick used when he took the mayor's essence required a stick doll, which he hastily hid beneath the stage or in the Grey Cloister's tent.
- A book of black magic is hidden in Rodrick's quarters in the monastery.

Gwenna is held under guard in the local jail. The party may try to convince the city watch to release her based on the evidence they find. They may try to bypass the guards and break Gwenna out of prison. They may attempt to bribe the guards. When in doubt, DC 10, apply advantage or disadvantage to relevant skills. If the party is stumped or has no evidence, Ravenna proposes a bribe. A bribe of 200 gp will convince the guards to look the other way while she escapes.

By whatever path, the party should end up near Gwenna with Ravenna. Gwenna is very weak and rambling about Gnathus, saying that Rodrick is at the standing stones and there is no time to lose. Hearing this, Ravenna takes her mother back to Black Hat Brewery (if possible) and prepares to battle Rodrick. Gwenna is too old for battle and remains at the brewery.

DEVELOPMENT

When Ravenna readies the Black Hats for battle, she asks the party to ride with her Black Hats on their *brooms of flying*.



CHAPTER 4 – FIRE BURN AND CAULDRON BUBBLE

A frothing portal glows in the center of the standing stones. Demonic chanting fills the air. *"Gnathus! Gnathus! Gnathus!"* A black cowled figure raises his arms and pulls back his hood. *"Welcome,"* Rodrick smiles. *"I am glad you have come Ravenna. Bear witness to his return."* Rodrick's smile grows impossibly large as his teeth turn into massive fangs. He contorts in agony, growing to massive size, his flesh splitting, exposing blackened muscle beneath. The portal begins to widen as Rodrick's underlings charge forward. A massive demonic hand reaches out of the portal, snatching a cultist who screams as he is dragged into the Abyss.

The portal starts at a 5 foot radius and expands by 5 feet every two rounds (or at a rate the DM deems appropriate). The arm of Gnathus reaches through the portal once per round. His arm has a reach of 30 feet from the portal edge. Divide the circle into 6 segments, roll 1d6 and target a creature at random within reach. It will not grab Rodrick. If it grabs a cultist, demon, or Black Hat, it drags them through immediately. If it grabs a character or Ravenna, a successful DC 13 Dexterity saving throw is required to dodge. On a failed save, the target takes 2d8 bludgeoning damage and is grappled. After three rounds, they are dragged through the portal and are gone. Each round, a grappled character may use their Action to make a DC 13 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. If they succeed on the check, they escape the grapple. The arm has AC 12, and if it is hit by a spell or attack, it drops any creature it is grappling. While the arm is grappling a creature, it cannot attempt to grab another.

Make it clear that if the portal gets too wide Gnathus will emerge, but this does not happen during the encounter. Demons can continue to emerge from the portal. The portal closes if Rodrick or all the cultists are incapacitated. Have the players control the Black Hats in combat. The cultists do not attack but will defend themselves.



Map and Illustration by Charles Van Slambrouck

Creatures in this Encounter:

At the beginning of this encounter, characters face:

- 2 **manes**: spawn more from portal as needed
- 1 **bloodhawk** per character (demonic appearance): spawn more from portal as needed
- 1 axe-wielding zombie woodcutter per character (as **zombie** but does 1d8+1 slashing damage)
- 8 **cultists**
- Rodrick (**manticore** stat block)

Allies:

- 1 Black Hat per character (**acolyte** on *broom of flying*)
- Ravenna (**druid**)

Conclusion

Gnathus Thwarted

If the party stops Gnathus, they are handsomely rewarded by the people of Konigsthron. Lord Gaffer's Cup is renamed Lady Gwenna's Cup.

Gnathus Triumphant

If Gnathus emerges, it takes over Krakhelm Monastery and sends a horde of demons against Konigsthron. Ravenna and the Black Hats resist, asking the party for help. You are encouraged to develop the adventure further, allowing them a further chance to defeat Gnathus.



REWARDS

Treasure	
Save Willem	10 gp each
Find evidence for Rodrick	50 gp each
Find evidence clearing Gwenna	20 gp each
Defeat Gnathus	Ravenna's *broom of flying* Rodrick's *ring of mind shielding* 500 gp each

Experience (XP):	
Chapter 1	
Maw demon	200
4 Dretches	50 each
Save Willem	300
Chapter 2	
Resolving Random Encounters and the festival	50-100 each
Chapter 3	
Free Gwenna	300
Chapter 4	
Rodrick	700
Zombies	50 each
Manes	25 each
Blood Hawks	25 each
Cultists	25 each

AUTHOR'S NOTES

In the call for *Uncaged* pitches, the second entry in the list of female mythological creatures is witches. There is no witch entry in the *Monster Manual*. I found this fitting. Women accused of witchcraft were not extra-planar beings or brides of demons, they were just people. Often, they were women who were considered different or odd and lived in a society that punished those differences. Sometimes their only "crime" was standing in the way of the power and wealth of others.

Brewing as a profession was almost entirely performed by women dating as far back as ancient Sumeria (1800 BCE). In Europe in the 16th-17th centuries, beer production began to industrialize, and the craft became more male dominated. Traditional brewers were considered a threat to these operations and propaganda was created associating them with witchcraft. The trappings of medieval women brewers are still associated with witches today, though the association with brewing has largely disappeared.

Broom: An ale stake was placed above the door when fresh ale was for sale.
Cat: Brewers kept cats to keep rodents out of their grain stores.
Cauldron: Used for boiling wort.
Pointed Hat: Alewives wore tall pointed hats when selling beer in order to stand out and be easily visible.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the Midnight Gaming Society for their inspiration and assistance in bringing this project to life, the *Uncaged* writing group for their advice and encouragement, and Ashley Warren for taking a chance on a novice author.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Tetzlaff (@TempestLOB on Twitter) is an avid tabletop gamer and has been for nearly 30 years. When not gaming, he can be found chasing after his baby son, brewing in his garage, gardening, marathon training or collecting yet another hobby alongside his wonderful wife, Allison.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Charles Van Slambrouck is a hematopathologist, artist, and general nerd who has been a passionate player and GM of TTRPGs for 25 years. He lives in Chicagoland with his amazing wife, two incredible children, and two yorkies.



"The Magic Circle" by John William Waterhouse



Illustration by Critical-Hit!

KEEN MISUNDERSTANDING

by Karren Loomer

Creature: *Banshee* | **Level:** *3* | **CWs:** *Death of parents, of spouse*

SYNOPSIS

A small town by a forested hill—knowing nothing but peace—lies closed off from the world until a Banshee appears. The local priestess and her acolytes drive her off only to be attacked by specters the following day! When adventurers stumble in, the church turns to them for help. Everyone blames the Banshee, but fey folklore implies forgotten pacts over enchanted land.

ADVENTURE HOOK

An adventure for a party of 3-4 of the 3rd level.
In a simple town which is little more than a rest stop, a church acolyte begs for help dealing with monsters terrorizing a residence. Be it for heroism, coin, or promise of treasure, can the party solve this town's banshee problem?

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Long ago a pact was forged between human and fey. From that union, they founded Crainsol. Along with the establishment of the town, the fey put into place pact magic to keep it safe from monsters and detached from the outside world. Time passed; people forgot and, to the modern inhabitant, folklore is all that remains. Fifty years ago, the inhabitants built a church dedicated to familiar pantheons to celebrate their slowly rising tourism. However, once every century the magic goes wild, disturbing natural cycles of life and death, and time itself; one consequence is the inability for the dead to pass on, leaving behind bewildered specters. The Pale Lady, also known as The Banshee, is tasked by the ancient pact with the role of guiding lost spirits, calling them to their appropriate rest. With history muddled over time and the cultural shift, people misinterpret her call to the specters. They fear her and send the church clerics to drive her away. Everyone blames the deaths on her and are desperate for a solution.

This adventure begins with the adventurers entering the town and are directed to a house full of specters to defeat. The church offers a bigger reward for a more significant threat: the Banshee. Investigating the town leads to the forest to get help from the local witch, with a non-standard pixie encounter in the way. Once night falls, the final encounter concludes the adventure.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

- **Eilish Switchsid:** Young church **acolyte**. Curious about fey and old folklore. She was briefly the witch's apprentice before joining the church to be closer to her sick parents.
- **Cénne Smith:** Single dad of a young girl, widower; wife recently passed from illness. Blames the Banshee for killing her, wants vengeance.
- **Lily Smith:** The daughter. Friends with forest pixies. Believes the Banshee is a good person.
- **Nora Savton:** Middle-aged Priestess who heads the church. She is beloved by the town for her work keeping the townsfolk safe. She is frustrated with her inability to deal with banshee or protect her people. She's tired and overworked.
- **Úna Ó Crannefey:** A senior witch, living in the forest. She remembers history forgotten and is friendly to all except those who harm the fey or town. Pixies tell her everything that goes on in town.
- **One, Two, and Three: Pixie** trio who protect the forest. Always watching the town's events invisibly, occasionally playing tricks on people.

CHAPTER 1 – SUDDEN SPECTERS

As they enter the town, read or paraphrase:

> The sun shines from a clear blue sky over a small town at the foot of a forested hill. "Crainsol Welcomes You" is carved into the side of the second tallest building, clearly visible to any visitors. The largest building is the most recent looking—a church with a bell tower commonly used to host the region's most prominent pantheons. Arriving at the square, any semblance of peace is immediately disturbed by the cries of a wounded man: *"Please! Do something! My daughter is still inside!"* He begs a woman in church robes as concerned townsfolk circle around. Turning to you, he pleads, *"Monsters! They're in my home! Please save my daughter!"*

STRANGER'S HOUSE

If they agree to help, he leads them to his home. Read or paraphrase:

> From the outside, it's a house no different from any other. But within, it appears as if this man and his family are quite well off; art hangs on the walls, silverware set on the table, toys sit in a corner, an ornate dagger lays in a glass case, and everything is remarkably clean. The door to the cellar is ajar.

BASEMENT BATTLE

Lighting in the cellar is dim as sunlight barely pokes through a curtained window. Two **specters** are in the cellar. One specter floats in the room, searching for something. Another specter ambushes the party from behind the stairs. The specter doesn't notice anyone right away, but attacks on sight or sound. The man's daughter is hiding in a crate directly beneath the window.

Tactics: A third may appear, depending on party composition and encounter difficulty. The specters focus on whoever is closest to the girl.

DEVELOPMENT

Once the specters are defeated, the child runs to her dad. He invites the party for dinner. The acolyte introduces herself and insists everyone come to the church for a reward.

CHAPTER 2 – UNDEAD INVESTIGATION

> Entering the church, you see rows of pews, an altar, and displays of reverence to just about every deity common to the region. An acolyte quietly sweeps around Eilish and a middle-aged woman in cleric's robes. Head Priestess Nora Savton's tired eyes meet each of yours. *"Eilish tells me you lot handled some specters. Think you can take a banshee?"*

Nora knows the following:

- A banshee showed up recently and has murdered three people, leaving specters.
- She and her acolytes have been able to drive away some evil spirits but not the banshee.
- She asks for their help in exchange for 200 gp and an assortment of treasure (See rewards section for "Conclusion B").
- DC 14 Intelligence (Religion), (Investigation): Iconography suggests ancient magical pacts between fey and the town followed by prosperity for everyone involved.

Eilish knows the following:

- Eilish is stressed, overworked planning three funerals, and worried about ailing family members.
- The banshee has been heard wailing on three occasions; one death discovered each appearance. Some townsfolk tried fighting but were lucky to survive. Nora drove the banshee off but could not defeat the monster.
- DC 12 Wisdom (Perception): Carries a fey relic kept from brief apprenticeship to the Witch. Gain advantage to (Survival) checks in the woods.
- Career change to cleric to better aid sick parents.
- Fears angered fey.

TOWNSFOLK TALKS

Characters may leave the church to speak with townsfolk. They know the following:

- Terrible screams keep people on edge.
- They are fearful and frustrated by monster attacks.
- They are hopeful about adventurers aiding the church.
- Word travels fast if the characters are rude.
- DC 12 Charisma: folklore about fey tricks and ancient spirits are on people's minds; they worry about angering the fairies and gods. Wild rumors float about the witch colluding with or being the banshee herself; she's a divisive topic as nobody's managed to navigate the woods to find her recently.

On a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) or Wisdom (Perception) check, characters notice time is passing too slowly for the amount of activity they have done thus far. This becomes more apparent should a long rest be attempted. The townsfolk seem oblivious to the slow passing of time. They will not know yet that the magic pact that generally protects the town is flowing wild.

DINNER WITH DAD

The offer to join Cenné for a meal still stands if he wasn't robbed during the specter fight.

> He introduces himself and his daughter as Cenné and Lily Smith, and welcomes you inside for a warm meal as thanks. The food is delicious, the atmosphere is delightful, and wine is shared freely. Lily thanks you for calming her mom's spirit. Cenné frowns, sends her off to her room, and explains his wife's recent passing.
>
> Awkward silence fills the room.

Cenné asks the party if they plan to fight the banshee if nobody speaks up first. If yes, he'll help however he can, even offering his family heirloom, the ornate dagger. Otherwise, he begs them to avenge his wife and slay The Banshee.

Cenné knows the following:

- A phantom rose out of his wife while paying respects at her wake on a night where The Banshee was heard. She must have turned her soul into a monster!
- Accuses the witch of conjuring The Banshee and claims fairies are stopping him from traversing the forest to find her.
- DC 12 Intelligence (Nature): Dagger is cold iron. +1 against fey.

Upon leaving, Lily accosts the party, warning against harming the fairies; they are her friends and will help if asked nicely. If a promise is made, gain advantage on Persuasion checks when dealing with fairies in the woods.

FEY FOREST

> Traveling through the woods to the witch's home is unsettling; you feel watched every step of the way. The sun hangs low as if it were permanently dawn. Time stretches endlessly as all paths circle back on each other - this is no simple walk in the woods.

- DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) or (Perception): Discover white flowers acting as landmarks guiding up the forested hill. Gain advantage on Perception checks in the woods.
- DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) or (Arcana): Magic is wild here and there is evidence of someone or something actively impeding progress. Gain advantage on Arcana checks in the woods.

Three **pixies** named One, Two, and Three hide invisibly casting spells to distract, annoy, or scare the party into leaving. Meanwhile, wild magic is affecting time and life, causing the forest to shift and die and regrow when unobserved. This encounter is solved multiple ways, either identifying the fairy tricks and persevering through the woods or making a deal with them and appealing to their natures. Defeating or scaring them off is also possible. These pixies can speak Common but prefer Sylvan.

Tactics: Each pixie has their own personality and favored spells but still casts any to meet their goals.

- One likes to watch slapstick, causing mayhem while giggling and hiding just within eyesight: favors *confusion*, *entangle*. Ceases her tricks after everyone's given her a good laugh.
- Two always looks for a bargain, which includes theft: favors *sleep*, *dancing lights*, *phantasmal force*. Ceases her tricks upon obtaining something worthwhile.
- Three whispers secrets and temptations to sow chaos, becoming visible only to cast magic from safety: favors *polymorph*, *detect thoughts*, *phantasmal force*. Ceases her tricks with a good show of drama or playing along.

WITCH'S ABODE

The witch's hut is in possibly the most pristine condition a hut has ever been. The wrinkle-covered face of a woman in layers of colorful fabric pokes her head out. With a glance, she motions everyone to enter.

Inside is a well-organized workshop complete with several cauldrons, a stewing pot, tea kettle, racks full of arcane and natural ingredients, and plenty of furnishings. It feels larger than it appeared from the outside. She sits down and sips some tea, *"Well? Whatdya here for?"*

Whether or not the pixies were injured and how well behaved the party was in town determines how helpful and sassy Ûna is.

- Characters gain advantage on Charisma (Persuasion) checks if the fairies were negotiated with.
- Characters gain disadvantage if harmed.
- Characters gain disadvantage if townsfolk dislike the party.
- A successful DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion) check to determine how helpful she'll be.

Ûna knows the following:

- Ûna warns against impoliteness once, but if shown rudeness a second time, attacked, or stolen from, she'll teleport both herself and her hut, leaving the party alone in the woods.
- "The Banshee" isn't the monster people call banshees. She's a fairy older than the town. Used to be known as "The Pale Lady."
- "The Banshee" is a guardian of the dead; she screams and wails to help their spirits pass on. It's called keening the dead.
- "The Banshee" shouldn't be killing anyone, let alone making specters.
- She recommends talking instead of fighting back.

Locked behind successful Charisma (Persuasion) check:

- If asked how to go about "talking", she teaches the ancient fey words of negotiation. Characters gain advantage on Charisma (Persuasion) checks with The Banshee.
- If asked for help and promise is made not to kill The Pale Lady—if lying, they must succeed on a DC 16 Charisma (Deception) check—she brews a *potion of psychic resistance* with warning that The Pale Lady might be too angry to talk right away.
- If asked why time seems strange, she tells them the magic that protects the fey and the town goes wild every century. This marks the arrival of the Pale Lady to help spirits and return things to normal. Without The Pale Lady, the magic will grow more unstable.
- If asked about the church, Ûna says, "Good people, good intentions, but stubborn and ignorant. Tell Eilish she should visit more."

When they leave, it is dusk instead of dawn; decreased light and unstable magic make returning difficult. DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) check: Success means a swift return to town and advantage on the next initiative check.

DEVELOPMENT

Once night sets in, The Banshee's wails echo through town.

CHAPTER 3 – THE PALE LADY

The screams lead to a cottage where a tall figure in white drifts towards the building. Her silver hair flows in the wind, pale skin shimmers in the moonlight, and her red eyes instill a primal sense of awe. While beautiful, she inspires sheer terror.

The fairy woman turns to face you, and for a moment, everything is dead silent before her wails turn to speech.

"Why do you mortals continue disrupting my work?!"

BANSHEE BATTLE

One banshee is enraged and attacks!

Tactics: She'll first try to eliminate as many as she can with Wail, followed by Horrifying Visage before attempting to focus down characters one at a time. Anyone brought down to 0 hit points is merely knocked out and won't die. Each round she is not attacked with the ornate dagger, she becomes noticeably less angry. After three rounds without using her cold iron weakness, she calms down, allowing negotiation.

FAIRY PARLEY

If not attacked at all for 3 rounds, skip to *Conclusion C*.

A successful DC 13 Wisdom (Insight) check at any time during the fight reveals the misunderstanding; she is trying to protect the town and sees you and the church as outsiders harming it. Characters gain advantage on Charisma (Persuasion) checks.

A DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check is available once calm. On success, skip to *Conclusion C*.

DEVELOPMENT

If the party is defeated, *Conclusion A*. If The Banshee is defeated, *Conclusion B*.

CONCLUSION A: CONFUSED AWAKENING

When you wake up, you're all being tended to in the church by Nora and an acolyte. The Banshee's screams echo in your minds, but somehow, you survived. Deep down, you know she could have killed you. She didn't.

"Eilish found you outside her cottage. You're lucky to be alive," Nora lectures. *"Her family is dead and the banshee escaped. Good job. No sign of specters at least. Consider our treatment payment for the attempt."*

The party is free to stay in town, but they're considered failures. If they were kind to the pixies, Cénne's daughter gives a bag of items from the pixies.

CONCLUSION B: FEY FUNERAL

In dying breath, she warns: *"You have doomed this town,"* then with one final wail the Banshee calcifies and disintegrates into the wind. The town is finally quiet before Eilish bursts out of the cottage in tears as two specters rise from the roof and disappear into the night.

Eilish is unsure if killing the banshee was the right way and grieves for her family. An innkeeper offers free stay for defeating the monster, but unease fills the air. Come morning, Nora fulfills her end of the bargain (treasure below). Cénne also gives thanks, but Lily screams accusations of murder.

Without the Banshee, the fey stop protecting the town and it opens to the rest of the world—for better or for worse. Specters continue to be a problem as wild magic grows increasingly unstable.

CONCLUSION C: KEEN UNDERSTANDING

The Banshee ceases attacking and defines her contract: keen the mortal souls whenever lands grow unstable and disturb the natural cycle, lest their spirits haunt the earth—lost and unable to reach the afterlife.

Eilish then bursts out of the cottage in tears, chased by two specters. The Banshee looks to the party expectantly.

"*Let me fulfill my role,*" she demands.

Eilish tearfully witnesses and understands the events before her as the right thing to do. The Pale Lady resumes wailing and the specters fade away.

The Pale Lady's wisdom:

- Ancient pact between fey and mortal closed off Crainsol from the world with powerful enchantment and calmed land.
- Every century, the land's magic grows unstable; her job is to protect mortal souls during this period. Without her, souls become specters and cause further chaos to the land.
- She is drawn towards souls fated to die, hence her timely appearance.
- The enchantment has grown weaker over time, allowing outsiders. She perceived clerics as a threat, as Crainsol had barely opened up to the world last century.

The next day has Nora reluctantly paying at Eilish's request. Cénne refuses to speak, but his daughter thanks you with gifts from the fairies.

REWARDS

Conclusion A may grant a bag of 33 gp, a *driftglobe,* and a barely legible note detailing one owed favor, signed Three. Instructions: *burn note to summon*.

Conclusion B gives 200 gp, two spell scrolls (1st and 2nd level), a *potion of healing*, a *wand of secrets*, a *philter of love*, and a *helm of comprehending items* (*DMG*). Alternatively, roll once from magic item table A and B per player (*DMG*).

Conclusion C gives both of the above and a good reputation among the Fey.

Adventure XP: 3,000, divided among players.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

Fairy mythology has been rewritten time and again. The banshee's origin as a fairy woman, guiding the souls with her keening was lost to popular media. This depiction offers an alternative to the weeping woman's ghost by focusing on the roots of the word "banshee," allowing more play with the underused fey in *D&D*.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Karren Loomer aka @WhimsiKarren is a Canadian writer, artist, game designer, and GM for a wide variety of tabletop RPGs. Follow her on Twitter to see more of her latest creations!



Banshee (The Pale Lady)

Medium fey, neutral good

Armor Class 12
Hit points 58 (13d8)
Speed 0 ft., 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	17 (+3)

Saving Throws Wis +2, Cha +5
Damage Resistances acid, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Damage Immunities cold, necrotic, poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages Common, Elvish, Sylvan
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Detect Life. The banshee can magically sense the presence of living creatures up to 5 miles away that aren't undead or constructs. She knows the general direction they are in, but not their exact locations.

Incorporeal Movement. The banshee can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. She takes 5 (1d10) force damage if she ends her turn inside an object.

Actions

Numbing Touch. Melee Spell Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 12 (3d6 + 2) psychic damage.

Terrifying Visage. Each non-undead creature within 60 feet of the banshee that can see her must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for 1 minute. A frightened target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, with disadvantage if the banshee is within line of sight, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a target's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the target is immune to the banshee's Horrifying Visage for the next 24 hours.

Wail (1/Day). The banshee releases a mournful wail, provided that she isn't in sunlight. This wail has no effect on constructs and undead. All other creatures within 30 feet of her that can hear her must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, a creature drops to 0 hit points. On a success, a creature takes 10 (3d6) psychic damage.



Illustration by Wouter Florusse

THE NECROMANCER'S BROTHER

by Jameson Hampton

Creature: *Banshee* | **Level:** *3*

SYNOPSIS

Rumors that the Alabaster Mansion is haunted by a vengeful banshee have all of Levinbolt gripped with fear—though the mansion's owners are more afraid it will drive away all their business! They hire the party to take care of their ghost problem and investigate the local legends of the mysterious necromancer siblings of Levinbolt. But when not everything about the Alabaster twins is as it seems, perhaps the party can help the necromancer's brother rest in peace at last. The *Necromancer's Brother* is intended for characters of 3rd-5th level.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Stumbling upon Levinbolt is meant to be a random encounter, so this module works well as a one-shot or can be dropped into an existing campaign as a fluff session. Since Levinbolt is the only town around for many miles, the party has little choice but to stay there. For an inquisitive party, it can be framed as an interesting mystery to solve; for more business-minded characters, it can be framed more as a job in need of an adventuring party.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The party may have already heard of Levinbolt, a strange, radiant village powered by lightning. If any characters are historians, they may also know that it was the home of a famous pair of necromancer twins, Henriette and Julian Alabaster, the original inventors who brought light to Levinbolt—and died under mysterious circumstances.

Levinbolt is illuminated by magical-mechanical hybrid lights. The light is diffused by a spell with *permanency* cast on it together with a mechanism that can interrupt and resume the flow of magic so they can be turned on and off. High-quality lamps in public buildings use *lightning bolt* as the source and actually crackle and hum. Low-quality lamps use the *light* cantrip and lack that aesthetic.

CHAPTER 1 – THE RADIANT VILLAGE OF LEVINBOLT

> Darkness and fog have settled over the highland as you anxiously search for a town or safe place to make camp for the night. In the distance, a strange, otherworldly glow emanates through the fog. As you draw closer, it gets brighter and stranger. Cresting a ridge, you are greeted by a small hamlet, nestled cozily amongst the hills, and the unfamiliar glow and soft humming sound of the electric lights that illuminate it! Electric lights line the main roads, and most of the public buildings and many of the private homes are lit from the inside with these strange bulbs.

THE CITIZENS OF LEVINBOLT

Upon entering the town, it becomes apparent that the superstitious citizens are worried about ghosts. The party encounters townspeople who try to sell them chintzy (non-magical) amulets as protection from spirits. Towards the tavern in the middle of town, another group insists on checking them for necromantic possession using strange electric devices, which do nothing except blink. Despite these silly tactics, the townsfolk seem genuinely shook up over ghosts—and pleased to see competent (and non-possessed) new adventurers in town.

A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check gives the party three potential sources of information: Fennel Stormspinner, Charlene Audrey, and Lt. Lionel Rourke.

Fennel Stormspinner (CG female gnome) is a friendly but slightly strung out alchemist, found hanging out at the tavern. She's easily convinced to tell a very dramatic, if embellished, story about being at the mansion and hearing the ghost screaming and crying. She also says:

- Hattie and Julian Alabaster rarely appeared together publicly.
- They secretly hated each other and only stuck together because they were famous.
- Julian was an asshole and possibly killed Hattie.
- She has been to the mansion but is reluctant to give directions. Her aunts are the current owners, but she doesn't like to admit it because they're currently on the outs.

Charlene Audrey (CN female elf) is a fortune teller with curly black hair wearing scarves and trinkets. She runs her divination business out of a tiny corner store which smells heavily of incense. Her demeanor is initially mystical, but she drops the act when she realizes the party aren't customers. She says:

- Julian was gregarious and manic, while Henriette was quiet and reclusive.
- They were secretly incestous lovers and didn't like being seen together because they were afraid people would figure it out.
- She admires them because they were great marketers.
- The mansion isn't haunted and it's probably just a racket by the current owners for publicity, which she also admires.

Lt. Lionel Rourke (LG male human) is in his early thirties and comes across as straight-laced but affable. He is on duty at the constabulary and tells the party:

- He has no opinion on the Alabasters. Why dredge up the past?
- He's worried about the current residents of the mansion, Maggie and Eleanor Stormspinner. They have a ghost problem and may be in danger, but they're too stubborn to let him help.
- The mansion is on a hill north of town and he'd appreciate if the party would try to reason with the Stormspinners.

CHAPTER 2 – THE ALABASTER MANSION

Catching your first glimpse of Alabaster Mansion, you almost feel silly for asking for directions. On the outskirts of town and elevated on a hill, it looms over the rest of Levinbolt, huge and foreboding. The front doors are flanked by tall pillars and dramatically illuminated by a gently buzzing electric chandelier. The mansion emits a diffused glow in the darkness, but whether it's welcoming or sinister is for you to decide.

When you knock on the door, a woman's voice shouts from inside, *"ROURKE, I TOLD YOU TO COME BACK WITH A WARRANT!"* The door edges open, still latched, and you see a sliver of an elderly gnomish woman, who looks embarrassed. She hastens to unlatch and open the door for you, saying, *"Oh my goodness, dearie, I'm so sorry, I thought you were someone else!"*

Maggie Stormspinner happily invites the party inside and introduces them to her wife Eleanor, also an elderly gnomish woman, if a bit calmer and less of a spitfire. They are both thrilled that the party is interested in the mansion and the Alabasters, although they chafe a bit if anybody admits to being sent by Lt. Rourke or acts too concerned for their safety.

Eleanor brews tea as they explain how they came into possession of the mansion. As big fans of Hattie and Julian, they recently bought the house at auction and intend to turn it into a bed and breakfast and museum of necromancy and electricity. Esoteric and creepy trinkets of various sorts adorn the mansion. The crown jewel of the collection seems to be a full-sized taxidermy **doppelganger**. Eleanor mentions it was the last piece Julian added to his collection before his death.

Maggie and Eleanor speak affectionately about the Alabaster twins. If the party relays any of the rumors they've heard, the Stormspinners shut them down and express that they find the rumors distasteful. They insist that the reason they didn't appear much together in public was because Hattie was deathly ill and Julian

was the devoted brother taking care of her, and was so heartbroken over his sister's death that he died shortly after.

They also show the party a large portrait of the twins together hanging over the fireplace. The Alabasters do indeed look very much alike, and share the same facial structure, eyes, and straight black hair with a platinum blonde streak. They're slim half-elves and both strikingly handsome. Hattie wears an ornately laced black dress and looks somber while Julian wears an old-fashioned black suit and has more of a spark in his expression. Somehow, he feels like a mad genius just by looking at him.

When asked about the haunting, the Stormspinners confirm they've spotted shadows and heard screaming from the basement, but they seem more pleased than scared. Part of the reason they wanted to buy the house was because they suspected that the Alabasters had some sort of secret bunker, and they recently found the entrance. That's when the undead activity started—they suspect they broke some sort of seal. Julian was obsessed with banshees in the later parts of his life. The Stormspinners have theorized there's one down in the bunker—and they even suspect it could be Hattie, fueling Julian's obsession. They desperately want to see the bunker for themselves, but who knows what else is down there?

The Stormspinners ask the party to go through the bunker and make sure it's safe and clear of traps and ghosts. They insist that they'd love to do it themselves but lament that they're not as young as they used to be! They hope to preserve the Alabasters' belongings for their museum, but they offer to pay 3000 gp.

CHAPTER 3 – THE NECROMANCER'S LAIR

The Stormspinners eagerly usher you down to the basement, where you find a large, heavy steel door, ever so slightly ajar. You swear you can see shadows flickering around the edges.

"We finally figured out how to open it, but it was trapped!" Maggie tells you enthusiastically, and shows you her left arm, which is marred by dramatic burn scars in the shape of lightning bolts. *"I know, I look amazing, but it also hurt like hell! That's when we decided to leave it to the professionals."*

THE FOYER

There is a *glyph of warding* on the door, but it has already been sprung by Maggie, so the party can pry open the door and pass through without incident. They find themselves in a surprisingly cozy foyer, which is illuminated by electric lights, as is the rest of the dungeon. A coat hangs on the wall near the door, with a pair of boots below. Countless tomes line a multitude of bookshelves, as well as most other surfaces.

Two **spectres**, drawn to this place by the necromantic energy present in Julian's lab, lie in wait behind the door. (If your party is large or particularly powerful, you can adjust the difficulty of the encounter by scaling up the number of enemies.)

A single exit across from the steel entrance door leads to a long, narrow hallway. It, too, is furnished primarily by books. At some points, they reach so far up the walls that the stacks connect, forming a rounded tunnel of books.

A trap lies in wait in the hallway, but is not designed for living beings, so if the party doesn't notice it, it won't react to their presence. They can spot the trap with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. A successful DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check bestows knowledge of the trap's function—ensnaring undead spirits while leaving living creatures alone—and the wisdom to leave it be instead of playing with it. Attempting to disarm the trap with a Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check allows four **shadows** to escape and attack the party.

THE DUNGEON

Behind a heavy, unlocked wooden door on the left lies a plain, rustic dungeon, featuring jail cells holding the remains of several monsters, including a **minotaur skeleton**, a **mummy** and a **bone naga**. Only one is still active and breaks through the rusty bars of its cell to attack the party. (The minotaur skeleton is recommended, but feel free to use the others for a more difficult fight if desired.)

There is also a plain treasure chest in a jail cell by itself. The **mimic** does not bother the party unless they attempt to find a way inside the jail cell to loot it.

THE READING ROOM

On the right of the hallway, a revolving bookcase hides a secret room. Luckily, the bookcase is ajar, making the door obvious and able to be pried open. The hidden room, Julian's reading nook, is small, cozy, and full of even more books. A comfy plush chair sits across from a small, round table, on which rests a journal, lying open, a quill next to it.

Before the party can investigate further, a small brood of approximately ten **crawling claws** appear from out of the walls and attack. Some of them are holding dusters and other cleaning supplies. Once dispatched, the party can read the journal, which outlines Julian's obsessive research regarding banshees.

"I am certain that my latest attempt at a cure is finally correct—and divinatory magic confirms this notion—but I fear the universe is conspiring against me. I already feel the wrath and sorrow of the banshee coursing through my blood, corrupting my thoughts, and still I wait impatiently for the delivery of the doppelganger eye I need to complete the formula.

Who is this cruel arbiter of beauty? I am sure Corellon has empathy for the quandary of their child, so which deity disfavors me? Who dares tell me that I have scorned my former beauty? Who decides what is WASTE and what is CREATION? Scarred as I may now be, I have never looked or felt more divine—does that count for NOTHING? I cannot, will not, accept such a fate. I WILL be free to live as I wish."

The next page contains a detailed account of the aforementioned cure and how it works. The rest of the journal contains the ravings of a mad scientist—mainly musings on banshees and the nature of beauty, but also some notes on his electrical experiments.

A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) check shines more light on Julian's words. Common understanding of banshees says they are the spirits of beautiful women with elven blood who became corrupted by their own beauty when they failed to use it for the greater good—and were cursed to eternal despair and rage as a result.

A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check at this point notes that despite supposedly being the Alabasters' shared lair, everything the party has come across down here has been Julian's alone and even the journal had no mention of Hattie.

THE LABORATORY

The hallway ends in a large laboratory, spacious and cluttered with half-finished experiments magical and mechanical alike. Clearly, the owner of this lab worked with a frenetic energy. One section of the room is taken up by a giant, impressive—and extremely magical—machine, currently humming and producing occasional bolts of lightning. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals that this is the "battery" that powers most of the electricity for the town.

The party can look around, but if they interact with anything, they are attacked by a **flameskull**, which intones, "You must leave this place. I will protect Julian Alabaster."

The flameskull is intelligent and converses with the party, and even answer questions, during the fight. If the party insists that Julian is dead: "No. Julian is here. I will protect Julian."

If Hattie is mentioned: "There is no Henriette Alabaster. Julian was born Henriette. Then he lived as both. Now there is only Julian."

If asked about the banshee: "My master suffers unfairly. I will not let you hurt him."

If the party tries to convince the flameskull they mean no harm: "I cannot take that risk. My purpose is to protect Julian."

With a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check, the party locates and identifies the unfinished banshee cure Julian had been working on, a tinderbox containing a bird's nest woven with herbs and soaked in various oils. They can finish it by adding the doppelganger eye from the Stormspinners' taxidermy piece, which the couple gives up willingly if the situation is even rudimentarily explained to them.

While in this room, the banshee can be heard wailing on the other side of the final door, which is locked and warded by a lightning trap. The trap can be spotted with a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check and disabled with a successful DC 18 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check. When triggered, it erupts in a 10-foot-radius centered on itself. Each creature in the area must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. A creature takes 2d10 lightning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Breaking the machine disables the trap, but also cuts off power to the town!

THE INNER SANCTUM

Once past the door, the party enters Julian's personal room, which is cozy but cluttered with books, crystals, multicolored fairy lights and, surprisingly, houseplants kept alive by magic.

The banshee is within and barely recognizable as an Alabaster from the painting. They look like they are in anguish, long hair unkempt, ghostly suit torn and tattered.

If the cure is completed before entering the final room, the party can administer it immediately upon encountering the banshee. Otherwise, the banshee attacks and dramatically chases them back through the dungeon into the mansion, where they acquire the doppelganger eye. (If this happens, the Stormspinners are ecstatic to see Julian's ghost with their own eyes.)

CONCLUSION

The party administers the cure, once fully assembled, by lighting the tinderbox in the vicinity of the banshee, which they know from reading the journal. Magenta smoke pours out of it and surrounds Julian, who stops attacking as a sense of tranquility washes over the room. He momentarily regains his senses, now looking just like the man in the painting. He calmly thanks the party and bestows on them a charm of *conjure minor elemental* before fading into nothingness. The smoke turns grey and dissipates, leaving only the faint smell of ozone behind. Julian's charm allows each player present to cast conjure minor elemental at 4th level one time each before vanishing from them.

Killing the banshee also solves the problem, although at a greater price—Julian dies with an anguished wail and explodes into wispy smoke in a 10-foot-radius. Each creature in the area must make a Constitution saving throw. A creature takes 2d10 necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Either way, the Stormspinners are delighted by the discoveries about Julian and stories of the artifacts found in the lair. They happily discuss how much of a success their museum is going to be, but they agree that they will still dedicate it to both the Alabasters, as they're not comfortable outing him to the public after his death. They ask the party to do the same. They pay the party 3,000 gp (or 2,000 if they broke the machine).

Upon returning to Levinbolt, the townspeople are hostile to the party if they broke the machine and cut off power to the town, but are otherwise happy to be regaled with stories about the ghost.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jameson is a social justice Tremere antitribu from Buffalo, NY who wishes they were immortal so they'd have time to visit every coffee shop in the world. They're a professional plant liker and software engineer, as well as an unprofessional comics writer.

The Necromancer's Brother is important to me because it's a reflection of my personal experiences as a transmasculine person. The banshee's curse really represents transphobia: it afflicts Julian based on his birth gender because it perceives him as "misuing" his beauty by choosing to transition, which is an attitude from others I have often received and struggled with. For me, the fact that he has the confidence and talent to stand up to the curse and develop a cure is empowering, and the fact that the party has a chance to right the wrongs done to him feels like justice. I want to thank *Uncaged* for giving me an opportunity to tell my story in this way.



Illustration by Luciella Elisabeth Scarlett

WATERS SHALLOW, ROOTS DEEP

by Annamyriah de Jong

Creature: *Dryad* | **Levels:** *3-5*

SYNOPSIS

The town of Rootstock is a quiet community, nestled just off a main road. It has bustling trade relationships and a happy population—people of all sorts find their place amongst the tall evergreens that make up the forest around them. They credit their health and safety to a natural spring, deep in the caves beneath town, and celebrate and drink from it twice a year. But when adventurers arrive in town, and participate in the Festival of Blessings, what will they find?

ADVENTURE HOOK

Rootstock can be placed along any road lined with forest, or any forested area with access to other towns one way or another; Rootstock is not a self-sustaining town as designed. It works well in the middle of a long journey—a small place of respite from camping and cold, or, perhaps, the party has heard of the Festival of Blessings elsewhere, and decide to go investigate.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

This is an adventure for 4-6 adventurers, levels 3rd-5th, but is adjustable to any party size or level by increasing the amount of monsters in the combat, and/or adding puzzles or other independent elements.

Rootstock was founded as a seasonal hunting camp, which became permanent when families settled down. Fifty years ago, the land was hunted to near extinction which lead to a famine. A few of the older members of the population remember that difficult time. Now, most of the population is in good health, but people die approximately ten years earlier than the average, and weaken quickly near their deaths.

Under Rootstock is a cavern where a large tree grows. At the base of the tree is a fountain, and inside of the tree is a lich's phylactery. The phylactery is fueled by small fractions of the souls of those that drink from the fountain. Those that have died from the effects of the fountain, their souls being siphoned away over time, are trapped inside the cavern in the form of "ghosts."

A dryad protects the tree and the phylactery. She was once a human woman, but the lich offered her the power to protect her town in return for the protection of their phylactery.

The Festival of Blessings is a twice-yearly event that lasts two days.

The first day consists of gathering items to burn in the fire that evening: furniture, worries written onto paper, anything and everything. A physical and emotional 'spring cleaning': giving up the things that weigh them down.

The second day starts at dawn with a gathering out front of the town's temple. As the day breaks, the doors are opened, and the attendees are guided down into the dark of a cave to drink from the fountain, and receive its blessings for the upcoming time.



CHAPTER 1 – FIRES BRIGHT

During the party's travels, they see smoke a fair distance off into the woods drifting above the treeline. With a successful DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check, they spot an overgrown dirt road leading towards the smoke.

The forest surrounding the path grows dense. Any diversion from the path through the underbrush becomes difficult terrain as it is nearly impossible to traverse. After a thirty minute walk, the party reaches a town that is the source of the smoke.

WELCOME TO ROOTSTOCK

Laughter, chatter, and music drift through the forest. Through the trees, a town can be seen, lively with people all having a wonderful time. The road comes to an inelegant conclusion in the center of this small town - buildings line this center, drawing focus to a small church, which stands directly like a haphazard sentinel over the entrance into Rootstock. In front of it burns a large bonfire, which most of the people seem to be paying attention to in some regard. The flames are filled with all sorts of objects, from furniture to books to clothes. A few older children are seated at the edge of the bonfire, roasting meat on sticks and chatting while others add to the fire. A woman is lugging a broken chair from her home toward the fire with her young son trailing behind her.

A few people glance towards the party as they enter the town with curiosity. They draw much more attention if they burst out of the underbrush than they do if they enter via the road.

After the characters have a moment to catch their breath, a middle-aged half-orc named Vanes greets them. She can answer many questions about the town and what's currently going on. She is more than happy to see visitors, which are rare, but not uncommon, especially around the Festival. She's less willing to discuss the events of the next day, eager for the visitors to be surprised, but advises them to wake early. She directs them toward The Silver Cup if they're looking for somewhere to stay.

The Silver Cup is an inn on the northwest side of the town center. It's rather nondescript in appearance - a wooden two-story building with a handful of windows squished between an unimpressive bookstore and a small, but delicious smelling bakery. Above the door of The Silver Cup is a tin cup hanging off a string. Two children are playing under it, trying to jump and hit it, but they scamper off if people want to enter the inn. It's run by an elven man named Horace, who is friendly, but impersonal. He's eager to sell them food from a small, but passably tasty menu, and beds for the night.

INDEPENDENT EXPLORATION

Within Rootstock, there's only a few businesses open on account of the festival. Once Vanes takes her leave, the party is left to explore on their own. There are bards to listen to, the fire to interact with, and people to meet. A few businesses that are open are a general store that sells basic goods, a restaurant that offers the Saif's Feast—a challenge to the party's appetites (If the characters can finish off the huge meal within an hour, it's free. Use a group DC 50 Constitution check for this challenge; otherwise, the cost is 10 gp total) and a man selling cheap magical fireworks out of his bedroom window.

DEVELOPMENT

The characters can find lodging at The Silver Cup or are welcome to camp along the edge of town when the hour grows late. If they've made connections with townsfolk, they might find lodging in someone's home. Wherever they rest, they rest well.



CHAPTER 2 – A JOURNEY BELOW

The festival begins a half-hour before daybreak, with the citizens gathering in the center of town.

> The air holds a quiet buzz of anticipation; amiable conversations are being held, hushed in the early morning darkness. Talks about what things people are hoping the fountain will bring them luck over, what new things will be in the general store this week (preserved peaches and small copper toys, if the rumors are anything to go by), and what sort of bird it is that's calling from the trees.
>
> And then, all at once, as the doors of the church open and Bertrand steps out, everyone quiets.
>
> He says nothing, just turns and heads back inside, the doors left open.
>
> The unorganized mass files inside, funneled through the main doors and down the aisle. Bertrand waits by the unassuming door in the back corner, made of old wood with a heavy lock. The crowd is restless, but polite, as they wait for him to unclip the heavy ring of keys from the belt around his robes, and slide it into the lock.
>
> The room beyond the door is small with a few boxes stacked against the walls, a small shelf of books, and a few robes hang on hooks; however, they're all secondary to what's in the middle of the room. Centered is a wide staircase of rough hewn stone, dug down into the earth. It descends, though its impossible to tell how far as darkness swallows the steps after about two dozen.. No one seems to pay any mind. Any lingering whispered conversations die down as the town descends.

Bertrand Rylands, a human male in his early fifties, has been the presiding cleric the small temple for twenty years. He's kind and well liked in the community, but stubborn when it comes to the church. He rarely accepts ideas concerning it that aren't his own.

Bertrand is aware that Dechtire exists, and believes that she wants to protect the town. He supports her in this effort. He believes that she's ultimately good, and that she is the direct reason for the fountain's powers. He does not know about the ghosts, the phylactery, or the lich.

INTO THE CHAMBER, PART ONE

Three-quarters of the way down the staircase, any non-magical light is extinguished by a magical darkness that fills the space. If any magical light is on a character, they are asked to put it out or leave the object behind in the room by Bertrand. The rules are strict around this ceremony, but enforcement is kind. The darkness continues throughout the underground.

> The path you are led down is as dark as tar, and the footing is uneven. Hands pull and catch at your robes as people stumble, keeping themselves upright, but they pull away when they're steady, for the most part. Even with darkvision, it's impossibly dark. Unnaturally dark.

The path is roughly a mile long and remains dark. It's cold, and sound echoes slightly before fading out.

At some point near the end of the walk, the crunching of leaves can be heard beneath the party's feet with a successful DC 15 Passive Perception check. Shortly after, the tunnel reaches the fountain chamber. It's a room shaped like an irregular circle, about 40 feet across and 45 feet high.

In the center of the room, unseen in the darkness, is a large tree. Nestled in a round divot in the roots is the faintly bubbling fountain.

> The mass of people that had been surrounding you starts to thin out. Hands grab at your arms, and at others, everyone sorting themselves out into a line in the pitch black. The room is almost uncomfortably chilled, and occasionally a small draft sweeps by, ruffling clothes and hair.

The party finds themselves directed into a loose single file line, which moves towards the fountain as people take their drink from it. As each character approaches the fountain, they are directed to kneel by Bertrand's sturdy hand on their shoulder. A wooden bowl filled with water is put into their hands.

After drinking the water, the character must succeed a DC 17 Constitution saving throw. On a success, nothing happens. The water is cool and delicious, but harmless.

On a failure, the character is filled with confidence and peace that they have never known before. Unbeknownst to them, part of their soul is sucked away by the phylactery. Any worries they held previously seem meaningless. Any problem is conquerable. They gain +1 to Constitution and Strength. The feeling lasts for about an hour, but the buff is (optionally) permanent.

The mass of people make their way back through the cave and into the church when all have drunk from the pool. If the party or anyone else decides to stay, then their absence is not noticed until the NPCs reach the church again.

Development

If the players leave, and aren't naturally drawn back down to investigating the cave further on their own, some guiding might be necessary. However, move on to *Chapter 3* once they decide to investigate the cave.

Chapter 3 – Past the Door, Down the Stairs

The door leading to the room with the staircase to the tunnel is non-magically locked. Bertrand tends to keep the keys that open it hooked on his belt. Non-magical light continues to be extinguished at the same spot on the stairs.

Into the Chamber, Part Two

If the characters have a way to see through magical darkness, then give the description of the path into the cave, the fountain, the tree, and the ghosts as they travel back down into the cavern.

The Ghosts: There's a few dozen of them, of varying appearances and ages. They don't seem to notice the party or care that they're there. They aren't capable of communication. These ghosts are not technically creatures—they cannot be killed. If intentional, their touch can paralyze a player for a round on the failure of a DC 12 Constitution saving throw.

If harm comes to the tree, immediately proceed to the "Combat" section.

If harm comes to the fountain or the cavern itself, or if the party lingers for too long, Dechtire emerges from the tree which cracks and shifts to allow her through. She is not immediately hostile.

> She's tall—you're not sure if it's natural or not, but she definitely isn't shortened by the branch-like horns growing from the nest of moss that makes up her hair. Tangles of branches and leaves are tucked into it. She holds a large sword, five or six feet in length, and it doesn't, somehow, dwarf her. Her skin is split and mottled, thin sections of bark clinging—or growing—on her bare arms. Her face is strange, inhuman just as much as it is human. Her eyes are the one thing that assures you that she was at some point human, pale blue and looking between you all.

Ultimately, it is up to you how malevolent Dechtire is portrayed. But here are some things she is not: cruel without reason, unwilling to listen despite her stubbornness, unsympathetic to other's plights. She is, however, also determined to protect this forest at any cost to her, and at her idea of reasonable cost to others.

If she is given a chance to explain, continue with the following dialogue options from Dechtire, broken up and supplemented as need be to allow it to be a conversation between her and the party.

"I am doing nothing wrong. I am not taking anything that isn't owed.

"They hunted this land to near extinction—and, gods, I wish I could say that I was anything but complacent. But I wasn't. I watched as my husband brought home anything he could sink an arrow into. It was to eat, at first. Just to eat. Just to eat, and to keep us through the winter. But then they started hunting for the fun of it- hunting for sport, not for necessity. And I did nothing as stuffed heads started decorating our walls. It was a game, a competition, and I told them to stop. I warned them. But they did not listen. I remained complacent until there was nothing left. People went elsewhere or starved. There wasn't a deer or mouse in these woods, by the time they were done. The birds learned to fly past elsewhere. I was complacent for too long, and they did so much harm in the wake of that -- but unlike them, I promised that I would return things to how they should be.

"And I have, and I am sworn to keep it this way. This land should not pay for the sins of the greedy. It is my influence that keeps wandering children from being taken by bears, my influence that keeps their hunts good, my influence that keeps their gardens bountiful. This is better for them than any alternative."

This is possible to resolve peacefully: maybe the party finds her actions justified, and leaves the routine alone. Maybe other solutions to what she sees as necessary are found, or the party convinces her that the debt has been paid. Combat is not necessary, if the tree is unharmed. She is her definition of just. She is not vengeful.

COMBAT

Three to four **eagles**, Dechtire, and one **giant eagle**. Add more giant eagles for high level parties. The eagles come sweeping out of the branches of the tree and attack upon the tree taking harm. They care only about protecting the tree, and vanish into ash upon their death. Dechtire is more eager to talk and have herself understood than fight, but she is not unwilling to participate.

Dechtire uses the **revenant** stat block with the following changes, most of which are from the dryad statblock.

- **AC:** Reduced to 10.
- She loses the Multiattack ability.
- **Innate Spellcasting:** Can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components, with a spell save DC of 14.
  - 3/day: *entangle*
  - 1/day: *shillelagh, pass without trace*
- **Magic Resistance:** Has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.
- Can speak with beasts and plants as if they share a language.
- **Actions: Sword of the Dryad.** *Melee Weapon Attack* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 12 (3d6)+3 slashing damage.

CONCLUSION

If the tree was destroyed, the population of the town seems tired and worn down as the enchantments that have been upon them most of their life fade away. They will recover in a few days.

If Bertrand is told of or figures out what happened, he makes it clear that the party is to leave.

The situation, whatever it is, leaves the party with a feeling that they're not welcomed here any longer.



REWARDS

Upon completion, characters may earn the following rewards:

XP REWARDS

Add the total XP obstacles overcome by the party, then divide it evenly amongst the characters to find individual earnings.

Event	Reward
Giant Eagles—Combat	200 each
Eagles—Combat	10 each
Dechtire—Combat	1,800
Resolving without combat	1,800
	200 per player
Saif's Feast	10 per player

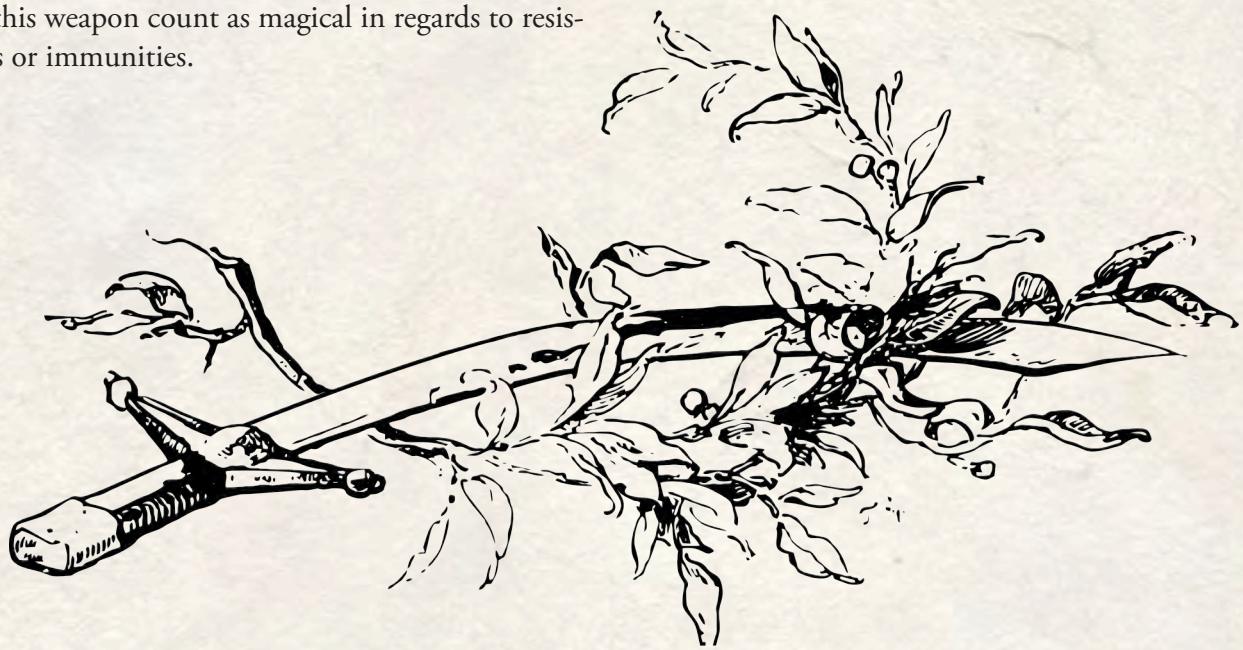
MATERIAL REWARDS

Sword of the Dryad

At one point, this heavy sword must have been beautiful—intricate work has been done on the handle, but now it's worn down with age and covered by bits of clinging moss. It has seen some better days, but a small amount of work would put it back into pristine condition. As it is, it's usable—it would be worth a good amount if sold.

Suggested worth: 40 gp if sold as is, 50 gp if restored.

3d6 slashing damage, heavy (two handed). Attacks with this weapon count as magical in regards to resistances or immunities.



AUTHOR'S NOTES

I set out to do two things with this adventure. The first was to create a story without a right or a wrong solution to let the character's stories and morals color the end result. The second was a bit trickier of an undertaking: write an adversary that challenged the traditional idea of a female 'villain' by using the traits often stereotyped onto female characters and allowing her to use them in a way that defies those stereotypes. Hopefully I did those both some amount of justice.

Thank you to everyone who helped me throughout the process of refining this, and, to my own campaign group - thanks for playing through whatever I throw you into as enthusiastically as you do.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Annamyriah de Jong is currently a student in the PNW, where she lives with her cat, Yam, and plays a lot of games. Other *D&D* work of hers can be found dmsguild.com under the same name, other games can be found at annamdejong.itch.io, and she can be reached on Twitter at @annamdejong.





Illustration by Kayla Cline

THE HAUNTING OF COLDWOOD MANOR

by Shannon Lewis

Creature: *Banshee* | **Level:** *4*

SYNOPSIS

The dead are rising from the grounds of Coldwood Manor, and Lord Cunningham is looking for enterprising adventurers to take care of the problem. Lady Cunningham is ill, and the ceaseless cries of the banshees have only made her condition more fragile. He considers the wailing apparitions a simple nuisance; his wife believes they portend her death. The party may discover a truth that defies them both.

ADVENTURE HOOK

This adventure is intended for a party of 3-5 4th level adventurers who have traveled to Coldwood Manor at Lord Cunningham's request, either as an established party or as individuals responding to an open call for adventurers.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Coldwood Manor is a remote estate. In nearby villages, little is known of the people who live there beyond that the family is very old and has occupied the manor house for as long as anyone can remember. It is widely accepted that the place is haunted—not as superstition or caution but a longstanding fact. Once there, it becomes obvious the manor is not a place anyone would want to live, and not many people do: the house is large but only occupied by the Lord, Lady, and a small personal staff.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

- **Lord Cunningham:** NE male human **vampire spawn**. The self-important Lord of a crumbling manor, he gives lip service to his wife's health but seems more irritated with the situation than concerned for her wellbeing. He is secretly a vampire whose many murdered wives have returned to haunt him.
- **Molly Beck:** LG female human **commoner**. The butler of Coldwood Manor and former lady-in-waiting to Lady Cunningham. She is deeply concerned for the wellbeing of her friend, and unsettled by the atmosphere of the estate.
- **Matthias:** NG male human **guard**. The young groundskeeper of the Manor who holds more loyalty to the place than its master.
- **Lady Cunningham:** LN female human **noble**. Lord Cunningham's young bride; suffers from a "wasting disease" that has her confined to bed.
- **The Banshees:** CG female human **banshees**. Victims of Lord Cunningham's appetite, these apparitions seek to prevent him from killing again.

CHAPTER 1 – ANSWERING THE CALL

In the last village you heard that Coldwood Manor was remote, but you travel for the better part of a day before you reach the gates. The nearest neighbor is already a distant memory.

The estate is carved out of dense woodlands, a wide rectangle of lawns and gardens and a lone manor house bordered by forest. It is clear that the property was once incredibly grand, but it hasn't been kept up for some time. The house is sagging and gray with age and the garden, while still lovely, is overgrown.

You approach the manor just as the sun begins to set. A chill settles on your skin, and an unearthly wail fills the air, echoing all around you. The sound follows you to the front door, where a young woman in a formal suit is waiting for you. Looking both worried and relieved she says, *"Have you come to help us?"*

The woman is Molly Beck, the butler of Coldwood Manor. She is young, perhaps early twenties, and professional but clearly nervous as she escorts the party to Lord Cunningham's study. The manor is richly decorated but, as with the exterior, not well-kept, and the party sees no other staff. The study is lined with old books and decorated richly, but is noticeably dusty and has a faint musty odor.

Lord Cunningham is seated, reading. He is an older man, a silvery mid-forty, and acts as though the party has kept him waiting unduly. He should be roleplayed as haughty and terse—right on the line between understandably stressed and irritable, and suspiciously evasive and dismissive. When questioned he provides the following information:

- The banshees began appearing about a month ago and with increasing frequency ever since. They haven't physically harmed anyone yet, but the sound is constant and maddening.
- His wife is ill, and the noise is disturbing her—she superstitiously believes the sound portends her death. He reluctantly admits the banshees' appearance coincides with her illness.
- This isn't the first time the banshees have appeared—he doesn't know the cause, but apparently the last group of adventurers didn't do a very good job of getting rid of them.
- If pressed about when or why the apparitions have appeared in the past, he hastily recounts the explanation he was given: the manor has been haunted for as long as anyone can remember, and the banshees are some long-forgotten women cursed by their own vanity to wander the earth causing ugliness and misery. On a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) or (History) check, a character will recall hearing of a similar legend, but one with an elven rather than human origin.

Lord Cunningham quickly tires of the party's questioning and summons the butler to lead them to the gardens. If they request to wait until morning, Lord Cunningham indicates the banshees are most active at night and insists they proceed immediately. Any attempt to speak with his wife is firmly rebuffed. If the party questions Molly while she escorts them to the garden, she is nervous but chatty and will readily provide the following information:

- She and Lady Cunningham are close friends; Molly took this position when the Lady wed.
- There are very few staff members. Most of them joined the household at the same time Molly did.
- Lady Cunningham's health has been steadily declining since they arrived at the Manor.
- The banshees don't seem to have caused any damage and haven't attacked anyone, but wail at all hours of the day and night.

If the party asks to see Lady Cunningham, Molly also refuses them: her condition is too delicate, and only the Lord's physician has access to her—even Molly hasn't been allowed to wait on her. The party can attempt to convince her that they might be able to help with a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check. On a failure, she clams up and hurries them outside. On a success, Molly leads the party to Lady Cunningham's bedroom door but allows them no further while she's present. If the party chooses to continue to investigate the manor, they find it eerily empty and the Lady's bedroom lived in (with signs her illness is being tended to) but unoccupied.

INTO THE GARDEN

Molly promises to answer the door if the party knocks but has no desire to go into the garden herself, and locks the door to the garden behind them.

> Dusk has fallen on Coldwood Manor, bathing the grounds in shadow. The gardens stretch out before you in full view, rose bushes growing wild and ornate statues covered with moss. Faint wisps of fog creep in from the forest, obscuring the not-too-distant trees in haze. Another plaintive wail rises up from the garden before you.

The party encounters the first **banshee** shuffling listlessly through the garden. She appears little more than a bundle of rags and bones that echo hollowly as she moves, alternating between quiet sobbing and piercing wailing. She does not attack the party unless provoked, and she only uses her Wail or Horrifying Visage attacks if attacked first.

Almost any act of kindness or attempt to reason with the banshee will calm her, particularly if the party attempts to persuade her that she is harming Lady Cunningham. This banshee appears mummified and desiccated on inspection and is unable to communicate with the party, but indicates the far end of the property if asked why she is here.

Note: if the party does decide to attack, she responds with her Wail. It is entirely possible that this results in a total party kill. If this happens, the party awakes in the groundskeeper's small cottage home, and with his hospitality, receive the benefits of a long rest over the course of their interaction.

DEVELOPMENT

Once the banshee is dealt with, the groundskeeper appears to assist fallen or wounded party members and question the party's presence in the garden.

CHAPTER 2 – THE HAUNTED GARDEN

The groundskeeper Matthias is young, twenty at the most, and lives in a humble cottage on the grounds. He is hospitable but hesitant to reveal too much to the party. If questioned he tells them:

- The grounds are full of spirits, but they've never attacked him and don't seem to mean any harm.
- Previous adventurers have tried everything from fighting to religious rituals, but the banshees always come back eventually—usually within weeks or months.
- The banshees congregate—and seem to get lost—in the hedge maze in the heart of the garden.
- Matthias was born on the grounds and is the longest-standing staff member. A successful DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) check convinces him to admit that he's still here because he believes he has seen his mother among the ghosts.
- Pressing him on the matter reveals his mother died of a wasting disease—much like the current lady Cunningham...and the former lady Cunningham. He is too young to remember, but he thinks there was at least one more.

Once the party is patched up and have their questions answered, Matthias directs them to the maze.

THE PHANTOM MAZE

> The grounds of Coldwood Manor are too extensive to be maintained by a single man, but the hedge maze is clearly the greatest fruit of his labor. Though it has lost its shape in places, the walls are impressively tall (too high to see over easily), and judging from the size, it is both large and intricate. Dusk has begun to fade to evening, and the maze itself seems to murmur, echoing muted sobs punctuated by sharp, bone-chilling wails. The nighttime fog has grown thicker, winding its way into the maze as you pass through the opening in the tall hedges.

