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.