As the party makes its way through the maze, each member should make a DC 15 Wisdom (Survival) check in turn. Both successes and failures count as progress toward the center of the maze, but on each failed check, the party comes to a dead end and a **specter** solidifies from the mist. The specters are formless,

ghostly shapes that emanate soft, feminine sobbing and do not attack unless provoked. They are unable to communicate with the party, but should be increasingly unsettling—weeping and following along behind the party as they move through the maze. Sobs also seem to come from the hedge itself, and tendrils of mist grasp harmlessly at the party like cold, clammy fingertips, as though the maze is completely filled with specters they can't see. Characters who succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check to take a closer look at their surroundings as they navigate the maze will notice paved memorial stones throughout—each inscribed with a woman's name and a date, spaced one to twenty years apart and dating back hundreds of years. Any attempt to detect or discern magic will reveal that the maze itself is non-magical but filled with spiritual energy. After enough survival checks to navigate the maze (1-2 per party member, at the DM's discretion), the party emerges from the hedge and the ghostly forms behind them dissipate into mist.

THE HEART OF THE MAZE

A grand fountain occupies the center of the hedge maze, and a spectral woman kneels before it. She is dressed in regal clothes, but her dress is torn and stained with blood. From where you stand, the fountain appears to be filled with blood, and the woman is frantically scrubbing cloth in the wide basin, sobbing and wailing.

Once again, the banshee only fights to defend herself, and only uses her special attacks if the party attacks her first.

If desired, a **specter** or two can be added to increase the difficulty of this encounter. In the event of a party-devastating Wail, Matthias once again comes to the rescue, but this time provides only a short rest (and perhaps a stern reminder that the banshees hadn't attacked anyone until the party showed up).

If the party chooses to try to speak with the banshee and gets a closer look at her, she appears more "alive" than the last—emaciated rather than withered and unable to speak but expressive. She, too, indicates the far end of the property if asked why she is here. If the party examines the banshee herself (and got a close look at the first one), they notice similarities in coloring and build, but this one has a distinctive facial mole the previous one did not.

On a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check of the area, the party notices memorial plaques embossed around the edge of the fountain—newer and better cared for than the stones in the maze. If questioned, the banshee gestures to a specific plaque: the most recent, Elaine, dated the year prior.

BEYOND THE GARDEN WALLS

The "central" courtyard of the maze turns out to be most of the way through it, and the party is able to navigate the rest of the way with relative ease.

A small but well-kept mausoleum stands before you, emblazoned with the Cunningham name. There is no surrounding graveyard, only a single ornamental stone building. As you approach, you catch a whiff of old death on the air. The door to the tomb is standing ajar.

The smell inside the mausoleum is terrible, and the party quickly identifies the source: a body is laid out on a central pedestal, covered by a simple white sheet. An inspection of the tomb reveals a few sealed but unlabeled internment niches, one of which has the front slab removed, as if in preparation to receive a body. An inspection of the corpse, with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception or Medicine) or Intelligence (Investigation) check, reveals the body to be the same woman as the banshee found in the center of the maze (though desiccated to the point of mummification), and the cause of death to be a pair of suspicious puncture wounds on her throat.

DEVELOPMENT

Once the party finishes investigating the area, they hear a human scream coming from the garden.

CHAPTER 3 – LADY CUNNINGHAM

The cries of the banshees are unearthly and all-present, but the scream you hear now is sharp, clear, and distinctly human—and coming from deeper in the garden. As you rush towards the sound, you discover a small, dingy greenhouse at the edge of the property, the windows crusted with grime. Inside, a woman is screaming. Outside, a banshee with the form of a starved, matronly woman is clawing at the glass, echoing each scream with a piercing, desperate wail.

The party can choose either to fight their way past the banshee or open the door and let her inside with them. The banshee is not blocking the party's progress and, like the others, does not attack unless provoked.

If the party attacks and kills all three banshees proceed to *Part A*.

If at least one banshee is left unharmed proceed to *Part B*.

PART A

You enter the greenhouse and find Lord Cunningham bent over the body of a thin, pale woman—his wife, by her dress. Her throat is marked with two small puncture wounds, and as he rises, he wipes a bit of blood from his lips. *"Ahh, quiet at last. Have you come for your payment?"*

If the players accept Lord Cunningham's compensation, skip to *Conclusion A*.

If the players refuse or attempt to question him, skip to "The Fight."

PART B

As you open the greenhouse door, a beam of light shoots past you, striking Lord Cunningham and repelling him from the prone body of his wife. There is blood on her throat to match the blood on his mouth, and he smiles bitterly. *"I see you didn't take care of my problem, either."*

If the players attempt to talk their way out of fighting Lord Cunningham, skip to *Conclusion A*.

If the players decide to attack, skip to *The Fight*.

THE FIGHT

Egad! Lord Cunningham is revealed to be a **vampire spawn**! That explains all the lady-ghosts on his property. If the party spared even one banshee, Lady Cunningham gains the protection of the spell spirit guardians. For each additional banshee spared, consider the spell cast at a higher spell slot, increasing the damage by 1d8 per banshee. This spell excludes the party and deals radiant damage.

Note: for a party of three that did not spare any banshees, this encounter is potentially deadly, so consider scaling down the difficulty by lowering Lord Cunningham's health or not using either his Regeneration skill or Multiattack.

If the party spared at least one banshee, read this before beginning combat:

Lady Cunningham's body is surrounded by light, and the haggard, withered women you saw out in the garden are revitalized, their terrible cries turning into a beautiful, wordless song.

Tactics: At the start of the fight, Lord Cunningham casts spider climb and attempts to get out of range of the *spirit guardians*, if any.

DEVELOPMENT

When Lord Cunningham is defeated, his body turns to ash, the barrier around Lady Cunningham (if active) dissipates, and she revives. If all three banshees were spared, as they fade away, the light dims to a single point and leaves a *driftglobe* in its place. Skip to *Conclusion B*.

CONCLUSION A

If the party overlooks Lord Cunningham's nature and past indiscretions, he is happy to reward them each with a potion of healing and 5 gold pieces before sending them on their way.

CONCLUSION B

Lady Cunningham is disoriented and weak, but with Matthias' assistance, the party is able to escort her out of the greenhouse and back through the garden. Outside, the wailing has ceased and the fog has dissipated. The night is crystal clear. Back at the manor, Molly rushes to aid Lady Cunningham.

When Lady Cunningham has recovered, she thanks you for your service...and your silence. With the Lord of the house gone, she intends to revitalize the estate and would rather atone for its sordid history without it being made public. If the party agrees to keep quiet about what happened, she rewards them by doubling her husband's offer and giving each of them 10 gold.

REWARDS

Characters who complete this adventure may earn the following rewards:

XP REWARDS

Add the total XP of creatures defeated by the party, then divide by the number of characters to determine individual rewards.

Obstacle	XP
Banshee	1,100
Specter	200
Vampire Spawn	1,800

TREASURE REWARDS

If all three banshees are spared, the party also receives a *driftglobe* (*DMG*, "Treasure").

AUTHOR'S NOTES:

While in our world the dead—especially victims of violence—are often robbed of their voice. In a setting like *D&D*, they retain power and agency in the afterlife. Tales of the Banshee have taken on many forms over the years, but many modern depictions are almost completely removed from their origin: women who mourn. This adventure seeks not only to return banshees to their mythological origins, but to allow these women to use their powerful voices not for violence or revenge, as is popularly depicted, but to protect other women and stop the violence against them.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Illustration by Gwendy Bee

SEVEN TEARS BY THE SEA

by D.W. Dagon

Creature: *Sea Hag & Selkie* | **Levels:** *4-5*

SYNOPSIS

In the afternoon tides of Briebhig (Breeb-hig) Bay, the sickening stench of a hag floats in with the fog, frightening the local leader enough to flee inland every Summertide. As the waters warm and salty winds rot the docks, the clock ticks for adventurers to solve the mysterious affliction that is slowly draining a mother's vitality.

Mutation, greed, and tentacles lurk for selfless adventurers who get in too deep; yet promises, pearls, and pirates' gold await those lucky enough to see the tide through.

ADVENTURE HOOK

After travelling along the coastal road, the party arrives at an inn a few miles from the ocean. A noticeboard parchment grabs their attention. It urgently calls for assistance at the Stornlock household.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

This adventure is for a party of four or more 4th-5th level characters. Set in a melancholy seaside town, the party attempts to discover the mysterious affliction of a woman who is secretly a shape-shifting creature called a selkie. A sinister sea hag works her magic from a forbidden cove. When the party is trapped within her lair, they're thrown into a game of death.

HISTORY OF BRIEBHIG BAY

The Bard and the Hag

- Thirteen years ago, Paden Stornlock (N male human) was a bard who played music by the beach. Under pressure from his father, he tried fishing but was injured in a rowing accident, drowning in the Barking Cove.
- Brinemouth Marcail (LE **sea hag**), revived him and offered him a deal; riches, an estate, and a family of his own for seven years, but afterward, he had to return as her servant for a further seven years. He signed a Fey pact and Brinemouth worked powerful blood magic to influence the ocean to fulfill his first two wishes. When he got back to his boat, his nets were full of giant pearls. Brinemouth later called upon the ocean for a creature who wished to marry this human until the pact was complete.

The Selkie

- The creature that answered the call was a selkie: a shapeshifting seal (**sea lion**) which can shed its skin to temporarily transform into human form.
- Iona (NG female), the selkie, already fancied Paden, having listened to him play lovely folk ballads by the ocean.
- To return to the ocean, selkies must transform back to their original form by wearing the seal skin they have shed.
- Within a year, Paden and Iona had a son, Ewan (NG male human/selkie). Managing their newfound wealth wisely, they introduced a fishing industry to Briebhig Bay, growing the town.

The Fall

- Iona was a devoted mother and wife; regardless, Paden kept Ewan's crib on top of her sealskin, and he never told her of his end of the Pact.
- After seven years elapsed, Paden refused to allow Iona or Ewan to swim past the docks, fearing

Brinemouth would take them. Paden now flees inland each Summertide to avoid capture by Brinemouth's Creeping Fog.
- The fishing boom ended five years after it started, due to unsustainable fishing practices.
- Iona attempts to resist the magic requiring her return to the sea. Weakened from being apart from her seal skin, Iona slipped into a coma; she withers with every passing day.

Adventure Rules

Iona's Affliction

- Iona's condition is caused by being in human form for too long after the Fey Pact's expiry. If she's not reunited with her seal pelt, she will die on the first sunrise of Summertide.

The Creeping Fog and Undertow

- The Creeping Fog covers Stornshire during the evening. Characters must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or become Undertowed.
- Undertowed: those afflicted are vertically disoriented and drawn to watery depths. When aiming a ranged attack at targets higher or lower than themselves, they roll attacks with disadvantage. The afflicted are unable to move up or down inclines unless crawling prone. If swimming, they can only swim downwards. Undertow ends after the 24 hour period is up, or through the use of *greater restoration*, *heal*, or *wish*.

Iona's Talisman

The clues for the *Chapter 3* puzzle must be described to the players during *Chapter 1*. The items are listed below, but more detail can be found in *Chapter 3*:

Talisman Puzzle:

- Giant Pearl in Paden's Office
- Mounted Fish upon Ewan's Playroom wall
- Seal Pelt under the crib in Ewan's Playroom
- Shark Tooth Pendant worn by All-Purpose Dan at The Fuschian Angle

If the players somehow cheat or meta by immediately putting the seal pelt on Iona, it does not work. Instead it needs to be brought to Brinemouth Marcail to revitalize it with her sea magics.

Lair Loot!

- To keep things running smoothly during the Sea Hag Stadium battles, pre-roll a list of magic items from Magic Item Tables B, F and G (*DMG*, "Treasure").

Chapter 1: The Bane of the Bay

Arriving at the bay, the party investigates Iona's affliction.

Briebhig Bay

A wide, crescent-shaped bay grasps its own little piece of the grey ocean. The southern portion consists of a sparse pebbled beach and grassy flatlands. In the center of the bay lie docks full of scattered rowboats and a few larger fishing luggers. Most of the bay is shrouded in murky fog rolling in with the afternoon breeze, having breathed its way across the waters from the northern peninsula.

To the north, a cliff looms over a rocky cove shrouded in mist.

Passing farmlands divided into goat pastures and bushy orchards, you get a closer view of the township itself. Stornshire is small with tired buildings, long weathered by the muggy ocean air. Houses and shacks are scattered at varying distances inland of the bay, yet in its center, buildings hug tightly as if they were the failed seed of a city.

At the near edge of town, a large manor greets newcomers.

There they meet Paden's 12-year-old son, Ewan Stornlock. Ewan invites the party inside Stornlock Manor to ask them to help cure his mother (Iona Stornlock) of her "curse." Ewan is overwhelmed by his responsibilities and is completely devoted to his mother. He informs the party that his father Paden is out of town for business but will return home at the end of Summertide. He tells the party that his mother Iona is ill and begs them to save her.

STORNLOCK MANOR

Interior:

A large oil painting of the family in their child's playroom hangs above the central staircase, displaying a handsome-yet-weary Paden Stornlock. He stands with his arm upon the shoulder of a seated Iona; her face looking left of the frame, out the window. She is dressed in an extravagant gown and wears a Giant Shark-tooth Pendant. A young Ewan stands to his father's side, holding his mother's hand.

When describing the Points of Interest, below, ensure you mention the talisman items noted in italics.

Points of Interest

- **Ewan's Playroom (first room near the stairs):** open doorway, wooden toys and instruments are strewn about, an old baby's crib sits upon a *large white seal pelt* (Iona's pelt) beneath the window, and a strange and colorful *mounted fish* hangs above a toy castle at the opposite end of the room.
- **Paden's Office (at the opposite end of the manor):** the door to this room is slightly ajar. A *giant pearl*, which emits a shimmering glow, sits atop a large oak and leather writing desk strewn with documents.
- **Master Bedroom (near the office):** Iona rests here. On a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check, it is noticeable that Iona's life force is diminishing and that neither curse, disease nor illness is the cause. On a fail, it is clear that Iona is sick; however, the cause is not apparent and the party cannot rule out illness or a curse.
- Discovering nothing about her illness, the party is tasked to discover what has afflicted Iona Stornlock by asking around town. Servants of the household recall hearing gossip at the local tavern and direct the party there.

THE FUSCHIAN ANGLE [TAVERN/WORKSHOP]

All-Purpose Dan

Goliath barkeep-handyman.

Appearance: Oppressive physique. Wears a *giant shark-tooth pendant* (Ch.3: Talisman Puzzle).

Personality: Boldy helpful and understanding. Will fix/craft simple items at one-quarter of the cost.

All-Purpose Dan has heard rumors from villagers that an evil fey creature may be the cause of the town's problems. Rumors point to the forbidden Barking Cove. As soon as the party leaves the tavern, the Creeping Fog flees to the cove.

CHAPTER 2: HUNT THE HAG

The party uncovers an old evil in the forbidden cove. The Barking Cove is a forbidden area set into the cliff-side shores of the bay.

BARKING COVE

Thick fog and jagged rocks make for dangerous sailing and splashes of water can be heard in the mists.

Beneath the waters:

- a thriving ecology of marine life
- a gargantuan hole on the seabed which tunnels down and under the peninsula, further than eyes can see

An ocean inlet cave is the source of the fog and filled with primordial sigils which mean "NO TRESPASSING". When navigating through the cave, three **giant crabs** ambush the party.

The cave path ends in a tunnel descending beneath the water. The tunnel emerges into a vertical tunnel which emerges into the Lair of Brinemouth Marcail. The wide vertical tunnel descends into a seemingly infinite depth. If any characters in the party are Undertowed, the group will have to think outside the box to stop them swimming downwards to their own doom.

THE LAIR OF BRINEMOUTH MARCAIL

A fog obscures all but two horrific warning dummies, stationed to frighten intruders. When the party leaves the Entrance Pool, the thinning fog reveals the macabre, yet dazzling, lair. A magical barrier covers the underwater entrance the moment all characters enter the cavern and disappears when Brinemouth lets them go.

> The large cavern, aglow with luminescent coral, is covered in stalagmites, dead fish, and bones. Stalactites thrust from the ceiling, adorned with roped and chained treasure chests, hanging cages containing the odd skeleton, and hundreds of gory charms. In the center of the room is a vivid purplish-red, gigantic fish-like building.



POINTS OF INTEREST

1. **Pile of Jetsam:** A huge mound of jetsam and anchors secured with rope and chain.
2. **Razor Coral**: Difficult terrain. Movement requires the characters to succeed on a DC 11 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or take 1d4 slashing damage per 5 feet traveled.
3. **Prow Shelter:** A 10 foot by 15 foot building with a balcony.
4. **Rockpool & Rowboat:** Fish swim through holes to pick at bloated corpses below.
5. **Crow's Nest Appendage**: 20 feet high. Inside is a pirate skeleton and two levers. Each lever has three notches representing each cannon (3d10 bludgeoning damage) on that side. Pulling a lever all the way down fires all 3 cannons on that side at once. Cannons can only be fired once each until reloaded from the inside.
6. **Large Fish Bones**: The bones of a huge sea creature creates a makeshift cage.
7. **Cave Entrance Pool:** This pool is the surface of the vertical underwater tunnel.
8. **Brinemouth's Blockhouse**: The entrance is blocked by an opaque magical barrier.

As the party enters, Brinemouth Marcail's voice booms throughout, announcing the party as contestants in her Sea Hag Stadium. Brinemouth gives them 10 minutes to prepare themselves for "Wave One" of the Sea Hag Stadium Battle.

After 10 minutes, Brinemouth gleefully shouts a five second countdown and then Wave One begins.

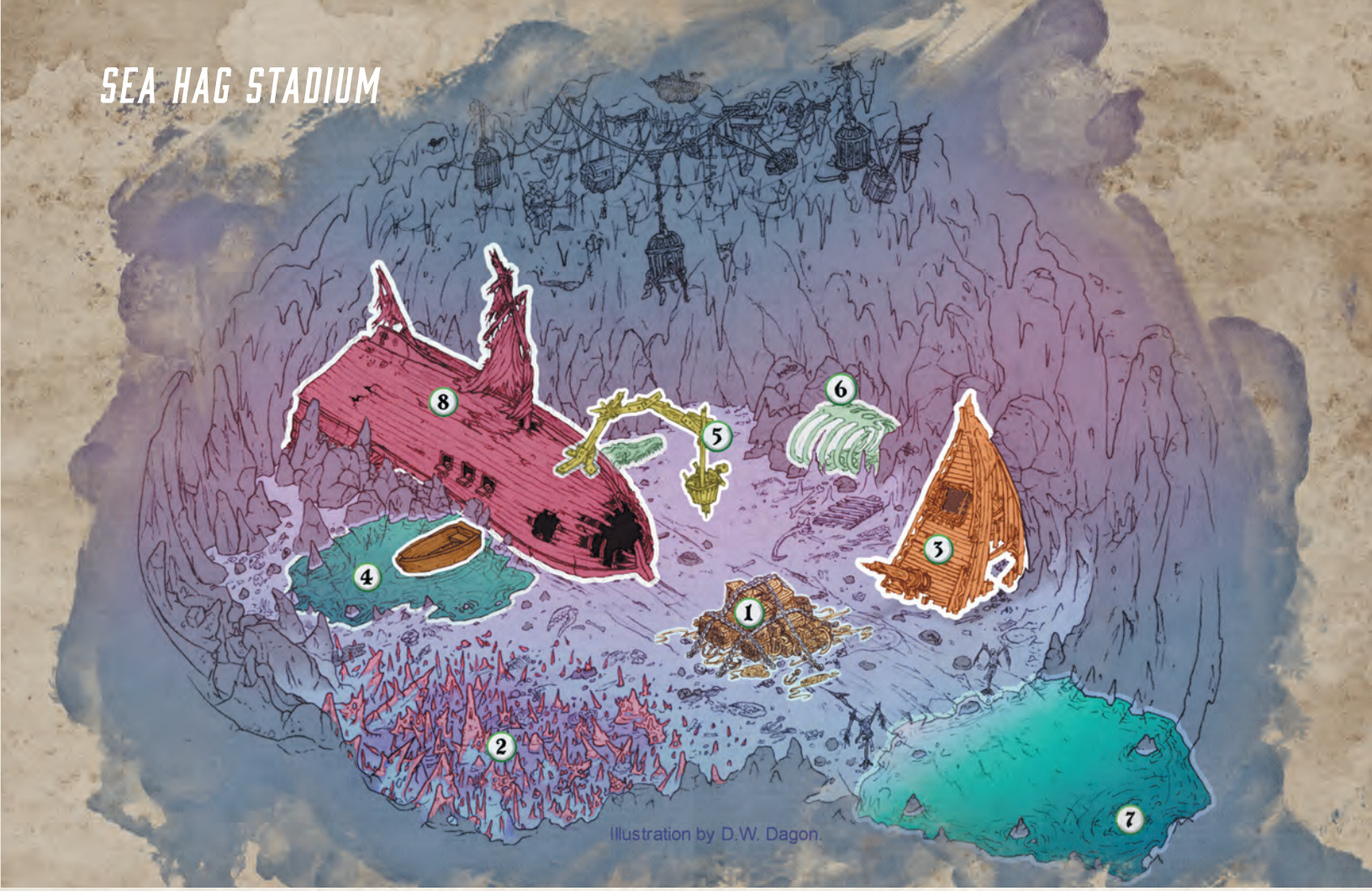
RUNNING THE SEA HAG STADIUM

In the Cave Entrance Pool, two hunter sharks are present during the Waves. Points of Interest from above are referenced in the Lair Actions chart as "POI" followed by which dice to roll to determine the location number.

Lair Actions (Initiative Count 20):

You may roll for lair actions or choose them appropriately. The same lair action cannot be used twice in a row.

SEA HAG STADIUM



1D6	LAIR ACTION
1	Seawater blasts downwards from POI (1d6). All creatures in a 10-foot high, 20 foot radius, cylinder take 2d8 bludgeoning damage and are pushed 10 feet directly away from the center of the effect. Those who succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw take half as much damage and are not pushed. If a character is pushed while over POI 2, they automatically take coral damage.
2	The water fills the room to a depth of 15 feet and becomes clouded with black ink, carrying with it one of the following creatures which appear at POI (1d4): ***1d4 High Tide Creature*** **1 Giant octopus** **2 Swarm of quippers** **3 Swarm of poisonous snakes** **4 Hunter shark** The creature immediately attacks the closest target and then disappears with the tide on the next lair action.
3	Thousands of crabs blanket the cavern floor. Player characters touching the ground must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 1d4 piercing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Any items on the ground are carried 15 feet in a random direction.
4	A barrel tumbles from the ceiling, crashing on POI (1d6). Contains: worthless shells and one item from Magic Item Table B (*DMG*, "Treasure")
5	A crate falls from the ceiling, smashing into POI (1d4). Contains:100 sp and one item from Magic Item Table F (*DMG*, "Treasure")
6	A treasure-chest drops from the ceiling, bursting over POI (1d4). Contains: 30 gp and one item from Magic Item Table G (*DMG*, "Treasure").

WAVE ONE: BONE-SAILORS

Four **bone-sailors** (Appendix A: Bone-sailor)

After Wave One ends, Brinemouth announces that they have one minute to prepare for "Wave Two: Loyal Flotsmen."

WAVE TWO: LOYAL FLOTSMEN

Two **flotsmen** (Appendix A: Flotsman)

After Wave Two, Brinemouth congratulates them and lowers the magical barrier to her ship.

BRINEMOUTH'S BLOCKHOUSE

The fish-like shipwreck reeks with dark magical auras. Every inch is coated in colorful coral and seaweed. Rank and rotting charms are strung along the walls and ceilings with dried fish guts and twine. The ship creaks as if breathing.

CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS

Trinkets and captains' hats of varying styles and cultures line the walls, affixed with mucusy resin. In the center of the room is an extravagant armchair with barnacles growing from the sides.

Brinemouth Marcail

Sea Hag

Personality: Jaunty, greedy but fair. Tires of humanoid politics/morals. Committed to protecting her ecosystem and hoarding trophies.

Brinemouth's Secret: She has an ancient kraken which sleeps below Briebhig Bay to do her bidding.

Brinemouth's Dialogue:

cackling *"There's no curse; just unsustainable fishin' and a broken Fey Pact."*

Brinemouth tells the party about Paden's Pact (described in Story Overview: The History of Briebhig Bay) and Iona's Affliction (described in Adventure Rules). She does not mention that Iona is a selkie. Iona's talisman must:

- Represent a sea creature
- Have arrived at the same time as Iona
- Be an object of inherent magic

Brinemouth Rewards:

- Level-Up Milestone or 200 XP each.
- Brinemouth offers the party some special seaweed tea which provides the same effect as a long rest.
- If the party has discovered the seal pelt in the beginning chapter, Brinemouth imbues it with sea magic to heal Iona.
- Brinemouth wishes them the best of luck in returning Iona back to her sea creature form. The characters may now leave the ship.

The Jetsam Golem

As they leave Brinemouth's ship, she reactivates the magical barriers; cackling. She truly wishes them the best. But first they must pay for their trespassing by completing the "Final Wave."

FINAL WAVE: THE JETSAM GOLEM

1x **Jetsam Golem** (Appendix A: Jetsam Golem)

When the Final Wave ends, Brinemouth lets them leave on good terms, unharmed by any sea creatures.



CHAPTER 3: WHAT WAS STOLEN

The party races against the clock to return Iona's talisman.

Ewan is loading a ship with the entirety of his family's wealth to offer Brinemouth should the party fail. All-Purpose Dan is nearby and helps the party locate the possible talismans and tells them what he knows about each item.



TALISMAN PUZZLE

Location	*Item*	*Does the item represent a sea creature in any way?*	*Did the item arrive at the bay at the same time as Iona?*	*Is the item magical?*
Stornlock Manor: Paden's Office	Giant Pearl	✓	✗	✓
Stornlock Manor: Ewan's Playroom	Mounted Fish	✓	✗	✓
	Seal Pelt	✓	✓	✓
Mounted Fish Fuschian Angle	Shark Tooth worn by All-Purpose Dan	✓	✓	✗

DAN KNOWS THE FOLLOWING ITEMS AND DETAILS:

Places where Iona spent her time:

- The Fuschian Angle—hosting trivia nights.
- Ewan's Playroom—watching over Ewan or gazing toward the window.

Giant Pearl:

- Giant Pearl from Paden's first catch, prior to Iona arriving.
- Is enchanted to glow softly as a desk lamp.

Mounted Fish:

- An artificial fish made from leather and glittering paint.
- Enchanted with a magical 2 foot radius aura. When disturbed, magically animates the fish to sing a shanty.
- Paden commissioned Dan to make this for Ewan's sixth birthday.

Seal Pelt:

- Dusty seal pelt sits under an old crib, below the window.
- Magically stays warm to the touch.
- The crib and pelt were the only pieces of furniture which the family kept when they moved from their old shack to the newly built manor, eight years ago.

Shark Tooth Pendant:

- Four years ago, when training at the docks, Iona was attacked by a giant shark. She punched it in the mouth till it let go. In a rowboat nearby, Dan pulled her out of the water and tended to her wounds.
- A shark tooth was embedded in her leg and she had it made into a pendant.
- Iona gave it to Dan after wearing it for her oil painting.

When the Seal Pelt is laid upon Iona, she awakens. She requests Dan row the party and her to see her son (on the ship now in the cove).

Iona Stornlock

Triathlon record holder. Trivia host. Selkie. Mother.
Personality: Bold, determined and caring. Confident in the things she can change but fearful of the things she cannot. Works hard to make those around her happy.
Dialogue: Still loves Paden, though she has lost respect for him due to his controlling behaviors (she was unaware that cheating on his end of the bargain was the reason for his over-protective behavior).

Epilogue: Returned

The party reunites mother and son.

Reunion

Iona confesses she is a selkie. Ewan professes that he loves his mother in any form and gives his blessing to return to the ocean. Iona transforms into her seal form and Ewan assists her into the water. She swims happily in the cove.

Ewan thanks the party and, handing them a key, informs them that their reward waits for them in the basement vault. Ewan would like to be alone with his mother, so Dan rows the party ashore to receive their reward.

When the party rows a short distance away from the ship, Ewan emits a painful shriek as he transforms into a seal then leaps into the water. As the two selkies swim away, dozens of other seals emerge from the cove, playing, catching fish, and barking with glee.

Once the herd of selkie swim far enough from the boat containing the entire wealth of the Stornlock title, a kraken commanded by Brinemouth Marcail emerges and sinks the ship; adding it to the treasure hoard of its master. Brinemouth's greedy cackling can be heard on the wind.

Rewards

Wooden Lockbox

Containing: Deed to Stornlock Manor

Outcome

Iona and Ewan swim away to live with their selkie family. Paden eventually returns to no wealth, home, or family. If he approaches Brinemouth, she considers his debt paid in gold and woe. She tells him if he truly repents, and sheds seven tears by the sea, his family will know of his grieving and may return to him of their own volition. He does this and both Iona and Ewan visit him every Summertide.

Author's Notes

In European folktales the sea hag and the selkie are similar in setting and lore, with certain tellings of the two overlapping, yet often the difference between them is that whilst a hag is imbued with inherent agency (magic and/or control of the elements), the selkie is one whose magical properties lead to the loss of agency, specifically to a partner or family. This duality of agency and interaction with magic inspired the focus of this adventure.

Special Thanks: Alison Huang, Connor Urwin, Emma Power, Gwendy B., Jessica L. Washburn, John Tetzlaff, Kosta Sideropoulos, Luciella Scarlett, Paul S. Washburn, Rebeccah Shumway, Sarah Gray Harker, and Thomas Worsley for playtesting and/or editing Seven Tears By The Sea; and to Ashley Warren and contributors of RPG Writer Workshop for making this possible. I couldn't have done it without these fantastic folks.

About the Author

D.W. Dagon is a trans non-binary creator with a love for speculative fiction and weird fantasy. They love to dabble in illustration, adventure writing, and designing game mechanics. If they had one thing to say to a dear reader it would be, *"Get weird. Stay kind. I love you."*

Bone-sailor

Medium undead, lawful evil

Armor Class 12
Hit points 13 (2d8 + 4)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	6 (-2)	8 (-1)	10 (+0)

Skills Acrobatics +4
Damage Vulnerabilities bludgeoning
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities exhausted, poisoned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9
Languages understands Aquan and Sylvan but cannot speak
Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Actions

Rapier. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 +2) piercing damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6+2) piercing damage.

Reactions

Bone-memory. Bone-sailors can Parry as a Reaction, increasing their AC by 2 for one attack.

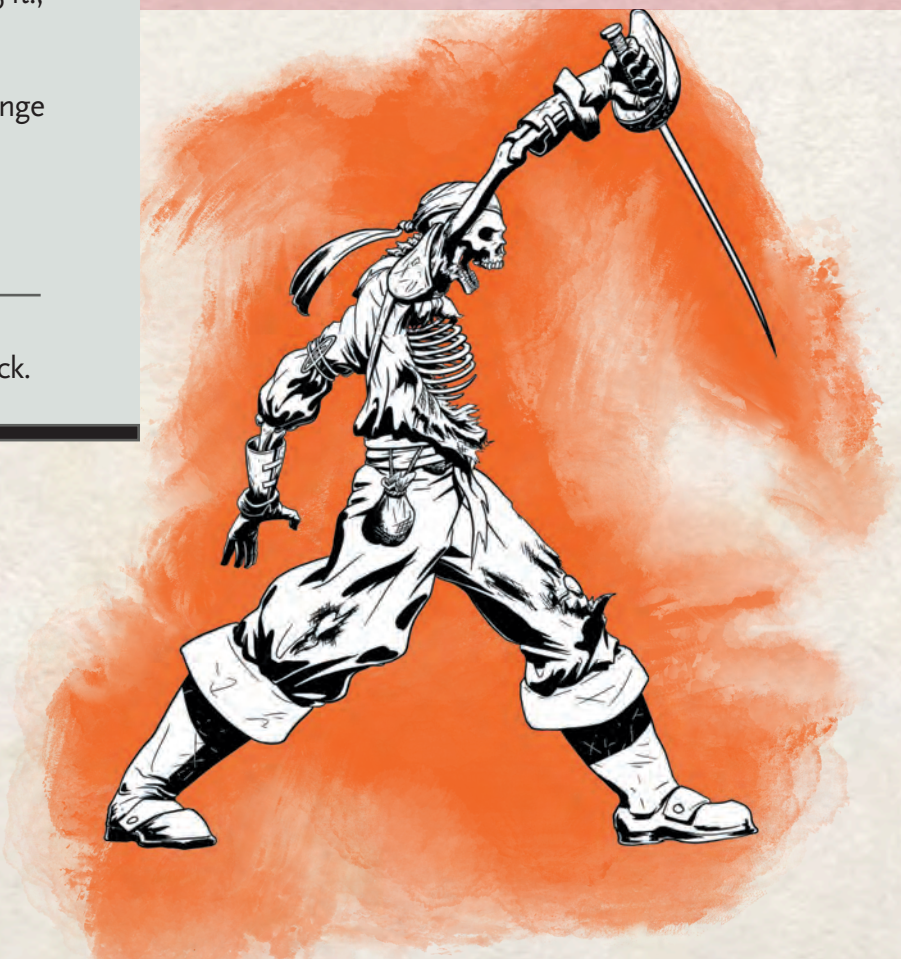
Bone-sailor Tactics

Bone-sailors appear as skeletons of dead pirates until they are raised from the dead to fight for Brinemouth's entertainment. They are found or are hidden in these locations:

- Two Bone-sailors appear as skeletons in cages chained to the ceiling which crash to the floor 10 feet to either side of the Pile of Jetsam
- one Bone-sailor is the pirate skeleton in the Crows Nest
- one Bone-sailor is hidden in the back of the Razor Coral, using a large stalactite as 3/4 cover

Assists:

- Assisting the Bone-sailors are a swarm of quippers and two zombies in the Rockpool (POI 4). Zombies only surface and attack if someone is in the boat or water during any of the phases. Zombies will attempt to grapple and drown characters, opening them up for attack by the swarm of quippers.
- If the swarm of quippers are destroyed, a new swarm swims into the pool in the next round.
- If the zombies are destroyed, they stay dead and do not return in later Waves.



Flotsman

Medium construct, chaotic evil

Armor Class 12
Hit points 36 (8d8)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)

Damage Vulnerabilities fire
Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from non-magical attacks
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralysed, poisoned, unconscious
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages understands Aquan and Sylvan but cannot speak
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

False Appearance. While the Flotsman remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from an ordinary, inanimate dummy.

Actions

Multiattack. The Flotsman makes two claw attacks.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (2d4 + 2) slashing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened until the end of the Flotsman's next turn.

Terrifying Glare. The Flotsman targets one creature it can see within 30 feet of it. If the target can see the Flotsman, the target must succeed on a DC 11 Wisdom saving throw or be magically frightened until the end of the end of the Flotsman's next turn. The frightened target is paralysed.

Reactions

Behind You. Once per round as a Reaction, Flotsmen can misty step if they are not being directly looked at by any hostile enemies.

Flotsman Tactics

The Horrific Warning Dummies at the Entrance Pool come to life as Flotsmen for Wave Two. Inside the hessian-sack head of a Flotsman is a head-sized ball of wax. When using their terrifying glare, they magically morph the wax to appear as the face of someone their target loves. Use the Flotsmen as tactical flankers, and play their hide-and-seek movements in a similar way to horror tropes featuring mannequins or weeping angels.

Assists:
The Flotsmen have the same assisting creatures as the Bone-sailors.



First Form Jetsam Golem

Huge construct, lawful evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)
Hit points 93 (11d10 + 33)
Speed 10 ft., wire trick 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	8 (-1)	17 (+3)	7 (-2)	16 (+3)	6 (-2)

Skills Perception +6
Damage Vulnerabilities lair cannons, falling damage, fire
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, poisoned, unconscious
Senses darkvision 120 ft, passive Perception 16
Languages understands Aquan and Sylvan but cannot speak

False Appearance. While the jetsam golem remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from the pile of jetsam it was constructed from.

Lair Champion. The jetsam golem is not affected by any lair actions, nor impeded by any effects of the Razor Coral.

Grasping Tendrils. The jetsam golem uses ropes and chains as tendrils. It can have up to six tendrils at a time. Each tendril can be attacked (AC 15; 10 hit points; immunity to poison and psychic damage). Destroying a tendril deals no damage to the jetsam golem, which can extrude a replacement tendril on its next turn. A tendril can also be broken if a creature takes an action and succeeds on a DC 15 Strength check against it.

Wire Trick. The first form jetsam golem can use three of its six tendrils to grapple the ceiling and pull itself through the air in any direction. If at least two of these are cut, it plummets to the ground.

Shedding Mass. When the first form jetsam golem reaches 0 hit points, most of its mass falls to the ground as if dying. What is left is the Final Form Jetsam Golem; a minotaur-like form which is fast, frantic, and falling to pieces.

Jetsam Golem Details

The Pile of Jetsam transforms into a monstrous construct for the Final Wave.

The Jetsam Golem has two forms. The First Form is a monstrous mass of cargo with a mouth in the centre and tendrils made from ropes and chains. The Final Form has the appearance of a minotaur-sized bipedal creature with an anchor for horns and anchor flails for arms. When the slow, yet far-reaching 1st Form is defeated, it sheds enough jetsam to transform into the reckless Final Form.

Assists:
The Jetsam Golem has the same assisting creatures as the Bone-sailors and Flotsmen.

Actions

Multiattack. The first form jetsam golem makes four attacks with its tendrils, uses Reel, and makes one attack with its bite.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 22 (4d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Tendril. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 50 ft., one creature. *Hit:* The target is grappled (escape DC 15). Until the grapple ends, the target is restrained and has disadvantage on Strength checks and Strength saving throws, and the jetsam golem can't use the same tendril on another target.

Reel. The first form jetsam golem pulls each creature grappled by it up to 25 feet straight toward it.

Final Form Jetsam Golem

Large construct, chaotic evil

Armor Class 14
Hit points 67 (9d10 + 18)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	18 (+4)	15 (+2)	6 (-2)	8 (-1)	5 (-3)

Damage Vulnerabilities lair cannons, fire
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, poisoned, unconscious
Senses darkvision 120 ft, passive Perception 16
Languages none
Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Lair Champion. The jetsam golem is not affected by any of the lair actions.

Reckless. At the start of its turn, the final form jetsam golem can gain advantage on all melee weapon attack rolls during that turn, but attack rolls against it have advantage until the start of its next turn.

Charge. If the final form jetsam golem moves at least 10 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with a gore attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 9 (2d8) piercing damage.

Aggressive. As a bonus action, the final form jetsam golem can move up to its speed toward a hostile creature that it can see.

Actions

Multiattack. The Final Form Jetsam Golem makes an attack with gore and makes two attacks with its anchor flails.

Anchor Flail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 17 (2d12 + 4) piercing damage.

Gore. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage.




TIER 2



Illustration by Sammy Ward

LAMIAS, TIGERS, AND WERES, OH MY!

by KM Kovalcik

Creature: *Lamia* | **Level:** *5* | **CWs:** *Death, mind control, animals fighting*

SYNOPSIS

The town of Athelney has recently been overrun with baby displacer beasts… wearing bows? To make matters worse, several have notes daring adventurers to come to the Spellburned tower, promising riches… or death. Some foolhardy teenagers have already tried, only to come back raving about a beautiful woman with the body of a lion!

The party must investigate the Tower, where a lamia, a weretiger and a lich live, along with several breeding pairs of displacer beasts and saber toothed tigers. The lamia and the weretiger test the party in combat, and only let them up the secret door should they prove themselves powerful enough to defeat the lich.

ADVENTURE HOOK

The map's third floor is there for flavor, but may need to be drawn should characters choose to focus on fighting and combat.

A small, tiger-striped displacer beast cub approaches the party with a note around its neck. The cub is looking for companionship and food. If attacked, three displacer beasts come to save the cub. The note says:

Are you strong? Courageous? Do you seek treasure? Knowledge? A challenge?

The Spellburned tower is in need of heroes! Fortune and fame awaits you... if you survive!

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The displacer beasts and tigers are all owned by a lamia and weretiger pair. Gretzel, their daughter, had always been obsessed with darkness, but tried to become a lich after finding a strange book at the top of Spellburned tower. Instead, she has become a vengeful banshee.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

- **Jacklyn Hyde: Weretiger** lover of Morga Fae. She believes that if she's given a second chance with her daughter, Gretzel, this time she'll raise her right.
- **Morga Fae: Lamia** lover of Jacklyn Hyde. She believes her daughter, Gretzel, has made her choice, and can only have peace in true death.
- **Gretzel: Banshee**, the once-human witch daughter of Morga and Jacklyn. After failing to become a lich, she is now stuck at the top of the tower, ranting about the beauty of undeath.
- **The Cats:** While they may be **displacer beasts** and **saber-toothed tigers**, Jacklyn and Morga do spoil them. They all wear bows, bells, and respond to names like "Blinky," "Thumbelina," "Snowball," or "Pokey."
- **Unnamed Students:** These intelligent ladies take care of the beasts and the tower in exchange for education. If the characters choose to interact with them, they are bookish and shy. They ask the party to leave them to their studies, and if questioned will only give brief answers about their jobs or the tower.
- **Unnamed Male Guardians:** These men had either tried to steal from or kill Morga Fae, and now wear red tabards with the words "Thief!" in bold. They are under the control of Morga Fae until she is bored of them, or until someone plans to take them to justice.

CHAPTER 1 – THE SPELLBURNED TOWER

The Spellburned Tower was once the home of Krofaris, a human wizard, and his students. Krofaris had tried to turn himself into a lich, but failed. The tower burst into flames, killing everyone and destroying all but his black, leatherbound spellbook. The tower has remained empty, until now.

If the party has kept the kitten, it tries to run away when it gets close to the tower unless if the characters succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check.

A. FRONT DOORS

The entrance to the tower has large, wooden doors carved with symbols representing the schools of necromancy, transmutation, and evocation. Although transmutation and evocation are untouched, the symbols of necromancy are deeply scratched, as if a beast had tried to rip them off the doors.

Guarding the front doors are three bandit captains. Sneaking up on them is rather easy and requires a successful DC Dexterity (Stealth), but one of them rings the bell next to the door once combat begins.

If the party approaches peacefully, the guards ask for the note and warn them of the dangers within, but a successful DC 15 Charisma (Intimidation) or Wisdom (Persuasion) convinces the guards to ring the bell and step aside.

B. THE FRONT FOYER

The inside of the tower is mostly clean, but the ceiling is still darkened by soot. Otherwise, this front foyer is charming, if you ignore the short weretiger and her growling beasts.

The front door is locked, and can be unlocked by a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check. Jacklyn Hyde is in the foyer in hybrid form. If the characters manage to sneak in, she continues playing with her "cats." If she is aware of them, she tries to talk to the characters, but Blinky, a **displacer beast**, and Thumbelina, a **saber-toothed tiger**, growl and hiss if anyone brandishes weapons. Rather than a fight to the death, she proposes a brawl, with the understanding that the first group to have a downed combatant is the 'loser.' If the party continues the fight after a combatant falls unconscious or dies, then two more displacer beasts join the battle.

After the fight, Jacklyn tells them what is going on. The displacer beasts have been running from the tower because her human daughter, Gretzel,tried to transform into a lich, but failed, instead becoming a terrible banshee!

Jacklyn tries to make a deal with the characters: if they bring Gretzel's corpse and phylactery to her, she and all of her "babies," (the large cats and kittens) leave and go elsewhere. However, she takes the corpse and phylactery and try to reincarnate her daughter into an infant's body in the hopes of giving her a second chance.

C. DINING ROOM

The dining room feeds everyone at the tower, including the "cats." Avoiding combat is easy here, the characters won't be attacked unless they attack the two displacer beasts under the table. To coax them out without threatening the cats requires a successful DC 25 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check. Otherwise, they stay hidden and shiver.

D. KITCHEN

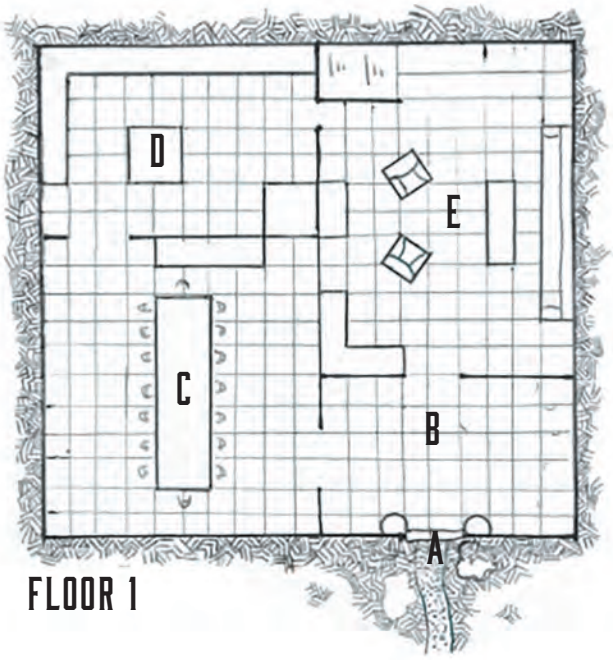
The kitchen contains enough food to feed the tower, several ways to start a fire, and plenty of meat.

E. LIVING ROOM

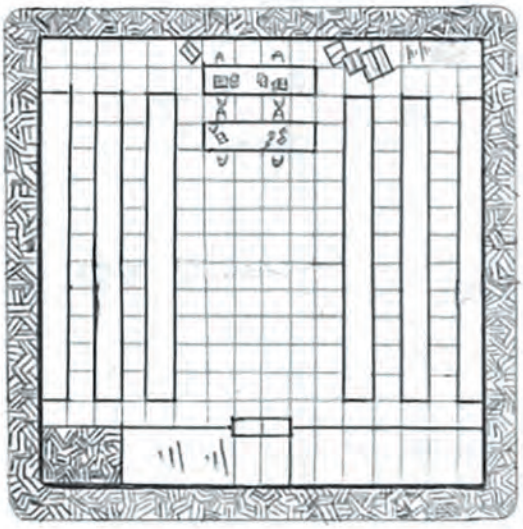
Several large, plush couches line the room, and a fireplace rests on the back wall. Several displacer beast/saber toothed tiger hybrids shake under the couches and tables. All seems calm until a shriek cuts the silence, sending the animals scattering just as a ghostly figure emerges out of the fireplace.

Although this image is incapable of causing harm, the party must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw

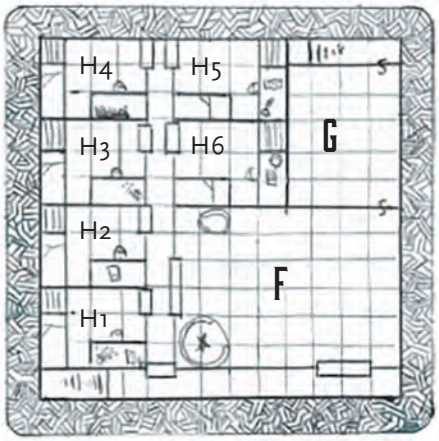
THE SPELLBURNED TOWER



FLOOR 1



FLOOR 2



FLOOR 3



FLOOR 4

MAP BY KM KOVALCIK

or suffer the effects of Horrifying Visage. Regardless of the results, they are still susceptible to Gretzel's ability.

This room of plush chairs hides several striped displacer beast kittens. They are fluffed up, hiding wherever they can. They do not attack, even if provoked. If necessary, they use the **cat** stats.

DEVELOPMENT

How they deal with Jacklyn determines the next chapter. If they manage to talk with Jacklyn, then she follows them into the next chapter but doesn't give any help in combat. Killing Jacklyn makes the next chapter much harder.

CHAPTER 2 – QUIET IN THE LIBRARY!

FLOOR 2: LIBRARY

The grand library is truly a wonder, covered in bookshelves, art, and chests. Standing just inside are three men, an albino displacer beast, and a purple displacer beast. The men all wield great axes, and wear a red tabard with the word "Jerk" emblazoned in white.

Morga Fae is more interested in testing the adventurers than trying to kill them. Even so, she has two displacer beasts, Snowball and Princess, and four bulky warriors; much bigger than the guards outside. (Use four **bugbears** as the warriors.)

Tactics: Morga Fae casts suggestion, urging the characters to flee back to Athelney. She continues the fight until one of her cats is downed, or two characters succeed on her suggestion spell, or all four bulky warriors are killed. When one of these conditions are met she surrenders with this speech:

"Well done, adventurers!" the lamia says. *"Excuse my manners, I am Morga Fae. These kind gentlemen have helped me run a test. Now, please, put down your weapons, and we can discuss more important matters."*

Morga Fae fears a panic in the nearby village. In addition, Gretzel's transformation is very troubling. She once believed her daughter to be loyal to her, but her followers have been disappearing, and she knows Gretzel is to blame. A visit by some competent adventurers is all she is truly looking for.

At this point, the party likely has questions. Use these examples to guide the conversation.

- ***Why can't you kill Gretzel?*** Morga Fae still loves her daughter, so she can't bring herself to kill her. She also doesn't know if she is powerful enough to stop her. Sending anyone weak would just give Gretzel more souls to sacrifice, bringing her terrible daughter closer to lichdom.
- ***What are you going to do about your displacer beasts wandering around?*** She will keep them indoors and build them a catio, but she needs to know this tower is safe before keeping them locked in.
- ***Is the lich your daughter?*** The banshee was once a human female that they adopted. They taught her everything she needed to become a witch, but unfortunately, her obsession with immortality and undeath caused her to make the grave mistake of trying to become a lich.
- ***What will you give us for killing Gretzel?*** Morga Fae has gold and artworks she is willing to part with. She will not allow anyone to take books from her library. Should a character want to read a book, she gladly lets them read it there under the supervision of her followers.
- ***Why should we let you live?*** Morga Fae may be greedy, but she isn't the kind of monster to go on rampages or kill indiscriminately. She also knows how to destroy the phylactery, and can provide the adventurers room for a short or long rest. As for the town, she offers protection and to send some business their way.

What if Jacklyn is dead? Morga Fae will not realize that something is amiss until after her "test." If the characters are caught lying, or if they confess, Morga Fae becomes enraged, and demand the party go into the next battle without a rest. Should they survive, she tries to kill them.

What if the characters decide to just kill everyone? Should this happen, they will be under-resourced for the next fight. Do not give them a short rest. Gretzel flees into the library once Morga Fae dies. The men do not fight if Morga Fae is incapacitated or killed. As they are under mind control, killing them after she dies would be evil. As the women are historians, experts, and art sellers, they do not fight the characters, and killing them would be an evil and unlawful act. If the party kills any of these unarmed women, they should face legal consequences.

What if the characters try diplomacy? If the characters talk to Morga Fae while she and her retinue are attacking them, and two characters manage to make successful saves against *suggestion*, award them an extra 50 gp each.

Floor 3: Living Area

F. The Lamia's Bedroom

This grand bedroom does not have a bed, but is instead covered in lush pillows, mattresses, and blankets. Several displacer beasts and saber toothed tigers are currently napping.

Before the party can rest, Morga Fae has a task. They must retrieve a bell from one of the sleeping displacer beasts. The party needs to succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to find the bell, and then need either a DC 20 Wisdom (Animal Handling) or Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check to get the bell off without waking the animal. The party may find other ways to keep the animal asleep or put it back to sleep. Attacking the beast automatically fails the challenge.

G. Secret Room

If the characters have made friends with Morga Fae, she tells them where the room is and unlocks it for them. Otherwise, a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check is needed to see the door, and a successful DC 20 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check with thieves' tools is needed to open the door. Inside this room is Morga Fae's private library, her most precious possessions, and the stairs to the upper floors.

H1-6: Follower's Living Quarters

The living quarters are for her many followers, although several often bed with her. The men live in the servants quarters in the basement. Each of these rooms contains a bed, chest, and desk.

Development

To stop the lich, the characters must enter the secret door. If the party is friendly with Morga, she unlocks the door for them. If not, Morga has a diary with notes about the door.

Chapter 3 – The Cold Doesn't Bother Her Anyway

Secret Stairs

The secret stairs lead up into a cold tower that becomes colder the further up the characters go.

The Lich's Lair

This once large lab area owned by the wizard, once sectioned off for experiments and study, is now one large room. A few tables and bookshelves have survived the destruction. The room is unnaturally cold and dark, with no light shining in from the windows.

In the middle of the room stands a banshee, glowing with anger. Next to her are two creatures with the bottom half of a skeletal tiger and the torso of a women.

Gretzel's transformation was compromised by Morga Fae locking her in the third floor without enough sacrifices. Instead of a complete lich, she has become a **banshee**. Before she was locked in, she convinced two women to go with her. These two have been combined with saber toothed tigers to become hybrid tiger skeletons (use **minotaur skeletons** stat block). Reskin the Gore attack as a Bite attack.

Tactics: The two hybrid tiger skeletons begin combat behind rubble, waiting until the banshee wails. The banshee begins combat hiding under the bed, and begins combat with her wail. The three hybrid tiger skeletons use their Charge attack to try to knock characters down.

After the battle, Gretzel's corpse can be found on her bed, where she lays without a scratch. A DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check is needed to find a black, leatherbound book where she had found the incomplete instructions for lichdom and a small, black amulet with a frosted, black gem wrapped around it.

Development

With the banshee and her retinue defeated, the unnaturally dim light gives way to the midafternoon light. The room warms up, but is still covered in shattered glasses, broken tables, and ripped books.

Conclusion

With the "lich" defeated, there is still the matter of the loose displacer beasts. To solve this crisis, Morga Fae and Jacklyn have two different plans.

Morga Fae

- Build a "catio" for her beasts so they stay close to the tower.
- Lure in wealthy merchants from nearby towns and cities to sell and buy art and books.
- Will be a provider of history, magic items, and arcane lore.
- Destroy the phylactery and book to put her daughter to rest.
- Could bring thieves and con artists into town.

If the characters side with Morga Fae:

Jacklyn kneels besides Gretzel's body, crying and holding her daughter's hand for the last time. Morga Fae squeezes her wife's shoulder, then tosses the phylactery into the fire. The two women hold hands as the flames crack the amulet, and their daughter's corpse magically turns to ash, as if it too was in the fire.

Jacklyn Hyde

- Remove herself and her beasts from the tower.
- Small retinue of women stays behind to guard the tower.
- Offers to make someone a weretiger.
- Offers the tower as a base to the characters.
- Bring phylactery and corpse to wizards to try and reincarnate the banshee that was once their beloved daughter.
- Could fail and create a worse monster than the banshee.

If the characters side with Jacklyn:

Morga Fae places the corpse inside a bag, then hands it to one of her guards to hold.

"Thank you, adventurers," Jacklyn says as she squeezes each of their hands. *"Thank you for a second chance. I promise you, this time, we won't make the same mistakes."*

Morga Fae walks over and nods at the adventurers. *"We will do our best to keep in touch. Thank you for having faith in us. We won't waste this chance, and I'm sure Gretzel won't either."*



REWARDS

XP is already calculated per character assuming four characters.

Obstacle	XP
Foyer Fight	563
Library Fight	763
Getting the ribbon	50
Gretzel fight	613

TREASURE REWARDS

Item	Value
Art pieces	Five pieces worth 100 gp each
Coins	50 gp, 63 sp
Not killing any "cats"	50 gp
Scroll of *blur*	
Two *potions of healing*	
Getting the bell	25 gp

Tiger-Striped Displacer Beast, Adolescent

If a character wishes to gain one of these animals as an animal companion, they use the **panther** stats, but replace Pounce with Displacement.

Characters without the ability to have an animal companion will not be able to take on one of these adolescent creatures as a pet, as they run away the minute they sense danger.

Tiger-Striped Displacer Beast, Cub

The cubs take a long time to grow up, and never count as more than a **cat**. However, they still look cool, enjoy travel, and have the Displacement feature. These cubs will never be useful in combat, but they are very cute.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

My husband was actually the one who gave me the initial idea of a female lich. Somewhere along the way, I decided to make her a bit of a tragic figure. I've kept it a bit silly, and I've made sure that everyone involved is a "crazy cat lady," but I do want the players to feel bad for Jacklyn and Morga Fae. I didn't add what drove Gretzel crazy, but I think I gave enough hints that she can fit into the GM's world without too much trouble.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

KM Kovalcik is a writer, teacher, babysitter, tutor, marketer, crafter, Game Master, player, librarian-in-training, and jack of all trades. She writes for a children's mentoring program and works with children with emotional needs in New Jersey. This is her first published adventure.





Illustration by Alison Huang

ON THESE CURSED WINGS

by Megan Irving

Creature: *Harpies* | **Level:** *5*

SYNOPSIS

When a wizard is captured by an unusually dangerous clan of harpies, it's up to the characters to rescue him. They'll need to track down the harpy lair, find out why he was captured, and help some unexpected victims.

This is an adventure for two players with 4th-5th level characters.

ADVENTURE HOOK

While walking through a forest, the party hears sudden noises from somewhere close: human screams, magical explosions, and birds shrieking.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Harpies are filthy, dangerous, and fuelled by an eternal, berserk hunger. They believe that their current nature is due to an ancient curse, which they long to remove. In moments of lucidity, they kidnap magic-users to try to force them to remove the curse. Before long, however, their inhuman hunger rears its head and the wizard in question is eaten.

This particular harpy clan is led by a harpy with unusual focus, who'll stop at nothing to remove the curse. However, the latest wizard has let himself be captured on purpose: he plans to kill the harpies and steal their eggs. Harpy eggs are extremely rare and rumored to have magical properties, and therefore fetch a high price on black markets.

CHAPTER 1 – TAKEN

The party is walking through a forest. They may be en route to a new town, using a shortcut, or they may be lost. The forest is very old and full of life, though the signs are subtle. If the characters are quiet and attentive, they can see small animals and new growth, and hear the birds and insects all around them. The forest has a peaceful feeling to it.

A CRY FOR HELP

While walking through the forest, the characters hear sudden noises from somewhere close: human screams, magical explosions, and birds shrieking.

When they investigate, they come across a wizard's tower in a small clearing. A man and a woman are using magic to fend off ten **harpies**. Before the characters can intervene, two harpies (one wearing a tiara and the other wearing bracers) manage to grab the man and take off.

Five harpies follow them, but three harpies are still left attacking the woman. In the first round of combat, or if the characters are unsure about helping, a harpy knocks the woman unconscious. She can be easily revived after the fight. When only one harpy remains alive, it tries to escape to warn the clan.

After the fight, the woman begs them to follow the harpies and rescue Landon, her wizard teacher. She believes the harpy's lair is on the top of a tall cliff just visible over the trees that she points out to the party.

Talia, the Wizard's Assistant:
A young, asexual human woman. Nervous in nature, weak in magic, greedy for gold and power. In cahoots with Landon, but also worried about his ability to survive the harpy clan.

Knowledge:

- During the fight, the harpies spoke to her and Landon, saying they needed him. She thinks the harpies live deeper in the forest, on top of the cliffs.
- The harpies seem to live deeper in the forest, on top of the cliffs.

Reward:

If the characters resist helping, she offers a reward: two *potions of healing* and 50 gp.

Items:

- She has the key to the wizard's tower, a quarterstaff, and a *dagger of venom*.

Into the Forest

The characters easily follow Talia's instructions to track the harpies through the forest without needing skill checks. As the characters head further into the forest, it changes. The peaceful feeling turns tense. The trees grow taller until they're almost blocking out the sun, and the forest becomes dimly lit. The birds get quiet, and it smells strongly of leaf rot. Use any or all of the following encounters as the characters travel through the forest.

The Animal

In the distance, the party hears a large animal crashing through the undergrowth. If they investigate, they'll encounter an enraged **giant boar**.

The Plant

The character last in the marching order is tripped by a moving vine. If they fail a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw, they take 2d4 bludgeoning damage. This is an old forest, full of ambient magic that's given the plants some semblance of life.

The Harpies

The characters hear the sounds of talking and discover two harpies squabbling over a dead boar. The characters can choose to either attack the **harpies** (gaining a surprise round as the harpies are distracted), or keep silent and let the harpies lead them back to the lair.

If they attack the harpies, they can collect a *luckstone* from the harpies.

Development

Once the characters have gone through each forest encounter, they have successfully tracked the harpies to their lair.

Chapter 2 – Cursed

After tracking the harpies, the characters come to a clearing at the base of the cliff they could see from the wizard's tower. According to Talia's guidance, the harpy lair is at the top of this cliff.

Onwards and Upwards

The party can easily see a way to climb up the cliffs, and a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check discovers a crevasse in the cliffs that leads into a cave.

The cave is dimly lit, huge, and empty, with a tunnel at the back leading upwards. It's slightly slippery and narrow, but easy enough to scale that they don't need to roll. The tunnels are a stealthier way to the top, but the characters don't know what could be living in them.

The cliff has a clear path to the top, but the characters are exposed to any harpies or other flying creatures like giant birds that could pass by.

The characters can choose to brave either the dark tunnels or the exposed cliff to get to the harpies.

The Caves

The tunnels are dark. They occasionally open into larger caverns, and there are spots of dim light here and there from holes in the cliff.

In the darkest corners of the big caverns, there are mushrooms. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check makes it clear they are poisonous. If a character touches a mushroom or gets within 5 feet of one, it releases poisonous spores.

About halfway up, the characters are ambushed by two **darkmantles** (they have advantage on Stealth checks, as they are indistinguishable from stalactites until they move). After the first round, a **giant spider** attacks.

Eventually, the tunnel becomes dimly lit, then well lit, and the characters can feel a fresh breeze and hear voices. This tunnel leads up and into the main cavern. The characters can hide near the entrance and listen.

THE CLIFFS

The cliffs are tough to scale, requiring two successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) checks to get to the top. After the first successful check, the characters reach a ledge. On the ledge is a large, empty bird's nest and a collection of bones.

A character on the ledge can help characters on the ground, giving them advantage on their check.

When a character is helping another climb, or when all characters reach the ledge unaided, three **giant vultures** attack the characters on the ledge. If a character is helping another, they are surprised by this attack.

The second successful Strength (Athletics) check gets the characters to the top of the cliff. Characters on the top of the cliff can again help characters stuck on the ledge.

The top of the cliff is a windswept plateau, with rocky outcrops and tufts of plants. The characters can see over the top of the forest, including the top of the wizard tower, and potentially any nearby towns. A huge cavern opening rises up in front of the characters. They hear voices from the cavern and sneak up and listen. Any stealth checks are made with advantage, as the harpies are distracted.

THE MAIN CAVERN

Inside the lair of the harpies, the characters find a surprising situation: Landon, the wizard, is tied up, and the harpy with the tiara (clearly their leader) is talking to him. The harpy with the bracers is next to her, looking angry. The rest of the clan is loosely ringed around them, weapons down. The atmosphere is tense, but not violent.

If the characters are listening, they hear the following:

> You hear a cacophony of female voices arguing, with one lone male voice. Then, a commanding female voice rings out: *"Be quiet, all of you!"*
>
> The male voice then says, *"I don't know if I can break the curse."*
>
> The harpy says, *"I believe you can, Landon. And if you can't, then I'll eat you."*
>
> There's a pause, then the male voice says, *"Okay... I'll try. I know a ritual that might work. However, there are some things I'll need for it."*
>
> The harpy says, *"Here, write them down. My scouts will fetch whatever you need."*

A group of harpies fly out of the cave. If the characters are on the cliff, they'll have to succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity (Stealth) check to quickly hide. If they were listening, they have advantage on this roll. If they fail, one scout returns to the cave to warn the chieftain.

If the characters burst in ready to fight, the harpies are ready to attack, but Landon calls out, trying to stop the fight. He says, "They can help me break your curse!" and the harpies calm down, waiting for him to explain. He tells the harpies that he needs non-harpy assistants for performing the ritual, so the characters can help him.

If the characters approach diplomatically, the harpies won't attack. Aelina, the harpy chieftain, asks the characters to explain themselves. Landon suggests they can help him break the curse, as described above.

If the characters don't ask about the curse, Aelina explains it anyway in an attempt to gain their help, leading to the following conversation:

> The harpy chieftain explains to you that all harpies were cursed long ago. They used to be a proud race, intelligent and powerful, worshipped by ancient civilisations as goddesses. They raided, pillaged, and ruled cities, until one day, a powerful magic user cursed them.
>
> Now they are shadows of their former selves, forced into an endless cycle of being smart and aware, and being rabid and feral.
>
> She wants to break this curse and is sure that this wizard can do it.

Aelina, the Harpy Chieftain:
The ruler of this harpy clan. Aelina is determined to break the curse and desperate to do it before returning to her feral state. She trusts anyone willing to help, but will eat them the second they falter. She is in a relationship with Naedith.

Knowledge:
She knows nothing about who originally cursed the harpies and doesn't care. She believes any powerful magic user could break it if they tried hard enough.

Items:
She is wearing a golden tiara, a relic from an ancient queen.

Naedith, the Harpy Enforcer:
The chieftain's bodyguard, girlfriend, and second in command, Naedith is fiercely protective of her leader and the rest of the clan.

Knowledge:
She doesn't believe in the curse. She thinks it is just in their nature to swing between lucid and feral states.

Items:
She is wearing a pair of *bracers of protection* (these have the same benefits as the *cloak of protection*).

If the characters fight the harpies here, it is likely they'll lose. There are ten harpies (plus any extras who have returned from the previous encounters) in the chamber. It should be clear to them that they're better off using diplomacy now, and (potentially) violence later.

After this conversation, Aelina orders the harpies to return to their duties and she heads into a dark corner of the cave with one harpy—this is where the eggs are. Two harpies remain with Naedith, guarding Landon. The others spread out around the cave and on the cliff top. If the characters entered through the tunnels, one harpy starts investigating that area.

Landon asks to speak to the characters in private, but Naedith steps in to speak to them first.

Development

The characters have tracked down the harpies and discovered why the wizard was kidnapped. Now they can speak to the enforcer and the wizard, and other harpies if they so choose.

Chapter 3 – Betrayed

The characters must speak to Naedith first, and can then speak to Landon and the other harpies in any order they choose.

The Harpy's Worry

Naedith is suspicious of the wizard but can't kill him without causing a split in the clan. She asks the characters to talk to Landon and stall until they find out the truth and make a plan with her.

If the characters ask for repayment, she promises to give them something good but is vague on the details.

The character with the highest passive Wisdom (Insight) can tell she's hiding something. A successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) or Charisma (Intimidation) check forces her to reveal her worry about the delicate harpy eggs that are hidden in the lair. She explains that Aelina is currently looking after them, and she doesn't want anyone to compromise their safety.

The Wizard's Plot

Landon reveals there's no way he can reverse the curse; further, he's not sure if it even exists. He tells the party that they'll all be eaten unless they do something drastic: kill all the harpies. A few of them have left, so the fight should be a little easier now. He asks the characters to cut his ropes and attack the harpies with him.

The character with the highest passive Wisdom (Insight) can tell he's hiding something. A successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) or Charisma (Intimidation) check, made with advantage if the characters reference the eggs, forces him to reveal his real plan: he let himself be captured on purpose. This clan of harpies has eggs, and harpy eggs are extremely rare and valuable. He promises the characters an egg of their own if they help him kill the harpies. If the characters seem conflicted or concerned, he says that harpies are monsters and eat people and that selling the egg will make them rich beyond their wildest dreams.

THE EGGS

If the characters attempt to follow Aelina, a harpy guard blocks their passage. Aelina comes to talk to them if they ask or make a fuss.

If the characters already know about the eggs, she confirms their existence and location. If they don't, it takes a successful DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) or Charisma (Intimidation) check for her to reveal their presence.

THE OTHER HARPIES

The other harpies talk to the characters if approached. They tend to be suspicious and gruff, and not happy about the presence of the characters or the wizard—they don't trust outsiders, especially ones with magical powers. They trust Aelina and Naedith to protect them. Some believe in the curse, others do not. None of them know anything further about it—it's a rumor amongst all harpies, one without any actual proof.

DECISION TIME

Once the characters have spoken to Naedith and Landon, and optionally to the other harpies, make it clear to them that they have a choice: they can help Landon attack the harpies and steal the eggs for profit (or to potentially make the area safer), they can tell the harpies his plan and let them eat him, or they can negotiate with the harpies for his release.

A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION

This can only be achieved if the characters do not tell the harpies about the wizard's real plan. If the harpies know about his plan to steal their eggs, they won't let him leave alive. If they only know that he can't break the curse, they can be convinced to let him leave.

The characters need to succeed on a DC 25 Charisma (Persuasion) or Charisma (Intimidation) check. They have advantage on this roll if they promise to investigate the curse or try to break it themselves.

SIDE WITH THE HARPIES

The characters can let Aelina or Naedith know about Landon's plans. If they tell Aelina, she immediately confronts Landon, which alerts Naedith. If they only tell Naedith, she confronts Landon alone unless the characters ask about Aelina.

When confronted, Landon calls out to the characters, saying he'll kill them for their betrayal. An **imp** appears on his shoulder and breaks his ropes, and he immediately opens up a small gilded flask that was on his belt. Thick black smoke pours out of it and resolves itself into five **shadow demons**. The demons and Landon immediately attack.

The harpies and the demons fight each other, leaving Landon and his imp for the characters. The harpies outside the cave come inside on the third round of combat. When Landon dies, the demons and imp vanish.

SIDE WITH THE WIZARD

If the characters approach Landon and say they're with him, he tells them to cut his ropes and get ready to attack immediately. If they have another battle plan in mind, he accepts it. Aelina and one harpy are with the eggs, and Naedith and two harpies are nearby. The rest of the harpies (five, plus potentially four more) are scattered equally in the cave and on the clifftop.

For this fight, Landon uses the stat block below, without spell slots above third level. He has the imp, but his flask only releases two **shadow demons**.

If a harpy gets the chance, she raises an alarm by screaming or singing, which alerts the rest of the harpies to the fight. It takes one round for harpies to get to the combat, plus an extra round if they have to come inside or outside to get to the fight.

DEVELOPMENT

Whether the characters have sided with the harpies, the wizard, or tried to remain neutral, if they survive the fight, they are free to leave the lair.

CONCLUSION – CONSEQUENCES

If Landon died and the characters return to Talia, she has questions and may be hostile to the characters. If they fight her, she uses the cult fanatic stat block. Did they need to fight her? Was she evil or simply greedy?

If the harpies died, Landon is open to giving the characters a harpy egg. Do the characters agree with his actions? Do they regret their own? Can they find a buyer for the egg, or will they try to hatch it?

If the characters sympathise with the harpies, they may try to investigate and break the curse. How do they feel knowing the harpies have no remorse for killing and eating people?

AUTHOR'S NOTES

This adventure is an exploration of morality. I wanted to create a "regular" adventure with some hard questions for the characters. The harpies are evil—and they're okay with that—but there are vulnerable eggs at stake. The wizard and his apprentice are greedy, but in the end, their goal is to kill "monsters." It's not always easy to know what the heroic course of action is.

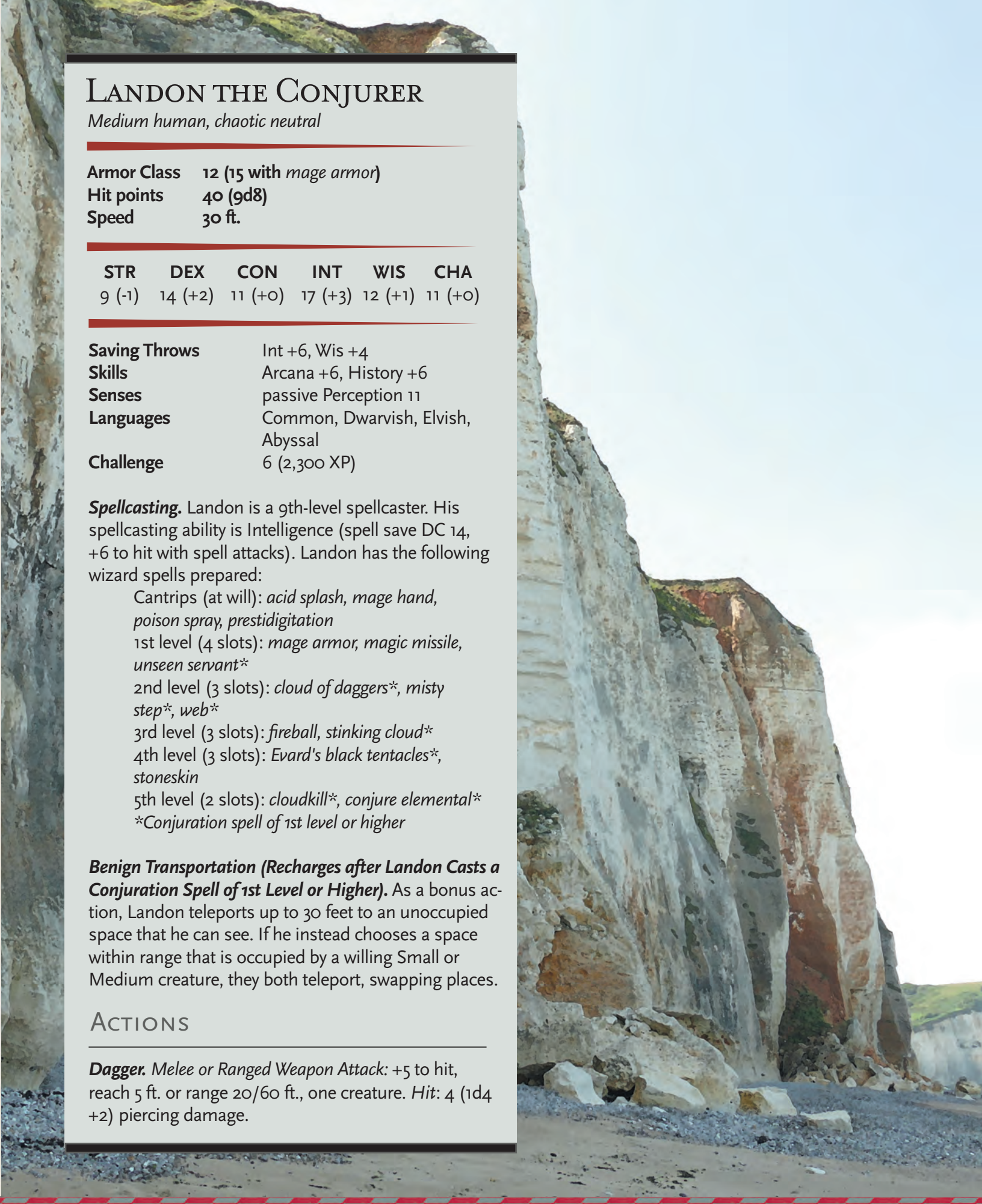
Thank you to my regular *D&D* group for playtesting this and cheering me on.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Megan is an Australian software developer who writes and plays *D&D* adventures in her spare time.



Illustration by Anthony Alipio



Landon the Conjurer

Medium human, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 12 (15 with *mage armor*)
Hit points 40 (9d8)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Int +6, Wis +4
Skills Arcana +6, History +6
Senses passive Perception 11
Languages Common, Dwarvish, Elvish, Abyssal
Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Spellcasting. Landon is a 9th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). Landon has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *acid splash, mage hand, poison spray, prestidigitation*
1st level (4 slots): *mage armor, magic missile, unseen servant**
2nd level (3 slots): *cloud of daggers**, *misty step**, *web**
3rd level (3 slots): *fireball, stinking cloud**
4th level (3 slots): *Evard's black tentacles**, *stoneskin*
5th level (2 slots): *cloudkill**, *conjure elemental**
**Conjuration spell of 1st level or higher*

Benign Transportation (Recharges after Landon Casts a Conjuration Spell of 1st Level or Higher). As a bonus action, Landon teleports up to 30 feet to an unoccupied space that he can see. If he instead chooses a space within range that is occupied by a willing Small or Medium creature, they both teleport, swapping places.

Actions

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one creature. *Hit*: 4 (1d4 +2) piercing damage.



Illustration by Luciella Elisabeth Scarlett

RECLAIM

by Yubi

Creature: *Yuki-Onna* | **Level:** *5*

SYNOPSIS

When the village of Meijin is infiltrated by a young red dragon and its guardian spirit barred from entering, the party is contacted by a yuki-onna with a duty to uphold. She has been watching over Meijin for centuries, guiding the inhabitants and keeping them safe from avalanches and howling blizzards. But with this dragon usurping her for its own selfish purposes, she needs help reclaiming the village and saving it from the treacherous creature hiding within.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Snow-born spirit Kiyoko, who watches over the village she loves, has reached out to a group of adventurers after hearing of their deeds in the local tavern a few months ago. Desperate after being barred from entering Meijin, she offers the party a reward of ancient gems and a powerful magical item in return for their help. Kiyoko meets them at her shrine a few miles from the village and asks them to investigate both the village and the magical barrier keeping her out. As well as being unable to enter her village, she is worried that if her shrine falls into disrepair she will vanish, leaving Meijin defenceless against the continual blizzards and avalanches she holds back.

She offers to help should the party need her aid, but as she is unable to enter the village, they will need to clear her a way in if they cannot return to her shrine.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Meijin has been infiltrated by a young red dragon named Wardlaw. Using a *hat of disguise* she has taken the form of a travelling soothsayer and convinced the village that the long, freezing winters are because of the yuki-onna, who has been holding them captive. By setting magical warding barriers along the outer walls she has managed to effectively block Kiyoko from entering Meijin.

There are many clues to Wardlaw's true nature. Firstly the temperature inside the outer walls is much warmer and the snow has melted away to reveal ancient volcanic rock. Wardlaw is in charge of the construction of a new temple to a goddess named Tamait (pronounced 'tah-mate', and Tiamat backwards) and is currently dwelling within the temple. A new sulphurous hot spring has appeared near the temple.

However, while the inside of the village is warmer, various tubers and roots grown for food are dying off in the heat, and the wildlife the villagers would normally hunt have abandoned their mountain homes. Snow has piled up on the nearby peaks, and several avalanches are dangerously close to wiping out the whole village – all of which the villagers (encouraged by Wardlaw) blame on a jealous and vengeful snow spirit.

When the characters realise Wardlaw's nature they can attempt to ask her about her motives, or return to Kiyoko for help after dismantling some of the wards –allowing her back into the village. Wardlaw can be bargained with but she demands a king's ransom for her departure. She is inclined to fight for her territory, however, as this is her first foray into domination and rule. Kiyoko is too weak to fight alongside the party, as the presence of the red dragon has sapped her magic abilities, but can provide a little healing with an initiative order of 20.

When Wardlaw has been vanquished, Kiyoko regains her full strength and turns back an avalanche set off by the fighting. The characters are celebrated as heroes and Kiyoko is re-deified. They are given what food the villagers can muster, and Kiyoko asks them to return to her shrine to receive their rewards. She gives them 1000gp worth of gems, and the Winter's Wand.

CHAPTER 1 – KIYOKO'S LAMENT

This adventure starts outside the entrance to Kiyoko's shrine, in a small mountain cave. It's bitterly cold with heavy snow falling in feather-like flakes. The shrine is a small altar in the back of the cave and decorated with ornate red ribbons and golden finishings. Though once well tended, it has now fallen into a state of neglect, with withered flowers and items blown onto the floor.

Kiyoko appears in a rush of cold air and snowflakes. She is a tall woman wearing a greyish white robe. Her long hair is dark and loose around her face, and she has a regal, kind bearing. She:

- Thanks the characters for responding to her
- Explains she is the guardian of Meijin, protecting it from the worst of the storms and the avalanches
- Explains she cannot enter the village as the walls have been enchanted somehow to block her access, and her power is fading fast
- Someone or something has turned the village against her, and she needs the players to find out who and why, and to convince them to allow her back in however they deem fit—without hurting the villagers
- She tells them to start by visiting Ursula Gidden, an old priestess by the second gate, and gives them a crystal to show her to prove they've come from Kiyoko
- She will reward them with a bag of ancient gems (valued at 1,000gp) and a magical wand, an heirloom left as an offering to her (see *winter's wand*)

ENTERING MEIJIN

Meijin is encircled by a 15 feet high stone wall. There are three gates into the village, each with two guards who let the party pass. They direct the party to Ursula's house if asked. Success on an appropriate DC 12 ability check, such as Wisdom (Perception), or Intelligence (Investigation, Religion) reveals new-looking thick, green braided rope around the gates and walls. With a successful DC 15 check, characters also notice wooden talismans hanging from ropes with symbols painted on them. A DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check or detect magic shows them as infused with abjuration magic.

The village is notably warmer inside the gates, the falling snow melting quickly on the stone ground and rooftops. There's a smell of sulphur in the air.

Ursula Gidden's house is the only house not covered in rope and talismans. The words 'GO FREEZE' have been painted messily on her door in green paint.

URSULA'S ISOLATION

Ursula [OLD, TIRED, AND KIND] is an orc with white hair pulled back into a messy bun. She is broad and tall despite her old age, and is wearing pale blue robes with red brocade around the sleeves and hem. She is wary until shown the crystal, and then eager to talk.

> Ursula's house is small but well kept. A miniature version of Kiyoko's shrine sits in the far corner, a beautifully carved stone baby taking centre stage. The shrine is lacquered, and has a beautiful chrysanthemum pattern inlaid in white opal. Ursula looks tired but regal, and she gestures for you to sit at her table with an air of patience.
>
> *"What can I do for you travelers?"*

Speaking to other villagers reveals the same information given by Ursula, but they speak highly of Wardlaw and side with her. They believe Kiyoko has been causing the blizzards and avalanches, and point out the warmth since she was banished, and the new hot springs which have emerged.

- Wardlaw arrived 3 months ago. She is a soothsayer and claims she was drawn here by the presence of a malevolent spirit
- Wardlaw started to convince the people that the Guardian was keeping them in an eternal winter for her own amusement
- A month ago the villagers strung the braided rope and hung the talismans around the gates and walls on Wardlaw's orders

- The temperature inside the village has risen and a hot spring has appeared near the temple, causing the sulphurous smell
- The tubers and roots Meijin grows are dying, and the mountains have been deserted by the elks and game that called them home
- Wardlaw is living under the temple she's having constructed in the name of Tamait, a goddess the village is now worshipping
- Ursula believes Wardlaw is not who she says she is, and has malicious intentions of some kind
- Her unwavering belief in the Guardian has caused dissent between her and the villagers

DEVELOPMENT

Once Ursula has passed on the relevant information one of her windows is shattered by a brick flying through it.

CHAPTER 2 – DISSENT

A group of kids are responsible for throwing the brick through Ursula's window. When questioned, they say Wardlaw told them it was Ursula's fault the food had disappeared and they're trying to make her leave Meijin. They point the party toward the Temple of Tamait.

THE TEMPLE OF TAMAIT

The new temple is a tall structure made of black stone and surrounded by scaffolding. It is clearly still being built. The double doors are open, and while villagers are working on the outside, the temple is empty inside.

On the floor is a large mosaic of a beautiful woman with dark hair, her eyes closed. She's wearing a long cloak of red, green, and blue with a black and white lining. At the back of the temple is a copper chalice filled with gold coins, colored gems and pieces of jewellery. An appropriate DC 12 check such as Intelligence (History or Religion) reveals this is a temple in the style of Tiamat.

An appropriate DC 12 check (Perception or Investigation) reveals a trapdoor in the far corner of the room. It has five small hollows in a circle at the top and a riddle carved into the stone beneath:

Five to pass beyond the gate,
and five to guide you forth.
First is night as old as hate,
then snow with little worth.
Third comes oceans deep and still,
then blood with ancient lore.
Fifth for valleys with treasure to spill,
and I shall reign forever more.

Placing gems, rocks, or other small items of the corresponding colors (black, white, red, green, and blue) open the trapdoor and show a set of stairs leading down to a corridor. Feel free to use Intelligence, History, Religion, or any other appropriate check to either give clues or solve the riddle. If they cannot find the trapdoor, a worker outside tells them about a "hidden door for true believers" and point them towards it.

WARDLAW'S LAIR

Wardlaw is not in her lair. A simple room carved from the rock, it is very warm. There's a desk and a chair, with a mound of precious items given by the villagers, which she uses in place of a bed. If the PCs have not yet worked out Wardlaw's true nature and intentions, place clues from the following list in the room:

- A small statue of Tiamat, the red head with golden eyes
- Charred marks and claw marks on the walls and floor
- A written prayer to Tiamat, proffering the little village of Meijin to her eternal hoard

> The chamber is carved from a dark, volcanic rock and the smell of sulphur stings your nose. A gleaming hoard of treasure—still small, but much loved—lays in the corner of the room. Beside it is a simple desk and chair with a standing mirror. The room is silent, but foreboding.

Here the players might decide to try and destroy some of the wards keeping Kiyoko from entering the village, or they might decide to head straight to confront Wardlaw.

DEVELOPMENT

Once the players have left the temple, if they are going to destroy the wards they come across a currently unwatched part of the wall with a sturdy ladder propped up against a villager's house opposite. If they are going to confront Wardlaw, as they leave the temple they hear cheering coming from the direction of the hot springs.

CHAPTER 3 – ENTER: THE DRAGON

If the players decide to confront Wardlaw immediately, then Ursula removes enough of the wards during the commotion of the ensuing fight or confrontation to allow Kiyoko to enter for the encounter.

DISMANTLING THE WARDS

The ropes are strung over the edges of the walls in an unbroken circle, passing over the tops of the gates and threaded with wooden talismans. Severing the ropes or destroying them in whatever manner they see fit breaks the wards. Consider adding ability checks for balancing on top of the walls, destroying the rope, avoiding being spotted by other guards, or whatever else you deem appropriate. To give the characters a chance at destroying the wards keep the DCs between 12 and 15, and play to their strengths. If the characters are caught, the guards take them to Wardlaw in the hot springs and Ursula finishes the job if they didn't manage to destroy the circle.



WARDLAW

Wardlaw [CALCULATING, SMIRKING, CONFIDENT] is overseeing a group of four villagers building baths from the hot springs. She:

- Does not reveal her true form unless attacked or directly confronted
- When her form is revealed, gloats over her power and the obedience of the now terrified villagers
- Can be persuaded to leave for a huge sum
- Decides to 'make a show' out of the party if they attack or press aggressively, and attacks

> A tall human woman dressed in a cloak of red, green, and blue stands by the newly formed hot springs, overseeing the construction of baths. Her copper hair gleams and her pale amber eyes have strange glint to them. She turns to face the party with a smirk.
>
> *"Well well well... the ones who went to visit dear Ursula."*

While Wardlaw can be bribed into leaving, she demands over 10,000 gp to be provided immediately, or will take 10,000 gp worth of magic items/other valuable items. She is more likely to defend her territory out of hubris. The villagers do not help in the battle.

DEVELOPMENT

A clash of two conflicts rings out in Meijin. Fight, or flee! If the party fights, Kiyoko appears during the battle at your discretion. She has two level 1 spell slots, and only *cure wounds* prepared, and acts just prior to the lair actions. She has 30 ft of movement and cannot make a physical attack.

Wardlaw uses the stats for a **young red dragon**, including lair actions. Consider adjusting her hit points depending on your party size. If your players are overpowering Wardlaw, have her summon a **fire elemental**.

CONCLUSION

With Wardlaw defeated, the last of her magic fades, and Kiyoko returns to her full strength. An avalanche, triggered by the fighting, rushes towards the village and is turned back by Kiyoko. Wardlaw's thrall over the villagers melts away, and Kiyoko is reinstated. The rest of the wards and talismans are destroyed, her shrine is repaired, and Meijin is once more protected.

> As you pause to catch your breath after the fight, the mountains around Meijin groan and shake with the rush of a huge avalanche. Kiyoko turns, ice and snow whirling around her as she lifts her hands and wails out this note so pure and clear the water in the hot springs freezes over, and as the avalanche tumbles towards Meijin it is split by this tone, parting and flowing around the village without touching it. There is a second of silence in the aftermath before the villagers burst into cheers and grateful shouts, bowing before their guardian spirit.

The villagers are apologetic to the party, and offer them food and shelter for their services. They begin dismantling the temple and the hot springs.

REWARDS

The party is celebrated as heroes! Kiyoko presents the party with 1,000 gp worth of gems and the *winter's wand*. Dragon parts can be harvested from Wardlaw's remains. They may also take her *hat of disguise*.

Winter's Wand

Wand, rare

This wand has 7 charges. While holding it, you can use an action to expend 1 or more of its charges to cast the spell *ice knife* (save DC 15). For 1 charge, you cast the 2nd-level version of the spell. You can increase the spell slot level by one for each additional charge you expend.

The wand regains 1d6 + 1 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the wand's last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the wand crumbles into snow and is destroyed.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

I would like first to thank Ashley for this amazing opportunity and for organising this event. I am so pleased to be a part of this anthology, and cannot wait to explore the adventures created by my fellow authors. I would also like to thank my playtesters.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Yubi is a nonbinary, queer creator who lives in sunny Scotland. They DM a *D&D* 5e actual play podcast, "The Mortal Path," and publish unique *D&D* content on their twitter @uzbadyubi. With several degrees in Japanese and Japanese Culture, they enjoy drawing on popular myths and legends from Japanese folklore.





Illustration by Xan Larson

THE HUNT FOR THE QUEEN-SERPENT

by Ataberk Bozkurt

Creature: *Shahmaran* | **Levels:** *5-7* | **CWs:** *Abduction, cannibalism*

SYNOPSIS

There is a mountain city-state named Tarsos, whose ruling sultan, Jumalee, becomes deathly ill from grief over his daughter's disappearance. Tarsos' vizier, Reza, sends word to those who are brave of heart and capable of mind to find the legendary Shahmaran, Queen of Snakes. Reza can brew a remedy to the sultan's illness from Shahmaran's dead body. The characters will uncover the truth about Shahmaran, the half-snake, half-human race called the maran that she keeps in check, and the missing Tarsos princess. Their choices will shape both the future of a land and a regretful soul.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Reza, the vizier of the Tarsos Sultanate, may hire the party to hunt down Shahmaran. Alternatively, the party may arrive at Cyrdus, a nearby village settled in the mountain range. Cemshab, Shahmaran's mortal lover held captive by Reza's soldiers (jannisaries), pleas for help to save Shahmaran from the janissaries.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

It all starts when Shahmaran offers heirdom to Parisa, Princess of Tarsos. Parisa accepts the offer after being torn between her dreams of either becoming a mighty sorceress or ascending the throne as the next Sultan of Tarsos. While Parisa feels obliged to tend and protect her people, she instead chooses to follow her sorceress path under Shahmaran's tutelage. However, Shahmaran only wishes Parisa to be her heir in order to keep the vicious maran under control. If Shahmaran dies, Parisa is her answer to prevent the maran from eradicating Tarsos once and for all.

Meanwhile, Vizier Reza plots to take advantage of the princess' disappearance and the sultan's illness. Sultan Jumalee has no other relatives that can inherit the sultanate, making it possible for the vizier to seize control. He knows of an ancient legend that claims if you drank the blood of Shahmaran, you gain ultimate knowledge and health. Falsely claiming that Shahmaran's body is the key to the cure for the sultan's illness, Vizier Reza calls forth his best hunters and sends them to hunt the Shahmaran, so he can drink her blood and become all-powerful.

Hunters track down Cemshab, the Queen's former lover for a century, who knows the hidden way to Shahmaran's bathhouse and forces him to reveal the way. Cemshab deliberately tries to delay them and maran ambushes kill many janissaries. Sooner or later, the bathhouse is revealed.

Shahmaran is guilt-ridden; she has not foreseen the consequences of taking Parisa to her side. However, her maran are vicious and ruthless and without a compassionate leader, they can simply invade and massacre Cyrdus and Tarsos. So she plans to sacrifice herself to kill the vizier Reza… but will it solve the problem in everyone's favor?

CHAPTER 1 – THE HUNTERS GATHERED

The story begins in Cyrdus, a mountain village. The party may come across this village on their travels, or they may be escorted by the vizier's men, the janissaries. Janissary Captain Omar offers 1,000 gp to the hunters that capture Shahmaran.

VILLAGE OF CYRDUS

Cyrdus is a remote hunting village. Only a handful live in this cold, barren town. They mostly live from hunting deer and other game, selling their meat and skin. Still, they are cold towards outside hunters and janissaries. The people of Cyrdus do not want to hunters to take up arms against the maran, so they are cold towards the party. The old, wise medicine woman Yolene knows more about the snakefolk so any senior villager point her out to those who seek more about the maran.

WHAT DO VILLAGERS KNOW?

The villagers of Cyrdus may be persuaded or bribed to reveal what they know about the maran. However, on your discretion, they may not know the legend completely or may tell it differently. One thing is certain, they all fear the snakefolk as vile ambushers and merciless killers. They talk about the maran as "the mountain's folk."

Yolene, Medicine Woman: Yolene and her son Hiskas look out for the village. Hiskas also has a store where adventurers may buy and sell common equipment. Yolene tells the legend of Shahmaran without any mistakes. She may also brew an anti-toxin for each character if they behaved themselves and showed them good will. However, if the characters attempt to force Yolene to show the way, she gives them false directions. A successful DC 20 Charisma (Intimidation) forces the truth from Yolene, but they refuse to do business with the party.

The Legend of Shahmaran

A long time ago and far away, there lived a warrior named Belkia, who was lost at the rocky and sharp mountains of Tarsos. For days, the bitter cold winds pounded against him and journeying through the snow and mist, Belkia grew weary. Belkia's situation was bleak; With his every step he realized it was not the wind that assailed him, but the very breath of Azrael, the Angel of Death. Belkia's judgment was due. However his fate would be delayed, for snakefolk discovered him near unconscious, near death. Their queen, Shahmaran, nurtured Belkia back to health and they fell in love. Despite his second chance, the warrior grew restless, his blood yearning for action. Shahmaran let Belkia go on with a condition—he was to keep the maran secret.

Belkia returned to his land, and there Ukap the Sorcerer sought him out to inquire about Shahmaran. Ukap was a mighty magician, commanding forces of nature, lightning, and thunder. Ukap asked a djinn that how can he become immortal and the djinn told him to seek Shahmaran. "If you boil her flesh and blood and consume them, you will get all you desire!"

"It was for the good of the people," Ukap convinced Belkia. They travelled to the Bathhouse of Shahmaran and there the queen was waiting for them. She knew Belkia would betray her, for he was mortal. Belkia cried and sought forgiveness after the maran tore Ukap to pieces. Shahmaran forgave Belkia and let him go once again but this time she knew Belkia's heart. It is not the heart's fault for even the best intentions are a double-edged sword. It is a sacrifice, they say.

THE HUNTING PARTIES

There are two different hunting parties. They won't cooperate with each other unless persuaded.

Janissary Captain Omar holds Cemshab as his prisoner, to show them the way to the bathhouse. They ventured twice before the party's arrival, both journeys ending with bloodshed. Omar and his men treat villagers poorly; they won't pay for any service and do not compensate for the damage they cause. If confronted, Omar respects courage and backs down from any tense encounter with respect. If the characters still antagonize the janissaries, they react violently. If the party asks to join them, they accept unless the party is hostile. Omar may also reveal why Sultan Jumalee is sick and what Vizier Reza actually aims to do. Omar

can be bribed, persuaded, or deceived, but won't be intimidated easily.

Cemshab, former lover of the Queen-Serpent, tries to divert the janissaries as he fears for the life of his lover. He knows that Parisa is Shahmaran's heir and Shahmaran regrets this decision. He may even give his life to save his lover's own, but they are threatening his whole family line with extinction. If the party earns his trust, he reveals that he knows the location and leads them there if they agree to help Shahmaran instead of killing her.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

- Omar (male/human/battlemaster fighter 7/neutral evil)
- Cemshab (male/human/hunter ranger 3/neutral good)
- Jannisaries (varied/varied/**veteran**/neutral evil)
- Hiskas (male/rock gnome/wild magic sorcerer 3/chaotic good)
- Yolene (female/rock gnome/circle of the land druid 3/neutral good)
- Parisa (female/human-maran/**maran**/neutral good)
- Shahmaran (female/maran/**guardian naga**/lawful neutral)
- Sultan Jumalee (male/human/**noble**/lawful good)
- Vizier Reza (male/human/**archmage**/lawful evil)

DEVELOPMENT

After the characters rest for a day, explore the village and talk to many hunters and residents. They have to decide whether to join forces with the hunting party or if they are going to explore Tarsos mountains themselves.

CHAPTER 2 – THE HUNT BEGINS

In this chapter, the party searches the mountains for Shahmaran's bathhouse. There are two encounters in this chapter that must play out before the characters encounter the maran. Length of the journey is up to DM, it may take a day or a couple. If the characters persuaded Cemshab, he shows the way. Otherwise, he deliberately leads the hunters into a maran ambush (3 to 5 maran according to their average party level). The bathhouse is guarded against divination unless the caster adds a special component to the spell that has ties to a maran. A successful DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check allows the caster to know the special component.

ROAD ENCOUNTERS

The mountains of Tarsos has many woods and narrow passages and game is plentiful. However, it is also very cold: weather should be a threat just like the maran. Serpentfolk may attack at any time to defend their home and rescue Cemshab. Hobgoblin warbands also populate this area. You may also use environmental hazards such as avalanches. Maran are watching them to discern and judge them from afar, and they are detected with a successful DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check. After characters have searched the mountains, proceed to the Shrine of Maran encounter.

Encounter: Pile of the Dead

In this encounter, the characters come up across a pile of corpses partially hidden under snow. These corpses belong to a hobgoblin scouting party that was murdered by maran, whose weapons and bites are coated with a deadly poison. The corpses are bloated and cannot be identified properly. However, characters inspecting the bodies determine they are not human. On a successful DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check, they find hobgoblin equipment buried with the bodies and bones belonging to a huge wolf. A successful DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check reveals that these bodies were killed a day ago. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check determines the cause of their demise.

Encounter: Shrine of Maran

The characters find a huge cavern and as winds collide with the walls it creates an even colder air compared to outside. However, there is a ruined shrine at the middle of the cavern.

Murals depict a series of events, told in three parts. In the first mural, there are dead people lying around and snakes adorning their bodies. At the second mural, a robed lady crowns herself with snakes around her. At the last mural, robed figures legs turns into a snakes body, leaving torso as human and all snakes lie beneath her feet.

A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Religion) check reveals the urals depict a primitive cleansing rite. To perform such a rite, tribals preferred a hill that may

see the dawn. If followed, this reveals the bathhouse's location.

A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) reveals that this ruined cavern has been carved out and huge chunks of stone were moved from here to a place to a lower part of the mountain. Character may use mason's tools proficiency or Stonecunning to understand what happened. If followed this reveals the bathhouse's location.

A successful DC 16 Wisdom (Survival) or Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that there are huge snake tracks all over the shrine and nearby woods. If followed this reveals the bathhouse's location.

There is also a torso and head of a skeleton on the ground, holding a spear. The spear's shaft is carved like a snake and the tip is bronze in color. This is a *+1 spear*, made and used by maran.

DEVELOPMENT

After dusk, the characters find a passage to the bathhouse. They may also find it via Cemshab or if they came alone and acted fair and just, they are guided by a group of maran as they reveal themselves watching the party. Characters may also encounter maran in the mountains and may have persuaded them to show their way. If the characters persuaded maran or helped Cemshab, Shahmaran is friendly and curious about what the characters will say. Otherwise they are cold, sarcastic, and doubtful of the party's intentions. If the characters bring janissaries with them, maran attacks them as soon as possible and try to rescue Cemshab.

CHAPTER 3 – THE WILL OF THE LADY

After their day-long journey into Tarsos Mountains, the party arrives at the bathhouse which serves as Shahmaran's home. The Queen-Serpent knows that adventurers and hunters are looking for her and to save her lover and her people from further bloodshed; she is ready to negotiate.

When the party arrives at the bathhouse, Shahmaran's heir and handmaiden, Princess Parisa, welcomes them. She informs the guests that the queen does not want (further) bloodshed and grants them a morning audience in her throne room. Parisa require everyone to leave their weapons (foci included). As they wait, the characters may talk to Parisa as other maran only hiss at them even though they understand them. Heroes are then placed in a huge, luxurious guest room with pools and soft beds.

Parisa visits the party and ask about Tarsos and what they heard lately. Successful Persuasion, Deception and Insight checks reveal that she is the Princess of Tarsos and if confronted she tells her story. If Captain Omar is present at this time, he will be quick to identify Parisa as the princess before she has a chance to speak.

Should the characters meet with Shahmaran in the morning, see *Audience with the Queen-Serpent*. The party may try to persuade Parisa here or try to take her away without talking to Shahmaran. Should this happen, all Maran try to defend Parisa and may attack the party. If persuaded, Parisa leaves with the party. If the party attacks the maran before talking to Shahmaran, it takes three turns for Shahmaran to interrupt the combat. She orders her maran to stand aside and deal with the invaders herself.

AUDIENCE WITH THE QUEEN-SERPENT

Shahmaran hails the adventurers with milk and honey, served by her handmaidens. She asks why they have come and demands to know who they are. The Queen-Serpent is patient and answers any questions as long as they are respectful. Shahmaran has decided that she should die and Parisa has to choose her own fate. At this point, heroes should be able to confront both Shahmaran and Parisa with facts. If asked about Parisa, a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals Shahmaran's visible regret. Shahmaran may reveal why she actually brought Parisa to her bathhouse, if persuaded (DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion) or Charisma (Deception) check). After hearing Shahmaran, Parisa is not angry with her as she understands why she must stay but apparently sad. Parisa can be persuaded to return home not as a princess but as a sorceress, because if she stays and rules, she only fulfills other's ambitions.

If Cemshab is present with the captain, she demands Cemshab's release immediately. Omar only releases Cemshab if Shahmaran agrees to the vizier's terms.

If the party demands Shahmaran to surrender, she simply refuses, she states that she is royalty and would never surrender her body. They will have to kill Shahmaran to capture her.

If the party explains the situation regarding the sultan and vizier and ask for Shahmaran's help, she can be persuaded. She gives her shed scales and a vial of her blood with the instructions.

If the characters kill Shahmaran and also persuade Parisa to return home, they leave the bathhouse while maran mourn and wail in sorrow. They let them go in shock and fear…

DEVELOPMENT

Shahmaran instructs the party (either alive or in her last breath), "Those who seek eternal life must drink her blood and those who yearn for their doom must boil her scales and eat them." However, if she is not killed and willingly gave these ingredients, she adds that only the vizier and the sultan should consume these. Adventurers must either bring a vial of Shahmaran's blood and her scales or her body. Vizier Reza will justly reward them. If Parisa is present, after this she reveals herself and warns Reza not to eat the scales or maybe heroes warn Vizier, however no matter what, he eats the scales, thinking that they try to deceive him. Soon a painful and unfortunate death takes Reza… leaving only a bloody carcass behind him.

CONCLUSIONS

IF SHAHMARAN DIES…

If Parisa does not return: Parisa becomes Shahmaran and rules over the maran. Our adventurers return to Tarsos and Vizier Reza holds a feast for them and he eats the flesh of Shahmaran and dies. The sultan's death follows after a couple of weeks and Tarsos falls into chaos.

If Parisa returns: Vizier Reza is displeased as Princess Parisa returns and only pays half of the reward. He may send a couple of assassins based on heroes' reaction. Parisa heals her father and they may rule together or Parisa may leave Tarsos to pursue her magical talent. No matter what, after a couple of weeks, maran attack both Cyrdus and Tarsos, they sack the city.

IF SHAHMARAN HELPS..

If Parisa stays with Shahmaran: Shahmaran instructs adventurers that the Sultan must drink her boiled blood and the Vizier must eat her scales. Parisa asks the characters to deliver a silver pendant to her father. Reza holds a feast for them and he eats the flesh of Shahmaran and dies. Sultan is relieved by Shahmaran's blood and rules justly, inspired by his daughter.

If Parisa leaves Shahmaran: She travels to the land of Ukap to pursue arcane secrets. Parisa asks adventurers to deliver a silver pendant to her father.

If Cemshab's present: Shahmaran and Cemshab live happily after, if anyone tries to touch Cemshab, Maran kills them on queen's orders.

If Cemshab is not present: Shahmaran asks for a favor from the party she wants her lover Cemshab to be rescued from the clutches of Captain Omar. She rewards them in Cemshab's weight in gold to compensate their efforts.

REWARDS

DM should reward characters for mostly exploring and uncovering a couple of secrets. Here are some example milestones or XP rewarding events:

- If Shahmaran survives, award characters with 6,000 XP.
- If the party rescues Cemshab from the Vizier, award them 3,000 XP.
- If the party persuades Parisa to leave, award them 3,000 XP.
- If Shahmaran dies, award characters with 3,000 XP.
- Should a character drink Shahmaran's blood, their Intelligence and Wisdom increases by 2 permanently.

The party may gain a simple magical spear as a souvenir. If you use a high-fantasy setting, you may reward characters with more magical items. Here are some suggestions: *potions of poison*, *potion of longevity*, *ring of animal influence* (snakes only), *ring of poison resistance*, magical longbows and ammunition (+1 quality), *scroll of conjure animals* (snakes only), *scroll of healing spirit*, *scroll of protection from good and evil*.

In the end, either Reza or Parisa awards the party with gold; you may adjust the amount again based on your setting, 500 gp per adventurer is enough.



AUTHOR'S NOTES

Thanks to my family, especially my mother, Pernan, for helping me to adapt Shahmaran tales into this story. I took some liberties with the story and combined myths and Tomris Uyar's interpretation so you may read different versions of Shahmaran's myth on web or in books. Shahmaran's story is an interesting piece of folklore; as a medusa-like figure, she is depicted as wise and compassionate. If you ever visit Turkey, go to Tarsus, Mersin, where the folk tale is set.

CITATIONS

Uyar, Tomris. Ödeşmeler Ve Şahmeran Hikayesi. Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2003.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born in October 15, 1996, always been a great fan of fantasy and sci-fi works. Studied American Culture and Literature in Hacettepe University. DMing and playing *D&D* since 2008.

Maran

Medium monstrosity, neutral

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit points 48 (8d8 + 16)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	19 (+4)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)

Skills Stealth +7, Perception +4, Survival +4
Damage Immunities Poison
Condition Immunities Poisoned
Languages Celestial, Telepathy 60 ft.
Senses Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14
Challenge 3 (700 xp)

Innate Spellcasting. A maran's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 12). Maran can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *animal friendship* (snakes only)
1/day: *pass without trace*

Multiattack. the Maran makes two ranged or melee attacks, but can use its bite and constrict attacks only once each.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack.* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) poison damage.

Constrict. *Melee Weapon Attack.* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d4 + 3) bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 13). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the Maran can't constrict another target.

Spear. *Melee Weapon Attack.* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage.

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack.* +7 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) poison damage.

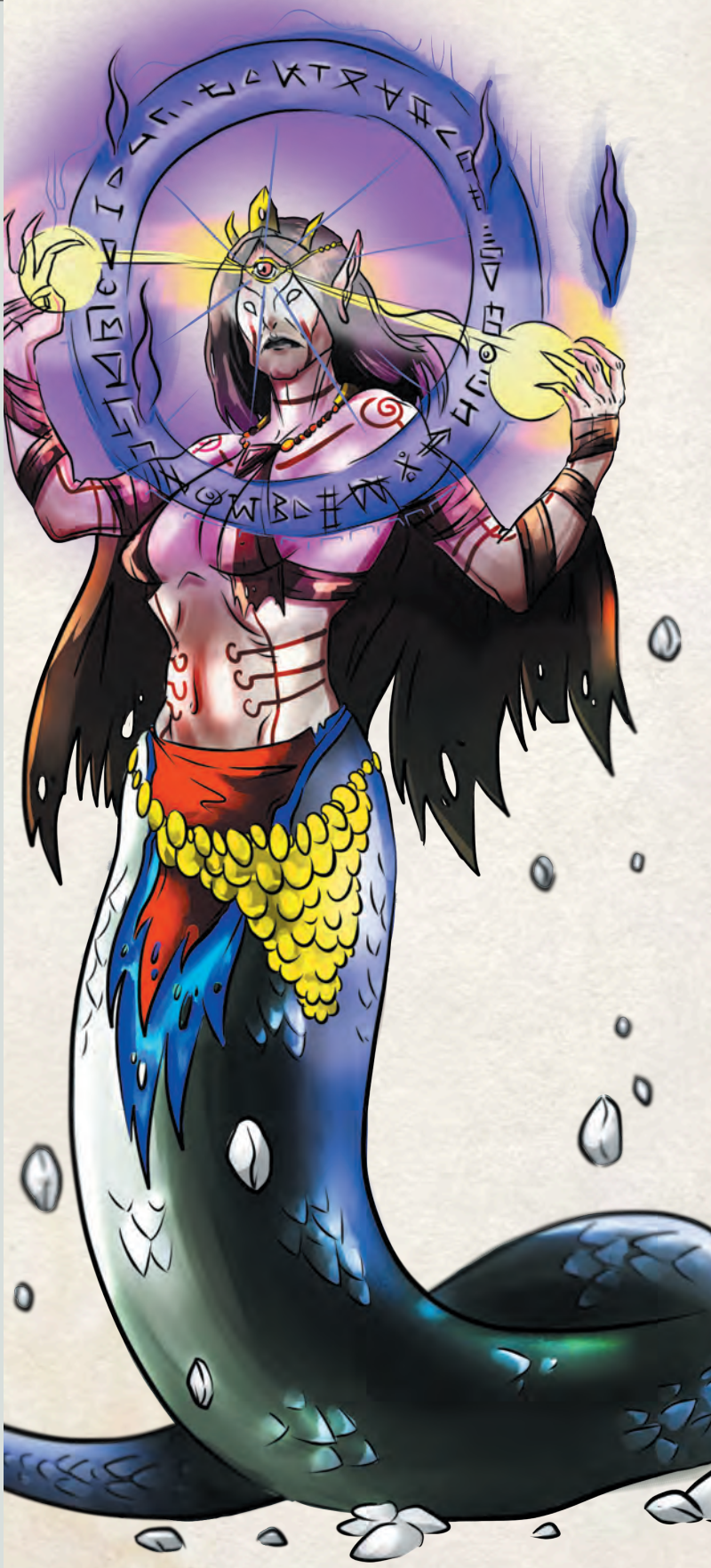


Illustration by Purple Duck Games



Illustration by Kayla Cline

LOLTH'S PUNISHMENT

by Katie Cunningham

Creature: *Yochlol* | **Levels:** *5 - 7*

SYNOPSIS

Baumsville, a peaceful and remote mountain mining village, has found itself under siege! The mine it relies on has been claimed by a fearsome yochlol, a monstrous servant of the goddess Lolth.

Your party has been hired to slay the yochlol. However, a meeting with a young drow woman suggests a deeper mystery and another option. Are you brave enough to challenge a goddess for the sake of happiness and freedom? Do you want to see two slime trees, chaotic-evil handmaidens, in love? Would you like to rob a temple and beat up a monster? All of that and more inside this adventure!

ADVENTURE HOOK

Lolth's Punishment is intended for five players of 5th to 7th levels. Getting characters here is easy: they've been hired to kill a monster. This means, whether the group is heroic or more mercenary, they have a reason to be involved.

The party is hired by the villagers of a remote mountain mining village, Baumsville, and can either arrive together or separately.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Yochlols tend to be presented differently from how they are here: generally they are straightforward monsters, though their lore is open to interpreting them like this. Depending on your party's level of experience with them, this may be something you want to build some groundwork for. Yochlols are lesser demons, generally seen serving Lolth. As described by the *Monster Manual* they "… can assume the guise of a female drow or monstrous spider to conceal its demonic form. In its true form, the fiend appears as a pillar of yellow slime with a single malevolent eye. In its drow and true form, a yochlol's touch carries the same venomous touch as its spider form's bite." While their origins vary, Lolth can create yochlols by transforming other creatures into them.

Lolth is one of the primary Drow goddesses. Also known as the Queen of Spiders and the Queen of the Demonweb Pits, she's chaotic evil and the main villain of this story; however, she is well out of reach of our heroes.

The Church of Vhaeraun consists largely of drow. Vhaeraun rebelled against Lolth and is the drow god of thievery. It's a technically evil church, associated with ravens and undead, both of which appear in the story. However, Vhaeraun's priests are more sympathetic than expected, seeing a familiar rebellion in Xune and Nasra.

CHARACTERS (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):

- **Glebe:** Male human historian/Lawful Good/Str: 17 Dex: 12 Con: 13 Int: 14 Wis: 11 Cha: 16. A local historian in Baumsville. He's 23, and he loves local history. He's deeply enthusiastic and gives the impression of a skinny puppy. His hands and clothes are constantly ink stained, and he still wears the glasses he got when he was twelve—they're far too small and make him squint.
- **Trina:** Female goliath hunter/Neutral Good/Str: 14 Dex: 16 Con: 17 Int: 11 Wis: 8 Cha: 10. A hunter who tried to kill the yochlol with her partner. 29 years old, constantly bruised and with a very broken nose. She acts older than she is and is permanently grumpy. Her head is shaven, with a bite mark showing prominently above her right ear.

- **Xune:** N female **drow priestess**. Str: 13 Dex: 13 Con: 10 Int: 13 Wis: 13 Cha: 14. A young drow woman, on the run from Lolth. Her robes are torn and dirty, her hair was braided but it's come loose and is tangled. There's a messy scar down the right side of her face. Normally she's restrained and calm, but when she's encountered now she's frantically desperate.
- **Baroj:** NG drow priest (**drow priestess** stats). Str: 10 Dex: 10 Con: 10 Int: 6 Wis: 12 Cha: 13. He's survived a lot. Elderly now, he has enough faded scars to mark him as having seen battles. Largely, he's weary, but still faintly optimistic – even if he knows optimism hasn't really helped him so far. If attacked he is mainly just disappointed.
- **Nasra:** N female **drow priestess**. Str: 7 Dex: 14 Con: 11 Int: 11 Wis: 8 Cha: 15. A young drow woman, trapped in the form of a **yochlol** for her betrayal of Lolth.

CHAPTER 1 – BAD TIMES IN BAUMSVILLE

Normally Baumsville is a busy town: miners coming and going, metal ores shipping out and supplies being shipped in. But now it's quiet. No goods are coming in because nothing's being mined—and without mining, there's no money.

There's no mining because the mine is occupied. Whatever lurks there has already killed two miners and one of the hunters sent after it, leaving the other injured.

The problem is serious enough to pay for outside help: namely, you.

The adventurers arrive in Baumsville, either together as a party or individual contractors who have been asked to work together.

Baumsville is Scandinavian-inspired, located in the mountains and with a peaceful mining population. The adventurers have been hired by the entire town, leading to most of the townsfolk themselves taking an eager—if presumptuous—tone with them. The main characters to be encountered in the town are the local historian, Glebe, who offers more information on the mines, and a hunter, Trina. Trina is eager to kill whatever is living in the mine, though reluctant to engage with it herself after losing a friend in a previous attempt.

The information Glebe can offer mainly relates to the mine itself:

- The modern mines, which gather iron and other metals, are actually built on top of older tunnels that are partly collapsed and have never been fully explored.
- He isn't sure who built them, only that they predate the village itself by a long time.
- He advises caution (cave-ins, getting lost) if you look to travel through them.

Trina is bitter and nursing an injury to her side. Despite that she will offer information: she wants the monster killed. She can tell you more about the area:

- The inhabitants of the area include animals, typically bears and wolves. There isn't anything she'd call "strange."
- She also mentions there's a nearby temple. The inhabitants keep to themselves, and she has steered clear from it. (What the DM knows: This is the temple of Vhaeraun, which Trina doesn't know.)
- She can also mention a banshee rumored to live in the area.
- Trina's old hunting partner Brian was lost a few months ago in the woods. Following their attempted hunt for the yochlols, she was separated from him, and he ran toward the mountains. She mentions his distinctively intricate helmet and that she's long given up hope of him being alive.

ARRIVING AT THE MINE

Having gathered whatever information they can, the adventurers head for the mine. The woods become silent as they come closer to the cave, with only an occasional raven watching them from the trees. As they approach the outside of the mine, they discover traces of a strange substance:

> You follow the forest trail up the mountain and reach a red-brown cliffside. Ahead is an entrance, carved into the rock, but something's wrong: There's a waxy, foul-smelling paste smeared on the trees closest to the mine. And those trees look distinctly unhealthy; they've lost their leaves out of season, and the wood is blackened.
>
> The epicenter is the mine entrance itself. Before you can enter or get closer to the entrance,a sharp, pained voice calls out from behind you:
>
> *"Stop!"*

If any of the party have encountered Lolth before or have a proficiency in a relevant knowledge-based skill, they recognize the slime as a sign of Lolth's presence.

The voice that called out belongs to Xune. She begs the adventurers to listen to her: the creature they're hunting is a yochlol, but the situation is more complicated than it seems. If they choose to attack it anyway, they have to fight her first. If they choose to listen, she tells them her story.

The yochlol was previously another drow woman, Nasra. They were priestesses working in an underground temple to Lolth, and they fell in love. When their devotion to each other threatened their devotion to their goddess, she punished them both by transforming Nasra into a yochlol, and ordering her to kill Xune.

The only chance of appeasing Lolth is to make her an offering. Xune believes that a relic purported to be a fragment of one of Vhaeraun's masks would be suitable. It's held in the nearby temple. Xune herself is too weak to travel but can provide any necessary information about Lolth (such as who she is and relevant information about her personality).

If the characters ask Xune about Vhaeraun, she tells them a modified version of the truth: that he abandoned Lolth. If challenged on this and with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) or Charisma (Persuasion) check, she admits she might be slightly biased about the circumstances as she worked for Lolth for a long time. In reality, Vhaeraun is another rebel against Lolth, who wanted to destroy her society in order to both restore power to the drow and to establish gender equality. If the party invests in this line of questioning and makes a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check, they can convince Xune to admit she's closer to being a follower of Vhaeraun than Lolth now.

If the party continues to question her she can offer more general information, too.

- The older tunnels beneath the mines belong to Lolth, and that is where she and Nasra came from.
- She advises against exploring further down there.

Following this conversation, she begs the party to help her. If the party can retrieve the mask, Xune knows how to make an offering with it: There's an altar in the old tunnels she can use.

DEVELOPMENT

The party must decide either to proceed toward the temple or to fight Xune and attempt to kill Nasra. If they choose the first, proceed to *Chapter 2*. If they choose the second, they move on to *Chapter 3*, Part 2, Option B. Here they fight Xune and then Nasra in her yochlol form.

CHAPTER 2 – ROBBING GOD

After a day of travel, the party arrives at the forest next to the temple.

If they choose to camp overnight before entering the temple, they should make a Perception check. If they roll lower than 14, they encounter a **banshee**; if they roll lower than 8, they encounter **drow elite warriors** (1 per party member).

> Ravens crowd the mountain around the temple. They caw and croak at you as you approach, shuffling but not moving from their perches on the rocks. This is clearly their home.
>
> The temple is carved into a towering cliffside.

Stairs in the rock lead up to a high doorway, but the cragged rocks below are climbable, too. If the characters examine the rocks, they see signs the rocks have been climbed before.

If the party chooses the stairs, they need to fight, lie to, or avoid the two drow guards there. The temple itself is built into more pre-existing caves, lit with lanterns. As the party explores, they come to the center of the temple: a small amphitheater chamber containing the mask fragment. The adventurers can choose to steal it, though doing so triggers the release of four **ghouls**.

These ghouls are past adventurers, one of whom can be recognized as Trina's old partner with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check. If the party defeats him they can take his helmet and return it to Trina upon their return to Baumsville. She appreciates the gesture and offers a reward of half of her last payment (60 sp). It would have gone to him if he hadn't been killed.

Alternatively, the party can try to ask for the mask fragment. This can be accomplished with a successful DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion, Intimidation, or Deception) check. In order to achieve this, they need to talk to the head priest of the temple: an older drow man called Baroj. If the characters speak to Baroj, they gain more insight into the background behind Vhaeraun and his worshippers. If they already know about this, either from their own knowledge or from Xune, he's impressed.

This includes Vhaeraun's origin as a rebel god. He also explains the ravens live around the temple because the priests feed them – which can be played as comedy if you play up the spookiness of them in the approach. For example, describing them picking at an animal's corpse or watching the party.

This conversation might make the characters more sympathetic toward Baroj and his people, and therefore less eager to steal the mask. Depending on how the conversation is handled, it is possible that he relents and give it to them instead. The party needs to be respectful, though he isn't averse to sarcasm.

He can be convinced to hand the mask over if one of the party members makes the argument the drow women are, like him, rebels against Lolth and with a successful DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion) check. If they choose to attack Baroj, the ghouls rise to attack them, too.

DEVELOPMENT

Once the adventurers have collected the mask, either by asking for it or stealing it, they can move on to the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3 – TUNNEL SCRAMBLES

The party returns to the cave, finding a slightly recovered Xune. She's relieved to see them, and especially to see them with the mask. If the party chose to have a more extensive conversation with Baroj, they can bring up some of what they've learned here. They can compare Xune's "betrayal" of Lolth to the actions of Vhaeraun, and through this begin to crack her already fragile dedication to her ex-goddess.

She knows she was betrayed, but it can be hard to shake old habits. If the characters are especially convincing, she may consider heading to the temple following the events of this adventure.

She leads the way forward into the tunnels. At first, the mines appear old: generally well maintained and polished looking. However, as they proceed, Xune leads the party through a hidden tunnel. The passages on the other side are clearly much older, carved in a way that looks almost natural. The walls are rounded and grooved, marked with decorative patterns. These are largely symmetrical shapes: whorls and complicated knotted lines.

As they walk, there is a sudden tremor underfoot and a cave-in starts. The party must succeed a DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check or fall prone. Regardless of whether the party succeeds or fails, they are separated from Xune, though they manage to keep hold of the mask. She is able to shout a message through the rocks which have fallen between them:

"Keep going down!" If the party insists on meeting with her before continuing, she tells them about a secondary way she knows won't be open to them: only drow can pass through, and she'll meet them farther in.

Once the dust clears, the party finds two options ahead of them, both leading down. The tunnel to the right takes them through a dank, wet tunnel where they encounter a **gibbering mouther**.

The tunnel to the left takes them through a dry, cavernous passage where they encounter two **swarms of bats**.

Whichever tunnel they take, they eventually find their way to the main underground chamber. This is a small, circular room containing a carving of Lolth with an offering table in front of her. Xune is already there. She's relieved to see the party with the mask in their possession. She asks if their journey was difficult and apologizes if they suffered at the hands of the previous monsters.

She takes the mask and moves to the table to make her offering, says a prayer in Undercommon, and places it onto the tablet.

However, her prayer goes unheard and a sudden screeching rises from the tunnel as Nasra, still in her yochlol form, appears.

It's a terrifying sight – towering and monstrous, dripping foul mucus, it looks more like gelatinous seaweed than any sort of humanoid. Seeing her girlfriend like this, Xune almost falls to her knees, but manages to stay standing.

Finally faced by the yochlol, the adventurers enter the final fight. However, the way it ends depends on their actions leading to this point.

PART 2

Option A

If this attack comes after receiving the mask and attempting the sacrifice, Nasra hesitates and seems to see the sacrifice. Xune approaches her and attempts to communicate with her: she explains they tried to bargain for her freedom but that Lolth has refused the offer, and that if she fights the control they can be together.

Her voice is pleading and desperate; she can barely stand to believe this creature is Nasra.

> Xune:
> *"Nasra, please, please recognize me! I'm here to save you! We all are! We've tried to make an offering to Lolth, but she won't listen. Only you can listen. Please, Nasra, please."*

However, after another moment of hesitation, the yochlol rises up and attacks Xune. Nasra knocks Zune back against the cave wall, semi-conscious and unable to participate in the rest of the fight. Despite this, Nasra continues to fight Lolth's influence throughout the rest of the battle and this gives the characters advantage.

Option B

This option occurs if the party does not listen to Xune and do not go to the temple. As soon as they refuse Xune's plan, she attacks them. Following her defeat, she screams, and this noise attracts the attention of the yochlol. It emerges from the mine, howling and charging. Perhaps it recognizes Xune's body, perhaps it is just hungry.

DEVELOPMENT

Once the yochlol has been defeated, this chapter ends and we move into one of the two possible conclusions.

CONCLUSION

Option A

This option assumes that the party went to the temple for the mask fragment. Here, defeating the yochlol results in it changing back into its drow form. A weakened, but happy, Nasra reunites with Xune. She's been through a lot. Much like Xune, her robes are torn and dirty. She's caught between gratitude for the characters' help and her distrust for non-drow, but once Xune confirms the characters helped her save Nasra, she's friendly to them. They're both thankful to the party and relieved to be finally free of Lolth.

Nasra: "You've done more for me—for us—than I ever expected of someone from the surface. Thank you."

Xune tries to hug them. It's a bad hug; she's not very good at hugging non-drow.

Option B

This option assumes the party went straight to fight the yochlol. After defeating her, Nasra materializes momentarily and sees the body of Xune lying at the feet of the adventurers. Slowly dying, she crawls to her side.

Nasra: "Oh, Xune, I'm so sorry I wasn't stronger. I'm so sorry…"

The sun is setting as you arrive back in Baumsville, greeted by the villagers who are happy to be able to return to their mines.

If the characters saved Nasra: As they celebrate, two figures sit hidden in the nearby forest and plan out their new, free lives.

REWARDS

For Option A, the adventurers are left with the mask fragment. As it wasn't accepted by Lolth, it is passed on to them. They can choose to keep it and sell it to Glebe for 100 gp or to return it to the temple. Either way, they can return to the village and collect their payment (60 gp per party member) for ending the threat of the yochlol.

For *Option B*, the adventurers do not have the mask fragment but can still claim the original reward.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

Thanks to all my editors who made this roughly readable: seriously Jessica, Michael, TK, I know I was a pain but you folks were awesome.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

I mainly write spooky comics and think about insects. On Twitter I'm @KLCunningha3.





Illustration by Daniel Comerci



Illustration by Jennifer Peig

DRACONIS ARGONAUTICA

by Lauren Neuburger

Creature: *The Colchian Dragon* | **Levels:** *5 - 8* | **CWs:** *Violence*

SYNOPSIS

Sailors claiming to be heroes attacked Colchia, the red half-dragon – enchanted her to sleep, and stole her Golden Fleece. She and her partner, Atalanta, don't care about the Argonauts' supposed heroism, but they do care about revenge.

ADVENTURE HOOK

This adventure is Tier 2 (suggested levels 5th-8th). There are several ways to introduce this module as a one-shot or a piece of an ongoing campaign; the simplest is a single cryptic request pinned to a bulletin board, which is the hook this adventure uses.

Additionally, the character Atalanta is an easy tie-in for players who prefer a more direct link to the story. She travels frequently, competes in all manner of martial games, and is regionally known for her athletic prowess. Similarly, characters may be familiar with the town Omiros or the Swig and Scale tavern. DMs also have the option of a town-crier shouting the arrival of the Argonauts at the docks, lauding their successful retrieval of the Golden Fleece.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

This module can be inserted into any setting, though it does mention the classical Greek Pantheon. Any number of seaside locations in the Forgotten Realms, e.g. Waterdeep, Candlekeep, etc. can be used as a substitute for Omiros.

All character combat statistics can be found in *Appendix A: Stat Blocks*. All personality traits and physical descriptions can be found in *Appendix B: Character Traits*.

CHAPTER 1 – SCORNED AS MONSTERS

The characters find themselves wandering through the coastal town of Omiros, a medium-sized village with a rich fishing and sailing economy. The docks comprise the entire western half of the town, an area featuring a diverse population of travelers and adventurers. The characters spot a clumsily-scrawled sign posted on a bulletin board. Read or paraphrase the following:

> A large, half-torn poster covers the smaller requests posted on the bulletin board at the crossroads of Omiros. The text is jagged and indelicate.
>
> *"Seeking warriors unafraid of monsters or those scorned as such. Bounty negotiable, pending successful revenge. Meet Colchia the Red at the Swig and Scale after dark."*

THE SWIG AND SCALE

This shady tavern near the docks is known for its fire-brandy and uncommon clientele. The place is large and spacious, and kept relatively clean by its owner and bartender, Khugak the Goliath. The other patrons range from a wide variety of backgrounds, but nearly all would be considered "monstrous" by many humanoid races. A trio of yuan-ti warriors quietly play a card game over mulled wine, and a cheerful goblin server hoists two trays of beer over her head.

COLCHIA AND ATALANTA

In the corner sit two tall figures, huddled closely and keenly watching the door. At six-and-a-half feet tall, the red half-dragon Colchia cuts an imposing figure. She wears spiked leather armor and a heavy cloak despite the season, and wraps her long tail around her waist. Beside her sits Atalanta, a tall, muscular woman with ghostly pale skin, thick black hair, and bright green eyes. She glares suspiciously at anyone who approaches their table.

Colchia's Story

Over drinks, Colchia outlines what happened when her property was stolen. The Argonauts stormed her home when she was sleeping and Atalanta was away, outnumbering her in combat. She fought back until the sorcerer, Medea, placed her under a sleeping curse. When she woke, her Golden Fleece—an expensive and sentimental family heirloom—was nowhere to be found. Her quaint home had been ravaged and looted.

She knows she can't fight all the Argonauts alone, even with the help of her demi-god partner (who begs to differ) and wishes to enlist anyone sympathetic to her cause. She is also aware that the Argonauts, especially Jason and Medea, are revered as heroes by most of the town despite their thieving and bullying of those they consider "monsters." Unless the characters suggest otherwise, Colchia plans to attack that night when most of the Argonauts are drinking and rabble-rousing.

Atalanta mutters at every opportunity that the Argonauts should be slain and Colchia vehemently disagrees: they did not kill her, so she will not kill them.

Development

Once the plan is set, the characters follow Colchia and Atalanta to the docks. Other patrons of the Swig and Scale treat them warmly if they show a measure of respect to Colchia and the serving staff.

Chapter 2 – Boarding Party

The *Argo* itself is a massive, gaudy trireme warship two stories tall. The players can use nearby ships and storefronts as cover, but they're clearly visible the moment they walk up the entry ramp. Barrels and boxes can help cover sneakier players from view with a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth) check.

Twins on the Deck

If any of the characters or NPCs have been instructed to stake out the *Argo* prior to the attack, they note the following on a DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check:

> The *Argo* floats, anchored at the docks, menacing and elegant. Above its two-story trireme deck, a deep red sail features Jason's insignia in black thread: a circular shield crossed with a downward-pointing short sword.
>
> No fewer than six Argonauts staggered away from the Omiros docks earlier, some with flasks in hand; the ancient shipwright and namesake of the *Argo*, Argus the Gnome, and a massive, scarred human barbarian, Theseus, among them. Currently, two nearly identical young men leisurely drink ale on the gangplank among the criss-crossed oars. They have ghostly pale skin and bright green eyes. They wear matching armor and weapons under brown cloaks: studded leather breastplates, two daggers, and powerful longbows.
>
> There is no sign of the leader of the Argonauts or their dangerous sorcerer.

If the characters act aggressively toward either of the two brothers, Castor or Pollux, they attack (Ref. *Appendix A*). If asked if she recognizes the brothers onboard the *Argo*, Colchia replies, "*They were there during the attack. But they're like babies: sheepish and guilty. I don't think they wanted to hurt me, despite Jason's orders. They may let us pass peacefully if we speak to them.*"

If Atalanta hears this comment, she adds, "*They may speak to my spear instead.*"

Highly perceptive or mythologically well-versed players might recall that Castor and Pollux are the twin sons of Zeus, who also happens to be Atalanta's father. She recognizes her kin immediately and refrains from commenting on their relation. If asked directly, she curtly replies in the affirmative they are her half-brothers, though she hasn't personally met them and doesn't care to do so.

With a successful DC 17 Charisma (Persuasion) check, Castor and Pollux grant the characters entry to the *Argo*. Note that only one check is required: the brothers do everything together. They are sympathetic to the people who've stood up to Jason and most recently, Colchia, and are not particularly fond of being in his service. They dislike his dictatorial, selfish leadership style. Castor and Pollux don't help loot the ship or harm any other Argonauts but quietly leave their posts, ale in hand. They nod respectfully and remorsefully to Colchia as they go and, despite her prior statements, Atalanta grits her teeth and lets them pass.

THE ALARM BELL

Throughout this encounter, any member of the Argonauts can attempt to sound the alarm: a massive bronze bell hanging at the stern of the *Argo*, near the stairs below deck. If the characters harm any Argonaut on board, they run for the alarm bell to call back their allies from nearby bars, even if the movement provokes an attack of opportunity. If the characters harm either Castor or Pollux, his brother spends an action sounding the alarm.

If the alarm bell sounds, Jason and Medea arrive from below deck and the other Argonauts return from their drinking spree within two turns or at the DM's discretion. Jason is the only Argonaut too arrogant to bother calling for help after being injured.

Colchia does not lead the charge below decks to Medea and Jason and instead avoids the combat order of the players, preferring to stay at the docks as advanced warning in the event that reinforcements return to the ship. Atalanta barges ahead, immediately kicking in doors to pick a fight with the first person she can find. She can be persuaded to stop (DC 13) and stay with the party if they ask for her help.

DEVELOPMENT

Finding nothing of value above deck, the heroes likely follow Atalanta on her revenge-fueled rampage downstairs. Contrarily, the alarm bell may have been rung and the entirety of the battle will occur above deck. Either way, items of value are below deck and the rest of the ship has yet to be explored.

CHAPTER 3 – BELOW DECK

The only way to catch Jason and Medea unaware is to creep onboard the *Argo*, persuade Castor and Pollux to grant them entry, and sneak past Medea's high passive Perception into their room at the bow.

> Small candles line the narrow passage below the deck of the *Argo*, casting flickering shadows across the pine floorboards. The nine closed doors on either side of the hallway stand in contrast to the single opened door at the bow: the Captain's Quarters.

BY CANDLELIGHT

Below deck is a cramped but clean hallway lined by nine tiny rooms—one for each of the Argonauts. The only exceptions are the room Castor and Pollux share with a bunk bed and the Captain's Quarters, where Medea has taken up living with Jason.

> Even from the opposite side of the long hallway, the Golden Fleece can be seen draped across a large, extravagantly decorated bed. It glimmers in the candlelight: Jason's latest trophy in a large collection of stolen goods.

All rooms are unlocked, with the exception of Argus', which can be unlocked with a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check. Argus hides a number of expensive Gnomish items inside, outlined in the treasure section in the conclusion of the adventure. Maps, ship blueprints, and engineering tools cover his austere room.

MAGIC AND BLADE

Only one room remains between the heroes and the Golden Fleece: Jason's room.

Medea has rigged a tripwire across the entrance of the Captain's Quarters she shares with Jason. If triggered, a *wall of force* damage (3d8) blows straight down

the hallway at any character within 10 feet of the door. *Dispel magic* removes the effect of this magical trap, or characters can simply step over the wire (Perception DC 12). Otherwise, tampering with the tripwire will trigger it. If the trap explodes, Jason laughs uproariously despite the damage to his ship.

Upon entering the Captain's Quarters, Jason calls the characters thieves and cowards, not recognizing they're in Colchia's service. If they explain they only want the Fleece, he initiates combat (Ref. *Appendix A*), bellowing, "Then come take it!" When bloodied, Jason becomes increasingly unhinged, saying they'll be punished by the gods for attacking him as he is mankind's greatest hero.

Meanwhile, Medea makes a break for the alarm bell at the earliest opportunity. If cornered, she attempts to deceive the characters into believing she is Jason's hostage. If they believe her (Insight DC 15), she attacks the moment their backs are turned. If she rings the alarm, the characters have to fight their way out of the docks to escape.

DEVELOPMENT

Time to flee! The characters attacked the *Argo* and returned the Fleece. The Swig and Scale makes a safe rendezvous point.

CONCLUSION

The hard part is over… or is it? The final outcome of this adventure largely depends on whether or not the characters were willing to kill the Argonauts to retrieve the Fleece. If they spare them, the characters are branded as lesser criminals in Omiros but revered as heroes among the monstrous races. If they kill the Argonauts, their story will be spread even farther, largely negating any good deeds done in the past as far as public opinion is concerned.

If the characters were spotted by anyone during their attack on the Argo, then Wanted posters - a parting gift from Argus the Gnome - appear on local bulletin boards. They describe the characters and read, *"REWARD: 200 GOLD PIECES. ASSISTED RED DRAGON IN ASSAULTING AND ROBBING THE GOOD SHIP ARGO."* The bounty on the characters may be higher depending on death toll, damages, and stolen goods.

REWARDS

Following the safe return of the Golden Fleece, the characters have earned the alliance of Colchia and her friends and family at the Swig and Scale. Individual payment from Colchia is 25 pp each.

POSSIBLE TREASURE

- The *Argo* is worth 20,000 gp. The *Argo's* sail is 2,000 gp. The bronze alarm bell is 1,000 gp.
- Castor and Pollux's longbows, Left and Right, are both magical +1 weapons worth 300 gp each. Their four total daggers are not enchanted, and are worth 3 gp each. A small keg of Omiros black ale worth 5 gp sat between the oars where they were resting.
- Argus' navigator's tools and ocean maps are worth 100 gp together. His gnomish tinkerer's tools are worth 10 gp.
- Jason's +1 sword, Deathbolt, is enchanted to do an additional 1d6 lightning damage. It is worth 400 gp when combined with his +1 shield.
- Medea wears a *ring of water walking* (500 gp) and *Quaal's Magic Token – Fan*.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

The Colchian Dragon deserved better. Now she'll have it.

Special thanks to Ashley Warren for her patience and trust in new authors, and Samantha Darcy for encouraging my participation in this incredible anthology. Tremendous thanks to Aaron Martin, Lindsay Wandall, and Andrea Lemons for always believing in my work. And finally, permanent thanks to my endlessly supportive girlfriend, Ashley Miller.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lauren Neuburger's first *D&D* module, "The Lambent Delirium," was written during Ashley Warren's first RPG Writer Workshop in 2018. She plans to keep writing adventures she would want to DM. Her Twitter handle is @LaurenNeuburger.

Colchia the Red

Medium, Lawful Good
Barbarian, Path of the Battlerager
Half-Red Dragon

Armor Class 15
Hit Points 82
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	13 (+1)	17 (+3)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	8 (-1)

Damage Immunities Fire
Senses Darkvision
Languages Common, Draconic

Actions

Greatsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 6) slashing.

Fire Breath (Recharge 5-6). Colchia exhales fire in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Atalanta, Warrior Hero

Atalanta, Warrior Hero
Medium, Chaotic Neutral
Fighter, Battlemaster
Aasimar

Armor Class 17
Hit Points 67
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	20 (+5)	17 (+3)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Damage Resitances Necrotic, radiant
Senses Darkvision
Languages Common, Celestial

Actions

Multiattack. Atalanta makes two spear attacks.

Spear. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d6 + 5) piercing.

Healing Hands. As an action, Atalanta can touch a creature and cause it to regain a number of hit points equal to her level (7). Once she uses this trait, she can't use it again until finishing a long rest.



Medea the Sorcerer

Medium, Neutral Evil
Sorcerer, Storm
Half-Elf

Armor Class 12
Hit Points 51
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)

Damage Resitances Lightning, thunder
Damage Immunities Fire
Senses Passive Perception 13, darkvision
Languages Common, Abyssal, Draconic, Primordial

Actions

Spellcasting. Medea is a 7th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). Medea has the following sorcerer spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *Ray of Frost, Shocking Grasp, Mage Hand*
1st level (4 slots): *Sleep, Thunderwave, Magic Missile*
2nd level (3 slots): *Shatter, Blur, Misty Step*
3rd level (3 slots): *Lightning Bolt, Fly*
4th level (1 slot): *Ice Storm*

Jason, the Argonaut's Leader

Medium, Chaotic Evil
Fighter, Champion
Human

Armor Class 19
Hit Points 67
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)

Languages Common

Martial Advantage. Once per turn, Jason can deal an extra 7 (2d6) damage to a creature it hits with a weapon attack if that creature is within 5 feet of one of his allies that isn't incapacitated.

Actions

Multiattack. Jason makes two short sword attacks.

Short Sword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d6 + 5) piercing, plus 3 (1d6 lightning) damage.

Castor and Pollux, the Twins

Medium, True Neutral
Ranger, Hunter
Aasimar

Armor Class 16
Hit Points 53
Speed 45 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)

Damage Resistances Necrotic, Radiant
Senses Darkvision
Languages Common, Celestial

Actions

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d6 + 5) piercing.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d4 + 5) piercing.

Healing Hands. As an action, Castor and Pollux can touch a creature and cause it to regain a number of hit points equal to their level (7). Once they use this trait, they can't use it again until finishing a long rest.

Theseus, Slayer of the Minotaur

Medium, Chaotic Evil
Barbarian, Path of the Berserker
Human

Armor Class 15
Hit Points 72
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	8 (-1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Languages Common, Celestial

Actions

Greataxe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (1d12 + 6) slashing.

Handaxe. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d6 + 6) slashing.

APPENDIX B: CHARACTER TRAITS

COLCHIA THE RED

Appearance

At six-and-a-half feet tall, Colchia cuts an imposing figure. She wears spiked leather armor and a heavy cloak despite the season, and tends to keep her eyes down when traveling in daylight, hoping to pass for a red Dragonborn. She keeps her tail wrapped around her waist.

Personality

While she is comfortable fighting, Colchia would rather avoid conflict and attention, particularly when either means making a worse name for those of her race. Her family of half-dragons simply wants to be left alone. She has a wretched temper, one that she works to control on a daily basis.

Colchia is well-spoken and patient, which may come as a surprise to the characters who have fought half-dragons in the past. She simply wants her property returned.

ATALANTA, WARRIOR HERO

Appearance

Atalanta is a tall, muscular woman with ghostly pale skin, thick black hair, and bright green eyes. She shares these traits with many other children of Zeus.

Personality

Far less forgiving than her partner Colchia, Atalanta is ready to exact bloody vengeance on the Argonauts. She is a generally aloof woman who has no interest in anything but fighting, winning competitions, and her girlfriend. Atalanta is the one most comfortable with point-blank murdering the Argonauts for stealing from Colchia.

MEDEA THE SORCERER

Appearance

Lithe and lovely, Medea isn't above using her elegant looks to get her way. She wears a dark blue robe, a sapphire ring, and an expensive, fan-shaped ornament in her hair.

Personality

The deceptive brains of the operation, Medea is using Jason to grow her wealth and power. She will remain loyal until it suits her to leave him.

JASON, THE ARGONAUT'S LEADER

Appearance

Conventionally handsome, Jason is large and powerfully built. His leather armor, circular shield, and blade are always on his person.

Personality

His arrogance is unparalleled. Entitled, aggressive, and oblivious, Jason has the makings of a perfect bully. He lives for attention and compliments, especially from the common folk.

CASTOR AND POLLUX, THE TWINS

Appearance

Tall and muscular, the fraternal twin brothers have ghostly pale skin, bright green eyes, and black hair.

Personalities

Castor and Pollux are the only Argonauts who feel a shred of guilt about the things they've done in Jason's service. The sons of Zeus grow to mistrust their leader more every day, and wish to be free to act on their own accord.

THESEUS, SLAYER OF THE MINOTAUR

Appearance

Theseus is a massive, hairy human covered in scars. His favorite scar is the sunburst on his stomach where the Minotaur gored him.

Personality

Theseus is an oft-drunk lush who only ever talks about toppling the Minotaur. His rage is blind and brutal.

ARGUS, THE SHIPWRIGHT

Appearance

Unkempt and ungraceful, Argus wears tattered clothes and a heavy backpack full of books and papers. His fingers are perpetually inkstained.

Personality

Argus is an ancient, grumpy old gnome. He is not a fighter, but acts as the Argonauts' navigator.



"Medea" by Frederick Sandys



Illustration by Luciella Elisabeth Scarlett

IT'S ALL IN YOUR HEAD

by Alette Smith (Scriv the Bard)

Creature: *Nukekubi* | **Level:** *5 - 8* | **CWs:** *Mild violence, themes of abuse*

SYNOPSIS

Life in Fellbrae isn't for the meek or faint of heart. The harsh wind and waters of this coastal fishing and mining village hardened its people to the rougher side of life—practicality and realism are the tools of the trade. When bodies start turning up with no suspects identified, superstitions and old wives' tales that have persisted through the generations fill in the missing answers due to an ineffective judicial system. Rumors of vengeful demons haunt the town as the magistrate struggles to find the truth.

ADVENTURE HOOK

The party may arrive in Fellbrae for a few reasons: they could be hired guards for trading caravans, escorting merchants and traders with interest in the fishing or mining industry, they may have heard rumors of strange deaths from nearby, or they could be there to deliver a letter from the capital to the magistrate, inquiring after a new law that has been passed. The magistrate is known for being unusually strict, but hesitant to deal out punishment before all information is considered. The new law requires there to be three witnesses to a crime who are willing to come forward for it to be a punishable offense.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The people of Fellbrae are very superstitious, and the recent mysterious deaths are only encouraging their superstition. Townsfolk think that spirits are to blame - spirits of those wronged in the past seeking retribution.

Common superstitions include:

- Always store away excess lantern oil, or demons will be attracted to the warmth of the leftover oil.
- Names written in red ink doom the subject to misfortune. This is also how the local court notates the names of the guilty in the registry.
- Don't whistle at night. It attracts bad luck. And whatever you do, never answer a whistling you hear in the night.
- Don't follow strange lights at night; they're restless spirits that will lead you into danger.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

- **Magistrate Dalen Sorem:** Male elf, darker skin with pale blonde, almost white hair. Seems old in a way that isn't reflected in his bearing or lines of the face, but in his eyes. Lawful and strict, but selectively so (for example, when it comes to his daughter's health). He is overly cautious when it comes to his daughter's well-being ever since her mother's (Deidra) death. He is hesitant to pass judgment without full information/details concerning a case, which leads to some culprits escaping punishment.
- **Nadia Sorem:** Female elf, daughter and only family of the Magistrate. Has the same pale hair and composition as her father, but with shockingly blue eyes (from her mother). At 13 years old, she feels trapped by her overprotective father, and has been feeling ill lately. She wants to become a lawyer herself one day.
- **Isla the Guard:** Female wood elf, tall, brown eyes, dark hair in a braid, a fighter who dual-wields axes. She guards the door to the magistrate's home. Has been in Sorem's employment since Nadia was a child and sees her as a little sister.
- **Yannik the Guard:** Male half-orc, guard assigned to the magistrate's home. Keeps hair shaved on the sides, but long on top, pulled back into a short ponytail. Gruff but kind.

- **Bokki the Innkeep (The Brass Canary):** Dwarf innkeeper. Salt and pepper beard that looks as though it hasn't seen a comb in days. Rowdy but friendly, encourages drinking and settling disputes with one's fists. Has a secret fascination with fancy mixed drinks and cocktails.
- **Talinn the Blacksmith:** Female human, highly skilled blacksmith who supplies the town's tools, equipment, and weaponry for the guards. She trains with the spear in her spare time. Shorter in stature, but strong. Keeps her forge clean and tidy and the fires hot to counter the chill, biting wind outside.
- **Victor the Drunkard:** Retired miner who spends most of his time hanging around the Brass Canary offering wisdom to all who don't seek it. He's probably pickled by now and no one believes him when he says he saw a floating head. Gray hair, missing a couple teeth, left eye is glass.
- **Kaizen the Librarian:** Male dwarf, lighter brown hair kept in a neat ponytail. Reserved and gruff, but brightens up if the party shows interest in books and old stories. He can introduce them to Granny Min.
- **Granny Min:** The unofficial expert on the town's superstitions and folklore. She's Kaizen's mother and enjoys gossip and a good cup of tea. She'll share a story if you bring her tea and biscuits. Wild hair kept back with a handkerchief, though her aggressive curls seem to ignore it.
- **Lisette the Fisherman:** Female gnome. She owns one of the fishing boats with her husband.
- **Garmin the Fishmonger:** Male gnome. Husband of Lisette, he sells fish in the market by the docks.
- **Craig the Miner:** Male human, middle-aged, very superstitious. Can be found in the Brass Canary.
- **Bastien the Cleric of Llyr:** Gnome cleric of Llyr, the god of the sea. Followers of Llyr believe in personal freedoms, and respecting the strength and tempestuousness of the sea, while also cherishing the bounty it brings. Bastien is a retired sailor.

CHAPTER 1 – A TORN NET AND GHOST STORIES

You have arrived in Fellbrae, a coastal fishing and mining town characterized by rocky cliffs and caverns rising tall on either side of the docks and cove leading out to sea. The townsfolk live a tough but comparatively prosperous life. The architecture showcases simple yet sturdy stonemasonry, built to withstand the heavy wind and rain battering the coast. A tall iron gate serves as the entrance to the town, with guards on either side. There is only one main road that winds down through the town, with smaller footpaths branching from it, terminating at the docks. There seems to be a perpetual mist in the air, providing a sharp contrast to the backdrop of vibrant green hills farther inland. It's winter, and preparations for the midwinter fair are underway, but spirits are dampened by a series of strange murders plaguing the town.

You arrive a couple of hours before sunset and head to the local inn where miners and fishing crews unwind after a long day of work. It can get a bit rowdy at times, but such is the manner of life in Fellbrae—leisure time is just as intense as the work done during the day.

Outside the inn there is a man yelling at his son for snagging a fishing net on the cobblestones and allowing some of the fish to scatter into the street. He strikes him hard before telling him to go home to his mother, with instructions to have dinner ready for his return. Other townsfolk walking by gasp, shake their heads, and mutter under their breath at how children shouldn't be treated in such a way, but no one stops him. Unchallenged, the man shakes his head and proceed into the bar, where he drinks his ale sullenly. If the party challenges him, he angrily tells them to mind their own business. Depending on how the party handles the situation, a successful DC 15 Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check may help the man decide he "doesn't want a drink after all" and he'll walk away.

The party may also interact with the boy, Danny. He is young, not more than ten years of age, and is

trying to collect the fish before heading home. He's thankful for the party's kindness, but shy and not very talkative. He goes home after the interaction ends.

THE BRASS CANARY

The town's only inn and tavern is a tall, two story building wedged between the guard post watching the main gates of the town and a general goods store. Windows are lit with candles and slightly fogged from the warmth within, giving it a welcoming glow. When you enter, you are greeted with loud laughter, mugs clanging, heated conversations, and somewhat discordant music. There are two fireplaces on either side of the room and a bar along the left-hand wall, behind which you can see stairs leading down into what is most likely a cellar. A central wooden staircase leads up to the second floor. Your boots click against the cobbled stone beneath your feet as you walk to the bar where Bokki, the innkeeper, greets you with suspicion hidden behind a broad smile.

This is where the party can interact with some NPCs and learn more about the deaths and superstitions. Here are some things they may learn:

Bokki is a down-to-earth realist who doesn't believe in ghost stories or fairy tales. He believes in the fish in a net and the ore in the mine, "real" things that support the town. He serves the party kindly and offers them rooms in the inn (5 cp a night), but if they want ghost stories, he tells them to ask Victor. If they want more, find Granny Min at the library. He isn't eager to talk about the deaths, but says that some folk think it's ghosts, but personally he thinks there's some sort of vigilante out there.

- If they ask about the man from the street, they learn that his name is Jeremiah. He lives with his wife, Mona and their son, Danny. He's known for being a hard worker, but unkind and impatient. He lost a brother last year to a cave-in in the mines, and he hasn't been the same since. People are afraid to confront him. "People mostly mind their own business here." Jeremiah doesn't stay long. If left to his own devices, he finishes his drink and leaves while the party speaks to other NPCs. He's out of sight by the time they leave if they try to follow him.
- Victor is sitting by the hearth, singing along drunkenly and out of tune as Craig plays a spirited tune on a tin flute. He sits by himself; most people seem as though they don't want to get too close. Victor is untrusting of the party at first, but with a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check, he warms up to them. If they ask him about the deaths or ghost stories, he's initially defensive and asks if they're just here to mock him and call him crazy. He shares that he's seen strange things late at night, after the lanterns have been snuffed—strange blue lights, "ghost lights," he calls them. He says that sometimes he even hears them whistling. He only tried to follow one once, but it led to him stumbling into some buckets in the alley and he lost it.
- Kaizen is sitting and laughing with Talinn, Lisette, and Garmin, and invites the party to join them at their table. Here, the party can learn more about the deaths. The victims are people who were either on the brink of being charged with a crime, or were suspected of a crime without enough evidence or witness accounts. Recent happenings include the body of a cruel man accused of betraying his wife that was found in the mines. Another body was found in the woods after she poisoned her mother-in-law. There are patterns among the victims:
  - Crimes against women or children
  - Pale corpses, drained of blood
  - Bodies are found in isolation
  - Puncture/bite wounds on arms
- Garmin and Talinn think there's a vigilante, Lisette is unsure, and Kaizen thinks there's something supernatural at work. He invites the party to the library in the morning.

The night continues and the party can either take a long rest or walk around the town. If they go outside, they see people removing the street lanterns with long poles, extinguishing the flames, and removing the residual oil before replacing them. Soon, they are the only ones outside, and as they walk, they start to hear a faint whistling carried on the wind. If they follow the sound, they come upon the docks at the "bottom" of the town, and with a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check, they see glowing, blue lights floating at the end of the harbor, just above the water's surface. If they move closer, the whistling abruptly stops, and the blue lights fly towards the party at high speed, revealing themselves to be three **will-o'wisps**! In addition to their listed abilities, these will-o'wisps also have the following special ability:

Mimicry. The will-o'wisp is able to mimic the sound of whistling or soft whispers, but cannot speak or create complex noises.

DEVELOPMENT

Once the fight is over, the wisps dissipate into the air. If the party looks in the water where the wisps were floating, they find the body of Jeremiah, the cruel father from earlier that day. Like the other bodies that have been found, he is cold and drained of blood.

They can leave the body for town guards to find or report it to the nearest guard (Isla at the Magistrate's manor) so they can begin their investigation. If the party asks to see the Magistrate, they are turned away, but offered an appointment in the morning.

The party won't find anything else of significance and can return to the inn for a long rest.

The party doesn't know it yet, but Jeremiah was killed by the **Nukekubi**. This vampiric creature appears as a normal humanoid by day, but once they fall asleep, their head separates from their body and flies through the air, searching for a victim. The Nukekubi is usually unaware of their condition and has no memory of the night before. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (History) check allows a character to recall stories of some sort of vampiric creature that used to haunt the region.

CHAPTER 2 – STORIES

The next morning, the party investigates and tries to learn more about the rumors, vampire-like creatures, and Jeremiah.

If they ask around about vampires, they learn of the Nukekubi that used to haunt the area, and that it disappeared long ago. Going to the library to see Kaizen and Granny Min yields more information.

The library is modest and comprised mainly of old, donated books from families through the generations. It is cozy and has the musty smell of old parchment. If they speak with Kaizen, he seems appalled at the discovery of Jeremiah's body, and numbly wonders who would be next. However, he concedes that Jeremiah wasn't exactly loved by the town, though he worries for the family left behind. If asked about creatures and old tales, Kaizen refers the party to Granny Min whilst he looks for a relevant book.

Granny Min recalls the stories of the Nukekubi, the vampiric creature that was seen many years ago, but says it has since disappeared. She also recalls that it didn't harm people, but a few sheep and stray cats would go missing here and there, only to be found drained of blood later. She also tells the party that only a special ritual can banish it. At this point, Kaizen returns with a dusty old tome. Granny Min tells the party if indeed there is a Nukekubi, they must draw the glyphs/runes from the book around the body and activate the spell before the head re-attaches to it.

MEETING THE MAGISTRATE

The characters return to the Magistrate's manor, and Yannick (who is now on duty) escorts them inside. It is easily the grandest building in Fellbrae: two-story stone construction, dark wooden flooring inside, covered with finely woven carpet that must have been brought in through the trade routes. There are a few low shelves in the foyer, containing books on law, historic records of Fellbrae, and some family records. There is also an oil painting of the Magistrate, his wife, Deidra, and their daughter, Nadia, hung over the mantle. All in all, the home is finely furnished, but seems a bit too orderly to be comfortable.

After they've had the chance to examine the room, the Magistrate descends the central wooden staircase, wearing formal robes and the chain of his office, silver balancing scales of Forseti, the patron deity of justice and fair trials. He greets them unsmiling, and a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Insight or Perception) check reveals that he bears fatigue in his posture and his eyes seem tired. He is well-intentioned, but the recent events have led to many sleepless nights.

Here, the party learns a bit more about the strange happenings (both victims had been accused and were awaiting trial) and Magistrate Dalen suggests that someone is behind the killings, and that the ghost stories are things designed to scare children and nothing more. He confirms that rumors have been spreading and requests the party's aid in identifying the vigilante, asserting that the accused and suspected must still stand trial, regardless of what others may say.

If the party mentions the strange lights (will-o'-wisps) fought the night before and suggest that they might have something to do with the strange deaths, Dalen suggests they had one too many drinks at the Brass Canary. He dismisses the hypothesis as an old

wives' tale meant to scare children that has no place in a court of law.

If asked about his family, he mentions that his wife passed away when Nadia was very young, and her grandmother helped raise her while he was holding trials. Unfortunately, she passed away about a decade ago, and had gone a bit mad in her later years. During this part of the conversation, Nadia makes an appearance at the top of the stairs, sniffling and looking rather ill. The party learns that the daughter is sick with a chill and has taken to wearing a thick red scarf to keep warm. The Magistrate excuses himself from the meeting to take care of his daughter, signaling an end to the visit.

If there is a cleric or healer in the party, Dalen may permit them to examine Nadia. If asked, she reveals that she's been sick for several days now and has been having nightmares. Dreams of flying that start out beautiful and serene twist into dreams of bad people who are hurting others. Next thing she knows, those people turn up missing or dead.

Her father dismisses this once again as fanciful imaginings and worries that he tells her too much about the town's goings-on. She argues that she can handle it, since she's been studying to become a magistrate herself one day. He shakes his head and assures her that it's not the kind of work a young girl should worry over.

Upon examination, the players see that Nadia is pale and drawn, and if they ask to examine her throat, they see strange markings, like thin white lines, around her neck, which she assures them are only birthmarks. She's self-conscious about them, however, and doesn't want to talk about them further.

DEVELOPMENT

If the party leaves here, they may notice Nadia watching them from a window on the upper floor (her bedroom), with a sad expression on her face, before receding back into the room.

From now until nightfall, the party may discuss the day's events and make any preparations they require for the Nukekubi ritual. Whether they are in the Brass Canary that evening or elsewhere, they notice with a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check more strange lights hovering outside the window and must give chase as this is the Nukekubi's head with four will-o'-wisps. This is when they witness the lights and the glowing, floating head disappear into the magistrate's house through Nadia's now open window.

CHAPTER 3 – REVEALING THE NUKEKUBI

The party can either request entry from Isla (if they tell her what they saw, they only need a successful DC 5 Charisma (Persuasion) check to gain entry) or break in and prepare for the ritual, sneaking through the halls and picking locks. When they go upstairs, the first door to the left is Nadia's room (the room she emerged from when they first met her). They can enter by opening the door from inside the house with a successful DC 10 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check or by scaling the wall outside and climbing through the window. The room is smaller, with a four-poster bed, wall shelves with books and some toys displayed, and a wardrobe. There is also a small bedside table holding a dimly lit oil lamp and a small framed picture: it's a younger Nadia with an older woman, who must be the grandmother. They are both wearing heavy scarves identical to the one Nadia was wearing earlier that day.

It is confirmed that Nadia is the Nukekubi when they find her headless body sleeping in her room. Before long, the head emerges from behind the wardrobe with two more **will o'wisps** and attacks the party!

To defeat the Nukekubi, the characters must:

- Keep the head from reattaching before the sun rises.
- Perform a ritual on the body while the head is detached, which awakens Nadia and dispels the Nukekubi when the head re-attaches.
- Some characters have to perform the ritual while others fight off the head.

During the battle, Isla, Yannick, and Dalen may try to enter the room, if the party did not lock or bar the door. If that's the case, Isla and Yannick (**guard**) try to help fight the Nukekubi and the party must prevent them from killing her and ruining the spell. Dalen becomes frightened and calls out Nadia's name.

CONCLUSION

The girl reawakens as the sun breaks the horizon, with full memory of all that has happened. She recalls that her mother and grandmother before her were also Nukekubi, but her grandmother attempted to hide her nature and knowledge of the condition after her mother passed away.

"My Grandmother thought it was a curse, too, like all the others, but it isn't. It's just the way we are… I think I can control it now."

The trait had been dormant in her blood, and been activated when Nadia became angry with her father's lack of action when dealing with those who harm others. She subconsciously decided to take matters into her own hands, and the wisps just used it as a way to feed upon her targets.

The will-o'-wisps are actually malevolent spirits who have been sapping energy from Nadia while in her headless form, thereby making her ill. The ritual did not reverse the "curse," as the Nukekubi state is simply something in her family's blood, but it protects her from the spirits while she sleeps and enables her to control when she goes into the Nukekubi state. It also gives her the ability to "see" through the will-o'-wisps.

Dalen rushes into the room once the fight is over and embraces Nadia tightly. The party can tell him what happened, but Nadia interrupts them, preferring to tell him herself. She maturely thanks them for all they have done, and reassures her father that everything is okay.

REWARDS

Magistrate Dalen rewards the party with 300 gp each, and Nadia gifts them her red scarf. Upon further inspection, the scarf has a healing enchantment woven into its fabric, granting the wearer 10 extra hit points and resistance against poison. If asked, Nadia tells the party her grandmother made the scarf for her to keep her safe.

The party is also able to keep the book they received from Kaizen and Granny Min. It is a tome of strange and unusual creatures. Whomever studies it for 30 hours or more gains proficiency in creature-based Nature checks and advantage on attacks against either undead or fiendish enemies.



AUTHOR'S NOTES

This adventure features a creature from Japanese folklore, the Nukekubi.

The Nukekubi is a cursed demon whose head detaches from her body while she sleeps to wreak havoc around town—from drinking the oil from lamps to attacking and sucking blood from terrified victims. The head then flies home and re-attaches to the body before the sun rises. When the woman awakens, she has no recollection of the events from the previous night, save for some strange dreams. If the Nukekubi is aware of the curse, she often wears a scarf during the day to hide the tell-tale lines or wrinkles around her neck, indicating where her head detaches at night.

This accursed state falls upon people—most often women—who commit some sort of sin or betrayal, though it also afflicts women whose husbands commit the sin. No one ever said demons were fair, I guess. What's more, the curse can pass from mother to daughter, thereby marking the entire family for misfortune. According to legend, the Nukekubi can be stopped by hiding the body from the head until sunrise, thereby preventing it from re-attaching. There are also tales that claim the cooked liver of a white dog can cure the curse, though it will simply pass to another person. Poor dog.

This adventure also experiments with an Eastern storytelling tradition, Kishōtenketsu.

Kishōtenketsu is a four-part structure found in classic Chinese, Korean, and Japanese narratives, with its origins rooted in Chinese poetry. This style of story is often identified by its lack of a central conflict, featuring instead some sort of contrasting elements to create a dynamic plot.

IT BREAKS DOWN IN THE FOLLOWING MANNER:

- **Introduction (ki):** Offers an initial description of characters and setting. In the adventure, this is where the party arrives in Fellbrae, interacts with the NPCs, and learns about the mysterious deaths.
- **Development (shō):** Further develops the characters, setting, and the interplay between the two. This is where the party learns more about the "ghost stories" and encounters will-o'-wisps with Jeremiah's body.
- **Twist or Contrast (ten):** Turns toward a seemingly unrelated development. When the party meets Magistrate Dalen and Nadia, the information about their family and the fact that Nadia is ill has no obvious link to the initial plot.
- **Conclusion or Reconciliation (ketsu):** Integrates and concludes the first three parts with a cohesive narrative. This culminates with the final battle, when the party discovers that Nadia is a Nukekubi and the connections between the deaths and her strange sickness.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alette Smith (aka Scriv the Bard) is an all-ages Dungeon Master and independent *D&D* 5E adventure author based in Cambridge, UK. She got her start at a local bookstore holding introductory games for children and their families, and has now expanded into regular family workshops in which she teaches children how to create and run *D&D* stories of their own. She also runs a blog where she writes about storytelling, running *D&D* for children and families, and offers original and commissioned OGL adventures. You can learn more about Scriv at scrivthebard.com or on Twitter and Instagram @ScrivTheBard!

Nukekubi

Humanoid, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 16
Hit Points 140
Speed 60 ft. (flying head), 10 ft. (body)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	18 (+4)	17 (+3)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Dex +9, Wis +9, Cha +7
Skills Perception +9, Stealth +9
Damage Resistances necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Senses darkvision 120 ft., Perception 17
Languages Common, Elvish, Undercommon
Challenge 13 (10,000 XP)

Misty Escape. When it drops to 0 HP away from its body, the Nukekubi head transforms into a cloud of mist instead of falling unconscious. It must return to its body within two hours or be destroyed. After spending 1 hour connected to its body with 0 hit points, it regains 1 hit point.

Sunlight Hypersensitivity. The Nukekubi takes 20 radiant damage when it starts its turn in sunlight. While in the sunlight, it has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks.

Innate Spellcasting. The Nukekubi's spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 17). The Nukekubi can innately cast the following spells:

At will: *charm person*
3/day: *dominate person*

Actions

Multiattack. The Nukekubi makes a bite attack with its head and an unarmed strike with its body if it is within 60 feet of the head.

Unarmed Strike (Body Only). *Melee weapon attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage. Instead of dealing damage, the Nukekubi can grapple the target (escape DC 11).

Bite (Head Only). +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) necrotic damage. The target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage taken, and the Nukekubi regains hit points equal to that amount. The reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.



"Nukekubi" by Bakemono no e (c. 1700)



Illustration by Alison Huang

A STORM OF WISHES

by D.E. Chaudron

Creature: *Medusa* | **Level:** *5 - 10*

SYNOPSIS

The mysterious Stonesea has been shrouded by an impenetrable mist that has cut the hidden islands within from outside contact for generations. When a storm god's avatar threatens the medusas on the islands, a monk named Alcis leaves her home to seek help for her fallen order. This avatar can reflect the most powerful magic on a whim, and rousing a god's chosen is a deadly gambit. What will the party find in the heart of the sunken temple?

ADVENTURE HOOK

A Storm of Wishes is intended for a party of 4, level 5th-10th adventurers. They may be treasure hunters seeking the bounty of the Stonesea or recruited directly by Alcis.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Centuries ago, tempest clerics ignited a war in the Stonesea. Their leader insisted the islands belonged to Poseidon, and must be reclaimed from the medusas at any cost. The medusas unleashed their petrifying gazes en masse, turning Poseidon's cohort to stone. Fearing his wrath, the medusas prayed to the goddess Panopti for a blessing, and the Stonesea was bound in mist to protect from future assaults.

However, the clerics were not entirely wrong. Centuries later, a mining expedition uncovered an underground chamber connected to the sea. The altar inside was dedicated to Poseidon and guarded by a vengeful elemental named Pelagaios, incensed by an eon of isolation.

A high priestess attempted to negotiate with Pelagaios, but was killed in the process. In retaliation, monks of the Open Eye descended into the chamber to destroy him, only to have their gazes reflected, turning the entire order to stone – all save one. Alcis, a young monk of the order who lacked sight from birth, fled the chamber, desperate to defeat Pelagaios and return her sisters to living flesh.

NOTE: While any storm god may be used in this adventure, the story defaults to Poseidon. For campaigns that lack Greek deities, Talos is recommended.

CHAPTER 1 – VEIL OF THE SEA

The Stonesea can only be approached through the shallows off the coast, as no ship will risk passage through the divine mist. A wall of fog stretches as high as the eye can see, casting a mile-wide shroud around the distant islands.

THE MIST

This border around the Stonesea is a heavily obscured area. Antimagic properties prevent any divination spell from being cast within. The mist cannot be dispelled or otherwise removed.

A total of six successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception or Survival) checks are required to navigate through the mist. A natural 1 subtracts a success from the total and a natural 20 adds two successes to the total. If three failures are accumulated, the party becomes lost in the mist.

Parties that succeed pierce the mist without trouble. They emerge near a sandbar bridge separating them from much deeper water. It is waist-height and traversing further puts the adventurers in difficult terrain.

Parties that fail their checks are lost inside the mist. They wander until Alcis finds them and offers assistance. When adventurers reach the sandbar, the elemental strikes.

ROLEPLAYING ALCIS

The daughter of two masons, Alcis broke away from family tradition by joining the Order of the Open Eye. She was born completely blind—and without a petrifying gaze—but excels as a monk. She was part of the original force that fought Pelagaios.

Alcis is soft-spoken, kind, and deeply devoted to her order. She gets along best with good or lawful party members, but is willing to cooperate with anyone in order to drive Pelagaios from the Stonesea. When narrating with her voice, keep in mind that visual descriptions are not appropriate.

AMBUSH!

> The water around your feet ripples before taking shape. Salt stings the air with the elemental's thrash, and despite a lack of expression, malice radiates from the creature. It lunges with the sound of a hundred crashing waves.

A **water elemental** attacks the party at the sandbar bridge. Additional elementals may be added for higher levels, but take caution when combining this with the effects of the difficult terrain.

Alcis (LG female medusa monk) assists the party in confronting the elemental.

Post-ambush, Alcis explains that the elemental was sent by Pelagaios. If they have not already been introduced, Alcis also explains that she is looking for help to fight the avatar.

ARIMA

Clear blue waters surround Arima; the island is free from the mist guarding the rest of the Stonesea. At first, it is difficult to see the capital itself, for its dozens of buildings are made of the same polished black stone that form the island's towering cliffs. A crescent-shaped bay is carved in the very center, allowing access to Arima's heart.

Arima is home to a thousand medusas, serving as the economic and political center of the Stonesea. Its distinctive black sands and cliffs are from the volcanic activity that formed the islands.

Medusas

In the Stonesea, medusas are a lawful and relatively isolated group. They live communally and are masters of fishing and masonry. Separated from the rest of the realm and lacking for threats, their only standing defensive force is the Open Eye, an order of monks who eschew weapons to hone their natural abilities. Their goddess Panopti is a minor deity (Nature domain) that protects all medusas sworn to her name.

Fishing is Arima's backbone; the party encounters a maze of docks approaching Arima through its bay. Domesticated gorgons provide meat, hides, and bone for the medusas, but their petrifying gaze is also used to create raw stone for architectural projects. Visitors may find this unusual, but the gorgons are blindfolded to prevent any accidents if the beasts are startled or hurt.

Citizens of Arima react with shock to outsiders, but not hostility. The party can purchase items from local merchants, but may have trouble finding anything composed of wood due to the lack of trees.

News of the party's arrival spreads like wildfire, attracting the attention of Peitho (LN female **medusa** artificer), Arima's leader. She confronts them with a warning: due to the loss of life from Pelagaios, descending into the underground is forbidden.

ROLEPLAYING PEITHO

Older sister of High Priestess Orthia, who was killed by Pelagaios. Peitho was elected to rule Arima decades prior and has a knack for engineering and other sciences. Her designs allowed for expansion below the earth, creating new homes and a wealth of resources for Arima.

She is haunted by guilt for what happened in the temple and is unwilling to risk any more of Arima's citizens. Her time and energy is spent aiding the refugees who lived beneath the surface. The stress of tending to the refugees make Peitho come off as cold and unyielding. If the party succeeds in destroying Pelagaios, then she warms up considerably.

If Alcis is with the party, she tries to convince Peitho

to let the party through. If not, Peitho requires some convincing, including a promise to limit any destruction below the surface. A successful DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check results in Peitho giving the party a *wand of greater restoration*. Peitho informs the party that the command word to use the wand is 'hemerasia'.

Once the party is prepared, they're lead to the entrance to the underground. Proceed to *Chapter 2*.

Arima NPCs:
Ariste (NG female **medusa** commoner), Chrysea (LG female **medusa** cleric), Ergane (NG female **medusa** bard), Sciras (LN female **medusa** monk), Xenia (N female **medusa** commoner).

Stonesea Islands:
Arima, Pithe, Cylicia, Catace, Hyde.

CHAPTER 2 – HEART OF THE EARTH

The floor below the open arch cuts downward at a sharp angle, offering a smooth descent into the underground. Ancient reliefs are carved on all sides, detailing how the medusas were gifted their ability to turn others to stone. A many-eyed goddess is shown trading two of her eyes to a trusted supplicant, bidding her to sculpt the world in the goddess' name. The supplicant offers her blessed sight to her daughter, and, thus, it carries from one generation to the next.

Arima's underground opens up after a long, wide ramp down. This corridor is well-lit with magical sconces, leading to a large map carved into the wall. Its directions are written in Primordial (Terran) runes. Alcis is able to translate these runes.

The path splits, diverging between the mines and the residential district. While both lead to the temple, the residential district is filled with traps left by minions of Pelagaios, and the mines hold a host of hostile creatures under his influence. Alcis is unaware of these dangers, as they were set in place after her escape. However, she does know that both paths take three hours to reach the temple.

THE MINES

The hall's elegant stonework fades to rough-hewn walls as you begin your descent. Abandoned chisels and pickaxes litter the floor, and many of the sconces providing light along the path are shattered. Flickers of magic grasp for purchase in the air, casting shadows everywhere you turn. Past their desperate dance, a jagged void of darkness welcomes you deeper into the earth.

It takes three hours to reach the temple. Past the first hour, darkvision (60 ft.) or an alternative light source is required to see. Every hour, roll for an encounter on the table on the next page.



D6 Result	Encounter	Description
1	**Earth Elemental**	The path ahead of you appears to be closed off by a rockslide. One of the rocks trembles before the entire pile starts to shake, joining together to form stony limbs, the largest of which clenches into a threatening fist.
2	1d3+1 **Ochre Jellies**	A faint dripping noise catches your ear. When you look up, a gelatinous amber blob stretches down from the ceiling. Another blob wriggles its way from a gap in the ceiling, intent on grabbing you with a knobbly pseudopod.
3	**Gorgon**	You hear the sound of a beast in pain before you see it. Metallic scales emerge from the shadows, framed by blood-spattered horns. The gorgon's blindfold is in tatters on the floor, forced off in a fit of primal panic.
4	Tunnel Collapse	Warped stone juts out from the walls, thin and splintered. With your next step, the floor beneath your feet shakes, and a massive shard of the ceiling shears off. (DC 20 Dexterity saving throw for half damage.)
5	Gem Cache	Something glitters in the distant dark. When you approach, more sparkles alight across the floor. A torn bag lays between the scattered gems. None of them are cut, but they could be valuable nonetheless. (1d10 gems worth 15 gp each.)
6	Stopgap	A small mining camp comes into view, composed of a half-circle of tents surrounding a floating orb of light. A basket of dried fish is tucked beside an amphora of water, offering refreshments to passerby.

For higher level parties, consider adding one additional creature per encounter. Once an encounter is used, remove it from the table and reroll if that number appears again.

When the underground paths converge, the party finds the temple entrance. Proceed to *Chapter 3*.

Residential District

Homs emerge from the stone walls, as if they were mined from within rather than constructed. Intricate eyes highlight every doorway like guardians, their irises embedded with colorful glass. Broken doors and tools warn of an evacuation in haste, and the magical light swiftly dwindles. Past the first line of houses, a malignant darkness cuts off the rest of the district from view.

Intent on capturing more medusas beneath the surface, Pelagaios spread traps of darkness in various locations throughout the tunnels. This is more than a visual inconvenience: other threats lay within the darkness, ready to imperil the party.

It takes three hours to weave through the residential district and reach the temple. The first threat the party encounters is always the well (detailed below), and each consecutive hour, a new encounter should be rolled from the table on the next page.

The Well

Once a resource for the medusas living here, it has become a trap thanks to Pelagaios' manipulation. The 30 foot well drops into 10 feet of water, potentially deep enough to drown any poor soul who isn't rescued.

A successful DC 20 Dexterity saving throw prevents a fall, but knocks the character prone on the well's edge. If the darkness around the well is dispelled beforehand, the trap can be completely avoided. However, the surrounding stone is slick, and any who dare go closer despite the obvious danger must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw to keep from falling into the well.

The fall causes 2d10 bludgeoning damage, and a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) must be made to swim to the surface and breathe.

D4 Result	Encounter	DC	Damage Description
1	Stonefall Trap	20	3d10 Bludgeoning You hear the grind of stone on stone, and sense something massive hurtling towards you down the tunnel.
2	Explosive Glyph	15	3d8 Lightning Something crackles beneath your feet, the sharp scent of ozone cutting through the air.
3	Shattered Glass	15	Caltrops A mess of glass scrapes under your boots, threatening to cut right through them.
4	Supply Cache	—	— You bump against a heavy crate, the smell of fish and spices carrying from the contents within. (5 days rations)

If a party member casts *dispel magic* on the darkness, it is permanently destroyed, and descriptions should be adjusted accordingly.

After an encounter is used, remove it from the table before rolling again. Trap damage and checks should be increased for higher level parties.

When the underground paths converge again, the party finds the temple entrance. Proceed to *Chapter 3*.

CHAPTER 3 – EYE OF THE STORM

The excavated temple before you was once mighty. Columns of white marble stand in sharp contrast to the black stone surrounding it, veins of silver splitting through the polished surface like bolts of lightning. Yet, said columns have collapsed upon themselves, devoured by a volcanic breach. Only a narrow gap between them allows passage forward.

If Alcis is present, she recounts her battle with Pelagaios and cautions the party to be careful using magic. She also warns that the statues inside are members of her Order and destroying them is akin to murder.

The gap to enter the temple is 5 feet in height and width, extending 10 feet in length. Characters unable to fit through may need to widen the space, which risks catching Pelagaios' attention. If their methods are noisy, have Pelagaios roll a DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check. On a success, Pelagaios is aware of the party and moves to ambush them.

The small tunnel opens into a massive cavern laden with crystal. In the center is a pool of water containing the altar, and any light cast on it reflects along the walls, imitating flashes of lightning through the bright crystal.

If the party has the element of surprise, Pelagaios is by the altar muttering to himself:

"Why do you not answer? Am I not yours? Have I not served faithfully? These gifts wait for you as proof of my service, but with each passing day, I'm tempted to shatter them..."

A party that alerts Pelagaios misses the monologue, as he hides in the water waiting for them to approach. A successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check spots unusual ripples in the water, negating Pelagaios' potential for a surprise attack. Otherwise, he attacks when the party is in range of the altar.

Tactics: Pelagaios is an intelligent water elemental empowered by Poseidon. He opens with *whelm* on the closest party members. If hostile spells are cast on him, he uses the ability *spell turn* as a reaction. Grappled party members are a priority for his Slam attacks.

RESOLUTION

When brought to 10 hit points or below, Pelagaios attempts to negotiate for his banishment. He insists his god has abandoned him and tries to bribe the party with a pearl of great value enshrined inside the altar. A cunning negotiator can make a DC 25 Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) check and a success convinces Pelagaios to surrender additional gems worth 200 gp in total. On a failure, Pelagaois only offers the pearl worth 500 gp.

If the adventurers accept Pelagaios' bargain, he reveals the altar is binding him, and bids them to destroy it, returning him to the Elemental Plane of Water. The altar can be destroyed with a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check or by dealing 10 damage to it. Despite his bitter and cruel nature, Pelagaios will not break his promise, and disappears with grim satisfaction as he says the following:

> *"My lord ensured I could never serve my own wishes, only corrupt those of others. His destructive nature even falls to his own servants. What good is a temple with no priests or worshippers? What good is his blessing when I share its bounty with an empty cave? Let this all end."*

If the party decides to kill Pelagaios after his attempt to negotiation, he is enraged, and attempts to shatter the statue closest to him. Pelagaios makes an attack roll and on a 10 or above demolishes the statue. If the avatar succeeds in breaking a statue before being killed, he moves onto another.

When he dies, a boom of thunder echoes around the altar before it splits in two, exposing the pearl inside. It is brilliant blue, the size of a fist, and worth 500 gp.

AFTERMATH

After Pelagaios is gone, there are several petrified medusas remaining in the temple. If the party acquired Peitho's *wand of greater restoration*, it can be used to save the monks, which rewards additional XP for each monk cured.

Without Pelagaios' influence, all magical traps disappear from the residential district, and the riled gorgon is non-hostile if encountered. The trip back to the surface can be made in half the time.

When the party returns to the surface, Peitho rewards them according to the *Peitho's Reward Table* below.

Thus rewarded, the party is politely asked to leave the Stonesea within a week. Any injured or killed party members can be healed at Panopti's temple free of charge, but the medusas value their privacy too much to welcome visitors for long.

If Alcis was with the party and survived, she is happy to be an ally in the future, promising to come if they send for her.

REWARDS

Add the total XP of the obstacles overcome by the party, then divide by the number of characters to determine individual rewards.

XP REWARDS

Encounter	XP
Water Elemental	1800
Earth Elemental	1800
Ochre Jellies	450 (per ooze)
Gorgon	1800
Tunnel Collapse	300
The Well	300
Stonefall Trap	800
Explosive Glyph	650
Shattered Glass	100
Pelagaios Defeated (Death or Negotiation)	2000

Peitho's Reward Table

Factor	Reward
Petrified Medusas Restored	200 gp (per restoration)
Pelagaios Killed	1 Uncommon magical item
Alcis Survived	Gems (100 gp)

Other Treasure Rewards

Pelagaios Killed	Amira's Pearl (500 gp)
Pelagaios Negotiated With	Amira's Pearl (500 gp) and 200 gp of additional gems
Peitho Met	*Wand of greater restoration*
Gem Cache	1d10 gems worth 15 gp each

Wand of Greater Restoration

Wand, very rare (requires attunement)

The wand has 6 charges, and it regains 1d6 charges daily at dawn. With the wand in hand, you can use your action to expend 1 charge to cast *greater restoration* (*PHB*, "Spells").

Author's Notes

I saw this story as an opportunity to turn one of the original myths of Poseidon and Medusa on its head, reforming the isolationist aspects detailed in the *Monster Manual* into a desire for privacy and protection, one which women are often denied. The monstrosity of the medusas become artistry when their petrifying gazes are framed as a creative urge, rather than a destructive one. For those who might be interested in playing a Medusa, my homebrew race is also available on DMs Guild: https://www.dmsguild.com/product/264180/Mistresses-of-Stone-A-Playable-Medusa-Race-for-Ravnica

About the Author

D.E. Chaudron resides in Chicago. Their background is in video games writing, including the mobile app *Lovestruck* and the award-winning *Love on the Peacock Express*. They can be reached @sixfeetzen on Twitter.



Alcis

Medium monstrosity, lawful good

Armor Class 17
Hit Points 31
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	18 (+4)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)

Skills Insight +6, Perception +6, Athletics +3, Religion +4
Senses Blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 16
Languages Common, Terran, Undercommon

Unarmored Defense. While the adept is wearing no armor and wielding no shield, its AC includes its Wisdom modifier.

Flurry of Blows. After you take the Attack action on your turn, you can spend 1 ki point to make two unarmed strikes as a bonus action.

Patient Defense. You can spend 1 ki point to take the Dodge action as a bonus action on your turn. Step of the Wind. You can spend 1 ki point to take the Disengage or Dash action as a bonus action on your turn, and your jump distance is doubled for the turn.

Unarmed Strike. When you use the Attack action with an unarmed strike or a monk weapon on your turn, you can make one unarmed strike as a bonus action.

Actions

Flurry of Blows. +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., 1d6+4

Snake Hair. *Melee weapon attack*. +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 1d4+2 piercing damage plus 4d6 poison damage.

Unarmed Strike. +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 1d6+4 bludgeoning damage.

Petrifying Gaze. You use your action to Paralyze a creature within 30 feet. This creature must be able to see you, and must roll a Constitution saving throw. The DC for this saving throw equals 8 + your Constitution modifier + your proficiency bonus. On a failed save, the creature is Paralyzed until the end of its next turn. On a successful save, it shakes off your gaze without effect. After you use your gaze, you can't use it again until you complete a short rest.



Pelagaios, Avatar of the Storm

Large elemental, chaotic evil

Armor Class	14 (natural armor)
Hit Points	114 (12d10 + 48)
Speed	30 ft., swim 90 ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

Damage Resistance	Acid; Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing from Nonmag ical Attacks
Damage Immunities	Poison
Condition Immunities	Exhaustion, Grappled, Paralyzed, Petrified, Poisoned, Prone, Restrained, Unconscious
Senses	Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages	Aquan, Common
Challenge	6 (2,300 XP)

Water Form. The elemental can enter a hostile creature's space and stop there. It can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

Freeze. If the elemental takes cold damage, it partially freezes; its speed is reduced by 20 feet until the end of its next turn.

Actions

Multiattack. The elemental makes two slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage.

Whelm (Recharge 4–6). Each creature in the elemental's space must make a DC 15 Strength saving throw. On a failure, a target takes 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage. If it is Large or smaller, it is also grappled (escape DC 14). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained and unable to breathe unless it can breathe water. If the saving throw is successful, the target is pushed out of the elemental's space.

The elemental can grapple one Large creature or up to two Medium or smaller creatures at one time. At the start of each of the elemental's turns, each target grappled by it takes 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage. A creature within 5 feet of the elemental can pull a creature or object out of it by taking an action to make a DC 14 Strength check and succeeding.

Reactions

Spell Turn (Recharge 4-6). Pelagaios has advantage on saving throws against any spell 7th level and below that targets him. In addition, if he rolls a 20 or above on the save, the spell has no effect on him and instead targets the caster, using the slot level, spell save DC, attack bonus, and spellcasting ability of the caster.

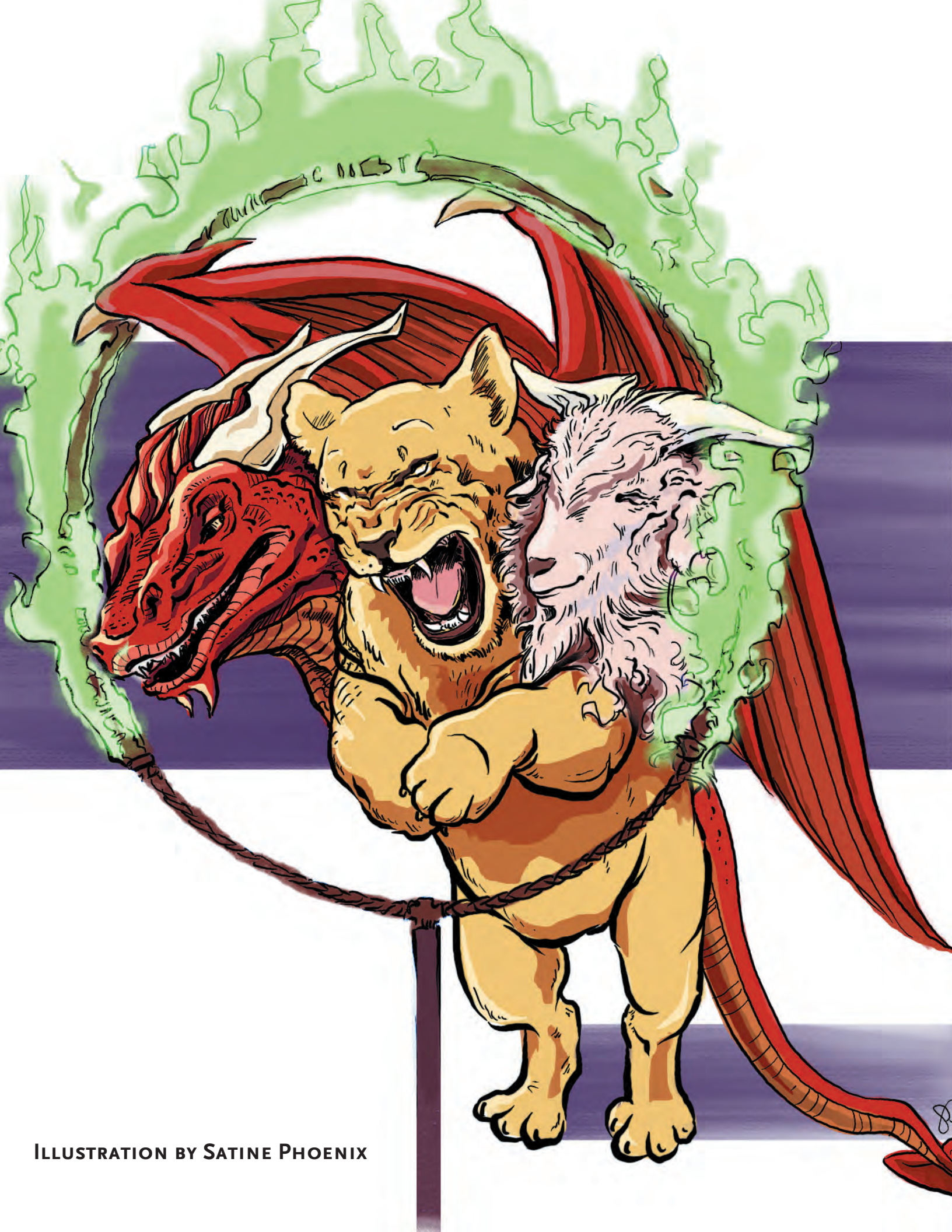


Illustration by Satine Phoenix

THREE HEADS ARE BETTER THAN ONE

by Fenway Jones

Creature: *Chimera* | **Levels:** *5 - 10*

SYNOPSIS

The adventurers are called to Dragons Breath to help Echidna, the ringmaster of a circus. They are asked to complete a series of tasks for the circus, talk to patrons of the local tavern, and finally protect the main act during the opening night of the circus. It's all fun and games until the dragon shows up.

ADVENTURE HOOK

The characters have been called to the Dragon Milk Tavern in Dragons Breath. They were summoned by someone called Echidna to assist with 'the mother of all monsters.'

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The Mother of All Monsters Circus has arrived in the village of Dragons Breath. The whole town has been expecting the most exciting, thrilling, and daring performance ever with the announcement of a new main attraction. There have been problems with the circus workers in the past, but nothing like there is now. The characters must fix these problems and make sure no others arise, so that the circus can continue to come back and maintain its amazing reputation.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

- **Echidna (LN female):** Ringmaster of the circus, she is very protective of the creatures in her care and will not under any circumstances tolerate them being hurt or killed. She uses the stats of a **marilith** but has only two arms. Being half snake, and half human, Echidna's form is tall and monstrous, but despite this, she possesses an intense, sensual beauty. She is also highly intelligent.
- **Delphyne (female human):** The shapechanger of the circus, Delphyne is unknowingly being controlled by the cyclopes, who were given the technology by a rival circus to wreck the circus. She is able to turn into a brass dragon.
- **Medusas:** The medusas—Medusa, Sthenno, and Euryale—are sassy, cold, and demanding when they want something, and vengeful towards anyone who tries to tell them 'no.'
- **Harpies:** The harpies are three flying creatures that cannot talk and can only communicate through motions. They can only open their magically sealed mouths for food. They serve as mimes for the show.
- **Fates:** Three older ladies whose names are Clotho (the Spinner), Lachesis (the Alloter) and Atropos (the Inflexible). They're very blunt when asked questions. They have one eye to share between them and all talk by finishing each other's sentences.
- **Dryads:** The dryads are shy and nice, as long as nature is not harmed in their presence. They are all female.
- **Sirens:** The flirtatious sirens are the best vocal performers around, so they make a great opening act.
- **Cyclopes:** The cyclopes are the guards of the circus. Unbeknownst to the characters, the cyclops guards have recently learned that Echidna intends to fire them because they have been too brutal with the guests and the circus acts. As retaliation, they are trying to wreck the circus with the help of a rival circus. To this end, they have placed a charm medallion around the neck of Delphyne, who is actually a dragon, and intend to use her in their scheme.

CHAPTER 1: THE MOTHER OF ALL MONSTERS

The characters arrive in the village of Dragons Breath on the first day of a tenday-long circus named the Mother of all Monsters, and promptly receive a request to join the ringmaster at the local tavern: the Dragon's Milk Tavern.

At just 40 feet by 50 feet, the Dragon's Milk Tavern is a small but cozy bar. Wooden floors line the inn with marble-topped tables placed haphazardly throughout the taproom. On the wall facing the door rests an impressive marble-topped bar.

Echidna greets the characters with a warm, inviting smile, and asks for their help with a few tasks:

- She wants the townsfolk to be excited for the night's show.
- She does not want anyone to know what she has planned as the main event until it happens; however, she will tell the characters what it is if they agree to help (a chimera that she thinks people will enjoy). There are very few chimeras in the world and the fact that she has one in her circus will be a big draw. The people know that there is a new main act, and she wants to capitalize on the excitement.

She asks them to do three things for her:

- Check in with each of the acts to see if they need anything and ensure they are ready for the show. She gives the characters a description of each act.
- Spread news throughout town about the show and its exotic new attraction.
- Attend the show that evening and make sure everything goes as planned, especially when the chimera is unveiled. Also, if something goes wrong, they are to subdue, but not kill, the chimera.

Echidna offers each character 500 gp if they complete her jobs.

CHAPTER 2: I'M DONE PLAYING GAMES

The characters attend to the first of Echidna's requests: visiting each of the main acts to ensure they are ready for the show.

The camp smells slightly of sea water and dust, intermingling with the smells of circus animals. The entire camp is brightly lit from daylight, and, unless noted otherwise, each tent has drift globes which provide bright illumination to the tent's interior.

Echidna wants the characters to check on six acts, in any order. Each of the six tents the characters may visit are 50 feet by 50 feet and 25 feet high. The content and decor vary based on which act the characters are visiting.

Having the characters complete all six parts may take some time; if the players are ready to move on, or you are short on time, select a few to run, and briefly summarize the others. Keep track of the characters' successes or failures during each of the challenges, as this becomes important later.

The six circus acts are:

- *Snake Charmers.* Medusa and her sisters charm snakes to the delight of the audience. They also perform *hold person* on volunteers from the audience.
- *Mimes.* A clamor of harpies serves as the circus' mimes.
- *Hypnotists.* A harmony of sirens perform hypnotism for the circus.
- *Plant and Light Show.* A brace of dryads performs an act of plants and lights.
- *Transformations.* A human woman named Delphyne changes her shape to that of a ferocious dragon to the delight of the crowd.
- *Fortunes.* The Fates spin their yarn and read the possible futures of audience members.

When the characters enter most tents, the tenants are very surprised.

Snake Charmers

The medusas' tent is filled with stone statues and tapestries depicting various Greek myths.

When the characters visit, Medusa and her sisters ask that the characters retrieve their favorite mango drink from Addy's 'One in a Melon' Drink Stand.

To obtain the drink, Addy, the store owner, insists that they win the best two out of three in a staring contest between her and three characters chosen to compete. Defeating Addy in a staring contest requires two contested checks: first a Wisdom check and then a Constitution check. Do not reveal the checks before the characters choose their champion.

Note: Medusa and her sisters have been changed and cannot turn people to stone; if someone looks them in the eye, and fails the associated saving throw, the character is affected as if by a *hold person* spell.

Mimes

The clamor of harpies includes three individuals: Alleo, Ocypete, and Celaeno. The harpies cannot speak, as their lips have been magically sealed.

The harpies are half-bird, half-woman creatures who are perched on a table spread with a full three-course meal which replaces itself if eaten. They can still eat the food but Echidna has magically sealed their mouths (so they can't sing to passersby). Echidna controls when this effect is active. The characters can figure this out if one of them has a telepathic ability, but only after they participate in the charades (see below). The harpies can inform them of their act, and the fact that they had their mouths sealed magically because they kept bothering the circus-goers with their song but they're not mad about the seal.

To get them ready for the show, the characters must help each of the harpies with a task.

- Alleo has a terrible knot in her shoulder that must be massaged out.
- Ocypete has a thorn in her wing that needs to be removed.
- Celaeno is sick and needs medicine to feel better.

To discern this information, the characters play charades. Split them into two groups. The first group assumes the role of the harpies. The second group represents the characters. Distribute *Player Handouts 1, 2, and 3* to each of the harpy players and commence with the game of charades until the characters know what each harpy needs.

The tasks can be completed with the following checks:

- A successful DC 18 Strength check or Wisdom (Medicine) check soothes Alleo's shoulder.
- A successful DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check locates the thorn in Ocypete's wing. Once located, removing it is a trivial task.
- A successful DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check locates a small bottle of medicine labeled "Celaeno." The harpy's mouth can be unzipped to feed her the medicine.

Hypnotists

The sirens almost never stop singing, and as such, the characters hear the song as they approach their tent.

- The inside of the tent is dimly lit.
- The song of the sirens is enchanting and when the characters first enter the tent, each must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, they gain advantage on any Charisma checks made while interacting with the sirens, but disadvantage on all other ability checks.
- The sirens complain of sore throats, and ask the characters to retrieve an herbal remedy from I'm a Little Horse, an herbal remedy shop that travels with the circus.

A centaur named Nemon runs the shop, but before he will sell his remedy, he insists that the buyer defeat him in a challenge to deliver the better pick up line! Nemon always initiates the game, and you can use the pickup lines on *DM Handout 1* as inspiration. Each character can compete, with the players voting for the winner. Nemon always votes for himself, but the character competing against him does not get a vote. To win, a character must beat Nimon the best out of three lines.

DM tip: If you have children, or someone that is uncomfortable with the prospect of pick up lines, feel free to use jokes as an alternative.

Plant and Light Show

The dryad tent is decorated with trees and murals of nature. Within, the brace of nymphs lounge, talking and laughing amongst themselves. This air of carelessness is dispelled immediately if the characters ask if they need any help. The nymphs explain that they have been troubled by a group of monsters. They are not sure what they are, but they are not human and have been invading their training ground and started calling it their home. The monsters include four **hellhounds** and two **minotaurs**. To help the nymphs prepare, the characters must defeat these monsters.

The dryads don't need anything else from them, but reward the players with a *bag of beans* (*DMG*) and wish them a very nice goodbye.

Transformations

Delphyne's tent is decorated with a snake scheme. Upon entering, the characters are met by a gruesome

sight: a giant **king cobra** with two arms is locked in combat with two **cyclopes**, three **magma mephits**, and four **ice mephits**. The king cobra is Delphyne. Echidna previously told the characters that Delphyne is a king cobra, but they may also realize she is not the attacker but the one being attacked. Delphyne asks for the characters' help as soon as she sees them.

To help her, the characters must defeat the cyclopes and mephits. Once the monsters are defeated, Delphyne thanks the characters profusely and explains they came in to try and steal her necklace.

DM INFO: In reality, the attackers simply wanted to distract Delphine and get the necklace on her. They succeeded in this, although the magic of the necklace has made her think it was always hers. The necklace will be used as a controlling device in the final combat. The necklace has a symbol of a three headed dog with one head towards the ground, the second looking straight forward, and the third reared towards the sky. Detect magic shows the entire tent and circus as magical, and the necklace specifically as compulsion magic. Delphyne explains that it is just to keep her from transforming when upset. If asked what she transforms into she answers that the characters will see later.

FORTUNES

When the characters visit the Fates, their tent is filled with objects made of a yarn that glows so brightly, it shines through the tent walls. The Fates only have one eye between the three of them, and occasionally one will take it out and hand it to another. As they speak, they finish each other's sentences.

The Fates are upset, as one of the circus performers stole their yarn of fate. They know it was Lingoth, an acrobatic tabaxi, who is always trying to bother them. Without their yarn, the Fates cannot perform.

To retrieve the yarn, the characters must visit Lingoth's wagon. The wagon proves to be much larger on the inside than outside, and it is packed full of yarn. The yarn of fate is prominently displayed on a pedestal in the middle of the room.

Lingoth denies stealing the yarn, but is willing to play a game for it. The game is called Malarkey, and the rules are detailed on *Player Handout 4*. The tabaxi is willing to play best two out of three games. He gifts them a set of weighted dice.

Once they return to the Fates with the yarn, the women give each character a piece of clothing made from yarn attuned to their life force. The clothing is of extraordinary quality and very comfortable, and allows the wearer to roll an extra 1d6 when spending hit dice. If it is ever destroyed, it causes the character to age at ten times the normal rate.

CHAPTER 3: THE RUMOR MILL

The characters travel around the village and spread rumors about the show. Echidna suggests that the tavern would be the best place to start.

OBJECTIVES

The characters must think of one or more rumors to spread about how amazing the circus's finale will be, and spread these rumors around town. Allow the characters ability checks that fit the rumors they concoct. The number of tickets they sell depends on the result of their check.

- DC 12: 1 ticket
- DC 15: 3 tickets
- DC 18+: 5 tickets

Do not allow any checks until after the characters have spread their rumors, and give advantage (or disadvantage) for particularly good (or bad) rumors.

REWARDS: Characters get 2 gp for each ticket that they sell.

CHAPTER 4: THEIR FINAL ACT

Once the party has seen to the needs of the acts and gotten the town excited about the circus, it's time to skip forward to the main event. The characters must make sure that nothing happens to disrupt the show.

The red and white striped tent is 80 feet tall and 120 feet in diameter. A large stage dominates its center, with rows of chairs on risers surrounding it. The ground is packed dirt, with a few tufts of grass jutting up here and there. The tent's large entry flaps are tied open, providing an overflow area when all the seats have filled. A cyclops stands by these flaps, arms crossed before it and wearing a pendant with the same symbol as the one that Delphyne was wearing (a three headed dog with one head towards the ground, the second looking straight forward, and the third reared towards the sky).

Sunlight pours into the tent. A few drift globes illuminate what would be the darkest spots. The sounds of people cheering and the smells of popped corn and sugary desserts fills the air.

DEVELOPMENT

The six minor acts of the show perform without event. Finally, the chimera is introduced. The crowd goes wild with excitement, but the loud noises and bright lights cause the chimera to rampage. As the characters move to deal with it, Echidna shouts a reminder to make sure that the chimera is not killed.

OBJECTIVES

Characters must defeat the chimera and any other creatures that join without killing them (except the cyclopes). If the characters failed all of the checks in any creature challenge in Chapter 2, one creature from each failed challenge joins the fight. A harpy joins if they fail the harpies, all of the Fates join as one combined invisible stalker if they failed to retrieve the yarn, and a dryad joins if they fail the dryads.

Any character with a passive Wisdom (Perception) of 12 or higher notices the cyclopes encouraging the crowd, and that the cheering is upsetting the chimera. The chimera attacks anyone and everyone, causing the audience to panic, making the entire tent difficult terrain.

Delphyne joins if the characters attack the cyclopes. For Delphyne, use the stats of a **young brass dragon** without the use of wings.

CONCLUSION

If the characters kill the chimera or any of the other acts, they gain the bane of the creature that died. The character who made the kill has disadvantage on all Charisma-based checks when interacting with creatures of that type.

Echidna pays them but docks 100 gp for each creature killed (except the cyclopes).

REWARDS

Each player receives 4,000 XP for this adventure. Each character gets their article of clothing made out of the yarn of fate. One person in the party also get Lingoth's magic dice as well as the *bag of beans* that the dryads give them, and one of the characters gets a set of weighted dice.

Each player also receives 500 gp from Echidna (possibly less if they kill any of her precious creatures), plus twice the number of tickets sold during *Part 3*.

PICK-UP LINES

- Girl, I must be a paladin because I wanna lay my hands on you.
- Hey girl, can I make a save vs. awestruck?
- Hey girl, are you a fighter? 'Cuz I never wanna (c)leave your side.
- Hey girl, I hope you're a druid, 'cuz this animal wants to be... handled.
- You must be a controller, because your AC so low I gotta hit that.
- Girl, are those paladin pants? Because you're looking lawful good in 'em.
- Baby, for you I'd turn a Bag of Holding inside-out.
- Are those Astral pants you're wearing? Because your ass looks out of this world.
- Did someone cast Sacred Flame on your face? Your smile is radiant.
- Girl, you must be a gibbering mouther, because your voice drives me crazy.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fenway Jones is a 16 year old dungeon master and writer from Michigan. She is a Silver bestseller on the Dungeon Masters Guild with her adventure "Dead Men Feel No Cold," and a Copper bestseller with "Left Black and Blue." She is also the founder of Jasper's Game Day and known as 'The Teen DM' on Twitter. She can also be found at Jasper's Game Day on Facebook.



Illustration by Sandy Jacobs-Tolle

THE SERPENT AND THE SEA

by Collette Quach

Creature: *Naga* | **Levels:** *6 - 8* | **CWs:** *Theft of cultural artifacts*

SYNOPSIS

Across the sea, through treacherous waves and winds, lies a temple. To the people of the coast it's a cultural icon. To the adventurers it's an ancient temple filled with treasure. The adventurers return with what they found, among which is a large, aquamarine relic. The relic, and by extension the temple, are tied directly to the ocean. Those who wish to cross the ocean make a pilgrimage here to ask for the blessing of the naga for safe passage.

ADVENTURE HOOK

The party can be returning to Ferris' ship, the *Orpheum*, via a dinghy. Out of divine judgment from the ocean, a storm hits suddenly causing the boat to capsize. The waves pull them under before they can swim away.

Alternatively, the party can simply be crossing the ocean on their own and got caught in the storm.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

This adventure is a Tier 2 adventure, recommended for 7th level. This adventure focuses on narrative and character reflection. Take the time to discuss with the group about their characters' regrets and those they've lost. Characters are encouraged to explore the festival and the temple to learn about the land. There are optional combat scenarios that the DM can use if the party prefers more combat over puzzles or riddles.

Naga are half-serpent, half-human beings, taking multiple different forms: a human, a multi-headed serpent similar to a cobra, or a mix. They are guardians of everything associated with water and the treasures that lie within. They pose no harm to humanoid populations unless threatened. The crew of the *Angkor* are the only known naga in this adventure.

The relic is a large, egg-shaped aquamarine. The inside is a clear blue green and staring into it is like staring into the ocean itself.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

- **Soriya Apsara:** Captain of the Angkor. In human form, she is a brown skinned woman with long, black hair. As a naga, she has nine serpent heads, indicating her seniority. She has a strong sense of justice and takes her role as guardian seriously. She uses altered stats for the yuan-ti pit master located in the appendix for her human and naga form.
- **Lai:** First mate of the *Angkor*. In human form, they are a dark-skinned individual adorned with various trinkets of shells and sea glass. As a **naga**, they have six heads. Curious by nature with a desire to see the world. Whenever they are away from the inhabitants of the coast, they are typically in their serpent form.
- **Ferris de Longpre:** Admiral of the *Orpheum* and former adventurer. He enjoys the thrill of dungeon-delving to find long lost treasures. Use the stats for an **assassin**.

REPUTATION

How the characters are perceived by the people and the land itself is important, especially during the Harvest Festival. Characters can participate in various events at the festival, making a good impression on the community.

Reputation can help the party in *Chapter 3*. The DM can state this explicitly to encourage exploration of the festival and temple.

CHAPTER 1 – HARVEST FESTIVAL

The characters awaken in a cabin on the *Angkor*, the ship of **Soriya Apsara**, a famed sailor in the area and naga guardian. Not too long later, Lai enters, noting that the characters have awoken. They ask the party follow them up to meet Soriya.

If the party was on Ferris' ship, she informs them that their theft has caused the storm. Upon returning the relic, it subsides and allows the party to return home.

If the characters were simply caught in the storm, in addition to the above, she says since an outsider has stolen this relic; the ocean can only accept it if another outsider returns it. She gives the party the relic.

She tries to convince the party to return the relic. She does not use force, attempting instead to appeal to the characters' morality. She can also appeal to them by offering a reward, specifically an item from the ship's armory, once they return the relic.

- Those proficient in Arcana may make a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check to sense magic coming off of Soriya and various crew members.
- *Detect magic* specifies that this magic is more druidic than arcane.
- A successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check party members looking overboard can see the outline of a serpent/naga swimming near the ship

After, she brings the party ashore near the Temple.

> Soriya guides you east from the sandy beach into the dense jungle. The path opens onto a clearing with the Temple of the Coast at the far end. The field is filled with celebration and people enjoying music, food, and other festivities. Market stalls are aligned in rows displaying various artisan goods.
>
> On the northern end of the field past the stalls is a makeshift theatre filled with children; the southern end, a shrine. A stone walkway divides the two areas in the middle where you see a crowd of children surrounding the familiar face of Lai.

PARTICIPATING IN THE FESTIVAL

This annual festival commemorates the autumn harvest, to honor and give thanks to the river that cuts through the land. The river is the area's livelihood. Food, water for farming, and transportation all derive from the river.

Soriya explains the festival if asked. She tells the party to partake in the festival as a way to show that the land isn't just lost treasures and "ancient" temples. The festival goers do not know of the theft and are being kept out of the temple, for safety and to avoid panic.

Map #1 has the locations of all the events. Merchants mostly sell souvenirs of the festival such as toys, lanterns, etc.

ANCESTOR SHRINE

The shrine is set up with different trinkets, portraits, and food offerings. A specific area is adorned with blue silk cloths in addition to the things usually placed. A marker reads:

> To those we lost. We remember them as the harvest ends. May the nagas bring them safely to the afterlife.

Talking with the various people around the shrine, they reveal that they have lost a partner, child, friend. Talking to those near the area of the blue cloth reveals that this is reserved for those who passed due to floods or other water related disasters.

Characters may participate in this event by physically placing a memento they have of someone that has passed. They also can receive a white lily from the person running the shrine to place if they do not have a momento.

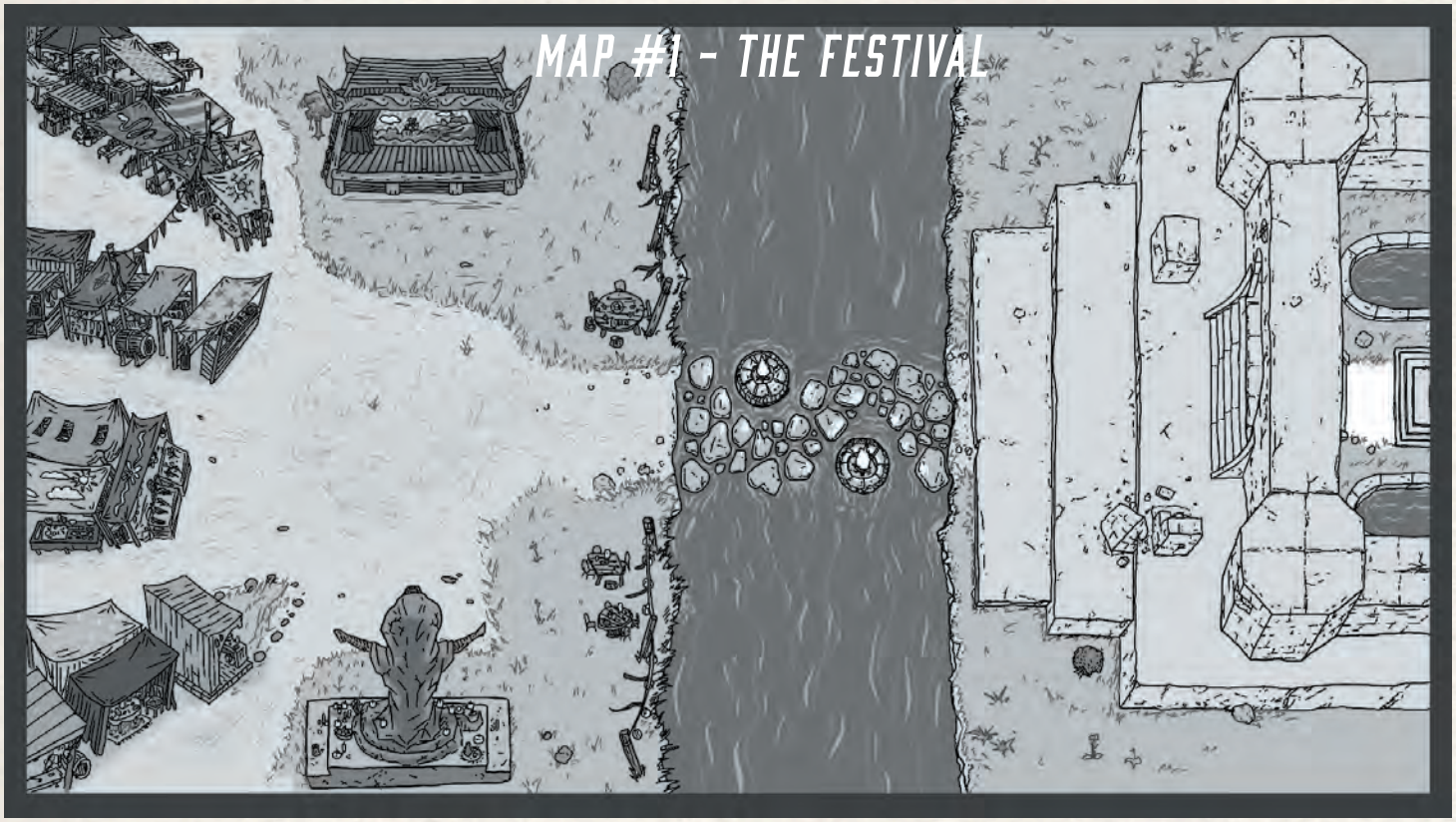
This event grants +1 reputation.

THE THEATER

A large audience has gathered, many of them children, around an outdoor stage. The performance is shadow puppetry—ornate cutouts of figures illuminated to create shadows. The shows tell various stories of heroes of their land. Sitting through a story grants +1 reputation.

A CONVERSATION WITH LAI

The party can find the first mate, Lai, with a group of children. One child is asking Lai why they can't go into the temple. Lai asks the characters what it's like on the other side of the sea and ask to entertain the



Map by D.W. Dagon

children, as they are interested as well.

On a successful DC 10 Charisma (Performance) check, a character can tell a story that entrances the kids (advantage if the player delivers it well).

- If there are magic users, they can use their magic to dazzle them.
- A bard can perform for the kids (The DM can decide if they want a Performance check).

Having at least two characters successfully interact with the children grants +1 reputation. Five successes grant +2 reputation.

TEMPLE UPKEEP

Various people are cleaning and repairing the sandstone around the temple foundation. Characters may help with the upkeep of the temple in various ways, earning +1 reputation for each success:

There are some stones that are weathered down. With a successful DC 16 Dexterity check characters can wash and restore some of the details on the stone. A result of 20 or higher restores the stone to pristine condition, granting them one extra reputation.

With a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) check, party members can learn from what the other festival goers are doing. If a character has proficiency with masonry, carpenter, or smith's tools they can make the check with advantage.

There are some sandstone blocks that have fallen out of place. With a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check, they can pick up one of the blocks and put it back. Failing the check means the character drops the block but can try again; on a five or less on the check, the block instead shatters and is irreparable.

DEVELOPMENT

When the party approaches the entrance to the temple, they see Soriya with a priest of the temple. Before the party enters, the priest warns of the changes in the temple due to their transgression (or the transgression of others) and cautions them against what now lies inside.

CHAPTER 2 – THE TEMPLE OF THE SHORE

As the party enters the temple, they see the thick coverage of vines, other foliage, and trees that have grown around the structure itself, just as the priest warned.

RELIC CHAMBER PUZZLE

Entering the inner sanctum, characters see two pools of water on either side of them. In front of the relic chamber is a large square indented into the ground where the puzzle is to be placed. To complete the puzzle, the party needs to find the pieces in the four corner rooms and assemble them correctly in the indent. The puzzle is available at the end of the adventure.

If the characters are stuck with aspects of the puzzle, they may make a DC 10 Intelligence (History) check for a hint.

FOUR CORNER ROOMS

The southeast room contains two puzzle pieces that characters can find without a check. Examining the room more closely, characters proficient in Intelligence (History) understand the carvings on the wall to tell a story of how sailors from this area use this temple to ask for safe passage when sailing. There are naga, some with multiple heads, swimming underneath the ships.

The entirety of the southwest room is a 30 feet deep pool of water. At the bottom lie two puzzle pieces, which characters have to swim down to in order to retrieve.

The northwest room is overgrown with spiky vines and brambles. At the end of the room is one puzzle piece wrapped in the greenery. Traversing the room requires a successful DC 13 Dexterity check to avoid tripping on the plants. On a failure, the character takes 2d6 piercing damage from the sharp thorns.

The northeast room is the room of reflection. Lit by candlelight and adorned in blue and green drapery, it seems to be untouched by the changes of the temple. One puzzle piece is bolted down on a pedestal standing in front of a large multi-headed snake. An inscription gives a clue to the party:

Like water, we are never still and ever changing. Wash away the past without judgment.

The characters have to wash themselves with water from the temple and spend a brief moment meditating on past regrets. A DC 10 Intelligence or Wisdom check can be used to give the characters a hint.

The piece can be removed by force (a successful DC 18 Strength check is required); doing so results in -1 reputation point.

Combat Alternative: Characters still need to go to all four of the rooms. Instead of looking for pieces, a lever is pulled to reveal the pieces. When the party returns to the entrance, two **bone naga** appear.

RETURNING THE RELIC

Once assembled, the puzzle pieces reveal an image of what appears to be Soriya in her half serpent, half human form. The door to the chamber opens to the relic chamber. Once the party enters, they see a naga in its multi-headed serpent form. The party may recall that a statue of a serpent was there in its place. The naga doesn't attack the characters, but it watches them intently.

The party may walk up to the naga and present the relic. The naga accepts the return of the relic and turns back into stone. If the party asks for safe passage, they gain +3 reputation.

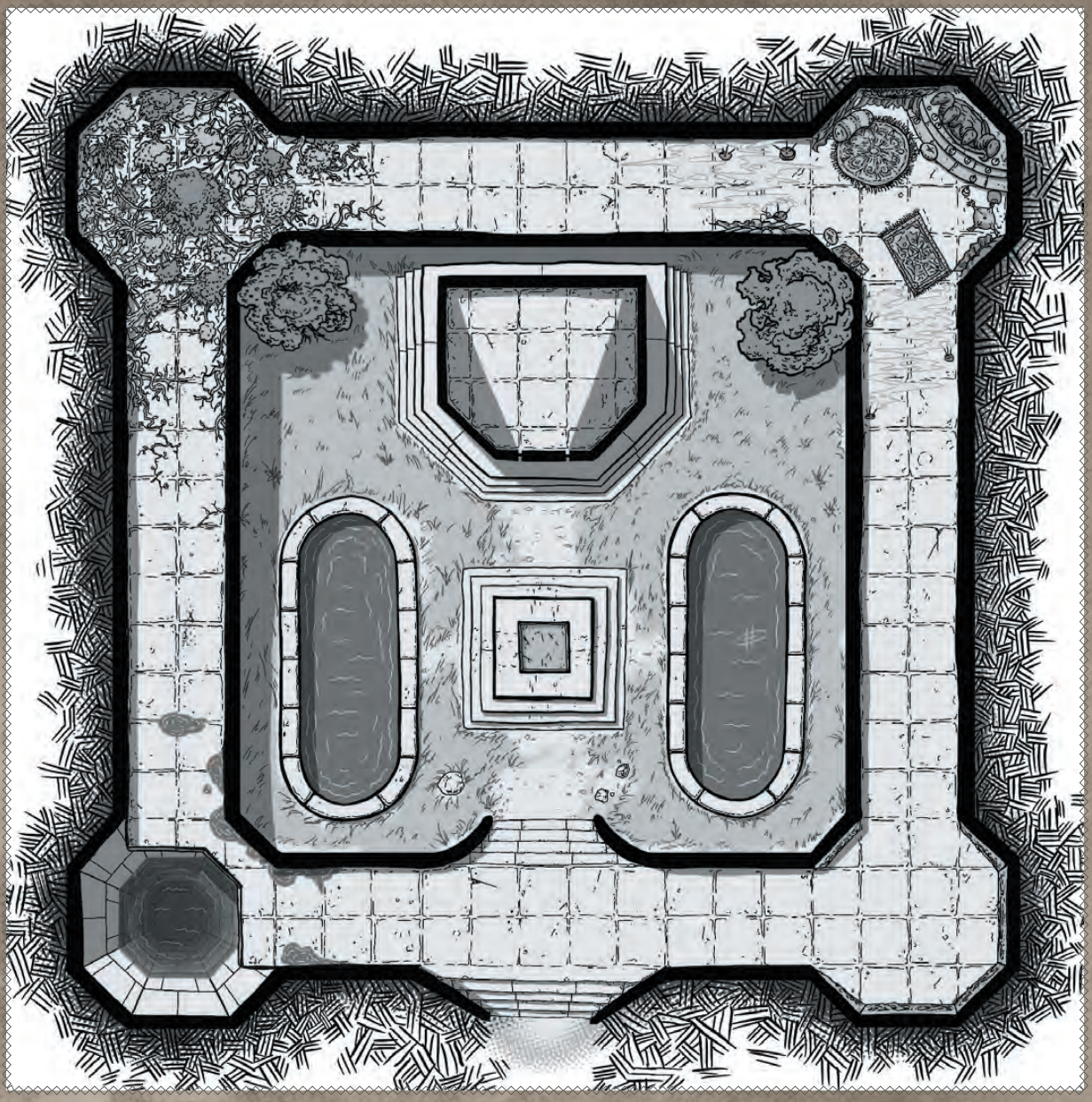
Killing the serpent results in loss of all reputation. Any attack roll of 14 or higher kills it instantly: the serpent crumples to the floor, replaced by a pedestal.

Upon leaving the chamber, the festival goers quickly head inside the temple for shelter. The pools of water are now a clear blue as opposed to the previous green hue.

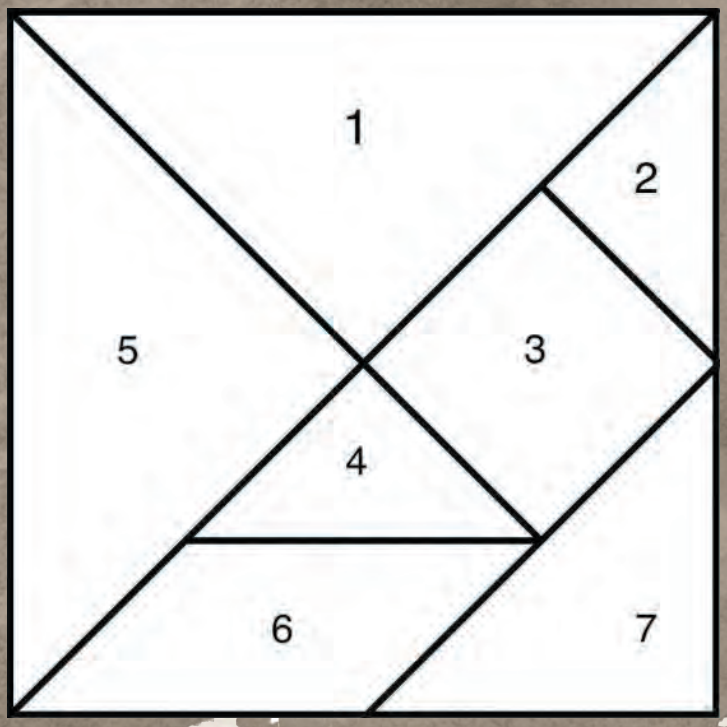
DEVELOPMENT

When the party exits the temple, Soriya is waiting outside. There is a strong wind and the sky is grey. She notes that the storm is not yet over. The festival goers quickly are heading inside the temple for shelter.

She urgently leads the characters back to the beach and up onto a cliff overlooking the sea. There the party can see the *Angkor* locked in combat with Ferris' ship. Soriya asks the party if they are still with her, but does not wait for an answer before leaping off the cliff. She shifts into her nine-headed serpent form and swims toward the *Angkor* (100 feet away).



MAP #2 - TEMPLE (ABOVE)
PUZZLE (RIGHT)



Map by D.W. Dagon

CHAPTER 3 – BATTLE FOR THE RELIC

HYDRA: FURY OF THE CRASHING SEA

At the start of combat, a **hydra** appears from the water, attacking both ships. The DM rolls a d10 to decide which ship it attacks. On a result of 1-5, the hydra attacks the *Angkor*, on a 6-10 it instead attacks Ferris' ship.

> As you look above the skies begin to grey. Beneath the approaching ships there is a rumbling from the depths. Erupting from the waters a hydra appears, its multiple heads gnashing at both ships. The fury of the sea is here!

FOR THE ENCOUNTER

Soriya can be played by the DM or placed under the control of a player. Ferris does an additional 1d6 poison damage to all attacks.

The characters, Soriya, the hydra, and Ferris are part of the initiative order. The ships themselves are last in the initiative order. During the ship phase, use the table below for encounters.

Once the hydra is at half health, the ships board one another.



D10 Result	Description
1	The enemy ship rams into your own. Roll a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.
2	The enemy ship fires cannons at your ship. Use the fireball spell at 4th level to determine damage with a DC 14 Dexterity save for half. Cannons can not be fired at your ship for 2 rounds. Instead treat the roll as fire spreading.
3	A strong crosswind from the storm hits. For the next round of combat movement is halved.
4	The enemy crew fires a volley of arrows at the party. Roll a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. Take 5d6 piercing damage on a failed save. On a success, characters may explain how they avoid the arrows for either half or no damage.
5	The party's ship fires cannons at the hydra. Follow rules of 2.
6	The party's ship fires cannons at the enemy ship. Follow rules of 2.
7	Ships are at a stand still.
8	The crew fires a volley of arrows at the hydra. Follow rules of 4.
9	The crew takes aim at the enemy captain. Follow rules of 4.
10	Your ship rams into the enemies. Follow rules of 1.

REPUTATION

Depending on how well the party interacted with the festival and temple there can be one of three boons.

Boon of the Naga (5+ Reputation)

The hydra prefers to attack Ferris' ship over yours. If the DM rolls to determine who it hits, roll with advantage.

> You feel the waves rock the boat, the sea breeze against your face. Even with the hydra towering above you, you feel at peace with the ocean.

Guardian (1- 4 Reputation)

During the ship/ocean initiative, roll at advantage/benefiting the player.

> The boat rocks beneath you as you face the hydra. You braved these seas before and you can ride the waves against your foes.

Invaders (0 Reputation)

PCs have advantage on hitting the hydra and any naga targets.

> You see the storm get closer to the mainland. Even with the relic returned, something else has upset the seas. But that doesn't matter, you want to go back home.

DEVELOPMENT

When the hydra is killed and the opposing ship is defeated, the storm subsides.

CONCLUSION

Soriya thanks the players for their dedication to helping the people, despite being hired to steal from them. She makes preparations for a ship to return the party back across the sea. Read the following for Soriya:

> *"Thank you, adventurers, for returning the relic, especially when you didn't know anything about it. As you've seen, something so small can mean a lot."* She signals some of her crew. They nod and head below deck, bringing up a sword and armor. *"For your help. It's not every day we give naga-crafted items to strangers. Take care of these pieces, as a memento from this side of the ocean."*

Read this if reputation is low (less than 3 points):

> Soriya speaks in a tone that feels distant. *"I arranged a ship to take you back across the sea. While I appreciate your help, it's best for you to return home as soon as you can. Here."* She signals some of her crew. They look at her with some hesitation before heading below deck, bringing up a sword and armor. *"I shouldn't even be giving you these, but I pay my debts."*

REWARDS

Completing this adventure with Soriya grants the party two items.

Dav-Vasuki

Weapon (Any Sword), Rare (requires attunement)

You gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls. Additionally, you can cast the *control water* spell through the sword. You cannot cast it again until after your next long rest.

This machete-like sword is used by Soriya and her crew. While not ornate, these blades are reliable tools both in and out of combat.

Vestments of the Naga Guardian

Armor (Hide), Rare (Requires attunement)

You gain a bonus of +1 to your armor class while wearing this armor. In addition, you gain a swim speed of 30 feet if you do not already have one, otherwise your swim speed is doubled. You can also hold your breath for an additional 2 minutes.

The armor is a mix of hide and serpent skin, adorned with blue and green fabrics similar to the ones seen at the ancestor shrine. The serpent scales glisten in the sun.

XP REWARDS	*MONSTER XP*
Bone Naga	1,100 each
Completing all the Festival events	100
Defeating the opposing ship	2,500
Hydra	3,900



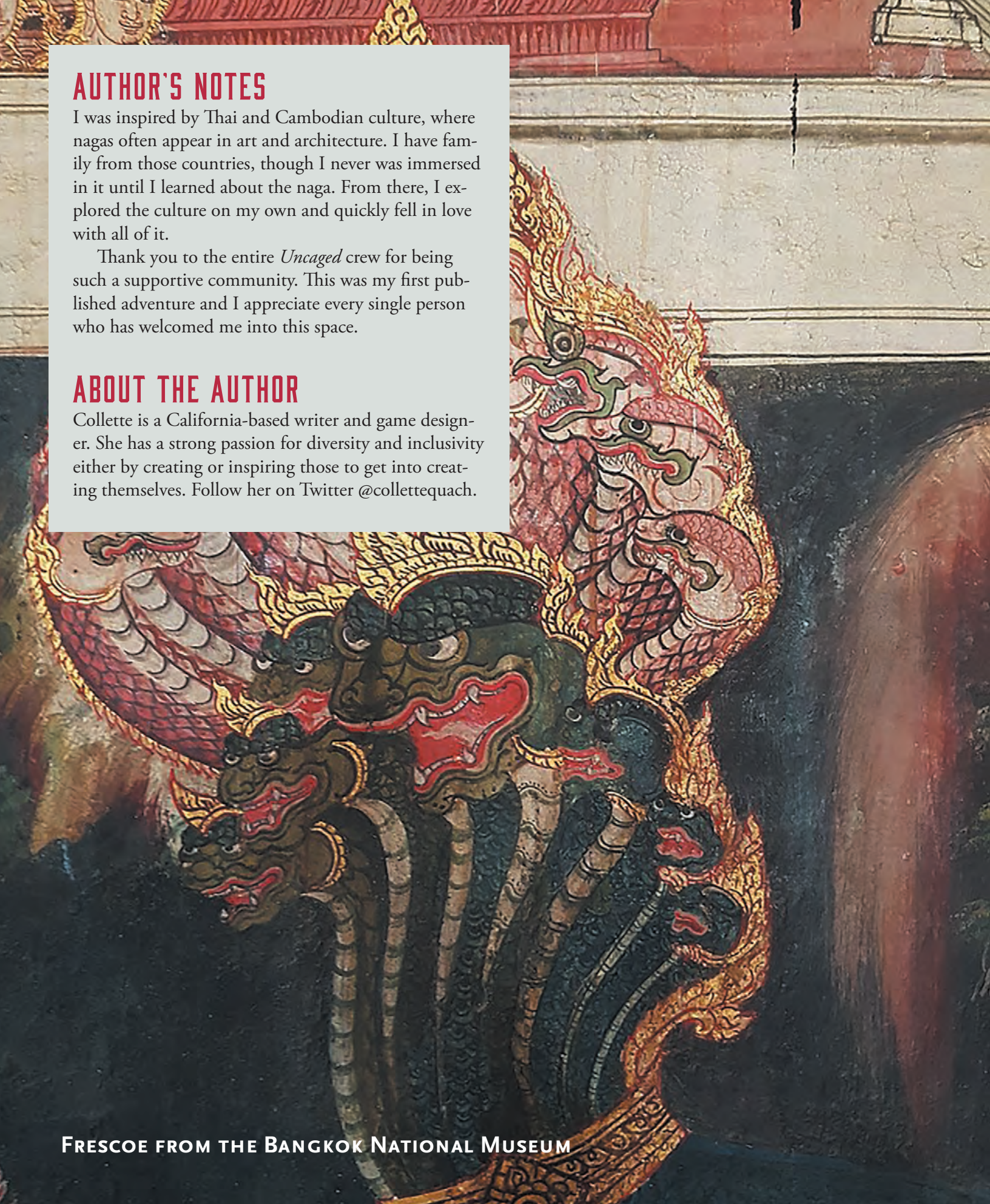
AUTHOR'S NOTES

I was inspired by Thai and Cambodian culture, where nagas often appear in art and architecture. I have family from those countries, though I never was immersed in it until I learned about the naga. From there, I explored the culture on my own and quickly fell in love with all of it.

Thank you to the entire *Uncaged* crew for being such a supportive community. This was my first published adventure and I appreciate every single person who has welcomed me into this space.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Collette is a California-based writer and game designer. She has a strong passion for diversity and inclusivity either by creating or inspiring those to get into creating themselves. Follow her on Twitter @collettequach.



FRESCOE FROM THE BANGKOK NATIONAL MUSEUM

Soriya Aspara

Medium humanoid (shapechanger), lawful neutral

Armor Class 14
Hit Points 88 (16d8 + 16)
Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Wis +3 Cha +5
Skills Nature +3, Perception +2
Damage Immunities Poison
Condition Immunities Poisoned
Senses Darkvision 120ft (penetrates magical darkness), passive Perception 13
Languages Common, Draconic
Challenge 5 (1,800 xp)

Shapechanger. Soriya can use an action to polymorph into a naga serpent (see NPC description). Her statistics are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. She doesn't change form if she dies.

Innate Spellcasting (Naga Serpent Form Only). Soriya's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *animal friendship* (snakes only)
3/day: *suggestion*

Magic Resistance. Soriya has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Spellcasting (Naga Serpent Form Only). Soriya is a 6th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). She regains expended spell slots when she finishes a short or long rest. She knows the following warlock spells:

Cantrips (at will): *eldritch blast (*range 300 ft., +3 bonus to each damage roll*), friends, guidance, mage hand, message, poison spray*
1st-3rd level (2 3rd-level slots): *command, counterspell, hellish rebuke, invisibility, misty step, unseen servant, vampiric touch*

Actions

Multiattack (Naga Serpent Form Only). Soriya makes two bite attacks with serpent heads.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) poison damage.

Scimitar (Humanoid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage.





Illustration by Liz Gist

THE TALE OF THE SPHINX

by Paige Leitman

Creature: *Gynosphinx* | **Levels:** *6 - 10*

ADVENTURE FLOWCHART



SYNOPSIS

Alephandrielat, a gynosphinx, doesn't kill people who try to raid the tomb she guards. Instead, she uses her lair powers over time to de-age opponents to babies, and then raises them "right" so they live upright lives. Sometimes nature beats out nurture. One of the sphinx's charges has left seeking revenge. The heroes can ask around with the local fey and townsfolk to learn more. She has rejoined a former adventuring partner and they are up to no good. The characters will have to decide how to resolve this family drama.

ADVENTURE HOOK

The Tale of the Sphinx is for 6th-10th level characters. The adventure starts with the characters in transit from one location to another. They should be in a relatively wild area with a few small villages nearby.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The sphinx protects Porfindel's tomb. Flynnad came to the tomb sixteen years ago to try to rob it. Alephandrielat couldn't dissuade her peacefully, so she de-aged Flynnad and tried to raise her to be a better person. Flynnad ran away and teamed up with a necromancer who wants to steal Porfindel's bones in order to use her ghost as a military advisor.

This adventure references creatures that aren't found in the *Monster Manual*; their stats can be found in the books listed below:

- Archer, *Volo's Guide to Monsters*
- Drow House Captain, *Mordenkainen's Tome of Foes*
- Korred, *Volo's Guide to Monsters*
- Master Thief, *Volo's Guide to Monsters*
- Necromancer, *Volo's Guide to Monsters*
- Quickling, *Volo's Guide to Monsters*

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

- **Alephandrielat (AL-eff-ann-dree-el-at)** – Or "Alepha" (Ell-EFF-uh) for short. The sphinx who voluntarily guards Lady Porfindel's tomb. She's bold, commanding, and has a sly sense of humor. She loves her "kids" and does her best to raise them right. She has golden fur on her leonine body, and gold, silver, and white wings. She wears an elaborate gold torc set with lapis lazuli and other jewels. Her eyes shine with a cerulean light.
- **Lady Emillian Porfindel (Uh-MEE-lee-an POR-fin-del)** – a venerated tactician who died peacefully about sixty years ago. Her ghost is calm, patient, and three moves ahead of everyone else. She cares deeply about Alephandrielat and the "kids" and enjoys raising a second family. She looks like a pale apparition of an elderly woman with long braided hair, dark skin, and very good posture.
- **Flynnad (FLIN-add)** – a human tomb-robber that Alephandrielat turned into a 2 year old child. She's 18 now and has broken Alepha's "brainwashing." She left Porfindel's tomb to take revenge on the sphinx. She has freckles, blue eyes, sandy brown hair, and the scars of a lifelong warrior.
- **Ghemar (GEH-mar)** – a half-elven necromancer and Flynnad's former and current compatriot. She has coppery skin, green eyes, and red-brown hair.
- **Ardella (Ar-DELL-uh)** – a gnome boy with curls, freckles, and green eyes. He's ten and his magical abilities are just starting to flicker to life.
- **Benwick (BEN-wick)** – a skinny 15 year old human boy with greasy, long, dark hair and a penchant for sarcasm. He's very sneaky, and an excellent hunter.
- **Stollos (STALL-owes)** – a hulking goliath boy with dark gray skin and vine-like markings. He thinks before he talks or acts and enjoys working with his hands. He's 23 and about ready to leave home to apprentice with a carpenter in town.
- **Peleen (PELL-een)** – a handsome, good-hearted, triton innkeeper in Sweetwater Branch. He's been here forever and knows all the gossip. He has silver-blue skin and purple hair.
- **Tiranuil (TEER-uh-nool)** – a wood elf ranger in Sweetwater Branch. He knows the local fey and is willing to consult for a fee. He's older and has white streaks in his auburn hair.
- **Greyanna (Grey-AH-nah)** – a human woman in her mid-fifties, Flynnad's cousin, and a priestess of Eldath in Sweetwater Branch. She is a pacifist and will heal anyone who needs her help.
- **Carilindë (Kar-UH-lend-UH)** – a wood elf smith in Sweetwater Branch. She's not the trusting sort and she keeps grudges, but she's good to her word and speaks her mind. She's got strong arms and likes to show them off. Her red-brown hair is tied up in a ponytail, and her brownish skin has small burns from sparks all over it.

CHAPTER 1 – THE ONE THAT GOT AWAY

SCENE 1.1: OUT HUNTING

Area Information

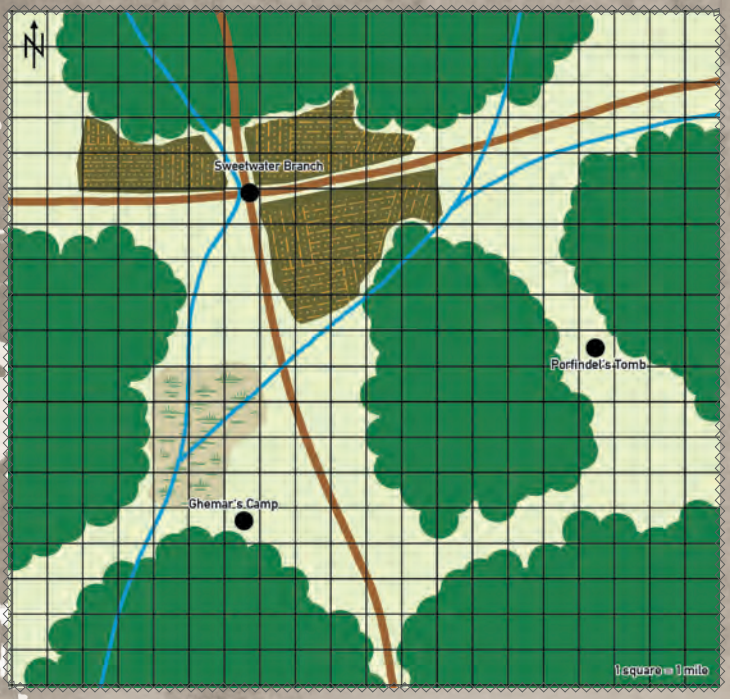
This is a small forest clearing near a major road through the area. It's late fall, so the grass is brown and many trees are bare, though the area is mostly full of evergreen trees. A cold, rainy drizzle falls from overcast skies. Though technically brightly lit, the fog and drizzle limit vision to 100 feet.

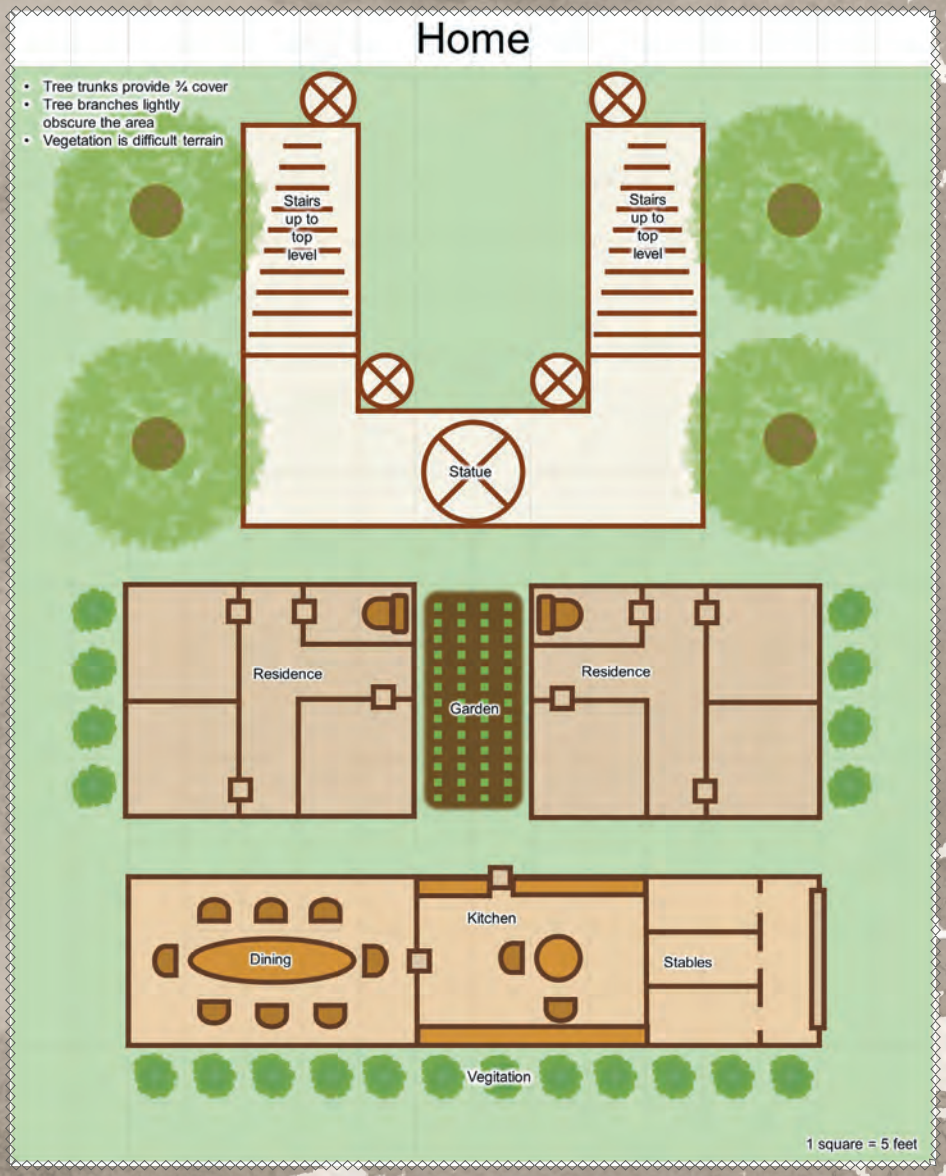
Creatures/NPCs

Alepha has been looking for Flynnad and she's wet, tired, and concerned. She's searching on foot because the evergreen trees block her sightline to the ground. Alepha wants to recruit the characters to help her find Flynnad and find out who took her. She suggests going home to get Lady Porfindel's advice, but the characters are welcome to start tracking the kid now. She searched the north side of the road and was starting on the south side. She believes Flynnad must be within ten miles of here.

She tells Flynnad's story; as an adult, she came to rob Lady Porfindel's tomb sixteen years ago. Flynnad could not be dissuaded so Alepha used her magic to alter the effects of time so that Flynnad became two years old. Alepha and the ghost in the tomb, Lady Porfindel, have been raising Flynnad since. Their goal is to turn her into a good person. Flynnad has been moody lately ("You know, teenagers,") and Alepha is

MAP 0


Sweetwater Branch
Porfindel's Tomb
Ghemar's Camp
1 square = 1 mile


Home
Tree trunks provide ¾ cover
Tree branches lightly obscure the area
Vegetation is difficult terrain
Stairs up to top level
Stairs up to top level
Statue
Residence
Garden
Residence
Kitchen
Dining
Stables
Vegitation
1 square = 5 feet

convinced Flynnad went out for a long walk to get away from the "family" and someone took her.

DEVELOPMENT

Alepha suggests going back home to talk to Lady Porfindel because she always has good advice (*Scene 1.2*). The characters are welcome to search for Flynnad on their own (*Scene 2.1*) or go to the small town nearby to ask after her (*Scene 2.2*).

SCENE 1.2: HOME

Area Information

An imposing monument in red and white marble memorializes a woman with a particularly calculating look on her face. Religious iconography shows the Red Knight advising Tyr, Lord of Battles. A cozy set of small wooden buildings houses "the kids" (Ardella, Flynnad, Benwick, and Stollos, all former grave robbers), and the sphinx.

Creatures/NPCs

Lady Porfindel is concerned about Flynnad. She's supervising Ardella, Benwick, and Stollos in getting dinner ready and teaching them reading, writing, and school lessons as they do.

Alepha wants Porfindel's advice on how to find Flynnad and wants the characters to help her search. The family all have bits of useful information about Flynnad:

- **Alepha** – Her magic that de-ages people causes their brains to revert to their childish state. Memories of one's life prior to that point are lost in the transition or are fuzzy and half-remembered. That's what gives Alepha and Porfindel the ability to raise good people without whatever traumatic past caused them to turn bad.
- **Ardella** – Flynnad was angry, particularly at Alepha. If the characters are going to look in the forest nearby, they should leave a saucer of milk out for the fey. He heard Flynnad mention them and they're very friendly.
- **Benwick** – He's seen a group of about ten heavily-armed people camped to the west. They were also packing up camp and leaving, so he's not sure where they are now.
- **Stollos** – He heard Flynnad grumbling about going back to Sweetwater Branch, a little town nearby that was where Flynnad originally grew up.
- **Porfindel** – In the kindest way possible, she says that she is concerned that Flynnad might have remembered some of her old life and might be looking for revenge. She suggests that looking for Flynnad in the forest or in Sweetwater Branch are the best options.

DEVELOPMENT

The characters might choose to search the forest (*Scene 2.1*), check for Flynnad in Sweetwater Branch (*Scene 2.2*), or look for the camp of well-armed people (*Scene 3.1*).

CHAPTER 2 – FINDING FLYNNAD

SCENE 2.1: FEY FRIENDS

Area Information

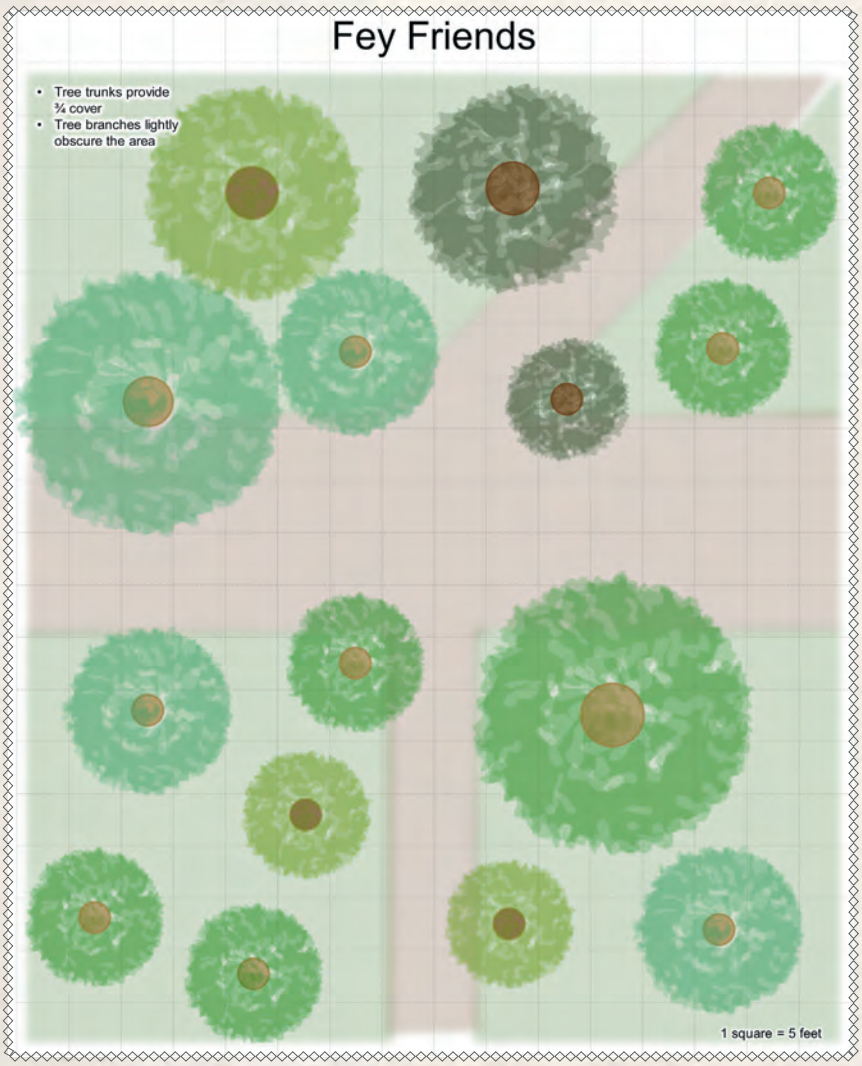
The forest here is densely covered with evergreen trees. Cold rain mixed with some sleet makes the day miserable. The rain and sleet limit vision to 50 feet.

Creatures/NPCs

If the characters set out a saucer of milk, a group of **sprites** will show up in 15 minutes. If they add cookies or sweets, the sprites will show up in 5 minutes and the characters will have advantage on all Charisma checks with them. Unfortunately, any offering draws the attention of darker fey. A group of **quicklings, redcaps**, and/or **korred** show up after 20 minutes. The sprites leave when the dark fey arrive and return when they are gone.

The sprites want all of the milk and sweets they can beg out of the characters. The dark fey want warm mortal blood for their redcaps.

The sprites know Flynnad by description. She killed a sprite with a slingshot months ago, so they don't go anywhere near her. They are heart-seers that can sense whether a creature is good or evil and they know for a fact that this kid is evil. They steer clear of evil characters as well. The characters can, with advanced culinary bribery, get the sprites to rouse up the bright fey in the area to help them.



If the characters manage to talk the dark fey out of a fight or keep one alive for questioning, the dark fey say they knew Flynnad. A DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana, Nature, or History) check or a DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check will suggest the dark fey can be bribed with blood, raw meat, or sufficient gold. She used to steal sheep from some of the farmers and bring them to the fey. Flynnad was trying to get them to fight Alepha, but the fey refused because they didn't think they would survive. Both groups of fey know that there is a sizeable encampment of people a few miles to the south west near the swamp, and can tell the characters how to get there.

Level adjustment:

- 3 level 6 characters: 2 redcaps and 3 quicklings
- 5 level 8 characters: 1 korred and 3 redcaps
- 7 level 10 characters: 3 korreds and 3 redcaps

Development

The characters can go on to Sweetwater Branch (*Scene 2.2*) or to the camp (*Scene 3.1*).

Scene 2.2: Sweetwater Branch

Area Information

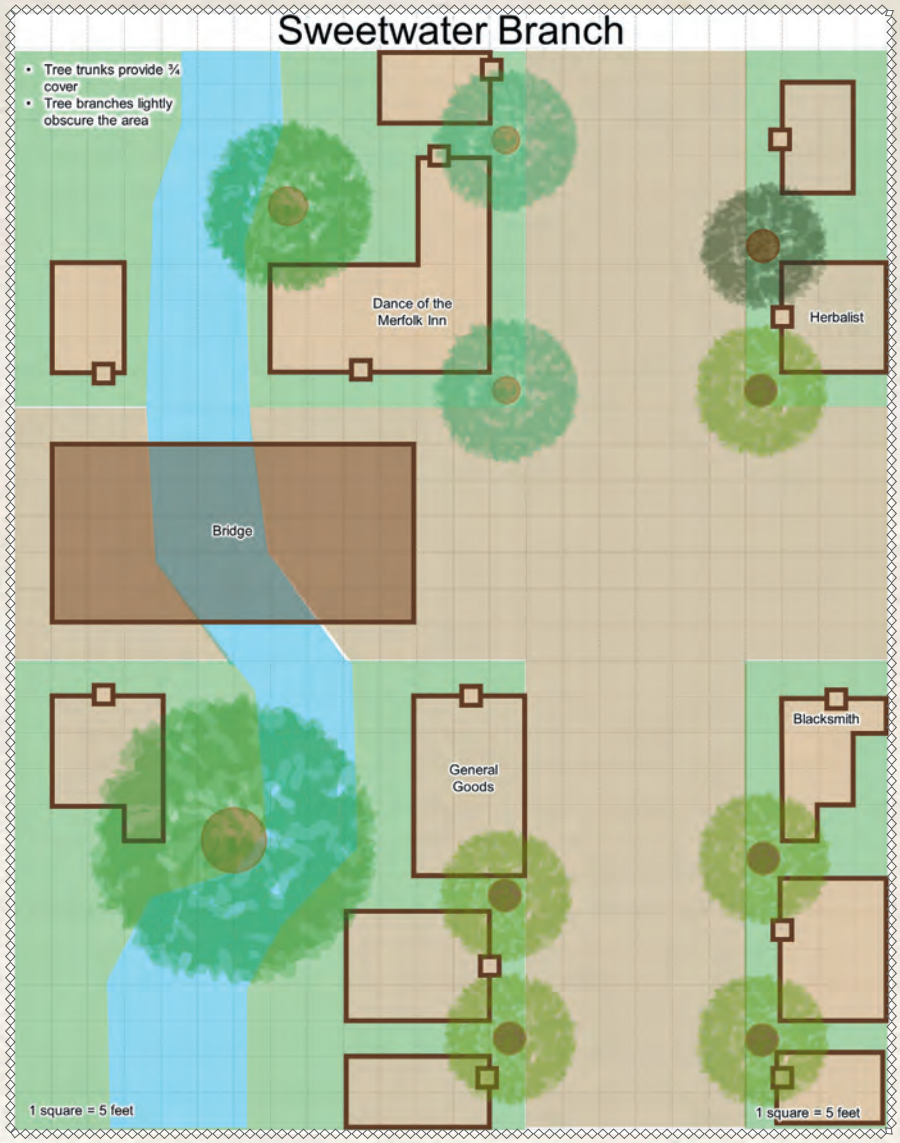
This crossroads stop has about ten homes of local farmers, foresters, and townsfolk and an open-air shrine to Eldath (or any other deity of forests and peace). A blacksmith, an herbalist, a purveyor of general goods, and The Dance of the Merfolk inn take up the four corners of the crossroads. A large creek (Sweetwater Branch) flows through the hamlet. The town is a tiny stop along a secondary road.

Creatures/NPCs

There are perhaps a dozen townsfolk around during daylight hours. At night, all buildings other than the inn are closed.

The townsfolk want no trouble. Greyanna wants the characters to save Flynnad from both the sphinx and Ghemar. Here's what the townsfolk have to say about Flynnad:

- Peleen knew Flynnad from "way back then." She was a competent fighter who was working with a half-elf wizard named Ghemar. The pair were out for gold and glory and bragging about exploring dungeons and slaying monsters like any other adventurers. Flynnad's cousin Greyanna tends the town shrine.
- Tiranuil knows that Ghemar is a half wood-elf wizard with a mean streak and a thirst for power. She's been in the area lately, hiring mercenaries. Tiranuil declined her offer. He can tell the characters where her camp is for 50 gp. That fee is waived if the characters express a wish to stop Ghemar. He also knew Flynnad as a young braggart back in the day, but one with a quick sword-arm and a penchant for violence.
- Greyanna is angry that the sphinx took Flynnad's choice, agency, and memory and calls the sphinx a



monster. She cast *greater restoration* (from a scroll) to return Flynnad to her late thirties. Flynnad deserves to be able to decide her own fate; the sphinx has no right to control her. Flynnad stormed off talking about revenge. Greyanna wants the characters to talk Flynnad out of revenge.

- Carilindë remembers making Flynnad's first shield for her a couple of decades ago. She was as wild as any other young adventurer. Flynnad's group of adventurers were having a hard time making money. Her elderly parents passed away in poverty after the bank took their home due to unpaid debts. Flynnad was trying hard to find anything to help her family, including dangerous enterprises like robbing Porfindel's tomb.

DEVELOPMENT

The characters can go on to look for Flynnad in the forest (*Scene 2.1*) if they haven't already or to the camp (*Scene 3.1*).

CHAPTER 3 – MY OLD LIFE

SCENE 3.1: THE GUARDS

Area Information

The forest here is densely covered with evergreen trees. Cold rain is pouring harder. Wisdom (Perception) checks for things that are more than 30 feet away are made with disadvantage due to the rain. The sun is setting, and the forest is dimly lit. Rain limits vision to 30 feet.

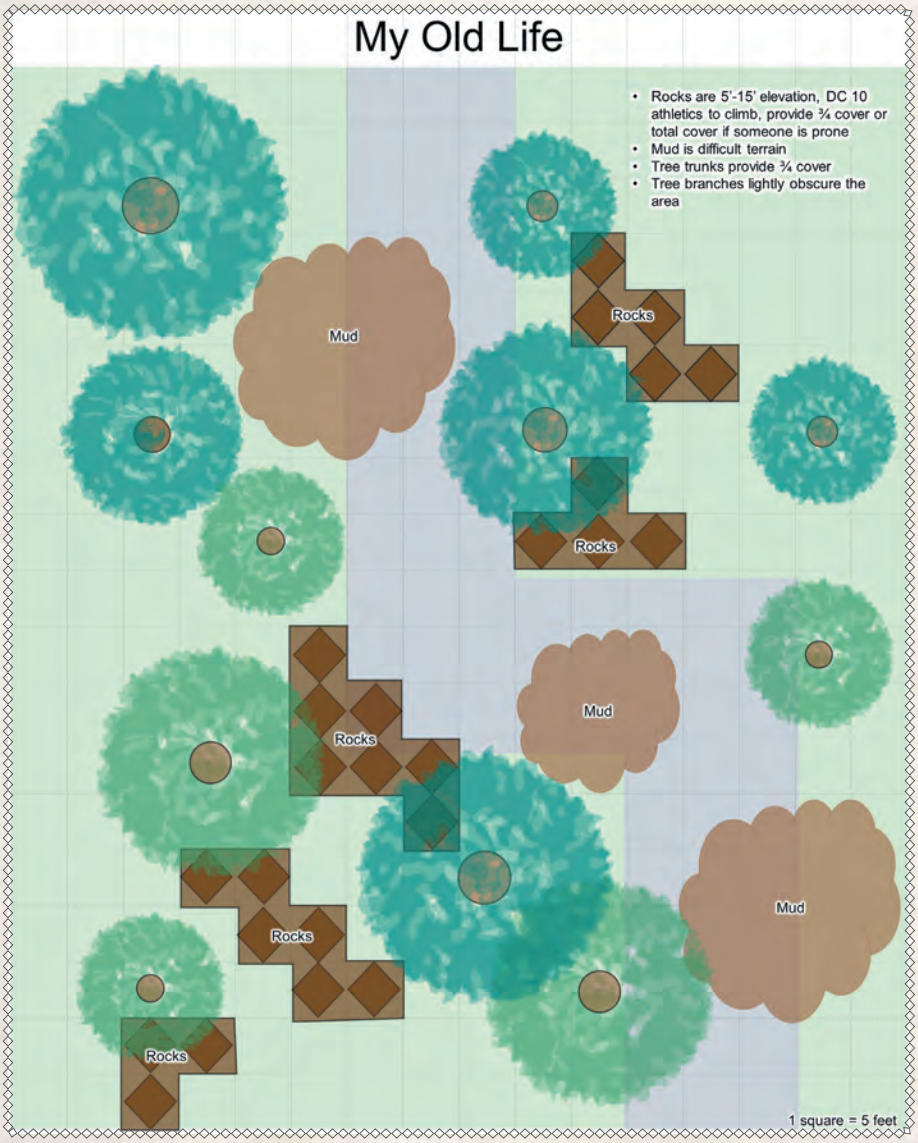
Creatures/NPCs

A half dozen or so guards (**archers**, **veterans**, **spies**, **master thieves**, and/or an **assassin**) patrol the outside of the camp, alert and wary. Their objectives are to tell passerby to get lost, and if they refuse to leave, to subdue them and bring them to Ghemar for questioning.

They know someone named Flynnad is back, is an old friend of Ghemar's, and is in Ghemar's tent right now planning something big. Whatever they're planning is secret because the guards have been sent to keep a watch on the perimeter where they can't overhear.

This is a very hard fight. However, the characters can make things easier in several ways:

- If the characters assure the sprites that they are working for the good of the entire forest, and supply them with some delicious people food, the sprites can harass the guards and lead them off into the woods for hours.
- If the characters were cordial with the dark fey, the redcaps are delighted to hunt these guards down and silently murder them in a gruesome fashion one by one.



- The characters can patiently stalk the guards individually and take them out silently in groups of one or two. Tiranuil can be hired (for 200 gp) to help do this. (He has the same stats and abilities as a master thief for weaker parties, an assassin for average parties, or a **drow house captain** with wood elf racial features for strong parties.)
- Roleplaying some sort of massive distraction. Lady Porfindel is happy to help them plan it. Alepha is happy to help them execute it. The townsfolk and the fey are also willing co-conspirators. Outright bribery works as well; these guards are hired mercenaries and demand significant coin (DM's discretion as to what is significant) from the heroes.

Level adjustment:

- 3 level 6 characters: 1 **archer**, 1 **veteran**, and 4 **spies**
- 5 level 8 characters: 3 **archers** and 4 **veterans**
- 7 level 10 characters: 1 **assassin** and 6 **master thieves**

Development

Once the guards are dealt with, the characters can face off against Ghemar and/or Flynnad (*Scene 3.2*).

Scene 3.2: The Necromancer

Area Information

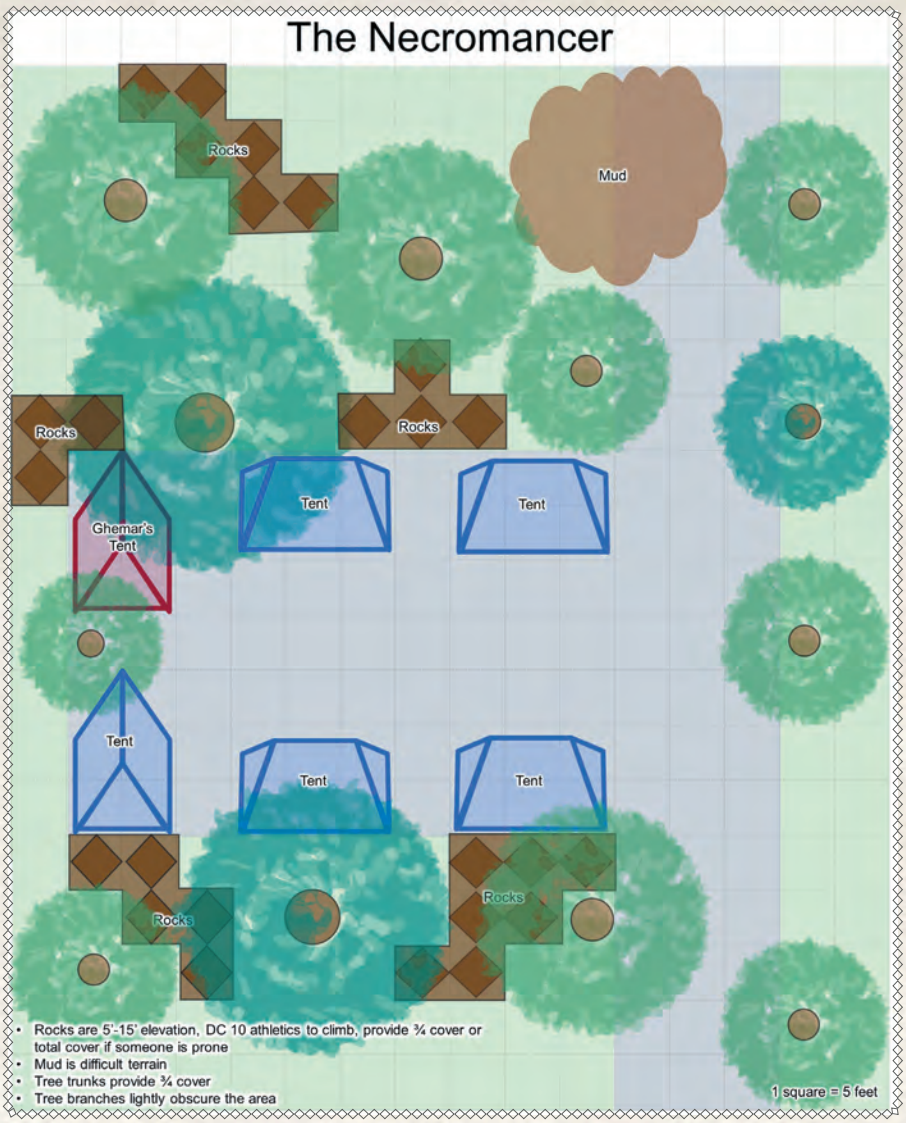
The forest here is densely covered with evergreen trees. Cold rain is pouring harder. Wisdom (Perception) checks for things that are more than 30 feet away are made with disadvantage due to the pouring rain. The sun has almost set, and the forest is dimly lit. Rain limits vision to 30 feet.

Creatures/NPCs

Flynnad and Ghemar are in Ghemar's tent discussing plans to attack Porfindel's tomb and steal Lady Porfindel's bones.

Flynnad wants revenge on Alepha for trying to brainwash her, but doesn't want the other kids hurt ("wasn't their fault that they fell in the same trap I did.") She doesn't care what happens to Lady Porfindel. Ghemar is a necromancer and has rites and rituals that will bring Lady Porfindel under her control and bind Porfindel to serve as Ghemar's military advisor. Ghemar doesn't care about the sphinx or the kids.

Flynnad tries to explain to the characters how she has been wronged and get them to agree to go hunt Alepha with or without her. Ghemar offers to give the characters 200 gp worth of jewelry if they will slay the sphinx. If they refuse, she agrees to give them a *periapt of proof against poison* to sweeten the deal. If the characters still refuse, but indicate they won't interfere, Ghemar and Flynnad let them go. If Ghemar and Flynnad notice their sentries have been hurt, killed, or driven off, they attack.



Level adjustment:

- 3 level 6 characters: 1 veteran (Flynnad) and 1 **mage** (Ghemar)
- 5 level 8 characters: 1 gladiator (Flynnad) and 1 **necromancer** (Ghemar)
- 7 level 10 characters: 1 **warlord** (Flynnad), 1 necromancer (Ghemar), and 1 **minotaur skeleton**

If the fight is too easy, the undead that Ghemar has buried nearby rise up to assist her:

- 3 level 6 characters: 1 or 2 **skeletons** per round.
- 5 level 8 characters: 1 or 2 **ghasts** per round.
- 7 level 10 characters: 1 or 2 **minotaur skeletons** per round.

Development

The characters have an important choice to make here. Do they:

- Subdue Flynnad and take her back to Alepha? If they do, do the heroes suggest that Alepha de-age Flynnad again?
- Kill Flynnad?
- Let Flynnad go free?
- Join Flynnad to hunt down Alepha?

Conclusion: The Choice

Afterwards, Alepha and Lady Porfindel desperately want to know what happened and why it happened. They want to engage in a deep discussion about free will and the power of nature versus nurture. If Flynnad is killed or left free they are deeply saddened.

Rewards

If the characters bring Flynnad back alive Lady Porfindel gives them each a small book of military history that's she's written posthumously. The characters can sell it for 500 gp. If they choose to keep it, they roll Intelligence (History) checks about military history with advantage if they take 10 minutes to look for the answer in the book.

Author's Notes

Thank you, beloved husband, first and always. Thanks also to the women and nonbinary folks who are learning to play *D&D* right now. I'm SO happy you're here!

About the Author

Paige started playing *D&D* in 1982-ish and has been a DM and player her whole life. She runs conventions (mostly in Atlanta, Georgia) and writes adventures with her husband. Her other hobbies include travel, goats, progressive politics, and making the online *D&D* community a nice place for good people.



Illustration by Dean Spencer



Illustration by Liz Gist

THE FALL OF PYGMALION

by S. T. Mannell

Creature: *Medusa* | **Level:** *7* | **CW:** *Implied parental abuse*

SYNOPSIS

Pygmalion, an ancient ruined city, sits at the heart of a blighted wasteland. Beneath the dead city's palace, there lies a vault with great, unclaimed riches within. Upon receiving a letter containing half of the vault's key, the characters are drawn to Pygmalion, and find it filled with statues and deadly constructs. Soon enough, they meet the letter's author—a medusa named Galatea. If they want the treasure, they must help her find revenge on the one who laid the medusa's curse upon her, uncovering the ancient secrets of the lost city in the process.

ADVENTURE HOOK

This adventure is intended for player characters of 5th-7th level. The more players are present, the lower their level can be.

The characters receive a direct invitation in the form of a letter. The specifics of the delivery depend on the campaign the DM integrates this adventure into.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

There are a few key secrets that you need to know up-front. First, that the Augur-King of Pygmalion, Ovid, cursed his daughter, Galatea. Second, that Ovid died thousands of years ago after locking himself inside of a vault while his kingdom crumbled.

Third, Galatea's perception of the passage of time is frayed, and she does not know that she is immortal and much older than she realizes.

Finally, Galatea's curse caused Pygmalion's collapse. Her petrifying gaze unintentionally dismantled the ecosystems surrounding and supporting the city, and now the countryside is a lifeless wasteland.

CHAPTER 1 – A SUDDEN SUMMONS

The tale begins during the characters' downtime between adventures. Wherever they are—perhaps resting in a tavern—they receive a letter from a flustered courier. Galatea carefully secured her anonymity while hiring the courier, and they cannot confirm the letter's sender.

THE LETTER

> The edges of the stiff white envelope are stained green, like bone dipped in algae. A wax seal pins the envelope shut, scintillating dully between drab copper and silver tones. Hefting the envelope back and forth, you feel a heavy thumb-sized object within.

Characters must make a DC 15 Intelligence (History) check to identify the letter's seal as the royal seal of Pygmalion. On a success, they know that Pygmalion collapsed over two thousand years ago, and they are aware of the many different accounts of what befell the city. Historians argue over the exact details, but generally agree that a war was fought over the marriage of Pygmalion's beautiful princess, Galatea.

When they open the letter, read or paraphrase the following:

> *"Greetings, heroes. Word of your deeds has reached me, and I ask that you lend me your skill. Enclosed in this envelope, you will find half of the key to the lost vault of Pygmalion, which I offer as proof of its existence. I await your aid within the throne room of Pygmalion's ruined palace, where, together with my half of the key, we will open the vault and claim its riches.*
>
> *I have included a map to the palace. Stick to the roads, for the way is dangerous. Your timely arrival will prove your worth."*
>
> The letter is signed simply with the letter "G." Half of a clock-winding key remains in the envelope.

Any character who succeeds on a DC 10 Intelligence (History) check is familiar with the vault. Additionally, characters with criminal contacts in the area may have heard of the lost treasure.

Note: As a Tier 2 adventure, the characters are making names for themselves as heroes of the realm. This adventure might be their first taste of their reputation preceding them!

THE WASTELAND

The characters are a full day's ride from the wasteland. They know when they've arrived, as the earth quickly turns grey and lifeless, and the trees become withered and twisted. Rangers and druids do not gain any terrain or environmental benefits while in the wasteland.

> The air grows cold, still, and eerily quiet. There are no birds here, nor even insects. You hear the faint pulsing of your own blood inside of your head. A green fog descends on the party, thickening as you press on, until you can barely see the road a few feet before you.

Rangers or druids who succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom (Nature) check can tell that the wasteland is part of a magical curse that has severed the connection between flora and fauna. On a roll of 20 or higher, they spot evidence—a tiny stone bee lying by the roadside.

Keep to the roads! If the party leaves the road, they risk falling into quicksand. Rules for quicksand can be found in Chapter 5 of the *DMG*.

Eventually, the party arrives at the open gates and crumbling stone walls of Pygmalion.

DEVELOPMENT

The next chapter begins when the characters enter the ruins.

CHAPTER 2 – MEETING GALATEA

> Upon entering the city you find it empty save for the many statues dotting the streets. Some are frozen in terror, as though fleeing for their lives. Others are locked in eternal battle, leaping toward some unseen foe. Here and there, you see statues which have toppled over, cracking into pieces. You stop before a perfectly recreated human face lying amidst the cobbles.
>
> From the gates of the city, you can see the shape of the palace looming through the fog.

These statues are victims of Galatea's petrifying gaze. She was forced to petrify many of the guards in self-defense when they turned on her out of fear of the curse. Galatea is still haunted by accidentally turning hundreds of her own citizens to stone as she tried to flee the city.

STREETS OF THE LOST CITY

The characters must prevail over the dangers of the city streets to reach the palace. Several of the mad king Ovid's constructs prowl the streets amongst the crumbling statuary. The rusting metal that makes up these automatons squeaks and screeches loudly as they patrol.

If the characters fight the constructs, use the **animated armor** stat block. The constructs appear in groups of 1d4 + 1.

GALATEA'S FOUNTAIN

The party comes across a statue of a beautiful woman standing in the center of an ornate fountain at the base of the palace. The base of the fountain is 30

feet in diameter and dry. A message in the ancient Pygmalion language is carved into the bottom of the fountain. Characters with an Intelligence score of 20, the Linguist feat, or who succeed on a DC 20 Intelligence (History) check, can translate the message. It reads: “Dedicated to the King's fair daughter, Galatea. May she continue inspiring the sudden pilgrimages of princes from afar for many years to come!”

THE THRONE ROOM

A single, lit torch welcomes you to the palace, and you swiftly notice more—a path left for you to follow through the ruins. As you go, you find more and more statues. Some of these statues are less eroded than others, and you recognize styles of clothing from different nations throughout history. Eventually, you push through a narrow corridor crowded with stone figures, and find yourself in the throne room.

Here, there are easily a hundred of the eerie sculptures, and all seem as though they have been petrified in the midst of battle. Archers eternally knock their arrows. Mages permanently recite words from tomes. And at the back of the room, a woman sits on the throne.

ROLEPLAYING GALATEA

Your depiction of Galatea is a major part of the adventure and the characters’ conversation with her is an opportunity for your group to stretch their roleplaying muscles.

You may describe Galatea however you want, but there are a few key points to note: She is unarmed—her sword and shortbow are behind the throne—and wears a blindfold. Galatea only uses her Petrifying Gaze in self-defense.

First, she asks the party to listen to her story. If they refuse, they are free to leave, but she demands they return the fragment of the vault key. If they ask about the petrified adventurers in the throne room, she explains with genuine sadness and regret that many of them tried to kill her the moment they saw her. Her story is thus:

"I was princess here, long ago. I was young. I had suitors. They came in droves from neighboring kingdoms. Most of them were tiresome, but a few were not." She sighs. *"But... it was decided that I was an embarrassment. That I was immoral. A libertine. The court-wizard did this to me as punishment."* The snakes coiling around her neck and shoulders hiss, but her anger subsides quickly. "*I’d never wished harm on anyone in my life, but it wasn't long before I brought the whole kingdom to its knees. I stayed here, exiled from the world, in a great cemetery of my people."* She laughs, light as a feather. *"I think... that my punishment may have been too great."*

What Does Galatea Sound Like?

Galatea sounds tired. She speaks clearly and succinctly, but hundreds and hundreds of years of self-imprisonment wear on her.

What Does Galatea Want?

Galatea wants to kill the one who cursed her, and she is convinced that their death will lift the curse. She tells the party that as the city fell, she saw the court-wizard lock himself in the vault, to escape Pygmalion’s destruction. She is convinced that his magic has kept him alive. Furthermore, she takes her continued curse as evidence that he lives.

What Does Galatea Know?

She knows that it was really her father, Ovid, who cursed her, but she does not share this with the party, as his betrayal embarrasses her.

The world progressed without Pygmalion, but Galatea thinks that only a few decades have passed, not two thousand years. The party must prove this to her, or else she does not believe them.

Galatea’s sudden immortality is a severe burden on her memory and perception of time. She attempts to distract the characters with talk of treasure if they force the subject of her timeline’s inconsistencies.

What Does Galatea Need the Party For?

This will likely be the party's number one concern. Why does Galatea need them if she has both parts of the vault key?

First, she needs help navigating the palace because of her blindfold. She has become extremely attached to it, and hates taking it off, even when alone. While wearing the blindfold, she is considered blinded.

Second, and more importantly, she cannot get past the guardian of the vault's entrance alone.

DEVELOPMENT

Reaching an agreement with Galatea, or taking her piece of the key, prompts the next part of the adventure.

CHAPTER 3 – THE VAULT

The final part of the adventure takes place in the vault room beneath the palace. Galatea knows the way, but she needs the party to guide her around the statues littering the hallways.

THE VAULT'S GUARDIAN

A lone **shield guardian** guards the vault. Augur-King Ovid was an accomplished spellcaster, and he stored a single casting of the *wall of fire* spell within the shield guardian, which it can cast as an action after it is reduced to half of its total hit points.

A larger party is liable to steamroll the shield guardian before it can challenge them, even if they are far below the recommended tier for this adventure. If the party has more than three members, consider adding a group of the same automatons that patrol the city streets to this encounter.

If Galatea joins the party in combat, you can offer her role to a player, using the **medusa** stat block from the *Monster Manual*. While blindfolded, she is considered blinded. Also note that a medusa's Petrifying Gaze feature works against all creatures, including constructs.

OPENING THE VAULT

A ten foot tall circular marble door stands before you, set into the stone. Its face is patterned with tarnished brass and copper cogs, wheels, and springs. In the very center of the door is a small circular keyhole.

The door is magically sealed, two-foot thick marble, and can be opened without the key, but this is dangerous. A *glyph of warding* is inscribed on the door and any attempt to tamper with it triggers the rune to erupt with magical energy in a 20-foot sphere centered on the glyph. Each creature in the aura must make a successful DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 5d8 fire damage, or half as much on a success.

The two halves of the winding key stick together magnetically. Once the key is placed in the keyhole and turned, the mechanisms on the face of the door shift. The grinding, ratcheting noise of the door opening can be heard for three hundred feet. It takes thirty seconds to unlock the door, after which it swings open silently.

DEVELOPMENT

Entering the vault prompts the conclusion of the adventure.

CONCLUSION

You enter a long, narrow stone room beyond the vault door. Coins and gemstones sparkle brilliantly in the dim light within. A skeleton adorned with a thin crown rests on a pile of gold at the far end of the vault.

GALATEA'S REACTION

If Galatea has her blindfold on she asks the characters to describe what they see. Galatea immediately understands that the skeleton is her father and takes this as evidence of how much time passed without her noticing. With horror, it dawns on her that even if she could remove the curse, she might immediately succumb to her old age.

Put yourself in Galatea's position and imagine realizing you are unjustly cursed forever. It is a difficult role to play, so don't worry if it doesn't come across exactly how you want it to!

The party is free to ignore or help Galatea however they wish. She does not stop them from leaving, but fights back if they attack her for any reason. If the party searches for another way to lift the curse, she goes along with it, even if you decide that stripping

away her immortality will kill her. Galatea is liable to befriend the party if they convince her to live on as a medusa.

OVID'S REMAINS

The king's skeleton is so old that it turns to dust the moment it is touched or moved.

He still wears the shield guardian's command amulet, but the magic of the vault door has suspended its control. With the door opened the characters can now command the construct, if it is still intact.

By his left hand is his spellbook. Much of the paper has cracked under the weight of time, but a few pages may be saved. Characters can examine the spellbook's contents with a successful DC 19 Dexterity check to gently turn the pages. It contains the spells *wall of fire*, *mass suggestion*, and *delayed blast fireball*. Characters must copy these spells into their own spellbook while inside the vault, as the pages are too old to move very far.

THE LOST TREASURE OF PYGMALION

Use the "Treasure Hoard: Challenge 5 - 10" table on p. 137 of the *DMG* to decide the treasure within the vault. You can even ask the players to roll on this table themselves.

If you would rather not leave the reward up to chance, the vault contains the following:

- 2d6 x 100 cp
- 2d6 x 1000 sp
- 4d6 x 100 gp
- 2d6 x 10 pp
- 3d6 100 gp gemstones
- 1x *necklace of fireballs*
- 1x *cloak of protection*
- 1x *spellguard shield*

Feel free to add or remove items as you see fit.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

The experience points gained in this adventure depend on the method your group has chosen for levelling up. If using standard rules, use the values given in the core books. If using milestone experience, consider allowing the party to gain a level once they have opened the vault.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

Thank you to Ashley Warren for the wonderful opportunity to work alongside so many other great writers and artists! The organization of the *Uncaged* anthology was a massive undertaking, and it's been fantastic to see so many people working hard to pull it together.

This adventure was heavily inspired by the Automata episode of the BBC podcast "In Our Time." In it, one of the guests talks about how Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* twists the gender politics of ancient myth. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Pygmalion's male gaze brings a female statue to life. In the myth of the Gorgon, the female gaze turns men to stone. The guests in the podcast posit that this sort of gender politics is always present in stories about automata. Male engineers try to create life and displace females in the process, and this leads to 'catastrophe for the human race.'

This was at the back of my head when writing Fall of Pygmalion. It's a bit on the nose, but my general goal was to take all of the above and use it to comment less on automata, and more on autonomy, something that women constantly have threatened. In this story, Galatea's autonomy is taken away once the curse is placed on her, and I wanted to give players the challenge of finding ways to give it back to her.

More than anyone else involved in the project, I would be remiss not to mention my partner, Julia Holden. She reads everything I write, in keeping with the commonly forgotten law that no male writer should ever publish anything without non-male editing. When she heard about *Uncaged*, it was her idea to tell a story about Medusa as a woman unfairly punished by her own father for promiscuity. This work is hers more than it is mine.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

S.T. Mannell currently writes from a demiplane known as Auckland, New Zealand. You can find more of their work on DM's Guild, crypticparlour.com, or follow them on twitter at @crypticparlour.




TIER 3



Illustration by D.W. Dagon

CALL OF A MOTHER

by Anthony Beal

Creature: *Penanggalan* | **Level:** *10 - 12*

CWs: *Themes of arson, infanticide, and body horror*

SYNOPSIS

The distant hospice of Mother's Hope has been destroyed. For centuries it was a safe haven for expectant mothers and their newborns. The destruction of the hospice above has awakened something below, for Mother's Hope held a secret. An ancient evil stirs, her name lost to time, but soon to be whispered anew.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Call of a Mother is for 3-4 characters at 10th-12th level. The adventurers must unravel the secret hidden below the remains of Mother's Hope before it claims their lives.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The creature in this adventure is an undead called a **penanggalan**. She appears as a humanoid woman during the day but at night, her head and her entrails separate from her body. She flies out in search of blood, preferring new mothers and infants. She returns to her body before daybreak, soaking her swollen organs in vinegar before reattaching her head to her body.

The penanggalan in this adventure is Nyari. Once a powerful celestial, she believed that morals would soon overrun the Material Plane, and began a sacrificial cult. At the moment of her execution, Orcus saved her body and soul, and she became the first penanggalan. Only Nyari can create new penanggalan.

She was imprisoned by the Order of Sacred Light, who built Mother's Hope above her tomb to keep her sealed. Each time a child was born in the hospice, the divine energy released renewed the magic binding her. The Order hunted her penanggalan daughters to extinction.

Nyari lay dormant until Kar'heeta, a former priestess of Lolth, arrived. Despising Lolth, Nyari pushed against her bonds, causing the uneasiness Eleana felt near Mother's Hope. As less children were born at the hospice, her influence grew, until Eleana's attack inadvertently freed her.

This adventure works best when you slowly build the tension and dread. The room descriptions are functional, but feel free to embellish them to your own tastes. This includes adding additional rooms, but be careful not to tax player resources too heavily.

As a final note, this adventure can be deadly. The danger should be emphasized to players. The information in the Priest's Journal is essential. If your players find a way to circumnavigate the ghoul tunnels, be sure to give them an opportunity to find the journal, or have Kar'heeta or Eleana find it for them.

FEATURED CHARACTERS

- **Kar'heeta:** A female drow nearly 400 years old, she was a midwife at Mother's Hope. Kar'heeta was once a priestess of Lolth, but gave up her faith and left the Underdark when her son was taken away from her.
- **Eleana:** A human woman in her mid-forties. Tough and grizzled, Eleana is still grieving the death of her only daughter. She is unknowingly descended from the priests that sealed Nyari.
- **Nyari (spirit):** The first penanggalan. She is vicious, intelligent, and devoted to Orcus.
- **Seeta, Brianne & Ventra:** Midwives who fled Mother's Hope during Eleana's attack.

CHAPTER 1 – SCOURGE OF NEW LIFE

Each of you was awakened in the night by the same lucid nightmare. A tide of blood. Screams of women and infants. A cold, monstrous presence pressing against your minds.

In the morning, black smoke rises over the treeline, portending something dreadful. Mother's Hope, a hospice for the care of pregnant women and newborns, is burning. You move as swiftly as you can, uncertain of what horrors you will find when you arrive.

Arriving at Mother's Hope, the party find the husk of the building, ravaged by fire and collapsed in on itself. A female drow in a smock is near the building. Her body is covered in small cuts and abrasions, and her smock is smeared with dirt and plant matter. She pulls a large chest from the rubble and opens it with a key.

When the party approaches, she panics and draws a rapier from the chest. Realizing that the party is not who she thought, she lowers the rapier. She introduces herself as Kar'heeta, one of the midwives.

Mother's Hope was destroyed by a woman named Eleana, the leader of a mercenary company. Eleana had claimed for years to feel an evil presence on the hospice grounds, warning away everyone she could from seeking their aid.

Three days ago, Eleana's daughter went into labor, and Eleana hesitated to call the midwives. When she finally did, it was too late, and both mother and child died. Drunk and lost in her grief, Eleana and her soldiers burned down the building and the midwives scattered into the woods. There were ten midwives in total, including Kar'heeta.

As upset as she is, Kar'heeta understands Eleana's pain and so far no one has come to harm. She asks the party to help her find the other midwives and make sure Eleana doesn't hurt anyone. She has a pretty good idea of where to look for the others. There's a small cave nearby that they might have taken shelter in.

CAVE OF THE MOTHER

It takes an hour to reach the Cave of the Mother on foot. The entrance is in the side of a hill that resembles the belly of a pregnant woman. With a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Survival) check, a character discovers several smaller sets of tracks leading into the cave as well as heavy boot prints. No tracks exit the cave.

The interior of the cave is shallow. Along the back of the cave there is a doorway that Kar'heeta says was not there before. The entrance is framed by three pieces of stone, each carved with arcane runes which are now cracked. A successful DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana) check identifies the runes as a potent illusion spell. Something happened that shattered the magic.

The entrance leads to a dark corridor of smooth worked stone. A successful DC 16 Intelligence (History) check identifies the tool marks and techniques used for this construction to be from more than a millennium ago.

DEVELOPMENT

The party enters the corridor to continue searching for the lost midwives.

CHAPTER 2 – MOTHER OF THE HEADLESS MAIDENS

The corridor continues for 100 feet before opening into a small chamber. Two arches lead out of the chamber on the left and the right. To the right, another corridor leads deeper beneath the hill while on the left is a round room with murals on the walls.

A massive 8 foot tall statue sits against the far wall, the figure a bloated, winged demon holding an imposing weapon in its right hand. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Religion) check identifies the figure as Orcus, Demon Prince of the Undead.

MURAL ROOM

The murals are as beautiful as they are grotesque, stretching from floor to ceiling, moving clockwise in four panels. In the first, an impossibly tall woman stands at the center of a group of women. Her features are demonic and her expression evil, yet the women kneel in reverence. On the second, the tall woman's head separates from her body along with her internal organs. The heads of the kneeling women do the same. The third shows these severed heads brutally attacking a village, mostly women and infants. The final panel mirrors the first.

DEAD END

The corridor continues for 50 feet before turning sharply to the left for another 20 feet. This shorter corridor has several collapsed side corridors and small tunnels positioned near the floor, about 4 feet wide and 2 feet tall. It then opens into another chamber. The sounds of battle echo from within.

In the chamber, Eleana stands at the center of a bloody mess. Three of her men and one ghoul lay dead on the ground as she holds off two more **ghouls**.

Once the ghouls are dealt with, Eleana spots Kar'heeta. Kar'heeta demands to know what Eleana has done with the other midwives. Eleana says that she has done nothing to them, but that obviously her instincts were right. Eleana long suspected the midwives were hiding something.

While this is happening, have the party make a DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check. A success means that they see the ghoul that scurries out of the tunnel in the corridor behind them, dart up the wall and remove a stone from the ceiling. Regardless, the entire corridor collapses behind them, burying the ghoul and their only exit. A long, low laugh echoes throughout the chamber.

Realizing that they face some new danger, Kar'heeta and Eleana form a shaky truce. It would take days to dig out the corridor. The only way out is through the small tunnels.

GHOUL TUNNEL

The tunnels eventually connect together. This new tunnel continues for more than 100 feet, and progress is slow and tense. The skeletal remains of a priest await, 50 feet down the corridor. His hand rests atop a journal and a small medallion hangs around his neck.

The medallion is made of steel, and a successful DC 14 Intelligence (History or Religion) check identifies the symbol as the Order of Sacred Light. The Order has not existed for several hundred years. Curiously, the symbol of Eleana's mercenary company shares many similarities, though she is unaware of any connection.

The journal takes some time to go through, but provides a lot of useful information.

PRIEST'S JOURNAL

The priest was part of the Order of Sacred Light and came to this place as part of a large hunting party with the intent to destroy a powerful undead creature and her minions. He refers to her only as the Mother.

To defeat the Mother, they constructed four golden lances imbued with divine power. They knew that the Mother, as a servant of Orcus, was too powerful for them to destroy. Instead, they intended to prevent her from returning to the Abyss by using the lances to trap her in her physical body. To ensure that she was forgotten, the priest gathered all known records of her and destroyed them.

The undead they hunted were called penanggalan, daughters of the Mother. The journal contains basic information about the penanggalan as well as the following.

- They are resistant to turning and grant that resistance to other undead in their proximity.
- Their entrails can infect a person with a deadly disease if touched.
- Destroying their bodies while their heads are detached limits the penanggalan's regeneration and ensures that at sunrise the creature will die.

Kar'heeta remembers a legend told among the drow about an entity from long ago that set itself against Lolth. The legends are unclear as to what started the conflict, but the entity in the stories was called the Mother.

DEVELOPMENT

After finding the priest's journal, the party moves through the corridor to the final chambers.

CHAPTER 3 – EXALTED PRIESTESS OF ORCUS

The corridor is short, with a smaller doorway on the left and a set of descending stairs at the end. In the center of the corridor is the body of a small gnome woman being consumed by a ghoul. As it hears the party, the ghoul darts into one of the small tunnels, dragging the body with it. Only a bloody smear remains. Kar'heeta recognizes the body as that of Seeta, one of the lost midwives.

FEEDING ROOM

This room is nearly 70 feet long, the floor stained brown with blood. Lining each side of the room are a series of wooden beds equipped with stirrups. These stirrups have an iron cage intended to lock the legs in place, as well as iron bands to immobilize the head and arms. Several of them contain skeletal remains. There are more of the small tunnels in this room as well.

Kar'heeta stares as if lost in some distant memory. She wonders out loud "if he is in such a place." While she still lived in the Underdark, she had a son who was taken from her the day he was born. She searched for him for years but never found a trace of him. Disgusted with the depravity of drow society, she left the Underdark for the surface.

> *"I hold no illusions as to his fate. Most likely he is dead, or transformed into some abomination beyond recognition. Still, a mother always hopes."*

A moment passes between Eleana and Kar'heeta, both recognizing that they are more alike than they thought.

THRONE ROOM

The stairs descend to a set of double doors that are neither locked or trapped. They lead into a square chamber, 80 feet on each side with ceilings 50 feet high. In the far corners, two massive stones are set, attached to rusted chains, suspended in the air.

The left and right sides each hold four small alcoves. In the farthest of these alcoves, one on each side, Brianne and Ventra kneel in silence. They do not respond to either verbal or physical interactions. More of the small tunnels are positioned between the alcoves.

Centered on the back wall is a large stone throne atop a platform. Seated on the throne are the mummified remains of a woman. At her full height she would have been nearly 10 feet tall. Her head rests in her lap. Four golden lances pierce her body and the throne. To the right of the platform is a door.

Once they enter, the party is welcomed by a raspy, feminine voice that booms around the room. She introduces herself as Nyari, Scourge of New Life, Mother of the Headless Maidens, Exalted Priestess of Orcus. Her voice is coming from the mummified head but it is not moving. If the party tries attacking the head or body, Nyari laughs, explaining that she is using her former body as a conduit to speak, but her spirit has returned to the Abyss.

Nyari thanks Kar'heeta and Eleana for freeing her from confinement and allowing her to return to the Abyss. When Kar'heeta and Eleana deny helping her, Nyari is bemused. She tells them that once the lances pierced her body, the priests knew the magic was already weakening. Cleverly, the Order of Sacred Light built Mother's Hope directly above this chamber. They linked the building to the same magic as the lances. Every time a child was born, the release of divine energy renewed the magic of the lances.

Over the centuries, Nyari became dormant. When Kar'heeta arrived at Mother's Hope, Nyari's hatred of the drow and Lolth woke her from dormancy. Eleana is a descendent of one of the priests who bound Nyari, and it was her evil that Eleana sensed at Mother's Hope. When Eleana burnt the building, she shattered the bonds holding Nyari.

Tactics: Nyari engages the characters in conversation for as long as she can.

If pressed as to why she is sharing this, or when she finishes her tale, Nyari says she was stalling for sundown. At that point two things happen. First, both doors in the chamber lock with an audible click. Second, the two giant stones in the corners descend, their chains throwing clouds of rust, and raising thick metal doors over each alcove. The doors each have a 1-inch wide slit in their center.

> *"I'd prefer you all die here. Anonymity has its advantages. If you live, well, then my name will be whispered in hushed tones once again."*

The sound of claws on stone mixed with terrible screams rises from the tunnels, but is overpowered by the wet, tearing sound coming from the alcoves. The disembodied heads of Brianne and Ventra, now penanggalan, squeeze through the tiny gaps in the door just as the first ghouls emerge from their tunnels.

COMBAT

Brianne and Ventra's penanggalan forms attempt to destroy the strongest characters first. If someone destroys their body, the penanggalan fly into a rage, and target the party member or members responsible.

The ghouls attack anything that they can get to and flee when both penanggalan are slain. An optional wave of four ghouls can be added. They enter on initiative count 20 (losing ties) during the third round of combat.

Kar'heeta is an **assassin** but uses a rapier (1d8+3 piercing damage). She moves to intercept the ghouls, knowing she is immune to their paralysing touch. Eleana is a **knight** with an additional 40 hit points. She positions herself to make use of her Leadership ability. If reduced to 0 hit points, both Kar'heeta and Eleana make death saving throws.

The chains attached to the large stones are old and brittle, with an AC of 10 and 10 hit points, and resistance to piercing damage. They can be targeted by melee or ranged attacks. Breaking a chain causes the alcove doors on that side of the room to retract.

DEVELOPMENT

When both penanggalan are dead, any remaining ghouls flee the area.

CONCLUSION

After the battle, a quick search of the room reveals a lever in the far right alcove that releases the locks on the doors. The lances can be pulled from Nyari's body. Characters who make a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) check realize the magic in them is broken, but they still look valuable.

Each of the alcoves has a series of arcane runes inscribed inside. A successful DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check deciphers their meaning. These runes channel Abyssal energy for some purpose, most likely to create penanggalan.

Exiting the chamber through the far door, the party moves through a short corridor that splits left and right. The left leads further into the dark. A breeze comes from the right where a circular shaft leads up to the surface. Some of Eleana's men are near the top and lower a rope.

If Kar'heeta and/or Eleana survived they tell the party that they will continue to explore beneath Mother's Hope, hoping to find the other midwives, who they believe (correctly) have been transformed into penanggalan. They ask the party to scour the surface for any information that might still exist about Nyari. One of them gives the party one half of a pair of *sending stones* to relay any information they find.

The party watches as the woman or women disappear into the dark.

REWARDS

Enemies Defeated	XP (per defeated)
Ghoul	200
Penanggalan	10,000

Challenges Completed	XP
Kar'heeta lives	2,000
Eleana lives	2,000

Items	Value
Throne Room	Golden Lances x4 (2,500 gp each)
Kar'heeta or Eleana	*Sending stone*

AUTHOR'S NOTES

The penanggalan is a horrifying creature, both in appearance and in the fears that she represents. Giving birth, during any time period, can be a dangerous, harrowing time for both mother and child. Infection, toxic shock, birthing complications, and even S.I.D.S. are frightening realities. Those fears are given a face in the penanggalan.

In Malaysian folklore, penanggalan are women who are cursed into becoming a monster, by making a demonic pact for eternal life or beauty, and failing to uphold the bargain. With Nyari, I rejected that notion, creating instead an undead matriarch powerful enough to tangle with entities like Lolth without fear. Nyari represents the same fears as all penanggalan, now organized and focused. She is completely devoted to the ideals that Orcus embodies.

Women have been measured throughout history by their willingness and ability to have children. Societies have often seen those women who can't or won't have children as somehow abnormal or broken. Motherhood, like all things to do with a woman's body, is a choice. It belongs to her, despite history and society's attempts to say otherwise.

Nyari represents an alternative, albeit a dark and twisted one. Her emergence in a larger campaign setting can have a direct impact on the world. How

do societies that place women in a subservient role react when some flee to join Nyari, hoping to become one of her penanggalan daughters? Does it cause massive societal changes or do they react by trying to re-enforce those traditional roles more harshly?

Special thanks to Alec, Amanda, Annie, Jeremy, and Peter for playtesting and feedback for this adventure.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anthony Beal lives in Northern Ohio. A relative newcomer to the world of *D&D*, he has enjoyed the creative freedom the game offers and the diversity of people involved in play. This is his first published adventure. He can be reached @ajbeal85 on Twitter.



Penanggalan

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 16
Hit Points 144 (17d8 + 68)
Speed 0 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)	17 (+3)	15 (+2)	8 (-1)

Saving Throws Dex +9, Wis +7
Skills Perception +7, Stealth +9
Damage Immunities Poison
Damage Resistances necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons
Condition Immunities charmed, diseased, poisoned
Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 17
Languages Common, Abyssal
Challenge 13 (10,000 XP)

Slip Through. The penanggalan can use an action to squeeze herself through a space as small as 1 inch wide.

Legendary Resistance (3/day). If the penanggalan fails a saving throw, she can choose to succeed instead.

Regeneration. The penanggalan regenerates 20 hit points at the start of each of her turns.

Turning Resistance. The penanggalan and any undead within 30 feet of her have advantage on saving throws against effects that turn undead.

Body Vulnerability. The penanggalan's body is vulnerable to attack while the head is detached. Her body has an AC of 12 and 35 hit points, and is considered paralyzed. If the penanggalan's body is reduced to 0 hit points it is destroyed and she loses her Regeneration and Legendary Resistance. The penanggalan dies at sunrise if her body has been destroyed.

Actions

Multiattack. The penanggalan makes one tongue attack and one gut attack.

Tongue. *Melee Weapon Attack*: +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 10 (1d8 +4) piercing damage. Make a Constitution saving throw, DC 17. The target creature takes 2d8 necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful save. The penanggalan regains hit points equal to the amount of necrotic damage dealt.

Gut Attack. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5ft., one creature. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 +4) acid damage. Make a Constitution saving throw DC 17. On a failed save, the target creature is considered diseased. While diseased, the creature loses hit points at the start of its turn equal to 5 minus its Constitution modifier (minimum 1) and has disadvantage on attack rolls and saving throws. The creature can repeat the save at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success. If the creature fails the saving throw three times, the disease take hold and must be cured by some other means.

Legendary Actions

The penanggalan can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time, and only at the end of another creature's turn. The penanggalan regains spent legendary actions at the start of her turn.

Move. The penanggalan moves up to her speed without provoking opportunity attacks.

Gut Attack. The penanggalan makes one Gut Attack.

Tongue Attack (Costs 2 actions). The penanggalan makes one Tongue Attack.



Illustration by 1manstudio

SOMETHING THIS WAY SLITHERS

by Paul Keiter

Creature: *Erinyes + Naga* | **Levels:** *10 - 12*

SYNOPSIS

Jalambad was once a peaceful village nestled between the Dirus River and the Vasha Forest, but peacefulness has been replaced by fear. It began with the disappearance of one of the villagers. Days later, a large serpent was spotted nearby. The village priest is looking for help to find the missing villagers and solve the mystery of the disappearances. Will the adventurers be able to free the village from the coil of fear suffocating it and prevent the serpent from striking again?

ADVENTURE HOOK

Something This Way Slithers is intended for characters of 10th-12th level. The party could hear a rumor about the missing villagers of Jalambad from tavern gossip, from a passing merchant, or by stumbling across Jalambad while adventuring. Alternatively, the party could hear rumors of an erinyes they are tracking.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Long ago, Mishara protected the village of Jalambad. Generations benefitted from her protection. Some thought Mishara was chosen by the gods, and a few thought she was a god. After years of longing, Mishara decided she wanted her own children and prayed fervently. The gods answered her prayers, and she birthed twin daughters, Dominah and Kelexa. Having a mother whose time was divided between them and the village impacted the two girls. Dominah considered the villagers as part of the family, while Kelexa felt neglected having to share Mishara with the villagers. As her daughters entered their teen years, Mishara worried about their safety. She prayed again for her daughters' protection. The gods offered immortality for Mishara's daughters if their hearts remained pure and they continued to protect the village. Dominah was willing, but Kelexa felt the deal stripped her of her freedom of choice. Mishara agreed to the deal without her daughter's consent, which Kelexa resented.

Years passed; Mishara passed away and Kelexa's resentment grew. Dominah tried to convince Kelexa to accept their duty but this deepened Kelexa's resentment, which became directed at Dominah. One day, Kelexa was approached by a strange man who offered her power and immortality without being bound to Mishara's deal. In return, Kelexa had to attack the village and break her mother's promise. With her resentment boiling over, Kelexa agreed. Dominah tried to stop Kelexa, but Kelexa turned her sister into a giant snake. Dominah drove Kelexa away and retreated to a nearby temple, where she protected Jalambad from afar. It wasn't long before Kelexa realized she had been tricked by the strange man. She aged, died, and found immortality in the Hells. Anger and hate fueled her as she worked to become an erinyes. She aimed to become as powerful as Zariel and Glasya so she could punish all who wronged her.

Generations continued to pass, and the story of the three women faded into legend even as Kelexa schemed. She formed a small cult near Jalambad by striking a bargain with Chhaya, a priest who shared in her rage. Chhaya agreed to help gather victims for a ritual which would allow Kelexa to gain power; in return, Kelexa promised Chhaya power and freedom. Their plan was working until Dominah disrupted their third kidnapping. Dominah took the villager to her temple to protect him.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Chhaya (LE female human priest)

- Pushed by parents who wanted higher standing in the caste system
- Resents the position
- Desires power and freedom
- Outwardly tries to fit the part
- Sometimes can betray true feelings through facial expressions
- Can promise special healing potions/salves in return for help (acts as *potion of greater healing)*

Lomash (NG male human)

He is a sadhu—someone who has surrendered all family, social responsibilities, and material possessions to pursue enlightenment by meditation, devotion, study of sacred texts, self-mortification, and pilgrimage.

- Dedicated life to studying history of Jalambad
- Knows the true story of Mishara
- Is wary of Chhaya, feels she is not devoted enough
- Older, balding spot on head, surrounded by long white hair
- Every time he ends a sentence, he trails into soft mumbling/chanting
- Returned from pilgrimage two days ago and has no knowledge of recent events

Preetha (NG female human)

Mother who approaches the party to ask for help.

- Grandfather is missing
- Traumatized, almost hysterical
- Suggests party speaks to Lomash
- Offers all she owns (family heirloom: hand-carved obsidian elephant)

CHAPTER 1 – JALAMBAD

You are travelling through a forest of neem trees which tower over you. The leaves shade you from the hot sun, and rustle due to a slight breeze, which helps cool you. As you travel, the forest thins and you see many circular stone homes with thatched roofs that extend a foot beyond the walls of the houses. Many have a smooth outer wall, while a few show the brickwork from which the houses were made.

Some of the villagers tend to aloe vera and ashwagandha, an evergreen shrub that stands a few feet tall and is thick with leaves that have reddish-orange berries scattered among them. As you enter Jalambad, the villagers stop their work and gather around you, talking excitedly and slowing your pace.

Suddenly, a woman bursts through the crowd and throws herself at you. Her face is tear-streaked and she cries, *"My Dada! My grandfather! He has been missing for days! Please, you must find him!"* The woman continues to cry and plead with you.

After a few moments, the crowd parts and another woman approaches. *"I am Chhaya, priest for the village. Some of our people have disappeared. Could you help us find them?"*

Although similar on the exterior, each building interior has its own unique decoration including mirrors.

Around the village are large aloe plants, ashwagandha, turmeric, and other vegetation that can be used for healing. On a successful DC 10 Intelligence (Nature) check characters know aloe can be used to heal burns, ashwagandha can be used to help reduce anxiety, and both ashwagandha and turmeric powder can be used to make healing potions.

Three individuals (Suresh, Leela, and Madhan) have gone missing recently. If the party speaks with Preetha, she suggests they speak to Lomash. Preetha offers a small hand-carved obsidian elephant (value 100 gp) as a reward if needed. The party can speak with other villagers, but they give few clues, other than who was kidnapped and where. Roll a d8 on the table on the next page for a rumor. Although incorrect, each villager believes these rumors to be possible.

1. Snakes came out of the ground and carried them away
2. Eaten by tigers
3. Tired of village life and left for another village
4. Taken by the Nambe tribe who live by the Tansi Hills
5. Punishment by gods for secret transgressions
6. Carried off by giant eagle, which lives in Mount Buresh
7. Each of the missing left on a pilgrimage
8. Wandered into the forest at night and got lost

TALKING WITH CHHAYA

Chhaya is responsible for the disappearance of Suresh and Leela at the behest of Kalexa, but no one in the village knows this and she does everything possible to hide it. Madhan was protected by Dominah after she learned of Kelexa's plot. Chhaya takes advantage of this and accuses Dominah, helping Kelexa get vengeance on her sister. If the characters are willing, Chhaya brings them to the temple courtyard. The characters are given food and Chhaya tells them the following:

- There are three missing villagers
- The first (Suresh, the grandfather) went missing seven days ago, the second (Leela), five days and the last (Madhan) three days ago
- There are no witnesses for the first two kidnappings
- A large snake creature was seen near the third kidnapping
- She can give them general directions to Dominah's lair

DEVELOPMENT

Once the characters have spoken to people in Jalambad and decide to go to Dominah's cave or Lomash's hut, proceed to *Chapter 2*.

CHAPTER 2 – NAGA'S TEMPLE

Roll a d6 on the random encounter table below.

1. 2 **elephants** crash through the forest
2. A small herd of chital/spotted **deer** (white spots on body/fur), which will run when spotted
3. 2 **giant apes**
4. 6 **ankheg**
5. 1 **venom troll**
6. 1 **gnoll fang of yeenoghu** and 1 **shoosuva**

LOMASH'S HUT

You walk east through a lush forest of neem trees that stretch upwards over forty feet. Their long, green leaves shade you from the sun above. A small path branches to the north and the larger path continues to the east.

The path to the north leads to Lomash's (see *Dramatis Personae*) hut. His hut is similar to those seen in Jalambad, though a little more sparsely decorated. If the characters approach and are friendly, he welcomes them into his small abode and offers them tea. He relates the story of Mishara and her daughters if asked about the history of the village. If persuaded on a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) or Wisdom (Insight) check, he says he thinks Chhaya should be doing more because a priest's duty is to the village and the priest should be the one protecting the village, not outsiders.

The journey to Dominah's lair takes another three hours from where the path splits.

OUTSIDE DOMINAH'S LAIR

You have walked for a few hours and the trees have thinned around you. Through the trees, the side of a small mountain rises to the east. As you approach, a structure appears to be carved into the side of it. Although the stone appears, you can see time has not erased all of the details.

Four stone elephants support columns spaced five feet from each other. Under the stone roof, about five feet behind the columns, is a carved wall decorated with detailed carvings of humans and animals. Centered in the wall is an opening.

If the characters search the outside, on a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check they find molted snake skin.

INSIDE THE NAGA'S LAIR

You enter into a large chamber, which appears to be the inside of an ancient temple. A large stone altar 10 feet long and 5 feet wide sits in the center of the room. The base of the altar has carvings of tigers, snakes and elephants on it. The walls of the chamber have bas-relief carvings as well.

You see a passage in the northeast part of the east wall. In the southeast corner of the chamber is a large serpentine figure. Its eyes lock with yours.

There is no lighting inside the naga's lair, which is a square, 90 feet to a side. Treat as darkness unless a light source is used.

Dominah, the **guardian naga** (modified to 175 HP) resides in this temple. To the northeast is a 10 feet long corridor that leads to a 10 feet square room. In this room, Madhan, one of the missing villagers, is resting.

Tactics: If the party attacks Dominah, she yells, "You won't harm my people as long as I live, vile c ultists!"

If Dominah wins initiative, she holds her action to see what the characters do.

Dominah's strategy is to end the conflict quickly. She uses *command* to disarm the characters, *banishment* to send one away, and *geas* to order the characters to guard Madhen.

The sounds of battle alert Madhan, who arrives at the end of the second round. If Dominah is still alive, he yells at the characters, "Leave her alone! She saved me!" If the party has killed her, he cries, "What have you done? She was protecting me!" and rushes to Dominah's body.

If the characters speak with Dominah first, she tells them that Madhan is safe here and she took him to protect him after she heard some cultists planning the kidnapping. She explains her relationship with Kelexa.

Dominah is trying to find where the other kidnapped villagers are but has not had luck. There is a ritual she can perform to locate them, but it requires a magic item. The item must have at least a +1 enchantment (sword, armor, *ring of protection*, etc.) or be of equivalent power. The item's magic is consumed in the ritual, leaving it a normal item. If the characters give her such an item, the ritual takes an hour and Dominah is able to tell them the location of the other villagers. If they choose not to, she points them to the north of Jalambad, but does not have a specific location.

DEVELOPMENT

This can advance in one of two ways. If the characters kill Dominah and return Madhan to the village, Chhaya claims Madhan's story of the Naga saving him is due to a charm by Dominah. Chhaya rewards the characters with two potions of greater healing each. Continue to *Conclusion - Alt*.

If the characters talk with Dominah, they can look for the other villagers. Continue to *Chapter 3*.

CHAPTER 3 – ERINYES TROUBLE NOW!

If Dominah performed the ritual, the party can find the way to the kidnapped villagers easily, which is located roughly 5 miles north of Jalambad. Otherwise they are given a general direction and have to find it, which can take many hours. If desired, the random encounter table from *Chapter 2* can be used.

AMBUSH!

Kelexa (**erinyes**) has protected her lair. When the characters come within half a mile of it, they are ambushed by six **cultists**, led by a **cult fanatic**. On a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, the characters notice the ambush.

Every step you make through the forest seems to echo against the eerie silence. Unlike other parts of the forest, this one appears to be void of life. Suddenly, leaves and small branches shower you from above as many figures drop from the trees and attack.

Along the way, Kelexa placed traps. One quarter of a mile from the entrance, there is a 20 foot deep pit in the path. An identical pit is located roughly 500 feet from the entrance to the lair. The party notices either pit on a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check. Each pit is triggered by someone stepping on it. Anyone triggering a pit must make a DC 10 Dexterity save. On a successful save, the character avoids the

trap. On a failed save, the character falls into the pit, taking 11 (2d10) points of damage.

Once the party makes it past the last pit, they see the temple.

KELEXA'S TEMPLE

Neem trees towering over 50 feet tall cast shade over the forest. The light pink flowers of the Indian Rosewood break the monotony of green. Through gaps in the leaves, a rocky hillside peaks through. As you continue, the trees look less healthy and vines become more common, wrapping themselves among the branches, seemingly choking the life out of the trees.

The forest breaks and the hillside rises above you. Carved into the hillside, six stone columns spaced ten feet apart support a stone ceiling ten feet above it. Stone snakes and green vines encircle the columns, slithering to the top. The stone appears old and worn and needing repair in spots. To the north lies an opening into the structure.

If the characters enter the temple, they see the following:

The temple goes on for as far as the eye can see. In the middle of the temple, a hooded figure stands at the altar with six other figures surrounding it. Back along the north wall, you can barely make out a large cage with two figures in it. The floor of the cage is lined with straw.

Beside the cage is an armored figure who says, *"It looks like we may have more souls to offer after all."* The hooded figure looks at you. As your eyes meet, you recognize her as Chhaya. *"Kill them!"* she orders the others. *"Kill them, and I can be free of my shackles to Jalambad!"*

There are six **cultists** and **Chhaya**. If questioned, Chhaya is tired of being used by her parents to maintain their standing and tired of serving the village. She wants to make choices for herself instead of having them made for her.

The figure in the back is Kelexa. She fights, but because of her ultimate plans, does not fight to the death. Instead she flees if she falls below half her max hit points. If this happens, she summons 1d6 **bearded devils** to distract the characters while she escapes.

The characters can easily open the cage and free the villagers once combat is over.

DEVELOPMENT

If the party defeats Chhaya and Kelexa and rescue the villagers, they all return to Jalambad. Continue to *Conclusion*.

CONCLUSION

If the party defeats Kelexa:

Upon returning to Jalambad with the kidnapped villagers, you are greeted by a joyous crowd. As Suresh and Leela reunite with their families, Dominah approaches you. *"Thanks to you, the villagers accept me again. To express my gratitude, I would like to give you something. Madhan, would you bring it here?"* Madhan approaches and holds forth an amulet.

Domianah says, *"This amulet was worn by my mother, Mishara. I would like you to have it. You have made it possible for me to continue to watch over the village."*

If the party killed Dominah:

As you return to Jalambad, you are met by Chhaya. *"Well done! I see you have rescued one of the villagers! Here is the reward I promised you."* Chhaya hands you each two vials.

Chhaya is courteous but tries to send the characters off while answering as few questions as possible. The vials contain the equivalent of a *greater healing potion*.

REWARDS

Characters who complete this adventure may earn the following rewards:

XP REWARDS

Add the total XP of creatures defeated by the party, then divide by the number of characters to determine individual rewards.

Obstacle	XP
Ankheg	450
Cultist	25
Cult Fanatic	450
Elephant	1,100
Giant Ape	2,900
Venom Troll	2,900
Gnoll Fang of Yeenoghu	1,100
Shoosuva	3,900
Dominah (Guardian Naga)	5,900
Kelexa (Erinyes)	8,400
Chhaya	1,800

Amulet of Mishara

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

While wearing this amulet, you gain a +2 bonus to AC and saving throws. Once attuned, the amulet has the Guardian minor property and the Blissful quirk (*DMG*, "Treasure").

AUTHOR'S NOTES

One of the themes of this adventure is predefined roles. Historically, women have been looked at as the caretakers of family. Related to this, oftentimes people are forced into paths or roles. Although in this adventure, some characters are defined as "good" vs. "evil," this should not be taken as comment that accepting predefined roles is good and not accepting them is bad or evil. Instead, my hope is that it makes one consider the unanticipated effects of forcing people into predetermined roles. Even if done with good intentions, it might have unintended consequences.

Thanks to Kathryn Kovalcik, Elizabeth Merritt, David Cutler, Heather Johns and Matthew Johns for playtesting, and Kathryn Kovalcik, John Tetzlaff, and Cameron Blair for helpful feedback.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paul has been a fan of *D&D* since the boxed set/1st edition days. He is in awe at how widespread *D&D* is now and hopes to help contribute to the community. This is his first publication, and he is extremely honored to be part of this collaboration.



Chhaya

Medium humanoid (human), lawful evil

Armor Class 17 (chain shirt, shield)
Hit Points 68 (9d8 + 18)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Wisdom +7, Charisma +4
Skills Religion +5, Medicine +7
Senses passive Perception 17
Languages Abyssal, Common
Challenge 5

Spellcasting. Chhaya is a 9th level spell caster. Her spell casting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks).
Cantrips (at will): *light, sacred flame, thaumaturgy, resistance*
1st level (4 slots): *guiding bolt, command, shield of faith, healing word, charm person, disguise self*
2nd level (3 slots): *hold person, spiritual weapon, silence, mirror image, pass without trace*
3rd level (3 slots): *spirit guardians, meld into stone, bestow curse, blink, dispel magic*
4th level (3 slots): *guardian of faith, banishment, stone shape, dimension door, polymorph*
5th level (1 slot): *flame strike, dominate person, modify memory*

Channel Divinity. Chhaya can use her channel divinity (2/rest) to create a perfect illusion of her or to become invisible until the end of her next turn. (PHB, "Classes")

Divine Strike. Chhaya can infuse her weapon with poison once on each turn to deal an extra 1d8 poison damage to the target.

Actions

Attack. Mace +4 to hit, *Hit:* 1d6 bludgeoning damage + 1d8 poison (from divine strike)

Shoosuva

Large fiend (demon), chaotic evil

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)
Hit Points 110 (13d10 + 39)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	13 (+1)	17 (+3)	7 (-2)	14 (+2)	9 (-1)

Saving Throws Dex +4, Con +6, Wis +5
Skills Religion +5, Medicine +7
Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical Attacks
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, poisoned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages Abyssal, Gnoll, Telepathy 120 ft.
Challenge 8

Rampage. When it reduces a creature to 0 hit points with a melee attack on its turn, the shoosuva can take a bonus action to move up to half its speed and make a bite attack.

Actions

Multiattack. The shoosuva makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its tail stinger.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 26 (4d10 + 4) piercing damage.

Tail Stinger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 15 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned. While poisoned, the target is also paralyzed. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Venom Troll

Large giant, chaotic evil

Armor Class 15 (natural armor)
Hit Points 94 (9d10 + 45)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	13 (+1)	20 (+5)	7 (-2)	9 (-1)	7 (-7)

Skills Perception +2
Damage Immunities poison
Condition Immunities poisoned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12
Languages Giant
Challenge 7

Keen Smell. The troll has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Poison Splash. When the troll takes damage of any type but psychic, each creature within 5 feet of the troll takes 9 (2d8) poison damage.

Regeneration. The troll regains 10 hit points at the start of each of its turns. If the troll takes acid or fire damage, this trait doesn't function at the start of the troll's next turn. The troll dies only if it starts its turn with 0 hit points and doesn't regenerate.

Actions

Multiattack. The troll makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) poison damage, and the creature is poisoned until the start of the troll's next turn.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage plus 4 (1d8) poison damage.

Venom Spray (Recharge 6). The troll slices itself with a claw, releasing a spray of poison in a 15-foot cube. The troll takes 7 (2d6) slashing damage (this damage can't be reduced in any way). Each creature in the area must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 18 (4d8) poison damage and is poisoned for 1 minute. On a successful save, the creature takes half as much damage and isn't poisoned. A poisoned creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.



"A Lady Awaits Her Lover in the Forest," Kangra Painting





Illustration by David Markiwsky

WHATEVER IT'S WORTH

by Morgan Geiss

Creature: *Erinyes* | **Level:** *12* | **CW:** *Slavery*

SYNOPSIS

The valley country of Dalemeade suffers under the Braakendrake clan of dwarves, who rule from the nearby Braakbergen mountain range. A lone exile readies herself to stand against these tyrants, but her schemes have drawn her into an infernal alliance with an army of fiends ten thousand strong. Devils do nothing for free, however, and what your party takes for a mage's treasure hunt might be prelude to a massacre.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Whatever It's Worth is intended for characters of 12th level. The party encounters a cart transporting young people marked for slavery while traveling a lonely road in the shadow of a foreboding mountain range.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Centuries ago the Braakendrake dwarf clan conquered all of the other clans of Braakbergen. The clan's victory was ensured by a secret pact between their leader, Zaran, and the hated duergar dwarves of the Underdark. The wizard Sifgir was one of a few dwarves to escape death or subjugation at the hands of the Braakendrake.

CAST IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

- **Loosh:** A plucky, but morbid peasant.
- **Canute:** Dalemeade's titular ruler.
- **Irae:** The laconic leader of the **erinyes** army, Irae is devoted to Sifgir.
- **Sifgir:** A reserved, but generous, dwarf who remembers and avenges every wrong done to her.
- **Zaran:** Braakbergen's ruthless tyrant.
- **Orlond:** A lesser chief who opposes Zaran.
- **Ferod:** Braakbergen's craven and avaricious treasurer.
- **Olba:** The chief of a once mighty clan, Sifgir's mother leads the resistance efforts against Braakendrake.

Sifgir spent centuries searching for the means to overthrow the conquerors until she met the erinyes Irae, who convinced her that only a massive show of force could accomplish her goal. Irae offered Sifgir her army's services in exchange for souls. Sifgir accepted Irae's offer and gave the fiend her own soul in return for her personal pledge of support.

Meanwhile, the Braakendrakes subdued Dalemeade and demanded regular tribute in human slaves. Zaran now secretly trades slaves to his duergar allies in return for access to their mines. Sifgir promised Olba's resistance a mighty army without sharing its infernal nature.



CHAPTER 1 – MEETING THE DEVIL

The party encounters a cart bound for the village of Horsehead Hill in the shadow of Drakesdoom, the tremendous mountain hold of the Braakendrakes. A peasant named Loosh drives the cartful of young captives. Loosh freely explains the situation if the characters stop them. The slaves resist and protest that worse will come if the party attempts to free them.

When the party arrives in Horsehead Hill, they find a crowd of villagers ringing a dozen dwarf **veterans** guarding a group of young people outside of Sheriff Canute's hall. The crowd parts for Loosh, and the dwarves quickly pull the slaves out of the cart. Canute steps forward and addresses the crowd. Read or paraphrase the following:

> An overworked figure with a thick gray beard steps forward. Two masked dwarves wielding heavy hammers and shields loom menacingly behind him. The man raises his head to speak.
>
> *"Our sad business is done for another ten years. Again our hearts break, but our lives and our homes remain. Know that each lost child of yours weighs on my heart. Remember that the rest are safe. Remember that the lords will take tenfold of what is not freely given. Remember that I love you, though you may hate me. Endure, my people."*

Canute returns to the hall and the crowd disperses as the dwarves lead the slaves away toward the mountains.

The slavers are hostile and attack the party if they try to free the slaves, or otherwise antagonize the slavers. Canute begs the party to stand down, but does not intervene. The townspeople are grateful for the characters' heroics, but they fear reprisal. The next day, a human slave delivers a message to Canute demanding that he deliver twice the number of slaves within the week.

Dwarf NPCs

All dwarf NPCs, including Sifgir, share statistics with their counterparts in Appendix B of the *Monster Manual* except that their speed is 25 feet, and they possess the Dwarven Resilience, Dwarven Combat Training, and Dwarven Armor Training features.

The townsfolk of Dalemeade share the following information:

- The dwarves overran the valley countless generations ago and demand tribute to this day.
- Sheriff Canute conducts the valley's census every year and gives a small number of healthy young people to the dwarves as slaves.
- Dwarves took Canute's son twenty years ago. Some say the boy volunteered in order to prove there were no favorites.
- A pair of folk heroes called the Magus and the Knight is rumored to roam the valley and offer aid to the weary and oppressed. Some believe that they will one day lead Dalemeade against their oppressors.
- Any citizen or guard can take the party to see Canute about securing free food and board in his hall.

If the party visits Canute, he asks after their purpose in Dalemeade and accepts them as guests, provided they are not openly hostile towards him. Canute rewards the party for freeing the slaves with his heirloom *ring of warmth* (*DMG* p. 193).

A SHOW OF STRENGTH

A child approaches the party with a message asking for a meeting at a crossroads about a mile west of town. The child believes that the very tall hooded woman who gave him the message is the Knight.

Irae waits for the party at the crossroads. She is transformed into a human **warlord** by means of *true polymorph*. She seeks powerful warriors on behalf of a client offering 1,000 gp for help retrieving a lost book of magic. If the party is interested, Irae tests them by releasing a **nalfeshnee** from an *iron flask*.

Irae asks the party to meet with her client after they pass her test. She leads them into a stand of trees and opens the door to Sifgir's magnificent mansion.

> The stranger opens an unseen door into a grand hall of soaring columns and blazing torches. Long tables piled high with food run the length of the hall. An ephemeral statue bows to you just inside the doorway.
>
> A tired dwarf with shocks of iron gray streaking her dark brown hair and beard approaches you down a lane framed by two tables. The fine make of her robes is faded and frayed.

Sifgir invites the party to make themselves comfortable and introduces herself. She offers them time to rest and recuperate before talking business. The mansion's servants appear in the form of dwarf-sized **stone golems**.

DEVELOPMENT

Before or after discussing business with Sifgir, the party may eat as they please, avail themselves of the servants' services, and take a short or long rest in comfortable conditions. Proceed to *Chapter 2*.

CHAPTER 2 – READ BEFORE SIGNING

Irae sends a servant to retrieve Sifgir as soon as the party is ready. Sifgir summarizes the Braakendrakes' conquest and explains that the book she is after is kept in a demiplane created by a long-lost wizard. She feigns ignorance of what the party can expect to face within.

Characters can reach the demiplane through a three-inch wooden cube that Sifgir keeps on her person. Only humanoid creatures with souls may enter or exit the demiplane and may only do so by speaking the command words, but to learn the command words the characters must sign a contract specifying terms of payment. The contract also demands that the party pay a fine equal to the value of the intact book should they damage or attempt to read it. Objects native to the demiplane reform within seconds of being damaged.

BIGGER ON THE INSIDE

The first time a character enters the demiplane, read or paraphrase the following:

> Your feet strike stone with a jolt. Ancient, crumbling walls enclose you in a humid chamber that reeks of decay. A stone basin crafted in the shape of a gaping mouth and filled with foul, murky liquid sits on a squat pedestal in the center of the space. A soft clinking sound draws your gaze up to the dozens of rotting bodies dangling out of the darkness from chains.

The demiplane is dimly lit from an indistinguishable source. The room is thirty square feet with an infinitely tall walls. Draconic runes carved into the lip of the basin read, "Life is my meat, Death my wine. Love is my fruit, Hate my sweet."

An object corresponding to each requirement must be placed inside the basin. The first time any requirement is satisfied, the liquid changes color as follows:

- **Satisfying Life** changes the color of the liquid to red.
- **Satisfying Death** changes the color of the liquid to black.
- **Satisfying Love** changes the color of the liquid to gold.
- **Satisfying Hate** changes the color of the liquid to silver. Hate: silver.

Anything placed in the basin disappears forever. The liquid drains into the basin when all of the requirements are satisfied, after which the party is transported to a room that is 60 feet square with walls that are 30 feet tall. They appear in front of an enormous door in the center of awall. A robed **nothic** wearing *winged boots* cowers upon a throne in the middle of the room, facing the door. The demiplane's command words do not work in this room.

Read or paraphrase the following:

> The hideous, one-eyed wretch points a gnarled claw at you and shrieks a warbling, piercing, wail makes your brain spasm. With a brilliant blast of green light, the wall behind the throne explodes into a cloud of dust.

A **beholder** emerges at the opposite end of the room from the party. The disintegrated wall reforms behind it and combat begins. The room behaves as the beholder's lair.

The nothic spends its turn trying to evade the party while using its action to shriek at the nearest hostile creature that it can see. This creature becomes the beholder's target until the start of the nothic's next turn. The beholder acts on its own accord if the nothic fails to designate a target for any reason.

Characters can uncover the door's key on a chain around the nothic's neck with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check after the battle. A similar check reveals a *luckstone* (*DMG* p. 205) in the beholder's stomach.

Placing the key in the door returns the party to the entrance where the basin has now been replaced by a dais, upon which sits the book they have been sent to collect. The book is latched shut, but not locked, and the first creature to touch it activates a *glyph of warding* storing a *disintegrate* spell cast on the front of the dais. A successful DC 17 Wisdom (Perception) check on the book reveals the glyph before it is activated.

The Book of Stolen Lives

Each page of the book contains a soul represented by an image of its owner and a summary of their life. Tearing out a page frees that soul, but does not return the person to life. Sifgir intends to commission Irae's army by giving the fiend this book. A successful DC 20 Intelligence (History) check allows a non-magical appraisal of the book, deeming it an art object worth 1,000 gp.

Development

Sifgir pays the party on delivery of the book and invites them to rest in her mansion for one more night. In accordance with the contract, Irae owns the souls of any characters who damaged the book or glimpsed its contents. Proceed to *Chapter 3*.

Chapter 3 – Paying the Bill

Sifgir dispels Irae's *polymorph* spell with a scroll of *dispel magic* after leaving the mansion. She opens a portal to Hell using a scroll of gate, through which the erinyes army emerges. Read or paraphrase the following:

> You hear a low pulsing and rustling that rises to the roar of crashing thunder. A dark whirlwind of shadows climbs in a column up to the sky. At its peak near the clouds, the cyclone spreads and now you behold uncountable knights in dark armor, bearing enormous batlike wings.

All erinyes, including Irae, possess *ropes of entanglement* and the *summon devil* ability. Sifgir explains her idea to intimidate the chiefs into negotiations before being carried off to Drakesdoom by erinyes.

The hold's citadel is warded against Irae's army and she offers the party another 2,000 gp and any of the characters' souls in her possession if they agree to guard Sifgir. If the characters decline Irae's offer, she is joined by two erinyes per player character and they attack the party until all of the characters surrender or fall unconscious. Any erinyes who fall are replaced by two more at the start of the next round. The erinyes stabilize any unconscious characters and carry those who cannot fly to Drakesdoom.

Reckoning

The erinyes batter down the gates of Drakesdoom and flood the hold. Irae and the party catch up with Sifgir just outside the citadel, which is impenetrable to fiends and undead.

Zaran waits with the other chiefs in his office within the citadel. Three **stone golems** stand guard outside of the office door. These guardians do not attack except to defend themselves. Most of the Braakendrake armies are gathering in the citadel in preparation for a counterattack. Meanwhile, Olba's resistance occupies the hold under the erinyes' protection.

Zaran refuses to allow the party entrance, enforcing his will with the golems if need be. Sifgir asks that the party stand ready in the citadel common during talks. Soon after, the petty chief Orlond emerges. After explaining that they expelled him for accusing Zaran

of corruption, Orlond asks the party to accompany him to his office. He admits to believing that Zaran is bribing the treasurer, Ferod. He offers the party his *+2 battleaxe* to find out why.

Orlond directs the party to Ferod's office where the treasurer keeps a coded ledger documenting Zaran's illicit business in a safe beneath his desk. Finding the safe requires a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check and a successful DC 14 Dexterity (thieves' tools) check to unlock it.

Unless Orlond is given the ledger to decipher, Zaran calls Sifgir's bluff after two hours of deliberating with the chiefs. In either case, he and Sifgir emerge into the citadel common with the chiefs. Zaran (**dwarf warlord**) denounces Sifgir and the party, and he and the stone golems attack.

The common is a 100 foot diameter hexagon with a 50 foot high ceiling. Sifgir has the statistics of an **archmage** with the dwarf NPC traits mentioned in *Chapter 1*, except that she has the *shield* spell in place of *mage armor* and the *true polymorph* spell in place of time stop. She wears half plate +1 and wields a *staff of power* (*DMG*).

DEVELOPMENT

Olba arrives after the battle with her cohort. The resistance has complete control of the hold outside the citadel. Proceed to *Conclusion A* if the party exposed Zaran or *Conclusion B* if they did not.



CONCLUSION A

The chiefs arrest Zaran and submit to Olba. Read or paraphrase the following:

> Olba calls an assembly of the clans to the citadel, addressing them regally.
>
> *"We come through darkness to find the hearth again. Let those who repent their crimes be humbled and restored through work and trust."*
>
> The proud queen turns her steely gaze toward you, her eyes settling on her daughter. *"You have our love and gratitude for your part in breaking our chains, but the abominations you unleashed is unforgivable. Rid us of these devils in penance, then take your folk and go, and never return.*
>
> *"Folk of the hold, celebrate and rejoice, and let your hearts rest warm beside the hearth."*

After Olba emancipates the human slaves, the dwarves politely encourage the party to take them and leave immediately.

CONCLUSION B

After three days of fighting against the erinyes, Zaran's loyal chiefs and their armies are crushed, leaving Olba in control. Read or paraphrase the following:

> The weary queen gathers her surviving people to the citadel and addresses them.
>
> *"We come through darkness and find a hearth of cold ash. The Braakbergen is a cursed tomb, and its denizens corrupt slaves. I will abide it no more, but seek out a new hearth in some other depth."*
>
> Olba passes her ferocious gaze over you and her daughter. *"Your lives are spared for your part in breaking our chains, but condemnation upon you for the abomination you unleashed. Go, and be damned with your devils.*
>
> *"You who still love me, join me. The rest can perish for all I care."*

Olba departs with most of the clan's remnants, abandoning the human slaves. The remaining dwarves are hostile and insist the party leave immediately.

EPILOGUE

Sifgir reopens the portal to Hell with another scroll of gate and as the army of erinyes departs, she thanks the party for their help. As a reward for exposing Zaran, Sifgir gives the party 5,000 gp and her staff of power. Sifgir and Irae embrace fondly before entering the portal together, hand in hand, as it closes behind them.

If the party returns the prisoners to Dalemeade, Canute holds a public feast in their honor.

REWARDS

Characters who complete this adventure may earn the following rewards:

XP REWARDS

Add the total XP of challenges overcome by the party, then divide by the number of characters to determine individual rewards.

Challenge	XP
Beholder	10,000
Erinyes	8,400
Nothic	450
Priest	475
Stone Golem	5,900
Veteran	700
Warlord	8,400
Solve basin puzzle	10,000
Expose Zaran	20,000

TREASURE REWARDS

Beholder:	*luckstone*
Canute:	*ring of warmth*
Nothic:	*winged boots*
Orlond:	*axe +2*
Sifgir:	6,000 gp, *staff of power*

AUTHOR'S NOTES

The erinyes in this adventure were inspired by their counterparts in The Eumenides, an ancient Greek play with an infuriating ending for anyone who likes to think of women as people. This module is my attempt to take the coolest part of that story, an army of righteous demon-god-women, and let them be as awesome as that sounds.

It wasn't easy. *D&D* lore makes erinyes pure evil, and myth casts them as bloodthirsty gods of vengeance. In either case we're left with ostensibly powerful women who are in fact just types and functions. To escape that, the erinyes had to have freedom of will and agency, while remaining recognizable for what they are. "Goth mercs doing something noble but mainly for the cash" is where they ended up in this story. I'll take it.

Thanks first to Ashley Warren for accepting me into this project alongside so many talented writers, artists, and gamers. Thanks to my parents for supporting my coming out as a huge damn nerd (I know you always knew). Thanks to my brother who helped us fight dragons until he had to go save the world. To you, you know who you are: thank you for driving across town for playtests, feeding us tons of lumpia, and that face you made when the army of devils showed up. And to my wife, our DM: thank you for your incalculable help in figuring out what worked and what sucked, even if what worked for you sometimes was near-TPK. You tell such wonderful stories. Thank you for letting me play such a big part in yours.

To the players and DM: Thank you for reading and playing this adventure. I hope you had fun. That's really all I want in the end. You're the best.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Morgan's preferred pronouns are she/her. She lives in Texas with her wife and cat.



"Fallen Angels in Hell" by John Martin



Illustration by Sammy Ward

SCALES OF TRUTH

by Jacky Leung

Creature: *Naga* | **Level:** *12*

SYNOPSIS

Legends speak of a relic inside a mysterious shrine, hidden within the jungles of Numot and protected by two guardians. Though many locals dismiss tales of the shrine as myth, there are those who continue to explore the uncharted undergrowth. Your adventuring company is recruited by an archaeologist who claims to have clues to the shrine's location. In reality, the archaeologist works for a trio of medusa sisters who seek the relic inside the shrine. The trio has failed on multiple occasions to secure the relic from the nagas who guard it and so they lure adventurers to complete their goals instead. Your party unearths the truth upon their discovery of the shrine and its contents.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Scales of Truth is intended for characters of 12th-14th level. The legend of the shrine is well-known to the locals of Port Gebralt, a port city along a river that leads further into the jungles of Numot. The party is recruited by the archaeologist upon their arrival in the city.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Port Gebralt is a port city on a peninsula in Numot. It is a port of call for hundreds of races, nationalities, and creeds. Many individuals seek to strike business deals, and others hope to explore the lush jungles of Numot in the pursuit of treasure or new resources. Many adventurers have sought this shrine and while some return empty-handed, others are never seen again. An old tale about the shrine mentions important landmarks to guide the way. Professor Haltz recently deciphered the clues to the shrine's possible location but needs a group of adventurers to escort him through the dangers of the jungle.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

- **Professor Haltz** – Professional scholar and archaeologist. Egotistical, erratic, but brilliant field researcher. He is eager to explore and learn, which often leaves him short-sighted of dangers and social cues.
- **Captain Scalia** – Captain of a riverboat and has worked with Haltz in the past. Scalia is a brash but a jovial young woman. Very protective of her boat and doesn't believe in the stories about the lost shrine.
- **Stone Sisters** – A trio of **medusas** (Akurra, Egle, Ungla) who believe the relic within may remove their curse and lured adventurers to solve the shrine's puzzles in the past.
- **Yessire** – A **spirit naga** who acts as one of the guardians of the relic. Gloomy, meek, and spiteful. She does not enjoy being goaded or tricked.
- **Leilyra** – A **guardian naga** who acts as one of the guardians of the relic. Patient and calm, Leilyra shows compassion if she believes an individual worthy.

Professor Haltz (true neutral human **mage**) notices the party upon their arrival to the local tavern in Port Gebralt as new potential adventurers for hire. Haltz states to the party that he discovered the possible location of the shrine deep within the jungle. He desperately seeks to prove his theory true but lacks resources and the workforce to organize such an expedition.

Once the party locates the shrine and overcomes its many challenges, the Stone Sisters plead their case to acquire the relic to free them from their curse. Haltz learned the location of the shrine from the Stone Sisters and agreed years ago to help lift their curse. Whether the party agrees with the sisters' demands

or not, they ultimately face the two nagas, and a trial called the Scales of Truth.

CHAPTER 1 – JOURNEY THROUGH THE JUNGLE

You arrive in the bustling city of Port Gebralt. The sun is high and the air is warm from a coastal breeze. The town square is full of merchants, travelers, and locals partaking in the rush of daily life. You make your way to one of the nearby taverns to secure lodgings and rest after your journey.

The exotic herbs hung to dry around the main door, combined with the smell of cooking food, creates an inviting aroma. A tavern worker greets you and promises food and drink.

After your meal is placed in front of you, an older man with grey hair and odd spectacles introduces himself. *"Greetings. You all look to be very capable individuals. I could use your talents for an expedition deep into the jungle. You will all be paid well, and perhaps we may find some interesting treasures. Does that offer interest any of you?"*

When the characters meet Professor Haltz, the eccentric man is ecstatic at the prospect of the party joining his expedition into the jungle. This is what the Professor knows about the lost shrine:

- The shrine has been lost for centuries. Many other expeditions returned empty-handed, and some never returned at all.
- Three major landmarks in the jungle lead to the shrine's location. According to Haltz, he deciphered the clues from a map he inherited from a deceased cartographer.
- Haltz's research on the relic suggests it grants the user insight into the ultimate truth, though he does not know what kind of truth it portents. He believes it could be a religious artifact from a lost civilization.
- Haltz is willing to pay the party 1,000 gp along with any treasure they may find in the shrine.
- Many conflicting stories exist about the shrine, but all consistently mention guardians and wards protecting the artifact.

After accepting Haltz's offer, he suggests they locate his friend Captain Scalia, who owns a riverboat to help traverse the river through the jungle. A DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals Haltz is not forthcoming on how he acquired the information about the shrine's location.

TRAVELING THROUGH THE JUNGLE

While the party travels through the jungle, roll a d6 for possible encounters within the jungle and river. The party can roll either a single or group DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) check to assist Haltz in navigating the jungle. On a failed check, the group becomes lost and double back to the starting point. For each success, consult the table and incorporate one of the three landmarks into your descriptions.

- **The Monolith**—a black monolith of jagged stone rests in a stone-lined grove
- **The Serpent Falls**—the rock formation resembles a serpent and water is pouring from its mouth
- **The Dais**—remnants of an ancient altar wrapped in vines

After the party finds all three landmarks, they arrive at the shrine.



d6	Obstacles
1	The characters stumble on a patch of quicksand covering a 20 foot radius. At the start of each turn, the characters must make a DC 15 Strength saving throw. On a failure, their speed is 0 until the start of their next turn, and sink 5 feet into the quicksand to a maximum of 50 feet. On success, the character's speed is halved until the start of their next turn. A character needs to succeed a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check to climb out of the quick sand.
2	The vines in this area become thick, be careful not to get tangled. The area is considered difficult terrain. A successful DC 14 Strength saving throw keeps an adventurer from being restrained. On a failed saving throw, a **shambling mound** ambushes the party.
3	A group of **water weirds** ambush the party.
4	The characters find an abandoned campsite. A successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check uncovers a pouch of gemstones worth 300 gp.
5	The party discovers several burial mounds. If anyone searches them, a group of **wraiths** attacks the party.
6	The group hears a rumble from the jungle, the ground shakes and quivers. A **giant ape** and **tyrannosaurus rex** are battling each other, and the party is now in the middle of it.

When the party arrives at the shrine, read the following:

> You emerge in a clearing. A large stone structure as high as the canopy is covered in vines and trees. Nature has reclaimed the stone and rock. You notice a large opening ahead; the air is cool and moist.

Development

When the party explores the shrine, they find traps and the Stone Sisters waiting for them. Proceed to *Chapter 2*.

Chapter 2 – Shrine of the Twinned Serpent

The Stone Garden

As the party enters the shrine, the entrance opens into a large antechamber full of stone structures and bones. Read the following:

> The winding tunnel leads you into a dimly lit chamber. The ground is littered with bones, weapons, and other debris. Odd stone statues populate the room.

The bones belong to various races and large vermin on a DC 15 Intelligence (Nature) check. The statues are victims of the Stone Sisters, but some are also **gargoyles**. A group of **bone naga** animates and ambushes the party upon entry. The interior of this chamber is dark and dimly lit.

The Three Goddesses

When the party continues further into the shrine, read the following:

> As you pass another darkened tunnel that opens into a second large chamber, you are greeted by large stone doors with two large snake carvings on it. A large pedestal with three figurines rests in the center. Broken stone columns and bones line the edges of the room.
>
> Three hooded figures surround your party and Haltz. Each is adorned with a golden mask. Two of them stand by the exit, and the third glides past the pedestal. They speak in unison with a discordant harmony.
>
> *"We seek your aid travelers, and promise you no harm will come to you."*

If the party becomes hostile, see tactics on the next page. Otherwise, the sisters plead their case to the party. The trio introduce themselves as former beauties and truth seekers who found the shrine years ago, but in their attempt to uncover its ancient secrets, they became cursed.

If asked about their curse, the sisters explain they were unable to solve the riddle on the pedestal and were afflicted with hideous forms. They believe the relic beyond the stone doors may cure them. Haltz reveals he met the sisters years ago in a previous expedition and wished to help them.

Read the following description when the pedestal is investigated:

> The three figurines resemble cloaked women. Their features are obscured. You notice three circular rings with carved words and snake icons.

Underneath the figurines are three rows of stone circles arranged as such:

Left Goddess	*Middle Goddess*	*Right Goddess*
Truth	*[snake icon]*	*[snake icon]*
Wisdom	*[snake icon]*	*Liar*

Solving the pedestal: The figurines on the pedestal represent three goddesses on a DC 12 Intelligence (Religion) check, and a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals the word "Wisdom" with two snakes on either side of it. Investigating the door reveals there is no obvious way to open it. The party must determine the nature of the goddesses on the pedestal: "the left one is wisdom, the middle is the liar, and the right goddess is the truth."

DEVELOPMENT

If the party fights the Stone Sisters: The Stone Sisters are each a **medusa** and Haltz is a **mage**.

Tactics: One of the Stone Sisters removes her mask to reveal her true nature, forcing the characters to save against their Petrifying Gaze or avert their eyes and be unable to see them. The other sisters stay out of the 30 foot range of the revealed sister. Each employs their snake hair and longbow effects to great advantage. Haltz joins the medusas and casts *fireball* and *cone of cold* if at least two of the party members are close together. He uses *counterspell* on powerful or restorative spells.

If the party accepts the sisters' plea to lift their curse: Haltz accompanies the party into the Hall of Truths in *Chapter 3*.

Once the pedestal is solved, the stone doors open.

CHAPTER 3 – HALL OF TWO TRUTHS

Once the party walks past the stone doors, read the following:

> Behind the stone doors, a long hallway with several rows of columns stretches forward. There are more carvings with the two serpents coiled together until you reach the end. Two large serpents, one emerald green and the other a dark charcoal grey, slither and coil near a large carving etched with gold.

THE TWINNED SERPENT TRIAL

While in this hallway, the adventurers are subjected to a *zone of truth* spell (DC 15 Wisdom saving throw). The two nagas are be aware of anyone who saved against the effect and view them with distrust.

If the party becomes hostile, see tactics below. Otherwise, the nagas challenge the adventurers with a riddle.

When the party reaches the end of the hallway, read the following:

> *"Greetings seekers,"* the emerald serpent hisses, *"there is one final test to prove your merit and determination."*
>
> *"You shall be judged like those before you."* The grey serpent hisses. *"If you prove worthy, you shall claim what you seek. A final query, seekers. You may only produce one answer."*
>
> The emerald serpent hisses a short passage. *"You faced truth, lies, and wisdom. All to test a theorem. The solution, of course, falls under criticism."*

The final trial is a riddle. Their solution should relate to the following:

- There is a "fourth" perspective, as truth, lying, and wisdom are the first three (as the three goddess pedestal).
- The fourth perspective is tied to utilizing truth, lies, and wisdom together.
- "Intentions" often fall under criticism.

On a successful DC 15 Intelligence or Wisdom ability check, you can provide the following as a clue: "There were three figurines in the previous chamber, each a goddess representing a use of truth." If Haltz is with

the party, they have advantage on this check. The hint relates to the fourth perspective.

DEVELOPMENT

If the party fights the two nagas: Yessire is a **spirit naga**, and Leilyra is a **guardian naga** that defends the shrine, its contents, and their sanctum.

Tactics: Leilyra first uses *geas* to command a strong character to protect her. Should that fail, she uses *banishment* the following turn. She casts *flame strike* if the party is grouped close together. Leilyra uses ranged spells and features such as *sacred flame* or *spit poison* to stay out of melee combat while casting *cure wounds* on herself or Yessire if needed. Yessire casts *lightning bolt* if the party is grouped close together and follows up with *dominate person* to gain a strong character as an ally in combat. Yessire uses *hold person* to make her Bite attack more effective. While in the shrine, the nagas have access to a group lair action (see below). If both nagas are defeated, proceed to *Conclusion, Path A*.

If the party attempts the trial: Proceed to *Conclusion, Path B*.

CONCLUSION – PATH A

Read the description below:

> With the dying breath of the last naga, the hooded sisters thank you for clearing the last of the obstacles to be free of their curse. They approach the wall with the gold inscriptions and chant in a foreign language. A flash of light and the sisters turn to face you. They unveil their hoods to reveal beautiful women with emerald eyes. One of them steps toward you, *"Thank you for your understanding and kindness. We failed the trials and in our foolishness, overstepped our bounds. Our punishment was those hideous forms. You have our eternal gratitude."*

The sisters are restored to their humanoid form. The party returns to Port Gebralt with stories of their adventures and exploits.

CONCLUSION – PATH B

If the party provides a satisfactory answer, read the description below:

> The two serpents rear their heads and look at each other for confirmation. They both nod and then give you a bow. The large snakes hiss low, and a small tremor erupts as the wall with the gold inscription begins to separate to reveal something inside wrapped in a red cloth.
>
> *"Take it. It is yours."* Yessire hisses.
>
> *"May you find more wisdom in your travels and life's journey,"* Leilyra gives her blessing.

The item is a book. An identify spell or DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals it to be a *tome of understanding* (see *Rewards* on the next page). Upon reading the text, the party learns of a ritual to cure the Stone Sisters of their curse. The party returns to Port Gebralt with stories of their adventures and exploits.

If the party did not provide a satisfactory answer, read the description below:

> Leilyra gives an endearing gaze to you, like a mother to a child. She hisses, *"There is wisdom in your words, and I believe you will gain more along your life's journey."*
>
> *"Yes, learn from these lessons and find your truth."* Yessire hisses.
>
> *"Read the inscriptions. Read and understand."* Leilyra hisses.

The inscription is a tale of the Three Goddesses and their meeting with a fourth. Through it, they gained greater understanding of the truth from the kindness and intent of their actions. Haltz deciphers the wall and learn the incantation to remove the Stone Sister's curse. The party returns to Port Gebralt with stories of their adventures and exploits.

REWARDS

Characters who complete this adventure may earn the following rewards:

XP REWARDS

Add the total XP of the creatures defeated by the party, then divide by the number of characters to determine individual rewards.

Obstacle/Creature	XP
Guardian Naga	5,900
Spirit Naga	3,900
Medusa	2,300
Bone Naga	1,100
Mage	2,300
Gargoyle	450
Quicksand Pit obstacle	500 per person
Shambling Mound	1,800
Water Weird	700
Wraith	1,800
Giant Ape	2,900
Tyrannosaurus Rex	3,900

TREASURE REWARDS

Item	Value:
Pouch of gems	300 gp
Expedition Reward	1000 gp per person

Tome of Understanding

Wondrous Item, very rare

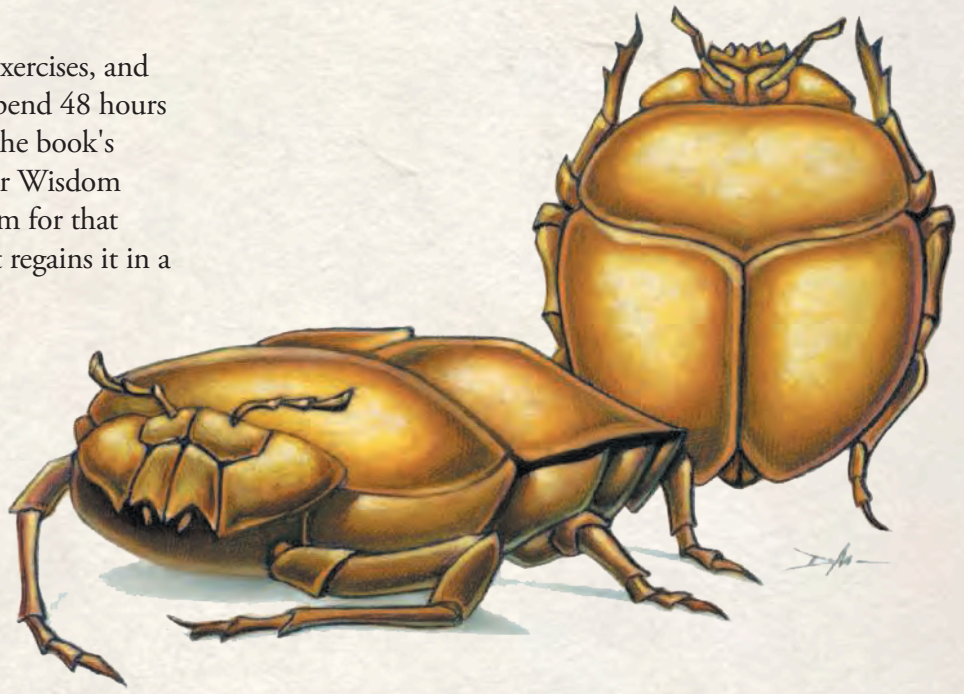
This book contains intuition and insight exercises, and its words are charged with magic. If you spend 48 hours over a period of 6 days or fewer studying the book's contents and practicing its guidelines, your Wisdom score increases by 2, as does your maximum for that score. The manual then loses its magic but regains it in a century.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

This adventure was largely inspired by the Egyptian myth of the deceased being judged by the scales of truth by the god Anubis. Taken into different context with nagas serving as the literal and figurative scales to the path of truth and enlightenment. Special thanks to my Team BAJA players who served as playtesters and their continuing love and support.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jacky Leung resides in sunny Florida, land of endless sunshine and all things Disney. A longtime fan of *D&D*, owner of the "Death by Mage" blog, and columnist on "Encounter Roleplay." He loves learning about other cultures and their cuisine, in other words, a major food-ie. He can be reached on Twitter at @deathbymage or by email: archmage@deathbymage.com.





"The Temple" by David Roberts



Illustration by June Heo

DEMON BLOCK PARTY

by Ryan Servis

Creature: *Marilith* | **Levels:** *12 - 16*

SYNOPSIS

Demons hate mortals, almost as much as they hate being enslaved. A spellcaster must be very foolish indeed to call forth these fiends, for their chaotic nature chafes at the strict terms of their summoning. Unfortunately for the nearby town of Wolfwater, the local wizard has failed to treat demons with the level of caution they deserve, enslaving them for increasingly trivial purposes; theatrical entertainment, menial labor, and experimentation. Such arrogance inevitably led to catastrophe when a powerful marilith was called forth.

ADVENTURE HOOK

This is an adventure for characters of 12th-16th level. There are various ways the party may come to know of Wolfwater's plight. Perhaps they stumble across the town, are drawn by the sounds of an epic party, or have some connection to a local.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

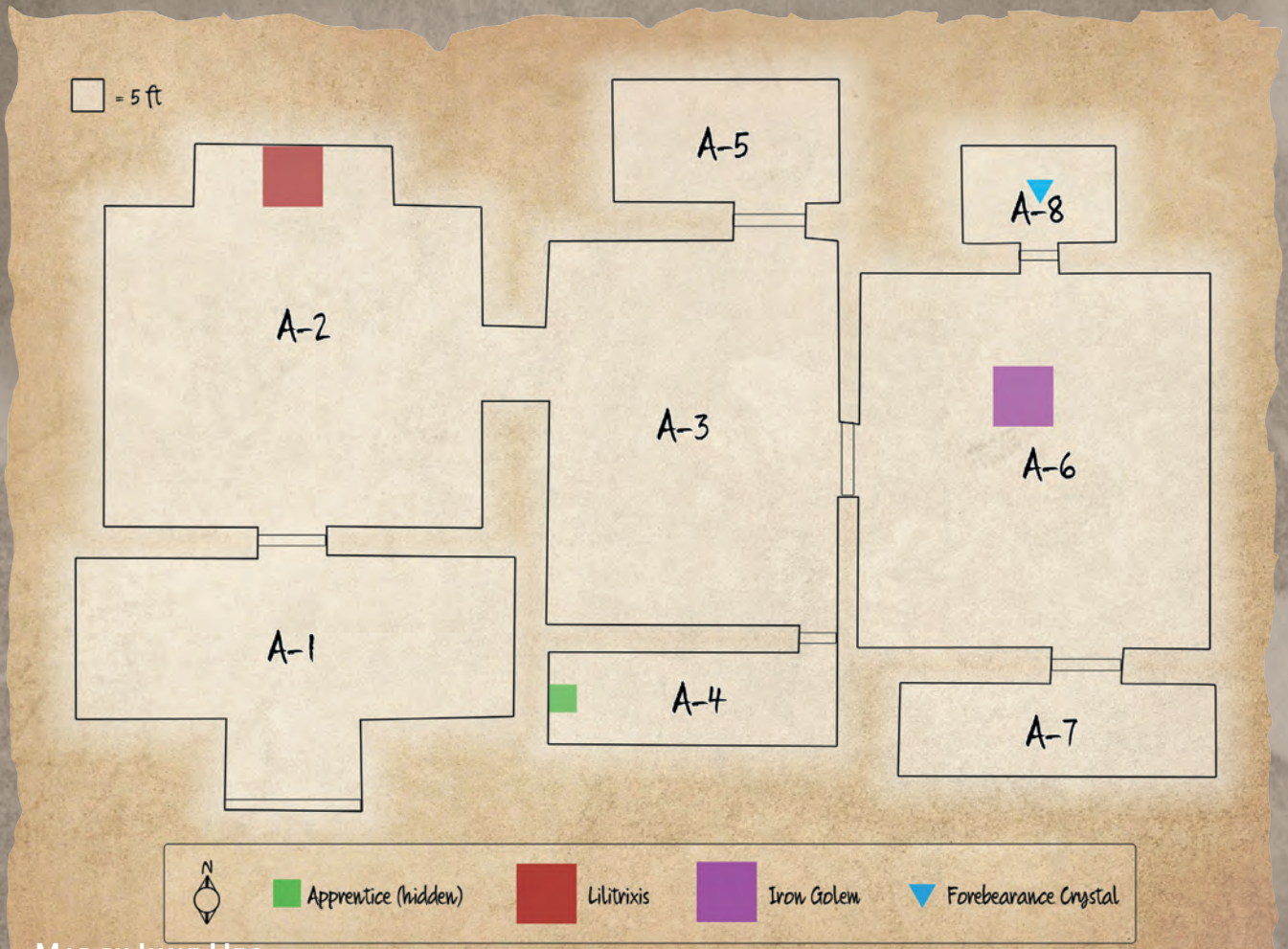
The wizard of Wolfwater is dead, and the marilith Lilitrixis holds court within his keep. The frustrated demons are still magically bound to the fortress and have elected to throw a party of epic proportions, tearing the structure down to dispel the magic binding them to the material plane. The townsfolk are quite thankful the demons are unable to escape, but the party has been raging for three days straight with no signs of stopping. Sleepless nights and rampant exhaustion have put the mayor, Norn Von Skell, in a difficult position. Any adventurers willing to speak with Lilitrixis and politely ask her to "turn it down" will grant the people of Wolfwater some much needed peace and quiet.

CHAPTER 1 – WELCOME TO WOLFWATER

Before you even saw this cozy seaside town, you heard it. A cacophonous roar of hellish music, laughter, breaking glass, and dancing feet echo far and wide. As you draw closer, locals move sluggishly about their business, clearing suffering from exhaustion due to lack of sleep. Many have covered their ears with whatever they could find, while others shout at each other in a vain hope of being heard above the din. At the center of the community stands a large stone keep, the clear source of all the noise. Its windows shine with flashing multicolored lights and, even as you watch, a few bricks slide loose, victims of a catastrophic party being held inside.

The exhausted and sleepless locals can only point to the mayor's residence when questioned about what is going on. Norn Von Skell (LN male half elf **noble**) is quick to meet the party as soon as he learns they are in town. He explains the situation (he knows nothing about the marilith, only that the demons have gotten out of control), stating the town has little to offer powerful heroes in terms of money, but they are welcome to keep anything they find in the wizard's keep as fair compensation. The mayor doesn't care what happens to the demons, just as long as the noise stops and the fiends never leave the keep.

THE WIZARD'S KEEP



Map by June Heo

CHAPTER 2 - THE WIZARD'S KEEP

The keep is a modest stone fortress, with 2 foot thick outer walls and completely encompassed by a powerful *forbearance* spell (9th level, undead) that prevents teleportation into and out of the structure. This same spell prevents the demons from going home. The only entrance is a pair of large double doors. These doors are locked (DC 20 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) ability check to unlock), are objects (AC 20, 100 HP), and are trapped by a *glyph of warding* (spell save DC 20, 8th level *fireball*) that triggers if the doors are damaged. The windows have no glass, but are instead protected by panels of magical force that repel any damage. The entire keep is lit by magical torches that shed bright light in every room.

The keep has suffered greatly under the mariliths's stewardship. The original owner was clearly a person of posh tastes, filling the keep with elaborate decorations, art, furniture, and magical tools. Only the most sturdy of these items still survive, defiled by demons eager for revenge. Every inch of the building is cracked, burned, scratched, and shattered, with the interior splattered with garbage and debris. The smell is intense; equal parts sweat, intoxicating fumes, and blood.

A map of the keep's layout is provided in the *Appendix*.

A - 1: THE FOYER

What was once an opulent foyer is now a rest room for demons who drank too much. Splinters of furniture, silks, and broken bottles are scattered about. Four demons lie passed out in this room; three of which are massive apelike fiends with blue skin and red hair, while the other is a dog headed monstrosity with a pair of pincers making up one of two sets of arms.

Creatures: **Glabrezu** x1, **Barlgura** x3
Special Traits: The demons have disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks due to their drunkenness. Additionally, each of the demons is branded with an arcane sigil that belongs to the wizard that once owned the keep.
Terrain. 14x5 grid, carved stone, 15 ft. high ceiling. These demons are completely intoxicated and have fallen asleep. If attacked, they will be surprised, but successful DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth) checks allow the party to easily sneak past without disturbing the fiends. If the demons detect the party as they sneak past, they drunkenly inquire as to who the party are, acting in a menacing manner but not attacking immediately. Unless convinced otherwise, the demons will always want to bring the group to Lilitrixis so she can decide what to do with them. Should the demons be killed and Lilitrixis finds out about it, the party has disadvantage on Charisma ability checks against her until amends are made.

A - 2: DRINKING HALL

What remains of this room is a testament of how hard demons party. The walls are plastered with paints, alcohol, and food, with the furniture pushed aside to make room for a massive pile of presumably empty kegs. All about, demons of various shapes and sizes are singing, dancing, and throwing objects at the body of a robed old man suspended from the ceiling by thick chains. The body has two swords thrust into it, likely belonging to the massive demon coiled around a makeshift throne. Each of her hands is filled with a confection or fancy drink, which she daintily consumes, a fanged smile never leaving her face.

Creatures: Lilitrixis x1 (**marilith** with maximized hit dice, 270 HP, Skill Proficiencies: Insight, Persuasion), **Hezrou** x5, **Succubi/Incubi** x3
Special Traits: All the fiends in the room besides Lilitrixis have been branded with an arcane sigil that belongs to the wizard that once owned the keep.
Terrain. 12x10 + 6x2 grid, carved stone, 25 foot high ceiling.

As soon as the demons become aware of the party's presence, everything freezes comically. The silence is deafening as each demon turns to stare at the intruders, their faces cracking into wide, menacing grins. Before they can act, however, Lilitrixis raises one of her hands and speaks with a soft voice, commanding her "subjects" to hold. Beckoning with that same hand, she gestures for the party to come forward and holds up a bottle of wine invitingly. Lilitrixis speaks the following

in a clear voice, presenting an air of sophistication and danger:

> *"Well this is a surprise. Just when things were getting boring, here new entertainment has arrived. I'm no stranger to the ways of adventurers, so I know why you are here and how such encounters typically end. Before things get too uncivilized let us see if you have the fortitude to drink with a demon of the Abyss? I'll wager you've never done that before in your long careers of slaughtering my kind."*

Lilitrixis is telling the truth here, and wants to explain the situation to the party in hopes they will help her. She wants nothing except to go home to the Abyss and would like to avoid a fight if at all possible. This is because the forbearance effect prevents a fiend from returning to its home plane when killed, ensuring its death is permanent rather than inconvenient. This is a risk she would rather avoid, as the crystal powering the spell is guarded by a deadly iron golem and magical traps. Lilitrixis suspects that if the keep is destroyed the crystal will no longer function (she is correct), but disabling it is far more expedient. Lilitrixis will not call off the demon party until the keep is destroyed, leaving the adventurers with the following options.

Slaying Lilitrixis and all the demons in the keep. This is brutally difficult, as Lilitrixis is already a stronger than average marilith, and has many demons at her disposal. Make it clear through roleplaying with Lilitrixis that this option would be nearly impossible unless the party are willing to risk everything just to spite the demons.

Partying Hard. Should the party chafe at the idea of disabling the crystal, Lilitrixis will offer them the chance to party with the demons and help tear the keep down. This is a dangerous and exhausting course of action, involving five continuous days of drinking, dancing, and general mayhem. The people of Wolfwater will not take kindly to this decision, and will treat the adventurers with all the hostility they can muster. Additionally, some demons may not choose to return home when the forbearance effect ends, instead rampaging through the town. If the group chooses this option, you can introduce the following mechanics to help play out the scenario.

- Exhaustion. In order to partake in the celebration a character must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution check or gain one level of exhaustion over the course of the merry making.
- Demon rampage. Upon the destruction of the keep, the Nalfeshnee from area A - 5 and the ten Quasits from area A - 3 decide to remain in Wolfwater and go on a collective rampage. Lilitrixis doesn't approve of her minions taking such action, but is far too tired to do anything about it and returns home.

Disabling The Forbearance Effect. Disabling the crystal involves both slaying the iron golem in room A – 6 and solving the puzzle in A – 8. Once the forbearance effect ends, the demons voluntarily return home, honoring their agreement at Lilitrixis' behest. Should the adventurers agree to aid Lilitrixis in this manner, she will order her demons in A – 2 to not assault them, but makes no promises for others carousing throughout the keep.

DEVELOPMENT

If the party chooses to disable the forbearance effect, proceed with the adventure through the rest of the keep. If the party chooses either of the other options, play them out and then proceed to Conclusion.

ROLEPLAYING LILITRIXIS

Lilitrixis is far more subtle than other demons. When summoned by a foolish wizard and learning his intentions, she slew him immediately. Seeing her fellow demons branded and exploited in such a manner drove Lilitrixis into a rage. While she has little affection for her fellow demons, the idea that a puny mortal could think to use other beings in such a manner was infuriating. What began as a rage fueled rampage quickly turned into a large party, which Lilitrixis decided was an acceptable alternative to her unending anger. When roleplaying Lilitrixis, emphasize her conversational manner and personability, which is very inconsistent with how a marilith is expected to behave. She will use her Wisdom (Insight) skill to detect any deception from the party, and her Charisma (Persuasion) skill to emphasize the fact that while evil, both she and her fellow demons are victims of a foolish wizard who held no respect for their power.

Lilitrixis has the following personality traits:

- ***Demon Background.*** Demonic Nobility
- ***Demon Personality Trait.*** I will become an abyssal lord someday, and everything I do works toward that goal.
- ***Demon Ideal.*** Ambition. We reach the station in the cosmos that we deserve due to our drive and talents.
- ***Demon Bonds.*** I am a perfect product of creation, destined to one day shape the cosmos to my whims. Everything I do verifies my destiny.
- ***Demon Flaws.*** I rage, but I use anger to distract from my fear of confrontation.

A – 3: Performance Hall

Before the demons had their way, this private theater would have been quite elegant. Now, the curtains are torn and the stage is slightly on fire. Quasits race around the room, playing with the remains of what must have been dozens of fine costumes. To the south the grand stage is adjacent to a door that provides access to a changing room, while to the north another door is ajar and emits the gurgling rumble of someone guzzling an extraordinary amount of booze.

Creatures: Quasits x10

Terrain. 9x12 grid, carved stone, 10 foot high ceiling. The quasits here are having fun while they avoid the larger demons. They will poke and harass the party, using their Scare trait to startle them. If attacked, the quasits retreat to A – 2 and complain to Lilitrixis.

A – 4: Changing Room

Costumes of all shapes and sizes line the walls of this narrow room, enough to put on a dozen different plays. Many of them are still in acceptable condition, with a pair of incubi squabbling over the grandest pieces.

Creatures: Incubus x1, **succubus** x1, **apprentice** (hidden, CG male human **conjurer**)

The fiends have failed to notice the apprentice hiding behind the costume racks, who has been camped out for many sleepless days. The apprentice requires a successful DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) check or passive Perception of 16 or higher to spot. If the party exposes the apprentice's location while the fiends are in the room, the creatures will immediately attack the apprentice and attempt to enthrall him. Otherwise, the fiends will ask the party to kindly depart, mocking them for their failure to observe proper mortal etiquette in the changing room.

The apprentice has five levels of exhaustion and is in no shape to fight alongside the characters, but can explain how the puzzle in room A – 8 works (but not its solution). This character is intended as a blank slate for the DM, to use according to the needs of the adventure. If the party is having a hard time empathizing with Lilitrixis, have the apprentice detail the many poor choices his master made that lead to this scenario. Consult the *Author's Notes* section of this adventure for examples of talking points and questions the apprentice can bring up when engaged in conversation. The young man is having an emotional crisis on multiple levels and is full of doubts about the current situation. Use these doubts to subtly discuss the moral dilemmas of the situation without leading the players by the nose. Consider an encounter with the apprentice a success if it provokes some healthy conversation at your table.

A – 5: WINE STORAGE

Kegs are stacked in this room from floor to ceiling. They are filled with countless fine wines, some centuries old if the labels are to be believed. At the center of it all is a large piglike demon guzzling an entire keg in between thunderous belches.

Creatures. Nalfeshnee x1
Terrain. 7x4 grid, polished wood
Treasure. 7 kegs of fine wine, each worth 1,500 gp.
The nalfeshnee jealously guards the wine store here and attacks any non-demons on sight. Belligerent and angry, the demon cannot be reasoned with, and is so disliked by its fellows that none will come to its aide when fighting breaks out.

A – 6: GOLEM CHAMBER

This large room is barren save for a single massive suit of armor standing in the middle of the room. Unscarred by demons, the area is sweltering hot, the air scalding your throat with each breathe. As you approach, the armor lurches to life, hefting a massive blade with considerable menace.

Creatures. Iron golem x1
Terrain. 11x12 grid, carved stone.
Special Effects. When a creature starts its turn within the room, it takes 7 (1d12) fire damage.
The golem is hostile to everything that enters the area and attacks relentlessly. The golem will pursue creatures that flee from combat, sending any surviving demons scrambling and greatly upsetting Lilitrixis.

A – 7: WIZARD'S BEDCHAMBER

This bedchamber is completely untouched, safeguarded by the golem. Inside is a wealth of fine fabrics, magical materials, and other accoutrements, all of which are yours for the taking.

Terrain. 10x3 grid, carved stone.
Treasure. 5,000 gp in rare alchemical and spellcasting materials, 3 diamonds worth 1,000 gp each, *deck of illusions* (20 cards), *hat of wizardry*, *staff of power*.

A – 8: FORBEARANCE CRYSTAL CHAMBER

This room is completely empty save for a magical crystal about the size of a human head suspended in the air. The crystal is a flamboyant purple and wreathed in a magical glyph in the shape of a pentagon. The clearly magical device glows with a soft blue light and sparks with arcane energies. Some of the pentagon's sides and corners are emblazoned with numbers, but other spaces are unfilled and await some kind of input to complete.

The crystal is an object (AC 12, 30 hit points), shielded inside a magical puzzle that protects it from all damage. If the crystal is destroyed, the forbearance effect enchanting the keep immediately ends. The puzzle cannot be dispelled or suppressed (such as via antimagic), and instead must be solved. The details of the puzzle are found below.





Puzzle



Puzzle Solved

Solving The Pentagon Puzzle. When any character touches one of the empty areas on the pentagon, a magical series of numbers (1-20) appear. When a character touches one of those numbers, the number becomes assigned to the empty slot. The goal of the puzzle is to have each side of the pentagon (5 sides total) have a sum total of 19. This is hinted by the 19 in the center. If the party inputs the incorrect number into the slot (when compared to the solution), they take 26 (4d12) lightning or fire damage (at the DM's discretion). Once solved, the pentagon dissipates and the forbearance crystal can be accessed. If your players are struggling to find a solution, you can offer them a hint by filling in one of the numbers, taking the time between each hint to give them a chance to work it out.

CONCLUSION

How the adventure ends depends on what the party chose to do when they encountered Lilitrixis.

Slay Lilitrixis and all the demons: Assuming the party is successful and isn't simply killed outright, they have brought welcome peace and quiet to the town of Wolfwater. While they will still get all the Treasure Rewards, they will only receive the XP Rewards for monsters slain. They will not receive the Puzzle or Story Awards.

Playing Hard: As expected, the people of Wolfwater do not take kindly to this option. Not only did the party add to the problem instead of solving it, but some demons chose not to return home and rampaged through the town. The citizens of Wolfwater are extremely displeased and lay the blame for the entire affair at the party's feet. A mob of eight **knights** lead by a **warlord** are tasked with delivering capital punishment to the party unless reparations are made.

Disabling The Forbearance Effect: This option, while morally questionable, leads to the best outcome for all involved. Wolfwater gets its peace and quiet back, Lilitrixis and the rest of the demons stick to the bargain and go home, and the adventurers receive all their just (and not-so-just) rewards.

REWARDS

Characters who complete this adventure may earn the following rewards:

XP REWARDS

Add the total XP of creatures defeated by the party, then divide by the number of characters to determine individual rewards.

Obstacle	XP
Barlgura	1,800
Glabrezu	5,000
Hezrou	3,900
Iron Golem	15,000
Lilitrixis (Marilith)	15,000
Nalfeshnee	10,000
Quasit	200
Succubus/Incubus	1,100

PUZZLE REWARDS

Solving the puzzle awards the party 11,000 XP. For each hint the players received for solving the puzzle, reduce the puzzle's XP reward by 1000 XP.

STORY REWARDS

If the party successfully aids Lilitrixis in a manner that meets with her satisfaction, award the party 15,000 XP.

TREASURE REWARDS

Item	Value
Rare alchemical and spellcasting materials	5,000 gp
3 diamonds	1,000 gp each
7 kegs of fine wine	1,500 gp each
Deck of illusions (20 cards)	N/A
Hat of wizardry (XGE)	N/A
Staff of power, DMG	N/A

AUTHOR'S NOTES: OF DEMONS AND FEMINISM

This one shot intends to present the longstanding struggle women face from those who attempt to control their bodies through institutions of power, but with a fantasy twist. It has been a longstanding tradition in *Dungeons and Dragons* that fiends can be summoned and subjugated with no real ethical concerns being raised about doing so. Sure, demons are evil, but that doesn't mean it is okay to enslave them. By focusing on Lilitrxis (mariliths are always women according to the *Monster Manual*) and her desire to return home, you can make the adventure about not just a demon escaping enslavement, but a woman regaining her agency.

However, because Lilitrixis is an evil being with more than a few bad deeds to her name, how the players interact with her can be quite a conundrum. Do they help the marilith return home (and if so, how?), or slay the fiend on the spot? Is Lilitrixis justified in what she did? Can (or should) she be reasoned with? When running this one shot I hope you do your best in bringing these questions to the forefront. Finding a moral and adequate resolution that is consistent with the Players and their character's beliefs is part of the challenge and should be a teaching moment. A successful running of this adventure involves thoughtful discussion and the changing of perspectives.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ryan Servis lives in Davis, California and works full time for 2CGaming LLC, a tabletop RPG design company. He has contributed writing and design work to 5th Edition 3rd party books *Fate of the Forebears: City of Stands*, *Fate of the Forebears: Lion's Vault, Tyrant and Hellions* and authored *The Epic Legacy Core Rulebook: A Guide To Epic Level 5th Edition*. He can be reached at rmservis@2cgaming.com.



APPENDIX A: FEATURED CREATURES

These creatures are featured prominently in this anthology. Those denoted with an asterisk are new or reskinned creatures whose stat blocks are provided in this book. The page numbers below correspond with the adventures the creatures are found in.

Harpy — pg. 7, 15
Dryad — pg. 7, 15
Witch — pg. 21
Banshee* — pg. 37
Banshee — pg. 39
Dryad — pg. 45
Banshee — pg. 53
Sea Hag — pg. 61
Bone-Sailor* — pg. 69
Flotsman* — pg. 70
First Form Jetsam Golem* — pg. 71
Final Form Jetsam Golem* — pg. 72
Lamia — pg. 75
Harpy — pg. 83
Landon the Conjurer* — pg. 89
Yuki-Onna — pg. 91
Shahmaran* — pg. 103
Yochlol — pg. 105
Colchia the Red* — pg. 117
Atalanta, Warrior Hero* — pg. 117
Medea the Sorcerer* — pg. 118
Jason, the Argonaut's Leader* — pg. 118
Castor and Pollux, the Twins* — pg. 119
Theseus, Slayer of the Minotaur* — pg. 119
Nukekubi* — pg. 130
Alcis, Medusa Monk* — pg. 140
Pelagaios, Avatar of the Storm* — pg. 141
Chimera — pg. 143
Naga* — pg. 157
Gynosphinx — pg. 159
Medusa — pg. 169
Penanggalan* — pg. 183
Erinyes — pg. 185
Naga — pg. 185
Chhaya, Priest* — pg. 191
Shoosuva, Demon* — pg. 191
Venom Troll* — pg. 192
Erinyes — pg. 195
Naga — pg. 203
Marilith — pg. 211



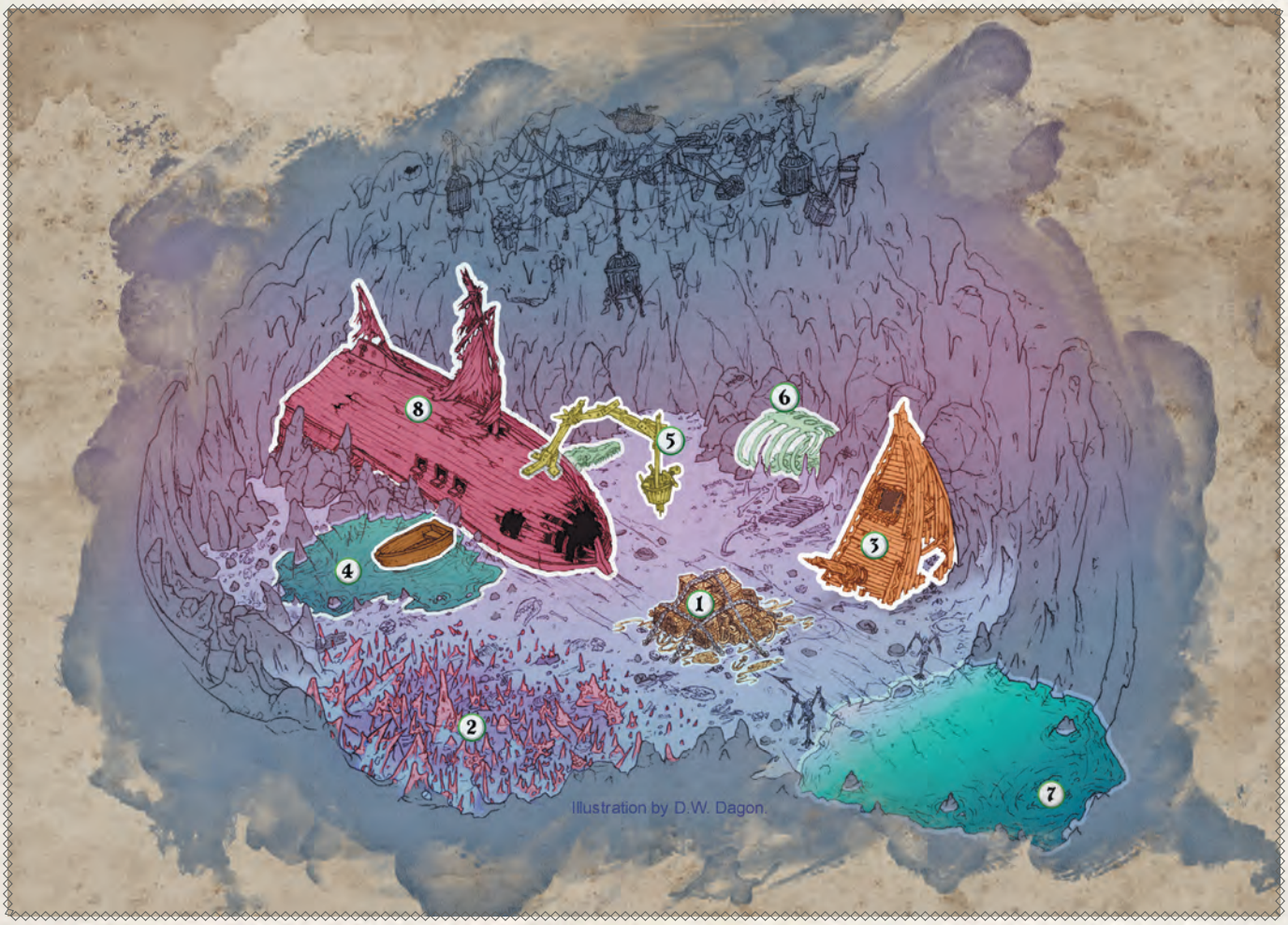
APPENDIX B: MAPS FOR PLAYERS

THE TEMPLE (FROM *THE BREWSTER'S DAUGHTER*, PG. 21)



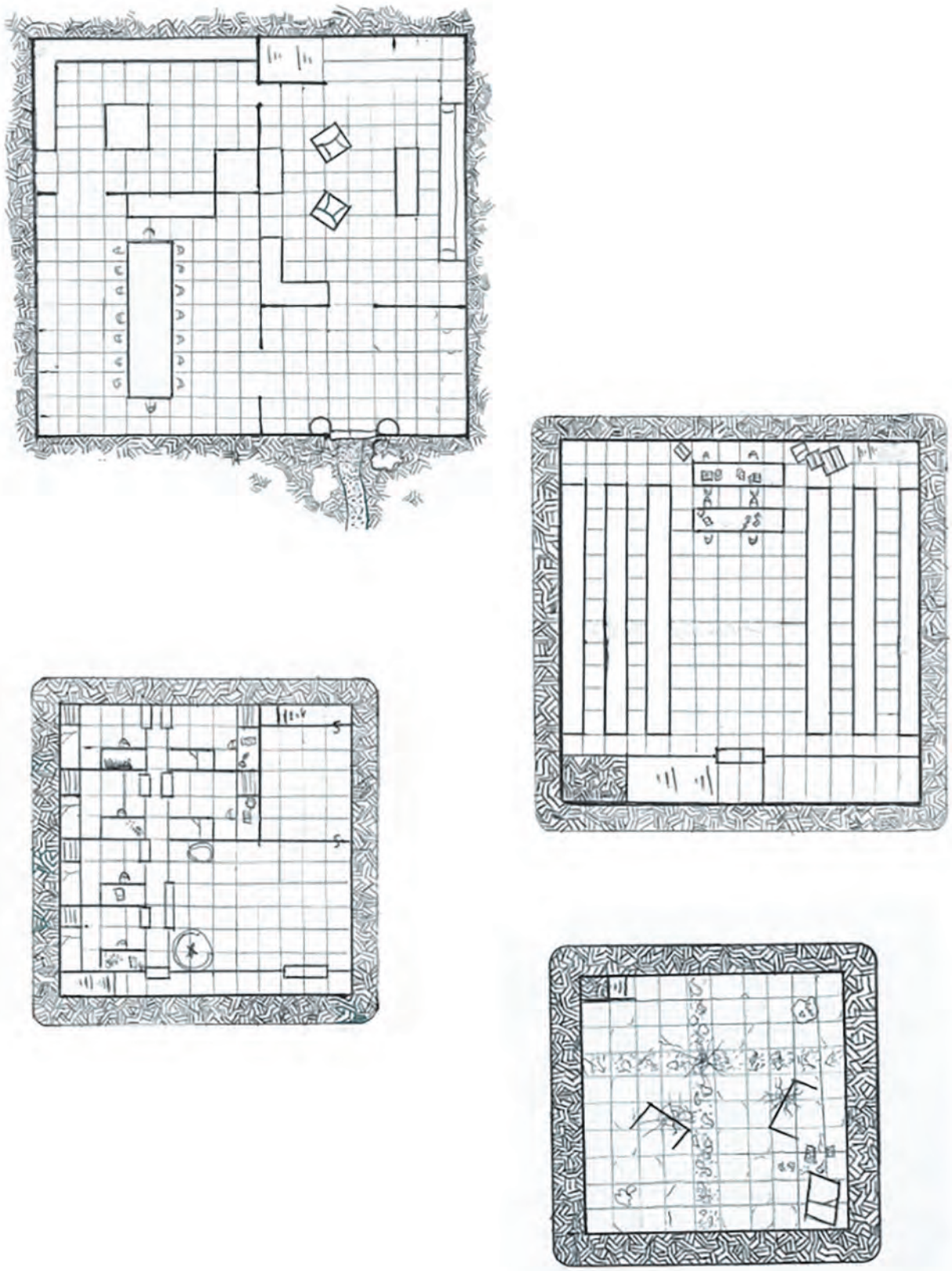
Map by Charles Van Slambrouck

SEA HAG STADIUM (FROM *SEVEN TEARS BY THE SEA*, PG. 61)



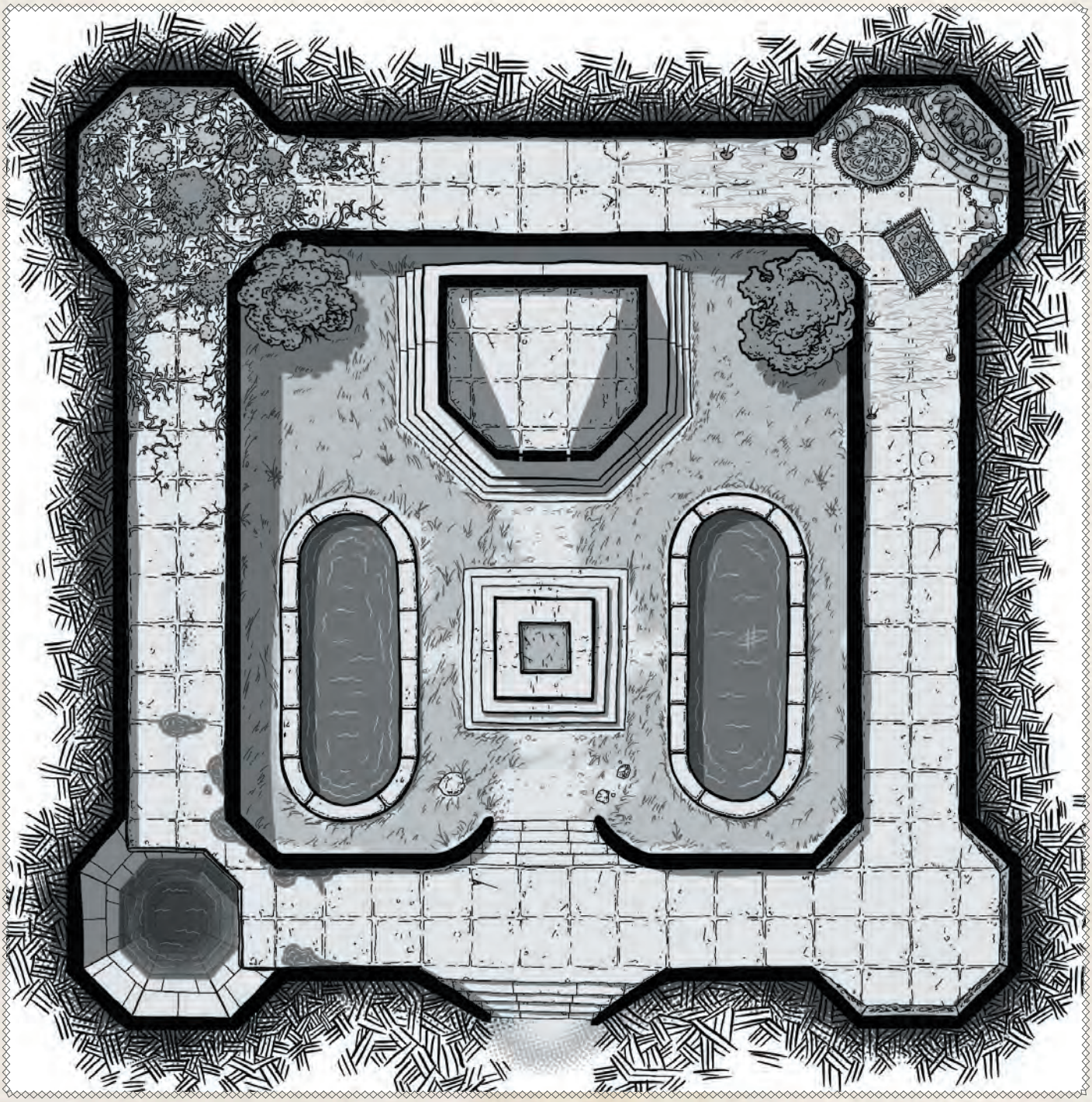
Map by D.W. Dagon

THE SPELLBURNED TOWER (FROM *LAMIAS, TIGERS, AND WERES, OH MY!*, PG. 75)

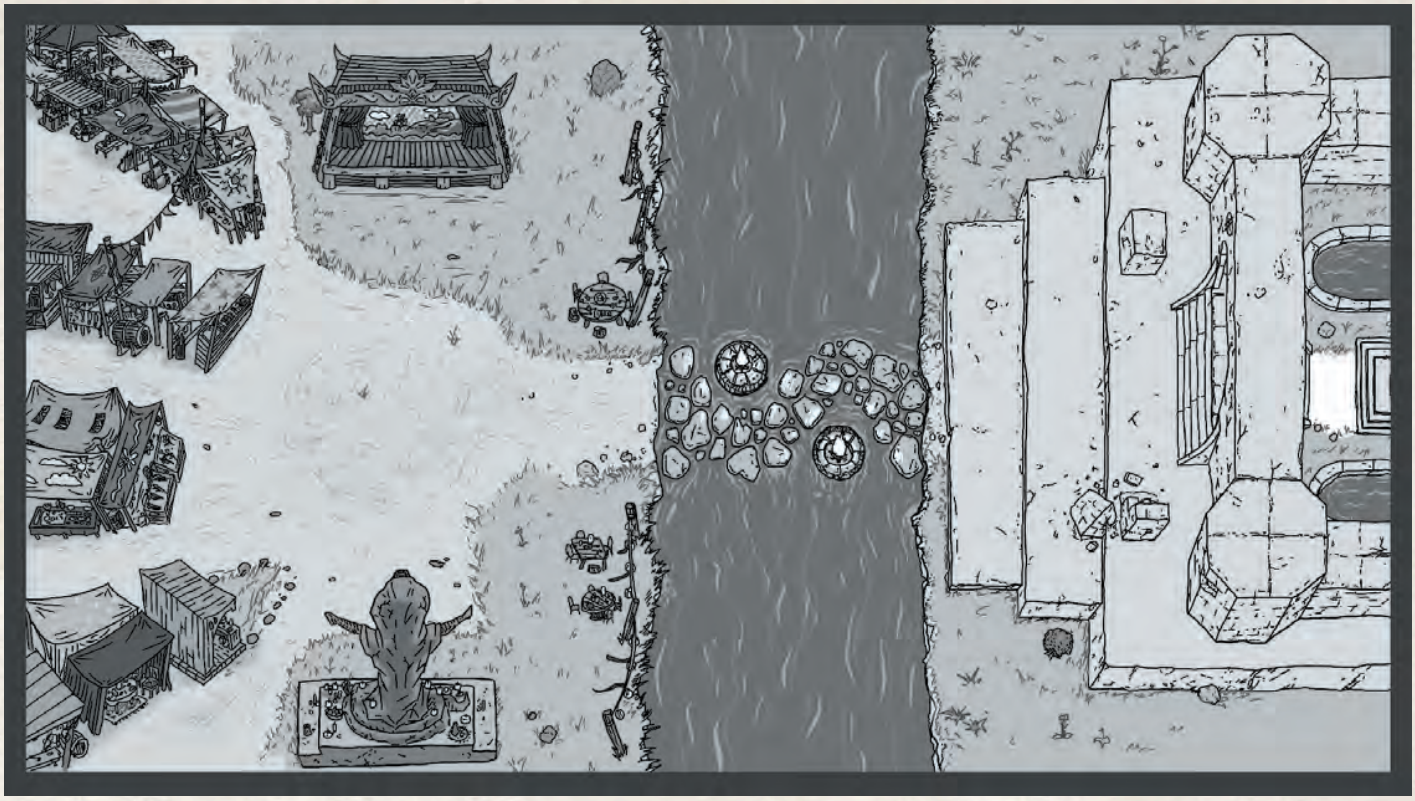


Map by KM Kovalcik

THE TEMPLE (FROM *THE SERPENT AND THE SEA*, PG. 149)



Map by D.W. Dagon

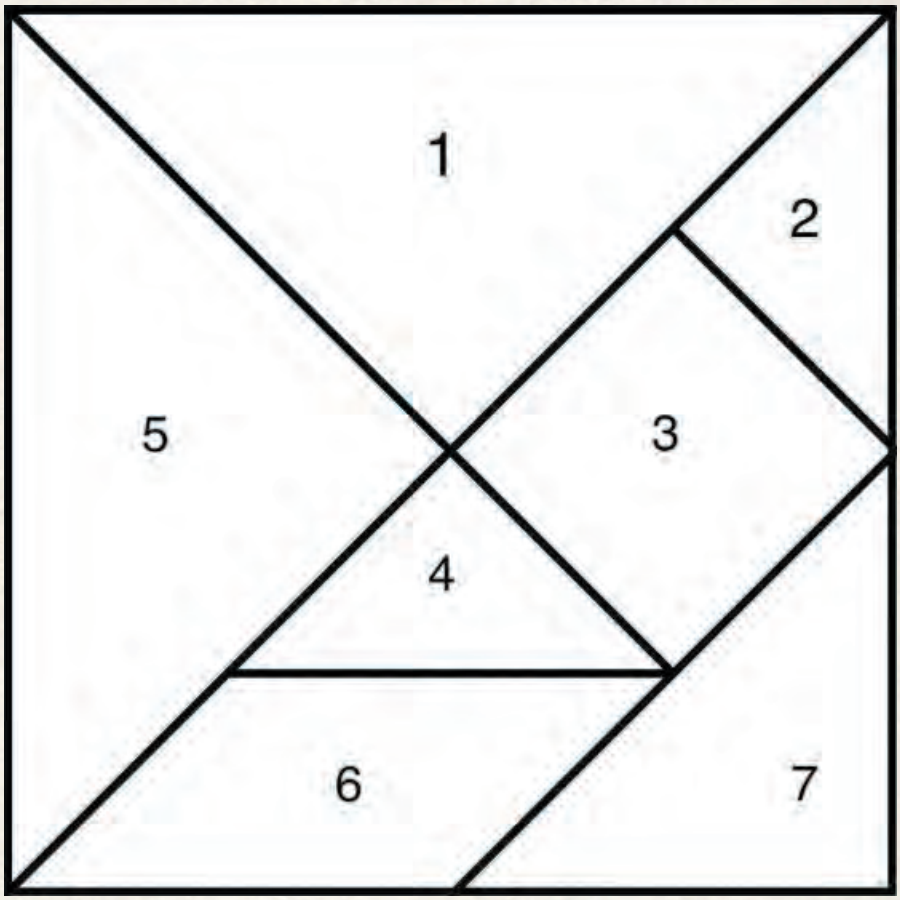


THE FESTIVAL (FROM *THE SERPENT AND THE SEA*, PG. 149)

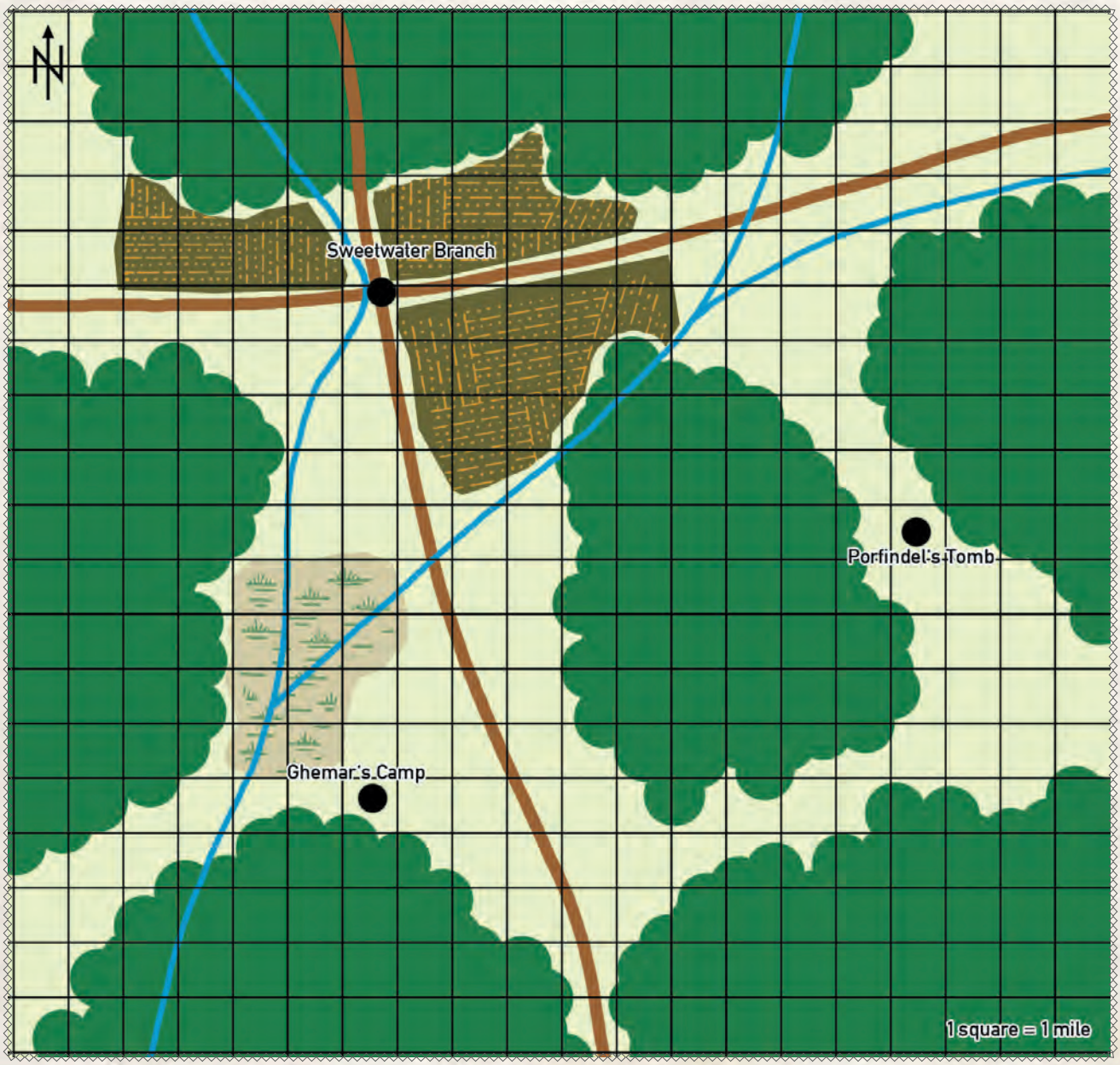
Map by D.W. Dagon

THE PUZZLE

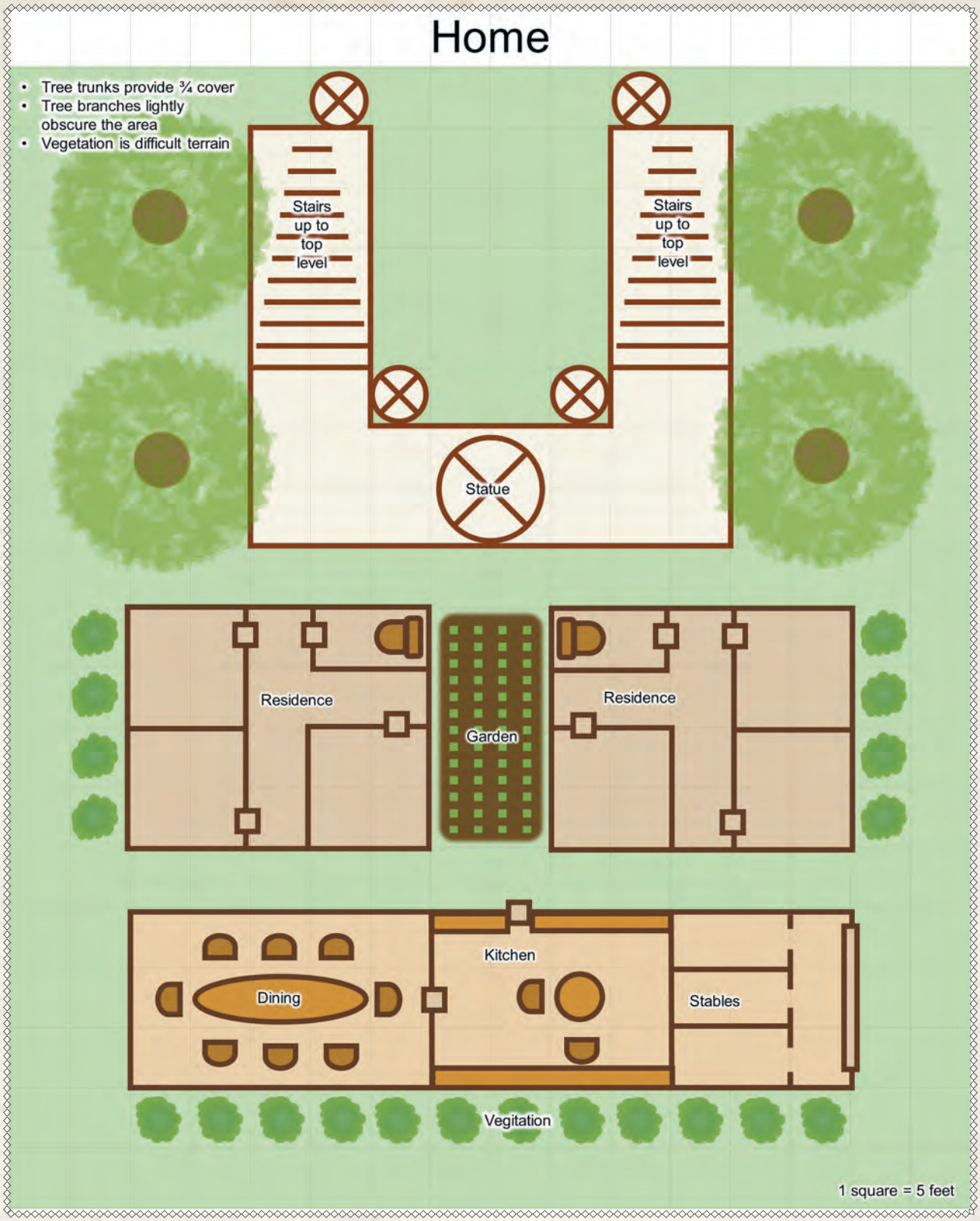
(FROM *THE SERPENT AND THE SEA*, PG. 149)



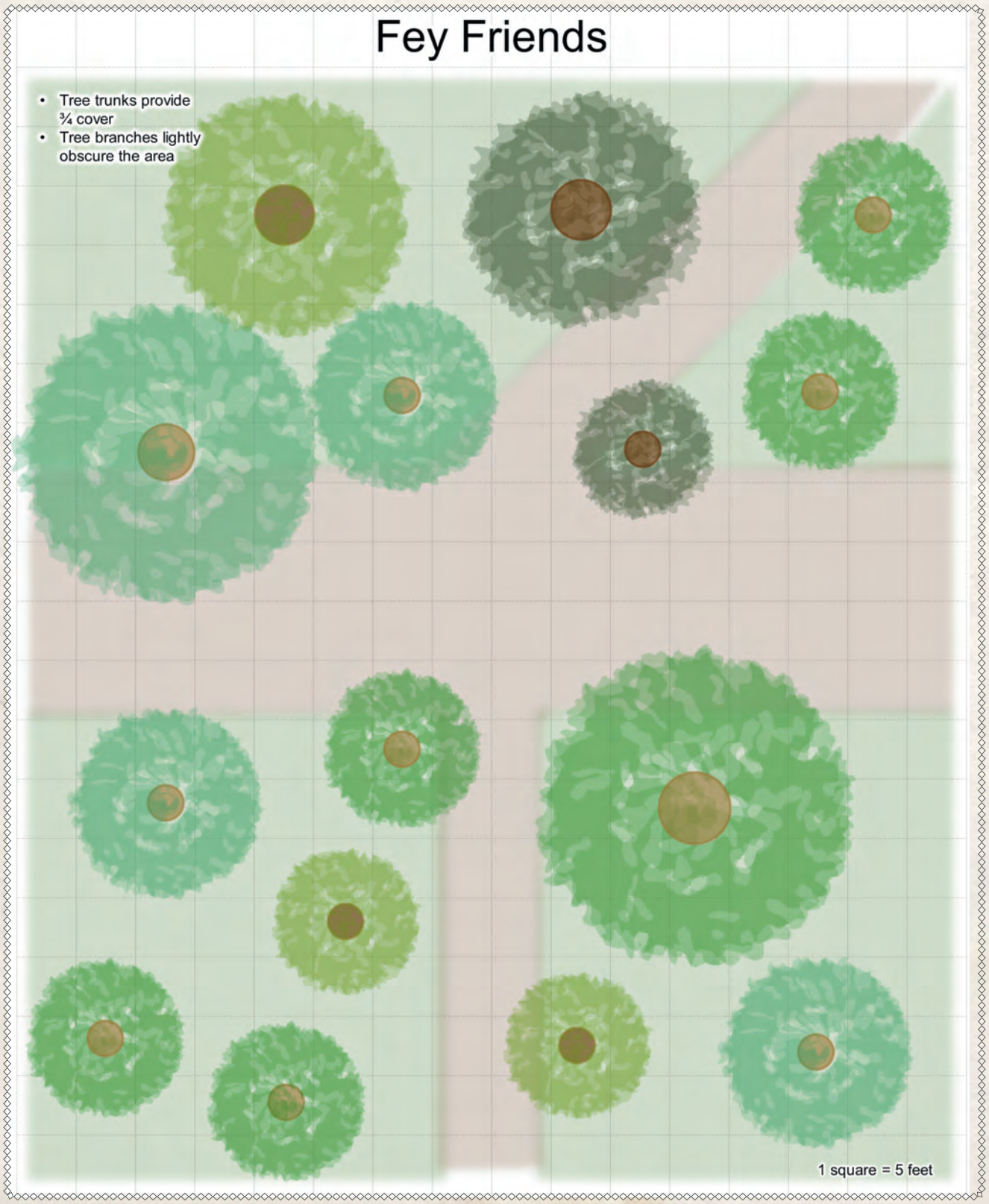
MAP 0 (FROM *THE TALE OF THE SPHINX*, PG. 159)



HOME (FROM *THE TALE OF THE SPHINX*, PG. 159)



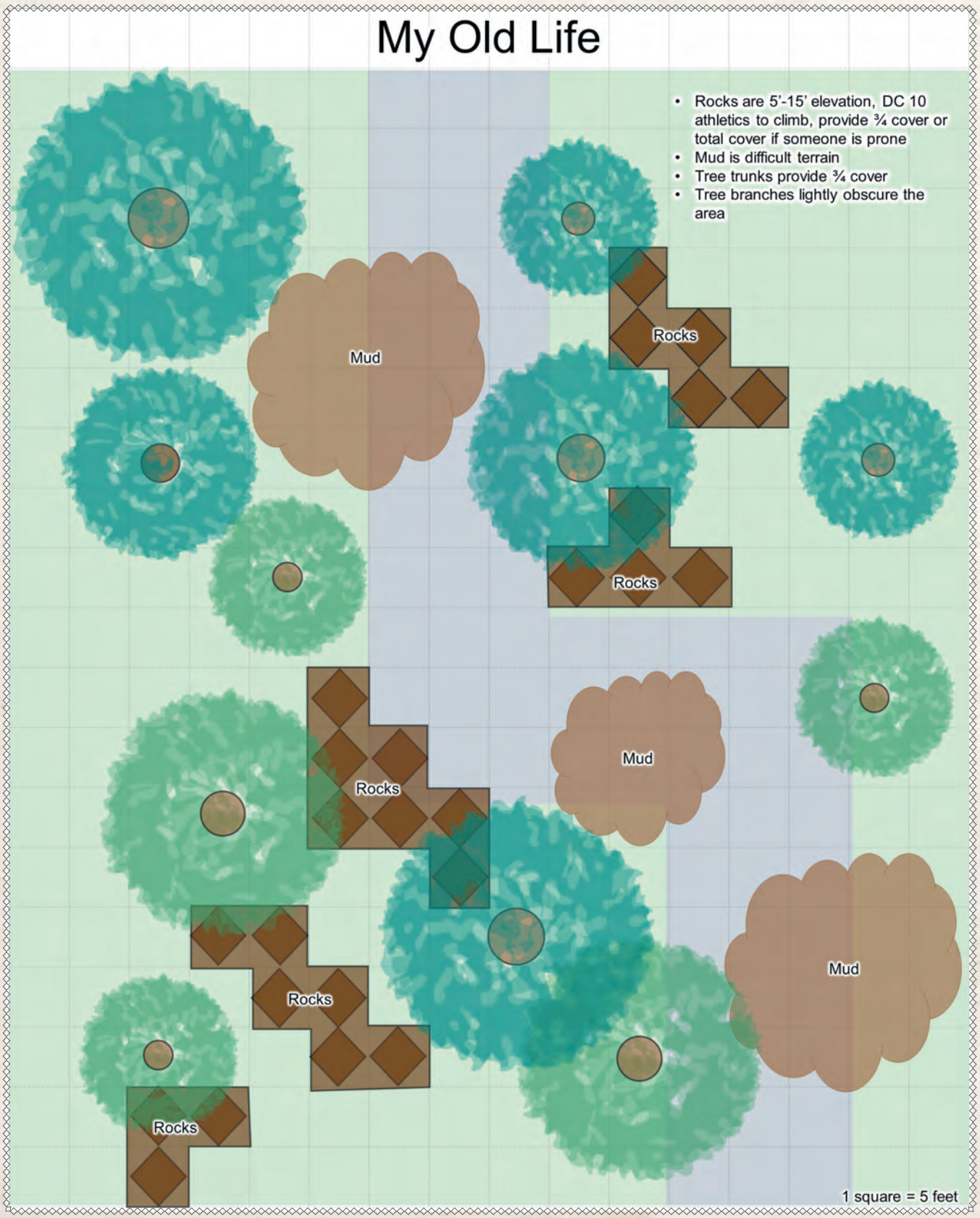
FEY FRIENDS (FROM *THE TALE OF THE SPHINX*, PG. 159)



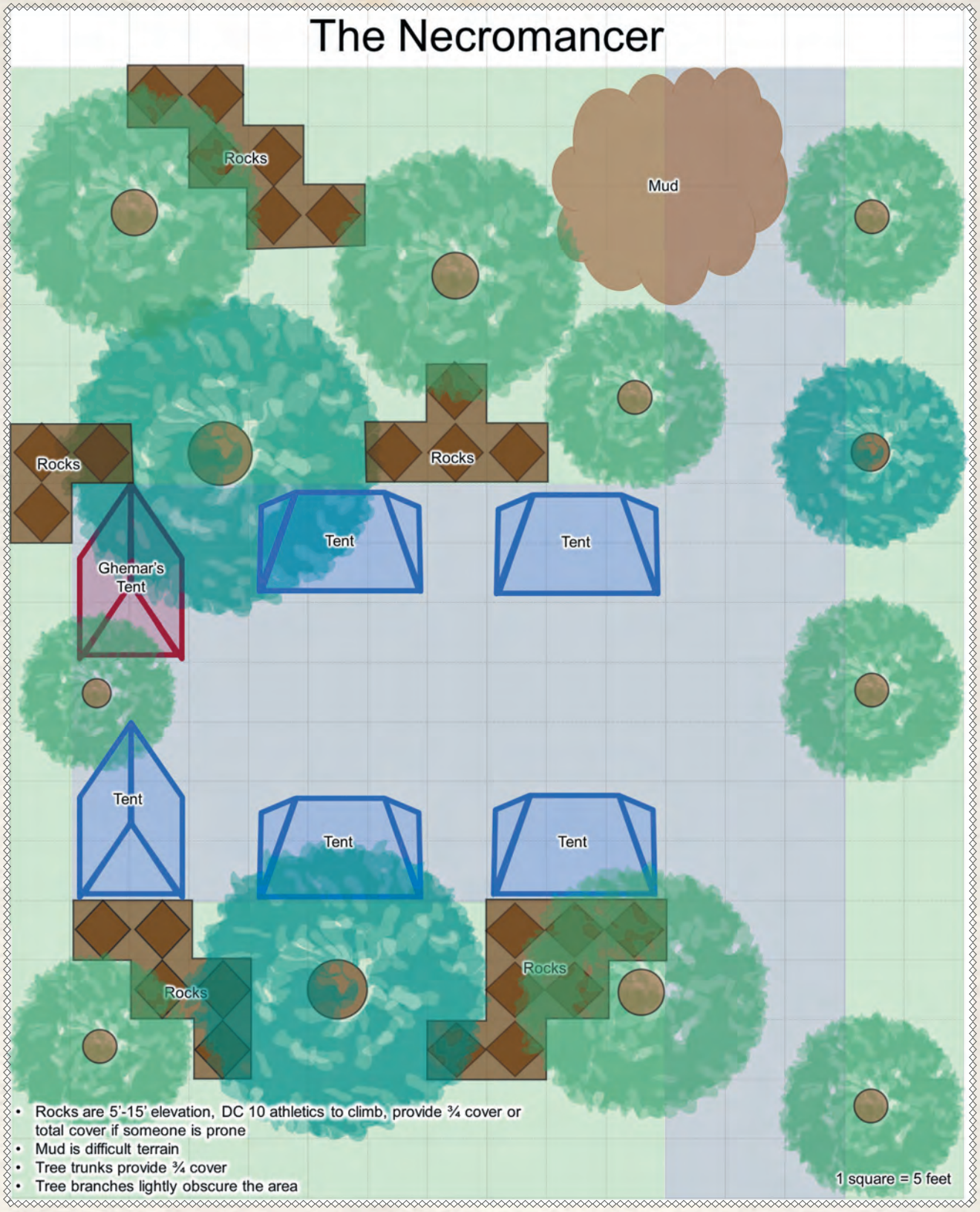
SWEETWATER BRANCH (FROM *THE TALE OF THE SPHINX*, PG. 159)



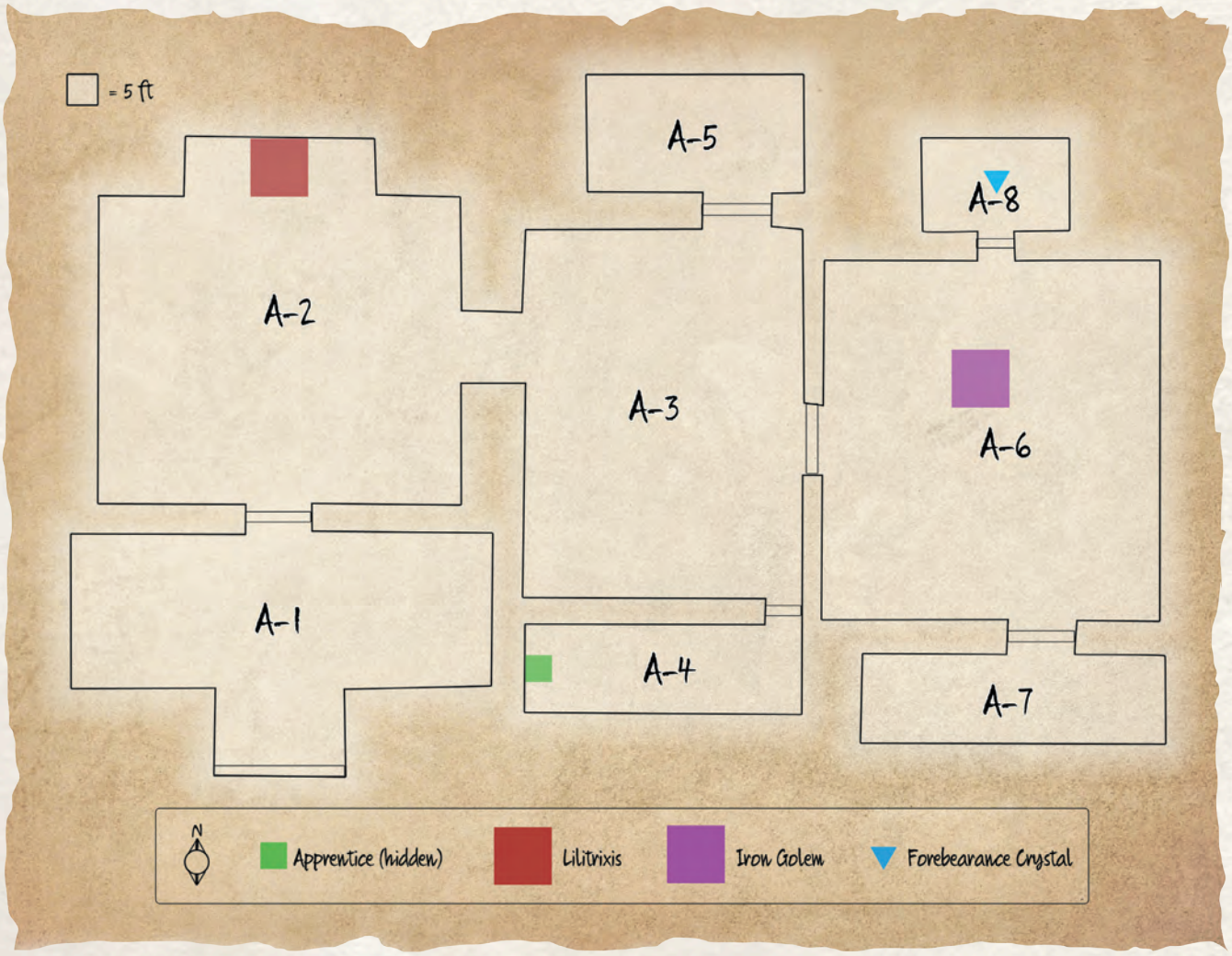
MY OLD LIFE (FROM *THE TALE OF THE SPHINX*, PG. 159)



THE NECROMANCER (FROM *THE TALE OF THE SPHINX*, PG. 159)



THE WIZARD'S KEEP (FROM *DEMON BLOCK PARTY*, PG. 211)



Map by June Heo



THE PENTAGRAM PUZZLE
(FROM *DEMON BLOCK PARTY*, PG. 211)

APPENDIX C: HANDOUTS

The following handouts go with *Three Heads Are Better Than One* by Fenway Jones (pg. 143).

HANDOUT 1

ALLEO

Her charade: Back rub
Check: DC 18 Strength check to see if the other characters can get the giant knot out of her back.
Personality: She is very angry and scary. She will growl if someone gets close to her besides for the back rub.

OCYPETE

Her charade: Thorn in wing
Check: DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) to find the thorn.
Personality: She does everything in a fast manner but gets tired very quickly.

CELAENO

Her charade: Requires medicine
Check: DC 18 Medicine (Wisdom) to administer the correct medicine.
Personality: She seems much darker than the rest of them and will not get off of the table for anything.

HANDOUT 2

RULES OF GAMBLING:

Your tabaxi friend has challenged you to a game of Malarkey!
To play this game you will need three d6s.

- Roll your dice. DON'T show them to anyone!
- Everyone is trying to get as close to 18 as possible.
- The DM goes around the table, and asks you how much you are betting, but there is a catch - you are betting years of your life.
- After you hear the person before you bet what they are betting you say "I see your _____ and I raise ___ years."
- Say "Malarkey!" when you think you've reached the limit of what you want to bet.
- Once everyone has bet, go around the table again and again until everyone says "Malarkey!"
- For a final time, go around the table to see who got the closest to 18. That person wins everything. They keep their life, get however many years it added up to be added on to their lives, and win the special item and yarn that the tabaxi was betting.
- The lives lost are distributed evenly between everyone else.
- In case of a tie, roll the three d6s again and whoever gets the highest (no betting this time) wins.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND BIOGRAPHIES

We are indebted to everyone who playtested a module in our anthology series, including the following:

Aaron Dull, Aaron Quick, Adam Blinkinsop, Alex Abbott, Alex Grant, Alex LoCurto, Alex Misner, Alexander Mirams-Harrison, Alice Carstairs, Alison Huang, Allen Engleson, Andre Campeau, Andrew Florea, Andrew Sinsheimer, Andrew Beharelle, Anthony Booros, Artur Augustyniak, Arwen Connolly, Aviva Geretz, Azhaiel, Batty the Toon, Bec Scane, Bek, Benjamin Adelman, Beth Watson, Bex Bugois, Bill Manning, Blunders & Brigands, Bob Curry, Bonnie Shaw, Brian Forbis, Britt Monday, Caitlandia, Caitlin Collins, Caleb Jones, Callan Stein, Cameron Calka, Cara Judd, Carl Lister, Carolyn Petty, Cas, Catherine Lowry Franssen, Chance Clement, Charles Vanslambrouck, Chris, Chris Booth, Chris Creasing, Chris Ogren, Chris Tressler, Christian Harris, Christopher Mason, Colin Arnott, Connor Urwin, Corin Kumamoto, Craig Friedman, Crista Megee, Curtis Voelker, D.E. Chaudron, D.W. Dagon, Dani Bar-Lavi, Daniel Moller, DarkBlade, Dave Eisinger, David Cornelius, David Cutler, David Gibson, David Leverton, David Warshawsky, DCSTABOS, Derek Fisher, DoctorCube, Don-Brainhook, Doug Thomas, Drake R. Finney, E. Forney, Elena Chiovaro, Elizabeth Meritt, Emily Beebe, Emma Power, Enoki, Erin Vickers, Esra-Lynn Fife, Evan Gornick, Gabriel Negrete, Grace Fuller, Grace O'Hair-Sherman, Grace Willsmer, Grant Ellis, Greg Twentyman, GremlOlgilviee, Griffin DiStasi, Guillermo Garrido, Gwen MacDonald, Gwendy B., H. "Ink" Kugler, Harvey Smith, Hermod, Horse, Heather Johns, Heather Wells, HobbleDragon, Howie Boyd, Ignacio Santander-Alfonso, Isaac Kindel, Jack Garst, Jacob S. Wible, Jake Parisse, James Cooper, Jamie B.B., Jay Andromeda, Jessica L. Washburn, Joan "Jay" Bedinger, Jayden James, Jean Adaser, Jean-Francois Lacelle, Jeff Braun, Jeff Ellis, Jes Schrodinger, Jess Buttriss, Jess Prudent, Jesse Jordan, Jessica R, Jessica Waters, Joel Russ, John Tetzlaff, Johnny Kuzmanovski, Jon Peters, Jonathan Robb, Jono Mammel, Jordan Richer, Jordan Thomas, Joseph Tennant, Josh Knapp, Joshua Graves, Joshua James Gervais, Joshua Robinson, JR, Kalimah Patricia Carter, Kara Baker, Karla Zimonja, Kat Willott, Kate Jordan, Katie Assarian, Katie Ileki, Katie Tregs, Katiequixotic, Kathryn Kovalcik, Katherine Lusk, Katherine S. Raine, KaylaRPG, Khadizha Laila Lunn-Wilder, Kikka "The Princess" Delarose, Kimber Streams, Kosta Sideropoulos, Kris Giere, Kyle Gould, Kyle McCordic, Lauren Hardesty, Leigh Lunsford, Liseanne Pierson, LittlestCrouton, Liz Gygax, Logan Treglia, Lottie Turner, Louise Edwards, Luciella Scarlett, Luvy Mann, M. Wilkins, Maggie Darrah, Marissa Oudshoorn, Martin Katz, Mary Jo Creaney Stockton, Mat Pimz, Matis Kleidman, Matt Monasch, Matt H. Taylor, Matthew Johns, Max Churak, Maxine Henry, Melanie Murphy, Meghan McGinnis, Michael B., Michael Graham, Michael Plautz, Mick Wilder, Mike Pisani, Molly Segale, Morgan Bate, Morgan G., Morgan Goin, Morgan Treglia, Mr. Handsome, Natalie Mulder, Nathan Reyes, Nailya Shamgunova, Nick Hammer, Nightelyn, Nomi "Progamer" Lastname, Nola Pfau, Olivia Noble, Paige Turner, Pat, Patrick Eaton, Paul Charvet, Paul Hackett, Paul S. Washburn, Pearce Truesdale, Pedro Pagés, Phil Hanley, Philip R Spence, Polar Bear, Potato Hollow, Purnacandra Sivarupa, Rae withabrickk, Rachel Snyder, Raphael Grimes, Rebeccah Shumway, René L Karkut, Rhea Anne Myers, Rob Loweson, Robert Laedlein, Robin Farndon, Robin Gibson, Robin Michele, Robin Schadel, Roll for Trouble, Rudolphus SamSquatch, Samantha Darcy, Sam Olgilvie, Sam Alberts, Sam Sullivan, Sam Tregs, Sammy Ward, Sarah Dompkowski, Sarah Gray Harker, Sarah Lanaway, Sarah Pavlich, Sarah Mazul, Scott Bullock, Scott Tatum, Seph Steel, Shamini Bundell, Shannon Bebel Shawn Gillikin, Shoshana Yaswen, Simon Goudreault, Sith Witch, Stakehater, Stefan Turner, Steven Assarian, Steven Barrett, Suzy Deacon, Taran Winnie, tiakall, Timothy Bryant, Tim Kardaras, The_Bird543, The Sharkofironwill, Thomas Karkut, Tory Lynch, Tom DeFrancisco, Tom Powell, Thomas Gray Hurdle II, Thomas Jancis, Thomas Worsley, Tony Molinet, Trever Haugen, Tristen, Wes Valley, Willy Abeel, Willy Seaman, Will "The Worst" Hagen, wing_newlimit, W. Graham Bishop Jr., Wyatt Warner, Xavier Rodriguez, Xinyi, Yaakov Kuperman, Zach Gartner, Zach Lee, Zach Prince, Zoë Pryce

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Gwen ("gwendybee" across the web) is a freelance fantasy illustrator who will take any excuse to paint bright colors, flashy magic, and dramatic lighting. In her spare time, she likes to eat inadvisable quantities of dessert and pet other people's dogs.

Jennifer Peig

Jennifer Peig is a freelance illustrator and artist specializing in fantasy and folklore. She resides in Chicago with her ever-exuberant chiweenie pup. You can often find her scribbling furiously and consuming copious amounts of pastries under piles of blankets.

Kayla Cline

Kayla Cline is an illustrator and graphic novelist, whose work frequently invokes gaming culture, the occult, and science fiction. Her work can be found at her website kaylacline.com.

Liz Gist

Liz is a hobbyist, artist, and freelance editor. They grew up fascinated with mythology and look for any excuse to burrow into that part of their psyche. Follow them on Twitter @crit_liz for puppy photos, mini painting, and far too many tiefling PCs.

Luciella Elisabeth Scarlett

Luciella Elisabeth Scarlett is an aromantic and asexual author and illustrator based in Melbourne, Australia, who obnoxiously publishes under a name the length of an entire alphabet. You can follow her on Twitter or Facebook @luciellaes or at luciellaes.wordpress.com.

Ma'at Crook

Ma'at (ma ought) Crook has been a *D&D* fan since the 80s but didn't find a table to play at until her 40s. Since then, she's written modules and tools, served as an Adventurer's League coordinator and DM, and plays *D&D* and *Pathfinder* actual plays. Web: maatcrook.com, Twitter: @MaatCrook

Sammy Ward

Sammy is a freelance illustrator and independent comics creator. Her work tends to delve into the world of fantasy and horror inspired by folklore and mythology. In between work and playing *D&D*, Sammy is constantly drawing skulls and drinking excessive amounts of tea. You can follow her adventures online @sammywarddraws.

Sandy Jacobs-Tolle

Sandy Jacobs-Tolle got into video gaming with an Atari 2600, tabletop gaming with *AD&D* 2nd Edition, and art since she ate a blue crayon in the first grade. She's done illustrations for Choice of Games, Threadbare, Motobushido, Circle of Hands… too many indie games to count. She'll also knit you a pair of socks if she likes you well enough. Portfolio at https://www.

artstation.com/racerxmachina, Twitter: @racerxmachina

Satine Phoenix

Satine Phoenix is the founder of Gilding Light, Dungeon Master of Sirens of the Realms, host of Dungeon Master's Guide & GM Tips Season 2, as well as the author and creator of the *New Praetorians* graphic novel series and *The Action Heroine's Journey* (non-fiction) and the founder of CelebrityChariD20.com. Artist, author, entertainer and storyteller.

Wouter Florusse

Wouter Florusse is a freelance illustrator with a passion for history, fantasy and nature. He lives in Rotterdam, the Netherlands with his wife and two sons. In his spare time he engages in Historical European Martial Arts, plays tabletop roleplaying games and can be found wantonly drawing trees anywhere.

Xan Larson

Xan Larson is an illustrator, comic artist, mythological creature enthusiast, DM, and more. *Artist of If Dragons Were Horses*, *SVN*, *Deep False Waters*, and creator of the teacup almiraj and teacup wolpertinger. Follow on Twitter @PaleWhiteRabbit or Instagram @pale.white.rabbit.

About our cover artist

Samantha Darcy

Crafted from only the finest twigs and glamours, Samantha Darcy was well-nurtured in exchange for her father's freedom. She was beloved by all her neighbors, though her presence would frighten the livestock and cause the room to chill. The families would vie for her attention on the hot summers' days, and found they preferred the taste of soured milk. Samantha saw her first artistic inspiration behind their straining smiles, and delighted in drawing all their prettiest nightmares.

An illustrator for tabletop roleplaying games, Samantha has risen far above those humble beginnings. She has contributed to works both great and small, including the *Uncaged Anthology*, *Rolled & Told*, and countless commissions. She currently labors on the *Adventurer's Fashion Primer*, a book sorely needed by creatures of every type.

Samantha lives in a tower of toadstools and teeth, located somewhere in the strange wilds of Indiana. She dwells there with her loving husband—a musical clockwork filled with bartered voices, and their darling son—who she made herself, using only the finest twigs and glamours.

Editors

Dr. A. Kelly Lane, Ph.D.

Dr. A. Kelly Lane is a biologist and education researcher by day, a TTRPG player, GM, and streamer by night. Kelly loves playing games both live and in person. Being an avid promoter of all things inclusive, she couldn't pass up the opportunity to be involved with this wonderful project. The talent and kindness in this group have been astounding and Kelly has learned a great deal from those involved. You can find her @AKellyLane on Twitter where she discusses higher education, gaming, and inclusivity.

Ashley Warren

Ashley is the founder, creator, and producer of the *Uncaged Anthology*. She writes for Wizards of the Coast, Onyx Path Publishing, and more. Ashley is a cast member on *Tales from the Mists*, which airs on WotC's official Twitch channel. Additionally, she is the founder of the RPG Writer Workshop and the author of numerous titles on Dungeon Masters Guild. Her website is ashleywarrenwrites.com; Twitter, @ashleynhwarren.

Bianca Bickford

Bianca is a lifelong geek living deep in the Heart of Texas. She can be found running around the jungles of Chult or pulling off the biggest heist in Waterdavian history. Bianca DMs for friends and one-shot adventures for girls ages 9 to 12 to introduce them to the imaginative world of *Dungeons & Dragons*. Her module "Maid in Waterdeep" was a part of *Uncaged* Volume 1. Find her on Twitter at @BiancaBickford.

Brent Jans

Brent has worked as a freelance fiction and TTRPG editor for the last thirteen years. He is currently an editor for On Spec Magazine, a Canadian quarterly publication of speculative fiction, and has edited for: Wayfinder (a magazine for the Pathfinder RPG); the

Space: 1889 line for Clockwork Publishing; and the RPG Foreign Element for Mystic Ages Publishing. He is also the founder and curator for the Canadian Library of Roleplaying Games, and you can read more from him at renaissancegamer.ca.

Catherine Evans

Catherine has been playing and running RPGs since 1997, and she somehow always finds her way back to *D&D*. You can find her shamelessly self-promoting on Twitter (as @perpetualgloom) and writing dark fairy tales and outright horror on DMs Guild.

Christopher Walz

Christopher is the Dungeon Masters Guild creator of *The Midnight Revelry* and *An Ogre and His Cake*, a children's charity project. He is also a freelance tabletop roleplaying game editor, currently working on Cubicle 7's *Adventures in Middle-earth*. His journey into roleplaying games began before he could read, stealing away his brother's Monstrous Manual to look at the pictures. He resides in central Kentucky with his son, who is most certainly a crafty kobold. Connect with him on Twitter @DMChristopherW.

Echo Roanoke

Echo Roanoke (they/them) is a writer, editor, gamemaster, and game creator in Indiana. They graduated in 2011 from Eastern Illinois University with an MA in Literary Studies with Creative Writing Emphasis. They can be found on Twitter and Instragram at @echoroanoke.

Hannah Rose

Hannah is a professional nerd with two cats, several hundred books, and never enough time for *D&D*. She co-produces the actual play show Worlds Apart, where she also plays the strong barbarian mom Mara. DMs Guild credits include the *College of the Opera* (gold bestseller), the *Temple of Shattered Minds*, and upcoming projects — follow her on Twitter (@wildrosemage) for updates, cat pictures, and general geekiness.

Jamie O'Duibhir

Jamie O'Duibhir is an atheist minister and writer. Her writing includes content for the DMs Guild, indie TTRPGs, nerdy news articles, poetry, and essays. She is an activist focused on trans liberation, immigrant rights, and prison abolition. She is also very gay. #RampUptheLesbians. Twitter: @irreverendjamie.

Jeff Ellis

Jeff has written and published multiple adventures using the Dungeons & Dragons 5th Edition Open Gaming License to the Dungeon Masters Guild and is happy to be working as a contributing editor for the first time on *Uncaged*. He is humbled by all of the talent present in these anthologies and is honored to have helped in what little way he could. You can find out more about him on Twitter @manyeyedmonster.

Jessica Washburn

Jessica is an aspiring writer and copy editor who looks forward to releasing more projects and supplements for *D&D* 5e. You can find her on Twitter as @HealthPakStream. She may or may not be a halfling bard.

Jessica Ross

Jess is a teacher, editor, and podcaster. You can listen to her play *D&D* with some of her favorite ladies on d20 Dames and tune in while she GMs Blue Rose for some of her besties on Bitches & Liches. Check in with her shenanigans on her website writejess.com or on Twitter @writejessr.

Joe Nehmer

A nine-year-old boy in 1983. Glorious red box basic *D&D*. Elmore cover. What? No board?... what. is. this. So many summer days making spell books from chopped up looseleaf, and seeing dungeoneer and crusader alike fall to glorious *AD&D* deathtrap dungeons. Thrilled to be a contributing editor for the *Uncaged Anthology*!

Liz Gist

Liz is a hobbyist, artist, and freelance editor. They grew up fascinated with mythology and look for any excuse to burrow into that part of their psyche. Follow them on Twitter @crit_liz for puppy photos, mini painting, and far too many tiefling PCs.

Lynne M. Meyer

Bisexual interfaith and diversity educator and activist Lynne M. Meyer holds a Master of Theological Studies from Harvard Divinity School, and a Master of Jewish Studies from Spertus Institute. Lynne is a chronic

illness warrior, devotee of Hekate, and lover of cats and good coffee. Her adventure appears in *Uncaged* Volume I. Connect with Lynne on Twitter @Lynne_M_Meyer.

Maryska Connolly

Maryśka Connolly is a writer, librarian, and game designer in central Virginia. She spends much of her time designing escape rooms, hosting murder mysteries, and running *D&D* campaigns for college students. You can follower her on Facebook @queenofthegoblins and on Twitter and Instagram @maryskaconnolly.

Michael Haney

Michael Haney is currently finishing his creative writing degree from the University of South Florida. When he isn't writing about the occult or editing, he is devoting his free time to playing ttRPGs. You can find him on Twitter @michaelhaneyc.

Stephanie Lee

Stephanie Lee is an editor, aspiring author, and perpetual GM. You can find her work at scribblesandknots.com or on Twitter @scribblesnknots.

TK Johnson

TK is a full-time southern gothic/dark fantasy writer and part-time eldritch horror. They have been derailing campaigns since early childhood, but their most diabolical plans are unveiled every Friday evening as DM in the Twitch actual play, Tales From the Mists. Their spooky stories can be found at www.tkjwrites.com. Legends say that you can find TK lurking in the hills of Kentucky with their familiar, Samson, when the moon is full, the fog is thick, and the harvest is ripe for the Ancient Ones' return.

DONORS

A heartfelt thanks to those who donated to our project.

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Alex is a best-selling creator whose work can be found on DMsGuild.com.

David McDonough

David is a writer, editor, and creator for DMsGuild.com.

Glenn Magas

Glenn is a financial analyst, social media expert, screenwriter, and *D&D* fan based in Los Angeles.

Joe Nehmer: Joe also served *Uncaged* as an editor; learn more about him on pg. 233.

John Jusayan: John is an app developer and veteran DM. Learn more at treeness.com.

M.T. Black: M.T. Black is a prolific creator with numerous best-selling RPG titles to his name. Get a peek into the world of RPG creation via his newsletter: bit.ly/mtblacksignup

Phil Beckwith: Phil is the owner of P.B. Publishing, which produces immersive content for *Dungeons & Dragons* 5e. Learn more at www.facebook.com/PBPublishing

Sersa Victory: Sersa Victory is a designer of deathtrap dungeons for dark fantasy tabletop and video games. His work includes *Tomb of Mercy*, *Necropolis of the Mailed Fist*, *Testament of Malice*, and the upcoming text adventure game *Ember Undying*.

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Uncaged is a collection of original adventures designed for *Dungeons & Dragons* 5th Edition. Each adventure subverts and reinvents the tropes around female mythological creatures, monsters, and figures. **This ambitious project features creators from across the globe.**

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